LEGAL ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS' SELF-ASSESSMENT OF USE OF ENGLISH WRITING STRATEGIES AT HANOI LAW UNIVERSITY

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Article info	Abstract
	This study aimed to examine the self-assessment of the use of English writing strategies by legal English major students at Hanoi Law University. The study employed a quantitative approach to gather data via Google form from 54 legal English major students who were in the course of 46 at Hanoi Law University in the second term of the academic year 2022-2023. The researcher-made instrument - the 5-point Likert scale survey questionnaire - was constructed based on the criteria set by Dornyei and Taguchi (2010) with the confidence level of Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.76 - 0.95$) of fairly high internal consistency. The results reveal that students do not pay serious attention to the preparatory writing stage, they are inclined to concentrate on fulfilling their writing assignments to get their tasks through when investigating the during-writing stage, and they also do not care about the rewriting activities by getting the comments from teachers or peer students in the after writing stage. The finding also points out that there is no difference between male and female students in the use of English writing strategies. This study's findings would serve as a resourceful reference for teachers and students in terms of developing writing skills.

TỰ ĐÁNH GIÁ VIỆC SỬ DỤNG KỸ NĂNG VIẾT TIẾNG ANH CỦA SINH VIÊN CHUYÊN NGÀNH TIẾNG ANH PHÁP LÝ TẠI TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC LUẬT HÀ NỘI

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Thông tin bài viết	Tóm tắt
	Nghiên cứu này nhằm mục đích xem xét sự tự đánh giá việc sử dụng các chiến lược viết tiếng Anh của sinh viên chuyên ngành tiếng Anh pháp lý tại trường Đại học Luật Hà Nội. Nghiên cứu sử dụng phương pháp định lượng để thu thập dữ liệu qua Google form từ 54 sinh viên chuyên ngành tiếng Anh pháp lý khóa 46 tại trường Đại học Luật Hà Nội trong học kỳ 2 năm học 2022-2023. Công cụ do nhà nghiên cứu thực hiện - bảng câu hỏi khảo sát thang đo 5 mức Likert - được xây dựng dựa trên tiêu chí của Dornyei và Taguchi (2010) với độ tin cậy Cronbach's alpha (α = 0,76 - 0,95) có tính nhất quán nội tại khá cao. Kết quả cho thấy sinh viên chưa chú trọng nhiều đến giai đoạn chuẩn bị viết, sinh viên có xu hướng tập trung hoàn thành bài tập viết với ý định hoàn thành nhiệm vụ ở giai đoạn viết thực tế và sinh viên cũng không quan tâm đến việc viết lại bài viết của mình thông qua các ý kiến nhận xét bài viết từ giáo viên hoặc bạn học cùng lớp trong giai đoạn sau khi viết. Kết quả của nghiên cứu cũng chỉ ra rằng không có sự khác biệt giữa sinh viên nam và nữ trong việc sử dụng các chiến lược viết tiếng Anh. Nghiên cứu này sẽ là tài liệu tham khảo hữu ích cho giảng viên và sinh viên trong việc phát triển kỹ năng viết.

1. Introduction

Language testing and assessment play a crucial role in the development of learners acquiring foreign (FL) or second languages (SL). It is true to state that assessment is widely used but commonly confused with testing in current educational practice. It is important to have a glance at how assessment is remarked hence. Assessment can be viewed as an ongoing process that encompasses all classroom activities learners are expected to take part in according to the teachers' instruction inside or outside classrooms. Obviously, learning activities which can take place during a lesson are that students answer a question, offer a comment, read aloud a piece of writing or write a sentence, a short paragraph, and a short essay, their performance is assumed to evaluate by themselves or other people to elicit how successful students are able to perform in these activities [1]. Consequently, compared with

testing, assessment has a feature of broader meaning in English language teaching and learning (ELT). On the other hand, testing is seen as a part of administrative procedures that takes place at identifiable times in a curriculum when students have to demonstrate their best performance to pass certain forms of testing in which their responses are being measured and evaluate to acknowledge their achievements in a course. In a broader sense, tests are viewed as a subset of assessment that students have to undergo during their learning process [e.g., 2; 3; 4]. Therefore, tests can be regarded as useful tools but they are not only one among many procedures and tasks that teachers can employ during the course of learning and teaching process. In other words, teaching is likened to an outer circle in which it contains an assessment circle inside, and the assessment circle again encompasses the testing circle. As such, teaching triggers a series of instruction for students to respond, then assessment occurs and finally official tests can conduct to evaluate the learning outcomes.

