

How Chinese Beginning Writers Learn English Writing: A Survey of Writing Strategies

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Doi: 10.5901/jesr.2013.v3n1p9

Abstract

Research on learning strategies is an important means of understanding how learners learn and improving teachers' ability to help students. With a self-made questionnaire, this study carried out an analysis of learning strategies used to learn English writing of Chinese senior middle school students for the purpose of understanding how EFL learners learn English writing in a Chinese context and discovering their weakness in learning English writing. The results show that 1) subjects are medium-frequency strategy users of English writing, 2) the most frequently used strategies are affective strategies, memorization strategies, monitoring strategies and checking strategies, and 3) the least frequently used strategies are reviewing strategies, social strategies and planning strategies. This study suggests that following measures should be taken for the improvement of the teaching of English writing in Chinese senior middle schools: 1) teachers should help students form a correct idea of the nature of writing process, 2) teachers need to cultivate students' positive affect towards English writing and 3) teachers should promote learners' consciousness of using learning strategies.

Key words: *learning strategies; English writing; Chinese senior school learners*

1. Introduction

Research on language learning strategies is an important approach to understanding how learners learn a language and improving instructors' ability to help learners. Since the 1970s, research on L2 learning strategies has seen considerable growth (Cohen, 1998; Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001; Macaro, 2006; Naiman, Frohlich, Stern, & Todesco, 1978; O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanaraes, Kupper, & Russo, 1985; Rubin, 1975; Wenden, 1991; Wenden & Rubin, 1987) and different theories have been put forward (e.g., Cohen, 1998; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Rubin, 1981). However, Hsiao and Oxford (2002) suggested that other perspectives on strategy taxonomy should be taken into consideration, for example, distinction between strategies for language learning and strategies for language use, and attaching importance to language environment. Following this line, this research attempted to examine language strategies for learning writing in the Chinese context which is quite different from the western contexts where traditional L2 learning strategies research occurs.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Research on learning strategies

Wenden (1987) held that learner strategies are "the language learning behaviors learners actually engage in to learn and regulate the learning of a second language... what they know about the strategies they use...what they know about aspects of their language learning other than the strategies they use" (p. 6). Oxford (1990) argued that learning strategies are "specific actions taken by

the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (p. 8). O'Malley & Chamot (1990) viewed learning strategies as "the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information" (p. 1). Cohen (1998) thought that "second language learner strategies encompass both second language learning and second language use strategies" (p. 5). Taken together, they constitute the steps or actions consciously selected by learners either to improve the learning of a second language, the use of it, or both". It is clear that there is no full consensus on what learning strategies are. Ellis (1994) claimed that one of the best ways to define learning strategies is to offer a list of their main characteristics, which are as follows:

- 1) Strategies refer to both general approaches and specific actions or techniques used to learn an L2.
- 2) Strategies are problem-orientated—the learner deploys a strategy to overcome some particular learning problem.
- 3) Learners are generally aware of the strategies they use and can identify what they consist of if they are asked to pay attention to what they are doing /thinking.
- 4) Strategies involve linguistic behaviour (such as requesting the name of an object) and non-linguistic (such as pointing at an object so as to be told its name).
- 5) Linguistic strategies can be performed in the L1 and in the L2.
- 6) Some strategies are behavioural while others are mental. Thus some strategies are directly observable, while others are not.
- 7) In the main, strategies contribute indirectly to learning by providing learners with data about the L2 which they can then process. However, some strategies may also contribute directly (for example, memorization strategies directed at specific lexical items or grammatical rules).
- 8) Strategy use varies considerably as a result of both the kind of task the learner is engaged in and individual learner preferences (p. 532-533).

This research adopts Ellis's approach to defining learning strategies.

For the classification of learning strategies, Oxford (1990), O'Malley & Chamot (1990) and Cohen (1998) provide researchers with useful theoretical framework. Depending on the presence of strategies directly involving the target language or not, Oxford (1990) classified learning strategies into direct strategies and indirect strategies. The former contains memory strategies, cognitive strategies and compensation strategies which operate directly on the language being learned. The latter consists of metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies which support and regulate language learning.

