
The Teaching Writing of English as a Foreign Language in Senior High School: A Qualitative Analysis of Students' Perceptions in Indonesia

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Abstract

The focus and purpose of this research are to investigate students' perceptions of teachers who teach writing in the classroom and how student's expectations of English writing instruction in the classroom to improve their writing skills. This study, which took a qualitative approach, gathered information from ten students via an open-ended questionnaire and observation to explore their perceptions of teaching English writing as a foreign language. This study's key finding is how crucial it is to teach English writing in the classroom using the right methods. If suitable instructional methodologies, strong teacher support, and the use of pertinent materials are applied to English writing instruction, students can improve their writing skills. Additionally, success in the classroom and in the future workplace depends on possessing strong English writing abilities.

Keywords: English foreign language, perceptions, skill, teaching writing

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1. Introduction

English has become the universal language of instruction in education around the world. More students than ever are studying English as a foreign or second language in both native and non-native English-speaking situations. This shows that English is highly valued in today's globalized environment, where speaking and understanding the English language is becoming increasingly important to engage in education.

Teaching English as a foreign language to secondary school pupils is crucial to preparing them for the global issues of today. One of the most important skills in learning English is writing. Despite being extremely vital, teaching English writing is a demanding endeavor that both teachers and students find difficult. According to Hyland (2003), the primary components of learning to write in a foreign or second language are linguistic knowledge as well as vocabulary selections, syntactic structures, and cohesive devices that make up the fundamental building blocks of texts. It means that linguistics, the study of language and its structure, must be understood in order to carry out this process. This includes the syntactical patterns (sentence structure), cohesive devices, and appropriate word choice. Put another way, mastering the art of writing in a language other than one's mother tongue necessitates understanding not just the words one uses but also the way those words are chosen, organized, and linked in sentences to produce coherent writing. To effectively utilize this, one must possess a profound comprehension of language structure.

Writing is an English skill that English language students must master. Writing is also seen as an indicator of a student's success in learning English, as it can measure their future professionalism. According to Gautam (2020), Writing is one of the four basic language abilities, along with speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Writing is a language skill that needs to be taught in Senior High School. Writing assignments are a daily students' school day, particularly for those who are learning English as a second language. In the curriculum, pupils should be able to express their thoughts and feelings both orally and in writing. It should also be possible for them to apply their creative and analytical thinking when studying English as a second language. Alisha (2019) that writing is crucial for both personal and professional success since it conveys our ideas to others and shapes their opinions of us. It means, that writing is a critical skill that students in Senior High School should possess since it's a great way to communicate. Writing is the process of turning thoughts and ideas into actual text, therefore learning to write is crucial to improving writing abilities. Furthermore, a lot of individuals decide that writing is an efficient and successful technique to communicate the information they wish to get across in a variety of contexts, including writing a proposal letter for a scholarship abroad.

In the teaching of English writing in the classroom, there are many issues that arise, one of which is that teachers are not always adequately prepared to teach writing. It's possible that educators won't get the specific guidance or assistance they need to teach English writing

in the classroom. These issues may impede a pupil's progress and ability to write better. According to Selvaraj (2020), a variety of techniques and approaches must be employed while teaching writing. In order to effectively teach writing and help students develop their writing skills, a variety of methods and strategies are needed. In order to help upper senior high school students develop their writing skills, teachers play a critical role in the classroom. They must supervise and evaluate students effectively in order to track their progress in writing English, and they must use effective teaching strategies like Whole Language and Cooperative Language Learning.

To frame the research, it is important to understand that teachers and students need to work closely together to promote positive and effective learning activities for writing. The focus and purpose of this research are to investigate students' perceptions of English language teaching by teachers. Utilizing students' perceptions can provide profound insights into the requirements, challenges, and preferences of students learning English writing. This enables educators to adapt their teaching strategies to better meet the needs of their pupils. The method used for this study is qualitative descriptive. Data collection methods include observations over three sessions and open-ended questionnaires filled out by students who have learned English writing in class.

