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Exploring the Effectiveness of Graphic Organizers on EFL Learners' Writing Performance across Different Learning Style Preference and Gender at Higher Education

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Abstract: In EFL context, graphic organizers (GOs), learning style preference and gender difference were predicted to be the factors affecting learners' writing accuracy. The investigation investigated the interaction effect amongst types of writing strategy (x1), learning styles (x2), and gender (x3) on writing accuracy (y) at Islamic University Students. The investigation applied a posttest quasi-experiment design using a 2x3x2 analysis of variance. The 70 participants consisted of three groups based on types of writing strategy (x1): free writing (n= 34) versus graphic organizers (n=36); types of learning styles (x2) : visual (n=22) versus auditory (n=26) versus kinesthetic (n=22); and gender (x3): male (32), female (38). A three way ANOVA test was applied in the investigation. The study revealed that an interaction effect occurred amongst writing strategy, learning styles and gender

difference on average of writing accuracy at $F(2, 69) = 3.34, p = 0.02, \eta^2 = 0.10$. Then, the interaction effect also occurred between writing strategy and learning styles at $F(2, 69) = 7.40, p = 0.01$; and between learning styles and gender at $F(2, 69) = 6.56, p = 0.03$. On the contrary, the interaction effect did not occur between writing strategy and gender at $F(1, 69) = 1.79, p = 0.19$. Additionally, the simple main effect analysis confirmed that there was a statistically significant effect of writing strategy at $F(1, 69) = 9.70, p = 0.03$; learning style preference at $F(2, 69) = 62.92, p = 0.00$; and gender at $F(1, 69) = 14.81, p = 0.00$. Here, GOs were better than free writing; visual learners outperformed better than auditory and kinesthetic; and female had higher achievement than male on the learners' writing accuracy. The further investigation is needed to validate the finding.

Key words: writing strategy, gender, learning style, writing accuracy

Introduction

Composing argumentative essay is regarded to be the most difficult skills to learn (Suhartoyo et al. 2015; Pablo & Lasaten, 2018; Liunokas, 2020; Rubiaee et al. 2020; Zarrabi & Bozorgian, 2020; Vahid, et al. 2021). It is a complex matter that needs generating ideas and reviewing texts (Rethinasamy, 2021; Teng et al., 2022), since writing such essay needs critical thinking skills (Vögelin et al., 2019; Teng & Zhang, 2020; Zulaikha, et al. 2021). Argumentative essay is the most essential genre learnt at higher education. It covers, claim, counterclaim, refutable and conclusion (Boykin et al., 2019; Setyowati, Sukmawan, El-Sulukiyah, 2020). In higher academic setting, argumentative skills are useful instruments for learners to argue their stance. Therefore, it is clear that the skill to write argumentative essay is strongly needed for college students. However, learners still face many difficulties in composing argumentative essay. This is agreed upon by some scholars who have been investigating the learners' difficulties in composing argumentative essay such as Shahriari and Shadloo, 2019; Beckett & Kobayashi, 2020; Nindya & Widiati 2020; Ozfidan & Mitchell, 2020. Dang, et al., (2020) who confirmed that learners face problems with linguistic competence and critical thinking skills. Additionally,

learners also have anxiety while facing the written tests.

Prior investigations (Styati & Latief, 2018; Zakrajsek, 2018) recommended that more attention on thinking process should be given in teaching of second language (L2) writing. To cope such difficulties in writing, some scholars suggest to use writing strategy in L2 writing (Bailey, 2019; Cer, 2019; Dewi, Nurkamto, & Drajati, 2019; Fauziati, & Marmanto, 2019; Rahmawati; Zhang, Chen, & Yu, 2019; Khongput, 2020). Therefore, the study proposes graphic organizers (GOs) as a strategy to cope with the difficulties in L2 argumentative writing class. Relevant studies were conducted by some scholars such as (Anggraeni & Pentury, 2018; Lasaka et al., 2018; Maharani, et.al. 2018; Rahmat, 2020; Hafidz, 2021). In general, they believe that GOs help learners in the process of selecting, organizing, and developing ideas.

