# SELF-REGULATION: A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO DEVELOPING ESSAY WRITING AT SECONDARYLEVEL

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## Abstract

*Autonomy, critical thinking, flexibility and problem solving are key skills for successful communication in today's dynamic globalized knowledge economy. As English is the de facto lingua franca of the international community and the knowledge economy, there is a strong need for Pakistani English as second language (ESL) learners to develop these skills alongside proficiency in the English language. In this context, Self-Regulated Language Learning (SRLL) Strategies are vital for developing the metacognitive abilities and creativity of the learners. The current study investigated the impact of SRLL strategy training on the learners' second language writing task performance and perception of their writing proficiency. The sample comprise 50 students enrolled at a private English mediumsecondary school in Rawalpindi. The study drew upon Oxford's 2011 S2R framework(Strategic Self-Regulated Language Learning Strategies) to train the students to make strategic use ofSRLLs.The study found considerable improvement in learners' writing task performance. Through strategy training, they became more autonomous and flexible in completingset writing tasks and experienced greater motivation towards their second language writing tasks. The findings of the study are of use to L2 learners as well as for teachers in developing greater self-regulation in ESL learning.*

### Background

The demands ofa global knowledge-based economy have created a need for a skilled workforce.Inline with this, countries across the world are focusing on developing a workforce committed to lifelong learning and skill development (Maric, Barisic & Jurjevic, 2012). The innovativeness and creativity of the workforce in producing ideas as well as solutions to emergent problems depends on thinking and thinking about thinking skills as well as emotional and social skills (Berger & Frey,2015) self-regulation ofgoal establishment, performance monitoring, and task-efficiency evaluation (OECD,2018). They also develop their abilities to think critically, rationalize, analyze, infer and evaluate (Facione,1995).

The contemporary educational institutions haveto develop learners' flexibility so that they are well-equipped to respond to the dynamics of a labour market in continuous flux. It is important for the contemporary learners to be independent in knowing what and when they should learn (Grebow & Gill, 2017) which calls for the development of a repertoire of skills such asan inclination towards experimentation, critical thinking and curiosity (Hagel & Brown, 2017).

### Imperatives of the knowledge economy and ESL proficiency

As a global lingua franca utilized by 1.75 billion people across the world, the English language is a vital tool forinternational communication(British Council, 2013) within the international knowledge economy. In Pakistan, Englishserves as the'de facto language of science and commerce' which is central for fostering information exchange within the business world as well as accelerating collaboration and innovation (EPI, 2014). Moreover, a strong correlation between macro-economic development and English language skill has been reported in existing research (Deveci, 2015). In a 2012 survey by Economist Intelligence, 70 % of the surveyed executives flagged the need for their workforce to master English to materialize business expansion, and 25 % of the respondents noted that more than 50 percent of their employees would need English proficiency (British Council, 2013). McCormick (2017) highlights in the World Economic Forum that English language skills leads to increases in national income. In the 60 surveyed countries, English proficiency was directly linked to per capita income increases, with recruiters and HR personnelrevealingthat applicants with advanced English proficiency earned 30-50% percent higher salariesthan competitors (McCormick, 2017). Warschauer (2000) has pointed out that English is used by non-naïve communicators in their workplaces for a variety of purposes. In this regard, promoting ELT leads to economic stability (Ghoneim & Elghotmy,2016; Deveci, 2015).

**Writing challenges in the Pakistani ESL classroom**

English is the language of global communication (Lazaro & Medalla, 2004) which can also widen ESL and EFL learners' access to employment opportunities, and catalyze the social mobility (Lee, 2012). Pakistan is a developing country seeking economic growth and development. In the Pakistani context, English serves as a second language for use in official circles an educational setting, wherein it is taughtcompulsorily from class one onwards.However, despite studying English for years, ESL learners in Pakistan tend to have limited proficiency and weak L2 writing skill in particular.

Writing is a complex cognitive skill (Mercer& Mercer,2004) which requires critical thinking and a holistic compositional process. However, in Pakistan, due to the prevalence of a Grammar-Translation (GTM) based traditional pedagogy,ESL writers tend to focus on reproducing memorized content, rather than adopting a process of planning, writing, and reviewing which would allow them to avoidprevalent issues of poor cohesion, syntactic coherence and inadequate use of punctuation and lexis (Bilal, Tariq, Latif & Anjum, 2013; Aqeel & Sajid, 2014; Jat & Shah, 2019).

