Language Learning Strategies used by Secondary School English Language Learners in Improving Writing Skills

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Abstract
In learning a language, it is important for learners to fully utilise the four skills which are reading, listening, writing and speaking. One of the ways to assist learners to improve their learning is Language Learning Strategies where learners are provided with the essential strategies. Among the four skills needed to be proficient in a second language, writing skill is one of the crucial skills where most learners have difficulties in mastering and hindering the learning progress. Therefore, this study aimed to identify the LLS used to improve writing skill by Form 4 learners in a Chinese High School, Kuala Lumpur. Purposive sampling was used, compromising 41 students from the school. A questionnaire adapted from Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) by Oxford (1990) was distributed to the students focusing on identifying the strategies used to improve their writing skill. Likert scale was used as a measuring instrument from a scale of 1 to 4 points, mainly from never true of me to always true of me. The results reveal that learning from mistakes in essays, watching English TV shows and movies and being aware of their process in writing English are the strategies for improving English writing skill. Thus, implications and suggestions are included in the conclusion.
Keywords: Language Learning Strategies (LLS), Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), English Writing, Secondary School Students, English as a Second Language (ESL)

Introduction
In acquiring a second language throughout the globe, each student possesses each of their own strategies acquired after consecutive amounts of time learning and practising it. Sewell (2003) discover that few of the learning strategies used are in relation with the learners'

acquisition pace, level of exposure to English language, learner's objective, and level of proficiency. Moreover, one of the factors that influence second language acquisition is the learners first language. Rubin and Thompson (1994) also believes that the first language plays an important role when implemented throughout the second language learning. Students with limitless growth opportunity is one sort of good move an educator ought to initiate and to accomplish this mission, the educators really should ensure that the appropriate teaching strategies are used to address the issues of students' diverse learning needs (Samat & Hashim, 2019). Henceforth, educators should be knowledgeable and competent to teach English as well as incorporating and advocating the learning strategies to enlighten students and further develop their second language acquisition and learning productivity. The search is still ongoing and new possibilities are still discovered to identify each learning strategy, especially in improving writing skills. Among the four skills in acquiring a language, writing is one of the competitive skills that can be a challenge as it collides with the ability of speaking where the use of informal language is applied in daily life. Sakkir et al (2016), share the same concern about writing skill where learners need to have extensive knowledge in order to be able to write independently. A lot of factors can contribute to the implementation of language learning strategies such as gender and level of motivation but the question here lies on which strategies are most preferable or effective in improving especially writing skills. Majid & Stapa (2017) based on their research in regards of writing skills also shows that even with extensive amount of time growing up with the language, learners still face difficulties in producing a good writing. Among all the skills in mastering the English language, writing is indeed the most difficult skill to accomplish by Malaysian students where educators and learners concurred in achieving an outstanding proficiency level (Chandran et al., 2019).

As indicated by Cohen (2005), learning language strategies are significant in contributing to language learning and instructing for two significant reasons which are recognizing the metacognitive, mental, social and affective processes associated with language advancing by exploring the technique utilisation of second language students and less proficient language students will improve more through compelling learning strategies. Naiman et al (1978) suggested Good Language Learner model as a medium to measure the effectiveness by using 5 strategies listed which are dynamic assignment approach, acknowledgment of language as a framework, acknowledgment of language for the purpose of correspondence and cooperation, affective demands management, and checking of execution in the objective language. This is also supported by other research that also believes an effective learning possess their own strategies, styles and techniques (Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975; Rubin & Thompson, 1994). All these 5 strategies under Good Language Learner model can be used as a measurement to identify which strategies are commonly used among students in Malaysia. However, even with extensive research to identify good learning strategies , there is still lack of research focus revolving around LLS among secondary Malaysian students especially for writing skills, thus the purpose of this study is to identify language learning strategies employed by learners in a secondary school for improving writing skills. Research objectives and questions are listed below:

Research Objectives
1.   To identify the most used language learning strategy among the Form 4 students of a Chinese Independent High School

2.   To identify the least used language learning strategy among the Form 4 students of a Chinese Independent High School in learning English writing

Research Questions
1.   What is the most used language learning strategy among Form 4 students of a Chinese Independent High School in Kuala Lumpur in learning English writing?
2.   What is the least used language learning strategy among the Form 4 students of a Chinese Independent High School in Kuala Lumpur in learning English writing

Literature Review
Every learning process involves the adaptation of a method or strategy in order to reach the primary goal of learning. The process of learning involves important necessities which are what to use for learning and how to use it (Hardan, 2013). Some of the strategies are not contributing to the most optimum effects, thus learners are engaged in variety of strategies while learning language. Since the early 1970s, language learning strategies (LLS) have gained a lot of attention for the critical role they play in language learning.

