

The Relation between Omani Students' Perceptions of the Writing Strategies and their Writing Performance

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Abstract: The present study aimed at exploring the relation between Omani students' perceptions of writing strategies and their own writing performance. Three types of key universal strategies (metacognitive, cognitive, social-affective), in master's degree research, were assumed as effective in promoting students' successful writing processes. A strategy questionnaire in order to map Omani EFL students' perception of strategy use as well as a writing test to identify students' actual writing performance was constructed. The present study reported that the participants perceived the metacognitive strategy of selective attention as prevailing in their writing practice. They also demonstrated interest in the social affective strategy of cooperation. Cognitive strategy use, however, seemed to be complex and challenging, and was perceived as the least apparent. Furthermore, the study reported inefficiency of strategy use, as obtained by the questionnaire, which corresponded with students' very poor performance in the writing test. The test scores indicated that 84.40% of the participants failed the writing test, which means that they are far away from being successful language writers.

Keywords: Writing strategies, EFL, tenth grade students, Oman.

العلاقة بين إدراك الطلبة العمانيين واستخدام استراتيجيات الكتابة و أدائهم الكتابي

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مستخلص: هدفت الدراسة الحالية إلى كشف العلاقة بين تصورات الطلبة العمانيين نحو استخدام استراتيجيات الكتابة وأدائهم الكتابي. حيث افترضت هذه الدراسة أن الاستراتيجيات العالمية الرئيسة الثلاث (ما وراء المعرفية، والمعرفية، والوجدانية الاجتماعية)، في بحث أجري للحصول على درجة ماجستير ذات فعالية في إنجاح عملية الكتابة لدى الطلبة. وتم بناء استبيان من أجل معرفة تصورات الطلبة الذين يدرسون اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية نحو استخدام استراتيجيات الكتابة، كما وتم بناء اختبار لتحديد الأداء الكتابي الفعلي للطلبة. وخلصت الدراسة إلى أن الطلبة كانوا يتصورون أن استراتيجية ما وراء المعرفية للانتباه الانتقائي هي السائدة في أدائهم الكتابي وعلاوة على ذلك أبدوا ميلاً نحو استخدام الاستراتيجية الوجدانية الاجتماعية للتعاون. كما أظهرت تصورات تعكس صعوبة الاستراتيجية المعرفية وتعقيدها. هذا وقد أشارت الدراسة إلى عدم توافق تصورات الطلبة لاستخدام استراتيجيات الكتابة التي تم الحصول عليها من الاستبيان مع أداء الطلاب الفعلي في اختبار الكتابة الذي كان ضعيفاً. حيث أشارت نتائج الاختبار أن 84.40% من المشاركين قد فشلوا في اختبار الكتابة، وهذا قد يعني أن مستوى كتابتهم كان بعيداً كل البعد عن وصفهم بكتابي لغة ناجحين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: استراتيجيات الكتابة، اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية، طلبة الصف العاشر، عمان.

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A noteworthy drift in the teaching of the writing skill in the last decade has been a prototype shift from stressing the process of writing rather than the product of writing. As such, such a drift motivated the researchers of the current study to explore the teaching of the writing skill in Oman, which will, in turn, affect the teaching of the writing skill.

Researchers such as Tsui and Ng (2000) and Liu and Hansen (2005) highlighted this move from studying writing itself to reviewing what writers do as they write. Experts dedicated their teaching to a sequence of strategies the writer engages in so as to produce a piece of writing. Successful language writers often make use of appropriate learning strategies to facilitate their writing process (Nyikos, 1987). With the development of the research on second language acquisition, more and more attention has been paid to the research on language learning strategies as they have the potential to enhance the development of the writing skill (Fazeli, 2012; Kang & Pyun, 2013). As early as Oxford (1990[a or b]), learning strategies have been theorized to have the principal influence on the rate and level of second language acquisition.

It was felt by the researchers that teachers have begun to be aware of the need for providing support for students with the writing process. Inquiry into language learning strategies explored the possibility of assisting students to become more effective language learners by teaching them some of the writing strategies that empirical studies have identified as characteristics of the successful language writer (e.g. Rubin, 1987; Shih-Chieh, 2012; Fazeli, 2012). Learning strategies can be defined as steps, deliberate actions, techniques and behaviors that learners take in order to facilitate the learning process (Rubin, 1987; Schmeck, 1988, O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

Defining writing strategies

Second language research on writing strategies refers to the comparison between experienced writers' writing behavior and that of inexperienced writers. The difference in writing behaviors in first and second language writing, the use of first language in second language writing, and also the writers' perception about writing tasks (Petric & Czarl, 2003; Okamura, 2006; Erkan & Saban, 2011) have been investigated. Okamura (2006), for example, supported this argument when showing

the findings of a study which revealed that more experienced Japanese academic writers differ from their junior counterparts when using "language-oriented" writing strategies.