Legal English major students' self-assessment of use of writing strategies is crucial for their academic success and professional development. Self-assessment enables students to recognize their strengths and weaknesses and to take appropriate actions to improve their writing skills. Students' self-assessment of their writing skills has a significant impact on their academic performance, as those who rate their writing skills as high perform better academically than those who rate their writing skills as low [5]. Furthermore, the use of writing strategies, such as planning, drafting, revising, and editing, can also enhance students' writing skills. The use of writing strategies significantly improved students' writing skills [6], with the most effective strategies being planning, revising, and editing. The study also revealed that students who used these strategies achieved higher scores on writing assignments than those who did not. Legal English major students can benefit greatly from self-assessment and the use of writing strategies, as they often have to produce high-quality written work in their academic and professional careers. Therefore, it is essential that English majors develop a strong sense of self-awareness and continuously monitor and evaluate their writing skills. This can be achieved through regular reflection and feedback from peers, instructors, and writing centers.

In addition to self-assessment and the use of writing strategies, the development of writing skills also requires exposure to a wide range of texts and genres. English majors should be encouraged to read extensively and critically, as this can help them develop a deeper understanding of language, style, and structure. Moreover, reading can also inspire students' writing and enable them to experiment with different writing styles and techniques. Furthermore, this assessment strategy would provide teachers, materials designers, and curriculum developers with useful information about learners' language and learning needs [7], without pressuring them to undertake tedious needs analysis projects [8]. Self-assessment occurs when students judge their own work to improve performance as they identify discrepancies between current and desired performance. The use of self-assessment as a strategy of self-reflection on the mistakes and weaknesses that the language students conduct in using the language (linguistic), organization of discourse, and style of language use (non-linguistic), which they should improve in the process of their learning [9]. It is considered as innovation on the nature of testing which moves from catching what the students do not know into what they do. It helps them to demonstrate that they are making progress on their writing development, which can encourage their motivation and identify their own strengths and weaknesses [10].

Overall, self-assessment and the use of writing strategies are crucial for legal English major students' academic and professional success. These practices can help students identify their strengths and weaknesses, develop a sense of self-awareness, and continuously improve their writing skills. Moreover, exposure to a wide range of texts and genres can also enhance students' writing skills and enable them to produce high-quality written work. As such, English majors should be encouraged to engage in these practices and to take an active role in their own learning and development. In Vietnam, English writing is one of the most important skills which benefits students from domestic as well as international publications throughout their academic lives. In addition, graduates with satisfactory writing skills are essential in proving them to be qualified workforce. In this sense, facilitating students with good writing techniques is a crucial job of writing teachers. One way to achieve it is enabling them to self-evaluate their own writing skills. Therefore, in this paper, the

researcher decided to implement this study with K46 legal English major students at Faculty of Legal Foreign Languages at Hanoi Law University during the second term of the 2022-2023 academic year. To navigate the focus of this paper, the two following questions are proposed to orient the research.

1. What are common writing strategies do HLU legal English major students prefer to use?

2. How do male and female HLU legal English major students differ in the self-assessment of use of English writing strategies?

The finding of this study would provide insight into the current state of use of writing strategies of legal English major students at HLU so that it might directly be beneficial for the teachers to understand the strengths and weaknesses of their students to implement more effective writing teaching techniques. As such, the findings of this study may have implications for English language policy and curriculum development in other similar contexts

2. Materials and methods

Research design

The quantitative descriptive method approach was basically designed to conduct a cross-sectional study of representative legal English major students from K46 course at Hanoi Law University during the second term of the 2022-2023 academic year. The study population consisted of approximately 124 English students, but due to time and budget constraints, the researchers were only able to collect information from a sample of 54 respondents using the stratified sampling formula (Slovin's formula). To make it easier for the participants, the researcher used an active Google form link to administer the questionnaire, which was sent to the participants' addresses over a period of two weeks. The data obtained from the questionnaire was analyzed using IBM SPSS v.25 application. The researcher utilized the findings from the data to arrive at some conclusions and implications.

