

EXPLORING ENGLISH TEACHERS' STRATEGIES FOR WRITING INSTRUCTION AT MAN PALOPO: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates English teachers' strategies for teaching writing in an Indonesian Islamic senior high school context, with particular emphasis on identifying dominant and effective instructional approaches. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, the study was conducted at MAN Palopo and involved two experienced English teachers selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, and analyzed using John W. Creswell's qualitative procedures, including data transcription, coding, categorization, and thematic interpretation. The findings reveal six key strategies implemented across different stages of writing instruction: Genre-Based Approach, Cooperative Learning, Quick Write, RAFT, Journalistic Questions (5W1H), and Blooming Sentences. Among these, the Genre-Based Approach and Cooperative Learning emerged as the most dominant due to their systematic scaffolding, alignment with curriculum requirements, and ability to promote student interaction and engagement. These strategies were effectively integrated across pre-writing, while-writing, and post-writing phases, contributing to improved student writing proficiency, increased confidence, and more active classroom participation. The study highlights that the integration of structured, collaborative, and context-sensitive strategies is essential for effective writing instruction in EFL classrooms. It also underscores the need for sustained professional development and institutional support to enable teachers to adapt and implement diverse pedagogical approaches. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on context-responsive writing pedagogy in Indonesian secondary education and offers practical implications for enhancing teaching practices in similar settings.

Keywords: Cooperative Learning, EFL, Genre-Based Approach, Qualitative Study, Teaching Strategies, Writing Instruction

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a crucial yet complex skill in English language learning, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Among the four language skills listening,

speaking, reading, and writing writing is often considered the most demanding because it requires simultaneous mastery of vocabulary, grammar, coherence, organization, and critical thinking (Richards & Renandya, 2002). Unlike speaking, which allows for immediate feedback and real-time negotiation of meaning, writing demands deliberate construction, revision, and refinement. For senior high school students, writing is an indispensable medium for academic achievement, standardized examinations, and personal communication. As Hyland (2006) emphasizes, writing is not merely a linguistic product but also a social act shaped by the writer's purpose, intended audience, and socio cultural context.

Despite its recognized importance, writing remains one of the most challenging skills to teach and learn in EFL contexts. In Indonesia, particularly within Islamic secondary schools such as MAN (Madrasah Aliyah Negeri), teaching writing is complicated by several persistent factors: heterogeneous student proficiency levels, limited instructional resources, large class sizes, and the dual pressures of meeting curriculum demands while addressing individual learning needs. While extensive research in international contexts has demonstrated the benefits of integrated writing pedagogy combining elements such as genre awareness, process writing, collaborative learning, and strategy training there is still limited understanding of how such approaches are implemented, adapted, and sustained in Indonesian high school classrooms (Hasan & Bidin, 2023). This represents a critical research gap, as the localization of global best practices is essential to ensure their effectiveness in diverse and resource-constrained settings.

The post 2021 educational landscape has further complicated this challenge. Globally, English Language Teaching (ELT) has experienced rapid shifts toward hybrid and blended learning environments, increased reliance on digital tools for instruction and assessment, and an intensified focus on learner autonomy, inclusivity, and critical literacy (Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019). In writing pedagogy specifically, recent studies highlight the need for strategies that are not only linguistically effective but also socio culturally responsive, technologically adaptable, and psychologically supportive. For example, Goh & Chen, (2025) argue that contemporary writing instruction must integrate both cognitive and socio-affective dimensions, while Steve Graham, Yucheng Cao, Young-Suk Kim & Tamara Tate, (2025) stress the value of digital mediation in scaffolding writing development in multilingual classrooms.

In the Indonesian context, the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Belajar policy encourage teachers to shift away from grammar-heavy, product oriented writing instruction toward approaches that are functional, process-based, and student-centered (Graham et al., 2025). The Genre-Based Approach Zebua & Rozimela, (2020), which has been widely adopted in Indonesia, provides structured stages Building Knowledge of the Field (BKOF), Modeling of the Text (MOT), Joint Construction of the Text (JCOT), and Independent Construction of the Text (ICOT) that guide students through contextualized writing

development. However, relying solely on GBA may not fully address diverse learner needs, particularly in classrooms with varying levels of proficiency and motivation. This limitation has led scholars to recommend combining GBA with complementary strategies such as Cooperative Learning Gillies, (2016), Quick Write Harris & Bradshaw, (2019), RAFT (Teza Peby Alisa, 2013), Journalistic Questions (5W1H), and Blooming Sentences (Siregar, 2022). Each of these strategies targets specific aspects of writing, from idea generation and sentence expansion to collaborative text construction and audience awareness.

