

Overcoming Academic Writing Challenges: English Language Learning Strategies for Chinese International High School Students in Blended Learning Environments

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Abstract—With the increasing globalisation and the integration of blended learning models, academic English writing has become a critical skill introduced at the high school level. This study investigates how Chinese international high school students develop and apply effective English language learning strategies to address the specific challenges of academic English writing in a blended learning environment that combines offline EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and online ESL (English as a Second Language) instruction. Utilising a qualitative research design, three participants in this special blended learning environment are selected as specific cases. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, student learning logs, and classroom observations. Findings reveal that students employ a combination of cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies to address issues in this special blended learning environment. The study underscores the importance of integrating technology with traditional teaching methods, highlighting the effectiveness of blended learning in supporting students' academic writing. These insights offer valuable guidance for educators in enhancing teaching practices and for policymakers in designing supportive educational frameworks.

Index Terms—blended learning environment, English academic writing, English learning strategies, international high school students

I. INTRODUCTION

In the context of globalisation, the education landscape is undergoing significant transformations, with blended learning emerging as a prominent model. Blended learning, which combines traditional face-to-face instruction with online components, offers numerous advantages, such as flexibility and access to diverse resources (Bizami et al., 2023; Ortega et al., 2023). However, this model also presents unique challenges, particularly in the realm of academic writing, which poses significant difficulties for many students who must navigate complex expectations for structure, coherence, and argumentation (Muhria et al., 2023; Ahmadi & Sultani, 2023).

For international high school students, these challenges are often compounded by additional factors such as language barriers and cultural differences. These students, who are part of an increasingly interconnected global education system, must adapt to academic standards that may differ significantly from those in their home countries. Research by Wei et al. (2024) highlights the difficulties international students face in blended learning environments, including mastering academic writing conventions in English.

International high school students' academic writing challenges in a blended learning context are multifaceted. They must develop proficiency in English while also understanding and applying complex academic writing norms. This dual burden can be daunting, requiring effective strategies to manage both language learning and academic writing skills. Consequently, understanding what strategies they would employ to address these challenges is crucial for supporting international high school students' academic success.

The aim of this study is to explore the specific English learning strategies employed by international high school students to overcome these challenges in academic writing within a blended learning environment. By examining these strategies, the study seeks to provide insights that can inform educational practices and policies, ultimately enhancing the support provided to this unique student population.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Definition and Classification of English Language Learning Strategies

English learning strategies are defined as specific behaviours, steps, or techniques that students use during the learning process to enhance their language ability and learning effectiveness. Various experts have offered definitions and classifications of these strategies, highlighting their significance in improving learning outcomes. According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990), these strategies include cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies, which play essential roles in processing information, self-regulating learning, and facilitating interaction, respectively.

Cognitive strategies involve the direct processing of language materials, such as using repetition to memorise vocabulary, summarising to understand content, and guessing word meanings from context (Chamot, 2014). Metacognitive strategies include planning, monitoring, and evaluating the learning process, such as setting goals, checking comprehension, and assessing learning outcomes to improve methods (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Social strategies focus on interaction with others to enhance learning, including seeking help from teachers or peers, participating in discussions, and sharing resources, which also boost confidence and motivation (Griffiths, 2003).

Oxford (2011) provides a comprehensive framework for understanding English learning strategies, categorising them into direct and indirect strategies (see Figure 1).

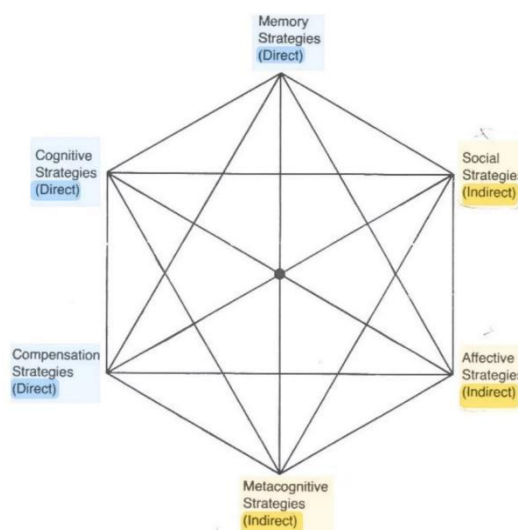


Figure 1.1 Interrelationships Between Direct and Indirect Strategies and Among the Six Strategy Groups. (Source: Original.)

