

Influence of Pre-Writing Strategies on Writing Performance and Preferences of Libyan EFL Students

Fatma Mohamed Mustafa Elzawawi^{1*}, Hawa Mohammed Saleh Esskare²

f.elzawawi@art.misuratau.edu.ly

hmsaleh@art.misuratau.edu.ly

Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Misurata University, Libya

Abstract

This study investigated the influence of pre-writing strategies on the writing performance of university students majoring in English as a Foreign Language(EFL). It also explored students' preferences for different prewriting strategies during classroom writing tasks. Thirty EFL students from the college of Arts Misurata University participated in the study. The research employed an experimental design, using writing tasks with brainstorming strategies, particularly mind mapping and outlines. writing samples were analyzed in terms of vocabulary, structure, content, and cohesion. The results revealed that mind-mapping techniques significantly enhanced the quality of EFL students' writing, with the mind mapping proving especially effective for idea for idea generation and organization. The study highlights the importance of integrating pre-writing strategies into EFL writing instruction and provides valuable insights for teachers to improve students' writing skills.

Keywords: Pre-Writing Strategies, Writing, mind mapping, outlines

تأثير استراتيجيات مرحلة ما قبل الكتابة على أداء وتقنيات طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في جامعة مصراته

فاطمة محمد مصطفى الزواوي¹، حواء محمد صالح السكير²

¹ قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، كلية الآداب، جامعة مصراته، ليبيا

² قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، كلية الآداب، جامعة مصراته، ليبيا

ملخص البحث

تناولت هذه الدراسة تأثير استراتيجيات ما قبل الكتابة على أداء الكتابة لدى طلاب الجامعة في تخصص اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. كما استكشفت أيضا تقنيات الطلاب لهذه الاستراتيجيات المختلفة أثناء أداء مهام الكتابة في الفصل. شارك في الدراسة ثلاثين طالبا من طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بكلية الآداب جامعة مصراته. استخدام البحث تصميمًا تجريبيًا اعتمد على مهام الكتابة مع استراتيجيات ما قبل الكتابة، وخاصة رسم الخرائط الذهنية، والقوائم التنظيمية، وقد تم تحليل عينات الكتابة من حيث المفردات والصياغة والمحتوي، والترابط اللغوي. وكشفت النتائج أن تقنيات رسم الخرائط الذهنية ساهمت بشكل كبير في تحسين جودة الكتابة لدى طلاب، وكانت استراتيجيات رسم الخرائط الذهنية الأكثر فاعلية فعالية في توليد الأفكار وتنظيمها. توصي الدراسة بضرورة دمج استراتيجيات ما قبل الكتابة في تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، وقدمت رؤى قيمة للمعلمين لتعزيز مهارات الكتابة لدى الطلاب. الكلمات المفتاحية: استراتيجيات ما قبل الكتابة، الكتابة، الخرائط الذهنية، القوائم التنظيمية.

Introduction

Although writing is a complex process, it is a vital skill in (EFL) educational settings and it is seen as a means of communication as well as standards of language proficiency level. In any writing task, EFL learners are required to demonstrate both their linguistic competence and academic achievement. 'Writing is the result of employing strategies to manage the composing process, which is one of gradually developing a text' (Hedge, 2000, as cited in Zhang, 2021). By practicing writing skill, learners can address complicated thoughts and concepts, effectively applying them in meaningful written contexts. There are many challenges EFL learners encounter while writing in a foreign language such as, vocabulary limitations, grammatical structures, and organizational skills. In EFL academic settings like schools and universities, writing is almost as important as speaking because students are required to write in exams, submit written assignments and tasks during their educational journey (Yunus et al., 2018). Therefore, teaching writing skill should be a primary objective in EFL education as this will be a part of students' success in both academic and career prospects (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014).

There are a variety of approaches instructors can adopt in teaching EFL writing. For example, process writing approach (Flower and Hayes, 1981) requires writers to engage in a series of steps, including planning, drafting, revising, and editing, allowing them to focus on the development of ideas and the organization of their thoughts throughout the writing process. In this approach, pre-writing stage is one of the stages when students take their time generating their ideas before drafting. There are a lot of pre-writing strategies, including freewriting, brainstorming, outlines, and mapping. All of those strategies and many others can be used effectively to enhance EFL students' writing skill. EFL students might be aware of the pre-writing strategy, but they do not identify how the strategy can change their writing experience and performance. Pre-writing steps give students more engaging time to generate, organize and expand their ideas for the writing task. According to Zamel (1983) pre-writing activities are valuable as they provide an effective approach to writing tasks, reducing anxiety and helping in the managing linguistic and cognitive complexity. This notion was in line with Oblaquelova's (2024) study which revealed a significant improvement in the writing skills of students who were taught using the process approach. This suggested that the method was effective in enhancing EFL students' abilities to write in English as a foreign language.

