



PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING ENGLISH WRITING PROFICIENCY AMONG ESL LEARNERS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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Abstract:

This Systematic Literature Review (SLR) examines pedagogical strategies to enhance writing skills among English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. Recognizing the growing significance of effective writing instruction in ESL contexts, the review addresses the need for a comprehensive understanding of current strategies and interventions. Applying the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) protocol, a rigorous search was conducted across two major academic databases, Scopus and ERIC, yielding 33 primary studies for inclusion. The selection process involved systematic screening, eligibility checks, and Quality Assessment (QA) to ensure the relevance and credibility of the studies. The findings were organized into three key thematic areas: (1) Metacognitive Strategies, Self-Regulation, and Feedback, highlighting the role of learners' reflective practices and instructor feedback in improving writing proficiency; (2) Technological Tools and Innovative Approaches, highlighting the integration of digital resources and creative methods to facilitate writing development; and (3) Writing Challenges, Proficiency Development, and Special Learner Groups, exploring the barriers faced by diverse learners and strategies tailored to address varying proficiency levels. The review reveals that while significant progress has been made in implementing effective pedagogical strategies, gaps remain in addressing the needs of special learner groups and in the consistent application of technology across varied learning environments. Overall, this review underscores the significance of targeted, adaptive pedagogical interventions to

support ESL learners' writing proficiency and provides insights for future research and instructional practices.

Keywords:

Pedagogical Strategies, Writing Skills

Introduction

Mastering English writing proficiency has become a critical skill for learners in a world increasingly demanding effective communication across academic, professional, and social domains (Fareed et al., 2016). Writing, often regarded as one of the most complex language skills, requires linguistic accuracy, cognitive organization, and cultural awareness. For English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, achieving proficiency in writing is often more challenging than acquiring speaking, reading, or listening skills due to the intricate integration of grammar, vocabulary, coherence, and critical thinking involved. Consequently, pedagogical strategies that effectively enhance ESL learners' writing abilities have gained significant attention among educators and researchers. Notably, various approaches have been introduced, including discipline-specific writing instruction (Casanave & Hubbard, 1992), collaborative learning practices (Williamson et al., 2020), metacognitive strategies (Mohd Dollah et al., 2023), differentiated instruction, and the integration of digital technologies. These strategies have demonstrated varying degrees of success in improving writing outcomes, reflecting an ongoing commitment to refining teaching methodologies. However, consistent and sustainable improvements in ESL writing proficiency remain elusive despite these efforts. This highlights the need for more comprehensive and adaptable instructional models that cater to learners' diverse needs across different contexts.

Although current research has contributed valuable insights into pedagogical practices for ESL writing instruction, several critical gaps and unresolved issues persist. While interventions such as digital storytelling, structured feedback, and metacognitive strategy training have demonstrated potential in improving ESL learners' writing skills, many studies remain limited to narrow educational contexts, raising concerns about the generalizability of their findings (Mohd Dollah et al., 2023; Meletiadiou, 2022; Siu et al., 2023). Moreover, despite the widespread promotion of collaborative writing, feedback mechanisms, and technology-enhanced learning tools, challenges related to learner autonomy, unequal participation, digital literacy, and long-term skill retention continue to surface (Singh et al., 2020; Gong, 2023; John, 2024). Additionally, longitudinal studies do not examine how pedagogical strategies interact over time to support sustained writing development, especially in increasingly digital learning environments (Williamson et al., 2020; Hashim et al., 20; Vula et al., 2024). In light of these issues, this article aims to identify the most effective pedagogical strategies for enhancing ESL writing proficiency across diverse contexts by critically analyzing current approaches. This includes highlighting key success factors and proposing an integrative instructional framework that promotes linguistic growth and learner independence.

Literature Review

A growing body of literature explores pedagogical strategies to improve English writing proficiency among ESL learners, highlighting the role of metacognitive strategies, technological tools, and learner autonomy. Razzaq and Hamzah (2023a) underscored the

effectiveness of metacognitive strategies such as planning and evaluation, particularly in fostering willingness to write and improving writing performance. Their findings are supported by Riwayatiningasih et al. (2025), who demonstrated that specific strategies like planning enhance coherence, monitoring improves grammatical accuracy, and evaluation boosts clarity in writing. Meanwhile, Han (2024) and Khan and Kumar (2023) confirmed that metacognitive instruction enhances writing ability and motivation while encouraging critical thinking and content organization, especially during remote learning. At the same time, Liu et al. (2022) noted that flipping writing instruction with metacognitive guidance promotes collaboration and quality output. Additionally, El Madani et al. (2024) discovered a significant correlation between metacognitive awareness and overall writing proficiency. Furthermore, Dinsa (2023) suggested the broad applicability of these strategies across learner demographics. Razzaq and Hamzah (2023b) further supported the positive effects of metacognitive self-evaluation and willingness to write on ESL learners' performance. In addition, Ke and Zhou (2024) contributed to this discussion by revealing how emotional transformations from a focus on form to content during revision improve writing quality and learner self-efficacy.

The integration of digital tools and Artificial Intelligence (AI) into writing instruction continues to receive considerable attention for its potential to engage learners and enhance various aspects of writing. Al Fraidan (2025) and Shen et al. (2023) reported that AI-supported tools improved writing clarity, structure, and motivation, particularly through immediate feedback and reinforcement. Conversely, Alharbi (2023) and Chomicz (2024) discussed how AI-enabled Machine Translation (MT) tools, like ChatGPT or Google Translate, enhance learners' confidence and accuracy, though they also point to over-reliance as a potential drawback. Yoon and Chon (2022) also examined how learners at different proficiency levels use various strategies to correct MT errors. This reveals that even lower-proficiency learners can improve their output with multiple correction approaches. Notably, Cheng (2023) demonstrated the benefits of paraphrasing tools in enhancing lexical and structural skills, while Meletiadou (2022) asserted how Educational Digital Storytelling (EDS) fosters self-confidence, intercultural awareness, and writing fluency. In addition, Guan et al. (2024) introduced a Virtual Reality (VR)-based approach that enhances empathy and expressive richness, emphasizing the value of immersive technologies in developing nuanced writing capabilities.