Figure 1. Interrelationships Between Direct and Indirect Strategies and Among the Six Strategy Groups (Source: Oxford, R., 1990, Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know, p. 15)

Direct strategies involve the immediate handling of the language material and are divided into three types: memory, cognitive, and compensation. Memory strategies help learners store and retrieve new information. Cognitive strategies involve the manipulation and transformation of language materials, such as through repetition, summarisation, and guessing meanings. Compensation strategies enable learners to use the language despite knowledge gaps, such as using synonyms or gestures to convey meaning.

Indirect strategies, on the other hand, support and manage learning and are categorised into metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. Metacognitive strategies involve planning, monitoring, and evaluating the learning process, helping learners organise and control their learning activities. Affective strategies are related to managing emotions, motivation, and attitudes towards learning, such as using relaxation techniques or self-encouragement. Social strategies involve learning through interaction with others, emphasising cooperation and communication, such as asking questions, seeking feedback, and engaging in group work.

Oxford's model further updates this theoretical framework by recognising the interconnectedness and interdependence of these strategies. She emphasises that learners often use a combination of strategies tailored to their specific needs and contexts. This holistic approach aligns with Griffiths (2018), who notes that successful language learners can flexibly employ various strategies to overcome learning challenges.

In her later work, Oxford (2017) introduces the Strategic Self-Regulation (S²R) Model, which provides an updated definition and classification of learning strategies. The S²R Model posits that learners actively and strategically regulate their learning processes through a combination of direct and indirect strategies. This model underscores strategy use's dynamic and adaptive nature, emphasising that effective language learners continually adjust their strategies based on their specific learning contexts and goals.

According to the S²R Model, strategic self-regulation involves three key components: strategic planning, strategy use, and strategic evaluation. Strategic planning involves setting clear learning goals and selecting appropriate strategies.

Strategy use encompasses the implementation of chosen strategies in various learning tasks. Strategic evaluation involves assessing the strategies' effectiveness and making necessary adjustments to improve learning outcomes.

This updated theoretical framework highlights the importance of a flexible, learner-centred approach to strategy use. It aligns with Griffiths' (2018) assertion that successful language learners can adaptively employ various strategies to address different learning challenges. By emphasising strategic self-regulation, Oxford's model provides a comprehensive understanding of how learners can effectively manage and enhance their language learning processes.

Recent studies have highlighted the pivotal role of English learning strategies (LLS) in language acquisition for international students, improving language proficiency, enhancing learning initiative, and fostering self-efficacy. Research by Mahmud and Nur (2018) indicates that international students often prefer cognitive and metacognitive strategies over social strategies. Their study found that repetition and summarisation are frequently used cognitive strategies, while planning and goal setting are common metacognitive strategies. Social strategies, though beneficial, are less preferred due to potential cultural and communication barriers. Additionally, Peng and Patterson (2022) highlighted the influence of cultural identity and motivation on the use of learning strategies, finding that high motivation levels can mitigate the negative effects of strong ethnic identification on English proficiency, emphasising the importance of metacognitive strategies in managing learning processes.

Similarly, Woo and Kim (2024) observed that self-regulated learning strategies significantly impact writing achievement in EFL contexts, underscoring the critical role of metacognitive strategies. By effectively utilising these strategies, students can better cope with various learning challenges and improve learning efficiency and outcomes (Sani & Ismail, 2021). The holistic application of cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies enables students to navigate the complexities of language learning more effectively, enhancing their overall academic performance.

B. Common Problems in Academic Writing

International high school students often face numerous challenges in academic writing. According to Wei et al. (2024), these problems can be summarised as misunderstandings due to cultural differences, unfamiliarity with academic regulations, limitations in language proficiency, communication barriers, and adapting to technology. Understanding these problems in depth can better support students in their academic writing development.