Definition of Language Learning Strategies (LLS)
Many academics have described LLS in various ways, concentrating on how learners deal with the information they get and the strategies they employ (Hardan, 2013). One of the definitions given by Rigney (1978), LLS are defined as the often conscious procedures or behaviours used by language learners to improve the acquisition, storage, retention, recall, and application of new information. Ghani (2003) also stated something similar which was LLS are specific acts, behaviours, steps, or procedures that students (often consciously) utilize to boost their success in establishing second language skills. She claims that these strategies can help with internalization, storage, retrieval, and use of the new language. Oxford et al., (1989) stated that LLS are utilized to improve and facilitate language acquisition, according to the statement. They referred to LLS as acts, behaviours, procedures, or approaches taken by learners to improve learning, such as seeking out target language conversation partners or encouraging oneself to face a challenging language task. Most of the authors mentioned before concluded that Information acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use are all made easier with LLS.

Adan and Harwati Hashim (2021) explained about statements by Wenden (1987), LLS can be characterised in terms of language learning behaviours like learning and regulating the meaning of a second or foreign language, cognitive theory like learners' strategic understanding of language learning, and affective theory like learners' motivation, attitude, and so on. These are the three points of view that can improve in language learning.

According to Rubin (1987), LLS are behaviours, procedures, or techniques that language learners use to help them acquire a language. Oxford (1990) added that LLS improve learners' language learning competency and self-confidence also included cognitive, emotional, and social factors.

Categorization of LLS
O'Malley et al (1985) has separated LLS into three subcategories which are Metacognitive Strategies, Cognitive Strategies and Social Strategies. Metacognitive strategies is a term used

to convey the meaning of learning processes that include preparing for learning, thinking about the learning process while it happens, monitoring one's production or comprehension, and evaluating learning after an activity is accomplished. Cognitive strategies are restricted to certain learning tasks and require more direct manipulation of the learning material. Some of the most crucial cognitive strategies are repetition, resourcing, translation, grouping, note taking, deduction, recombination, imagery, auditory representation, key word, contextualization, elaboration, transfer and inferencing. Social strategies can be described as they have much to do with social-mediating and exchanging with others. According to Brown (1980), the key techniques of social strategies are cooperation and clarifying questions.

Rubin (1987) showed the differences between learning strategies that contribute directly to learning and learning strategies that contribute indirectly to learning. According to him, learners employ three sorts of strategies that contribute directly or indirectly to their learning. The strategies are Learning Strategies, Communication Strategies and Social Strategies. There are two forms of Learning Strategies, each of which contributes directly to the development of the learner's language system which are Cognitive Learning Strategies and Metacognitive Learning Strategies. Cognitive Learning Strategies are learning or problem-solving steps in other words, activities that require direct analysis, transformation, or synthesis of learning materials. Rubin discovered six basic cognitive learning strategies that directly contribute to language acquisition that are Clarification (Verification), Guessing (Inductive Inferencing), Deductive Reasoning, Practice, Memorization and Monitoring.

Factors Affecting Language Learning Strategies (LLS) Used
Bayuong et al (2019) mentioned that a student's language learning strategy (LLS) might not be the same as his or her classmates of the same class. Thus, teachers should identify the students' language learning strategies (LLS) in order to deliver the knowledge in an effective manner. Lee (2010) has cited that many researchers have investigated the elements which influenced the learners in choosing the learning strategies. Some of the factors were age, sex, attitude, motivation, aptitude, learning stage, task requirements, teacher expectation, learning styles, individual differences, motivation, cultural differences, beliefs about language learning, and language proficiency. Adan and Hashim (2021) focused on gender, race, age and the respondents' art department of an art school and how these factors affect their language learning strategies (LLS). The researchers concluded that metacognitive strategies were the most preferable strategies of all even though the respondents were regarded as less academic oriented art students. In the research of Abdullah (2019), students had gotten used to getting help in grammar or spelling corrections from online platforms and sites that they would not have the chances to learn and improve by their mistakes or even not realise what the mistakes they had made. The researcher further stressed that responsible teachers who are willing to try and accept errors of new ways in teaching that pass the limits of traditional classrooms would increase the students' motivation in learning English writing using social media platforms.