Regarding Libyan educational setting, there are many Libyan EFL students who have faced challenges in developing their writing skills. Traditional teaching approaches may not sufficiently have assisted Libyan EFL students to cope with the complexities of writing in English. (Abukhattala, 2016), leading students produce incoherent and poorly-structured written texts, as a result, many Libyan EFL students find writing tasks significantly challenging, which have affected their writing skills in English and general academic performance. Moreover, in the Libyan educational context, students often face challenges due to limited opportunities for English language practice outside the classroom, which can hinder their ability to effectively organize and express their ideas in writing.

Exploring Libyan EFL students' preferences and experiences in pre-writing strategies is essential for improving writing instruction in Libyan teaching context. Researching these preferences might highlight which techniques are most effective in enhancing writing performance and addressing students' specific needs. By gaining insights into students' experiences with pre-writing strategies, educators can adopt their teaching methods to better support the development of writing skills (Al-Homoud & Schmitt, 2009).

Theoretical Framework

There are various theories and approaches explain the relationship between pre-writing strategies and writing performance and proficiency development. Understanding the relevant theories requires examining how each perception contributes to the different aspects related to writing skill in terms of cognitive, social, and self-regulatory processes.

To begin with, both Flower and Hayes (1981) and Sweller (1988), i.e. in the process writing approach and cognitive load theory, respectively, highlight the significance of pre-writing stage as a cognitive strategy to cope with the difficulties of writing skill. This theory explains how such strategies decrease the cognitive load of establishing and generating ideas all together during process of writing. By separating some of the organizational tasks to several simple pre-writing stages, students can preserve working memory resources, allowing for more attention to creating a comprehensible and well-structured text. Similarly, the process writing approach structures writing as a multi-phase cognitive task, where pre-writing stage helps writers break down the writing task into smaller and practicable elements. Therefore, pre-writing strategies can simplify the cognitive demands, making it easier for students to engage in deeper-level thinking during the actual writing stage. Pre-writing stages provide cognitive capability to concentrate more on writing quality and proficiency and improve coherence and content of the written text.

Anderson (1984) proposed schema theory, which aligns with cognitive load theory (Sweller,1988) as it illustrates the benefits of pre-writing activities in reducing cognitive load while writing. Pre-writing activities such as brainstorming or using graphic planners support encouraging these pre-existing knowledge, allowing students to connect new ideas with what they have already known through their previous experiences. According to Sweller's theory (1988), learners organize and generate their thoughts for writing tasks through several schemas, so they can reduce the amount of new information the brain has to process. This results in more developed and generated ideas, better structuring of thoughts, and a more cohesive pieces of composition. Thus, both theories support the idea that pre-writing stages make writing process less cognitive demanding and more efficient. Schema theory describes the role of prior knowledge, while cognitive load theory demonstrates how organizing this knowledge beforehand lessens the cognitive effort required during writing.

Furthermore, both process writing approach (Flower and Hayes, 1981) and writing self-regulation theory (Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997) describe how pre-writing strategies develop monitoring over the writing process itself. In the process

writing approach, pre-writing phase is a planned stage which supports the writers' thinking skills about other aspects of writing such as, their goals, audience, and structure. Likewise, writing self-regulation theory highlights how pre-writing activities assist writers in controlling their progress, setting objectives, and regulating their strategies while they are involved in writing. For instance, while students are outlining the ideas of their writing task, they are engaging in self-guiding practices by locating writing targets and recognizing what to concentrate on. When they start writing, they can refer back to their pre-writing plan. Therefore, they have the ability to focus and make necessary modifications to ensure their writing aligns with their outlines they have already prepared. Pre-writing stage, accordingly, becomes a tool for managing both cognitive strategies (planning, writing, revising, and remembering) and metacognitive strategies (checking, adjusting, organizing, and evaluating) of writing.

