

## Writing Needs and Strategies of FELDA Primary ESL Pupils

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### Abstract

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Two of the challenges faced by teachers in the primary schools in Malaysia are to improve the English proficiency level and to prepare pupils for the upcoming School Certificate Examination (UPSR). Pupils have been taught certain ways to answer the questions but all efforts prove to no avail as reports came out suggest that pupils' compositions for Paper 2 are weak and they have yet to master the writing skills. The fact that pupils failed to produce a short paragraph of intelligible writing comes by no surprise as pupils are often being spoon-fed with the information they hardly digest on their own. This study investigates the needs and writing strategies among primary FELDA ESL pupils, where the data collected serves as a guide for the development of an English learning module. Sixty two respondents, of eleven and twelve years old took part in this study. Data was collected via a survey and was analyzed statistically. Findings suggest that pupils are interested to learn English, aware of the importance of English and use various writing strategies. The use of writing strategies differ between boys and girls and when an independent sample t-test was run, there is a significant variance between the selection of writing strategies used by girls and boys. In terms of the preferences for an English learning module, pupils preferred the learning module to be in the medium of book, Malay as the language of instruction and writing as the main skill taught.

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**Keywords:** writing, needs, strategies, primary, FELDA, ESL pupils

### 1. Introduction

The Malaysia Ministry of Education (MOE) in its efforts to improve the Malaysian Education Curriculum came up with the "Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025" (MOE, 2012).

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The Blueprint reaffirms the implementation of the New Standard Curriculum in the primary and secondary schools in 2011 which sees additional time allotted for English subject (Darus and Subramaniam, 2009).

Pupils in the Primary Year 5 and Year 6 of 2014 are the last two batches of pupils who are learning English as a second language (ESL) under the old curriculum, and also the last two batches that are going to sit for the School Certificate Examination (UPSR) by the end of Year 6. Among the candidates, English has been one of the killer subjects. The 2004 School Certificate Examination Report on English Language 2 (MOE, 2005) revealed that majority of the candidates have yet to master the writing skills in English. A study conducted by Sia and Chuah (2004) as cited in Samuel and Bakar (2006), reported that pupils' writing skills at the UPSR level in guided composition in vernacular schools are far from satisfactory. This poor performance is primarily due to limited exposure, usage and negative feelings towards English.

Meanwhile, a newspaper report on the achievement of UPSR candidates for English subject in 2011 reveals a slight decline in the number of "A" achieved compared to previous years (Metro, 2011). The short time allotted for English subject under the old curriculum (210 minutes) is argued as one of the factors to low level of competency among Malaysian pupils (Fatt, 2007; Manickam, 2004). Tabitha D. Lim (2013) in her study questioned the eleven years of students studying English in school, yet Nooreiny et al. (2003) and Talif and Edwin (1990) discovered that the level of English proficiency in rural schools is much lower than the level in the urban schools although students went through the same curriculum. In the 2012 UPSR, candidates who scored the highest number of all "A" are all coming from the top three urban primary schools which are SK Setiawangsa (97 pupils), SK Bukit Damansara (93 pupils) and SK Taman Tun Dr Ismail 1 (89 pupils) (Sinar Harian, 2012). There were only a small number of pupils from FELDA primary schools made into the headlines.

FELDA ESL primary pupils are rural pupils who are often struggling in English subject. FELDA which stands for the Federal Land Development Authority was meant to be an organized, modern agricultural society (Nik A. Hisham et al., 2010). However, the fall in the price of FELDA products in addition to inflation and world economic downturn, FELDA settlers ended up being in poverty. It has major impact on the lives of FELDA's children. As parents focusing on making an end meet by taking more jobs, children's welfares are often being neglected.

As claimed by Mustapha (1998), a great number of Malaysian students are actually passive learners. They rely heavily on rote learning which is promoted under the old curriculum. Students in FELDA schools have been experiencing the same kind of learning practice. With the lack of facilities and unsupportive environment in the rural area, pupils are becoming increasingly dependent on their teachers. Language learning strategies (LLS) has been one of the options to overcome this situation. A study by O' Malley and Chamot (1990) suggests that effective language learners are aware of the strategies they use and why they use them but there is a need for a language learning module to guide pupils on these strategies.