The previous study that is almost the same as this title is Fadhillah (2023) investigating how Students' Perceptions of Project Based Learning in Writing Class. The aim of this study is to find out how well students feel about project-based learning in writing classes. Additionally, the focus of this study is the advantages of their writing assignments. Quantitative research methodology using descriptive statistical data analysis is employed. The data gathering process consists of questionnaires modified from Unumeri, G.O (2009) and interviews. Another previous study is Ramzan (2023) conducted a study to find out Perception of Students about Collaborative Strategies Employed by Teachers for Enhancing English Vocabulary and Learning Motivation. The goal of this study is to increase writing abilities and vocabulary acquisition in English through collaborative learning. The present research employs a qualitative approach to investigate how students perceive the collaborative tactics utilized by their teachers to augment their learning of English vocabulary, as well as the impact of this experience on students' academic performance and motivation to learn. The process of obtaining data using semi-structured interviews.

1.1. Research question

Based on the background of the research, the research question can be formulated as follows: What are student's perceptions of teachers teaching in writing class?

1.2. Theoretical framework

1.2.1. Perceptions

According to Sharma (2020), Perception is central to understanding how people react. It plays a central role in understanding one's response to a particular situation or stimulus. How a person perceives something can affect their emotions, attitudes, and behavior. Therefore, understanding the role of perception is important to better understand human responses. Freya (2021) asserts that perception and embodied action are intimately related. Our interactions with our surroundings through motions and activities also influence our perception, which is not only dependent on sensory data. This perspective emphasizes that our body's engagement with the surroundings influences the way someone perceives and interprets sensory information, creating a dynamic relationship between perception and physical action.

In this context, perception is how a person perceives and understands the world around them through their physical senses and mental processes. In addition, Rybár (2013) declared that the process of evaluating data about individuals and the environment is known as perception. Sensing (hearing, vision, touch, and so forth). In other words, perception is the use of our five senses to make sense of the world around us. According to Hesty (2018), perception is the psychological process by which people interpret reactions into either positive or negative views based on the information gathered by their five senses. The phrases of interpretation, reaction, and selection are used to gather responses. It means that perception involves interpreting information gathered through our senses and forming positive or negative views based on that information. Essentially, it's about how we make sense of the world around us through what we see, hear, smell, taste, and touch.

In my study, perception is the process by which someone chooses, arranges, and interprets the data that our senses provide. Accordingly, perception is a process in which we select a stimulus to pay attention to form the variety of information we are exposed to, arrange and categorize it into pre-established patterns and groupings, and make inferences based on prior knowledge and experience.

From the experts' opinions above, that perception is a central aspect influencing human responses. It involves how individuals interpret the world through their physical senses and mental processes and influences emotions, attitudes, and behavior. The process of perception involves the use of sensory information, such as sight and hearing, to understand and navigate the environment. Recognizing the role of perception is crucial to gaining insight into human responses.

1.2.2. English as a foreign language

Writing in English is difficult for most English as a foreign language (EFL) student because they must utilize accurate English grammar and vocabulary, use the writing skills they have

learned, and blend this knowledge with their prior expertise on the topic presented when writing.

According to Ajaka (2020), English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is an expanding field of research that has been prompted by the adoption of English as the International language of the world. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) refers to the teaching and learning of English in countries where it is not the first language. The field has seen significant growth due to the global prominence of English as the International language. This expansion has led to increased research focusing on effective teaching methods, language acquisition, and the cultural implications of using English in diverse contexts worldwide.

According to Sulistiyo (2016) that teaching English as a foreign language in Indonesia is challenging for a number of reasons. Firstly, EFL teachers must have superior competence to teach English in the classroom. But many schools in Indonesia have limited English teachers which makes English learning less conducive and less motivating for students. Second, pupils might not be exposed to English outside of the classroom because it is not the primary language spoken in the nation. Their process of acquiring the language may be hampered by this lack of immersion. The last, Indonesia is a linguistically varied nation. Hundreds of regional languages are spoken throughout the Indonesian islands. Because of this diversity, there may be differences in the English language competency of the pupils, which makes it challenging to use standardized teaching techniques.

In summary, for EFL students, writing in English can be difficult since it requires them to apply their newly acquired writing abilities, integrate their topic knowledge, and understand grammar and vocabulary. The rise in the popularity of English as a Foreign Language has stimulated study in EFL, including cultural ramifications, effective teaching strategies, and language acquisition in various international contexts. Not only that, EFL teacher have difficulties in teaching English as a foreign language in the classroom including limited English teachers in some schools which results in a non-conducive learning process and lack of exposure to English outside of school.