While these strategies are well documented in the literature, their systematic integration in Indonesian secondary education especially within the context of Islamic schools remains underexplored. Most local studies have examined isolated techniques rather than multi strategy approaches, and few have considered the contextual factors influencing teachers' choices, such as institutional culture, assessment demands, and student engagement levels. As Santangelo & Olinghouse, (2009) notes, effective writing instruction must be both context-sensitive and adaptive, requiring teachers to make informed pedagogical decisions in response to real classroom dynamics. Without understanding how teachers navigate these complexities, it is difficult to translate broad pedagogical frameworks into sustainable classroom practices.

In response to these gaps, this study investigates the strategies employed by English teachers at MAN Palopo in teaching writing, focusing on both the dominant and the most effective methods used in practice. Specifically, it examines six strategies Genre Based Approach, Cooperative Learning, Quick Write, RAFT, Journalistic Questions, and Blooming Sentences and analyzes their implementation through classroom observations, teacher interviews, and documentation. Grounded in constructivist and sociocultural learning theories, the study also considers how these strategies respond to the dual pressures of local curricular requirements and global ELT challenges. By linking the realities of Indonesian EFL classrooms to international debates on writing pedagogy, this research seeks to contribute both theoretical insight and practical guidance for enhancing writing instruction in diverse secondary education contexts.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the strategies used by English teachers in teaching writing at MAN Palopo, a state Islamic senior high school located in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Established in 1990, the school is recognized as one of the leading Madrasah Aliyah Negeri in the region and is known for integrating religious and academic excellence. Its vision emphasizes producing graduates who are not only proficient in religious studies but also competitive in global academic contexts, with English language competence considered a key component of this goal. The school has approximately 850 students, most of whom come from surrounding urban and rural areas, representing diverse socio-economic and educational backgrounds. While all students study

English as a compulsory subject, their proficiency levels vary considerably due to differing levels of prior exposure, with many relying solely on formal classroom instruction.

The research adopted a qualitative approach because its primary aim was to capture in-depth insights into teachers' decision-making and instructional practices, as well as the contextual factors shaping their strategies. Qualitative research, as Creswell, (2012) notes, allows for the study of complex educational realities through rich, detailed descriptions generated from participants' own settings. This design was particularly suitable for uncovering how writing strategies are not only planned and implemented but also adapted in real-time to accommodate the needs of diverse learners in large class settings.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure their direct relevance to the research objectives. Two English teachers, identified as Teacher 1 (T1) and Teacher 2 (T2), were chosen because they (1) were actively teaching writing to Grade 11 students during the study period, (2) had more than five years of teaching experience, (3) demonstrated consistent engagement in professional development activities, and (4) were recommended by the school's head of the English department for their innovative teaching practices. Both held bachelor's degrees in English language education and had been trained in implementing the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Belajar framework.

Data were collected using three main techniques: classroom observations, semi structured interviews, and documentation analysis. Observations were conducted over four sessions, each lasting 90 minutes, covering two consecutive lessons for each teacher to capture continuity in instructional flow. An observation checklist, adapted from Harmer, (1987), Hyland, (2006), and Sri Gunani Partiwī & Dkk., (2023), was used to systematically note how the six target strategies Genre Based Approach, Cooperative Learning, Quick Write, RAFT, Journalistic Questions, and Blooming Sentences were applied. Semi structured interviews followed a protocol of ten open-ended questions designed to elicit teachers' rationales for strategy selection, planning considerations, adaptations for different student abilities, and reflections on student responses. Interviews were audio recorded with participant consent and transcribed verbatim. Documentation analysis involved collecting lesson plans, worksheets, PowerPoint slides, and samples of student writing, which served as evidence of both planning and output quality.