Participants

The participants were selected from one course, i.e., K46 with 124 via the stratified sampling method to estimate the expected sampling size. By adopting Slovin's formula ($n = N/(1+N*(e)^2)$ with e = ±5%, 54 legal English major students out of 124 ones from

K46 course had been selected. Regarding gender, the majority of the participants are females - 39 students - accounting for 72.2%, and the rest includes 15 male students, equivalent to 27.8%. On taking their residence into account, students mostly come from rural areas (n = 26; same as 48.1%). Next, 20 students (equal to 37%) are from urban areas, and students from mountainous areas make up 14.8% or 8 learners. Regarding the duration of engaging in learning English, all participants have been learning English for less than 15 years.

Research instruments

This study employed the researcher-made questionnaire basing on the factual and behavioural criteria recommended by Dörnyei and Taguchi [11]. For the survey questionnaire, it was constructed with 3 major groups concerning the use of performance of writing strategies. The questionnaire was internally constructed and underwent content validation by three experts in English language teaching and legal practitioners. A dry run was conducted with a group of 20 students to validate the strengths and weaknesses of the questionnaires, which was then fine-tuned accordingly. To ensure internal consistency reliability, a range of confidence level (α = 0.76 - 0.95, fairly high) based on Cronbach's alpha was used to retain the statements.

Data collection and analysis

The demographic data was collected, tabulated, analyzed and interpreted using descriptive statistics. Specially, frequency count and percentage were used to treat the profile of the respondents. Descriptive statistics was employed to address five - Likert-scale statements to find out the means and standard deviations relevant to the interval scales such as never or almost never true/ never (1.0 - 1.80), usually not true/ rarely (1.81 - 2.60), somewhat true/sometimes (2.61 - 3.40), usually true/ often (3.41 - 4.20), and always or almost always true/ most often (4.21 - 5.0).

3. Results and Discussion

On analyzing the use of learning strategies containing 41 items totally grouped into three categories: Before Writing (12 statements), While Writing (14 messages), and After Writing (15 items), it is worth noting that the mean scores range from 2.50 to 4.14, with a weighted mean of 3.32, indicating that students are somehow aware of the importance of using writing strategies

to some extent. The standard deviations ranging from .641 to .950, with a average standard deviation of .782 indicate that the choice among the participation is not very different. These figures are all under 1.0 per cent.

Regarding to the category of the before writing stage, the results show that the most frequently used strategies are making plans and notes in the native language (M = 3.74; SD = .842) and brainstorming and writing down ideas before writing (M = 3.57; SD = .747). The least used strategies are making a timetable for when to do the writing (M = 2.55; SD = .669) and doing extra study outside the classroom to improve writing (M = 2.50; SD = .705). These results suggest that students tend to rely more on pre-writing activities that involve generating ideas and organizing them than on time management and self-directed learning. Overall, students do not spend much time preparing for their pieces of writing, their readiness to write is not very high, which should be of the teachers' efforts to encourage the students to have well-prepared psychosphere to be proactive to involve in the writing process, especially in this before writing stage. Some other studies [3; 12; 13] also emphasize the need to evoke student interests in raising the sense of initiative to get ready in the before writing stage.

As regards the category of the while writing stage, it is clearly presented in Table 1 that the most frequently used strategies are editing for organization (M = 3.88; SD = .739), and editing for content (M = 3.72; SD = .852). The least used strategies are making up new words if they do not know the right ones in English (M = 2.99; SD = .699), and thinking about how learning to write well in English will help them succeed in other courses (M = 2.52; SD = .752). In general, the results from Table 1 denote that students tend to focus more on some features of writing such as organization and content than on the development of language skills and awareness of the benefits of learning to write well in English. Specially, students tent to gain knowledge about the format of writing pieces, they know how to organize the ideas in a writing piece, and they could write to fulfil their homework assignments or writing exams. Unfortunately, they still have problems with improving language skills; that is, they are not good at writing skills such as the inadequate use of word choice or lexical variety. Besides, students have low motivational attitudes to acknowledge the importance of mastering English writing skills. It is important for

students of English to have competent English writing skills as they have to write a lot in their prospective workplaces, which is also affirmed in other studies [2; 4; 12]. In general, students are inclined to focus more on the while writing stage than the before writing one.