Drawing on information-processing model, O'Malley & Chamot (1990) presented a three-factor strategy system which has the advantage of clearly revealing the hierarchical relationship between strategies. This system is made up of metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies and social/affective strategies. Metacognitive strategies are located at a higher level and manage language learning through planning, monitoring and evaluating. This category fulfils an executive function and is similar to metacognitive strategies proposed by Oxford. Cognitive strategies are "the steps or operations used in problem-solving that require direct analysis, transformation or synthesis of learning materials" (Ellis, 1994, p. 536). This group plays an operative role and roughly corresponds to Oxford's direct strategies. Social/affective strategies are those strategies that enhance language learning by means of interacting with other people or keeping control of one's affect. This set approximately matches affective strategies and social strategies presented by Oxford. It is obvious that there is a large degree of overlap between O'Malley & Chamot's taxonomy and that of Oxford although different criteria and names are used for classification and naming.

In accordance with the purpose of using language strategies, Cohen (1998) divided learning strategies into language learning and language use strategies. The first subset includes strategies for identifying the material for learning, distinguishing it from other material, grouping it for easier learning, having repeated contact with the material and remembering it with efforts. The other subset consists of retrieval strategies, rehearsal strategies, cover strategies and communication strategies.

Hsiao and Oxford (2002) made a comparison of theories of language learning strategies and

proposed other methods for the measurement of learning strategies employed by L2 learners in future research. Two of the methods suggested are that distinction between L2 learning and L2 use strategies should be identified and the importance of language learning setting should be stressed. In this study, these two views are integrated into the theoretical framework of learning strategies.

One point must be made clear that L2 refers to both a second language and a foreign language in this study.

2.2 Research on writing strategies

This research defines writing strategies as those strategies which directly involve the language skill of writing.

In the west, most of the research on writing focuses on the writing process, writing tasks and the similarity and difference between L1 and L2 writing. Flower and Hayes (1981) claimed that writing is a cognitive process consisting of distinctive thinking processes—planning, translating and reviewing which does not occur in a linear way. Horwitz (1986) made an analysis of academic writing tasks at a university level and made recommendations for the EAP classroom teaching. Leki and Carson (1994) examined students' perceptions of the relationship between their writing instruction and their writing tasks in classes across the curriculum. Raimes (1985) studied the composing process of unskilled L2 writers and compared their composing behaviors with those of unskilled L1 writers. Zamel (1983) reported six case studies which dealt with the composing processes of advanced ESL students.

In China, there are a few studies concerning writing strategies. Yang (2002) discussed the differences on the use of writing strategies during the writing process between successful and unsuccessful EFL writers. This study classified writing strategies into pre-drafting strategies, drafting strategies, post-drafting strategies, audience awareness and mother tongue avoidance. Huang and Chen (2006) explored the English writing strategies in out-of-class writing assignments used by university-level EFL learners with almost equal English proficiency. This research was done within O'Malley and Chamot's three-factor model. Xiu and Xiao (2006) examined the relationship between English writing strategies, cognitive process of writing in TEM-8 and achievement (the whole name of TEM-8 is Test for English Majors- Band 8 which is a national English proficiency test). The investigation was carried out in the framework of splitting English writing strategies into learning strategies in writing and process strategies in writing.

From the above statement, we can see that little effort has been devoted to the research on how L2 learners learn to write in English. Although research on the process of composing contributes a lot to the L2 teaching of writing, research on how L2 learners master the skill of English writing will add more information to the whole picture of L2 learners' writing behaviors. Thus this study aims at exploring how L2 learners learn to write English compositions in the framework of learning strategies theory by making a survey of learning strategies used to learn English writing by Chinese students in the academic setting of senior middle school.

Moreover, the above analysis displays that there is variation about the classification of English writing strategies among researchers due to their different research interest. This study deems that English writing is not only a composing process where thoughts are expressed through language but also a language skill that learners of English must work hard to master. Thus research into English writing strategies should be composed of two parts: research on strategies for learning to write in English and research on strategies for using English to write compositions. That is, the writing strategy system adopted by this study is based on the idea of distinguishing between L2 learning and L2 use strategies. This view is in line with that proposed by Cohen (1998) and Hsiao and Oxford (2002).