The majority of ESL teachers in Pakistan lack professional training and tend to rely uponfollowingteaching methodologies based on rote learning and knowledge reproduction but not knowledge transformation. Jat(2019) observes that the teachers' conventional approaches fail to develop the ESL writers' L2 writing proficiency. In this context, L2 writers also struggle to form 'abstractions or conceptions' to perform well in a given task in a specific situation(Haider, 2012).Furthermore, the Pakistani examination system encourages rote learning as it assesses only specific topics and forms of writings in the exams. Therefore, students tend to focus on cramming the 'exam-specific content' '(Fareed, Ashraf & Bilal, 2016) and write them in the papers to get good marks. Such assessment prevents the students from developing critical thinking and awareness of the complex process of composition. Haider (2012) notes that in Pakistan, knowledge is considered as static and 'out there which can be learned through a behaviouristic model of learning that emphasises imitation and repetïtion but not reflection or critical thinking.

The lack of topic-specific know is another problem faced by ESL writers. The reading of authentic English texts is observed to provide ESL writers with awareness of coherence, organization, style, range of vocabulary, grammatical structures and punctuation and to

improve their general knowledge  (Zheng, 1999). Previous knowledge has been found to improve the comprehension and composition of student writers (Hinkel, 2004). As Pakistani students are not extensive readers,they lack information related to specific domains. Therefore, without the capacity to think critically about the content of their writing, they rely on the teachers and textbooks for generating content-basedknowledge (Kellog, 2001).

   Due to the problems outlined above, Pakistani ESL writersdevelop anxiety and fear while completing L2 writing tasks. Consequently, their passive approach to learning prevents them from participating in the skilled workforce envisioned in the roadmap for national economic development (Vision 2025). Moreover, their exam-specific language learning does not make iteasy for them to learn the kind of skills which are key to training as lifelong learners with the capacity to deal effectively with the ever-changing requirements of the knowledge economy.

### Self-Regulation as a strategy for Second Language Learning

   Yang, Schneller and Roche (2015) observe that educational systems across the world lay emphasis on the need to developlearners' critical thinking to help their responsiveness to the dynamic global environment and imperatives of lifelong learning. Against this backdrop,researchers have argued not only that self-regulated learning or SRL skills are pivotal for lifelong learning but also that they predict academic attainment and satisfaction across different educational settings (Dignath & Büttner 2008; Sitzmann and Ely, 2011). SRL skills are also believed to be of key importance in the workplace (Lord,Diefendorff, Schmidt&Hall 2010).

   Dinsmore, Alexander&Loughlin (2008) point out that self-regulation within educational institutions exists as a broader notion.  SRL is concerned with preparing learners who can set achievable and concrete goals of learning, sustain their enthusiasm for learning, manage their affect and monitor their progression in goal attainment(Zimmerman &Moylan, 2009).Learner self-regulation involves planning strategically,  managing time effectively or structuring one's environment to better comprehend and assimilate available materials ( Panaderoand Alonso-Tapia, 2014; Khiat, 2019). In this context, learning strategies may be understood as learning actions related to cognition, metacognition, emotion and motivation (Weinstein, Acee& Jung, 2011).Self-regulation also pertains tohaving a strong belief in one's abilities and the capacity to anticipate the outcomes of one's actions as well as pride inefforts made (Shunk & Ertmer, 2000).

   According to Zimmerman (1990),  self-regulation may be viewed as a self-led process which transforms learners' mental abilities into effective skills for learning. It involves the ability to motivate oneself, achieve self-awareness and capacity to take actions to deploy knowledge in an appropriate manner.Therefore, it makes the learners independent and autonomous and equipped with the capacity to monitor their actions and apply suitable strategies to accomplish this task (Kanplan, 2009) Moreover, through this process, learners develop flexibility inmodifying strategies for task planning and monitoringwhich allows them to address learning-related problems (Laventhal & Cameron, 1987). According to Zimmerman (1990),  self-regulation enables learners to be cognizant about their learning processes, demonstrate enthusiasm for their learning and undertake appropriate learning actions. As an outcome of these processes, the learners learn to take responsibility fortheir achievementand failure alike.

   In the process of Self-regulated language learning, strategies support the L2 learners to develop proficiency in language on their own. Griffith & Oxford (2014) point out that these learners can be trained in these strategies. Chamot (2004) suggests that teachers can not only instruct learners to make use of such strategies effectively but also motivate their

learners to deploy the strategies to achieve their language learning goals. Positive feedback can be used to motivatelearners to deploy the strategy chain for completing tasks.

SRL is a relatively recent concept in the field of Second Language Teaching (Oxford, 2011). Several studies have been conducted that highlight its significant role in the field of SLT.

Johnston (2016) contends that SRL is a motivating force that encourages the learners to learn strategically and increases their control over their learning. The proficient and self-regulated learners become more flexible towards selecting and adjusting the strategies according to task requirements. They use deep strategies like making inferences, more effectively and frequently as compared to less proficient learners who limit themselves to surface strategies like consulting the dictionaries for decoding the words(Wand, 2005)

Aligning with observations by Zimmerman and Kitsants (2002) that writing effectively entails thinking independently and self-discipline,Nami, Enayati and Ashouri (2012) found that language learning approaches are correlated with ESL writer self-regulation. Nami et al found that Self-regulation strategies pertaining to memory, goal-establishment, evaluating oneself and seeking help, in addition to restructuring the environment, taking responsibility and organizing are linked to approaches in learning and play a greater role in polishing learners' language skills and motivate them to perform more challenging tasks in their academics.