The data analysis process followed Creswell, (2012) steps, beginning with careful transcription and organization. An initial round of open coding was used to label specific instructional actions or teacher statements, such as "scaffolding through guided questioning" or "peer review to build confidence." Codes were assigned color tags corresponding to each strategy type for example, blue for Genre Based Approach, green for Cooperative Learning, yellow for Quick Write. The second cycle involved axial coding, in which related codes were connected to broader themes like "supporting low-achieving students," "stimulating idea generation," or "enhancing text organization." Throughout coding, analytic memos were written to capture emerging interpretations. For example, after coding several instances of

Journalistic Questions use, a memo noted: “T2 consistently uses 5W1H as a pre writing scaffold, particularly in recount and narrative tasks, suggesting this is a preferred method for helping students structure ideas.”

Triangulation was an integral part of the analysis. Observational data were compared with interview transcripts and documentation to verify consistency. For instance, during one observed session, T1 conducted a joint construction activity in which groups collaboratively wrote parts of a descriptive text. In the interview, T1 explained that this approach was intended to “build collective confidence before individual writing,” and the lesson plan explicitly allocated 20 minutes for this joint activity, confirming alignment across sources. Another example occurred with T2’s use of Quick Write: observation notes showed students writing continuously for five minutes without concern for grammar, interviews revealed T2’s belief that this practice reduced writing anxiety, and student work samples demonstrated increased word count and fluency over time.

Trustworthiness was ensured through Lincoln & Guba's (2023) criteria. Credibility was achieved via triangulation and member checking, where preliminary findings were returned to both teachers for verification. Dependability was maintained by keeping detailed field notes and an audit trail of coding decisions. Confirmability was ensured by preserving verbatim transcripts and raw observation notes for potential external review. Transferability was addressed by providing a thick description of the school environment, participant background, and classroom conditions, enabling other researchers or practitioners to judge the applicability of findings to similar contexts.

Through this combination of rigorous data collection, systematic coding, and careful triangulation, the study was able to produce a detailed and context sensitive account of how English teachers at MAN Palopo implement and adapt various strategies to enhance students’ writing proficiency.

RESULTS

Benefits of Strategies in Pre-Teaching Writing Activities

This study explored the instructional strategies employed by English teachers at MAN Palopo in teaching writing and examined their effectiveness during the pre-teaching, while teaching, and post teaching stages. In the pre teaching phase, teachers prepared lessons by selecting appropriate strategies and designing materials that would scaffold students’ understanding of the writing process. Data from observations and interviews showed that planning was crucial, with Genre Based Approach (GBA) and Quick Write being the main strategies applied.

Table 1. Benefits of strategies in pre-teaching writing activities

Pre-Teaching Strategy	Benefit Identified	Illustrative Teacher Comment
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Genre-Based Approach	Structured lesson plans aligned with genre-specific features and curriculum stages (BKOF, MOT, JCOT, ICOT)	“I always begin by analyzing the genre... ensures students don’t miss any essential steps” (T1)
Quick Write	Activates prior knowledge and stimulates idea generation before main writing task	“Quick Write is very useful... helps students write freely before we move into the structure” (T2)

GBA allowed teachers to predefine each stage of writing instruction with clear scaffolding and relevant materials, while Quick Write helped activate students’ thinking and prepare them mentally for the task. These strategies ensured lessons were well organized and students were ready to engage.

Benefits of Strategies in While-Teaching Writing Activities

During the while teaching phase, teachers implemented multiple strategies to guide students through writing tasks, combining structure, collaboration, and creativity. The main strategies were GBA, Cooperative Learning, RAFT, and Blooming Sentences.

Table 2. Benefits of strategies in while-teaching writing activities

While-Teaching Focus	Strategy Used	Benefit Identified	Illustrative Teacher Comment
Teaching structure	Genre-Based Approach	Clarifies text organization and language features through modeling & joint construction	“Students can see clearly how the paragraph is built...” (T2)
Group collaboration	Cooperative Learning	Encourages peer discussion, reduces anxiety, and improves writing output	“In groups, students help each other... become more active” (T1)
Creative thinking	RAFT	Stimulates imaginative writing from varied perspectives	“With RAFT, students are more imaginative... makes writing fun” (T2)
Sentence building	Blooming Sentences	Expands vocabulary and sentence complexity through incremental sentence development	“We start with simple sentences... learn new vocabulary” (T1)

GBA provided a clear organizational model, Cooperative Learning promoted mutual support, RAFT encouraged creativity and contextual awareness, while Blooming Sentences improved linguistic depth. Together, these strategies increased student engagement and writing fluency.