At the moment, there is no available and reliable module for LLS developed to support the specific needs of FELDA primary school pupils. Besides, there is an absence study on LLS used by primary school pupils in Malaysia especially in FELDA area. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gaps by looking into the primary objectives as listed below:

1. to identify whether FELDA primary school pupils are interested to learn English,
2. to investigate whether FELDA school pupils are aware of the importance of English,
2. to find out the needs of FELDA primary school pupils in terms of the language, medium and skills preferred for the development of an English learning module
4. to discover the writing strategies used by FELDA primary school pupils in general
5. to identify the writing strategies used by FELDA primary school pupils based on gender

## **2. Literature Review**

Countless researches have been carried out on the attitude and motivation towards learning English as a second language. Such studies found that students in rural areas generally like and are interested to learn English (Siti Sukainah and Melor, 2014; Melor and Nur Rashidah, 2011). Several studies on the realization of the importance of English among learners were also carried out and findings suggest that students are well aware of the importance of English (Thang et al., 2011) but they tend to labor minimal efforts into improving their English proficiency (Siti Sukainah and Melor, 2014, Melor and Nur Rashidah, 2011).

The awareness of the importance of mastering English for future benefits (Liu, 2007) has produced a large number of studies which identify Malaysians students as being extrinsically motivated to learn English (Siti Sukainah and Melor, 2014; Ainol Madziah and Isarji, 2009; Samsiah et al., 2009).

The acquisitions of English as a second language in Malaysian context is progressing at a snail speed despite numerous efforts have been put in promoting the use of English. Literacy skills are essential for the development of the second language learning among students. A study carried out by Jenkins, Stein and Anderson (1985) as cited in Agustin (2010) revealed that English vocabulary is learned receptively through reading or listening and it is often produced in the form of writing. Numerous studies on the effects of reading on writing also highlight the relevance of reading in the development of writing skills (Agustin, 2007) and that extensive and pleasure reading has a relevant impact on second language writing abilities (Krashen, 1993). Kuppusamy (1998) agrees with Krashen as his research into writing has shown that reading and writing proficiency can improve the writing proficiency.

Despite these findings, literacy statistic in Malaysia shows that only 3% of Malaysian readers read books (The Star, 2009) and almost 50% of children ages 10-14 years old are not interested in reading (Najeemah, 2010). Poor reading habits would result in anxiety and fear towards learning English as discovered by Rahil et al. (1994) in their study where Malay students tend to be more anxious to learn English compared to other races (Indian, Chinese and others). As a result, the teaching of English has to be done in mother tongue. Krashen (2004) proposed that many skills acquired in the first language can be transferred to the second language.

Akinbote (2001) and Ogunsanwo (2003) in particular supported the use of first language in learning English, as it helps to develop the lexical aspect of the second language.

Teaching ESL learners to acquire writing skills is by no means easy (Fatt, 2007). The number of LLS used is what differentiates a more successful language learner apart from a less successful language learner (Mohamed Amin, 2000). LLS expert such as Mohamed Amin (2000) has defined LLS as attempt or plans to acquire a second language knowledge.

One of the strategies that is often employed by unskilled ESL learners is writing a draft for the composition (Raimes, 1985) as weaker learners tend to pay more attention on the organization of the ideas and spelling.

LLS can be divided into Meta-cognitive, Cognitive and Social/Affective Strategies as (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990). Meta-cognitive strategies are defined as strategies that involve thinking about the process of learning through self evaluation (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990). Cognitive strategies, on the other hand, are strategies that reflect "mental manipulation of tasks" whereas social/affective strategies involve "mental control over personal effects that interferes with learning" (O'Malley and Chamot, p.4). Studies have found that gender plays a role in the learner's choice of LLS (Oxford and Nyikos, 1989), and males and females used different LLS (Green and Oxford, 1995). The success of learners in learning a second language, is also influenced by the cultural expectations and their behaviour in school (Eliot, 2012). Studies on LLS among Malaysian students revealed that students employed various LLS (Rajamoney, 2008) and a study carried out by Norhiza and Nurul Liyana (2010) found that the most frequently used LLS are those of metacognitive strategies followed by cognitive, social and compensation strategies.