Although the SRL process makes the students responsible and autonomous in their learning, theguiding and facilitating role of the teacher cannot be minimised. A teacher as a facilitator helps the language learners to identify their language learning goals and synchronise the language learning process (e.g. planning and task completion through scaffolding).Yen, Bakar, Roslan, Suluan & Rahman (2005) confirm that teachers play a key role in guiding and motivating the learners to achieve self-regulation. Mehmoodi, Kalantari, and Ghaslani (2014) also corroborate these findings and say that EFL teachers can scaffold learners in acquiring the skills for effective learning. By designing effective classroom instruction and modelling the strategies, the teachers can motivate the language learners to use task-specific cognitive and metacognitive strategies to become more independent in their language learning.Furthermore, the teachers can play their greater role through effective teaching instruction and constructive feedback to motivate the students to consider mistakes as an exciting opportunity to learn and find solutions. Learning is viewed as representing incremental and gradual progression towards the goal, wherein making a mistake does not reflect poor writing abilities (Perry & Kamp, 2000).

Based on the findings for her study on SRL strategies used by foreign language learners and their effect on language attainment, Seker(2016) points out that although cognitive and metacognitive strategies support the students in developing self-regulation in their language learning task performance,  it is a complicated process requiring time and guided practice for integration into the students' learning process. However affective and socio-cultural strategies are easy to practice and can help to solicit positive feedback. For instance, strategies based on maintenance of motivation, asking others for help, asking questions, and asking for clarification were frequently used strategies in the study reported above (Seker, 2016).

Existing studies on SRL strategies and ESL writing in Pakistan are limited. They focus on the use of language learning strategies by university learners in general (Javed & Ali, 2018), effect of gender on learners' use of language learning (LL) strategies (Kazi, 2017), use of LL strategies by ESL school learners (Kazi & Iqbal, 2011), peer feedback on writing in English in the university context (Fareed, Jamal & Zai et al, 2021). Whereas most of these studies are concerned with strategy use and focus on LL strategies in general (Javed

& Ali, 2018; Kazi & Iqbal, 2011; Kazi & Iqbal, 2011; Al Fadda, Afzaal, & Haberman, 2020), the present study involves an intervention designed to teach strategy use and is specifically concerned with L2 writing. The study by Fareed et al (2021) while intervention-based in design has been conducted at the university level and is based on a very limited sample of 15 students. The current study has been implemented at school level and has 50 participants.

**Theoretical Model**

Oxford's S2R model was selected as a framework for the current study. Oxford's Strategic Self-Regulation Model (S2R) comprises a number of dimensions, including cognition, affect and socio-cultural interaction (Demir, 2019, p.99). The strategies within S2R are aimed at training learners to use LL strategies autonomously whereby 'learners actively and constructively use strategies to manage their own learning' (Oxford, 2011, p. 7).  With its orientation to the individual, S2R seeks to guide learners in knowing how to use a particular strategy and in evaluating whether the strategy has been effective (Oxford, 2011, p. 18). Unlike Oxford's earlier framework, S2R foregrounds meta-knowledge which involves progressing beyond cognition to take into account other dimensions of learning, particularly social, emotional and motivational aspects (Kaldonek, 2018). It includes 'meta-cognitive, meta-motivational, meta-social and meta-affective' strategies (Demir, 2019, p.99).

The study addressed the following research questions.

1. What is the impact of self-regulation strategy-training on ESL students' Essay Writing?
2. Based on their utilization of self-regulation strategies, how do students compare their previous and present experiences in writing essays?

**Methodology**

Adopting an experimental approach, this study implemented SRL strategy training conducted over the course of eight classes of 80 minutes eachspread over 4 weeks. Afterthe pre-test, the participants were divided into Control and Experimental groups.In the intervention,the experimental group wastaught to complete their essay writing by applying self-regulated strategies, whereasthe control group was taught using conventional pedagogy.In the qualitative approach, interviews were conductedto learn about participants' perception of their writing experiences before and after the training.

The 50 secondary learnersfrom one level were randomly selected to the control and experimental groups, comprising 25 participants each. After the pre-test had been administered, the experimental group learners were trained to use the strategies, and the training was reinforced in all sessions that followed, where needed. Twelve participants from the experimental group volunteered for the post-test interview to share their experiences and perceptions about the training. Institutional approval and parental consent were secured for the learners' participation in the study.