Another factor that contributes to successful learning is learning style. Learning style is the way to learn and process knowledge. Fleming (2001) states that it is a learner's way of gathering knowledge. Learners may use one of the following: visual auditory and kinesthetic one. Some scholars have been investigating on learning style in L2 writing such as (Şener & Çokçalışkan, 2018; Siregar, 2018). This study applies VAK model of learning style: visual (see), auditory (hear) and kinesthetic (move) learners (VAK). Learning style plays a vital role in learners' life. When they have awareness with it, they can choose the best way to learn. Previous investigations found strong positive relationship between learners' learning style and writing achievement (Kusumawarti, Subiyantoro, & Rukayah, 2018; Rezeki, Sagala, & Damanik, 2018; Siregar, 2018; Alnujaidi, 2018).

Other variable assumed to affect the successful writing is gender difference (Coskun, 2014; Feery, 2008). Gender refers to the roles in society as performed by male and female (Anyanwu, 2015). Earlier investigation on gender difference was performed by Lakoff (1975). He found that girls and boys were not the same in language use. More specific focus of the present investigation, gender is assumed to influence writing accuracy. In the context of EFL/ESL, males are regarded to have lower competence than

females (Cornett, 2014). Then, Ng (2010) confirms that males do more grammatical errors than females. The similar studies are also performed by (Castro & Limpo, 2018; Zhang et al., 2019). They believed that girls gained better achievement in writing.

Despite the facts that there are many worthwhile investigations on the use of writing strategy, especially GOs, however, less attention has been given to the significance of GOs, learning style preference, and gender simultaneously in writing. Therefore, to fill the gap, this investigation is conducted. The purpose is to elaborate the effect of writing strategy, learning style, and gender difference simultaneously in writing accuracy.

Method

The design of the investigation is quasi-experiment using a 2x3x2 analysis of variance with participant's gender: male versus female (x1), learning styles: visual versus auditory versus kinesthetic (x2); and types of writing strategy: free writing versus graphic organizers (x3): as between-participants factors. The study involved 70 EFL participants. The three categorical independent variables were writing strategy (x1) and learning styles (x2) and gender (x3). Meanwhile the outcome variable was argumentative writing accuracy (y). A 2x3x2 interaction was applied to analysis data. It was a way of analysing the three-way interaction between variables and simple main-effects. In the present study, it was applied to determine if the interaction amongst writing strategy (x1) learning styles (x2) and gender (x3) differed significantly on the learners' argumentative writing accuracy (y). Here, writing strategy, learning styles and gender were factors that affected how well learners' writing accuracy. The criteria of participants are as follows:-

TABLE 1

THE PARTICIPANTS

Writing strategy

Learning styles

total

visual

auditory

kinesthetic

male

female

male

female

male

female

Free writing

5

3

5

3

8

10

34

Graphic organizers

6

8

6

12

2

2

36

11

11

11

15

10

12

70

Design of the study

This investigation used two groups pre-posttest experiment design. The pre-posttest design was performed to collect data on the learners' writing accuracy.

Data Analysis

The 2x3x2 three way analysis of variance meant that there were three categorical independent variables involved in the study. There were a total of 12 conditions, $2 \times 3 \times 2 = 12$. The three-way interaction examined for main effects, and interaction effects amongst all combinations of two factors and three factor on an outcome variable. In the present study, a significance level of 0.05 worked well. It indicated a 5% risk of concluding that a difference existed. The differences amongst the averages were considered to give effect significantly, if the p value is lower than 0.05. This meant that the levels in the corresponding factor differed significantly and conversely. In this investigation, the three factors contributing the learners' writing accuracy were factor A (writing strategy), factor B (learning styles), and factor C (gender), factor two interaction (AB), (AC), and (BC); and factor three (ABC). The null hypothesis was that there is no statistical significance difference in average on writing accuracy yield by writing strategy, learning styles, and gender simultaneously on average of writing accuracy. Answering the questions of

research; a three way interaction of ANOVA was conducted to analyze the interaction effect amongst writing strategy, learning styles, and gender on writing accuracy. The analysis also measured whether there was an effect partially of each writing strategy, learning styles, and gender.

Result

Data Presentation

The average score for each variable is shown below.