1.2.3. The teaching writing

According to Helmie (2019), writing is the ability to put pen and paper to express ideas through symbols, this way, representations on the paper will have meaning and content teaching process of writing. Astrini (2020) mentions that “writing is one of the most difficult skills to learn especially for foreign language students.

According to Yulianti (2019), “Writing is a process to create some ideas of students’ knowledge to be written. It means that writing is a very useful process because by writing a person will create a creation of ideas and knowledge that will be poured into writing.

According to Kartanegara (2019) In the context of the teaching writing of EFL students in Indonesia and based on the KTSP English curriculum, the program of teaching and

learning English as a Foreign Language is focused on objectives to develop students' skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. So, the goals of writing teaching are to promote originality, correct grammar, and effective communication abilities. A variety of writing genres, including essays, narratives, and reports, are probably included in the curriculum to give students a well-rounded approach to language learning. It is expected of teachers to use engaging techniques that meet the language needs of their pupils and promote active engagement in the writing process.

From the experts' opinion above, writing is seen as the capacity to convey ideas through symbols, and it is important for daily living, business, the arts, and academic endeavours. The goal of teaching writing to EFL students in Indonesia is to foster originality, proper grammar, and efficient communication by emphasizing the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Writing is seen as an important and fun part of studying foreign languages, despite its challenges.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research methods and design

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study to describe student perceptions and focus on research. According to Syarwan (2020), the goal of qualitative research is to comprehend a specific field. It seeks to give a clear account of the general structures, ordering, and patterns of the players. It means, that in qualitative research, the focus is more on a deep understanding of the phenomenon or context being studied, rather than simply collecting quantitative data. Aspers (2019), that Qualitative research is about interpretation. Rukajat (2021) states that Research that aims to depict phenomena in a genuine, realistic, actual, real, and current way is known as descriptive research. It means that, as opposed to the numerical and statistical data, this research places a greater emphasis on subjective and contextual elements, such as making descriptions, spoken or written statements from individuals, and observed behavior.

In this instance, researchers analyze and clarify the information gathered from open-ended questionnaires and observations so as to get answers and provide precise and comprehensive solutions to issues. Using a qualitative descriptive technique, the data analysis is done using the collected information (words and behavior). Instead, the information is exposed or described using narrative descriptions of the scenario or condition under study.

2.2. Research participant

The students in one of Indonesian senior high school were recruited as participants in the study. The researcher chose class X4 as the sample because this class is a class that is quite proficient in writing because they have gone through the stage of writing narratives by imagining using the English language and going through interpreting loved ones using the

English language with a very good structure. They have agreed to become participants in this study. There are ten participants in total under study.

2.3. Research instrument

This research used observation and open-ended questionnaires to obtain students' perceptions of teaching writing as a foreign language in the classroom. In the observation, there are eight questions and five topics including active teaching, learning resources, evaluation and feedback, teacher-student interaction, and student collaboration. In the open-ended questionnaire, there are ten questions and three topics including writing essentials, rational reflective writing, and creativity identity.

2.4. Collecting data procedure

The process of gathering data started with getting the tools ready for the open-ended questionnaire session. The purpose of creating the guide for the open-ended questionnaire is to get insights into the participants' perspectives. The researchers visited the school twice in order to accomplish this, spending the first day making observations in order to confirm the actual conditions and background of the study. After that, the distribution of questionnaires using Google forms took place on the second day. Students will find it easier to respond to open-ended questions using Google forms, and researchers will be able to efficiently organize all incoming emails.

2.5. Data analysis procedure

According to Ibrahim (2015) to gather information for a study, observation is defined as the direct examination of an item to ascertain its truth, circumstance, condition, context, place, and significance.

The researchers first determine the object of observation in light of the study's main goal. After that, the researchers start having direct conversations with the classroom object of observation. Next, the researchers observe firsthand the issues that arise when a teacher teaches English writing in the classroom. Next, the data that has been gathered is methodically documented and examined by the researchers, who may also describe what they have seen, heard, and felt during direct observation. So, in order to respond to research questions, the investigators can make inferences based on the facts, circumstances, and context.