In thepre-test, the learners were asked to write an expository essay. After the pre-test, the participants were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. Before the training, the teacher familiarized the students with the SRLL framework and the learners were taught to relate these to relevant tactics. Before each weekly session, the learnersrevisited the strategies and tactics with the teacher's help. After that, they started their activity of essay writing on the assigned topic. Learner self-check logs were used by the students to recall the strategies and to note those they were deploying. During the essay-writing session, help was provided to learners who neededit or asked for it by the teacher.The learners also engaged in discussions as a social-interactive strategy. Over 80 minutes, the learnerscarried out the planning, writing and evaluating of the essay. Subsequently, they reflected on their writing process and strategy use.

In the post-test, the learners from both groups wrote an expository essay on "Electronic Media vs. Print Media" using the strategies they had been taught.  Test scores from pre and post-test was assessed via descriptive analysis (Cresswell,2014; Kanglongand Afzaal, 2020) as well as t-test.After completing the task, 12 experimental group learner were interviewed to compare their prior experience of essay-writing with their post-intervention one.Thematic analysis was applied to the transcribed interview data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

**Analysis of pre-test and post-test data**

Graph 1 compares pre-test data from the control and experimental groups. The pre-test assessed organization, sentence construction, and usage and mechanics. In the results, the experimental group obtained 40%, 44%, and 48.60% respectively and the control group attained 41%, 36%, and 52%. While the scores for both groups in organization were fairly similar (Experimental: 3 students [16%], 10 students [33%], 11 students [66 %] and 1 student [more than 66 %]: Control: 8 students [16%], 12 students [33%] and 5 students [66%] ), the experimental group showed a marginally better performance on this element. In the other two elements (sentence construction, mechanics and usage), the experimental group performed better than the control group.
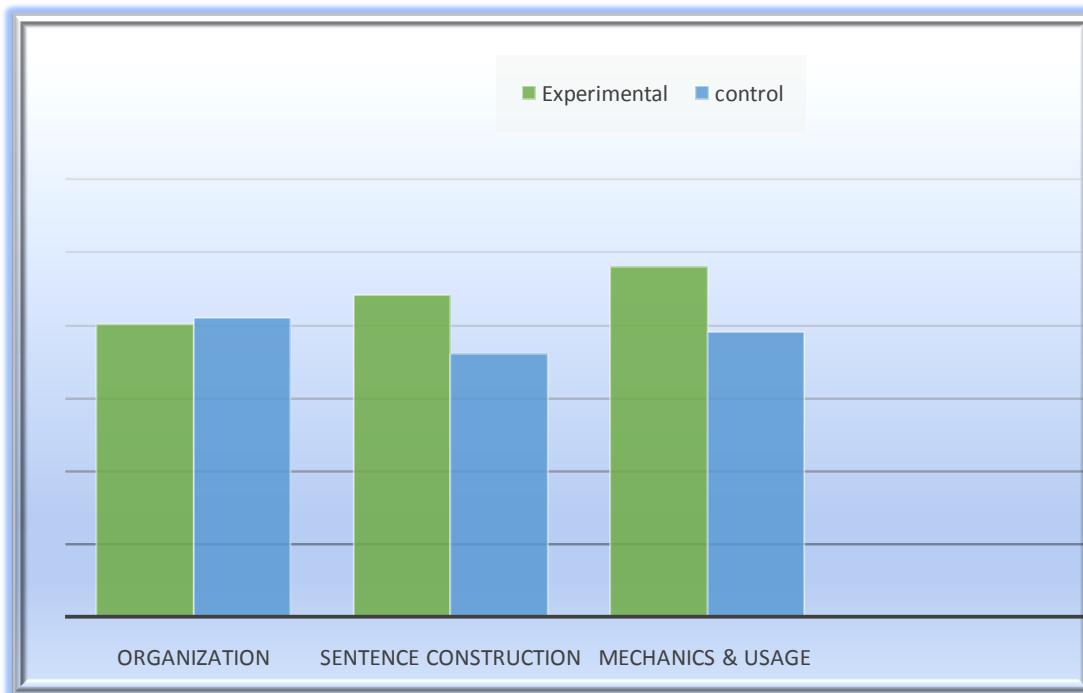