Feedback strategies suggest that teacher-led and peer-mediated play a critical role in enhancing writing proficiency and learner agency. Yang, Zhang, and Dixon (2023) stressed the role of process-oriented feedback in improving writing motivation and strategic thinking. Similarly, Yang, Liu, and Xu (2022) illustrated how Self-Regulated Learning (SRL)-based feedback boosts learners' planning, monitoring, and emotional regulation during writing tasks. Meanwhile, Kaloustian and Pladevall-Ballester (2024) (Kaloustian & Pladevall-Ballester, 2024) explored corrective feedback strategies among young learners, noting a preference for peer and self-correction methods. Furthermore, Duong and Nguyen (2022) observed that teachers favor comprehensive feedback to address content, organization, and language use simultaneously. Papi, Tabari, and Sato (2024) argued that feedback's impact is shaped by students' willingness to seek and act upon it. Phuong et al. (2023) discovered that analytic self-assessment outperforms peer-assessment in improving writing content and language accuracy. Takarroucht (2022) reported that self-assessment fosters higher self-efficacy. In line with this, Vula, Tyfekçi, and Biblekaj (2024) advocated embedding reflective writing tasks to strengthen learner confidence and ownership of writing growth.

Other pedagogical innovations also contribute to the advancement of ESL writing proficiency. Yang (2024) introduced a socio-constructivist writing model that fosters motivation and self-regulation through collaborative projects. Farooqi (2024) suggested word-count tracking as a means to improve writing fluency and engagement. Nguyen and Van Vu (2024) identified common errors in legal writing and advocate for targeted syntactic instruction, while Arihastha (2023) revealed that non-English majors face particular struggles in argumentative writing. This is particularly true in vocabulary, grammar, and coherence, highlighting the need for tailored interventions. Robillos (2023) explored translanguaging strategies within metacognitive instruction, suggesting improved grammar and structure. Mahmood, Sharif, and Aleem (2024) recommended blended learning models that balance digital and traditional methods to reinforce vocabulary and grammar skills. Finally, Jang (2022) and Alshakhi and Albalawi (2024) emphasized the significance of learner agency and task-based assessment in creating more socially and cognitively engaging writing experiences.

Research Question

Research questions play a vital role in an SLR as they lay the groundwork and set the direction for the entire process. They help define the scope and focus of the review, guiding decisions about which studies should be included or excluded. This ensures the review stays relevant, specific, and accurate to its intended purpose. Furthermore, a well-crafted research question makes the literature search more thorough and organized, helping to capture all important studies and minimizing potential biases. It also provides a clear structure for categorizing and analyzing the data, allowing for meaningful insights and stronger conclusions. Notably, clear research questions keep the review focused, prevent it from becoming too broad or unclear, and make the final findings more practical and applicable. Moreover, having precise questions improves the transparency and reproducibility of the review, enabling other researchers to follow the same path to confirm results or build on the work. In short, strong research questions are the backbone of a well-organized, credible, and impactful SLR, whether the aim is to highlight gaps, assess interventions, or explore trends in a field.

The Population, Interest, and Context (PICO) framework helps shape research questions in a clear and systematic way by breaking down key parts of the study. This structure ensures that the research questions are sharply focused and well-defined, making it easier to search for relevant studies or design new ones. Based on this approach, this study has developed the following three research questions:

- 1) How do metacognitive strategies, self-regulation, and feedback influence the writing skill development of ESL learners?
- 2) What is the impact of technological tools and innovative pedagogical approaches on enhancing the writing skills of ESL learners?
- 3) What writing challenges do ESL learners, particularly special learner groups, face, and how can pedagogical strategies support their proficiency development?

Materials and Methods

When conducting SLRs, researchers often rely on the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework. PRISMA helps ensure that the review process remains transparent, thorough, and consistent from start to finish. By following its guidelines, researchers can strengthen the accuracy and rigor of their work, especially when it

comes to systematically identifying, screening, and selecting studies for inclusion. The framework also emphasizes the value of randomized studies, recognizing their role in reducing bias and offering solid evidence to support the findings. For this analysis, two major databases, Scopus and ERIC, were preferred due to their broad coverage and reliable sources.

The PRISMA process unfolds across four main stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and data abstraction. In the identification stage, researchers search databases to gather all potentially relevant studies. The screening stage follows, where each study is reviewed against set criteria to filter out irrelevant or low-quality studies. Consequently, the remaining studies are carefully assessed in the eligibility stage to confirm they meet all the inclusion requirements. Finally, in the data abstraction stage, researchers extract and synthesize key information from the selected studies, laying the groundwork for meaningful and credible conclusions. By following this structured approach, researchers can conduct systematic reviews with greater confidence, producing reliable and valuable results for future research and practice.

Identification

Essential phases of the systematic review process were used in this study to gather a substantial amount of pertinent literature. Keyword selection was the first step in the procedure, followed by utilizing dictionaries, thesauri, encyclopedias, and prior research to identify similar terms. Search strings were created for the ERIC and Scopus databases when all pertinent terms were identified (Table 1). From the two databases, 259 papers pertinent to the study issue were yielded at this first stage of the systematic review.