As for the development of a language learning module, Oxford (1990) claimed that a good learning-to-learn module should take into consideration the affective domains of the students. According to Mackay and Mountford (1978), the first step in designing and planning of a course is to identify the needs of the learners. In an attempt to develop a learning module for the students, such information is essential as it helps in identifying learners' specific needs. Therefore, a need analysis serves as an important point for planning a language module (Kuppusamy 1998).

### **3. Methodology**

Instrument adapted from Cohen, Oxford and Chi's (2005) "Language Strategy Use Inventory" was developed for this study and was named as "Writing Strategy Use Survey" (WSUS). Only the writing skill from the inventory was included and many items in the WSUS have been adapted from the literature on LLS. Because of these many changes, the researcher believes that the instrument deserves to have its own name. The learners would report their use of writing strategies by choosing the suitable category. The categories are:

- 1= I often use this strategy  
 2= I seldom use this strategy  
 3= I have never use this strategy but I am interested

A simple need analysis questions accompanied the WSUS to reveal the students' interest in English, opinion on the importance of English, and their preferences for the module. Data collected from the surveys was analyzed statistically and an independent sample t-test was run. A pilot study was carried out to measure the reliability of the instrument. Cronbach's Alpha for 27 items in the WSUS shows a value of .734 which suggests that the items are reliable to be used with the samples.

The sample chosen were from upper primary pupils (Year 5 and Year 6, ages 11 and 12 year old). The selection of 62 pupils (59 Malays and 3 Indians) is made based on purposive sampling. They had just completed their first monthly test. Hence, they are in the best position to comment on their needs of writing skills. Thirty (30) boys and thirty two (32) girls were briefed on the questions in the computer laboratory and they spent an hour answering the survey questions.

#### 4. Findings and Discussion

##### 4.1 FELDA Primary Pupils' General Interest towards English and Activities Related to English

This section presents pupils' general interest towards English and activities that are related to English.

Table 4.1.1 shows that 52% of the respondents were interested to learn English, 44% of the respondents were less interested and 5% of the respondents were not interested to learn English at all.

**Table 4.1.1 Students' Interest to learn English**

Item	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Q5 Are you interested to learn English at school?	Interested	32	51.6
	Less interested	27	43.5
	Not interested	3	4.8
	Total	62	100

Based on the table above, it is found that most of the FELDA pupils are interested to learn English which is consistent with findings of Siti Sukainah and Melor (2014), Melor and Nur Rashidah (2011) despite being in the rural area. Pupils' interests towards English are also measured through activities related to English. Table 4.1.2 reveals that less than half respondents were interested to read English books (42%), only 23% interested to attend English course/camp and 26% of the pupils interested to take part in English competition.

**Table 4.1.2 Pupils' Interest in Activities Related to English**

Item	Response	Frequency	Percentage	
Q13 Are you interested to	read English books	Yes	26	41.9
		No	36	58.1
	attend English courses/camp	Yes	14	22.6
		No	48	77.4
	take part in English competition	Yes	17	27.4
		No	45	72.6

Findings from the past few years have shown that students in general are lacking in efforts to improve their English proficiency (Siti Sukainah and Melor, 2014, Melor and Nur Rashidah, 2011) Finding in this study also yield similar result as FELDA primary school pupils show less interest to read English books and involve in English activities.

This finding also supports Najeemah's (2010) claim that almost 50% of children ages 10-14 years old are not interested in reading. Minimal efforts among rural school pupils as suggested by Noraini (1999) would explain the higher failure rate among pupils in the rural schools.

#### 4.2 The Importance of English as Perceived by FELDA Primary School Pupils

Table 4.2.1 presents the findings on the importance of being proficient in the language as viewed by the pupils. From the table, it can be seen that majority of the respondents (79%) agreed that English proficiency is important for them while a few other pupils (21%) stated that it is not important.