While the social dimension to writing process is absent in the previous theories and approaches, Vygotsky's social constructivist theory (1978) argues that learning in a social environment in the pre-writing stage activities, such as, peer brainstorming and group outlining, can be seen as an additionally important aspect for refining and generating good ideas for the writing task. As a result, students are given an opportunity to learn from their peers by engaging in constructive discussion and negotiation on different meanings and how the writing task should be accomplished. Although writing process is often seen as an individual cognitive procedure in the process writing approach, incorporating Vygotsky's theory activates the pre-writing stage by creating social interaction. Collaborative -based pre-writing strategies can generate more various ideas, deeper critical thinking, and more helpful engagement in the writing process. Vygotsky's social perception improves the process writing approach by emphasizing the importance of social collaboration in the pre-writing phase. Group discussions during pre-writing stage provide more collective idea generation to write a better-structured and more thoughtful piece of writing.

Anderson (1984) and Vygotsky (1978) share overlapping perceptions on the process of knowledge construction in their theories. Whereas the focus of schema theory is on how individuals use their prior knowledge to apprehend new information, Vygotsky's theory puts emphasis on the notion that says knowledge construction is also a social process. In any classroom setting, as a socially active environment, pre-writing strategies such as, peer brainstorming and group discussions, stimulate and develop students' schemas. Students can enhance their own thoughts, leading to a deeper understanding of the writing task by discussing different perspectives and ideas from their peers. By adopting the two theories in pre-writing process, a social dimension to schema activation can be added, suggesting that students learn not only from their own previous knowledge but also through shared experiences thoughts, and discussions.

Overall, the significance of pre-writing strategies in writing is emphasized by several theories and approaches which assert how pre-writing stage supports decreasing cognitive strain, motivate prior knowledge, facilitate goal setting, and prompt social interaction, and eventually improve students' writing skills. By expressing, generating and organizing ideas before writing, students are better prepared to accomplish complex tasks, compose well-structured and coherent writing, control their progress, and enhance their thinking through socializing with peers. Together, these theories suggest that pre-writing strategies are effective because they address multiple dimensions of learning which make writing a more efficient, structured, and collaborative process.

Statement of the Problem

Libyan EFL students often face challenges in using effective pre-writing strategies, which may affect their writing performance. The current study investigates this by exploring the following research questions:

1. What pre-writing strategies are most commonly preferred by Libyan EFL university students when preparing for writing tasks?
2. To what extent do pre-writing strategies influence the writing performance of Libyan EFL university students?

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the pre-writing strategies commonly used by EFL Libya students at Misurata University.
2. To determine the students' preferences for different types of pre-writing strategies when preparing for writing tasks.
3. To examine the relationship between the use of pre-writing strategies and the students' writing performance.
4. To explore the extent to which pre-writing strategies contribute to improving the quality and organization of students' written work.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it contributes to a deeper understanding of how pre-writing strategies affect the writing performance and preferences of EFL Libyan students at Misurata university. Writing in a foreign language poses considerable challenges for many learners, and identifying effective strategies at the pre-writing stage can play a vital role in improving their overall writing competence. The findings of this research are expected to provide valuable insights for EFL teachers, curriculum designers, and language educators in Libya and similar contexts. By highlighting the most effective and preferred pre-writing techniques, the study may help teachers design more effective writing activities and training programs that support students' planning, organization, and creativity in writing.

Related Studies

According to several previous research findings, pre-writing strategies are important for developing effective writing skills in English as a Foreign Language. Such strategies provide learners an essential support for organizing and structuring content before engaging in the writing stage. 'The pre-writing stage is perceived as a critical component in organizing ideas before beginning the actual writing process' (Yunus et al., 2018, p. 2218). Researchers from different teaching and learning contexts have examined how pre-writing strategies affect writing improvement. Their studies explore the writing process and examine how these strategies can improve writing skills. Many researchers focus on how techniques such as, mind mapping, outlining, free writing and brainstorming assist students in generating and organizing their ideas, and structuring their writing. The existing research on prewriting strategies is different in terms of several aspects such as, purposes, methodologies, and contexts. For instance, there are several experimental research which often measures the impact of particular pre-writing strategies on writing performance, while qualitative studies usually investigate students' attitudes and opinions regarding the use and effectiveness of prewriting strategies on learners' writing skill. In addition, research varies in terms educational settings which include different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Accordingly, there are varied findings emphasized the significance of integrating these strategies into EFL instructions and support efficiency of prewriting stage across different learning contexts.