Table 1: The Search String

Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (strategies AND (enhance* OR improve*) AND writing AND (esl OR efl) AND learners) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "SOC") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "ARTS") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "PSYC")) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE, "final")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE, "j")) AND (LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD, "Writing Performance") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD, "Writing Skill") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD, "Writing") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD, "Writing Skills") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD, "L2 Writing") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD, "Writing Strategies") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD, "Collaborative Writing") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD, "Second Language Writing") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD, "Essay Writing") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD, "ESL Writing Strategy") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD, "ESL Learners")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2022) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2023) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2024) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2025)) Date of Access: April 2025
ERIC	strategies AND (enhance* OR improve*) AND writing AND (esl OR efl) AND learners Date of Access: April 2025

Screening

In the screening stage, potentially relevant research articles are carefully reviewed to ensure they align with the predetermined research questions. For this review, the selection of studies was focused specifically on my topic: *Pedagogical Strategies for Enhancing English Writing Proficiency among ESL Learners*. During this phase, duplicate entries were also identified and removed. After an initial round of screening, 147 publications were excluded, leaving 112 articles for further evaluation based on specific inclusion and exclusion criteria (Table 2).

The first major inclusion criterion was that the source had to be literature offering substantial insights, such as book series, book reviews, meta-syntheses, meta-analyses, conference proceedings, and book chapters not covered in the latest research. Note that only publications written in English and published between 2022 and 2025 were considered for the review. No additional publications were excluded due to duplication at this point.

Table 2: The Selection Criterion is Searching

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	English	Non-English
Time line	2022 – 2025	< 2022
Literature type	Journal (Article)	Conference, Book, Review
Publication Stage	Final	In Press
Subject Area	Social Science, Arts and Humanities, Psychology	Besides Social Science, Arts and Humanities, Psychology

Eligibility

In the third step, known as the eligibility phase, 112 articles were prepared for review. During this stage, the titles and key content of all articles were carefully examined to ensure they met the inclusion criteria and aligned with the current research objectives. Consequently, 79 articles were excluded as they were not qualified due to the out-of-field, title not significant, abstract not related to the study's objective, and no full text access was discovered on empirical evidence. As a result, a total of 33 articles remain for the upcoming review.

Data Abstraction and Analysis

An integrative analysis approach was used in this study as one of the key strategies to examine and synthesize findings from various research designs, particularly those involving quantitative methods. The main aim was to identify key topics and subtopics relevant to the study. The process began with the data collection stage, which laid the foundation for developing the themes. The authors carefully reviewed 33 selected publications, analyzing them for statements and information connected to the focus of the study.

Following this, the authors evaluated the major existing research on strategies for improving English writing proficiency. They closely examined the methodologies employed and the findings reported in these studies. Building on this evidence, the lead author worked collaboratively with the co-authors to develop meaningful themes that fit the study's context. A detailed log was maintained throughout the data analysis process to document interpretations, reflections, puzzles, and any emerging insights related to the data. Finally, the authors compared their findings to examine for any inconsistencies in the development of

themes. Whenever differences in interpretation arose, they were openly discussed among the authors to reach a consensus.

Table 3: Number and Details of Primary Studies (PS) Database

No	Authors	Title	Year	Source title	Scopus ERIC
1	Razzaq S.; Hamzah M.H.	Unraveling the impact of metacognitive planning on writing performance through willingness to write in Pakistani ESL learners: a mixed-methods study	2023	Sri Lanka Journal of Social Sciences	/
2	Guan J.-Q.; Ying S.-F.; Zhang M.-L.; Hwang G.-J.	From experience to empathy: An empathetic VR-based learning approach to improving EFL learners' empathy and writing performance	2024	Computers and Education	/
3	Razzaq S.; Hamzah M.H.	Assessing Metacognitive Strategies: The Influence of Evaluation on Writing Performance among Pakistani ESL Learners—A Comprehensive Mixed-Methods Study	2023	Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics	/
4	Robillos R.J.	Exploring Translanguaging during Metacognitive Strategy Use on L2 Listening and Writing Skills	2023	Journal of Language and Education	/
5	Alshakhi A.; Albalawi M.	Task-Based Language Assessment: A Case Study in Effectiveness in EFL Contexts	2024	Forum for Linguistic Studies	/
6	Ke Y.; Zhou X. F	Unlocking the core revision of writing assessment: EFL learner' emotional transformation from form focus to content orientation	2024	BMC Psychology	/
7	Yoon C.W.; Chon Y.V.	Machine Translation Errors and L2 Learners' Correction Strategies by Error Type and English Proficiency	2022	English Teaching(Sou th Korea)	/
8	Yang M.	Fostering EFL university students' motivation and self-regulated learning in writing: A socio-constructivist approach	2024	System	/
9	Takarroucht K. F	The Effect of Self-assessment on the Development of EFL	2022	International Journal of	/

No	Authors	Title	Year	Source title	Scopus ERIC
10	Duong T.M.; Nguyen T.N.	Writing Self-Efficacy: A Case of Algerian Higher Education Providing written corrective feedback in IELTS writing task 2: EFL teachers' practices	2022	Language Education Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences	/
11	Khan R.M.I.; Kumar T.	Metacognitive strategies use in fostering EFL learners' writing skill during remote learning	2023	International Journal of Innovation and Learning	/
12	Cheng Y.-H.	Exploring the Effects of Tool-Assisted Paraphrasing Strategy Instruction on EFL Learners' Paraphrasing Performance	2023	Educational Technology and Society	/
13	Al Fraidan A.	AI and Uncertain Motivation: Hidden allies that impact EFL argumentative essays using the Toulmin Model	2025	Acta Psychologica	/
14	Nguyen A.N.; Van Vu T.	Typical linguistic errors committed by tertiary students in legal written outputs; [Типові мовні помилки студентів вищих навчальних закладів у письмових текстах юридичного змісту.]	2024	East European Journal of Psycholinguistics	/
15	Vula E.; Tyfekçi N.; Biblekaj L.	Strategies for Enhancing ESL Writing Proficiency: Insights from a Pre-University Educational Setting	2024	Journal of Educational and Social Research	/
16	Yang L.F.; Zhang L.J.; Dixon H.R.	Understanding the impact of teacher feedback on EFL students' use of self-regulated writing strategies	2023	Journal of Second Language Writing	/
17	Farooqi S.-U.- H.	Motivational implications of the word-count tracking strategy for improving writing fluency: A study of Saudi undergraduate EFL learners	2024	Journal of Pedagogical Research	/
18	Alharbi W.	The use and abuse of artificial intelligence-enabled machine translation in the EFL classroom: An exploratory study	2023	Journal of Education and e-Learning Research	/