In this research, writing strategies consist of strategies for learning writing and strategies for composing. The former refers to those strategies deployed in learning how to write English essays and the latter concerns those strategies used in writing process. This paper only focuses on a report of strategies for learning writing. In light of the three-factor strategy system of O'Malley and Chamot,

this study further separates strategies for learning writing into three categories — metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies and social/affective strategies. Metacognitive strategies manage writing learning by means of planning, monitoring and evaluating; cognitive strategies improve writing proficiency through resourcing, memorization, practice, checking and revision; social/affective strategies involve interacting with other people and making control of one's affect.

3. Research design

3.1 Research questions

This study was designed to answer three questions:

- 1) What is the general tendency of learning strategies employed by Chinese beginning learners when learning to write English compositions?
- 2) What are the most frequently used strategies for learning writing deployed by Chinese beginning learners of English?
- 3) What are the least frequently used strategies for learning writing deployed by Chinese beginning learners of English?

Given the following facts, this study did not differentiate between skilled and unskilled writers and accordingly no discussion on the difference between skilled and unskilled writers existed. First, researchers employed different standards for the measurement of skill in writing, for example, language proficiency, writing strategies and behavior, and holistic assessment of written products. Accordingly, there is no consensus on the criterion for the assessment of unskilled writers. In addition, Raimes (1985) found that there is no fixed correspondence between the subjects' language proficiency and writing ability. Thirdly, the subjects in the present study were still at the initial stage of learning to write English compositions and had not grown into mature English writers.

3.2 Subjects

The subjects participating in the study were 390 students with an average age of 17 from three senior middle schools in a city of Shandong province, China. One third of the subjects were learning in grade 1, grade 2 and grade 3 respectively. English is one of the courses for senior middle school students in China and they start to learn English writing from senior middle school.

The reason for choosing Chinese senior middle school students as subjects is that the context in which language learning occurs plays an important role in determining the pattern of learning strategies. In addition, most of the research on learning strategies in China fixes their attention on high proficiency EFL learners. Thus this study selected Chinese beginning writers as subjects.

3.3 Instrument

The research tool for information elicitation in the present study is an English writing strategies questionnaire for senior middle school students. It consists of four parts: personal information, strategies for learning writing, strategies for composing and attitude towards English writing. Here we only fix our attention on strategies for learning writing. The section of strategies for learning writing contains 32 strategy items subsumed under three categories and ten subcategories. The response to each item is designed in the form of 5-point Likert scale with each point standing for the frequency on the use of each strategy. The internal validity for the strategy inventory is .865.

The questionnaire was self-made by the researcher which went through five stages: information collection, drafting, pilot-study, revision and final version. The content of the questionnaire came from three sources: 1) relevant literature (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Xiu & Xiao, 2006), 2) self-statement by freshmen who has just enrolled in the university where the researcher works, 3) researcher's personal experience of learning English writing.

3.4 Data collection and data analysis

This survey employs a cross-sectional method to explore the general pattern of strategies for learning English writing by a group of Chinese senior middle school students from grade one to grade three in the mid-Spring semester of 2010. The investigation was conducted by the researcher with the help of the subjects' course teachers in regular lessons. After the explanation of research purpose and requirement for answering the questionnaire, the subjects showed willingness to be cooperative. Altogether 390 students took part in the investigation and 360 copies of questionnaire were judged as valid.

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 16.0 was used to analyze the data collected from the study. Firstly, the subjects' responses to each item were examined. Then each item was considered within the group of items that addresses a specific category. Finally, the means of all the subjects' responses to each category were tallied. The mean provides information on the average performance of all the subjects' strategies for learning writing and informs the researcher about how subjects as a whole performed.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 The general tendency of strategies for learning writing

The results of statistical analysis are shown in table 1, 2 and 3. As table 1 presents, the mean of the responses to the strategies for learning writing by all the subjects is 2.74. Concerning each subcategory, the means of metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies and social/affective strategies are 2.73, 2.72 and 2.80. For each subcategory, the means of resourcing, memorization, practice, checking, monitoring, evaluation and affective strategies range from 2.5 to 3.4 and the means of revision, planning and social strategies are below 2.5. In terms of individual strategy items, three items are frequently used, nineteen items are sometimes used and ten items are generally not used (see table 2). Regarding the mean of responses to the strategies by each subject, the highest rating is 3.72; 2.8% of the subjects frequently deploy learning strategies, 64.2% sometimes deploy learning strategies and 33% generally do not deploy learning strategies (see table 3). According to the assessment criterion for the use of learning strategies by Oxford (1990), the subjects in this study are medium-frequency strategy users.

