Transformation of learning and writing in English: An analysis of strategies and competences in Peruvian university students

Transformación del aprendizaje y la escritura en inglés: Un análisis de estrategias y competencias en estudiantes universitarios peruanos

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Abstract

This study aims to understand the impact of learning strategies on students' ability to produce effective texts in English. Additionally, it seeks to identify the students' discursive and functional competencies by analyzing their relationship with the use of learning strategies. The study follows a basic design with a quantitative approach, utilizing a hypothetical-deductive method and adopting a non-experimental correlational descriptive approach within a positivist paradigm.The relationship between learning strategies and the production of texts in English was examined among university students. The findings indicate that 18.6 % of the participants always employ learning strategies, while 44.3 % use them quite often. A significant portion of the students (47.14 %) frequently utilize cognitive and control strategies. Additionally, 32.9 % of the students sometimes employ learning support strategies. Regarding discursive and functional competencies, 35.7 % of students demonstrate a regular level in both,while 31.4 % display a good level in both competencies. Encouragingly, 40 % of the students achieve a good level in text production, and 24.3 % reach an excellent level. These findings provide valuable insights for the design of educational strategies. This study contributes knowledge and validity to the teaching of English as a foreign language and text production in the university context. It holds significant value by enhancing students' English text production skills and preparing them to tackle communication challenges in diverse academic and professional settings.

Keywords: *Learning strategies, text production, English language, discursive competencies, functional competencies.*

Resumen

Este estudio tiene como objetivo comprender el impacto de las estrategias de aprendizaje en la capacidad de los estudiantes para producir textos efectivos en inglés. Además, busca identificar las competencias discursivas y funcionales de los estudiantes analizando su relación con el uso de estrategias de aprendizaje. El estudio sigue un diseño básico con un enfoque cuantitativo, utilizando un método hipotético-deductivo y adoptando un enfoque descriptivo correlacional no experimental dentro de un paradigma positivista. Se examinó la relación entre las estrategias de aprendizaje y la producción de textos en inglés entre estudiantes universitarios. Los resultados indican que el 18,6 % de los participantes siempre emplea estrategias de aprendizaje, mientras que el 44,3 % las utiliza con bastante frecuencia. Una parte importante de los estudiantes (47,14 %) utiliza con frecuencia estrategias cognitivas y de control. Además, el 32,9 % de los estudiantes emplea en ocasiones estrategias de apoyo al aprendizaje. En cuanto a las competencias discursivas y funcionales, el 35,7 % de los estudiantes demuestra un nivel regular en

ambas, mientras que el 31,4 % muestra un buen nivel en ambas competencias. Es alentador que el 40 % de los estudiantes alcance un buen nivel en producción de textos, y el 24,3 % alcance un nivel excelente. Estos hallazgos proporcionan información valiosa para el diseño de estrategias educativas. Este estudio aporta conocimiento y validez a la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera y la producción de textos en el contexto universitario. Tiene un valor significativo al mejorar las habilidades de producción de textos en inglés de los estudiantes y prepararlos para enfrentar desafíos de comunicación en diversos entornos académicos y profesionales.

***Palabras claves:** Estrategias de aprendizaje, producción de textos, lengua inglesa, competencias discursivas, competencias funcionales.*

1. Introduction

Currently, the mastery of the English language has gained great importance in the educational field due to the increasing globalization and the need for international communication. English text production has become an essential skill for university students, both in their academic and professional lives. However, a lack of appropriate use of learning strategies that facilitate coherent and effective text production in English has been observed, which has driven the need to investigate how these strategies influence the development of linguistic skills in this language. The research aims to analyze the relationship between learning strategies and text production in English among university students. The objective is to understand how the use of learning strategies influences students' competence in producing coherent and effective written texts in English. To achieve this, different theories and approaches related to learning strategies and English text production will be explored, providing a solid theoretical framework for the research.

As for the justification and current relevance, English language proficiency has become highly important due to globalization and the need for international communication. English text production is a crucial skill for university students in both their academic and professional lives. However, a lack of appropriate use of learning strategies to facilitate coherent and effective text production in English has been observed. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to the knowledge of how learning strategies can enhance English text production, which may positively impact students' academic and professional development. This study will focus on analyzing the correlation between learning strategies and English text production among university students at a private university in Lima. Data will be collected through surveys and questionnaires to explore the frequency and use of different learning strategies, as well as the quality of English text production. It is important to note that this study has its limitations in terms of generalizing the results, as it is based on a specific sample of students from a particular institution. Nonetheless, the findings can be useful to inform and improve educational practices in the university context.

To achieve the proposed objectives, a basic and quantitative research approach will be employed. A survey will be conducted using two instruments: the ."Abbreviated ACRA Scale of Learning Strategies."and the Rubric for Writing English Texts."These instruments will be administered to a sample of 70 English university students at the private university in Lima. The results will be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to identify potential correlations between learning strategies and English text production. The reliability of the instruments will be assessed using Cronbach's coefficient to ensure the accuracy of the collected data.