No	Authors	Title	Year	Source title	Scopus ERIC
19	Shen C.; Shi P.; Guo J.; Xu S.; Tian J.	From process to product: writing engagement and performance of EFL learners under computer-generated feedback instruction	2023	Frontiers in Psychology	/
20	Han L.	Metacognitive Writing Strategy Instruction in the EFL Context: Focus on Writing Performance and Motivation	2024	SAGE Open	/
21	Kaloustian S.; Pladevall-Ballester E.	Challenges in Written Corrective Feedback: Young EFL Learners' Attitudes and Perceptions of the Boomerang WCF Strategy	2024	Centre for Applied Linguistics Research Journal	/
22	Dinsa M.T.	EFL students' writing strategies use in Ethiopia: Gender and year level	2023	Cogent Education	/
23	Riwayatiningsih R.; Yuliasri I.; Rukmini D.; Pratama H.	The Differential Impact of Specific Metacognitive Strategies on EFL Academic Writing Performance	2025	Forum for Linguistic Studies	/
24	Jang J.	An exploratory study on learner agency and second language writing practices of Korean high school students	2022	Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education	/
25	El Madani E.M.; Larouz M.; Fagroud M.; Saadallah Z.	The Relationship between Writing Proficiency in English and Metacognitive Awareness of Writing Strategies among EFL University Students	2024	Jurnal Arbitrer	/
26	Arihasta D.	NON-ENGLISH MAJORS UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING AT MAE FAH LUANG UNIVERSITY THAILAND	2023	LLT Journal: Journal on Language and Language Teaching	/
27	Papi M.; Abdi Tabari M.; Sato M.	The importance of seeking feedback for benefiting from feedback: A case of second language writing	2024	Modern Language Journal	/

No	Authors	Title	Year	Source title	Scopus	ERIC
28	Chomicz M.	Enhancing EFL writing skills for adult Deaf and hard of hearing individuals	2024	Frontiers in Education	/	
29	Mahmood S.; Sharif H.; Aleem F.	Learning paragraph writing electronically: An insight into impact of blended learning strategies on ESL learners in Pakistan	2024	Forum for Linguistic Studies	/	
30	Liu G.-Z.; Rahimi M.; Fathi J.	Flipping writing metacognitive strategies and writing skills in an English as a foreign language collaborative writing context: a mixed-methods study	2022	Journal of Computer Assisted Learning	/	
31	Phuong H.Y.; Phan Q.T.; Le T.T.	The effects of using analytical rubrics in peer and self-assessment on EFL students' writing proficiency: a Vietnamese contextual study	2023	Language Testing in Asia	/	
32	Yang L.F.; Liu Y.; Xu Z.	Examining the effects of self-regulated learning-based teacher feedback on English-as-a-foreign-language learners' self-regulated writing strategies and writing performance	2022	Frontiers in Psychology	/	
33	Meletiadou E.	Using Educational Digital Storytelling to Enhance Multilingual Students' Writing Skills in Higher Education	2022	IAFOR Journal of Education	/	/

Quality of Appraisal

Following the guidelines set by Kitchenham (2007), it was necessary to assess the quality of the research presented and perform a quantitative comparison after selecting the primary studies. In this study, we adopted the Quality Assessment (QA) approach from Abouzahra et al. (2020), which uses six key QA criteria for evaluating studies in our SLR.

Each criterion is rated using a three-point scale:

- “Yes” (Y) – scored as 1 if the criterion is fully met,
- “Partly” (P) – scored as 0.5 if the criterion is somewhat addressed but with noticeable gaps,
- “No” (N) – scored as 0 if the criterion is not met at all.

The six QA criteria are:

- QA1: Is the purpose of the study clearly stated?

- QA2: Is the interest and usefulness of the work clearly presented?
- QA3: Is the study methodology clearly established?
- QA4: Are the concepts and approaches clearly defined?
- QA5: Is the work compared and benchmarked against other similar studies?
- QA6: Are the limitations of the study clearly acknowledged?