Previous Studies on Language Learning Strategies (LLS)
Sani and Ismail (2021) stated that compensation strategies were the most preferable strategies used by their young students. They further enclosed that the most popular strategy from the SILL items was gap filled by other counterparts during the communication process. The researchers also further discovered that female and male learners had different

preferable language learning strategies. The female learners tended to use more language strategies compared to their male counterparts. Furthermore, female students preferred to use cognitive strategies while male learners would adopt cognitive strategies more in their communications.

Another research done by Aziz and Shah (2020) indicated a different pattern of preference in language learning strategies among young adult learners of polytechnic students. Their results showed that cognitive and metacognitive strategies were the two most preferable strategies. Overall, the students did not prefer to adopt affective strategies and compensation strategies. This study further revealed that there were no statistically significant differences in the use of the six categories but the female students showed great interest in using the memory strategies as compared to their male counterparts.

Rubaai et al (2019) discovered that their polytechnic students preferred metacognitive strategies where 3 out of 9 items in this section received responses 40% and above for the frequency of always. These three more preferable strategies were: Notice *English mistakes and improve (44.4%)*, *Pay attention when someone is speaking (43.7%)* and *Try to find out how to be a better learner (40.4%).* The researchers had covered all six Language Learning Strategies of Oxford (1992) to investigate the preference of the students' language learning strategies and which items of each strategy was most preferable way of learning language.

Bailey and Cassidy (2019) stated that a wider range of strategies can be derived for writing skill based on statements by Griffiths and Oxford, (2014). They also conducted a study on 41 students from Korean University which focuses on how peer to peer review feedback process would affect L2 writing performance. The mixed method study was conducted with underlying social cognitive theory and was carried through a training program. The results section that showed improvement were shown by reporting students' performance improvements in terms of written accuracy and fluency, using quantitative and qualitative data from student writing and survey responses.

Yoon and Jo (2014) had implemented a study on four Korean participants based on corpus-based writing that focuses on indirect strategies to elicit participants' improvement for lexical items in their writing skill. The researchers found out that the participants were able to adopt the strategies in learning. They were able to show how learners corrected themselves in writing by using a software as well as demonstrated how learners cognitive and metacognitive abilities by motivating discovery learning, which enhanced autonomous learning.

Another study was carried out by Kessler et al (2012) that investigates how students engage in the collaborative writing process using Web-based word processing tools. Thirty one participants from Midwestern University who came from a wide range of disciplines had participated in the study. The researchers gathered and analysed Google Docs group collaborative texts and they have features that are comparable to those found in a variety of new Web-based word processors, such as simultaneous editing and automated updating. The findings focused on individual member involvement of the three case study teams and text production in language and non-language related contributions by the teams. Web-based word processing tool was seen as flexible and allowing for fluidity in the process of collaboration and writing.

Compared to previous studies, Devi and Mujiyanto (2015) experimented brainwriting approach as an alternative for brainstorming techniques which is used for the pre-writing stage. According to the researchers, brainstorming techniques have some drawbacks especially to silent learners as well as consume a lot of time. They also mentioned Takagi (2013) who conducted a research on several participants regarding the both approaches and the results showed that brainwriting was chosen over brainstorming because it was more effective in generating ideas. The researchers carried out their study on two groups by using a quantitative research approach which involves factorial design and questionnaire. The first experimental group received online brainwriting as treatment and the second experimental group which is the control group that received conventional brainstorming as its treatment. Their SPSS calculation showed that online brainwriting was significant in enhancing writing skills with low frequency of LLS. Devi and Mujiyanto also concluded that even though both techniques played an important role in writing skills but brainwriting showed more effective results.

Thus, a review of the literature reveals that there are a wide range of strategies used by learners that need to be explored. However, the strategies which are used by secondary English language learners are yet to be well explored. This has shown that language learning strategies should be determined before the lessons are conducted in the classroom. In fact, secondary school students who possess LLS particularly in writing skills are beneficial to them as they can identify the best approach to learn and enhance writing. Moreover, it is also beneficial for the researchers in the language learning field.