TABLE 2

MEAN SCORE

Writing strategy

Learning styles

gender

Mean

N

Free writing (FW)

Visual

male

64.80

5

Female

90.67

3

total

74.50

8

Auditory

male

64.80

5

Female

65.33

3

total

65.00

8

Kinesthetic

male

50.38

8

Female

54.10

10

total

52.44

18

total

male

58.39

18

Female

63.06

16

Total

60.59

34

Graphic Organizers (GOs)

Visual

male

76.17

6

Female

84.25

8

total

80.79

14

Auditory

male

78.67

6

Female

83.67

12

total

82.00

18

Kinesthetic

male

51.00

2

Female

52.50

2

total

51.75

4

total

male

73.64

14

Female

81.05

22

Total

78.17

36

Total

Visual

male

71.00

11

Female

86.00

11

total

78.50

22

Auditory

male

72.36

11

Female

80.00

15

total

76.77

26

Kinesthetic

male

50.50

10

Female

53.83

12

total

52.32

22

total

male

65.06

32

Female

73.47

38

Total

69.63

70

This table showed the outcome of the average score for each variables. The data shows that the average score for free writing group of male visual learners is 64.80 and female is 90.66; of male auditory learners is 64.80 and female is 65.33; of male kinesthetic learners is 50.38 and female is 54.10. Meanwhile, the average score for graphic organizer group of male visual learners is 76.17 and female is 84.25; of male auditory learners is 78.67 and female was 83.67; of male kinesthetic learners is 51.00 and female is 52.50. This indicated that the average score for graphic organizers is higher than free writing.

a. There was no statistical significance difference in average on writing accuracy yield by writing strategy.

The main effect of writing strategy is shown below.

TABLE 3
TESTS OF BETWEEN-SUBJECTS EFFECTS

Sources	df	Mean square	F value	P value	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	11	1190.53	24.99	0.00	

0.826

Intercept

1

235195.24

4.94

0.00

0.988

writing strategy

1

461.87

9.70

0.01

0.143

learning styles

2

2996.91

62.92

0.00

0.685

gender

1

705.47

14.81

0.00

0.203

Writing strategy * learning styles

2

352.60

7.40

0.00

0.203

Writing strategy * gender

1

85.25

1.79

0.19

0.030

learning styles * gender

2

312.56

6.56

0.01

0.185

Writing strategy * learning styles* gender

2

159.19

3.34

0.04

0.103

error

68

47.63

total

Corrected Total

69

a. R Squared = ,826 (Adjusted R Squared = ,793)

The table above shows that the average square (MS) of writing strategy is 461.87, $F(1, 69) = 9.70$, $p=0.03$, $\eta^2 0.14$. As α is smaller than 0.05, this means that different writing strategy gave facilitative effect on writing accuracy. It means that writing strategy differed significantly in writing argumentative essay. Data shows that the average score for free writing ($M= 65.01$) is lower than graphic organizers ($M= 71.04$). This indicates that there is statistical significance difference in writing accuracy yield by writing strategy. The average score of FW is 65.01. Meanwhile, the average score for GOs is 71.04. As a result, it is evidenced that the average score for graphic organizers ($M= 71.04$) is higher than that the average score for free writing ($M= 65.01$).

b. There was no statistical significance difference in average on writing accuracy yield by learning style preference.

The main effect of learning style preference is shown in Table 3. The average square (MS) of learning style preference was 2996.91, $F(2, 69) = 62.92$, $p=0.00$, $\eta^2 = 0.69$. As α was smaller than 0.05, this meant that the different learning style preference gave facilitative effect on writing accuracy. It showed that learning style preference differed significantly in writing argumentative essay. It is noticed that the average score for visual is 78.97; auditory is 73.11, and kinesthetic is 51.99. This indicates that the visual learners achieved better than auditory and kinesthetic learners. The post hoc tests of multiple comparison table below described the average difference amongst the three types of learning styles.