Graph 1: Comparison of Pre-Test scores

After the intervention, a post-test was conducted withthe control and the experimentalthe groups. They wrote an expository essay that was assessed through the same rubric with the criteria of Organization, Sentence Construction, and Mechanics & Usage. Graph 2 presents the post-test score of the experimental group which demonstrates a notable improvement in their performance on essay-writing. They scored 61%, 66%, and 65 % in 'Organization', 'Sentence Construction', and 'Mechanics & Usage, whereas the control group obtained scores of 34%, 46.6%, and 47%.  The comparison of post-test scores from both groups indicate that strategy training had a positive effect on the essay-writing performance of the experimental group.
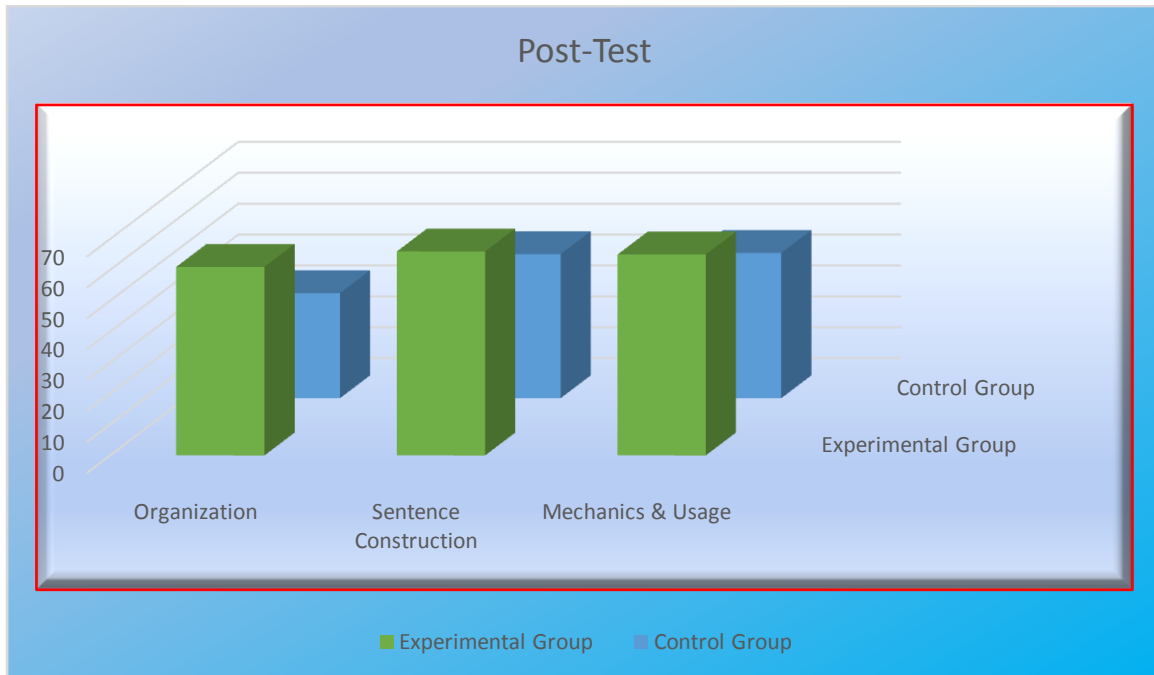
Graph 2: Comparison of Post-test performance of both groups

T-test was implemented to investigate the statistical difference in the pre-test and post-test scores for both groups.

|  | Pretest | Post-test |
|---|---|---|
| Mean | 3.98 | 5.88 |
| Variance | 3.3225 | 1.943333333 |
| Observations | 25 | 25 |
| Pearson Correlation | 0.728713246 |  |
| Hypothesized Mean Difference | 0 |  |
| Df | 24 |  |
| t Stat | -7.6 |  |
| P(T<=t) one-tail | 3.86438E-08 |  |
| t Critical one-tail | 1.71088208 |  |
| P(T<=t) two-tail | 7.72877E-08 |  |
| t Critical two-tail | 2.063898562 |  |

Table 1: Test test analysis of Experimental group

|  | Pretest | Post-test |
|---|---|---|
| Mean | 3.9 | 3.64 |
| Variance | 1.895833333 | 2.115 |
| Observations | 25 | 25 |
| Pearson Correlation | 0.454658104 |  |
| Hypothesized Mean Difference | 0 |  |
| Df | 24 |  |
| t Stat | 0.878458592 |  |
| P(T<=t) one-tail | 0.194202607 |  |
| t Critical one-tail | 1.71088208 |  |
| P(T<=t) two-tail | 0.388405213 |  |
| t Critical two-tail | 2.063898562 |  |

Table 2: T-test analysis of Control group

The results of the experimental group show a value of the t-test as 7.6/3.6 and the tabulated value is 2.06 which is greater than the standard value which is 1.96 as a rule of thumb. The findings clearly show that the strategies employed are significantand have a positive impact. The critical value of 1 tail is 1.7, whereas the calculated value is 3.8 which is higher than the critical value which is also significant. In contrast, the results of thelearners in the control group are insignificant because the calculated value is 1.19 which is less than the critical value.

**Analysis of interview data**

**Learners' perceptions of SRL training**

The second research question addressed in this paperinquired into how learners in the experimental group compared their previous essay-writing experiences with the post-intervention ones.

