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## Grade 11 Students' Writing Strategies Use Vis-à-vis Learning Style Preference: Public Secondary Schools in Jimma Town in Focus

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### Abstract

This study investigated the writing strategies use vis-à-vis learning style preferences of Grade 11 students in secondary schools found in Jimma Town, Oromia Region, Ethiopia. Quantitative data were collected from 382 students (selected using lottery method) through writing strategies use inventory questionnaire and perceptual learning style preference questionnaire. Mean, aggregated mean, standard deviation, and Pearson correlation were used to analyze the data. The findings revealed that the studied students mainly used the various categories of writing strategies moderately. It was also found out that they had more preferences for auditory, visual, tactile, and kinesthetic learning styles, but they showed negative preference towards individual and group learning styles. Finally, the study revealed that there was a moderate correlation between writing strategies use and learning style preferences. Based on the findings of the study, enhanced strategy-based writing instruction and further research are recommended.

**Keywords:** /Correlation/Learning style preferences/ Writing strategies/

### 1. Introduction

In the current world, nearly every aspect of modern life depends not only on spoken communication but also on written communication (Graham, Gillespie & McKeown, 2013). Yet, learning to write in English, although vital for success in academic and real-life communications, causes linguistic, cognitive, and psychological problems (Horwitz, 2001; Peter & Singaravelu, 2021). Accordingly, learning to write in English is challenging in the Ethiopian EFL context and this results in low writing achievements among many students (Geberew, Tigist, Pullen & Swabe, 2018). Among the measures that can be taken to mitigate these problems is taking appropriate measures based on the findings of studies on students' writing strategies use, their learning style preferences, and the correlations between these variables. According to Oxford (1990), Chamot (2005), and Teng (2023), language learning strategies use is a determining factor for language learning success, and writing strategies use cannot be an exception since such strategies help writers to self-regulate their writing, become aware of the writing process, and control their writing (Paris, 2003; Teng, 2023).

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Language learners can differ in their performance as a result of their learning strategies use (Rahimi & Norooziasiam, 2013). That is, better users of learning strategies can outperform those who use the strategies poorly. According to Macaro (2001) and Cohen (2011), language learning strategies are techniques that students use intentionally to make the most out of their learning, including learning how to write better texts. Thus, writing requires the conscious use of appropriate composing strategies (Paris, 2003; Habtamu, 2018), including planning, drafting, revising, and editing.

On the other hand, learning styles are among the main factors that determine how well students learn a second or a foreign language (Mahdi Moenikia & Adel Zahed-Babelan, 2010). Learning style preferences have thus been a crucial issue in language learning. Therefore, learning styles have been reasonably researched (Salahshour, Sheriff & Salahshour, 2013). Several major types and categories of learning styles have been identified, and studies documented the effect of these various styles on students' school achievement (Salahshour, Sharifi, & Salahshour, 2013). Thus, research on learning styles is a useful means for helping teachers recognize the varied needs students bring into the classroom (Sternberg, Grigorenko & Zhang, 2008; Peter & Singaravelu, 2021). Theories and empirical evidences provide a framework for teachers to develop a variety of fitting instructional methodologies, including strategy-based instruction, to benefit students with varied learning styles. Some students may encounter difficulties resulting from a mismatch between their teachers' instructional methods and their learning styles (Tsai, 2012). Hence, learning styles-focused writing strategy instruction can help students achieve improved writing. Thus, studies on learning style and learning strategies can give educators new directions for making changes in teaching methods to improve students' performance (Cheng, 2019).

Ample studies have been conducted on the techniques that students use while writing: planning, analyzing, synthesizing, reasoning, and monitoring (Rahimi & Norooziasiam, 2013). Such studies are amenable to language learning strategies in general and strategies of learning writing since one learns writing by writing. Some researchers (e.g. Paris, 2003; Rahimi & Norooziam, 2013) proved the positive effect of writing strategy-based instruction while others (e.g. Rasheed & Mohmood, 2017) found out that students used writing strategies with varied degrees and preferences. In the Ethiopian context, Getachew and Gupta (2011) found out those students who had strong motivation to write, persevered in writing, met grade expectations, and received positive reinforcement from significant others who used writing strategies more frequently. However, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, studies conducted on the investigation of students' writing strategies use are scarce in Ethiopia and non-existent in Jimma Town, warranting context-specific studies.