First, misunderstandings due to cultural differences are a significant challenge for international high school students in cross-cultural environments (Wei et al., 2024). Many students also lack strong evidence to support their viewpoints in their writing due to a lack of critical thinking skills or unfamiliarity with constructing effective arguments with proper resources (Ganapathy, 2016). Therefore, students often state their viewpoints without in-depth analysis and argumentation, making the article unconvincing.

Secondly, unfamiliarity with academic regulations makes it difficult for students to structure and format their written work properly (Wei et al., 2024). The problem of unclear structure is also common in academic writing. The logical structure of the article and the connections between paragraphs are not tight, making it difficult for readers to follow the author's thoughts and affecting the overall coherence of the article (Chapelle, 2003). Students often ignore the logical relationship between paragraphs or fail to effectively organise and arrange their viewpoints and arguments, making the article appear loose and incoherent.

Thirdly, limitations in language proficiency, including the application of vocabulary and grammar, restrict the accuracy and variety of students' academic writing. A lack of sufficient vocabulary makes it difficult for students to express complex ideas accurately. Insufficient vocabulary not only affects students' expression abilities but also limits their ability to understand and analyse complex academic texts. Grammatical errors are also common problems in academic writing for international high school students. Common grammatical errors include tense confusion, subject-verb disagreement, etc. These errors affect the coherence and accuracy of the article (Chakraborty et al., 2021).

Fourthly, communication barriers from the student's perspective also challenge improving their academic writing. Speaking anxiety is a significant reason why students cannot effectively communicate with teachers in academic writing classes. This issue is particularly prominent in English classes, where students often hesitate to participate in discussions due to concerns about their pronunciation. After class, students may also lack initiative in communicating with teachers and classmates, further hindering the completion of academic writing tasks. This problem is especially evident in activities requiring group discussions and peer reviews (Makovskaya & Radjabzade, 2022).

The last challenge in academic writing nowadays is adapting to technology. Students may have varying levels of familiarity with the digital tools and platforms used in academic settings, such as learning management systems, online libraries, and research databases. This can result in delays, lower quality of submissions, and reduced participation in collaborative projects. Students may face challenges accessing reliable internet, necessary software, or hardware, especially if they are studying remotely (Yunus et al., 2022).

These problems not only affect the quality of students' writing but also limit their further development in the academic field. Research indicates that effective English learning strategies are the key to solving these problems. Planning and organising strategies (such as brainstorming and outlining) help students clarify article structure and main content before writing. Resource utilisation strategies (such as using dictionaries and online tools) help students expand vocabulary and check grammatical errors. Self-monitoring and evaluation strategies (such as self-editing and peer feedback) help students continuously improve and enhance their writing quality during the writing process (Dhawan, 2020; Bao, 2020; Maslawati et al., 2018).

C. *Research Gaps in Blended Learning for Language Acquisition*

Integrating blended learning environments in language learning has shown numerous benefits, including flexibility, increased access to resources, and enhanced student engagement (Boelens et al., 2017; Bond et al., 2021). Blended learning combines the advantages of traditional face-to-face instruction with online learning, providing a comprehensive approach to education (Masrom et al., 2019). This model supports various learning styles and needs, allowing for more personalised and effective language acquisition (Nikolopoulou & Zacharis, 2023). Additionally, Yunus et al. (2022) emphasise that blended learning enhances learners' autonomy and motivation, which are crucial for effective language learning.

Despite these benefits, there are notable gaps and limitations in the existing research on English learning strategies in academic writing within blended learning environments. Current research primarily focuses on college students or native English speakers, with relatively few studies on international high school students, limiting our understanding of how younger learners adapt and apply learning strategies in a blended learning context. Additionally, while various effective learning strategies have been theoretically established, there is a lack of empirical studies on how students from different backgrounds use these strategies in practice, necessitating more research to observe and analyse the actual application and effectiveness of these strategies among diverse populations (Taheri et al., 2020). Furthermore, in blended learning environments, students need to switch between traditional classrooms and online learning, which increases the complexity and challenges of learning. There is insufficient research on the application of student strategies in this specific environment, and the transition between different learning modes can create additional barriers that impact the effectiveness of learning strategies (Wei et al., 2024).