Table 1. The Means and Standard Deviation of Strategies for Learning Writing by All the Subjects

Strategies	Mean	Std. deviation
Cognitive strategies	2.7236	.44889
Resourcing	2.8642	.66066
Memorization	3.1369	.69061
Practice	2.6466	.54996
Checking	2.9358	.95990
Revision	2.0346	.76447
Metacognitive strategies	2.7303	.60535
Planning	2.4123	.76787
Monitoring	3.0377	.67565
Evaluation	2.7409	.81126
Social/affective strategies	2.8004	.59133
Social strategies	2.3925	.64389
Affective strategies	3.2084	.80468
Total mean	2.74	

Table 2. Statistical Results of Individual Strategy Item for Learning Writing by all the Subjects

Mean	Frequency	Total of strategy items	Percentage
5.0-4.5	always used	0	0 %
4.4-3.5	frequently used	3	9.4 %
3.4-2.5	sometimes used	19	59 %
2.4-1.5	generally used	10	31 %
<1.4	never used	0	0 %

Table 3. Statistical Results of the Mean of Strategies for Learning Writing by Each Subject

Mean	Frequency	Total of subjects	Percentage
5.0-4.5	always used	0	0 %
4.4-3.5	frequently used	10	2.8 %
3.4-2.5	sometimes used	231	64.2 %
2.4-1.5	generally used	116	32.2 %
<1.4	never used	3	0.8 %

The fact that the frequency on the use of strategies for learning writing is comparatively low can be attributed to such factors as age, classroom input, learn environment and learning task. Senior middle school students are adolescents who are not cognitively mature and short of the knowledge of learning strategies. Secondly, the current model of middle school English teaching in China is teacher-centered which attaches great importance to the explanation of linguistic knowledge and pays little attention to the instruction of learning strategies. Accordingly, students have poor awareness and little opportunity to gain knowledge or train their ability independently. Thirdly, the learning environment of Chinese senior middle school students is almost closed. That is, students live on the campus every week except weekends and learn and rest according to the schedule made by their schools. Students have accustomed to the way of letting others arrange everything for themselves and have no habit of thinking about their study plan by themselves. Fourthly, writing is a difficult learning task which is likely to cause students to have fear of difficulty and avoid making efforts.

4.2 The most frequently used strategies for learning writing

As table1 shows, the most frequently used strategies for learning writing by all the subjects are affective strategies (M=3.21), memorization (M=3.14), monitoring (M=3.04) and checking (M=2.94).

Among all the subcategories, the mean of the subjects' responses to affective strategies is the highest. This means that the subjects tend to use affective strategies the most when learning to write English essays. Affective strategies are those strategies that are conducive to the adjustment and control of one's affect. The frequency of using affective strategies is an indicator of the extent to which importance is attached to affect. The high frequency of affective strategies implies that senior middle school students pay great attention to their affect. This study contends that this phenomenon can be illustrated from two aspects: degree of difficulty of learning tasks and amount of attention to the affective aspects in language learning. Affect plays an important part in language learning and consists of positive emotions and negative emotions. The former may facilitate language learning and the latter can weaken optimal learning potential. In the presence of writing which is a learning task of difficulty, students are apt to have negative emotions like fear and anxiety which hinder language learning and reduce learning capacity. In order to overcome the problems brought by the negative

affective reactions, students employ strategies to adjust themselves to develop more positive emotions. On the other hand, the result implies that affect is the weakest point in or the biggest obstacle to the learning process of English writing. According to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, language acquisition results from the combination of cognitive factors and affective factors. The fact that what learners concerns most in their writing learning is their affect denotes that in comparison with the training of cognitive ability learners' affect is given little attention in the learning process of writing. For this reason learners make frequent use of affective strategies to eliminate negative emotions. Huang and Chen (2006) found that Chinese university students frequently employ affective strategies. It may be inferred that writing is a constant headache to both Chinese university students and senior middle students.