**Prior Training Challenges**

The first theme identified was 'Prior Training Challenges'. This theme synthesises the students' perception of their proficiency in their writing skills before attending the training sessions. It is evident from the students' responses that before training their writing proficiency was affected due to the teacher-centric approach. The students had to follow the instructions of the teachers and they were not allowed to plan or write text independently. This practice hampered them to strategically plan their writing task to compose their ideas independently. Consequently, this practice dulled their cognitive abilities to strategically plan and compose their ideas. Similarly, as writing is a time-consuming activity therefore 40 to 45-minute class could not give them sufficient time to think, plan, and write and reflect.

The most notable challenges included 'Controlled Practice' and 'Lack of Constructive Feedback'. Recalling earlier essay-planning experiences, the students recalled how the teacher would draw the mind map for the essay, and instruct them to select ideas from those given by the teacher for further elaboration in their essays. Participant 5recalled that 'Ma'am used to write points on the board and we used to elaborate in the notebooks', suggesting limited student autonomy in planning the essay or generating ideas.

The students also revealedthat in earlier classes, they were not provided with clear guidance on how to plan and write the essay which led to a lack of knowledge about 'how to divide the paragraph' or 'how to start and how to end it and the body of paragraph'(P11). P6 confirmed they knew only 'the basic structure of the paragraph i.e. introduction, body, and the conclusion'.
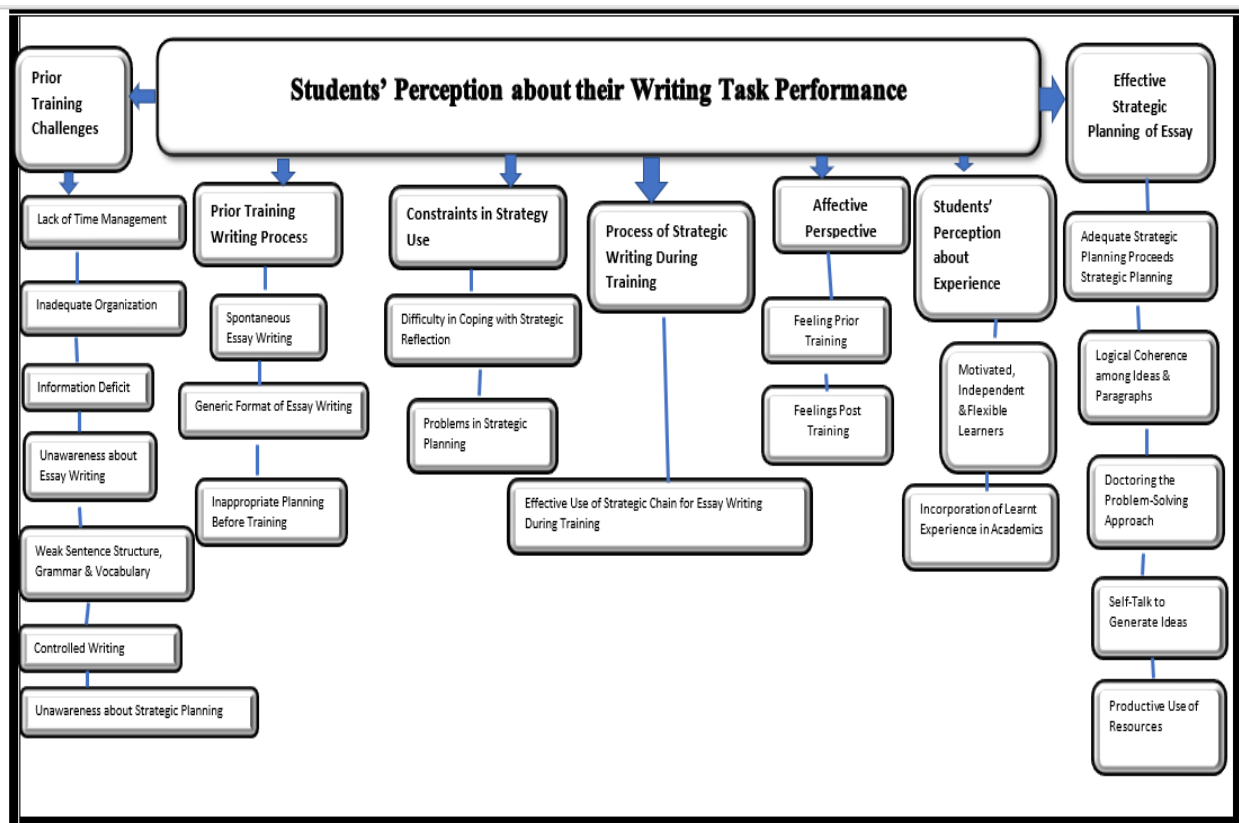


Figure 8: Themes generated from Interview Data

**Writing Process Before Training**

The above-mentioned challenges negatively affected the writing practices of the student writers before training. The next theme Writing Process Before Training shows how students viewed their previous writing performance. When they came across the actual process of writing they found out their practices in writing. As discussed in the previous theme that students' writing process was controlled by the teacher, therefore, their meta-cognition was not developed enough to organise the ideas themselves and they were used to follow the same

formulaic format of essay writing that was the introduction, advantages, disadvantages, and conclusion. Secondly, due to the absence of brainstorming or any pre-writing activity they had to face writers' bloc in between writing and left the task unfinished. This finding corroborates Haider's (2012) findings that due to lack of practice in the writing process learners cannot attain the required level of cognitive development and critical thinking and tend tostall during the writing and consequently leave their efforts in skill development.