In summary, while blended learning offers significant advantages for language acquisition, more empirical research is needed to explore how international high school students use English learning strategies in these environments. Addressing these research gaps can provide valuable insights into improving educational practices and supporting the academic writing skills of international students.

III. METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the research design, sample, instruments, data collection, and analysis methods used to investigate the learning strategies of international high school students in overcoming academic writing challenges in a blended learning environment, ensuring methodological rigour and reliability.

A. *Research Design*

This study employs a qualitative research design using a case study approach. Qualitative research design is suitable for deeply understanding complex social phenomena and individual behaviours (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In this study, we chose a case study method to explore in detail the English learning strategies international high school students use to solve problems in English academic writing. This method allows us to collect comprehensive data through various means, providing an in-depth understanding of the participants' learning experiences and strategy use (Yin, 2009). By utilising a case study approach, we can closely examine the contextual factors that influence students' learning strategies, offering rich insights into their academic writing processes (Stake, 1995).

B. *Participants*

The participants in this study are international high school students from China. These students attend an international high school in China and are enrolled in the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) online courses. They are in a blended learning environment, with conditions for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and ESL (English as a Second Language) learning. We selected students from the 11th and 12th grades to obtain a representative sample. The specific sample size is three students, including two males and one female, aged between 16 and 18. The diversity of these students ensures the sample's representativeness, aiding in a comprehensive understanding of the learning strategies used by students from different backgrounds.

C. *Research Instruments*

We employed multiple data collection tools to obtain comprehensive research data. These tools included semi-structured interviews, student logs, and classroom observations.

(a). *Semi-Structured Interviews*

The semi-structured interviews aimed to understand the specific strategies students use during academic writing. The interview questions focused on the strategies employed by students at different writing stages (e.g., preparation stage, writing stage, revision stage). Each interview lasted 30 to 40 minutes and was recorded and transcribed. The interview questions included, "How do you prepare for your academic writing?", "What strategies do you use to organise your thoughts during writing?" and "How do you revise and improve your articles?"

(b). *Student Learning Logs*

The student learning logs recorded the strategies used by students and the problems they encountered during the academic writing process. The student's learning log is a post-course requirement for the online course, intended to document the student's activities throughout the learning process.

(c). Classroom Observations

Classroom observations were used as triangulation to enhance the reliability of the study. Through the researchers' evaluation of students' classroom performance using an observational checklist, we could assess the authenticity of the information described in the semi-structured interviews and student logs and determine whether it aligned with their actual classroom behaviour.

D. Data Collection and Analysis Methods

Interview and Learning log data undergone content analysis. First, researchers transcribed all data and conducted an initial reading to identify key themes and patterns. In Interview transcripts, the data of these three participants were labelled as M1IN, M2IN, and F1IN, and in the learning logs, the data of these three participants were labelled as M1LL, M2LL, AND F1LL. Then, using NVivo 12 software, the data was coded and classified, generating theme labels and codebooks to analyse further the specific strategies used and their effectiveness (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method allows us to identify the strategies commonly used by students at different writing stages and analyse the effectiveness of these strategies.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings from semi-structured interviews, students' learning logs, and classroom observations, followed by an integrated discussion. The findings are structured around five key challenges Wei et al. (2024) identified that international high school students face in English academic writing: misunderstandings due to cultural differences, unfamiliarity with academic regulations, limitations in language proficiency, communication barriers, and adapting to technology. In the findings, we mainly analyse the different strategies students employ in online versus offline English learning environments based on each challenge; the discussion then focuses on how these strategies align with existing theories and models of language learning, such as Oxford's (2011) classification of learning strategies and the S²R Model (Oxford, 2017), providing insights into optimising these strategies to support students in a blended learning context better.