2. Literature Review

In terms of learning strategies, there has been a variety of research that has addressed this topic over time. Some relevant studies include the work of De la Cruz (2022), who showed that learning strategies are directly related to pedagogical performance in Ica. Mendoza (2022) also conducted research that showed a direct correlation between learning strategies and collaborative work in university students in Lima. Medina and Nagamine (2019) sought to establish the association between learning strategies and comprehension of written texts in English, finding a significant correlation. Solorzano (2019) found that the use of learning strategies is related to academic performance at the higher level. Moreno (2018) showed the correlation between the teaching and acquisition of the foreign language English and written production among university students in Lima. The aforementioned studies highlight the importance of investigating how learning strategies influence the development of language skills in the university context. To achieve this, the relationship between the learning strategies used by students and their ability to produce written texts in English will be analyzed in order to improve the teaching and learning of English in the university context. Furthermore, this research will provide relevant information for the development of more effective educational strategies that will allow students to reach an optimal level of competence in the production of written texts in English, which will have a positive impact on their academic and professional development.

The present study is based on a theoretical framework that draws on various general and substantive theories related to learning strategies and the production of English texts in language learners. Learning strategies are cognitive, metacognitive and affective processes that learners intentionally employ to enhance their learning process and understanding of information according to Derry & Murphy (1986), highlighted by Beltrán (1998). These strategies are considered as tools or techniques that students use to facilitate the acquisition and retention of knowledge. They involve a set of mental activities that allow the learner to plan, monitor and evaluate their own learning, leading to greater efficiency and autonomy in the process of acquiring skills and knowledge (Román & Gallego, 1994). The Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) approach is highly relevant to this study. It is grounded in theoretical concepts and pedagogical approaches of leading scholars such as Bruner and Dewey, who emphasize the importance of assigning challenging tasks to students, the appropriate use of resources and, above all, providing clear instructions to foster learning (Santana-Vega et al., 2020). ABI focuses on encouraging enquiry and the active participation of students in their learning process, allowing them to develop skills to solve complex problems, apply theory in practical situations and foster creativity and critical thinking.

On the other hand, the affective dimension plays a relevant role in the development of learning at university level. Quintero et al. (2021) and Meza & Lazarte (2007) point out that it is crucial to consider affectivity as a relevant psychological category to understand the relationship between the rational and emotional aspects of learning. Both spheres are closely related and cannot be separated, as the affective experiences, feelings and ideals of the individual influence the generation of meaningful stimuli that promote creativity and performance in various activities. Affectivity can influence motivation to learn, understanding and application of information, as well as willingness to take on new challenges and experiment with innovative approaches. Consequently, it is essential to consider the affective dimension when designing pedagogical strategies that foster creativity and enable students to improve their academic performance.

To measure learning strategies, the "ACRA-Abbreviated scale of learning strategies or techniques in university students", developed by De la Fuente & Justicia (2003), will be used. This scale consists of 30 items that assess the cognitive, metacognitive, and affective strategies used by students in the learning process. Each item is evaluated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "never" to "always". The total score on this scale will allow us to determine the level of application of learning strategies in students. Salazar & Heredia (2019) emphasize the intentionality of the student and their experience in specific subjects for the design of strategies that allow them to elaborate and process information to convert it into meaningful knowledge. Within the operational dimensions of learning strategies, three fundamental aspects are considered: the "Application of Cognitive and Learning Control Strategies", the "Use of Learning Support Strategies" and the "Use of Study Habits Strategies":

Text production, as a dependent variable, refers to the process that facilitates the written manifestation of ideas, emotions and feelings structured in previously planned texts. It involves the appropriate use of linguistic and non-linguistic codes, including lexical, phonetic grammar and non-verbal resources. It involves the ability to structure sentences, paragraphs and complete texts with grammatical accuracy and appropriate lexis considering the Council of Europe (2018). In addition, the production of written texts involves mastery of the discourse and linguistic conventions of the English language, as well as the ability to express ideas and arguments clearly and coherently. In order to assess the production of texts in English, the "Writing rubric for written texts in English" will be used. This rubric consists of several criteria, such as grammar and vocabulary, organization and structure of the text, coherence and cohesion, and appropriateness to purpose and audience. Each criterion will be assessed on a five-point scale, ranging from 'poor' to 'excellent'. The total score on this rubric will determine the students' level of proficiency in English text production.