**Table 4.2.1 The Importance of English to the Pupils**

Item		Frequency	Percentage
Q8 Being proficient in English is _____ to me.	Extremely important	24	38.7
	Important	25	40.3
	Not very important	12	19.4
	Not important at all	1	1.6

From the table, it is clearly seen that FELDA primary pupils are aware of the importance of English. This finding is also similar with the findings of Ainol Madziah & Isarji, 2009; Samsiah, Kamaruzaman, Nurazila, Musdiana & Taniza, 2009) as students are aware of the importance of English for future benefits.

FELDA pupils were also asked to determine if writing skill is important. Table 4.2.2 shows that 90% of the respondents agreed that learning to write in English is important for the current use while 95% of the respondents agreed that it is also important for future use.

**Table 4.2.2 Pupils' Opinion on the Importance of Writing Skills for Current and Future Use**

Item		Response	Frequency	Percentage
Q12 In your opinion, does learning to write in English important for current and future use?	Important for current use	Yes	56	90.3
		No	6	9.7
	Important for future use	Yes	59	95.2
		No	3	4.8

Table 4.2.3 explains the possible reasons why writing skill is important. From the table, 53% of the respondents agreed that writing skill is important to succeed in the subject, followed by 38% of respondents who agreed that it is important for the sake of passing the examinations. Only 8% of the respondents stated that English writing skill is important for everyday usage.



**Table 4.2.3 Pupils' Perception of the Importance of Writing Skill**

Item		Frequency	Percentage
Q11 English writing skill is important to _____.	succeed in the subject	33	53.2
	pass the examinations	24	38.7
	for everyday use	5	8.1
	Total	62	100

Pupils' responses reveal that they are extrinsically motivated as they want to succeed in the subject and pass the examination. This finding supports the findings of other researchers that students are generally extrinsically motivated than intrinsically motivated when it comes to learning a second language (Siti Sukainah and Melor, 2014; Ainol Madziah and Isarji, 2009; Samsiah et al., 2009)

#### 4.3 The needs of the FELDA primary school pupils (language, medium, and skills) for the development of an English learning module

This section presents the findings on the medium, language and skills preferred by the FELDA primary school pupils for the development of an English learning module. They were asked to determine the language, medium and skills they wish to learn if an English learning module is to be developed for them. In terms of language, Table 4.3.1 reveals that most of the pupils wish the module to be in their mother tongue (60%), while only 40% of the pupils preferred it to be in the target language.

**Table 4.3.1 Language Preferred for the Module**

Item		Frequency	Percentage
Q10a What is the language preferred for the module?	Malay	37	59.7
	English	25	40.3
	Total	62	100

The finding shows that FELDA primary school pupils are more confident to learn English in their mother tongue. As supported by Akinbote (2001) and Ogunsanwo (2003), the use of mother tongue in the process of teaching and learning

in the early years helps, and research also shows that many skills acquired in the first language can be transferred to the second language (Krashen, 2004).

Pupils' choice of their mother tongue suggests that they are anxious to learn English as supported by Rahil et al. (1994) that the Malay students are more anxious to learn English compared to other races.

FELDA primary pupils were also asked to determine the medium for the English learning module. Table 4.3.2 shows that pupils favored book (65%) over courseware (15%) and internet version (21%).

**Table 4.3.2 Medium Preferred for the Module**

Item		Frequency	Percentage
Q10b What is the medium preferred for the module?	Book	40	64.5
	Courseware	9	14.5
	Internet (online)	13	21.0
	Total	62	100

Printed books have many advantages for these pupils. Research shows that children's recall levels are significantly higher with printed books than other materials. Dillon (1992) in his review claimed that it happens because books possess an intimacy of interaction that can never be obtained in other medium.

Besides that, technology is a luxury in this area as a result of poverty (Nik A. Hisham et al., 2010) and because of this, not many FELDA primary school pupils are computer literate. The selection of book seems to be the only choice for most of the FELDA primary pupils.

For the development of English module, pupils were asked to choose the skills they preferred. Six items were presented to them and Table 4.3.3 reveals only four major skills selected by the pupils. Most of the pupils chose writing skill (52%), followed by vocabulary (21%), grammar (14%) and reading (13%).