In addition to the dearth of research on learning style preference, some researchers question the existence of a statistically significant correlation between learning style and language learning performance (e.g. Ehrman, Leaver and Oxford, 2003; Shi, 2011). Further, several studies established that there is likely an educational benefit from the use of varied modalities in instructional practice that draws on preferred learning styles (Kana, 2014). Some studies (e.g. Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Rossi-Le, 1995) also found out that there is a significant correlation between language learning strategies and learning styles preferences.

This means that students benefit from teachers' writing instructions which are in line with their learning style preferences (Kana, 2014). On the contrary, in studies conducted by Rahimi, Riazi, and Saif (2008) and Jones and Blankenship (2017), it was reported that learning style did not predict the use of language learning strategies. This implies that research findings on the correlation between language learning strategies use and learning style preferences is not yet conclusive (Hawk & Shah, 2007; Peter & Singaravelu, 2021) and that this area requires further research. However, to study the relationship between language learning strategies (e.g. writing strategies use) and learning style preferences, the two variables need to be studied separately in relation to the specific study context. This justifies the need for this study which examined Grade 11 students' writing strategies use, learning style preferences, and the correlation between these two variables.

## 2. Objectives of the Study

This paper addresses general and specific objectives.

### 2.1. General Objective

The main objective of this study was to investigate the writing strategies use vis-à-vis learning style preferences among Grade 11 students in secondary schools in Jimma Town, Ethiopia.

### 2.2. Specific Objectives

More specifically, the study attempted to:

1. Identify the writing strategies that Grade 11 students in public schools in Jimma Town use;
2. Find out the learning style preferences of Grade 11 students in the study setting;
3. Determine the correlation between the target students' writing strategies use and their learning style preferences.

## 2. Frameworks of the study

This study is based on two theoretical underpinnings which capture the focal variables: writing strategies use and learning style preferences. These theoretical grounds are Oxford's (1990) Language Learning Framework and Reid's (1978) Perceptual Learning Style Preferences Model. This section provides further details on writing strategies vis-à-vis learning styles preferences and explains the theoretical underpinnings along with the rationale for their selection. Following this, the conceptual framework of the study, which draws on the theoretical frameworks, is presented.

### 2.1. Writing Strategies

Writing is a complex process of discovery which involves brainstorming, multiple drafting, feedback practices, revision, and final editing. It thus poses a considerable degree of challenge whether it is performed in a first, second or foreign language (Maarof1 & Murat, 2013; Oxford, 2017). Therefore, students should be equipped with ample writing strategies so that they can write with ease. Writing strategies are thus important since they enable writers to control the operational process of writing, compensate for the cognitive limitations they encounter while writing, and overcome the possible cognitive, linguistic, and psychological problems that interfere with the writing process (Hayes, 1996; Chen, 2022). According to Gu and Zang (2017), a large number of empirical studies have proved that learning strategies play a positive role in building language proficiency and strengthening the autonomous learning ability of students.

Using appropriate strategies in the process of writing has become persistently important. Accordingly, the differences between more and less capable learners in writing have been found in the range and appropriateness of strategies used, and in how the strategies are applied to the task (Maarof1 & Murat, 2013; Oxford, 2017). Therefore, possessing a variety of writing strategies is a key factor for successful writing. This means that students need a range of strategies that they can apply selectively to various writing tasks which enable them to effectively plan, draft, revise, and rework their writing (Chen, 2011, Raooft, Miri, Gharibi, & Malaki, 2017).

Generally, writing strategies, which include memory, compensation, cognitive, meta-cognitive, affective, and social strategies (Cabrejas, 2012), play important roles in the process of learning to write.

Therefore, students should be equipped with a range of writing strategies which they can consciously apply according to the nature of writing tasks. However, studies show that EFL students are not good users of writing strategies. For example, Chen (2011) studied the English writing strategies of 132 non-English major college Chinese students and found that although the students used some writing strategies in the pre-writing stage, while-writing stage, and revising stage, they were still not frequent users of many of the strategies. Similarly, Habtamu’s (2018) study revealed that third-year English major students in three public universities in Ethiopia were low writing strategies users. This can suggest that more emphasis should be given to writing strategies awareness, and practice among EFL students.