According to Creswell (2018), the questionnaire data is analyzed by marking, division, and conclusion of data. In this context, "marking" can refer to the process of assigning markers or labels to the collected data. "division" refers to organizing or grouping the data according to certain categories. Finally, "drawing conclusions from the data" involves analyzing in greater depth to identify patterns or findings that can be drawn from the questionnaire results.

The researcher organized and summarized the questionnaire data obtained in a table into numerous areas. It assists the researcher in data analysis and allows the researcher to comprehend responses. The researcher then closes with a description of each facet of the investigation. In this research, the researcher transcribed all of the recorders into a document file. However, all information and transcripts contain only selected and presented statements in the findings.

Second, data displays are organized so that information from the initial stage can be displayed in figures, tables, and descriptions. The researchers concluded and verified the transcribed data during the final data analysis procedure. The analysis's essence in the conclusions describes how writing teachers teach from students' perceptions. In order to collect questionnaire data, the researcher employs nicknames such as respondent 1, and so on.

This is in accordance with the purpose of this research to find out the students' in-depth perceptions of The Teaching Writing of English Foreign Language in Senior High School.

3. Finding and Discussion

The students' responses highlighted a number of crucial ideas for teaching English writing in the classroom, such as writing essentials, rational reflective writing, and creativity identity. The findings and discussion are presented to answer one question, namely what are students' perceptions of teachers teaching in writing class? The results are arranged according to major themes.

3.1. Writing essentials

Regarding writing essentials, there were several ideas put forward in the open-ended questionnaire results. All the findings are grouped based on similar main themes as follows:

3.1.1. Effectiveness of English writing teaching methods and strategies

For students, these teaching techniques and strategies play a crucial role as they serve as the yardstick for evaluating the success of a lesson, especially in English writing instruction. It's essential that these techniques and strategies are not only effective but also comfortable for students to utilize in the classroom.

The responses from the open-ended questionnaire highlighted that while the taught strategies and techniques may not always be suitable for the classroom setting, each learner has their own opinion on the methods and approaches that work best for them. According to this research "In order to provide every student with the skills and knowledge they will need to succeed in life and the workplace, teachers are expected to continuously innovate, adapt, and develop their caching practices" (Schleicher, (2018). This suggests that educators should be proactive in finding innovative ways to instruct pupils, adjusting to the evolving needs of

both the classroom and the students themselves, and ensuring that the lessons taught are relevant to their future.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of English writing instruction techniques and strategies varies depending on the learner, as indicated by the responses from the open-ended questionnaire. For instance, one student emphasized “Direct method or practice, so that it can be applied immediately and so that it is better remembered” (Transcript according to AR). Another student highlighted the value of interaction “I think interaction in person or online is one of the best ways to learn English” (Transcript according to AAP). Additionally, a different student suggested “Holding quizzes maybe or repeating the words more often so as not to forget” (Transcript according to SW). These diverse perspectives underscore the need for personalized approaches in English writing instruction to cater to the varied needs and preferences of learners.

3.1.2. The importance of writing ability for the future

Writing proficiency holds significant importance for the future as it facilitates pupils in various aspects of life, including everyday communication and education. Proficient writing skills empower individuals to thrive and adapt to diverse life circumstances. As evidenced by the responses from the open-ended questionnaire, every student emphasized the critical nature of developing writing skills for their future success, particularly in the professional realm. This research suggests that “writing well is essential for adjusting to the quickly evolving nature of schooling” (Liston, (2022)). This necessity arises from the constant changes in the educational environment, requiring pupils to continually adapt. Moreover, adept writers will possess the ability to communicate clearly and effectively across different mediums in the future. Students’ responses from the open-ended questionnaire further emphasize the significance of prioritizing writing as a skill for all students, as it will significantly contribute to their future success. This statement is echoed in the following quotes “Very important! In other words, having foreign language skills (both writing and communicating) is something that is very much needed both in academic life and career” (Transcript according to AAP). “Very important, because in the future there will be many things that require English as a means of communication with others” (Transcript according to NAO)

3.1.3. The interconnectedness of writing skills with other skills

The interconnected nature of language development manifest in the correlation between enhancing writing skills and other linguistic abilities such as speaking, reading, listening and writing. This correlation was highlighted in the findings of the open-ended questionnaire, where each student emphasized the link between mastering writing and proficiency in other areas, notably reading among other skills. These results corroborate the assertion made by Vacalares, (2023) that “The growth of multimodal skills such as reading, speaking, and

listening are frequently connected to the development of writing abilities. This is due to the connections and reinforcements between these abilities”.