Several studies explore various pre-writing strategies and their effect on writing performance in EFL contexts. Several researchers adopted different methodologies used to examine the impact of pre-writing strategies among EFL learners. According to Hung & Van (2018) writing performance tests, questionnaires, and interviews were used to assess learners' preferences and performance, whereas Salija (2017) and Mahnam & Nejadansari (2012) used experimental designs with pre- and post-tests to measure writing performance. Hung & Van (2018) focused on using pictures and *outlining* as pre-writing strategies. They revealed that there was a significant inconsistency in the impact of the two strategies under question. When students used depicting strategy, they could generate more ideas. However, using outlining strategy provided better organization without significant differences in content quality between the two strategies. They concluded that the choice between depicting and outlining depended on the writing skill being targeted. On the other hand, the impact of *outlining* and concept mapping and negotiation strategies were examined by both Salija (2017) and Mahnam & Nejadansari (2012). It was found that outlining considerably enhanced the quality of ideas generated for essay writing. The researcher suggested that there was a strong relationship between outlining strategy and writing performance (Salija, 2017). On the

other hand, Mahnam and Nejadansari (2012) showed that various pre-writing strategies, including outlining and concept mapping, improve the general quality of writing performance among EFL Iranian learners. 'It seems that the use of prewriting strategies in our courses of writing in the university has been rewarding as a means of constructing knowledge and promoting writing' (Mahnam & Nejadansari, 2012, p.158). this study shows similar result of the current study where the improvement of students' writing performance has been raised.

Similarly, there are several studies which compared between two or more different prewriting strategies in their effect on writing performance among EFL learners. By adopting a quasi-experimental design, Hermasari & Mujiyanto (2015) focused on the use of two pre-writing strategies: brainwriting and brainstorming in the online learning context settings. It was found that both strategies significantly improve writing performance. '...both online brainwriting and brainstorming played a significant role in improving English writing skills of the students' (Hermasari & Mujiyanto, 2015, pp. 32-33). In contradictory, Salija's (2017) found that outlining was more effective, particularly in improving idea generating and organizing. These diverse results between the studies highlighted the significance of contextual factors, such as the type of learning setting (traditional versus virtual) and learners' linguistic backgrounds, in determining the preferable and most effective pre-writing strategy.

Furthermore, there are more recent relevant studies examined different aspects and types of prewriting strategies. For instance, Heidari Darani, Morady Moghaddam, and Murray (2023) investigated the influence of small-group student-led discussions as a new pre-writing activity on Iranian EFL students' writing performance and quality. Their study showed that the technique significantly improved several specific components of writing, such as content and vocabulary. They emphasized that 'Discussion as a pre-writing task can help create a positive class environment.... It also requires them to analyze the topic and the sometimes divergent points of view aired by other group members and then to synthesize and present them in a logical, coherent, and persuasive manner' (Heidari Darani, Morady Moghaddam, and Murray, 2023, p.609).

The aforementioned reviewed findings aligned with earlier research, highlighting how collaborative strategies enable students produce high quality essays and improve their writing skill. It was emphasized that adopting a social-constructivist approach in writing classrooms is strongly recommended (Ansarimoghaddam, Tan, & Yong, 2017). Another relevant study by Mahnam and Nejadansari (2012) explored several pre-writing strategies: negotiation, reading relevant texts, outlining and concept mapping. Their findings indicated that pre-writing strategies significantly advanced students' skills in organizing their essays and developing coherent argumentative

essays. Heidari Darani et al. (2023) also stressed that students' interaction encouraged better idea generaing. Therefore, engaging EFL learners in either collaborative or cognitively demanding tasks during the pre-writing phase could significantly enhance writing quality.

Several studies revealed consistent results regarding the significance of pre-writing strategies in the writing process. Pre-writing strategies such as, freewriting, mapping, and outlining, are commonly encouraged to be implemented in EFL classes to facilitate idea generation, organizing thoughts, and improving the overall coherence and structure of writing. Although the benefits of pre-writing strategies are widely recognized, there is a shared concern about students' limited awareness and effective application of these strategies. However, there are several studies emphasized the importance of examining EFL students' attitudes and perceptions towards the prewriting stages.