In terms of English text production, two dimensions are explored: "Discursive Competence" and "Functional Competence". The former refers to the ability to coherently organize and structure ideas in a text, while the latter focuses on the appropriate use of linguistic resources to express content accurately and fluently. The conceptual definition of both variables provides a sound theoretical basis for understanding their importance in the learning process of language learners. On the other hand, the operational definitions and measurement instruments selected ensure an accurate and objective assessment of learning strategies and text production in English. The combination of these definitions and measurement methods will provide relevant information for the development of effective educational strategies and the improvement of linguistic and communicative competence in academic and professional settings.

General theories such as 'Socioconstructivism', which holds that learning is a social process and constructed in interaction with other individuals and the environment, are considered. According to Vigotsky (1981), language plays a fundamental role in the development of thinking and understanding, suggesting that greater knowledge of sociolinguistic situations translates into better text quality. In Cassany's (1990) 'Theory of Writing and Composition', he stresses the importance of drafting and the process of editing and improving the production of written texts. This theory emphasizes the need to foster a collaborative and constructive approach to improve writing skills in university students. On the "Cognitive Approach to Writing" presented by Benoit (2021), which highlights

that the production of written texts involves cognitive resources and language processing. Students may have difficulties in comprehending complex discursive genres, which highlights the need for specialized didactics to develop communicative and linguistic skills.

The integration of these theories and conceptual definitions provides a solid theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between learning strategies and the production of English texts in language learners. This academic-formal approach contributes to the development of instructional strategies that enhance competence in English text production and, in turn, foster effective communication in academic and professional settings. In conclusion, the theoretical framework is based on learning strategy theories, citing Román and Gallego (1994), De la Fuente and Justicia (2003), Salazar and Heredia (2019), among others. In terms of text production, the pragmatic competences mentioned by the CEFR are considered, as well as the ideas of Acosta et al. (2020), Cassany (1989), Vigotsky (1981), Benoit (2021), among others. It is important to consider group collaboration and the application of social and cultural knowledge in the writing process, as proposed by Perlado et al. (2019), Martínez de Ojeda and Méndez (2017) and Estrada et al. (2016).

3.   Methodology

Regarding the methodological process employed to investigate the argument, a fundamental and quantitative research approach will be utilized. A survey will be administered using two instruments: the Abbreviated Learning Strategies Scale (ACRA) with a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.87, and an English Writing Rubric developed by a private university. These instruments will be individually and collectively administered to the sample of 70 students to gather data pertaining to the utilization of learning strategies and the quality of their English text production. The results will be subjected to analysis through descriptive and inferential statistics to identify potential correlations amidst variables. Result validity will be ensured via expert evaluation, and the reliability coefficient will gauge the precision of the data collection instruments.

Regarding specific aspects, a quantitative research approach was employed to delve into the relationship between the employment of learning strategies and the quality of English text production. The study population consisted of students, and a sample of 70 students was selected utilizing a non-probabilistic convenience sampling method. Data collection was executed via the administration of two instruments: the Abbreviated Learning Strategies Scale (ACRA) and an English Writing Rubric.

For data analysis, descriptive and inferential techniques were applied. Correlations between variables were examined using statistical analyses, with the aim of determining whether significant relationships existed between the utilization of learning strategies and the quality of English text production. Furthermore, result validity was upheld through expert evaluation within the field, and the reliability coefficient was employed to ascertain the consistency of the data collection instruments. Ethically, stringent ethical guidelines were adhered to throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their confidentiality was ensured. Moreover, approval from the pertinent academic institution was secured prior to commencing the study. These measures collectively safeguarded the integrity and ethical standards of the entire research process.

4.   Results and discussions

The results obtained in the study revealed relevant information about learning strategies and the production of texts in English in university students. The study population consisted of 70 students from the Basic Studies Program, who studied English as a foreign language at a private university in Lima. As for the learning strategies employed by the students, the ."ACRA-Abbreviated Scale of Learning Strategies or Techniques in University Students"designed by De la Fuente and Justicia (2003) was used.

Tabla 1: Independent variable: Learning strategies.

Response options	Quantity	Percentage
Never	9	12,9
Some of the time	17	24,3
Quite often	31	44,3
Always	13	18,6
Total	70	100,0

The present research explored the impact of learning strategies on English text production among university students. The findings of this study reveal significant variability in the participants' use of learning strategies. While most students reported using learning strategies, a considerable percentage (18.6 %) indicated that they

always use them. This observation suggests that a group of students shows a high level of competence in the use of effective study approaches. These results are consistent with previous studies such as Moreno (2018).

On the other hand, the fact that 44.3 % of the students claimed to use learning strategies quite often shows a positive inclination towards adopting more effective approaches to learning. Students could be employing organizational, planning, and self-regulation techniques that enable them to improve their academic performance and optimize their study process. The 18.6 % of participants who always applied learning strategies highlights a group of students who show a high level of competence in using effective study approaches. They might be more aware of the importance of learning strategies and have developed solid skills to apply them in different academic situations.