Language learning strategies have three types: cognitive, metacognitive and social-affective strategies (Oxford, 1989, 1990; Chamot, 2005). Cognitive strategies comprise unconscious interactions with the material to be learned, for instance differencing, resourcing, and note-taking. They refer to steps used in problem-solving that require analysis, transformation and synthesis of learning materials. Metacognitive strategies, conversely, include conscious management and control over the learning process, for example planning, paying attention, and monitoring. That is, metacognitive strategies refer to the knowledge about the cognitive process as well as to the regulation of cognition through processes of planning, monitoring and evaluating. Social-affective strategies involve interacting with one another or using affective control to assist learning, such as questioning, working with peers, and lowering anxiety. They refer to the activities learners engage in to practice this knowledge (Rubin, 1987; Oxford, 1990; O'Malley & Chamot, 2005).

Writing strategies are valuable in many learning settings. The potential will be achieved when the person acquires ability in strategy employment and formality with strategy application. This process approach to instruction views writing in progress as a dynamic entity, which can be substantively improved by multiple drafts and revisions. This is not to say that learning strategies will substitute specific knowledge of content domains; strategies are rather simply necessary conditions for more effective learning (Harold & O'Neil, 1978; Huwari & Aziz, 2011).

Shapira and Lazarowitz (2005). Such performances demonstrate four clusters of procedures; namely, metacognitive, cognitive, social, and affective. Since writing proficiency affects one's achievement, writing was perceived as an integral part of second/foreign language learning (Anson, 2006). Kobayashi and Rinnert (2008) indicated that students use metacognitive strategies in their L1 and L2 essays as a result of interaction between the two languages. Previously, however, Sasaki (2000) stated that skillful writers use strategies while less skilled ones do not. In his study,

Sasaki compared the use of planning and revision strategies by two groups of writers. The study reported that skillful writers use strategies while less skillful ones do not use writing strategies.

Metacognitive strategies echo students' consciousness of using strategies in order to manage learning. Metacognitive strategies were defined by Wiles (1997: 17) as "self-management and the capability to plan, monitor and revise, or control learning".

Cognitive strategies, in contrast, echo students' processing and transforming information, which entail using language dynamically. Examples of cognitive strategies are: organizing, reading out loud, analyzing, summarizing and reasoning (Oxford, 1990; Weinstein & Mayer, 1986). *Social strategies*, however, echo students' interaction with their teacher or colleagues in class such as asking questions, cooperating with others, and peer work (Shapira & Lazarowitz, 2005).

Language proficiency and the writing skill

Writers who are not skillful in English cannot express multi-faceted ideas due to vocabulary, grammar, background, culture, style, and L1 transfer deficiency issues (Kobayashi & Rinert, 2008; Petric & Czarl, 2003). In such cases, the growth of L2 writing promotes proficiency which has been one of the core research themes in EFL/ESL writing settings. Evans and Green (2007) reported significant differences between proficient and non-proficient language users in terms of the writing process as skillful and less-skilled writers employ different prewriting, planning, editing, and revision activities.

An in-depth investigation of the process was carried out by Mu and Carrington (2007), who examined the writing strategies of three Chinese post-graduate learners in an Australian higher education institution. Data were collected by a semi-structured interview, questionnaire, and reflective post-writing discussion, and written drafts of papers were analyzed. The study reported that the participants used rhetorical strategies, metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies and social-affective strategies in their writing.

Strategy use features successful/unsuccessful language learners. Gan, Humphreys, and Hamp-Lyons (2004) conducted a comparative

study of successful and unsuccessful learners of English in Chinese universities. The data were collected through interviews, diaries, and follow-up email correspondence with nine successful and nine unsuccessful second-year EFL students at two Chinese mainland universities. The findings revealed that the unsuccessful students relied on rote memorization, while the successful students relied on a systematic plan and supplemented rote-learning with strategies for supporting what they had learnt.

The social context was demonstrated as vital in writing strategies research. In this regard, Kang & Pyun (2013) examined the writing strategies used by L2 writers while stressing the mediated activities included in their writing processes. The sample number was as small as two participants, where there were interviews, a think-aloud technique, and motivated recall. A number of themes and trends were built in light of data analysis. Each theme was interpreted in relation to each individual's sociocultural context. The results revealed that a learner's socially situated setting is strongly related to the types of writing strategies and mediating instruments that the learner employs or favors.

Writing and cognition

Cognition was further examined in the context of EFL writing strategies. Specifically, cognitive and compensatory learning strategies were adopted study in order to develop writing skills. Twenty one females and 3 males in their second year undergraduate writers participated in this study in Costa Rica. All participants were EFL students joining a writing course. Brand and Jimenez employed a questionnaire which particularized Oxford's cognitive and compensatory learning strategies taxonomies and a pair of checklists for writers to fill in so as to overcome their writing difficulties. The study reported that most writers did not make the most of compensatory learning strategies in order to write well, and besides they had flaws in different writing areas, for instance, grammar, process, and vocabulary. Brand and Jimenez associated such findings with the fact that these writers did not know about the existence of cognitive and compensatory learning before the study commenced.