Thus, this study examined the writing strategies use of Grade 11 students selected from secondary schools in Jimma Town based on Oxford’s (1990) language learning strategies inventory framework. Oxford’s language learning strategies classification is popular among researchers in the area (e.g. Chen, 2022) who utilize the inventory and interpretative cut-offs proposed by this popular scholar. Oxford classifies language learning strategies into memory, cognitive, compensatory, meta-cognitive, affective, and social strategies. Accordingly, this study followed this classification to conceptualize writing strategies and used the respective inventory questionnaire as well as the interpretative cut-offs (see section on research methods) to collect data on writing strategies use and interpret the findings, respectively.

**3.2. Learning Style Preferences**

According to Reid (1987) and Hawk (2014), learning styles refer to the variations among learners in using one or more senses to understand, organize, and retain experience”. Similarly, Pelegrín (2020) defines learning styles as the cognitive, affective, and physiological traits that are relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment. This is in agreement with an earlier definition provided by Oxford, Lavine, and Crookall (2008), who explain that learning styles include variables such as “individual responses to sound, light, temperature, design, perception, intake, chrono-biological highs and lows, mobility needs, and persistence, motivation, responsibility (conformity), and need for structure...” (p. 56). Learning styles thus pertain to an individual’s preferred way of processing new information for efficient learning, referring to how students learn rather than what they learn (Tabanlıoğlu, 2013; Rhouma, 2016).

While there are several models that underpin learning styles search, this study followed Reid’s (1987) model which is a more appropriate model to be used as a basis for identifying students’ learning styles preferences. Reid was the pioneer in investigating the perceptual learning style preferences in ESL/EFL. Reid’s model is also clear, comprehensive, and widely applied for studying learning style preferences (e.g. Cheng, 2019; Khalil, 2019; Pelegrín, 2020; Rafique, 2021). This theoretical model was used to explain learning styles (Table 1), adapt the learning style preferences questionnaire, and interpret the findings according to the cut-offs the author has provided.

**Table 1: Reid’s Perceptual Learning Styles**

<b>Learning Styles</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Visual	Learning more effectively through the eyes	Reading and taking lecture notes
Auditory	Learning more effectively through the ears	Listening to lectures, reading aloud
Kinesthetic	Learning more effectively through complete body experience	Field trips, role-playing
Tactile	Learning more effective through “hands-on” learning	Building models, touching and working with materials
Group	Learning more effectively through working with others	Group discussions, working on group projects
Individual	Learning more effectively when working alone	Individual written assignments

Finally, teachers' understanding of their students' learning style preferences has a profound effect on their teaching (Evans & Waring, 2006; Rafique, 2021). This can significantly influence their perception of students' learning differences and determines their instructional practices. Providing trainings for teachers to enhance their understanding of learning style preferences can result in greater comprehension and consideration of the unique learning needs of each student under their guidance (Evans & Waring, 2006; Pelegrín, 2020). This implies that conceptualizing and researching the correlation between writing strategies use and their learning style preferences is a useful undertaking and it helps in shaping teachers' writing instruction.

For example, since the 1980s, pedagogy experts in China have focused on studying individual differences among learners, and their learning styles have subsequently attracted widespread attention. In the twenty-first century, empirical studies on foreign language learning styles have made some progress in China. Exploring the relationship between learning style and foreign language acquisition effectiveness has been an important topic of empirical research on learning style in the field of foreign languages during the past 20 years, but there are differences in terms of research results (Guo & Liao, 2014). However, since the correlation between learning strategies use, including writing strategies use, and learning style preferences has not been conclusively confirmed and can be context-specific, it is necessary to undertake further studies to extensively document the correlation that exists between the two variables.