It is evident from students' responses that before training they knew little about essay planning. They were familiar with makinga 'web' to write down the ideas without knowing how to organize it (P5) and when asked to make mind maps they 'skip it and jumped up …I think (thought)it was time taking' (P8).

Therefore, they did not plan the essay strategically. Rather they would briefly think about the topic and then directly start drafting the essay. As P6 explained 'I would just think about it and be like what idea sounds good to come first. What idea would give me a good introduction and how I wanna make body of my essay'.

### Effective Strategic Planning of Essay Writing

While students switched from unplanned disorganized writing practices to a strategically well-planned process of writing, a change in their writing performance and their metacognitive abilities was experienced. The them, 'Effective Strategic Planning of Essay Writing' highlights how the students found strategic planning helpful for improving their writing. They identified and solved their problems by using appropriate strategies.Therefore, they were no longer completely dependent on their teachers. Secondly, strategies and tactics helped them to build up connections among the ideas and organize them into a coherent whole.

Planning strategies enabled the learners to activate their prior knowledge via brainstorming. P6 noted that 'Brainstorming is useful because when you hear the topic you just write all kinds of things coming to your mind. It is important to see what reminds(remember) you because it is going to get the content that should be written instead of just take the topic and start writing on it'. This tactic helped the learners to develop sufficient ideas for generating relevant information on the topic, with P6 noting that 'if you brainstorm about it you have some quality content that you can compare... You know that this content is better than this and I can write more' (P: 6, Interview).   Mind mapping helped the students to connect and organize ideas that they had generated. This strategy helped them in writing the content in the performance phase (P4). Brainstorming further led them to use different strategies (e.g. Conceptualizing Broadly and Conceptualizing in detail)connected to the topic sentence and thesis statements. As P12 noted 'the mind map helps you to make thesis statement, how much you have to write it tells about word limit and it organize your ideas in a very good way'.

These planning strategies enabled the students to carry on with their writing process without overlooking any significant idea (P12). Implementing these planning tactics helped the students to become more autonomous and self-regulated learners. P1 explained that 'brainstorming helps me to write independently' and P2 added that using these strategies systematically made their writing more logical and coherent.The learners were able to connect ideas more effectively with the planning strategies. P11 noted 'now I think I can after this strategic use of mind map and organizing ideas, I can organize my ideas, it is good enough for me.

Therefore, these tactics helped ESL writers untangle the ideas and work out how they connected. P7 observed thatthe tactics 'organized my essay. Before, my essay did not make any sense. My ideas were jumbled up but now I can categories the essay'.

The use of these strategiesinfluenced their motivation and emotions positively. As the participant noted 'strategies helped me in writing coherently definitely because it is easier and as it said organize your ideas you don't feel nervous that O' my God…'(P11).

The learners developed more independence in solving their problems in essay-writing on their own. In this regard, if they found themselves stalling in their writing anywhere, they immediately returned to their planning (e.g. brainstorming, mind-mapping) to generate new ideas or reviewed the content to gain clarity (P5).Planning their essays also helped the learners to resolve the issue of lack of time (P2), whereas, for generating ideas, the learners made use of dictionaries and Internet sources (P3). For instance, P2 explained that before she would use the Internet for copying points, but post-trainingshe uses it only for generating ideas.

While planning, performing, and reflecting on their writing tasks, the student writers deployed the strategies and adjusted the sequence of their strategy use according to their own needs so every student developed her strategy chain. Using strategic chainintegrating planning and performance enabled the learners to write their essays without any obstacles. In addition, it helped them to cope with the demand of the writing task without anxiety (P6). The strategy chainwas used by learners to strengthen their writing performance (P8).

The learners also became skilled atstreamlining their ideas and making them more concrete. For instance, as one participant noted 'first of all I used to think through brainstorming then do mind mapping and then thesis statement that helped me very much that I can write supporting details' (P12).Using the strategic chain made the learners self-reliant in task completion (P120).Although, strategy training remained successful in making students self-regulated in their writing task performance these strategies cannot develop the cognition and metacognition of the students overnight. Therefore, some students had to face some problems initially while using these strategies and tactics.

## Constraints in Strategy Use
The learners struggled with generating ideas through brainstorming as they had limited knowledge in terms of content. As P1 noted, 'planning [was hard] because if the topic is difficult it is difficult to think about the points to plan.It was difficult to activate mind'.Organizing the essay and making it coherent alsoprovedchallenging (P2).