**Table 4.3.3 Skills Preferred for the Module**

Item		Frequency	Percentage
Q10c What is the skill most preferred for the module?	Writing	32	51.6
	Reading	8	12.9
	Vocabulary	13	21.0
	Grammar	9	14.5
	Total	62	100

FELDA primary pupils' selection of writing skill reflects their awareness of the importance of writing skill for the examination. It also implies that writing is the most difficult task to deal with. Kupusamy (1998) in his study also found that respondents chose writing skill as the top skill that needed to be mastered. Pupils' preference towards writing skill is also evident in Mohd Zaki's (2011) study and it may suggest the importance for them to master this skill.

#### 4.4 Writing strategies used by FELDA primary school pupils

This section presents the language learning strategies used by the pupils in the primary school. The findings of this section are divided into three subsections. In each subsection, only ten items were selected for the comparison purpose.

##### 4.4.1 Writing strategies used by FELDA primary school pupils in general

Table 4.4.1 presents the LLS used in general among boys and girls.

From the table, it could be seen that "Write a draft" ( $M=2.3$ ,  $SD=.68$ ) is a strategy employed by most of the pupils in the primary school. This is followed by the "Use of different structure of writing" ( $M=2.3$ ,  $SD=.72$ ), "Plan different styles of Writing" ( $M=2.2$ ,  $SD=.72$ ), "Improve on writing after getting feedbacks from the teacher" ( $M=2.2$ ,  $SD=.72$ ), "Write letter/email to others in English" ( $M=2.2$ ,  $SD=.82$ ), "Brainstorm ideas about what to write" ( $M=2.2$ ,  $SD=.71$ ), "Find a different way to express an idea when I don't know the correct word" ( $M=2.2$ ,  $SD=.75$ ), "Write a rough outline" ( $M=2.1$ ,  $SD=.89$ ), "Make use of a model essay as a reference while writing" ( $M=2.1$ ,  $SD=.84$ ), and "Use main idea and expand the sentence by adding supporting details to improve the writing" ( $M=2.1$ ,  $SD=.77$ ).

**Table 4.4.1 Writing Strategies Mostly Used by Pupils in FELDA Primary School in General**

No	Item	Category	Mean	Sd.
C8	Write a draft	Cognitive	2.3	.68
C2	Use different structure of writing	Cognitive	2.3	.72
M9	Plan different styles of writing (descriptive, narrative etc.)	Meta-cognitive	2.2	.72
M4	Improve on writing after getting feedbacks from the teacher	Meta-cognitive	2.2	.76
S7	Write letter/email to others in English	Social	2.2	.82
M7	Brainstorm ideas about what to write	Meta-cognitive	2.2	.71
C5	Find a different way to express an idea when I don't know the correct word	Cognitive	2.2	.75
M8	Write a rough outline	Meta-cognitive	2.1	.89
S4	Make use of a model essay as a reference while writing	Social	2.1	.84
C3	Use main idea and expand the sentence by adding supporting details to improve the writing	Cognitive	2.1	.77

Table 4.4.1 revealed that in general, FELDA primary school pupils use various LLS strategies for the writing skill. The similar finding was also found in Shirley's (2008) study among the secondary school students. It is observed that FELDA primary school pupils used both Cognitive strategies (4 items) and Meta-cognitive strategies (4 items) more often compare to Social strategies (2 items). This finding is consistent with the findings of Norhiza and Nurul Liyana (2010) who also found that the most frequently used LLS are those of meta-cognitive strategies followed by cognitive, and social strategies.

Writing a draft is a strategy mostly used in general for English Language 2 as the paper measures pupils' ability to construct simple and compound language and assess their understanding of English Language (MOE, 2008).

Draft writing is a strategy mostly employed by unskilled ESL learners as proposed by Raimes (1985). Writing a draft does not only help to record the idea, but it helps FELDA primary school pupils to create and form ideas too. Pupils in the FELDA primary school also utilize different structure of writing as emphasize in the English UPSR papers (MOE, 2008).