Benefits of Strategies in Post-Teaching Writing Activities

In the post teaching phase, the focus was on revising and improving student work through Journalistic Questions (5W1H) and Peer Feedback.

Table 3. Benefits of strategies in post teaching writing activities

Post-Teaching Strategy	Benefit Identified	Illustrative Teacher Comment
Journalistic Questions	Encourages elaboration, completeness, and coherence by prompting students to answer 5W1H	"I ask them to read it again and answer the 5W1H... more complete" (T1)
Peer Feedback	Enhances reflection, collaboration, and awareness of common mistakes	"Students notice their friends' mistakes and learn from them" (T2)

Journalistic Questions helped students expand ideas and ensure clarity, while Peer Feedback created opportunities for collaborative learning and self-improvement, reinforcing writing as a process.

Summary of Results

The findings of this study revealed that English teachers at MAN Palopo employed a range of effective strategies at different stages of writing instruction. During the pre teaching phase, strategies such as the Genre Based Approach and Quick Write helped organize lessons and mentally prepare students for writing tasks. While-teaching strategies like Cooperative Learning, RAFT, and Blooming Sentences engaged students in interactive and creative writing processes. Finally, in the post-teaching stage, the use of Journalistic Questions and Peer Feedback facilitated reflection, revision, and deeper content development. Overall, the most dominant and effective strategies were the Genre Based Approach and Cooperative Learning due to their flexibility, structured procedures, and alignment with students' needs. These strategies not only improved students' writing performance but also increased their motivation, confidence, and active participation in the classroom.

Teachers at MAN Palopo demonstrated thoughtful and responsive use of strategies that were contextually appropriate and pedagogically sound. Despite challenges such as large class sizes and varying student proficiency levels, they consistently adapted their approaches to maximize student engagement and learning outcomes. This highlights the importance of teacher expertise, adaptability, and ongoing professional development in the successful implementation of writing instruction strategies.

DISCUSSION

This study provides a comprehensive understanding of how English teachers at MAN Palopo implement various strategies to improve students' writing skills across the three main stages of instruction: pre teaching, while teaching, and post teaching. Among the six strategies observed, the Genre Based Approach (GBA) and Cooperative Learning stood out as the most consistently and effectively implemented. Their success in this context can be

explained by both pedagogical and cultural factors. Pedagogically, they offer a clear, step by step framework for teaching writing, which is particularly suitable for classes with wide variations in writing proficiency. Culturally, the collaborative nature of Cooperative Learning aligns well with Indonesian educational norms that value gotong royong (mutual cooperation) and collective learning.

In the pre teaching phase, GBA and Quick Write helped teachers design lesson plans that were both systematic and tailored to students' proficiency levels. The GBA framework allowed teachers to map out learning objectives clearly, align materials with curriculum demands, and anticipate potential student difficulties. This approach proved effective in MAN Palopo because the national curriculum emphasizes mastery of specific text types (e.g., narrative, recount, descriptive), meaning that the structured format of GBA kept both teachers and students focused on the learning targets. Compared to Wibowo & Lengkanawati, (2024) study in Australia where GBA was developed for resource rich contexts with smaller class sizes its adaptation in MAN Palopo places greater emphasis on content scaffolding from the outset to bridge significant gaps in vocabulary and grammar. Meanwhile, Quick Write served as a warm up that activated students' prior knowledge, similar to findings by Harris & Bradshaw, (2019) in Hong Kong, but here it was used more strategically as an idea trigger to reduce initial anxiety toward writing tasks.