Memorization is another subset of learning strategies often deployed by the subjects. Li (2002) found that Chinese university students frequently employ memorization. It is obvious that memorization is a learning tradition kept by Chinese students at different levels. This is because memorization has always been devoted much attention and seen as a prerequisite for language learning success in China. Besides, this result is in line with the conclusion drawn by western studies. To further understand what is memorized by the subjects, the researcher examined memorization items. It was found that subjects mainly memorize English vocabulary and seldom put well-written sentences and discourse into their memory. The method of learning vocabulary by heart reflects learners' traditional belief that if and only if one can memorize all the English vocabulary, he will learn English writing well. It is true that knowledge of vocabulary is useful to the improvement of language proficiency. But language is multi-faceted, containing levels of word, phrase, sentence, paragraph and discourse. Attention to only aspect of language is not good for writing learning and language learners should know how to use a word in a linguistic context instead of memorizing words isolatedly. In addition, writing is a skill of generating language which can only be developed through regular writing practice on the basis of acquiring a large amount of linguistic input. However, the subjects do not practice English writing regularly as the mean of practice strategies is only 2.65. It may be concluded that in the learning process of writing the subjects emphasize the learning of English vocabulary and ignore the practice of English writing and have an incorrect idea of how to learn writing well.

Monitoring is a third type of learning strategies frequently used by the subjects. Here it refers to those strategies that the subjects use to monitor themselves to complete school assignments or perform self-made study plans. After consulting monitoring items, the researcher learnt that the mean of one strategy item that says "monitoring oneself to complete school assignments" is 4.1 and the means of the other two items that write "examining the implementation of study plan for writing" and "making adjustments to one's study plan for learning English writing according to one's actual learning" are 2.5 and 2.6. Up to now it is not difficult to understand why monitoring is often used. Also, the result means that checking whether one has finished the homework or not is the main way taken by the subjects to monitor their writing learning and they believe that finishing the homework given by their teachers may guarantee their mastery of writing skill without doing anything else. It is obvious that the subjects' awareness of autonomous learning badly needs improving.

Checking is a fourth type of learning strategies frequently employed by the subjects. It refers to the learning behaviors of examining whether there is any mistake after writing an English essay. Huang and Chen (2006) pointed out that Chinese university students often check whether there are mistakes in their essays after the completion of writing tasks. This study holds that why checking is often used by Chinese learners of English at different levels originates from the fact that Chinese students have been required to form the habit of checking ever since the beginning of elementary school education. Checking has become a learning tradition in China. By analyzing the individual checking strategies in detail, the researcher detected that what is checked is limited to grammatical mistakes, spelling mistakes and mistakes of whether initial letters are big letters and little attention is given to cohesion and coherence. "Studies showed that less experienced writers were constantly concerned with grammar and correctness and this distracted them from thinking about clarity of

ideas and organization" (Hedge, 2002, p.306). It is clear that senior middle school students lack the quality of being an experienced writer.

4.3 The least frequently used strategies for learning writing

Results show that the least frequently used strategies for learning writing by all the subjects are revision strategies (M=2.03), social strategies (M=2.39) and planning strategies (M=2.41).

Revision strategies are the least frequently used strategies for learning writing in this survey, whose mean is 2.03 and suggests that this type of strategies is generally not used. In this study, revision strategies contain three items: "after getting marked essays, I sort the mistakes and note them down"; "after getting marked essays, I rewrite according to teacher's comment"; "after getting marked essays, I revise them regularly until I feel satisfied." Huang and Chen (2006) found that English essays written by Chinese university students receive little revision. Yang (2002) also found that Chinese university students hardly make repeated revisions of their essays. It may be assumed that Chinese learners of English generally hold the view that there is no necessity to make revision upon the completion of their essays or they dislike revising their essays over and over again. By comparing the means of revision strategies between the two above-mentioned studies and the present study, the researcher discovered that the mean of university students' responses to revision are higher than that of senior middle school students. That is, comparatively speaking, university students revise a little more often than the subjects of this study and have a better understanding of the importance of revision. But they have not deeply grasped the nature of writing.