According to Bommanaboina and Guduru (2021),most undergraduate engineering students encountered difficulties in generating and structuring ideas because they were not introduced to techniques like brainstorming and outlining before starting their academic writing tasks. The researchers emphasized that the students 'lack the awareness of prior knowledge strategies, so they do not seem to use any such strategies... when writing English essays in the pre-writing stage' (Bommanaboina & Guduru, 2021, p.325). Similarly, Suprpto et al. (2022), found that undergraduate students viewed pre-writing and revising stages as the most difficult ones. It was ascertained that 'The most problematic issues in the pre-writing stage were generating ideas and being unconfident with their ideas (Suprpto et al., 2022, p.192). In both studies, learners described several difficulties in the early stages of writing, such as, generating ideas and organizing content. these similar findings indicated that lack of pre-writing strategy awareness is a worldwide concern across different educational contexts. However, Yunus et al. (2018) explored the perceptions of Malaysian students about applying pre-writing strategies in writing classes, a significant number of the participants were unaware of the term and its importance as one of the stages of writing process. This finding is in line with Bommanaboina and Guduru's (2021) result which indicated that students struggled with both idea generation and sentence structure. The findings emphasized the importance of providing explicit instructions to help students recognize the value of these strategies. Therefore, when students were holding a positive perception of the pre-writing strategy, their confidence would be increased in writing out their essays. (Yunus et al., 2018)

Furthermore, Zhang (2021) adopted a timed examination setting to observe Chinese college students' use of prewriting strategies. The study revealed several

differences in prewriting strategies employed by skilled and unskilled writer. This finding is similar to a study by Chien (2017 as cited in Zhang, 2021), who claimed that skilled writers made more efforts on the global organization since they focused more on content and meaning organization. In an earlier study, Servati's (2012) examined how different prewriting strategies supported students' planning and organization in a more flexible classroom setting where writing success is not only an individual cognitive endeavor but also a socially constructed skill. Ahmed, Hasan, and Ameen (2023) explored the use of prewriting strategies among English Department students at Duhok University, in Iraq. Their findings indicated that students rarely use prewriting strategies. Factors such as time constraints and examination strain are identified as key obstacles to consistent use. This finding aligned with Zhang's (2021) study. Both studies emphasized the influence of similar practical challenges that hinder students from fully integrating these techniques into their writing process.

Several research investigated the use and effectiveness of different pre-writing strategies on EFL learners' writing performance, and focused on, for instance, there were several experimental research designs aimed to measure the influence of specific strategies such as, outlining, brainstorming, and mind mapping as prewriting strategies in writing process and performance. Many other existing related studies adopted a qualitative design to explore students' attitudes, perceptions and awareness of prewriting strategies and process. Few studies, however, combined both approaches in a single case study, particularly with a focus on particular teaching context. There have been a limited number of studies which sought to explore pre-writing strategies in Libyan teaching contexts. The purpose of the current study was to examine the effectiveness of two pre-writing strategies used by university Libyan EFL students. Furthermore, the study aimed to identify students' experiences and preferences for these strategies. By adopting a quantitative research design, the study provided a more holistic understanding how these techniques contributed to writing quality in Libyan EFL classes and offered insights into specific preferences of the learners, contributing to a better understanding of pre-writing strategies in the target educational setting.

Methodology

Research Design

The current study inspected the effect of mind mapping and outlines, as pre-writing strategies, on the writing performance of Libyan EFL university students. Moreover, it identified students' preferences about which brainstorming strategy they frequently used and found most effective. A quantitative approach was utilized to analyze the data, which was collected and managed using Microsoft Excel (version

2013). According to Creswell (2007), quantitative data refers to numerical data which are statistically analyzed to identify patterns and trends. The researchers chose this approach to deliver measurable understandings of the effectiveness of the two pre-writing strategies and to identify students' preferences based on quantifiable results. Consequently, the study intended to confirm generalizability of the results, and contribute to a deeper awareness of how these pre-writing strategies might advance writing performance in the target Libyan EFL context. Additionally, statistical analysis allowed for a systematic evaluation of the two strategies, supporting educational recommendations for EFL writing instructions.

Participants

The participants in the study were thirty adult Libyan EFL undergraduate students from the Department of English at the Faculty of Arts, Misurata University, Libya. They were all native Arabic speakers, aged between nineteen and twenty, and were enrolled in the Writing 1 course during the second semester of the 2024-2025 academic year. Writing 1 is a mandatory course that aims at the development of foundational writing skills and process, including the use of pre-writing strategies in classroom composition tasks. By examining both the impact and preferences of target pre-writing strategies, the study intended to provide insights into how pre-writing techniques can enhance writing skills and inform teaching instructions in the Libyan EFL context.