Concerning the category of the after writing stage, the results in Table 1 reveal that the most frequently used strategies are going back to writing to revise and improve organization (M = 4.14; SD = .812), and giving themselves a reward when they have finished writing (M = 3.75; SD = .661). The least used strategies are discussing their work with other students to get feedback (M = 2.45; SD = .753) and using a grammar book after finishing writing a draft (M = 2.85; SD = .695). The after writing stage concentrates on the revision step when students have finished a piece of writing. As writing skills encompass the process of writing and rewriting procedures; that is, students produce a first version then this writing piece receives feedbacks from their teachers' or peer assessment. After receiving these comments, students consider the appropriateness, then they rewrite their writing piece the second time. As glimpsed from Table 1, it is generally assumed that students tend to rely more on self-evaluation and self-reward than on peer feedback and self-correction. This finding is also in line with the previous research results [10; 14; 15].

On the whole, by looking at Table 1, it is obvious that there are numerous writing strategies that students have been implementing in their works, not just for the purpose of finishing their assignments but also to improve their relevant skills, in other courses. In terms of the former, students primarily write in their native language and only occasionally in English for both pleasure and notes. They use bilingual and English-English dictionaries and grammar books for assistance. Preparation is important, with students reviewing class notes, discussing ideas with peers or teachers, and brainstorming in their native language. When finished, they revise and improve organization, edit grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation, and seek feedback from teachers. This is in line with the research of Ferris [15], claiming that prewriting, drafting, and revising help students generate ideas and organize their thoughts before writing. It is worth mentioning that the external instruction and advice they seek are mostly from teachers, then they combined it with self-assessment to prepare themselves better

for writing in the future. The importance of teachers was also claimed in the study conducted by Min and Lo [16], which suggested that teachers can design argumentative writing tasks and peer review in the classroom to promote critical thinking and writing development among EFL students. Without these external evaluations, most of the time students are not aware of their own assessing strategies in writing or are too hesitant to discuss their work, rather they repeat the writing process that involved multiple steps (preparing, writing, revising) until seeing improvements, and they are not in concern about finding a method to develop those steps to a higher level by themselves. This correlation between the teacher's ability to evaluate the student's competency and the EFL learners' writing ability was proved in the previous work of Mazloomi and Khabiri [1].

Table 1. Use of performance of writing strategies

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Explanation
Before writing stage				
I review my class notes, handouts, and assignment requirements before beginning to write.	54	2.76	.950	sometimes
I consider the task or assignment and instructions carefully before writing.	54	3.18	.833	sometimes
I discuss what I am going to write with other students or my teacher.	54	2.72	.661	sometimes
I brainstorm and write down ideas before I begin to write.	54	3.57	.747	often
I make plans and notes in my native language before writing.	54	3.74	.842	often
I make an outline or plan in English.	54	2.86	.778	sometimes
I make a timetable for when I will do my writing.	54	2.55	.669	rarely
Before writing the first draft, I do extra study outside the classroom to improve my writing.	54	2.50	.705	rarely
I think of the relationships between what I already know and new things that I learn.	54	3.02	.652	sometimes
I notice vocabulary related to a topic that I will write about and try to remember the words.	54	3.24	.811	sometimes
I use a dictionary to check things I am not sure about before I write.	54	2.98	.868	sometimes
I use a grammar book to check things I am not sure about before I write.	54	2.97	.776	sometimes
While writing stage				
I try to write in a comfortable, quiet place where I can concentrate.	54	2.87	.882	sometimes
I use my background knowledge (world) knowledge to help me develop my ideas.	54	3.52	.799	often