**2.3. Writing Strategies Use Vis-à-vis Learning Styles**

Dunn and Burke (2008) and Hawk (2014) believe that learning styles are the sum of cognitive styles and learning strategies, which affect ways of learning. Thus, several studies proved that the type of learning strategies used by students was highly consistent with their learning styles. A study conducted by Hsu and Chen (2016) also showed that active, reflective, and balanced learning styles affect their choice of social, memory, and meta-cognitive strategies. Besides, Sahragard and Abbasian (2016) empirically proved that learning style preferences can have significant influence on students' learning strategies use. Hence, students who use specific learning styles tend to adopt particular categories of strategies. Therefore, it is believed that when students develop new learning styles, fitting strategies must be provided with enough time for experimentation (Salahshour, Sharifi, & Salahshour, 2013). In connection with this, to investigate the writing strategies use and learning style preferences of the target students and determine the correlation between writing strategies use and learning style preferences, the following conceptual framework was followed in this study:

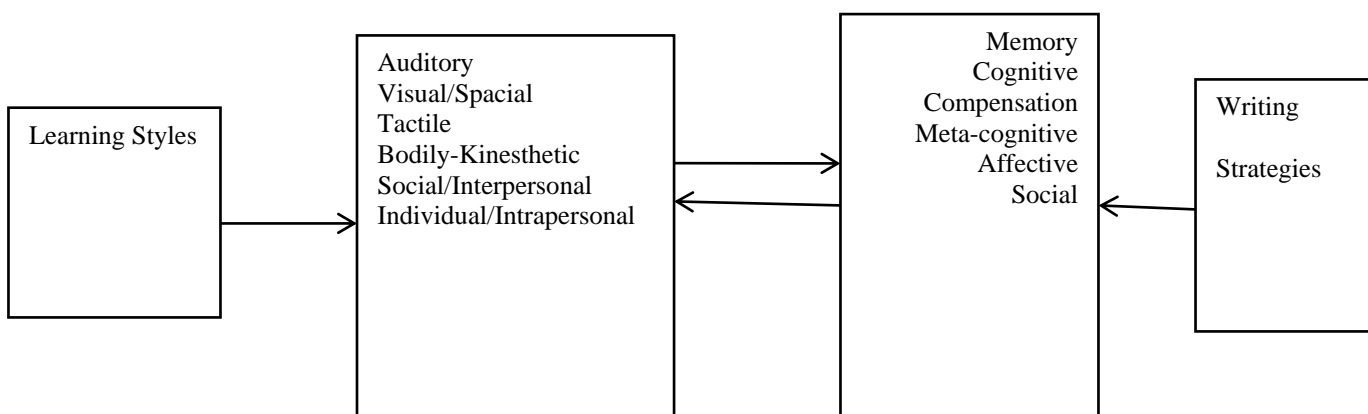


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study

As indicated earlier, this study intends to investigate Grade 11 students' writing strategy use, learning style preferences, and the relationship between their writing strategy use and learning style preferences. Therefore, the variables of the study are writing strategy, learning style, and the relationship between these two. As explained in the literature review, the writing strategy consists of memory strategies (e.g. remembering appropriate vocabulary and grammar while writing, recalling previously learned writing techniques), cognitive strategies (e.g. revising, text generating, resourcing), compensation strategies (e.g. using a synonym when memory fails to retrieve a vocabulary item), meta-cognitive strategies (e.g. self-regulation, planning, monitoring and evaluation), social strategies (e.g. help-seeking), and affective strategies (e.g. managing emotions such as foreign language learning anxiety). On the other hand, learning styles constitute auditory, visual, tactile, bodily-kinesthetic, social, and individual styles. Therefore, the above conceptual framework was devised based on these conceptualizations.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1. Research Setting and Design**

This study was conducted on Grade 11 students selected from secondary schools in Jimma Town. Jimma Town is the capital of Jimma Zone which is found in the Oromia Region of Ethiopia. There are private and public secondary schools in the town. The town has six public secondary schools. Two secondary schools owned by religious institutions are also available. This study, however, focused on public secondary schools only. The study used cross-sectional design which includes descriptive and correlational methods. A cross-sectional research design requires the collection of data from many respondents at a single point in time (Kesmodel, 2018).

#### **3.2. Population and Sampling**

The target population of the study (the total number of Grade 11 students) was 2915 Grade 11 students in the comprehensively sampled six secondary schools of Jimma Town (the town was chosen using convenience sampling). Of this population, 341 students were taken based on the sample size determination technique proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). However, adding 10% for non-response and 2% for design effect, the sample size was maximized to 382. After the sample size was determined, it was proportionally allocated to the six schools (see Table 2 below), and sample units were selected using lottery method.