Cognitive approaches to manage writing tasks were also introduced by Shih-Chieh (2012)

who examined students' use of writing strategies as correlated to Taiwanese students' English writing achievements. The cognitive approach was used so as to investigate the process of writing. The sample of the study involved 40 student writers (consisting of 20 low and 20 high achievers). The study employed a simultaneous think-aloud technique and instant effective interviews with students. The study reported that high-achieving students were more proficient than low-achieving students. Such student writers formulated their thesis statement, produced texts, and edited their texts through making the text as meaningful as possible.

Multiple intelligences were evidenced as relevant to writing strategies. Such a relationship was identified by Moheb and Bagheri (2013). The sample of the study consisted of 120 male and female Iranian EFL learners studying at a language institute. Two questionnaires were used. The first questionnaire was a multiple intelligences inventory reporting nine types of intelligences based on Gardner's theory. The second questionnaire, however, was a writing skills and strategies inventory. A relationship between certain kinds of intelligences among females and certain writing strategies was reported. The male group, in contrast, did not display such a relationship. Advanced level students presented more noteworthy correlations than high level students. Conversely, it was revealed that none of the intelligences could foretell writing strategies individually.

The relationship between strategy use and proficiency was highlighted. A study by Magno (2010) examined the English proficiency of Korean students, through adopting the SILL inventory together with the number of months spent in studying English. The sample consisted of 302 Korean learners who were asked to complete the SILL in addition to an English proficiency test. The study showed the compensation strategy as very effective in promoting students' English proficiency. A new result was that the number of months learning formal English increased as the English proficiency of Korean students also increased.

Arranging writers in terms of their writing proficiency is a priority of writing strategy research. Abdullah (2011) accounted for the differences in the use of writing strategies between skillful and less skilled writers. Abdullah used multiple assessment criteria so as to

group L2 writers consistently in light of their writing capabilities. The study trained four Malay engineering undergraduates in Malaysia who had completed their foundation program. The results indicated that cognitive strategies were used most by the engineering students in composing; in contrast, the study concluded that social strategies were the least used strategies.

Personality and writing

Personality traits were studied carefully when it came to the writing strategies research paradigm. Such a relation was explored by Fazeli (2012). Four research instruments were employed; namely: Oxford's strategy inventory for learning language (SILL), a background questionnaire, a personality inventory, and a test of English as a foreign language. Two hundred and thirteen Iranian female EFL university undergraduates in Iran participated in this study. The results of the study demonstrated positive and negative noteworthy correlations that accounted for frequency of English language strategies and personality traits.

A further correlation between strategy use and concept development was established by Al-Jabali (2012). Al-Jabali led a longitudinal study of language strategy use and concept improvement. Forty-five Jordanian EFL undergraduates majoring in English participated in the study, where study-semester and gender variables were explored as well. The SILL inventory was adopted as a tool for responding to the questions of the study. The findings established that Jordanian undergraduates majoring in English had great strategy employment for most strategies. The study reported a hierarchy of strategies as ranking from social, compensation, affective, cognitive, to memory strategies. Gender differences were not significant in strategy use; yet, the study-semester variable showed significant differences in favor of third and fourth semesters' responses.

The prominence of writers' motivation featured many studies, among which is the one carried out by Soo-Eun (2011) in order to survey Korean college students' L2 writing improvement, motivation, and strategies. The study used interviews and self-report methods for students enrolled in writing classes. Verdicts of the study pointed out that L2 [L1?] and L2 writing background knowledge were considerably linked to L2 writing motivation, performance, and strategy use. Interview data

supported the self-report method by establishing the students' level of L2 writing self-efficacy, motivation, and strategy uses.

Beliefs towards strategy use were perceived as crucial in the writing strategy research. In this regard, Sioson (2011) examined the relationship between students' beliefs and their strategy use among 300 undergraduates in the Philippines. The SILL questionnaire was managed in order to gather information on language learners' beliefs and their learning strategies. The study found that language learning strategies mostly were negatively associated with language learning beliefs. Furthermore, only the motivation subscale of beliefs was the important predictor of speaking performance.

Gender and proficiency were investigated as variables that may affect the use of strategies. As such, Abu Radwan (2011) examined the use of language learning strategies by 128 students majoring in English at Sultan Qaboos University, Oman by means of using Oxford's (1990a) SILL. The study relied on three-way criteria: students' grade point average (GPA) in English courses, study duration in the English Department, and students' perceived self-rating. Results of the study indicated that students employed metacognitive strategies meaningfully more than any other category of strategies, with memory strategies ranking as lowest on students' preference scale, and male students used more social strategies than female students. Moreover, the results revealed that more proficient students used more cognitive, metacognitive and affective strategies than less proficient students.