A. Main Findings

(a). Misunderstandings Due to Cultural Differences

In the online learning environment, students rely on personal efforts and self-adjustment to bridge cultural gaps. They mentioned that searching for culture-related information online helps understand the cultural context of academic writing, and they use multiple forums to seek explanations and clarifications about cultural nuances in academic texts.

For example:

*"I often **search online** for information about Western culture, so I can better understand the **background and requirements** of the article."* (M1IN)

*"To write a culturally relevant essay, I check **multiple sources online** about the norms and values related to my topic."* (F1IN)

During offline EFL classes, face-to-face guidance is crucial for understanding cultural differences. Students indicated in interviews that teacher guidance helps them better adapt to cultural differences, and teachers also provide contextual examples and share personal experiences to illustrate cultural points, which aids in bridging cultural gaps and enhances students' understanding. For instance:

*"Whenever I don't understand something, **the teacher** patiently explains it to me, which is very helpful."* (M2IN)

*"**My teacher** helps me understand the **cultural aspects** that are not clear from the text itself."* (M1IN)

(b). Unfamiliarity With Academic Regulations

In the online learning environment, students seek teacher guidance through class comments and after-class communication, actively utilising feedback to align their writing with academic standards. They claim that the teacher's explanation and comments on writing format enable them to focus on academic writing standards and guidelines. For example:

*"I carefully read the **teacher's comments** and revise my article based on this **feedback**."* (F1LL)

*"When the teacher points out my mistakes in **using MLA format**, I make sure to correct them in the next draft."* (M2IN)

During offline EFL classes, students refer to peers' formats and structures to learn academic regulations. They often learn by observing and imitating their classmates' work. Peer reviews are common practices that help students internalise academic writing norms. For instance:

*"I often ask **classmates** and see how they write their articles, then **try to imitate them**."* (M1LL)

*"Seeing how my **peers structure** their essays helps me understand the **proper format** better; that's real examples rather than a template."* (F1IN)

(c). *Limitations in Language Proficiency*

In the online learning environment, students use translation tools to overcome language barriers and help understand instructions and requirements. These translation tools, including language learning apps and online dictionaries, help students to build their vocabulary and comprehension skills.

*"Whenever I encounter unfamiliar words, I rely on **online translation tools** to quickly understand the meaning of the sentence."* (M2IN)

*"I use **online dictionaries and translation apps** to ensure I understand the academic texts, and I can also use the dictionary to learn how to use some words."* (F1LL)

During offline EFL classes, students seek help from teachers and diligently follow their instructions. When they face any confusion related to their language proficiency restrictions, they ask teachers for help in and after class to clarify their understanding.

*"**The teacher explains** the assignment requirements in detail during class, making my writing process clearer."* (M2IN)

*"My **teacher's individual explanations** help me grasp the **nuances** of the language better."* (M1IN)

(d). *Communication Barriers*

In the online learning environment, students normally communicate with teachers through email to resolve communication barriers, while online discussion boards and chat groups facilitate communication among students and teachers. Students mentioned in the interview and their learning log about the details:

*"Since it's **difficult to meet teachers** after class, I ask them questions via **email** to get timely responses."* (F1IN)

*"I find **emailing** my teachers very helpful when I need assignment clarification. Sometimes the **chat group and discussion group** on the learning forum also helps me to gain clear instructions from my teacher."* (M2LL)

Due to the fear of communication with teachers during offline EFL classes, students rely more on peer support. Asking peers for help before tending to their teachers, students overcome communication barriers and build confidence in interacting with teachers:

*"Sometimes I'm **afraid to ask the teacher directly**, so I ask **classmates** for advice first."* (M1LL)

*"I often **discuss my doubts with friends** before approaching the teacher, then I have strong confidence to talk to my teachers."* (F1IN)

(e). *Adapting to Technology*

In the online learning environment, students choose to adapt to technology by watching tutorial videos. Also, sharing experiences with peers provides students valuable assistance. Through communication with peers, students can learn different methods of using tools. For example:

*"I often **watch educational videos**, which greatly help my learning, and I discuss **different software methods** with **classmates**."* (M1LL)

*"Learning from **video tutorials** and exchanging tips with **friends** makes it easier to use new tools."* (F1LL)

During offline EFL classes, students seek guidance from teachers both in and after class. The practice of online tools helps students' offline learning and facilitates their online task achievements. The in-person help from offline teachers can also visualise and clarify how to apply the tools, as students mentioned in an interview:

*"The teacher **teaches us how to use some online tools**, making it easier for me to complete assignments for both online and offline classes."* (M2IN)

*"Having the teacher **explain the use of digital tools in person** helps me integrate them into my work."* (M1IN)

Through integrated analysis of interviews and field notes, it was found that students exhibit high flexibility and creativity in using learning strategies. For instance, in one observation, researchers noted that a student conducted detailed brainstorming, created a comprehensive outline, and enhanced their arguments by researching relevant literature during preparation for writing. These observations are consistent with students' descriptions in interviews and journals, validating their strategy use in academic writing.

B. *Discussion*

This study reveals the various learning strategies international high school students use to address challenges in English academic writing (Figure 2), encompassing direct and indirect strategies. These strategies play a crucial role in helping students overcome major writing challenges.

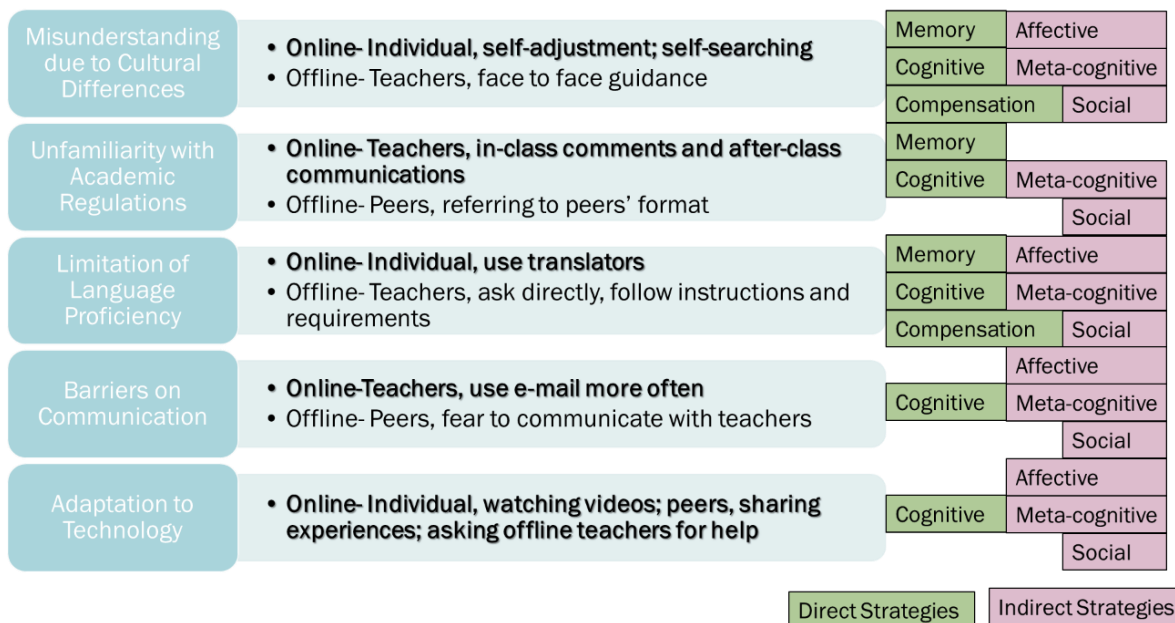


Figure 2. Learning Strategies Used by International High School Students in Addressing English Academic Writing Challenges

(a). *Misunderstandings Due to Cultural Differences*

When facing cultural differences, students rely more on self-adjustment and self-searching online, while offline, they depend on face-to-face guidance from teachers. This indicates that despite the vast amount of information technology can provide, direct guidance from teachers is indispensable in cross-cultural understanding. This finding emphasises the importance of combining technology and traditional teaching methods in blended learning environments.