TABLE 4
MULTIPLE COMPARISONS
TUKEY HSD

I) learning styles	(J) learning styles	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Visual	Auditory	1.73	1.99	0.66
Visual	Kinesthetic	26.18*		

2.08

0.00

Auditory

Visual

-1.73

1.99

0.66

Kinesthetic

24.45*

1.99

0.00

Kinesthetic

Visual

-26.18*

2.08

0.00

Auditory

-24.45*

1.99

0.00

The output indicates pairwise differences between (1) visual and auditory; (2) visual and kinesthetic; (3) auditory and kinesthetic. It shows the average differences amongst three types of learning styles. The average difference (MD) between visual and auditory learners is 1.73 (SE 1.99, $p = 0.66$) indicating no significance between visual and auditory. It meant that both types of learning styles were equal. Then, the MD between

visual and kinesthetic learners is 26.18 (SE 2.08, $p= 0.00$), indicating a significance difference between visual and kinesthetic learners. Here, visual is higher than kinesthetic learners. Next, the MD between auditory and kinesthetic learners is 24.45 (SE 1.99, $p= 0.00$) showing there is significant difference between auditory and kinaesthetic learners. To conclude, there is significance difference between visual and kinaesthetic learners; and between auditory and kinaesthetic learners. However, between visual and auditory learners did not differ. Therefore, the hypothesis stating that there is no statistical significance difference on writing accuracy yield by learning style preference is rejected.

c. There is no statistical significance difference in average on writing accuracy yield by gender difference.

The main effect of learning style preference is shown in Table 3. It indicates that the average square (MS) of gender difference was 705.47, $F (1, 69) = 14.81$, $p=0.00$, $\eta^2 0.20$. As α is lower than 0.05, it means that gender difference differed significantly in writing argumentative essay. The mean score for male is 64.30; and female is 71.75, It indicates that there is statistical significance difference on writing accuracy yield by gender difference. The null hypothesis is rejected.

d. There is no interaction effect between writing strategy and learning styles on average of writing accuracy.

Table 3 states the average square (MS) of interaction effect between writing strategy and learning styles preference was 352.60, $F (2, 69) =7.40$, $p=0.01$, $\eta^2 0.20$. As α is lower than 0.05, it means that there is an interactive effect between both variables, as described

below.

TABLE 5
WRITING STRATEGY * LEARNING STYLES

Writing strategy

learning styles

Mean

Std. Error

Free Writing (FW)

Visual

77.73

2.52

Auditory

65.07

2.52

Kinesthetic

52.24

1.64

Graphic Organizers (GOs)

Visual

80.21

1.86

Auditory

81.17

1.73

Kinesthetic

51.75

3.45

The average score of free writing group for visual is 77.73, auditory is 65.07, and kinesthetic is 52.24. While, the average score of graphic organizer group for visual is 80.21, auditory is 81.17, and kinesthetic is 51.75. This indicates that GOs of all types of learners' learning style got higher achievement than free writing group of all types of learners' learning style. The interaction effect between both variables is shown below.

FIGURE 1

THE INTERACTION EFFECT BETWEEN WRITING STRATEGY AND LEARNING STYLES

Figure above describes the interaction effect occurs between writing strategy and learning styles on average of writing accuracy. Therefore, the fourth null hypothesis was rejected.

e. There is no interaction effect between writing strategy and gender difference on average of writing accuracy.

The two interaction effect between writing strategy and gender difference on average of writing accuracy is shown in Table 3. The average square (MS) of interaction effect between writing strategy and gender difference is 85.25, $F(1, 69) = 1.79$, $p = 0.19$, $\eta^2 = 0.03$. As α is higher than 0.05, this meant that both writing strategy and gender difference did not

effect writing accuracy, The average score of free writing group for boys is 59.99, and girls is 70.03. Meanwhile, the graphic organizer group for male is 68.61, and female is 73.42.

The interaction effect between both variables is shown below.

FIGURE 2

THE INTERACTION EFFECT BETWEEN WRITING STRATEGY AND GENDER

Figure above indicates that there is no interaction effect on average of writing accuracy between writing strategy and gender. Therefore, the fifth null hypothesis is accepted.

f. There is no interaction effect between learning styles and gender difference on average of writing accuracy.

The two interaction effect between learning styles and gender difference on average of writing accuracy is shown in Table 3. The average square (MS) of interaction effect between both variables is 312.56, $F(2, 69) = 6.56$, $p = 0.03$, $\eta^2 = 0.19$. As α is smaller than 0.05, it indicates there is an interaction effect between both in writing argumentative essay. It indicates that both learning styles and gender difference simultaneously affected writing accuracy, as described below.