For instance, exposure to various forms of writing enhances students’ reading skills indirectly as they learn to write. Furthermore, since writing necessitates thought processing and interaction, it contributes to the improvement of speaking and listening abilities. The responses from students in the open-ended questionnaire further underscore the interconnectedness of writing skill as with other language competencies. It is imperative for students to grasp the importance of the four core components of English language proficiency; speaking, listening, writing, and reading. This statement is articulated in the following quotation “The four aspects are important things that must be mastered if you want to be fluent in a new or foreign language. The four aspects are interrelated because we as humans have a sense of hearing that functions to listen and digest a new language, then a sense of sound generation, which functions to speak the language we learn or hear from the sense of hearing, there is a sense of sight that functions to see the script or writing and images. Then, digest it as a sound to communicate with others”. (Transcript according to CWE).

3.2. Rational reflective writing

Regarding rational reflective writing, there were several ideas put forward in the open-ended questionnaire results. All the findings are grouped based on similar main themes as follows:

3.2.1. Convenience factors affecting the improvement of writing skills

The responses from students in the open-ended questionnaire highlighted the varying degrees of comfort and discomfort experienced in English writing instruction. This sentiment is illustrated by the following statements:

Students’ writing skills are greatly enhanced by the comfort level of the English writing instructor. Writing down thoughts is sometimes easier for students to do when they are at ease with the way the teacher is teaching. The open-ended questionnaire results that every student said they were comfortable with some aspects of the English writing lessons their teachers had given them to help them become better writers. But underneath it all, some students find teaching English writing to be less comfortable. This research underscores that “Comfort level is a major element in writing ability development”. Its intent writing is a process that requires comfort, and writers who are at ease with it are more likely to produce excellent work and advance their writing skills. The responses from students in the open-ended questionnaire highlighted the varying degrees of comfort and discomfort experienced in English writing instruction. This statement is echoed in the following quotes acted that teaching English writing to students had both comfort and discomfort levels. “The factor that makes it comfortable during English class is that it depends on how the tutor is” (Transcript according to NAO). “The factor that makes me uncomfortable is that the teacher sometimes laughs when I can’t say a word in English” (Transcript according to AAH).

3.2.2. Benefits of receiving feedback from teachers

Feedback from the teachers play a pivotal role in assessing students' performance and guiding their learning journey. As highlighted by the responses from open-ended questionnaires, students unanimously expressed their desire to receive feedback, particularly on assignments, as it provides valuable insights into their strengths and areas for improvement. Dennis, (2010) "While there are many factors that might influence students' confidence levels, one of the most significant factors that could have an impact on a student's confidence in their writing abilities is the feedback they receive". This indicates that students typically feel more confident about their writing abilities when they receive encouraging or helpful feedback about their work from classmates or teachers. Alternatively, unfavorable comments may cause pupils to doubt their ability as writers. The responses from the questionnaire further emphasize the value students place on feedback in enhancing their writing proficiency. For instance, one student stated "I think the feedback given by my teacher is very useful in helping me to better understand the parts that I can improve" (Transcript according to AAP). While another student expressed that "Feedback such as positive responses and suggestions that I have received can help me to be enthusiastic about honing my English writing skills" (Transcript according to CWE). Consequently, feedback serves as a catalyst for students' growth and development as writers, underscoring its indispensable role in the learning process.

3.2.3. Support and challenges in improving English writing skills

The process of developing writing abilities can be complicated and fraught with difficulties. Writing is essentially a skill that is useful in many facets of life, including academic and professional settings. Of course, there are challenges to overcome in order to hone English writing abilities, but there is also support available to promote students' writing development. As per the insights gathered from the open-ended questionnaire, that some students acknowledge that there are challenges that prevent pupils from developing their writing abilities as well as certain supports that help them perfect their abilities. Notably, research highlights that "Even skilled writers find writing to be extremely challenging and that one useful strategy for strengthening sentence construction skills is sentence combining" (Saddler, (2018).