Methodology
This research adopted a quantitative approach to obtain the data by distributing the questionnaire form to the students via Google Form platform. The students were labelled using their matrix number and responses were recorded instantly as soon as they submitted their replies. The reason for choosing this approach was that the students were undergoing online lessons when the research took place.

41 secondary Form 4 students aged 16 of a Chinese Interdependent High School located in Kuala Lumpur were given this questionnaire form. The medium of language used in most lessons conducted in this school was Mandarin, except for Malay and English language lessons. Students were all English L2 learners and were considered to have less opportunity to use English in school outside their classroom after their English lessons.

Purposive sampling was employed to identify the language learning strategies used among these young adult learners. The instrument used in the questionnaire was adopted from Strategy Inventory for Language Learning, or SILL version 7.0 (Oxford, 1990, pg. 293-300). This version of SILL with 50 items of 5 point Likert scale was adopted into 25 questions of 4 point Likert scale that focused on language learning strategies towards writing skill. The rationale for choosing this version was that it was designed to discover the language learning strategies among non-native English students for learning English in an English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. (Russell, 2010)

The students were contacted via their class group in WhatsApp, an instant messaging application. The students were briefed and were required to answer the items in the

questionnaire as close to their situation as possible. The questionnaire items were given through Google Form platform. The responses were then analysed by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Descriptive statistics using frequency counts were included to create a clearer picture of the results.

Findings and Discussion
The section below illustrated the findings collected from 41 Secondary Four students in a Chinese Independent High School, Kuala Lumpur. The students evaluate the ways of learning English through the questionnaire. To ensure the accuracy of the data, researchers analysed the findings and it showed that the data is normally distributed. From the study, it was determined that there are a few common strategies used by the students to improve their writing skill, such as learning from mistakes in essay writing, being aware of their progress in writing English sentences and watching English shows and movies.

Table 1
Items of the survey

	never true of me		rarely true of me		sometimes true of me		always true of me	
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
1. I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English.	1	2.4%	13	31.7%	24	58.5%	3	7.3%
2. I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.	3	7.3%	20	48.8%	13	31.7%	5	12.2%
3. I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.	6	14.6%	14	34.1%	16	39.0%	5	12.2%
4. I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.	9	22.0%	6	14.6%	23	56.1%	3	7.3%
5. I use rhymes (pronunciation of the words) to remember new English words.	15	36.6%	13	31.7%	9	22.0%	4	9.8%
6. I use song lyrics to remember new English words.	10	24.4%	15	36.6%	10	24.4%	6	14.6%
7. I physically act out new English words.	17	41.5%	17	41.5%	7	17.1%	0	0.0%
8. I review English lessons often.	6	14.6%	20	48.8%	13	31.7%	2	4.9%
9. I remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.	9	22.0%	16	39.0%	12	29.3%	4	9.8%
10. I watch English language TV shows or movies.	2	4.9%	11	26.8%	13	31.7%	15	36.6%
11. I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English.	10	24.4%	17	41.5%	10	24.4%	4	9.8%
12. I try not to translate word for word when writing.	1	2.4%	16	39.0%	17	41.5%	7	17.1%

Continuation of Table 1

13. I write summaries of information that I heard or read in English.	16	39.0%	14	34.1%	7	17.1%	4	9.8%
14. I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English.	10	24.4%	14	34.1%	12	29.3%	5	12.2%
15. I notice my mistakes in English composition and use that information to help me do better.	0	0.0%	8	19.5%	25	61.0%	8	19.5%
16. I try to find out how to be a better English writer.	2	4.9%	11	26.8%	23	56.1%	5	12.2%
17. I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to write my essay.	6	14.6%	8	19.5%	24	58.5%	3	7.3%
18. I have clear goals for improving my writing skills.	4	9.8%	19	46.3%	16	39.0%	2	4.9%
19. I think about my progress in writing English.	2	4.9%	8	19.5%	27	65.9%	4	9.8%
20. I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of writing English essays.	3	7.3%	14	34.1%	17	41.5%	7	17.1%
21. I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in writing English essays.	23	56.1%	7	17.1%	8	19.5%	3	7.3%
22. I notice I am tense or nervous when I am writing in English.	11	26.8%	6	14.6%	15	36.6%	9	22.0%
23. I write down my feelings in a language learning dairy.	32	78.0%	7	17.1%	2	4.9%	0	0.0%
24. If I do not understand the information of essay writing, I will ask my teacher to explain it again.	5	12.2%	19	46.3%	12	29.3%	5	12.2%
25. I text English messages with other students.	8	19.5%	18	43.9%	11	26.8%	4	9.8%