#### 4.4.2 Writing strategies mostly used by FELDA primary boys

Table 4.4.2 presents the findings on LLS used mostly by boys. From the table, it could be seen that boys mostly use LLS such as "Write letter/email to others in English" (M=2.7, SD=.73), "Improve on writing after getting feedbacks from the teacher" (M=2.4, SD=.77), "Find a different way to express an idea when I don't know the correct word" (M=2.4, SD=.72), "Try writing different kinds of text in English (SMS, chatting, diary)" (M=2.3, SD=.76), "Write a draft" (M=2.3, SD=.66), "Brainstorm ideas about what to write" (M=2.3, SD=.70), "Plan different style of writing (descriptive, narrative etc.)" (M=2.2, SD=.86), "Use different structure of writing" (M=2.2, SD=.78), "Write a rough outline" (M=2.2, SD=.86), and "Make use of a model essay as a reference while writing" (M=2.2, SD=.85).

**Table 4.4.2 Writing Strategies Mostly Used by FELDA Primary Boys**

No	Item	Category	Mean	Sd.
S7	Write letter/email to others in English	Social	2.7	.73
M4	Improve on writing after getting feedbacks from the teacher	Metacognitive	2.4	.77
C5	Find a different way to express an idea when I don't know the correct word	Cognitive	2.4	.72
S3	Try writing different kinds of text in English (SMS, chatting, diary)	Social	2.3	.76
C8	Write a draft	Cognitive	2.3	.66
M7	Brainstorm ideas about what to write	Metacognitive	2.3	.70
M9	Plan different style of writing (descriptive, narrative etc.)	Metacognitive	2.2	.86
C2	Use different structure of writing	Cognitive	2.2	.78
M8	Write a rough outline	Metacognitive	2.2	.86
S4	Make use of a model essay as a reference while writing	Social	2.2	.85

From the table, it is observed that boys used most of the Meta-cognitive strategies (4 items), followed by Cognitive strategies (3 items) and Social strategies (3 items). This finding once again confirms the findings of Norhiza and Nurul Liyana (2010) who also found that the most frequently used LLS are those of meta-cognitive strategies followed by cognitive and social strategies.

It is revealed that FELDA primary school boys often write a letter or email to their friends in English to enhance their self-esteem. They also take teachers' feedbacks on their writing seriously and use them to improve their writing while in the class. As proposed by Eliot (2010), cultural expectations shape and encourage certain behaviors in boys such as competition and taking chances. Competition against the pupils in the same class would explain why FELDA primary boys are challenged and motivated to perform better.

#### 4.4.3 Writing strategies mostly used by FELDA primary girls

Table 4.4.3 presents the findings on LLS used mostly by girls. It could be observed that girls favor the "Use different structure of writing" (M=2.3, SD=.65) realizing that it is the most needed skill in their UPSR paper. This is followed by LLS such as "Write a draft" (M=2.3, SD=.70), "Plan different style of writing (descriptive, narrative etc.)" (M=2.2, SD=.56), "Brainstorm ideas about what to write" (M=2.1, SD=.72), "Use main idea and expand the sentence by adding supporting details to improve the writing" (M=2.1, SD=.75), "I ask myself if the writing is good" (M=2.1, SD=.65), "Improve on writing after getting feedbacks from the teacher" (M=2.1, SD=.75), "Make use of a model essay as a reference while writing" (M=2.0, SD=.84), "Find a different way to express an idea when I don't know the correct word" (M=2.0, SD=.75) and "Write a rough outline" (M=2.0, SD=.91).

**Table 4.4.3 Writing Strategies Mostly used by FELDA Primary Girls**

No	Item	Category	Mean	Sd.
C2	Use different structure of writing	Cognitive	2.3	.65
C8	Write a draft	Cognitive	2.3	.70
M9	Plan different style of writing (descriptive, narrative etc.)	Metacognitive	2.2	.56
M	Brainstorm ideas about what to write	Metacognitive	2.1	.72
C3	Use main idea and expand the sentence by adding supporting details to improve the writing	Cognitive	2.1	.75
M3	I ask myself if the writing is good	Metacognitive	2.1	.65
M4	Improve on writing after getting feedbacks from the teacher	Metacognitive	2.1	.75
S4	Make use of a model essay as a reference while writing	Social	2.0	.84
C5	Find a different way to express an idea when I don't know the correct word	Cognitive	2.0	.75
M8	Write a rough outline	Metacognitive	2.0	.91