TABLE 5

LEARNING STYLES * GENDER

learning styles

Gender

Mean

Std. Error

Visual

Male

70.48

2.09

Female

87.46

2.34

Auditory

Male

71.73

2.09

Female

74.50

2.23

Kinesthetic

Male

50.69

2.73

Female

53.30

2.67

The table shows the mean score of visual for male was 70.48, and female was 87.46. Meanwhile, the male auditory is 71.73, and female is 74.50. Then, the male kinesthetic is 50.69, and female is 53.30. The interaction effect between both variables is seen below.

FIGURE 3

THE INTERACTION EFFECT BETWEEN LEARNING STYLES AND GENDER
DIFFERENCE

This indicates the interaction effect between learning styles and gender occurred difference on average of writing accuracy. Therefore, the sixth null hypothesis is rejected.

g. There is no interaction effect amongst writing strategy, learning styles and gender difference on average of writing accuracy.

The third interaction effect amongst writing strategy, learning styles and gender difference on average of writing accuracy is shown in Table 3. The average square (MS) of interaction effect amongst all variables is 159.186, $F(2, 69) = 3.342$, $p = 0.042$, $\eta^2 = 0.103$. As α was smaller than 0.05, it showed an interaction effect between writing strategy, learning styles and gender difference in writing argumentative essay. This indicates that, all predictor variables simultaneously affected writing accuracy, as described below.

TABLE 6

WRITINGSTRATEGY * LEARNINGSTYLES * GENDER

Writing strategy

Learning styles

gender

Mean

Std. Error

Free writing (FW)

Visual

male

64.80

3.09

Female

90.67

3.99

Auditory

male

64.80

3.09

Female

65.33

3.99

Kinesthetic

male

50.38

2.44

Female

54.10

2.18

Graphic Organizers (GOs)

Visual

male

76.17

2.82

Female

84.25

2.44

Auditory

male

78.67

2.82

Female

83.67

1.99

Kinesthetic

male

51.00

4.88

Female

52.50

4.88

Table above indicates that the average score for free writing group of male visual learners is 64.80 and female is 90.67; of male auditory learners is 64.80 and female is 65.33; of male kinesthetic learners learners is 50.38 and female is 54.10. In contrast, the average score for graphic organizer group of male visual learners is 76.17 and female is 84.25; of male auditory learners is 78.67 and female is 83.67; of male kinesthetic learners learners is 51.00 and female is 52.50. This indicates that graphic organiser is bigger than the average score of writing score at whole. The interaction effect amongst three variables is seen below.

FIGURE 4

THE INTERACTION EFFECT AMONGST THREE VARIABLES

This indicates that there is an interaction effect amongst writing strategy, learning styles and gender difference on average of writing accuracy.

Discussion

To sum up, the three way interaction is used to see the interaction effect amongst writing strategy, learning styles and gender difference on average of writing accuracy. The table can be summarized as follows:

1. The main effect of writing strategy on learners' writing accuracy was $F(1, 69) = 9.70$, $p = 0.03$; $\eta^2 = 0.14$. It showed that writing strategy differed significantly in writing argumentative essay. The average score for free writing ($M = 65.01$) was lower than graphic organizers ($M = 71.04$).
2. The main effect of learning styles on learners' writing accuracy was $F(2, 69) = 62.92$, $p = 0.00$; $\eta^2 = 0.69$. It showed that learning style preference differed significantly in writing argumentative essay. The mean score for visual was 78.97; auditory was 73.11, and kinesthetic was 51.99. Pos hoc analysis indicates that there were no significant difference between visual and auditory learners ($p = 0.66$) It meant that both types of learning styles were equal. Then, a significance difference occurred between visual and kinesthetic learners ($p = 0.00$), indicating visual was higher than kinesthetic learners. Next, there was a significance difference between auditory and kinaesthetic learners ($p = 0.000$) showing that auditory was higher than kinaesthetic learners.
3. The main effect of gender difference on learners' writing accuracy was $F(1, 69) = 14.81$, $p = 0.00$. $\eta^2 = 0.20$. It showed that gender differed significantly in writing argumentative essay. Here, the average score for male was 64.30; and female was 71.75 indicating that

females outperformed better than males.