This study aligns with previous research that underscores the critical role of cultural context in language learning strategies. Oxford (2011) highlighted that understanding cultural nuances is essential for effective language acquisition, and this study reinforces that notion by demonstrating how students actively seek cultural information online and rely on teachers for deeper cultural insights. Furthermore, Wei et al. (2024) discussed the challenges international students face due to cultural differences and the necessity of teacher support in bridging these gaps, consistent with our findings. Technology is a valuable resource for students to explore cultural contexts in blended learning environments independently. At the same time, traditional face-to-face interactions with teachers provide the nuanced understanding that technology alone cannot offer. This combination is crucial for helping students navigate the complexities of academic writing in a cross-cultural setting.

(b). *Unfamiliarity With Academic Regulations*

Students compensate for their unfamiliarity with academic regulations through online teacher feedback and offline peer guidance. Online feedback provides immediate suggestions for improvement, allowing students to align their writing with academic standards quickly. For instance, students reported that they frequently revise their work based on detailed comments received from their teachers through online platforms. This immediate and targeted feedback is crucial for helping students understand specific areas where they need improvement, which aligns with findings by Dhawan (2020) on the benefits of real-time feedback in online learning environments.

Offline, peer guidance plays a significant role in helping students understand and apply academic regulations. By observing and imitating their classmates' work, students can learn the correct formats and structures required for their assignments. This peer learning process is particularly effective as it provides practical examples that students can follow, enhancing their understanding through direct observation. Griffiths (2003) supports this learning method, emphasising the importance of social strategies in language learning, where students learn from their peers.

Combining these feedback sources – online teacher feedback and offline peer demonstrations – helps students gradually adapt to and master academic regulations. This blended approach ensures students benefit from immediate, individualised feedback and practical, peer-based examples. It highlights the effectiveness of integrating different feedback mechanisms to support student learning, a concept noted by Bao (2020), who discussed the importance of multiple feedback sources in blended learning environments. By leveraging online and offline resources, students can develop a more comprehensive understanding of academic regulations, ultimately improving their academic writing skills.

(c). *Limitations in Language Proficiency*

Students use translation tools and teacher guidance to overcome language barriers, demonstrating how the combination of technology and interpersonal support helps improve students' language proficiency. Online translation tools provide immediate help by allowing students to understand unfamiliar words and phrases quickly. This real-time assistance is

crucial for enabling students to comprehend instructions and academic texts without significant delays. However, while translation tools are effective for immediate comprehension, they do not always provide the nuanced understanding necessary for mastering a language. This is where teacher guidance becomes indispensable. Detailed explanations and guidance from teachers help students understand the context and proper language usage, which translation tools alone cannot offer. During offline classes, teachers can provide personalised feedback and elaborate on the subtleties of the language, helping students grasp more complex grammatical structures and idiomatic expressions. This direct interaction enhances students' ability to apply their knowledge accurately in their writing.

Combining the instant assistance from online translation tools with the in-depth understanding provided by teacher guidance creates a comprehensive support system for language learning. This blended approach not only helps students overcome immediate language barriers but also builds their long-term language proficiency. The findings support Oxford's (2011) theory of strategically using cognitive and metacognitive strategies in language learning. This study also reflects the insights of Chakraborty et al. (2021), who noted the critical role of teacher feedback in overcoming language challenges in online education.

(d). Communication Barriers

Students communicate with teachers via email in online environments while relying on peer support offline. This reflects their adaptation to different communication channels and emphasises the importance of social strategies in academic writing. Email communication allows students to seek clarification and feedback outside of class hours, which supports continuous learning.

The reliance on email for teacher interaction requires students to develop strong self-regulation and proactive communication skills. This method of communication helps students practise formal writing and precise question framing, which are valuable skills in academic writing. According to Griffiths (2003), social strategies, such as seeking help from teachers and peers, are crucial for language learning and academic success.