**Table 2: Population and Sample**

<b>No</b>	<b>Secondary School</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Sample</b>
1	Jimma	673	88
2	Jiren	700	92
3	Seto	440	58
4	Aba Buna	280	37
5	Mole Mendera	456	59
6	Kera	366	48
<b>Total</b>		<b>2915</b>	<b>382</b>

### 3.3. Instruments of Data Collection

Two questionnaires were used to gather quantitative data in this study: one to measure the respondents' writing strategies use (Specific Objective 1) and the second to measure the respondents' learning style preferences (Specific Objective 2). The first is a 5-point Likert scale Writing Strategies Use Inventory Questionnaire (WSUIQ) while the second is the Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ). This was also a 5-point Likert scale. The data from both questionnaires were also used to determine the correlation between learning style preferences and writing strategies use (Specific Objective 3).

Recently, Habtamu (2018) validated and used the WSUIQ to obtain self-reported data on university students' writing strategy use. Habtamu adopted this writing Strategies Use Inventory from Cabrejas (2012). It has 47 items categorized under the six classifications of Oxford's (1990) six categories of language learning strategies (4 items for memory strategies, 13 items for cognitive strategies use, 6 items for compensation strategies use, 14 items for meta-cognitive strategies use, 6 items for affective strategies use, and 4 items for social strategies use). Oxford (1990) is a prominent authority in language learning strategies classification, renowned for establishing cut-offs that are used in interpreting findings. As a result, many language learning strategy researchers predominantly use her classification and interpretative scheme (Daflizara Sulistiyo, Dairabi & Kamil, 2022). In this study, as was done in Habtamu's study, the WSUIQ was commented by experts, pilot-tested with 50 Grade 11 students (in a school in the vicinity of Jimma town), and found a valid and reliable (Cronbach's alpha = 0.90) measure of writing strategies use.

During data collection, respondents were asked to show the frequency of using writing strategies. Specifically, they were required to choose one of the five options (1 = never or almost never true of me, 2 = usually not true of me, 3 = somewhat true of me, 4 = usually true of me, and 5 = always or almost always true of me). The WSUIQ was translated into Afan Oromo so that the respondents would not face difficulty understanding the items.

On the other hand, the Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ) used in this study was adopted from Reid (1987). It is a 30-item self-reporting questionnaire consisting of statements on each of the six learning style preferences: auditory (5 items), visual (5 items), kinesthetic (5 items), tactile (5 items), group (5 items), and individual (5 items) learning styles. The respondents were thus required to respond based on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The PLSPQ was also translated into Afan Oromo, commented by experts, and pilot-tested so that its validity (face validity and content validity) and reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.94) were ensured. The PLSPQ was developed based on previously existing learning style inventory questionnaires and was tested and used by several researchers (e.g. Rhouma, 2016; Khalil, 2019; Rafique, 2021).

### 3.4. Methods of Data Analysis

Since quantitative data were collected in the study, quantitative methods were used in data analysis. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the quantitative data on writing strategies use (Specific Objective 1) and learning style preferences (Specific Objective 2) using SPSS 26. In addition, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used to analyze the data to address the objective regarding the correlation between writing strategy use and learning style preferences (Specific Objective 3). To this effect, it was proven that the assumptions of random selection of study participants and normal distribution of data were fulfilled. In addition, before correlation analysis was conducted, the data were tested for normality using one the One-Sample Kolmogorov—Smirnov (S-K) test. Accordingly, the S-K value for writing strategies use was 0.74 ( $p > 0.05$ ) while that of learning style preferences was 0.86 ( $P > 0.05$ ), showing that the data on both variables were normally distributed.

### 3.5. Ethical Considerations

Firstly, the study was approved by the Research and Graduate Programs Coordinating Office of the College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Jimma University. Then, the consent of the Educational Office of Jimma Town was testified through a formal letter. Following this, the letter was submitted to Jimma Town secondary schools. A good rapport was created at the same time. A similar procedure was followed while the researcher approached the English language teachers of the schools. In addition, the sample students participated in the study with their full oral consents. Participant anonymity and data confidentiality were also maintained throughout the study. Furthermore, maximum effort was made to duly acknowledge every source used in the study.

## 4. Results

As indicated above, this study was based on data collected through questionnaires on the target students' writing strategies use and learning style preferences. The findings from the analysis of the data on writing strategies use (Specific Objective 1) were interpreted according to Oxford's (1990) cut-off point; accordingly, mean  $\geq 3.5$  = high; mean 2.5 to 3.5 = medium; and Mean  $\leq 2.4$  = low.