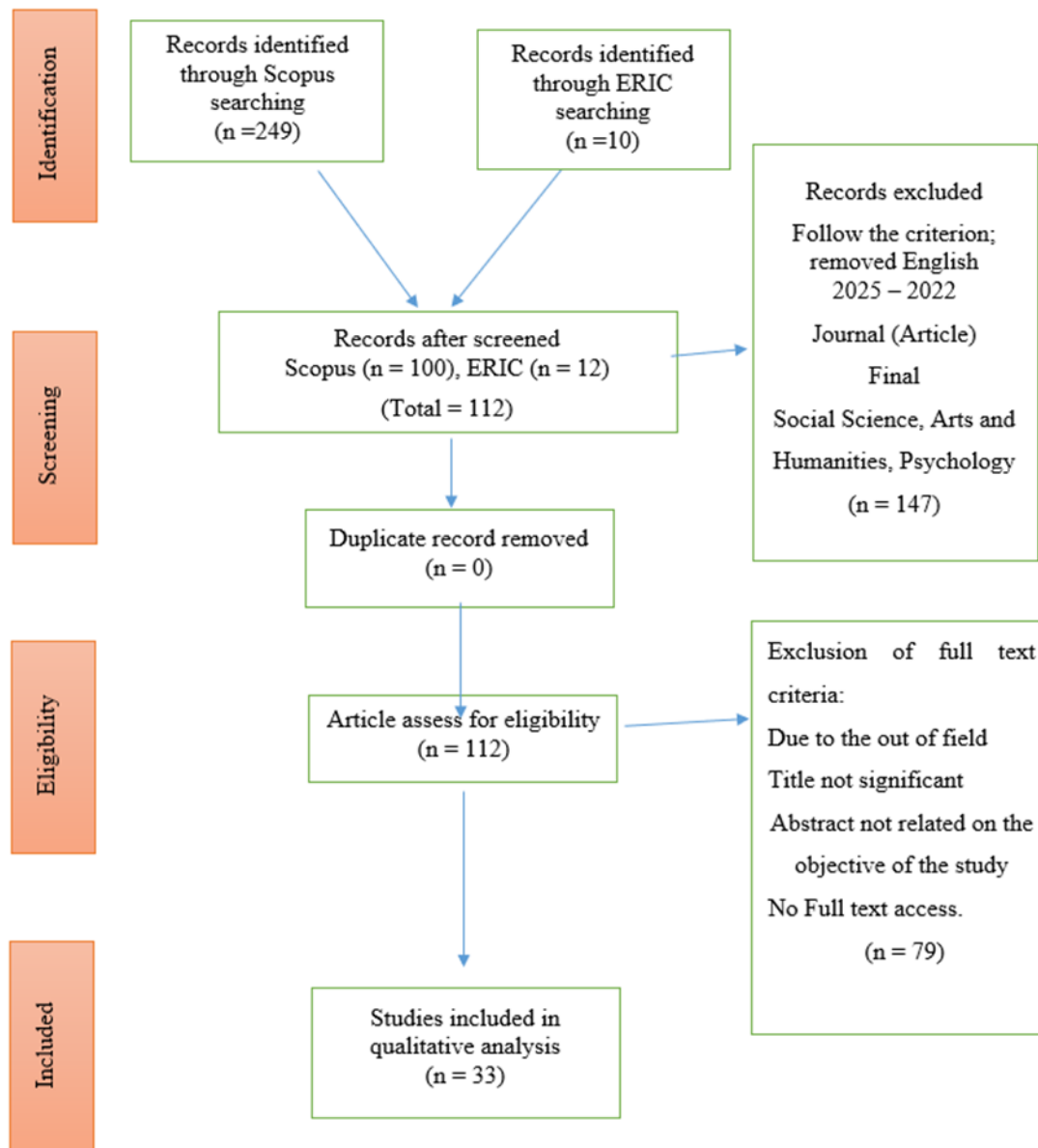


Figure 1: Flow Diagram of the Proposed Searching Study

Result and Finding

Based on the QA of PS1 to PS33, it is evident that most of the selected papers demonstrated strong clarity in stating the purpose of their study (QA1), presenting the interest and usefulness of the work (QA2), establishing the study methodology (QA3), and clearly defining key concepts (QA4). These strengths reflect high academic rigor, with most papers scoring between 83.33% and 91.67%. However, when analyzing QA5 and QA6, a consistent pattern emerges: while some papers partially compared to existing studies (QA5), comprehensive benchmarking against similar research was often limited. Similarly, while several papers briefly mentioned limitations, few offered an in-depth critique of their methodological or contextual weaknesses (QA6). These partial fulfillments suggest that while research designs and contributions were generally strong, critical reflection and positioning within broader scholarly dialogues were areas of relative weakness across the sample.

Overall, the analysis reveals that the selected body of literature exhibits a solid foundation in research design and theoretical framing but could improve in comparative analysis and transparent discussion of study limitations. Studies that scored higher, particularly those at 91.67%, tended to incorporate explicit comparisons between different groups (e.g., experimental vs. control groups) and offered some acknowledgement of methodological constraints. Although studies scoring 83.33% typically excelled in articulating research goals, they fell short in comparing results with prior work or discussing study limitations. This pattern underscores the significance of encouraging future researchers to design clear and methodologically sound studies and more critically evaluate and situate their findings within the existing body of knowledge, thereby enhancing the robustness and applicability of their contributions.

Table 4: Results of Assessment Performance for Selected Primary Studies

Primary Study	QA1	QA2	QA3	QA4	QA5	QA6	Total Mark	Percentage (%)
PS1 (Razzaq & Hamzah, 2023)	1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	5.0	83.33%
PS2 (Guan et al., 2024)	1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	5.0	83.33%
PS3 (Razzaq & Hamzah, 2023)	1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	5.0	83.33%
PS4 (Robillos, 2023)	1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	5.0	83.33%
PS5 (Alshakhi & Albalawi, 2024)	1	1	1	1	0.5	0	4.5	75%
PS6 (Ke & Zhou, 2024)	1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	5.0	83.33%
PS7 (Yoon & Chon, 2022)	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	5.5	91.67%
PS8 (Yang, 2024)	1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	5.0	83.33%
PS9 (Takarroucht, 2022)	1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	5.0	83.33%
PS10 (Duong & Nguyen, 2022)	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	5.5	91.67%
PS11 (Khan & Kumar, 2023)	1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	5.0	83.33%
PS12 (Cheng, 2023)	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	5.5	91.67%
PS13 (Al Fraidan, 2025)	1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	5.0	83.33%
PS14 (Nguyen & Van Vu, 2024)	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	5.5	91.67%
PS15 (Vula, Tyfekçi & Biblekaj, 2024)	1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	5.0	83.33%
PS16 (Yang, Zhang & Dixon, 2023)	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	5.5	91.67%
PS17 (Farooqi, 2024)	1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	5.0	83.33%