Table 2 shows the dimensions of learning strategies in relation to the production of texts in English, using the Rubric for writing texts in English". The results showed that 10 % of the students presented a deficient level in text production, 25.7 % had a fair level, 40 % obtained a good level, and 24.3 % reached an excellent level in this competence.

Tabla 2: Distribution of the dimensions of the variable "learning strategies.

Dimension	Never	Sometimes	Quite often	Always
(1) Cognitive Strategies for Learning Management	9 (12.86 %)	13 (18.57 %)	33 (47.14 %)	15 (21.43 %)
(2) Learning support strategies	9 (12.9 %)	22 (31.4 %)	23 (32.9 %)	16 (22.9 %)
(3) Study habits	13 (18.6 %)	18 (25.7 %)	21 (30.0 %)	18 (25.7 %)

The findings in Table 3 indicate that most students scored positively in text production, with 40.0 % of them being rated as "Good"in this skill. However, it is also observed that a significant percentage (35.7 %) are still in the "Poor."r "Fair"range, suggesting that there is room for improvement in English written text production proficiency among the participants. It is important to note that while the percentage of students scoring "Excellent"is considerable, it is critical that teachers and the curriculum continue to provide support and focus on the development of English writing skills to ensure a greater percentage of students achieve higher levels of proficiency in text production. The results provide relevant information for the planning of educational strategies and the implementation of specific interventions that promote the development of English writing skills among university students.

Tabla 3: Dependent variable Text production.

Response opinions	Quantity	Percentage
Poor	7	10,0
Fair	18	25,7
Good	28	40,0
Excellent	17	24,3
Total	70	100,0

In Table 4, the significant positive correlation (rs = 0.775, p ¡0.01) between learning strategies and English text production supports the stated hypothesis and is consistent with the results of previous studies, such as Medina and Nagamine (2019). This implies that participants who employ more effective learning strategies have a greater ability to produce English texts coherently and effectively.

Tabla 4: Correlation between Learning Strategies and Text Production.

Variable	Correlation coefficient (rs)	Sig.
Learning Strategies	.775	.000**
Text Production	1.000	

The results also show that cognitive and learning control strategies are used more frequently, suggesting that students tend to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning on a more regular basis. These findings are consistent with the Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) theory of Santana-Vega et al. (2020), which highlights the importance of self-regulation and metacognitive focus in the learning process. On the other hand, learning support strategies were employed sometimes or quite often, which may indicate that some students could benefit from further guidance and support in the development of specific skills for English text production. This observation is aligned with the cognitive approach to writing presented by Benoit (2021), which highlights the importance of addressing difficulties in understanding complex discourse genres in the writing process.

Tabla 5: Correlation between Dimensions of Learning Strategies and Text Production.

Variables and dimensions	Correlation coefficient (rs)	Sig.
Cognitive and Learning Control Strategies	.747	.000**
Learning Support Strategies	.752	.000**
Study Habits	.724	.000**
Text Production	1.000	

5. Conclusions

The results of this research highlight the relevance and effectiveness of learning strategies in English text production among university students. The findings show that a considerable percentage of participants employ learning strategies, suggesting that these strategies are valuable tools for improving written proficiency in English. Specifically, it was observed that both cognitive and learning control strategies and learning support strategies are frequently used. These results support the theory of Inquiry-Based Learning, which stresses the importance of self-regulation and the metacognitive approach in the learning process. They are also in line with the theory of Writing and Composition, which stresses the relevance of the process of editing and improving text production. However, it is essential to bear in mind that this study was limited to a specific sample of students from a private university in Lima, so it is suggested that future research be carried out with larger and more diverse samples in order to obtain more generalizable results. The results obtained in this study provide valuable information on the relationship between learning strategies and the production of English texts in university students. The findings support the usefulness of addressing both cognitive and learning control strategies and learning support strategies to improve English writing proficiency. These results are consistent with the theory of Inquiry-Based Learning, which underlines the importance of self-regulation and the metacognitive approach in the learning process. Furthermore, they contribute to scientific knowledge in the field of education and second language acquisition. However, it is crucial to bear in mind that this study was conducted on a specific sample of students from a private university in Lima, which suggests the need for future research with larger and more diversified samples in order to obtain a more complete and widespread view of the relationship between learning strategies and the production of English texts. The findings of this research have significant implications for the design of educational strategies to promote the development of English language and communication skills among university students. The results indicate that both cognitive and learning control strategies and learning support strategies are valuable in improving English writing proficiency. These results support the theory of Inquiry-Based Learning, which highlights the importance of self-regulation and the metacognitive approach in the learning process. They are also in line with the theory of Writing and Composition, which stresses the relevance of the editing and improving process in text production. However, it is essential to bear in mind that this study focused on a specific sample of students from a private university in Lima, which suggests the need for future research with larger and more diversified samples in order to obtain more generalizable and robust results.

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