Instruments of the Study

The data of this study was collected by conducting two writing tasks used to fulfill the assessment requirements of the Writing 1 course. The two tasks were conducted in different times during the semester: the first task was part of midterm test, and the second task was completed as part of the final test. This method help the researchers observe the effectiveness of using prewriting strategies during the semester and which pre-writing strategies was mostly used by the target participants.

Data Collection

The two writing tasks were based on familiar topics related to students' learning experiences. The choice of topics aimed at helping students easily find relevant vocabulary and generate ideas necessary for their writing. For both tasks, the participants were required to be engaged in brainstorming sessions before starting their writing. They were given the choice to choose between two pre-writing strategies: mind mapping or outlines. This method helped the researchers identify how brainstorming impacts the writing performance of the students and to identify which strategy the students preferred most, aligning with the study's objectives

Data Analysis

In the current study, the two writing tasks were evaluated and graded out of ten points, based on how well students used pre-writing strategies, grammar accuracy, and the content and idea quality of their writing. Simple statistics were used to analyze the data which were displayed in frequency tables to show how the given scores were spread among the students. Each task was tabularized separately to give a clear indication of the students' performance. The analysis mainly focused on summarizing the students' writing through frequencies and percentages, which offered insights into the effectiveness of the pre-writing strategies used.

Findings

According to Tables 1 and 2, the findings indicate that the use of pre-writing strategies contributed to an overall improvement in the quality of students' writing performance, although noticeable variations were observed among individual results. As shown in Table 1, in Task 1, six students scored 8, two scored 9, and one achieved a perfect score of 10. These findings likely reflect the effectiveness of pre-writing strategies, particularly among high achieving students who demonstrate noticeable improvement across tasks. However, not all participants benefited equally. As shown in Table 1, six students scored between 2 and 3 in Task 1, indicating that some learners continued to struggle with applying pre-writing technique effectively. This variation suggests that while pre-writing strategies can enhance overall performance, their impact may depend on learners' initial proficiency levels and their ability to engage with the strategies during the writing process.

The overall performance of students across the two tasks highlighted variations in writing proficiency, as some students demonstrated considerable improvement while others continued to face challenges. Moreover, the data suggest that students exhibited different preferences for specific pre-writing strategies, indicating that individual learning styles and strategy choices may have influenced their writing outcomes.

Table 1

<i>Task 1 Marks</i>	
Mark	Frequency
2	3
3	3
4	4
5	6
6	2
7	3

8	6
9	2
10	1

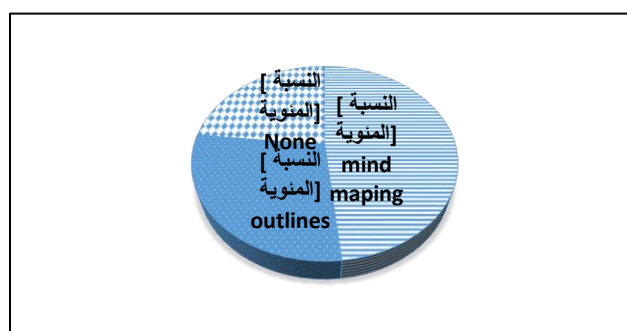
Table 2

<i>Task 2 Marks</i>	
Mark	Frequency
2	1
3	4
4	4
5	3
6	4
7	2
8	8
9	3
10	1

Figure 1 further illustrates the pre-writing strategies most frequently chosen by the students in the two writing tasks. (49%) preferred using mind mapping, while 28% reported using outlines as their main pre-writing strategy. Interestingly, 23% of the students indicated that they did not use any pre-writing strategies. This finding suggests a degree of inconsistency in students' engagement with pre-writing activities, possibly reflecting differences in their motivation, awareness, or perceived effectiveness of these strategies during the writing process. strategy used during the writing process.

Figure 1

Using Mind Mapping and Making a list in two Tasks



Discussion

The current study reveals that pre-writing strategies, such as mind mapping and outlining, can enhance the overall quality, of writing, especially among students who apply these strategies effectively. This finding is consistent with the the results of

Mahnam and Nejadansari (2012), who found that concept mapping and outlining supported both coherence and idea organization in EFL learners' writing. Similarly, Yunus et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of EFL learners practicing pre-writing strategies to effectively generate and organize their ideas. These findings align with numerous studies examining the relationship between writing proficiency and strategy use. For instance, El Madani et al. (2024) reported a positive correlation between students' writing proficiency and their use of pre-writing strategies.