The Omani setting

In Oman, English teaching has assumed extraordinary attention since as early as the 1970s when His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said rose to the throne and pursued substantial educational reforms (Al-Issa, 2011). English language command is seen as a crucial element in the development of Oman and its real incorporation into the modern world. At school level, from 1998-1999, English was taught as early as the first grade onwards, giving pupils twelve years of instruction in the language before entering higher education. However, the majority of Omani students find it very difficult to listen, speak, read or write in English (Al-Mahrooqi & Asante, 2010).

Al-Barwani, Mekhlafi, & Nagaratnam (2013: 3) studied the reality of Omani students in early pre-university grades and noted weakness in mastering the English language as a result of lack of students' knowledge about means and effective strategies that can help them to learn the English language as required. Very few researches on learning strategies of the English language have been conducted in Oman (Abu Radwan, 2011; Al-Barwani et al, 2013). Omani students need to be fully competent in learning English as a consequence of the spread of globalization and technological development. As a result, the need arises for studying the effect of using learning strategies of the English language on the students' achievement in the English language writing skill. Students' perceptions of the writing learning strategies may play a role in drawing conclusions regarding their writing skill development. Moreover, surveying Omani EFL strategies is an exciting, still-unfolding area of L2 writing and curriculum design. It is hoped that the present study will guide the main issues and considerations in EFL education particularly in Oman.

The primary research concern addresses the congruence between students' perceptions of writing strategies and their own writing performance by examining their perceptions as well as their real writing performance. Step by step questions that reflect such concern are as follows:

- 1. What types of writing learning strategies are most frequently perceived by EFL tenth grade students at Khrayes Al Hobos School?**
- 2. What is their actual writing performance?**
- 3. What is the relationship between students' perceptions of the writing strategies and their writing performance?**

Method

The present study adopted a descriptive research design. Khrayes Al Hobos School was selected as a case study. The participants included all tenth grade students at the school, comprising 186 students as distributed over 6 sections in Muscat City in Oman during the second semester of the academic year 2013-2014. The rationale behind having the tenth grade students as the sample is relevant to the fact that it is the last grade in the basic stage, where students can draw conclusions on their strategy use. All participants, thus, responded to a strategy survey questionnaire in addition to the writing test. To successfully conduct the study, the following instruments were used:

- A language strategy questionnaire. A questionnaire was used in order to identify the performances employed by learners when they rewrite in English. The language learning strategy questionnaire was derived from SILL as developed by Oxford (1990b), as shown in Appendix 1. This self-report instrument used a five-point Likert scale, ranging from very strongly disagrees to strongly agrees, to assess the frequency that the students used different techniques for English-language writing. The questionnaire comprised 24 items distributed across three strategy types, where the metacognitive strategy included items 1-10, the cognitive strategy included items 11-22, and the social-affective strategy encompassed items 23 and 24. The form of the language learning strategy questionnaire was as follows.

Table 1
Strategy types and their categorizations

Strategy type	Strategy name	Number of items
1- Metacognitive	-Selective attention	1-10
	-Directed-attention	
2-Cognitive	-Translation	11-22
	-Elaboration	
	-Inferencing	
	-Summarizing	
3-Social-affective	-Cooperation	23-24

- A writing test was designed so as to evaluate students' use of learning strategies. This test was parallel to tenth grade materials, as shown in Appendix 2. It consisted of two questions which assessed students' writing skill. The first question was graded out of 5 marks and the second question was graded out of 10 marks.

The strategy survey questionnaires as well as the writing test were given to a jury of eight university professors and six senior teachers and educational supervisors in order to elicit their views and to make sure that it suited the level of the students. The kind of feedback on[?] the moderation process by the jury was steered to elicit their views as to the accuracy, clarity, and appropriateness of the instruments. The questionnaire was then reviewed and modified in light of the jury's comments. In order to ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, the internal consistency calculated the coefficient on a pilot study of twenty students who were excluded from the sample. The reliability coefficient of the test was calculated by using Pearson which reached (0.87) and considered acceptable for conducting the questionnaire. The following table displays the estimation of each strategy.

Table 2
Coefficient of the internal consistency measures

Dimension	coefficient of the internal consistency
Metacognitive strategy	0.81
Cognitive strategy	0.86
Social-affective strategy	0.77
Writing strategies as a whole	0.88

Students' perceived strategies

The following table shows the rank order of perceived writing strategy types used by Omani tenth grade students.

Table 3 presents mean scores and standard deviations of the types of writing learning strategies. It demonstrates that the rank order of writing strategy types used by Omani tenth grade students were metacognitive strategy as the most frequent type with a mean score of 3.43, and then social-affective strategies with a mean score of 3.34, and finally cognitive strategies, which were uncommon with a mean score of 3.25. The results of the standard deviation scores, ranging, between 0.60 and 0.83, refer to a rapprochement (i.e. the standard deviation is a measure of discrepancy among the values) in the study participants' answers. The following table shows the meta-cognitive strategies used, ordered in a descending manner by Omani tenth grade students.