This study maintains that the fact that the subjects usually do not make revision stems from two factors: students' incorrect idea of what is writing and the current teaching method of writing. On the one hand, students have not fully understood the nature of writing. They think that writing is linear, not recursive. What they have to do in performing a writing task is to put their prefabricated ideas into words; then the task is over. In fact, "writing is indeed a process of discovering and making meaning. Through the act of writing itself, ideas are explored, clarified, and reformulated and, as this process continues, new ideas suggest themselves and become assimilated into the developing pattern of thought. Understanding that writing may be recursive, non-linear, and convoluted, writers are able to modify or even discard chunks of discourse or original plans as they review their writing, reconsider its function, and distance themselves from it in order to meet their readers' expectations" (Zamel, 1983, p. 166). On the other hand, subjects' low frequency on the use of revision is related with the teaching model of middle school English writing— the product approach. In a writing class guided by the product approach, following things occur: firstly, teachers explain how to write on a certain topic by analyzing a model essay; then, students write by modeling; next, teachers mark students' work and return it without requiring students to hand in the revised work; finally, teachers make a comment on it and explain mistakes. This way of teaching English writing moulds students' belief that the improvement of the quality of students' written products should be undertaken by teachers and teachers' comment signifies the end of a writing activity. Thus students fix their eyes on the teacher's feedback and then put their essays aside when they get the returned work.

Social strategies are another class of strategies for learning writing not often used by the subjects. In this study, social strategies include the learning behavior of "consulting the teacher or classmates about unknown information in writing", "exchanging the writing with classmates for mutual appraising", "discussing how to be a good writer with classmates", and "asking classmates to evaluate one's writing for oneself". The subjects' responses to these items indicate that the first item is sometimes used but the other three items are generally not deployed. That is, cooperative learning is missing in the learning behaviors of the subjects. Huang and Chen (2006) discovered that Chinese university students seldom have a discussion on English writing with their classmates or ask their peers to appraise their essays. It may be hypothesized that Chinese students prefer working independently and are not good at cooperative learning.

Planning strategies are also not regularly used strategies for learning writing. This may be connected with learners' age and learning environment. First, senior middle school students are

young learners of English who have no definite learning objectives and have poor ability of self-management and self-evaluation. Second, "teacher-centered" mode of middle school English teaching is likely to cause students to be over-dependent on their teachers and lack the awareness and ability of independent learning. Third, when teachers explain the mistakes in students' writing work, lexical and grammatical mistakes receive great attention. Of course, correctness in vocabulary and grammar is helpful to the improvement of the quality of written products. But more efforts should be taken in the training of learning ability because the advancement of one's learning ability is the key to the higher-level writing proficiency.

5. Conclusion

By making a survey of strategies for learning writing, the study finds that the senior middle school students investigated here belong to medium-frequency strategy users, most frequently use affective strategies, memorization strategies, monitoring strategies and checking strategies, and least frequently use revision strategies, social strategies and planning strategies. These findings lead to tentative conclusions that the majority of the subjects have a basic understanding about how to learn English writing, but problems exist in the process of learning how to write English essays. Firstly, the subjects have inadequate strategy awareness because the mean of their responses to strategies for learning writing only reaches 2.74. Secondly, the subjects have an incorrect understanding of the nature of writing process because they think that writing is linear and needs no revision. Thirdly, the subjects have no complete knowledge of how to learn English writing, for example, the use of memorization only focuses on memorizing English vocabulary, the use of monitoring mainly involves in monitoring oneself to finish the homework punctually, the use of checking principally concerns the checking of spelling and grammatical mistakes, a small amount of writing practice is performed and little revision or repeated revision occurs.

To solve these problems, this study makes following suggestions for Chinese EFL teaching of writing. In the first place, teachers should cultivate students to develop a correct view of what is writing. Only by fully understanding the nature of writing process will students be able to follow a correct routine to learn English writing. In the second place, teachers should help students to produce and use positive emotions to assist the learning process of writing. The survey displayed that in comparison with the cognitive side of language learning, little attention is devoted to the affective side of language learning. Therefore the study proposes that besides the training of cognitive ability teachers should attach great importance to learners' affect in the teaching of writing. In particular, teachers should try their best to arouse the interest of grade one senior middle school students who are at the very beginning of learning how to write English compositions and develop their positive attitude towards English writing. This will influence the learning outcomes of their future academic careers. In the third place, teachers should help students to strengthen their strategy awareness and improve their learning autonomy. Considering that senior middle school students are young learners and short of the ability to regulate their own learning of writing, this study recommends that strategy instruction should be integrated into regular lessons, especially, the training of revision strategies, checking strategies, and metacognitive strategies; on the other hand, students should be motivated to form the habit of resolving problems independently under the guidance of teachers in and out of class.

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