The variation in participants' performance observed in the current study suggests that not all EFL students are equally aware of the importance of using pre-writing strategies. This finding is consistent with Bommanaboina and Guduru's (2021), who reported that students' limited awareness of pre-writing techniques, such as brainstorming, often led to difficulties in generating, organizing and structuring their ideas for their writing tasks. Similarly, EFL learners often encounter difficulties in generating and organizing ideas for their writing tasks (Suprpto et al, 2022). However, when students write on familiar topics, as in the tasks used in the current study, they are able to generate ideas effectively and organize them into coherent structures.

Furthermore, Chien (2017 as cited in Zhang, 2021) highlighted that skillful writers tend to focus on global organization during the planning stage, whereas less skillful writers often neglect the use of pre-writing strategies. Therefore, providing explicit instruction during pre-writing stage is essential. Such instruction can enhance students' awareness of the importance of pre-writing strategies across various EFL learning contexts (Yunus et al., 2018)

Regardless of students' preferences for mind mapping or outlines, the findings suggest that visual and organizational tools can significantly enhance idea generation and content structuring. These results align with Oussou et al.'s (2024), who reported a positive correlation between strategic approaches and writing achievement.

However, participants who did not use any pre-writing strategies highlight a potential gap in training or metacognitive awareness, supporting the findings of El Madani et al. (2024), who emphasized the importance of metacognition strategies in developing writing proficiency. This inconsistency indicates that students' effective use of pre-writing strategies may depend on both their awareness and prior training in these techniques.

Overall this study makes a significant contribution to the existing literature on pre-writing strategies in EFL contexts. While the findings demonstrate the effectiveness of strategies such as mind mapping in enhancing writing skills, they also underscore the need for explicit instruction to ensure that all students can successfully apply these

strategies. Furthermore, future research could investigate the specific factors influencing students' strategy preferences and the obstacles in implementing pre-writing techniques, particularly across diverse educational contexts such as Libya.

Conclusion

The results of this study on Libyan EFL university students highlight that pre-writing strategies can play a significant role in enhancing students' writing performance in the assigned writing tasks. Although a substantial number of students demonstrated improved writing quality thorough the use of pre-writing strategies, particularly mind mapping and outlining, some students found these strategies less helpful. This highlights the importance of providing adequate training to increase students' awareness and familiarity with effectively using pre-writing techniques. Furthermore, students' stronger preferences for mind mapping over outlining suggests that visual tools may be more effective in facilitating the writing process.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that EFL writing instructors integrates a variety of pre-writing strategies to help students generate and organize ideas more effectively during the writing process. Moreover, it is important to organize structured practice and rehearsal sessions to ensure that students of varying proficiency levels are familiar with pre-writing techniques and can apply them effectively.

Finally, it is strongly recommended that further research be conducted to investigate various aspects of pre-writing strategies in EFL classes, including the factors influencing students' preferences for certain strategies, the challenges students encounter when using these techniques, and the effectiveness of pre-writing strategies across different educational contexts in Libya.

Overall, while pre-writing strategies can significantly enhance EFL students' writing skills. Their effectiveness, however, depends on appropriate in structural techniques and consistent practice. Therefore, educators play a crucial role in supporting students to develop their writing performance and achieve academic success.