Similarly, they found it difficult to make connections betweenintroductory and concluding sentences, with P8 observing that'[ensuring that] introduction should be the reflection of the conclusion that was the most difficult part' (P: 8). Finding mistakes also demotivated them (P2).               This strategy training not only developed the cognitive and metacognitive aspects of the student but also lessened their anxiety level. Before training, the students were unable to write effectively, and thus, they tried to avoid writing activities or feel stress while accomplishing the task. However, the effective use of self-regulated language learning actions improved their writing and boosted their morale.

## Affective Perspective

The  theme Affective Perspective (Feelings Prior Training, Feelings Post Training) is analysed in this section. This theme explains how students perceive their feelings before and after training. Their responses indicate that prior to the intervention, the students were apprehensive about their writing task. For instance, P10 revealed that 'before, I feel nervous because I didn't know how to write an essay'while P8 recalled she 'never enjoyed creative writing'. Subsequent to the training, the learners' perception about the essay writing task had become more positive, with P9 pointing out that ' I don't feel as much nervous as I was before …now I can write independently by making mind map'.

Reflecting on one's action and experience is a very significant strategy that helps people to determine their success or failure in the task, improve their shortcomings, and plan the future. When the students were asked to reflect on their experience of strategy training and share their perception about it, they were quite satisfied with their improved performance. This training boosted their morale and motivated them to continue their strategy use to get self-regulation in their academic task performances.

**Perceptions about training experience**

The theme Perceptions about Experience showed that after training, the learners perceived themselves as having the capacity to draw upon strategies according to the task assigned to them, and this flexibility enabled them to take charge of their learning. For example, P11 revealed that'Now we don't consult our friend or teacher…we do consult them when we are stuck somewhere other than that doing all independently'. P2 shared that she was independent in her writing and had improved her skills. The learners also found themselves writing more convincingly with the help of their training. As P6 highlightedthat 'I can execute my ideas better now'.

**Discussion**

The strategy training helped learners to critically analyse their writing practices before and after the training. Theyidentifiedprior practices as making their writing skill weak and slack. Prior to strategy training, the learners' writing process tended to be controlled and haphazard with a tendency for them to be teacher-dependent (Yen et al, 2005; Mehmoodi et al, 2014). They knew little about paragraph or essay structure. Creative writing tasks bored them because they had little idea about 'how to write and what to write'. However, implementing SRLLs enabled them to become organized and write more effectively. They made use of multiple meta-strategies (e.g. cognitive, affective, and social interactive). These strategies helped them to regulate different stages of the writing assignment better and activated their pre-existing topical knowledge via brainstorming. Subsequently,mind mapping was used by the learners to formulate thesis statements, topic statement and supporting evidence. Their planning and organizing of ideas and content for the essay demonstrates the effectiveness of strategy chains (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 1999).These findings align with earlier research (Quigely &Stringer, 2011) which points out the correlations between cognitive as well as metacognitive skills.

The learners felt that they had developed the capacity to undertake flexible problem-solving as to their essay tasks independently, and if they faced any obstacle, they would revisit their strategy chain to address the issue in their writing (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 1999; Haberman et al., 2020). The learners also learnt to take charge of their llearnin by monitoring their progress in the writing task. Thus the study proves that self-regulated strategies make the L2 learner problem solvers and flexible in the use of strategies, enabling

them to monitor their task performance. These findings align withearlier research which suggests that learners who develop self-regulation are effective problem-solvers with the ability to draw upon relevant strategies to bridge the gap between present performance and the goal to be achieved (Leventhal & Camron, 1987).

The learners also perceived a significant change in their emotional stability and independence (Kanplan, 2009). After self-regulation training, they were more composed towards their writing task. Earlier, the thought of what to write and how to write kept them confused throughout the task performance. Self-regulated strategies resolved confusion and helped them become confident and motivated writers.Deploying theself-appreciation strategy has enabled the learners to remain motivated towards the taskwhich is key to effective regulation of their learning. These findings align with earlier literature which suggests the contribution of strategy use to motivation (Shunk & Ertmer, 2000; Johnstone, 2016).

Before the training, the focus of the writing class was on the product approach and students were practicing the genre-specific writing. After training, they switched to learning the actual process of writing first and then using their skill in the completion of their writing tasks. Therefore, their ability to implement a process and move to a product supports earlier research (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 1999) which suggests that self-regulated strategy enables learners to navigate the process of writing and move towards achievingoutcomes effectively.

## Conclusion
The findings of the current study substantiate the usefulness of Oxford's (2011) Self-regulated Language Learning Strategies in developingESL learners as critical thinkers, problem solverswho are flexibleenough to meet the changing demands of the knowledge economy and deal with the dynamic trends of global communication (Dignath & Büttner 2008; Sitzmann &Ely,2011)

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