From the analysis above, it shows that 80.05 %, which is equivalent to 33 students, learn writing skill from their mistakes in the compositions, therefore, they will not repeat it again. Lint (2017) also mentioned the importance of composition writing during the English lesson in her study as students' will help out to correct their friends' mistakes. This had indirectly involved collaboration in learning English. In school, students are required to submit their essays and the marks would affect their overall English language score. This had motivated the students to write and take note of their common errors.

Apart from that, 75.7%, 31 students said that they sometimes or always think about the progress in writing English sentences. They need time in developing the sentences and it might involve planning the items in different paragraphs. This is to train students' metacognitive skills because writing requires planning, thinking, editing and correcting skills. This was supported by (Rahmanti et al., 2020) that students should be aware of their progress while applying knowledge in writing.

On the other hand, 68.3% or 28 students sometimes or always watched English language movies and shows to improve English writing skill. This statement was supported by Yunus et

al (2020) that students preferred to learn vocabulary from visuals which involves movements. Hence, the words will retain longer in their memory and they can apply those words in their write up.

However, 95.1% or 39 students in class seldom or did not write a diary or record their feelings by using English. They seldom practise the habit of summarising their daily lives' events through writing. This will indirectly reduce the frequency of students using adjectives to describe their feelings. In Zakaria et al (2019) review, they stated that students are not confident to share their thoughts openly to the crowd. Thus, they would not be able to narrate or describe their thoughts easily when they were asked to write reflections regarding the incidents happening around them.

Moreover, 83% or 34 students dare not act out the new words they have learned, especially when it comes to nouns or action verbs. They felt shy or ashamed to perform the actions in the classroom. In school, students were taught in a conventional way where chalk and board played an important role in the class. Thus, students were less motivated to act during the formal lesson.

Most importantly, 73.1% or 30 students neither write nor read English materials other than the reading materials provided for English lessons. As it is a Mandarin-oriented secondary school, all students prefer to use their mother tongue to communicate with their teachers and peers. This has drastically reduced the time for students to write in English language, except for formal English lessons. Lam et al (2018) also showed an agreement in their study that most students who learn English as Second Language had a great tendency to neglect the language as they learned it for education purposes. Hence, educators should stimulate students on finding the reason in learning English and guide students in finding the most suitable strategy in practising English writing.

Conclusion and Implications
In order to advocate an effective learning progress, educators can further enlighten learners on the significance of LLS in language acquisition. This research focus on the six learning language strategies which are crucial and the results showed that the memory strategies had become the most popular strategies for the students in learning English as a second language. As a result, these young adult learners tend to use memory strategies in obtaining vocabulary for them to be used in producing their writing work. Teachers should enclose these survey results of language learning strategies to their students in order to make their students aware of their own learning strategies and further expose them to other different learning strategies while obtaining other language skills, such as listening, speaking and reading. With these results, teachers could also further assist their students in the process of learning another language skill by guiding them through their preferable strategies. When the students feel confident and comfortable in the learning process, they would retain the knowledge more. Thus, it would lead to a better learning outcome. Furthermore, by conducting extensive research, researchers have found that there is a relationship between the utilisation of learning strategies and various factors like learning settings, learners qualities and opportunities for growth, language capability, or social and educational foundations. Educators ought to investigate new and numerous learning strategies to fully utilize productive development and for learners to discover their own preference in acquiring

second language. Thirusanku and Yunus (2014) also stated that educators should be well informed on how to further assist learners learning experience and ensuring that the learners are equipped with established knowledge on their desired learning strategies. A good language learners utilise numerous strategies and some utilise a blend of the strategies to be applied in their learning (Rusli et al., 2019). To further conclude, teachers and students should be aware of these different language learning strategies in order to further assist them in mastering a second language especially English effectively.

Overall, the article should be minimum 4000words. Kindly add on more to increase the number of words.

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