Based on the table above, it is also observed that girls used more Meta-cognitive strategies (5 items) compare to Cognitive strategies (4 items) and Social strategies (1 item). Both findings are contradict to the findings of Aslant (2009) where in his study it was found that females used more cognitive strategies than males. Girls' behavior as according Weeks (2013) helps explain why they do better in school.

#### 4.5 Significant differences between the strategies used by FELDA primary boys and girls

Previous findings reveal that boys and girls use different language learning strategies when it comes to writing tasks. An independent sample t-test was employed in this study to determine whether gender influence the writing strategies used by boys and girls.

**Table 4.5 Independent Sample T-Test for Writing Strategies between Boys and Girl**

Scale	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev	t-Value	Sig.
Total writing strategies	Boys	30	57.06	7.51	2.670	.010
	Girls	32	52.28	6.59		

An independent-sample t-test was conducted to compare the writing strategies scores for FELDA primary boys and girls. Based on the Table 4.5, there was a significant difference in the scores of writing strategies for boys ( $M=57.06$ ,  $SD= 7.51$ ) and girls ( $M= 52.28$ ,  $SD=6.59$ ); ( $t= 2.6$ ,  $p=.010$ ). The magnitude of the differences in the means was large ( $\eta^2= 0.1061$ ) which suggest that 10 per cent of the variance in writing strategies used among FELDA primary school pupils is explained by gender.

Research on LLS has pointed to a significant association at a general level between learners' gender and their choice of LLS. A study carried out by Oxford and Nyikos (1989) in the United States found that gender plays a major role on the usage of LLS among students. Similarly, a study by Green and Oxford (1995) in University of Puerto Rico found that male and female students use different LLS, with females used more cognitive strategy, meta-cognitive strategy and social strategy compare to males.

Therefore, the significant difference in the writing strategies used among the FELDA primary school pupils' suggest that gender plays a role in the LLS used among learners.

## **5. Implications and Recommendations**

Researchers propose that the most successful language learners tend to use learning strategies that are appropriate to the nature of the task, needs, motivation and stage of learning. However, if learners do not understand what they are doing at the moment, it would be difficult to improve on the process that they are engaged. Learners as young as the FELDA primary school pupils need to go through meta-cognitive thinking process in order to improve their cognitive performances.

Writing for many is the most difficult tasks which require a lot of practices. Successful writers are often said to be regular readers. Therefore, school activities that inculcate reading habits at such an early age should be running continuously in action as reading proficiency improves writing proficiency. In terms of writing strategies used by the pupils in the FELDA primary school, FELDA primary pupils should be made aware of the various strategies they could employ for different writing tasks. It is in the hands of the teachers to explicitly teach these skills to the pupils so that they could become independent learners and could decide which strategies are best for themselves and the tasks they need to deal with.

As for future study, researchers should consider looking into other language learning strategies used by the primary school pupils such as reading, listening, speaking, vocabulary and grammar. Researchers might also want to consider testing other factors that could explain the variance in the writing strategies used among boys and girls such as motivation and attitude. Findings and discussions presented in this study are rather suggestive than conclusive as the sample size used in this study is small. Therefore findings do not represent all language learners. Researchers should also consider having a large sample of study so as the study produces results from different perspectives.



## 6. Conclusion

This study examined the writing needs and strategies used by the primary FELDA ESL learners. The data suggested that pupils in the FELDA primary school, despite being young learners are well aware of the writing strategies they used in the writing tasks, especially during the examinations. They used various writing strategies and the selections of writing strategy used differ between boys and girls.

Having made aware of the various writing strategies that they could choose from, it is hoped that pupils in the FELDA primary school would utilize them to maximize their potentials and improve their writing skill. Besides, the information collected from the need analysis survey is essential in the planning and developing processes of the English learning module so that it would be tailored to their requirements.

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