PS18 (Alharbi, 2023)	1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	5.0	83.33%
PS19 (Shen et al., 2023)	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	5.5	91.67%
PS20 (Han, 2024)	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	5.5	91.67%
PS21 (Kaloustian & Pladevall-Ballester, 2024)	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	5.5	91.67%
PS22 (Dinsa, 2023)	1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	5.0	83.33%
PS23 (Riwayatiningsih et al., 2025)	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	5.5	91.67%
PS24 (Jang, 2022)	1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	5.0	83.33%
PS25 (El Madani et al., 2024)	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	5.5	91.67%
PS26 (Arihastha, 2023)	1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	5.0	83.33%
PS27 (Papi, Abdi Tabari & Sato, 2024)	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	5.5	91.67%
PS28 (Chomicz, 2024)	1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	5.0	83.33%
PS29 (Mahmood S. et al., 2024)	1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	5.0	83.33%
PS30 (Liu et al., 2022)	1	1	0.5	1	0.5	0	4	66.67%
PS31 (Phuong et al., 2023)	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	5.5	91.67%
PS32 (Yang, 2022)	1	1	1	1	0.5	0	4.5	75%
PS33 (Meletiado, 2022)	1	1	0.5	1	0.5	0	4	66.67%

Metacognitive Strategies, Self-Regulation, and Feedback

The integration of metacognitive strategies has been proven to significantly enhance ESL and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' writing performance. Razzaq and Hamzah (2023a) asserted that planning as a metacognitive strategy notably improved Pakistani ESL learners' willingness to write, which subsequently boosted writing performance. Complementary to this, Razzaq and Hamzah (2023) also demonstrated that evaluating one's own writing, another metacognitive tactic, positively influenced writing proficiency, further mediated by motivation to write. At the same time, Robillos (2023b) emphasized that incorporating translanguaging within metacognitive strategy fostered grammar and structure improvement and deeper cognitive engagement in writing tasks. These findings collectively underscore that deliberate metacognitive practices, whether through planning, evaluation, or multilingual scaffolding, can significantly bolster writing development.

SRL strategies have also emerged as pivotal elements in advancing learners' writing skills. Yang (2024) illustrated that EFL university students developed heightened motivation and self-regulation in writing when engaged in socio-constructivist classrooms, employing cognitive strategies, goal setting, and self-evaluative standards. Similarly, Takarroucht (2022) concluded that self-assessment enhanced Algerian EFL learners' writing self-efficacy, affirming the positive link between metacognitive self-monitoring and writing confidence. In addition, Duong and Nguyen (2022) further revealed that the provision of Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) fostered significant improvements in students' writing, particularly when feedback was clear, direct, and comprehensively delivered. Across these studies, the role of autonomous monitoring, reflective practices, and feedback integration surfaces as key drivers of writing advancement.

In the context of remote and online learning, metacognitive strategies retained their importance. Khan and Kumar (2023) reported that explicit training in metacognitive practices during online instruction significantly improved EFL learners' writing coherence and cohesion. Furthermore, Yang, Zhang, and Dixon (2023) observed that feedback on self-regulation and process strategies encouraged students to actively plan, monitor, and evaluate their writing, resulting in enhanced text processing and motivational regulation. Consequently, Shen et al. (2023) explored the effects of Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) systems like Pigai. They noted that although surface-level error correction was common, skilled learners used feedback to achieve deeper linguistic complexity and accuracy. This convergence of findings highlights that fostering metacognitive awareness remains essential for writing development even in technology-mediated environments.

Instructional interventions based on metacognitive strategies have strongly impacted writing performance and motivation. Han (2024) indicated that Strategy-Based Instruction (SBI) embedded in writing courses significantly improved writing performance and learners' motivation compared to traditional methods. Kaloustian and Pladevall-Ballester (2024) also documented that young EFL learners, when involved in the feedback process through the Boomerang Correction Strategy, developed positive perceptions and greater engagement in writing revisions. Furthermore, Dinsa (2023) noted that regardless of gender or academic year, EFL students in Ethiopia predominantly utilized metacognitive and cognitive writing strategies. This suggests the universality and effectiveness of such approaches across diverse educational contexts.

Studies focusing on feedback-seeking behaviors and peer/self-assessment strategies further validated the role of student agency in writing improvement. Papi, Abdi Tabari, and Sato (2024) emphasized that ESL learners benefited more from WCF when they actively sought and processed it, rather than passively receiving it. Meanwhile, Liu, Rahimi, and Fathi (2022) highlighted the effectiveness of flipped classrooms, where students exposed to pre-class metacognitive strategy instruction outperformed their peers in writing performance, organization, and collaboration. In addition, Phuong, Phan, and Le (2023) confirmed that using analytical rubrics in self- and peer-assessment significantly enhanced students' essay writing proficiency, particularly in content and language use. These findings collectively stress the critical importance of promoting learner autonomy and active participation in the feedback and revision cycles.

A strong correlation between metacognitive awareness and writing proficiency has also been consistently observed. El Madani et al. (2024) demonstrated that metacognitive awareness significantly predicted writing ability among Moroccan university students, with a high positive correlation identified. Riwayatiningsih et al. (2025) further detailed how different metacognitive strategies, planning, monitoring, and evaluation, each uniquely contributed to specific dimensions of academic writing, such as coherence, grammatical accuracy, and clarity. Finally, Yang, Liu, and Xu (2022) provided additional support by demonstrating that SRL-based teacher feedback substantially improved EFL students' use of self-regulatory writing strategies and overall writing performance. Together, these studies firmly establish that fostering metacognitive awareness and regulation is fundamental to enhancing writing proficiency among ESL and EFL learners.