**Table 3: Writing Strategies Use**

SN	Writing Strategies	Mean	SD
1	Memory Strategies	3.20	1.38
2	Cognitive Strategies	3.01	1.42
3	Compensatory Strategies	3.24	1.39
4	Metacognitive Strategies	3.06	1.41
5	Affective Strategies	2.88	1.20
6	Social Strategies	3.51	1.39

Table 3 displays the mean scores and the standard deviations for writing strategies use. As depicted in the table, cognitive writing strategies use received the highest mean score ( $M=3.51$ ,  $Sd= 1.39$ ). This is followed by the mean score for compensatory writing strategies use ( $M=3.24$ ,  $Sd. 1.41$ ), which in turn is followed by the mean score for memory writing strategies use ( $M=3.20$ ,  $Sd=1.38$ ). The mean and standard deviations scores for cognitive strategies use and affective writing strategies were found to be ( $M=3. 01$ ,  $Sd=1.42$ ;  $M= 2.88$ ,  $Sd= 1.20$ ), respectively. To sum up, the mean scores show that the respondents were medium users of memory, cognitive, compensatory, metacognitive, and affective writing strategies. However, their use of social strategies ( $M = 3.51$ ,  $Sd=1.39$ ) was tended to be high.

Secondly, the other objective of the study was to determine the learning strategy preferences of the students in focus. To this end, quantitative data were collected from a sample of 382 students using a pre-tested standard questionnaire. The data collected through this instrument were analyzed into aggregated mean scores. The aggregated mean scores were interpreted according to the cut-off point proposed by Reid (1987):  $\geq 13.5$  = major learning style preference; 11.50-13.49 = minor learning style preference; and  $\leq 11.49$  = negative learning style preference.



**Table 4: Learning Style Preferences**

<b>SN</b>	<b>Learning Style Preferences</b>	<b>Aggregated Mean</b>
1	Auditory Learning	14.58
2	Visual Learning	13.37
3	Tactile Learning	14.47
4	Kinesthetic Learning	14.50
5	Individual Learning	9.43
6	Group Learning	9.43

Students can be of the auditory, visual, tactile, kinesthetic, individual, and/or group in their learning style preferences. Hence, Table 4 summarizes the findings pertaining to learning style preferences. The results in the table indicate that the aggregated mean for auditory learning style was 14.58 while the one for the visual learning style was 13.37. According to Reid's (1987) cut-off point, 14.58 falls in the major learning style preference category while 13.37 indicates minor learning style preference. This reveals that the sample students tended to have major and minor preference to auditory and visual learning styles, respectively. The table also shows that kinesthetic, individual, and group learning styles received aggregated mean scores of 14.47, 14.50, 9.43 and 9.43 respectively. According to Reid's cut-off, these results indicate tendencies of major preference for tactile and kinesthetic learning styles but negative preference on the individual and group learning styles. The fact that the students had negative preferences for the individual and group learning styles which require careful interpretation since it has important implications (see Section 5).

Finally, the third objective of this study was to determine the correlation between learning style preferences (LSP) and writing strategies use (WSU). Thus, the data for the two variables were correlated using Pearson product Moment Correlation (Table 5).

Table 5: Correlation between LSP and WSU

		Learning Style Preference	Writing Strategies use
Learning Style Preference	Pearson Correlation	1	.189
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.317
	N	30	45
Writing Strategy Use	Pearson Correlation	.189	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.317	
	N	30	30

As summarized in Table 4, the correlation between writing strategies use and learning style preferences was found to be weak ( $r=.189$ ). As Schober, Boer, and Schwarte (2008) state, Pearson’s correlations of  $\pm 0.00-0.10$ ,  $\pm 0.10-0.39$ ,  $\pm 0.40-0.69$ ,  $\pm 0.70-0.89$  and  $\pm 0.90-1.00$  indicate negligible, weak, moderate, strong, and very strong correlations. However, the correlation between the two variables is not significant at p-value of 0.05 ( $p = 0.317$ ). This suggests that learning style preference cannot predict writing strategies use.