During the while teaching phase, Cooperative Learning, RAFT, and Blooming Sentences enhanced classroom interaction and encouraged students to collaboratively construct texts. Cooperative Learning not only facilitated peer discussion but also reduced psychological pressure in large classes a challenge less significant in contexts like Takala's (2016) study in Finland with smaller classes. RAFT provided space for creative exploration through different roles and perspectives, while Blooming Sentences progressively increased sentence complexity and expanded students' vocabulary. An interesting contrast emerges when compared with Liu et al., (2020) research in China, which reported that RAFT sometimes caused students' writing to drift off-topic. In MAN Palopo, this issue was rarely observed because students remained anchored to the strong genre framework taught, ensuring that creativity was channeled within the boundaries of task objectives.

In the post teaching phase, Journalistic Questions (5W1H) and peer feedback served as key strategies to promote revision and reflection. Their success here is partly influenced by local cultural norms that make students more receptive to critique from peers than direct criticism from the teacher. This finding aligns with Tsui & Ng, (2010) research in East Asian contexts but contrasts with Zhao, (2010) in the U.S., where students tend to place greater trust in direct instructor feedback. In MAN Palopo, peer feedback also functioned as a practical solution to the time constraints teachers face in giving detailed individual comments in large classes. This strategy not only accelerated the revision process but also enhanced students' metacognitive awareness in evaluating the quality of their own writing.

Overall, comparisons with international studies show that while these strategies are globally effective, their success at MAN Palopo is strongly tied to local adaptation taking into account national curriculum requirements, class size, students' language proficiency levels, and classroom social norms. Structured, collaborative, and adaptive strategies such as GBA and Cooperative Learning thrive here because they meet academic demands while aligning with socio cultural expectations. In contrast, strategies that rely heavily on individual autonomy such as self directed writing approaches common in Western pedagogy require significant modification to be relevant and effective in Indonesian secondary school contexts.

These findings underscore the importance of contextual sensitivity when implementing writing instruction strategies across international boundaries. They also reinforce the relevance of constructivist and sociocultural pedagogy for writing instruction in Indonesia. Moving forward, targeted professional development for teachers particularly through peer learning communities, as suggested by Alzahrani & Saleh, (2025) can help sustain the effective use of these strategies and broaden their impact. Future research that incorporates student perspectives will enrich understanding of how these strategies are received, processed, and valued, enabling the development of writing pedagogy that is more inclusive, culturally responsive, and connected to global best practices.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to investigate teachers' strategies for enhancing writing instruction in high school at MAN Palopo. The findings reveal that the use of structured and student centered teaching strategies significantly contributes to more effective and engaging writing instruction. The six strategies identified Genre Based Approach, Cooperative Learning, Quick Write, RAFT, Journalistic Questions, and Blooming Sentences are all shown to provide specific benefits across the pre teaching, while teaching, and post teaching phases. These include improved planning, enhanced student participation, more dynamic classroom interactions, and more effective feedback mechanisms.

Teachers felt that the implementation of these strategies enabled them to prepare more focused lesson plans, facilitate student centered learning, and evaluate student writing more meaningfully. Strategies like Genre Based Approach and Cooperative Learning were especially valued for their structured steps and their alignment with curriculum standards. These strategies also enhanced classroom collaboration, creativity, and language awareness.

This research can serve as a reference for teachers aiming to strengthen their writing instruction through practical, research backed methods. By recognizing the various benefits of each strategy, teachers can select and adapt their approaches based on classroom context and student needs. Moreover, this study contributes to the broader pedagogical discourse on writing instruction by showing how qualitative insights into teaching practice can shape more responsive and effective teaching models.

Based on the findings, this study recommends that teachers consistently integrate structured and collaborative strategies particularly the Genre Based Approach and

Cooperative Learning into their writing instruction to maximize student engagement and proficiency. Additionally, schools and educational authorities should invest in sustained professional development initiatives, such as workshops, peer observation programs, and teacher learning communities, to enhance teachers' skills in adapting and applying diverse writing strategies effectively across different classroom contexts.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The researcher extends heartfelt gratitude to the English teachers at MAN Palopo who participated in this study and shared their time, experiences, and valuable insights. Their contributions were crucial in providing rich data for this research. The researcher is also deeply thankful to the school administration for granting permission and support during the research process. Without their cooperation, this study would not have been possible.

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