There are challenges to and support for improving writing abilities, including as writing demands a variety of sophisticated abilities, such as appropriate word choice and well-constructed sentences. Writing well can be difficult for even seasoned authors to accomplish. But more than that, the teacher's approach like the sentence-combining strategy mentioned above must be demonstrated to be successful in order to support students' writing abilities. Additionally, students that expressed in the questionnaire responses emphasized that both the challenges encountered and support received in enhancing English writing abilities. As highlighted by students "Support from experienced teachers or mentors is very important as

they can provide constructive feedback and give advice on how to improve writing skills” (Transcript according to AAP). “From myself, the challenge that really affects me is when I am learning to apply English to daily life vocabulary and in writing that I make, there are people who judge if there is something wrong in grammar or something like that” (Transcript according to CWE).

3.3. Creativity identity

Regarding creativity identity, there were several ideas put forward in the open-ended questionnaire results. All the findings are grouped based on similar main themes as follows:

3.3.1. Benefits of writing assignments for improving English writing skills

Students have the opportunity to refine and enhance their writing skills through various writing assignments. When tasked with writing assignments, students are required to structure their ideas coherently and express them concisely. By engaging in writing projects, students can enhance their understanding of appropriate writing styles and organizational techniques. The feedback from an open-ended questionnaire revealed that every student acknowledged the beneficial impact of writing assignments on their development as writers. This research highlighted that “Writing assignments can promote self-efficacy attitudes, which are essential for academic success” (Hood, (2018). Consequently, students have the chance to experience a sense of accomplishment upon completing writing tasks, thereby boosting their confidence to tackle future academic challenges. Additionally, students expressed in the questionnaire responses that writing assignments were instrumental in improving their writing skills and addressing areas needing attention. As highlighted by students “Yes, because there are more things to pay attention to” (Transcript according to AR). “It is very helpful because, with the assignment, I can correct errors in the text that I have written” (Transcript according to AAP).

3.3.2. Resources to improve English writing skills

Various resources such as books, movies, guidebooks, and learning applications offer invaluable guidance to students seeking to improve their writing skills. According to the findings of an open-ended questionnaire, students unanimously expressed their reliance on both online and offline resources to enhance their writing abilities, acknowledge the effectiveness of these diverse origins. Farkhodovna, (2023) highlighted that “In order to help students’ skills in speaking, listening, reading, and writing, this research recommends accessing a variety of online resources”. Beyond traditional avenues like books, contemporary learners recognize the value of online platforms in honing their English writing prowess. One student emphasized that “I think we can learn English from anywhere but for me personally, social media or online games where we can interact with other people directly are the most effective resources in improving my English” (Transcript according to AAP). And another student give statement that “Books, English educational videos through movies,

and formal education such as at school or tutoring and journaling using full English or combined with Indonesian language to train the brain to get used to using a new language” (Transcript according to CWE). Students are proactive in their pursuit of linguistic proficiency, employing innovative methods to train their minds in adapting to a new language.

4. Conclusion

There are differences in the ways that students perceive teaching English writing as a foreign language. Many pupils find it difficult, because of the variations in syntax, lexicon, and sentence construction from their mother language. But they also understand how critical English writing abilities are to future employment prospects and worldwide communication. While some students may be inspired by the teacher’s innovative and engaging style of instruction, other students may believe that they still have difficulty with English grammar and sentence instruction. Based on student’s replies, it appears that the teacher’s approach, the resources, the feedback from teachers, and the effort of all students play a major role in how well English writing lessons go.

Recommendation for teaching instruction about how to improve student writing by giving it greater focus and constructive criticism. This is helpful to ensure that pupils produce writing of a high enough caliber and fully comprehend the organization and word placement pattern. Besides, for future researchers who wish to investigate students’ perceptions of teaching English writing as a foreign language, the researchers recommend using more thorough methods, like interviewing students to get their opinions in-depth, using a larger sample or population at different educational levels to get perceptions that vary across different educational contexts, and using comparative studies that compare changes over time to see how students’ opinions of teaching English writing change over time.

It is suggested that when developing instructional materials, the English department should consider more specialized and efficient teaching methods for students who are learning to write in English. In an effort to provide an engaging learning environment for pupils using techniques that are already in use in all schools worldwide.

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