Peer interactions provide a supportive environment where students can discuss difficulties and share solutions. This peer-based learning is essential as it offers relatable explanations and emotional support, fostering a collaborative learning experience. Oxford (2011) highlights the significant role of social strategies, including peer support, in enhancing language learning through meaningful interactions.

(e). Adapting to Technology

Students adapt to technology by watching videos and sharing experiences with peers, demonstrating the importance of self-directed and collaborative learning. Teacher guidance in offline environments helps students better utilise technological resources, improving learning outcomes. Peer interactions further enhance technological adaptation as students exchange tips and experiences, fostering a collaborative learning environment. Teacher guidance in offline environments complements these efforts by providing structured support and personalised instruction. Teachers help students navigate technological resources more effectively, ensuring they can apply these tools to their academic work. These kinds of support are essential for navigating new technological tools and platforms, as Oxford (2011) noted, which emphasised the role of social strategies in effective language learning.

The findings of this study are consistent with some key points in existing literature. Oxford (2017) points out that language learning strategies are crucial for improving language proficiency, and this study further validates this view, especially in the context of academic writing. Chakraborty et al. (2021) emphasise grammatical errors in online education, and this study also identifies similar grammatical challenges, demonstrating how students use various strategies to address these problems. Wei et al. (2024) highlight that cultural differences and academic regulations are major challenges for international students, and this study, through detailed interviews and journal data, further reveals specific strategies students use to address these challenges.

V. CONCLUSION

This study explores the English learning strategies employed by international high school students in addressing academic writing challenges within a blended learning environment. The primary objectives were to identify the specific strategies used by these students and evaluate their effectiveness in overcoming issues such as insufficient vocabulary, grammatical errors, inadequate argumentation, and unclear structure. Through qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews, student logs, and classroom observations, the research aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how students navigate academic writing tasks in both online and offline settings.

Despite the rich insights provided, this study has several limitations. The small sample size of only three students may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research should consider increasing the sample size to obtain more representative data. Additionally, all participants were from China, which may affect the broad applicability of the results. Including students from diverse cultural backgrounds in future studies will help comprehensively understand the impact of cross-cultural differences on academic writing strategies. Lastly, while multiple data collection tools were used, the study primarily relied on students' self-reports, which may introduce subjective bias. Combining observational and experimental methods in future research could provide more objective data.

This study makes significant theoretical contributions by enriching the understanding of the application of English learning strategies in academic writing, particularly among international high school students. It validates Oxford's (2011, 2017) classification theory, demonstrating the application of the combination of various strategies in academic writing. Moreover, the study highlights how the combination of technology and traditional teaching methods effectively supports students in blended learning environments. It also underscores the impact of cultural background on strategy choice, providing new empirical support for research in cross-cultural education.

Practically, the findings offer valuable implications for teaching practice, curriculum design, student self-management, and policymaking. Teachers can utilise these insights to guide students more effectively by combining online and offline methods to cater to specific needs. Educational institutions can develop more flexible curricula integrating online resources and face-to-face guidance to help students overcome academic challenges. The study emphasises the importance of self-adjustment and strategy selection, encouraging students to use various strategies to enhance their academic writing quality. Policymakers can promote blended learning models, providing more teacher training and student support to enhance academic development.

The implications of this study suggest several directions for future research. Expanding the sample range to include more international high school students from diverse cultural backgrounds will enhance the generalizability of the findings. Conducting longitudinal studies to track strategy use and academic writing development over extended periods will provide deeper insights into the long-term effects of strategy use. Employing mixed research methods, including quantitative and qualitative techniques, will yield more comprehensive and nuanced understandings. Finally, further exploring the integration of technology and traditional teaching methods will support international students' academic writing and overall development more effectively.

In conclusion, by analysing the learning strategies used by international high school students in solving problems in English academic writing, this study reveals the importance of cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies in addressing various academic challenges. The findings enrich the empirical foundation of learning strategy theories and provide valuable references for teaching practice and educational policy. Future research should continue to expand the scope and depth of investigation to support international high school students' academic success more comprehensively.

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