Table 3
Writing strategy types

Rank	Number of strategy	Std. deviation	Mean	Strategy type
1	1	0.60	3.43	Metacognitive
2	3	0.83	3.34	Social-affective
3	2	0.70	3.25	Cognitive

Table 4
Metacognitive strategies used, ordered in a descending manner

Item	Item	Mean	Std.deviation	Rank	Degree
10	I revise whatever I write and edit it.	3.71	1.15	1	High
4	I determine answers with explanations before starting writing the outline	3.58	1.05	2	Medium
5	I think about how the teacher may understand my writing.	3.56	1.28	3	Medium
9	I keep checking grammar when I write.	3.54	1.15	4	Medium
2	I identify the topic and collect information about it, from model written work written by native speakers, if the topic is new to me.	3.52	1.00	5	Medium
1	I think in Arabic whenever I write in English.	3.44	1.13	6	Medium
6	I can write the outline precisely.	3.38	1.04	7	Medium
3	I identify points supporting the thesis by listing down paragraphs, sentences and words relevant to the writing topic.	3.35	1.03	8	Medium
8	I do mind mapping to create relevant ideas to the topic in question.	3.17	1.14	9	Medium
7	I can write the main idea and supporting ideas precisely.	3.08	1.03	10	Medium

*(2.33 or less=Low; 2.34-3.67=Medium; 2.68 or more= High)

Table 4 illustrates the order of metacognitive strategies which came top when strategies were compared earlier. Mean scores of metacognitive strategies ranged between 3.08 and 3.71. Item 10 and its text "I revise whatever I write and edit it" came first with a mean score of 3.71. This indicates that most Omani tenth grade students usually revise and edit their writing. One explanation is that they tend to be anxious as a result of the lack of writing experiences and practices in writing the English language. Thus, revision and editing are established in order to ensure their efficiency during the writing process. Item 4 ("I determine answers with explanations before starting writing the outline") came second with a mean score of 3.58. Item 5, then, and its text "I think about how the teacher may understand my writing" came third with a mean score of

3.56. Item 7 ("I can write the main idea and supporting ideas precisely"), however, came last with a mean score of 3.08. The results of the standard deviations, which ranged between 1.00 and 1.28 bring up a rapprochement in the participants' answers. This refers to the fact that Omani tenth grade students tend to feel that they have problems when it comes to making an indicator of their knowledge base in general. Cognitive strategies came third when strategies were compared earlier in Table 3. Mean scores of cognitive strategies ranged from 3.61 to 2.94. Table 5 demonstrates how the participants felt towards each cognitive strategy.

The following table shows the cognitive strategies used, ordered in a descending manner by Omani tenth grade students.

Table 5
Cognitive strategies used, ordered in a descending manner

Item	Item	Mean	Std. deviation	Rank	Degree
16	I can compare and contrast similarities and differences between different things.	3.61	1.05	1	Medium
19	I make sure that I write all the needed elements/components of a certain argument.	3.48	1.04	2	Medium
17	I can provide sufficient examples to make my idea clear.	3.44	1.00	3	Medium
18	I can give evidence on my argument in order to make myself clear.	3.42	1.13	4	Medium
11	I can write without using the English-Arabic dictionary.	3.23	1.20	5	Medium
20	I can summarize key topics/ ideas precisely.	3.23	1.20	6	Medium
14	I can describe a place/an object/a friend in detail.	3.21	1.14	7	Medium
15	I can use different words/images every time I refer to the same thing.	3.18	1.18	8	Medium
21	I write redundant and trivial details.	3.16	1.30	9	Medium
22	I write everything and word for word when I summarize.	3.12	1.19	10	Medium
12	I can write without asking my teacher /friends about word meanings.	3.06	1.16	11	Medium
13	I write sentences in Arabic first then I translate into English.	2.94	1.36	12	Medium

*(2.33 or less=Low; 2.34-3.67=Medium; 2.68 or more= High)

In Table 5, item 16 and its text "I can compare and contrast similarities and differences between different things" came first with a mean score of 3.61. Such a finding can be explained in terms of the commonest of 'compare and contrast' theme in education which is typically introduced first. Item 19 ("I make sure that I write all the needed elements/components of a certain argument") came second with of a mean score of 3.48. Then, item 17 and its text "I can provide sufficient examples to make my idea clear" came third through a mean score of 3.44. Item 13 ("I write sentences in Arabic first then I translate into English"), however, came last with a mean score of 2.94. This can be interpreted as Omani students feeling that their teachers do not direct them to use such cognitive strategies where English writing classes are taught in a way similar to Arabic writing classes. Standard deviation scores of 1.00-1.36 denote a rapprochement in the participants' answers.

Social-affective strategies came second when strategies were compared previously in Table 3. Mean scores of social affective strategies ranged between 3.04 and 3.66. Table 6 proves how the participants felt towards each social-affective strategy.

The following table shows social-affective strategies use, ordered in a descending manner by Omani tenth grade students.