References

- Abukhattala, I. (2016). The use of technology in language classrooms in Libya. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, 6(4), 262–267. <https://doi.org/10.7763/IJSSH.2016.V6.655>
- Ahmed, S. M. A., Hasan, B. A., & Ameen, S. T. (2023). The importance of prewriting strategies in the students' writing production. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 54, 219–233. <https://doi.org/10.33193/IJoHSS.54.2023.573>
- Al-Homoud, F., & Schmitt, N. (2009). Extensive reading in a challenging environment: A comparison of extensive and intensive reading approaches in Saudi Arabia. *Language Teaching Research*, 13(4), 383–401. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168809341508>
- Anderson, R. C. (1984). Role of the reader's schema in comprehension, learning, and memory. *Lawrence Erlbaum Associates*.
- Ansarimoghaddam, S., Tan, B. H., & Yong, M. F. (2017). Collaboratively composing an argumentative essay: Wiki versus face-to-face interactions. *GEMA Online® Journal of Language Studies*, 17(2), 33–53. <https://doi.org/10.17576/gema-2017-1702-03>
- Bommanaboina, R. D., & Guduru, R. (2021). An appraisal of awareness and perceptions of prior knowledge strategies in pre-writing: A study of undergraduate engineering students. *Language in India*, 21(7), 316–326. <https://www.languageinindia.com>
- Creswell, J., 2007. *Qualitative inquiry and Research Design*. SAGE
- El Madani, E. M., Larouz, M., Fagroud, M., & Saadallah, Z. (2024). The relationship between writing proficiency in English and metacognitive awareness of writing strategies among EFL university students. *Arbitrer: Scientific Journal of Linguistics Society of Indonesia*, 11(3), 373–383. <https://doi.org/10.25077/ar.11.3.373-383.2024>
- Ferris, D. R., & Hedgcock, J. S. (2014). *Teaching L2 composition: Purpose, process, and practice* (3rd ed.). Routledge. https://www.google.com.ly/books/edition/Teaching_L2_Composition/5bmVAAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&printsec=frontcover

-
- Flower, L., & Hayes, J. R. (1981). A cognitive process theory of writing. *College Composition and Communication*, 32(4), 365–387. <https://doi.org/10.2307/356600>
- Heidari Darani, L., Morady Moghaddam, M., & Murray, N. (2023). The effect of student-led small-group discussion as a pre-writing task on the development of EFL students' writing. *Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 32, 605–614. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-022-00680-3>
- Hermasari, D., & Mujiyanto, Y. (2015). The effectiveness of online brainwriting and brainstorming techniques in teaching writing to students with different learning strategies. *English Education Journal*, 5(2), 28–34. <https://journal.unnes.ac.id/sju/index.php/eej>
- Hung, B., & Van, L. (2018). Depicting and outlining as pre-writing strategies: Experimental results and learners' opinions. *International Journal of Instruction*, 11, 451–464. <https://doi.org/10.12973/IJI.2018.11231A>
- Mahnam, L., & Nejadansari, D. (2012). The effects of different pre-writing strategies on Iranian EFL writing achievement. *International Education Studies*, 5(1), 154–160. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v5n1p154>
- Oblaqulova, D. (2024). The process approach to enhance students' writing skill in English classroom. *News of the NUUz*, 1(1.4), 326–329. <https://doi.org/10.69617/uzmu.v1i1.4.2094>
- Oussou, S., Kerouad, S., & Hdii, S. (2024). The Relationship between EFL Students' Use of Writing Strategies and Their Writing Achievement. *Jurnal Arbitrer*, 11(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.25077/ar.11.1.1-12.2024>
- Salija, K. (2017). The effect of using outlines on idea development quality of students' essay writings. *International Journal of Language Education*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.26858/ijole.v1i1.2867>
- Servati, K. (2012). Prewriting strategies and their effect on student writing (Master's thesis). St. John Fisher University. Fisher Digital Publications. https://fisherpub.sjf.edu/education_ETD_masters/242
- Suprpto, M. A., Anditasari, A. W., Sitompul, S. K., & Setyowati, L. (2022). Undergraduate students' perceptions towards the process of writing. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics*, 7(1), 185–195. <https://doi.org/10.21462/jeltl.v7i1.765>
-

-
- Sweller, J. (1988). Cognitive load during problem solving: Effects on learning. *Cognitive Science*, 12(2), 257–285. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15516709cog1202_4
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Yunus, M., Hashim, H., Sulaiman, N., Sulaiman, W., Richmond, R., Jarail, S., & Royal, N. (2018). Students' awareness and perceptions towards “pre-writing stage” as a strategy in writing directed essay. *Creative Education*, 9, 2215–2223. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2018.914162>
- Zamel, V. (1983). The composing process of advanced ESL students: Six case studies. *TESOL Quarterly*, 17(2), 165–187. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3586647>
- Zhang, L. (2021). An analysis of the pre-writing strategies employed by Chinese college students in a timed examination. *Journal of International Education and Practice*, 4(3), 22–27. <https://doi.org/10.30564/jiep.v4i3.3863>
- Zimmerman, B. J., & Risemberg, R. (1997). Becoming a self-regulated writer: A social cognitive perspective. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 22(1), 73-101. <https://doi.org/10.1006/ceps.1997.0919>