4. The two interaction effect between writing strategy and learning styles was $F(2, 69) = 7.40, p = 0.01, \eta^2 = 0.20$. It meant there was an interaction effect between writing strategy and learning styles. It indicated that both writing strategy and learning styles preference simultaneously gave facilitative effect to writing accuracy.

5. The two interaction effect did not occur between writing strategy and gender at $F(1, 69) = 1.79, p = 0.19, \eta^2 = 0.03$. Both writing strategy and gender simultaneously did not give facilitative effect to writing accuracy.

6. The two interaction effect occurred between between learning styles and gender at $F(2, 69) = 6.56, p = 0.03, \eta^2 = 0.19$. It indicated that both learning styles and gender simultaneously gave facilitative effect to writing accuracy.

7. The three interaction effect amongst writing strategy, learning styles and gender difference on average of writing accuracy was $F(2, 69) = 3.34, p = 0.04, \eta^2 = 0.10$. It revealed that there was an interaction effect amongst them. It showed that writing strategy (x1), learning style preference (x2) and gender (x3) simultaneously gave facilitative effect to writing accuracy (y). Here, GOs were better than free writing; visual learners outperformed better than auditory and kinesthetic; and female had higher achievement than male on the learners' writing accuracy.

The finding reveals that there is an interaction effect amongst writing strategy, learning styles and gender difference on average of writing accuracy at $F(2, 69) = 3.34, p = 0.04, \eta^2 = 0.10$. It indicates that writing strategy, learning styles and gender difference give facilitative effect simultaneously on learners' writing accuracy. Dealing with the finding that writing strategy, (here, GOs) gives effect on writing accuracy, the study was supported by Lasaka et al., 2018; Hafidz, 2021. They find that GOs are powerful tool to teach writing. In additional, the finding reveals that the members of GOs class can interact and share their ideas. Additionally, in GOs class, learners learn with various activities during the class, such as searching related texts on argument essay, making argumentative organizers,

and composing argument essay based on the graphic organizers they made. This finding is consistent with Rahmat (2020) stating that GOs help learners in the process of writing. Learners can write more efficiently. To conclude, GOs are effective in argumentative writing class. The implementation of GOs in L2 writing class also creates social community in the classroom setting. They can share ideas amongst others. As the result has positive impact, it is recommended that GOs are applied in writing argumentative class, included as part in curriculum design.

Dealing with the finding that learning style preference, (here, visual learners) gives effect on writing accuracy, the study was in accordance with Alnujaidi, 2018; Kusumawarti, Subiyantoro, & Rukayah, 2018; Rezeki, Sagala, & Damanik, 2018; Şener & Çokçalışkan, 2018; Siregar, 2018; Sabarun, 2021. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers should introduce and classify learners about their learning styles preference. By knowing learning styles preference for each individual, teachers can provide precisely the teaching style addressed to learners.

Dealing with the finding that gender difference gives effect on writing accuracy, in this case, girls are better than boys. Female learners gain higher achievement than male learners. The finding is in accordance with (Cornett, 2014). Another investigation performed by Reynolds et al. (2015) stating that females significantly outperform better than males. The finding is also persistent with some other scholars, such as (Castro & Limpo, 2018; Zhang et al., 2019). They found that females gain better achievement.

Recommendation

The highest implication of the current study is that there is a gender difference in writing accuracy. As a result, the study recommends that writing teachers reduce the gender gap by strengthening writing instruction for male students. Here, language instructors need to increase males' writing performance. The result of this investigation is very important since some teachers do not consider the gender difference in writing instruction. It is, therefore, language instructors should give more attention to the gender gap in L2 writing class.

Additionally, language instructors should provide more conducive and constructive feedback to male learners to enhance their writing skills. Here, teachers need to throw far away an image that writing act is a female act in L2 writing class. There are some recommendations to arouse male's motivation to write better. Another technique to strengthen writing skills is reading. Learners need a lot of readings to enhance writing better, since reading utilizes good example of for writing texts. It is, therefore, teachers need to provide learners with a variety of reading texts serving a good example for writing activity. It is advisable that the teachers provide chance the learners to read not only inside but also outside the class. The study also recommends that the future researchers perform bigger sample size in order to generalize the result.

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