Table 6

Social-affective strategies use as ordered in a descending manner

No. of Item	item	Mean	Std. deviation	Rank	Degree
24	I need to discuss the topic with my teacher first before commencing writing the outline.	3.66	1.27	1	Medium
23	I can write without negotiating meaning with teacher/friends.	3.04	1.24	2	Medium
	Social affective	3.34			

*(2.33 or less=Low; 2.34-3.67=Medium; 2.68 or more= High)

Table 6 illustrates that item 24 and its text "I need to discuss the topic with my teacher first before commencing writing the outline" came first with a mean score of 3.66. This reflects students' lack of self-confidence as a result of teacher-centered approaches. Item 23 and its

text "I can write without negotiating meaning with teacher/friends" came second through a mean score of 3.04. The results of the standard deviation were 1.24-1.27, which refers to a rapprochement in the participants' answers. The results of this table suggest that some students have the motivation to study and get high degrees, which pushes them to consult and ask for assistance from their colleagues or teachers, while others avoid that, perhaps as a result of social reasons related to shame or a sense of inferiority in their opinion when relying on others, or as a result of indifference towards academic achievement in general.

Students' writing performance

To recap, the second question involved information on the following question: What is the actual writing performance of the participants? Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated, in addition to number of students and their marks in the test to answer this question. Table 7 displays mean scores and standard deviations of Omani tenth grade students on the writing test. Table 8 outlines such details.

The following table shows results of students on the writing test by Omani tenth grade students.

Table 7

Results of students on the writing test			
Questions of test	Mean	Std. deviation	Rank
Question 1	1.52	1.54	1
Question 2	1.27	2.52	2
Total Marks	2.78	3.73	

The table indicates that the mean score of the overall marks obtained by the test is as low as 2.78. The mean scores of both questions were also low ranging from 1.27 for the second question and 1.52 for the first question. Understanding the students' actual performances further entailed classifying them in terms of successful or unsuccessful language writers on the grounds of their real answers in the test. The following Table, hence, points out such classification.

The following table shows the participants' classification in terms of successful/unsuccessful language writers by Omani tenth grade students.

Table 8
Successful/unsuccessful language writers' classification

Number of successful students	Number of unsuccessful students	Number of students	Students' marks
29	157	71	0
		86	1-6
		27	7-14
		2	15

Table 8 shows that the number of unsuccessful students according to the test is as high as 157 students out of 186. In contrast, the number of successful students according to the test is only 29 students. Surprisingly, 71 students received the score of zero. Eighty-six students had marks that ranged between 1 and 6. Twenty-seven students had marks that ranged from 7 to 14. Only two students got full marks. Strategy use is always correlated with proficiency. Accordingly, these very low figures obtained by the test correspond precisely with the results obtained by the strategy survey questionnaire, where low and very moderate results were obtained.

Perception versus performance

The third research question entailed an analysis of the relationship between students' perceived strategies and their actual writing performance. The present study embarked on metacognition, cognition, and social-affective writing strategies in light of the growing interest in such strategies. This has been connected to developing students' writing skills. This study searched for the relationship between students' self-reports of using writing strategies and their real use of these writing strategies. Using a language strategy questionnaire survey data for 186 tenth grade students as well as a writing test, we found a decline in writing performance and increased statistical indications of students' perceptions of using writing strategies.

This study reports many empirical based studies on the writing skill achievement. Its aim was to derive a set of pedagogical implications to help Omani students improve their writing performance. It is found that there is a gap between students' perceptions of the use of writing strategies and their actual writing performance. In other words, the study showed no relationship between students' perception and their actual writing output. Such variance in students' perceptions and practices reflected evidence that there were drops in students'

writing performance and increases in students' perceptions of using writing strategies, both independently and together. Students' perceptions, as investigated in the present study, were not a much stronger predictor of students' performance in using writing strategies.

Summary of results

The present study reported the following results:

- Omani tenth grade students feel that they use metacognitive strategies more than cognitive or social-affective strategies when they write in English. They feel that they use revising and editing metacognitive strategies most while believing that they cannot manipulate using writing main/supporting ideas met cognitive strategies as least. It is worth pointing out that 'revising' is a selective attention strategy and 'editing' is a directed attention one.
- Omani students believe that they use the cognitive strategy of 'compare and contrast', which is an inference cognitive strategy, more while not being certain of their ability to write without asking the teacher. The participating students regarded[?] using social-affective strategies, such as discussing the topic with the teacher, as paramount.
- Omani tenth grade students' beliefs, perceptions and feelings towards the use of strategies did not correspond with their actual writing performance. Provided that[?], results obtained by the writing test demonstrated that 157 students out 186 did not pass the writing test.