Technological Tools and Innovative Approaches

Recent advances in educational technology have introduced VR as a tool to enhance writing performance by fostering empathy among learners. Guan, Ying, Zhang, and Hwang (2024) demonstrated that the Empathetic VR-based Learning (E-VRL) approach notably improved EFL students' cognitive and dialogic empathy. This leads to better use of ideas, content, word choice, and voice in their writing. Similarly, Alshakhi and Albalawi (2024) reported that Task-Based Language Assessment (TBLA) in technologically enhanced environments improved students' writing by fostering higher-order thinking and aligning effectively with learning objectives. Moreover, Meletiadou (2022) revealed that EDS, which integrates multimedia elements, significantly boosted students' writing performance, critical thinking, and intercultural awareness. Collectively, these studies indicate that experiential and immersive digital tools substantially enhance writing proficiency by promoting emotional engagement and cognitive development.

The role of AI and MT tools in improving EFL writing has been explored extensively. Al Fraidan (2025) highlighted that AI tools, coupled with uncertain motivation strategies, facilitated improvements in the clarity, structure, and depth of argumentative essays through real-time feedback and motivational reinforcement. Supporting this, Alharbi (2023) highlighted that AI-enabled MT, particularly Google Translate, significantly improved students' writing drafts and encouraged the development of autonomous learning behaviors among EFL students. Similarly, Yoon and Chon (2022) examined error correction strategies when using MT. They revealed that learners' ability to address mistranslations and verb tense issues improved when supported by the strategic use of literal translations and contextual guessing. These findings suggest that AI and MT technologies, when appropriately guided, can potentially serve as valuable aids in EFL writing education.

In addition to translation and real-time feedback technologies, tool-assisted paraphrasing strategies have proven effective for enhancing learners' writing competencies. Cheng (2023) noted that guided instruction with paraphrasing tools such as Microsoft Word Thesaurus, Thesaurus.com, and Linggle improved EFL students' ability to paraphrase effectively and restructure sentences meaningfully. Mahmood, Sharif, and Aleem (2024) further illustrated that a blended learning strategy combining traditional and technology-driven instruction significantly improved paragraph writing skills, vocabulary usage, and adherence to language mechanics among ESL learners. Furthermore, Alshakhi and Albalawi (2024) confirmed that task-based assessments enhanced language use and critical thinking, underscoring the importance of embedding strategic tool use within assessment frameworks. These studies demonstrate the crucial role of integrating technology with strategy training to support sustainable writing improvement.

Blended learning environments that merge online and offline modalities have also contributed positively to writing development among language learners. Mahmood, Sharif, and Aleem (2024) suggested that ESL learners taught through a blended learning approach achieved higher post-test scores in vocabulary, reflective thinking, and grammar compared to those taught through conventional methods. Accordingly, Meletiadou (2022) echoed similar findings, where digital storytelling fostered improved academic performance and greater self-confidence in writing among multilingual learners. Guan, Ying, Zhang, and Hwang (2024) also revealed that VR-based interventions provided authentic experiences that stimulated empathy and

improved the expressiveness and organization of written content. These studies suggest that blended and immersive digital learning approaches significantly enhance the quality of EFL writing instruction by creating dynamic and authentic learning environments.

Writing Challenges, Proficiency Development, and Special Learner Groups

Understanding writing revision's emotional and cognitive dimensions has become increasingly crucial in supporting EFL learners' proficiency development. Ke and Zhou (2024) emphasized that emotional transformation from form-focused to content-oriented during revision processes positively influenced writing quality. Their study revealed that content revisions yielded higher writing scores compared to form-based corrections, underlining the necessity of addressing learners' emotional engagement in writing improvement. Similarly, Nguyen and Van Vu (2024) identified that specific linguistic errors, particularly in morphology and lexical choices, significantly impacted students' legal writing performance, suggesting that syntactic challenges require specialized intervention strategies. Furthermore, Arihastha (2023) highlighted that non-English major students experienced profound difficulties generating and organizing ideas for argumentative writing, compounded by limited vocabulary and grammatical control. These findings underscore the complex interplay between emotional, linguistic, and cognitive factors in EFL writing development.

Strategies to enhance writing fluency and proficiency have also received focused attention. Farooqi (2024) demonstrated that implementing a word-count tracking strategy improved writing fluency and motivation among Saudi undergraduate EFL learners. This indicates that quantitative self-monitoring can be a motivating and effective pedagogical tool. Moreover, Vula, Tyfekçi, and Biblekaj (2024) observed that consistent writing practice enhanced students' critical thinking, vocabulary use, and coherence in expression, which are essential components of writing competence. In a related exploration, Jang (2022) reported that Korean high school students exercising learner agency adapted and improved their L2 writing practices through active engagement with linguistic resources and context-sensitive strategies. Together, these studies suggest that fostering autonomy, continuous output, and reflective practices is central to promoting sustainable writing skill development.

Special learner groups encounter unique challenges in EFL writing, often necessitating tailored support and interventions. Chomicz (2024) explored how Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D/HH) learners utilized technology, such as online dictionaries and AI tools, to enhance writing quality, vocabulary, and grammar. However, the study cautioned against over-reliance on technological aids without reinforcing independent language skills. Arihastha (2023) similarly noted that students with insufficient pre-university writing experiences struggled more significantly with argumentative writing, pointing to the need for earlier, targeted instruction. Meanwhile, Ke and Zhou (2024) observed that recognizing and addressing emotional barriers during the revision process contributed substantially to learners' writing success. These findings advocate for adaptive teaching strategies that accommodate the diverse needs of learners, promoting equity and effectiveness in writing instruction.