### 5. Discussion

The finding of the study revealed that the studied students were medium users of memory, cognitive, compensatory, metacognitive, and affective writing strategies. However, their use of social strategies tended to be high. These findings are slightly different from previous studies conducted outside Ethiopia (e.g. Chen, 2011) and the one conducted by Habtamu (2018) in the Ethiopian context, which found out low use of writing strategies among students. The better use of writing strategies in the current study can be the result of English teachers’ efforts in providing instruction and practice on writing strategies use. It can also be the result of the students’ experience of strategy-based writing in other language subjects such as Afan Oromo since writing strategies can be transferable. Whichever the reason can be, the situation appears good, but teachers should not be satisfied with this since there always is more to do to enhance student learning.

The study also demonstrated that the students in focus showed major preferences for auditory, visual, tactile, and kinesthetic learning styles while demonstrating negative preferences for individual and group learning styles. Whilst learning styles are relatively stable and may be acknowledged by teachers (Evans & Waring, 2006), they can be altered due to various influencing factors, requiring adjustment in instructional approaches and methods (Salahshour, Sharifi & Salahshour, 2013). Hence, two points need further explanation.

Firstly, the fact that the studied students, who were found to be high users of social strategies, were identified as having negative preferences for group learning style should be explained. One possible explanation is that these students might have been constantly made to do writing assignments in groups, and could have considered engagement in group activities as using writing strategy. Another likely explanation is that these students might have found writing activities difficult, and in effect, resorted to merely seeking assistance from better students to get good marks. Secondly, the negative preference for individual and group learning styles among the studied students may lead to overdependence on teacher guidance and feedback as opposed to self-reliance and independent learning. Therefore, this issue needs to be carefully addressed.

Finally, it was found out that the correlation between writing strategies use and learning styles preferences was weak and not statistically significant. While this finding agrees with the finding of the study by Rahimi, Riazi, and Saif’s (2008), it contradicts with the findings of studies conducted by Cheng (2019), Feng, Iriarte, and Valincia (2019) which revealed a significant correlation between language learning strategies and learning style preferences. When students claim being high users of social strategies and show negative preference to individual and group learning, there is the possibility of overdependence on teachers and peers when groupwork is demanded. The difference can be the result of variations in study context, sampling technique, and sample size.

## 6. Conclusions

The finding of the study revealed that the studied students were medium users of memory, cognitive, compensatory, metacognitive, and affective writing strategies, but their use of social strategies tended to be high. In comparison to findings in several contexts that documented low use of writing strategies, this is a promising condition for the students to become good learners of writing. However, somewhere above it was mentioned that the study participants had low level of group learning style preference. To reconcile this mismatch, conducting further research is important.

The findings of the study also showed that the major learning style preference among the studied students were the auditory, visual, tactile, and kinesthetic learning styles. However, they showed negative preferences for the individual and group learning styles, as explained earlier. While it is logical to assume that the students can be left to depend on their own learning style preferences, it is also advisable to be cautious that the negative preferences for individual and social learning styles can lead to overdependence on teachers as opposed to autonomous and independent language learning, including learning to write.

Finally, it was found that the correlation between writing strategies use and learning style preferences was weak and not significant. This suggests that learning style preferences cannot predict writing strategies use. Yet, considering several intervening variables, further studies are required to reach more accurate conclusions. Put in another way, the implication of this study is thus the need for research-based decision and practice as regards writing strategy instruction that draws on learning style preferences.

## 7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- Although it is good that the respondents are mainly moderate users of writing strategies, English language teachers should strive to enable the students to become high users of all the writing strategy components. Therefore, continued implicit and explicit writing strategies use trainings are important.
- As concluded above, it is also desirable to be cautious about the possibility of the negative preferences for individual and group learning styles leading to overdependence on teachers and able peers. Thus, English language teachers should nurture autonomous and independent writing habits in their students by scaffolding individual and group writing practices to reduce overdependence on teacher guidance and feedback.
- Finally, further studies are recommended to generate adequate empirical evidences that help to soundly ascertain the correlation between writing strategies use (WSU) and learning style preferences (LSP) with the view to determining the extent to which LSPs can predict WSU.

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1. Endale Kumsa: Collected, analysed, interpreted the data, and produced the manuscript.
- 2 & 3. Tekle Ferede and Dagne Tiruneh: Supervised the PhD project and commented on the draft and final versions of the manuscript.

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**Competing of Interest**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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