Discussion

The present study investigated the English language writing strategies among tenth grade Omani students. The results of the study demonstrated that Omani students perceived themselves as using metacognitive strategies foremost; namely, selective attention and directed attention strategies. This finding is consistent with the findings obtained by Abu Radwan (2011), Nikoopour, Farsani, and Neishabouri (2011) and Al-Jabali (2012), which established that EFL writers, generally, tend to

adopt metacognitive strategies, since metacognitive strategies do not entail complex thinking processes; thus, they suit several students' levels. Accordingly, the present study showed that the learners favored using metacognitive strategies as they were the most frequently used English language writing strategies.

The present study, furthermore, demonstrated Omani students' sensible inclination towards using social-affective strategies of cooperation. Such moderate level of using social-affective strategies can be attributed to teacher-centered approaches to teaching. In such classes, students are not self-confident and keep asking for assistance from their colleagues or teachers. This result is consistent with the study of Al-Jabali (2012). On the other hand, Omani tenth grade students perceived cognitive strategy employment in their writing as the lowest. This result is also consistent with the findings of Al-Jabali (2012) and Abdullah (2011). Cognitive strategies entail the strategies of translation, elaboration, differencing, and summarizing; that is, cognitive strategies are complex and not easily used. Not all learners can manipulate cognitive strategies; unsuccessful language learners fail to use this type of strategy.

Results obtained by the strategy survey questionnaire concluded a shortage of use of writing strategies by Omani tenth grade students. The results of the writing test likewise corresponded to the questionnaire results. The test results exhibited a low level of students' writing skill in the English language, where their marks in the test were not promising. Additionally, the percentage of failure among students was as high as 84.40%. That is, 157 students out of a total of 186 failed the test. It was concluded that the majority of students' writings demonstrated obvious and overt weaknesses and flaws when expressing their ideas in the English language. In addition, a large number of errors like spelling and grammar were prevailing and dominant all through the students' writings.

In conclusion, strategy use was correlated with unsuccessful language writing. This result is consistent with the findings of many researchers, for example, Evans & Green (2007), Kuiken and Vedder (2008) [not in references list], and Moheb and Bagheri (2013), who associated writing proficiency with strategy use. On

the whole, unsuccessful language proficiency prevents students from communicating appropriately. Students with low English proficiency always find it difficult to communicate comfortably in English.

In Omani tenth grade English language classes, as indicated by the present study, students have a weak proficiency in English writing skills where they cannot write efficiently. Therefore, as reported previously, they find it hard to express ideas in their writing due to a lack of their use of Arabic first before translating into English. In this regard, Kobayashi and Rinnert (2008) demonstrated that the L1 writing ability of L2 students is the basic determinant of their L2 writing performance. Such views are based on the supposition that writers transfer their writing skills from their L1 to the target L2 writing (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2008). In such a case, L2 writing difficulties are the result of and influenced by L1 transfer of culturally preferred linguistic patterns from the L1.

Overall, the results of L2 writing process research displayed noteworthy differences between successful and unsuccessful language writers (Brand and Jimenez, 2013; Evans & Green, 2007). Successful and unsuccessful language writers differ in pre-writing activities. Unsuccessful writers devote only a short time to planning before starting to write. However, successful writers seem to devote more time to planning and revision. The current study noted that Omani tenth grade students' ineffective writing categorized them as unsuccessful language writers with low L2 proficiency as they made grammatical and lexical errors when they created texts.

Pedagogical implications

The present study stressed the importance of using strategies in learning the skill of writing. Still further examination is crucial to confirm the results of this study. Obviously, EFL teachers are intensely recommended to foster their students' strategic use. Teachers, likewise, are really steered to teach students how to write expressively through strategy use rather than evaluating their final product of writing. EFL teachers are strongly recommended to increase learners' engagement with pre-task activities by enabling them to plan their writing because this would enhance the quality of the language used during the task and reduce the overall mental burden during

writing. The study, hence, proposes designing applicable writing activities to promote the use of strategies, and explicitly teaching writing strategies and monitoring their application in writing classes. Teachers should be aware of the role of metacognitive, cognitive and social-affective strategies in regulating students' thoughts and emotions. Therefore, teachers are invited to clarify explicitly to their students how such strategies can help them cope with their writing problems and as a result make the writing process more creative and enjoyable.

Understanding the effectiveness of strategy use is important in designing EFL materials. Thus, the present study recommends the need for developing principled instruction of all language skills in light of language learning strategies exemplified through this study. Moreover, this study proposes directing research-based strategic instruction across different subjects. The study, then, displays gratitude to promising strategic instruction techniques that convey practical and comprehensive materials.

Although the emphasis of this study was not on the syntactic features of the text, it was found, however, that grammatical and spelling problems prevented understanding. Therefore, tutors and language instructors are recommended to teach students these aspects of the text, not in isolation but in communicative classes, and they should monitor the application of the rules in the students' writing. The current study, accordingly, might be of educational assistance to textbook designers, academics, instructors and communicative competence advocates.

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Appendix 1

Strategy questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed for investigating the writing strategies among EFL tenth grade students in Oman. I would be grateful if you could answer the following questions. The information provided will be of great help in my study and will be treated anonymously.