Discussion

This systematic review aimed to explore pedagogical strategies for enhancing writing proficiency among ESL learners, synthesizing findings from 33 primary studies into three overarching themes: Metacognitive Strategies, Self-Regulation, and Feedback; Technological

Tools and Innovative Approaches; and Writing Challenges, Proficiency Development, and Special Learner Groups. The first theme highlighted the crucial role of metacognitive strategies and feedback in improving learners' writing performance, underscoring the significance of planning, self-monitoring, and reflective practices. Studies consistently emphasized that fostering self-regulation and providing structured feedback through teacher guidance or peer review enhanced motivation, organization, and writing quality among ESL students. Conversely, the second theme revealed the growing integration of technological tools such as AI, MT, VR-based empathy training, and digital storytelling into writing instruction. These innovations supported technical writing skills and cognitive and emotional engagement, particularly when blended thoughtfully with human facilitation. Subsequently, the third theme focused on the persistent challenges faced by special learner groups, including non-English majors and D/HH students, and the need for differentiated instruction to address emotional, cognitive, and linguistic barriers. Overall, the findings suggest that a multifaceted approach combining metacognitive training, technological innovation, and responsive, inclusive teaching practices is essential for fostering writing proficiency in ESL contexts.

The emergence of these three themes reflects broader trends in language education, particularly the increasing emphasis on learner autonomy, digital literacy, and inclusivity. In particular, the strong presence of metacognitive strategies across studies justifies their selection as a theme, as learners who actively plan, monitor, and evaluate their writing demonstrate greater resilience and long-term improvement. Furthermore, the attention to self-regulation and feedback aligns with shifts toward process-oriented writing instruction, recognizing that writing proficiency is developed iteratively rather than instantaneously. Notably, the focus on technological tools was selected based on the rising trend of digitalization in education, as well as the observed effectiveness of tools like VR and AI in enhancing learner engagement, critical thinking, and writing mechanics. Finally, the theme on writing challenges and special learner groups was critical in interpreting the equity dimension of writing instruction, revealing that standard strategies are insufficient unless adapted to learners' diverse backgrounds and needs. These findings fill several gaps in existing literature by synthesizing intervention strategies and underlying learner variables—motivation, emotion, and cognitive engagement that determine their success. They also highlight emerging gaps, particularly the under-exploration of long-term impacts of technology integration and sustainable support structures for special groups.

The findings of this review offer significant implications for practice, research, and policy. For educators, integrating explicit metacognitive strategy instruction, encouraging self- and peer-assessment practices, and providing continuous, scaffolded feedback could meaningfully enhance students' writing autonomy and performance. Technology should be perceived not as a substitute for teaching but as a strategic enhancer when combined with purposeful pedagogical design. In addition, institutions should invest in blended learning infrastructures, ensuring that technological adoption supports, rather than replaces, critical writing skills development. Moreover, policymakers should advocate for teacher training programs emphasizing differentiated instruction and Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) to better equip teachers to meet the needs of diverse learners. In line with this, future research should prioritize longitudinal studies that examine the sustained effects of metacognitive and technological interventions over time. Additionally, additional research is required on culturally responsive strategies for supporting marginalized groups, particularly in under-resourced settings. Methodologically, future studies could benefit from adopting mixed-

methods designs to capture both quantitative writing gains and qualitative insights into learner experiences. As with any review, limitations exist: the focus on articles published between 2022 and 2025 may have excluded earlier foundational studies, and the selection of databases, while extensive, might not fully capture grey literature. Nevertheless, this review contributes a timely, integrative perspective on how evolving pedagogical strategies can be aligned with learner-centered, technology-enhanced, and inclusive approaches to foster English writing proficiency among ESL learners.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of this SLR was to explore and synthesize pedagogical strategies that effectively enhance writing proficiency among ESL learners. The review sought to answer three main research questions focused on the role of metacognitive strategies, the impact of technological tools, and the challenges faced by special learner groups in writing development. Thus, by applying the PRISMA protocol and conducting a rigorous search across two major databases, Scopus and ERIC, 33 primary studies were carefully selected and analyzed. The findings were organized into three significant themes: Metacognitive Strategies, Self-Regulation, and Feedback; Technological Tools and Innovative Approaches; Writing Challenges, Proficiency Development, and Special Learner Groups. The results emphasized that writing proficiency in ESL learners can be significantly enhanced through explicit metacognitive training, structured feedback, and the thoughtful integration of digital technologies. Additionally, the significance of recognizing and addressing emotional, cognitive, and linguistic barriers among special learner groups was consistently highlighted. These findings contribute to a broader understanding of how targeted, inclusive, and adaptive teaching practices can foster improved writing outcomes in diverse educational settings.

This study makes a meaningful contribution to the growing field of ESL writing pedagogy by providing a consolidated view of contemporary strategies and interventions. Accordingly, it extends existing literature by integrating findings across technological, cognitive, and emotional domains. It offers a comprehensive perspective that moves beyond isolated instructional techniques. Practically, the insights gained can inform educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers aiming to refine English writing instruction for second-language learners. The review also underlines the significance of combining human-centered pedagogical approaches with the strategic use of technology, ensuring that interventions remain personalized and context-sensitive. Nevertheless, several limitations were identified, including the focus on studies published between 2022 and 2025 and the potential exclusion of relevant grey literature. In particular, future research should address these limitations by expanding the timeline of reviewed studies and incorporating longitudinal designs to assess the sustained effects of interventions. Furthermore, further exploration into culturally responsive pedagogy and scalable, differentiated strategies for special learner groups is also recommended. In conclusion, by highlighting critical patterns, practical applications, and emerging gaps, this study reinforces the significance of adaptive pedagogical strategies in advancing ESL learners' writing proficiency and sets a foundation for future scholarly inquiry in this vital area of education.

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