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Explanation
I like to write in my native language first and then translate it into English.	54	3.69	.760	often
I like to write a draft in my native language first and then translate it into English.	54	3.50	.795	often
I edit for content (ideas) as I am writing.	54	3.72	.852	often
I edit for organization as I am writing.	54	3.88	.739	often
I like to change, or make my ideas clearer as I am writing.	54	3.88	.661	often
I use a dictionary to check things I am not sure about when I write.	54	3.77	.749	often
I use a grammar book to check things I am not sure about when I write.	54	3.68	.881	often
If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.	54	4.01	.779	often
I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English when I am writing.	54	2.99	.699	sometimes
I make my writing assignments fun for myself.	54	3.10	.665	sometimes
I think about how learning to write well in English will help me succeed in my other courses.	54	2.52	.752	rarely
I encourage myself by telling myself that I can do well.	54	2.94	.809	sometimes
After writing stage				
I give myself a reward when I have finished writing.	54	3.75	.661	often
I go back to my writing to revise the content and make my ideas clearer.	54	2.97	.772	sometimes
I go back to my writing to revise and improve my organization.	54	4.14	.812	often
I go back to my writing to edit the grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation.	54	3.58	.779	often
I use a dictionary after I finish writing a draft.	54	3.69	.809	often
I use a grammar book after I finish writing a draft.	54	2.85	.695	sometimes
I discuss my work with other students to get feedback on how I can improve it.	54	2.45	.753	rarely
I discuss my work with my teacher to get feedback on how I can improve it.	54	3.14	.832	sometimes
I evaluate others students' writing and give them feedback on how they can improve it.	54	2.74	.663	sometimes

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Explanation
I visit the campus Writing Center to get feedback from a tutor.	54	2.47	.740	rarely
If I do not understand a comment when getting feedback, I ask the person to explain it to me.	54	3.71	.648	often
I make notes or try to remember feedback I get so I can use it the next time I write.	54	3.22	.775	rarely
I record the types of errors I have made so I do not keep making the same types of errors.	54	2.68	.869	sometimes
I read the feedback from my previous writing and use this feedback in my next writing.	54	2.87	.755	sometimes
I use the feedback to help with my other English skills (reading, speaking, and listening).	54	3.28	.855	sometimes

Table 2 indicates the contrastive comparison between male and female respondents in terms of the self-assessment of use of English writing strategies. It is clear to recognize that the Sig. values in three stages, which are higher than .005, denote the similar viewpoints among them. In other words, there is no difference in their choices of the use of English writing strategies. To further strengthen this conclusion, the F. value in Before writing is 1.256, which does not exceed 4.07 in the degrees of freedom (df) value, while writing is 0.674, equivalent to 4.28 df. value, and finally after writing is 3.060, similar to 4.02 df. value assets that these students share the similarity in the choice of the self-assessment of use of English writing strategies. In comparison with the findings from other studies [4; 8; 18], they are also consistent with this confirmation.

Table 2. The differences between gender in regard to the self-assessment of use of English writing strategies

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Before writing stage	Between Groups	20.225	1	10.1125	1.256	.288
	Within Groups	346.034	43	8.047		
	Total	366.259	44			
While writing stage	Between Groups	13.879	1	6.940	.0674	.346
	Within Groups	236.721	23	10.292		
	Total	250.600	24			
After writing stage	Between Groups	83.080	1	41.540	3.060	.957
	Within Groups	729.124	53	13.575		
	Total	942.204	54			

4. Conclusion

When investigating legal English major students' self-assessment of use of writing strategies, it is concluded that students seem not to be serious in preparation for the before writing stage, they do not think it is necessary to do research carefully before starting to write what they are expected to perform. For the while writing stage, students are somewhat aware of trying to write in acceptable organization and content as required; however, they have not fully perceived the importance of English writing skills and how to develop these skills. In regard to the after writing stage, students

do not seek for the corrective feedbacks from others such as teachers' or peer assessments on their writing pieces. More seriously, they are likely to underestimate the importance of writing and rewriting process. To examine whether make and female students on the self-assessment of use of English writing strategies, the finding indicate that there is no difference among the students in the use of English writing strategies.

Students are expected to recognize the importance of three writing stages. It is more effective to incorporate specialized, professional training in English subjects to further improve writing skills. Both teachers and students should have a mutual understanding about how to teach and learn writing skills, as well as self-assessment. Students should concentrate on the particular writing requirements and conventions of legal English. Furthermore, teachers should provide students with appropriate writing strategies, such as outlining, drafting, and editing. Breaking down the writing process into manageable steps and providing guidance and feedback allows students to reflect on their writing process and identify areas for improvement. Moreover, providing students with resources and materials to practice and enhance their writing skills can also prove advantageous.

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