تم تصميم هذا الاستبيان للحصول على معلومات حول التحقق من استراتيجيات الكتابة لدى طلاب الصف العاشر في سلطنة عمان. أشكر تفضلكم بالإجابة عن الأسئلة التالية. وسوف تستخدم المعلومات التي سيتم الحصول عليها من هذه الاستبانة لأغراض البحث العلمي دون أن تعطى إلى طرف ثالث.

No.	Item
Meta-cognitive strategy	
1-	I think in Arabic whenever I write in English. أفكر باللغة العربية عندما أكتب باللغة الإنجليزية
2-	I can identify the topic and collect information about it, from model written work. أستطيع أن أحدد الموضوع وأجمع المعلومات عنه من نموذج العمل المكتوب
3-	I identify points supporting the thesis by listing down paragraphs, sentences and words relevant to the writing topic. أحدد نقاط دعم الأطروحة من خلال سرد الفقرات والجمل والكلمات ذات العلاقة بموضوع الكتابة
4-	I determine answers with explanations before starting writing the outline. أحدد الأجوبة والتفسيرات قبل البدء بكتابة الخطوط الرئيسية
5-	I think about how the teacher may understand my writing. أفكر كيف سيفهم معلمي كتابتي
6-	I can write the outline precisely. أستطيع أن أكتب الخطوط الرئيسية بدقة
7-	I can write the main idea and supporting ideas precisely. أستطيع أن أكتب الفكرة الرئيسية والأفكار الداعمة بدقة
8-	I can do mind mapping to create relevant ideas to the topic in question. أستطيع أن أقوم برسم خرائط ذهنية لخلق أفكار ذات علاقة بموضوع السؤال
9-	I keep checking grammar when I write. أتحقق من سلامة قواعد اللغة عندما أكتب
10-	I revise whatever I write and edit it. أقوم بمراجعة كل ما أكتبه وأحرره
Cognitive strategy	
11-	I can write without using the English-Arabic dictionary أستطيع الكتابة بدون استخدام قاموس عربي- إنجليزي
12-	I can write without asking my teacher / friends about word meanings. أستطيع الكتابة بدون سؤال مدرسي أو أصدقائي حول معاني الكلمات
13-	I write sentences in Arabic first then I translate into English. أكتب الجمل باللغة العربية أولاً ثم أحولها إلى اللغة الإنجليزية
14-	I can describe a place/ an object/ a friend in detail. أستطيع أن أصف مكاناً أو كائناً أو صديقاً بالتفصي
15-	I can use different words/ images every time I refer to the same thing. أستطيع أن استخدم كلمات وصور مختلفة في كل مرة أود أن أشير فيه للشيء نفسه
16-	I can compare and contrast similarities and differences between different things. أستطيع أن أوازن وأميز أوجه الشبه والاختلاف بين الأشياء المختلفة
17-	I can provide sufficient examples to make my idea clear. أستطيع تقديم أمثلة وافية لجعل فكري واضحة
18-	I can give evidence on my argument in order to make myself clear. أستطيع أن أقدم دليلاً على حجتي من أجل جعل نفسي أكثر وضوحاً
19-	I make sure that I write all the needed elements/ components of a certain argument. أتأكد أنني أكتب كل المكونات والعناصر المطلوبة لموضوع معين
20-	I can summarize key topics/ ideas precisely. أستطيع أن أخص المواضيع والأفكار الرئيسية بدقة
21-	I write redundant and trivial details. أكتب تفاصيل غير مهمة وزائدة عن الحاجة
22-	I write everything and word for word when I summarize. أكتب كل شيء كلمة كلمة عندما أخص
Social affective strategy	
23-	I can write without negotiating meaning with teacher/ friends. أستطيع أن أكتب بدون أن أستفسر حول المعاني من المعلم أو الأصدقاء
24-	I need to discuss the topic with my teacher first before commencing writing the outline. أحتاج لمناقشة الموضوع مع معلمي أولاً قبل البدء بكتابة الخطوط الرئيسية للموضوع

Appendix 2 Writing Proficiency Test

Name:

Class:

WRITING 1

[5 marks]

Write a PARAGRAPH about a film called '**Home Alone**'. Use all the information in the box. Your paragraph should be correct and well-organized.

Home Alone

Star/Macaulay Culkin

Child/protect house/thieves family/gone/Paris

Produce/1990 write/John Hughes

Suitable/12 and above direct/Chris Columbus

Earn/\$ 480 million comedy

.....
.....
.....

Marker A	Marker B	Average

Name:

Class:

WRITING 2

[10 marks]

Complete the following task. Write at least **75 words**.

Situation: Imagine that you have just received this e-mail from a friend. Write a reply.

Hi, As you know, I have just moved to a new school in a different area. I'm worried about finding new friends. What should I do? Can you advise me?

Your writing should be clear.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Marker A	Marker B	Average

SCORE