

## Research Article

# Strategic Use of English to Study Science: A Perspective from Communities of Practice

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This research is underpinned by the sociocultural perspective of communities of practice which situates learning and students' use of strategic actions to achieve the desired goals in the practices of their communities. Strategic use of the English language is the focus of this study and the aim of this research was to establish whether differences in the strategic use of writing skills in English exist between students of various educational backgrounds. A self-reporting questionnaire on the writing strategy use was distributed among 94 students enrolled in the Foundation Year in one university. The questionnaire items were classified into subgroups, including cognitive, metacognitive, social, affective, compensation, memory, and negative strategies. The results showed that no differences exist among students in all groups in terms of the overall strategy use and in each questionnaire subgroup. Data was analysed using the Mann-Whitney *U* test and the Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance. All results were statistically insignificant. The findings from this study have implications for the theory of communities of practice, suggesting that sources of student choices regarding the use of English skills to study science might be related more to their individual agency rather than specific communities of practice.

## 1. Introduction

The study reported here is part of an on-going research project seeking an understanding of factors that play a role in the transition of Bahraini students to Higher Education. This research is underpinned by the sociocultural perspective of communities of practice (CoP) which situates learning and student use of strategic actions to achieve the desired goals in the practices of their communities [1]. The entire research, therefore, focuses on the various aspects of societal and school structures that define learning, viewing learners from different schools as members of separate communities of practice.

The notion of communities of practice was developed by Etienne Wenger [1]. According to Wenger [1], "practice is the property of a kind of community created over time by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise" (page 45). This means that practice within a community gives meaning to what we do. This practice also leads to the development of a certain approach to learning and a learner identity in

which students will have to negotiate when moving between different communities of practice (ibid). Identity work is therefore central in CoP for it is seen as a barrier or facilitator in the process of crossing boundaries between two communities, thus preventing or enabling the transition process.

While a lot of works on CoP focus on forming trajectories and crossing boundaries when learners enter a new community of practice, the focus in this research falls specifically on the periphery stage. Learners in a new community are legitimate peripheral participants who have some experience of educational practices but who, at this periphery stage, do not know if the practices that had previously guaranteed success and that had been valued by the members of the old community are also valuable in the new community [2]. A lot of research works therefore focus on how learners negotiate the meaning of practice as they move towards the centre to achieve full participation [3, 4], but not much has been written about what happens to students at the periphery stage (see, e.g., Lea [5]). For this reason, we first

focus in this part of the research on identifying whether any differences in practice exist between our students who come from various communities of practice in order for us to develop an understanding whether specific groups of students will have to engage in greater negotiations of their identity than the others.

Additionally, seeing that language is one of the artefacts that mediates social interaction in a community, the construct of CoP is a way of locating it ethnographically, which creates an accountable link between the local practice and language development of individuals [6]. Taking into account our focus on school settings as separate communities of practice, this means that patterns of language and strategies of language use created in one learning environment might affect how learners use language as novices on the periphery of a new community of practice. This forms an important rationale for us to investigate in this study whether differences in the strategic language use exist between students from various educational backgrounds.

The conceptual framework of the on-going research project which also includes the findings presented here focuses on different areas of transition. One of these areas is related to developing literacy in science needed to learn the material in students' disciplinary modules. Learning of this material in our university takes place in English which is why we felt we had to investigate English language strategy use. Therefore, following CoP as a model for understanding transitions, we began with establishing whether differences in strategy use exist and we hypothesised that when beginning higher education, students from different educational backgrounds will use different English strategies to study their university subjects. To test our hypothesis, we raised the following research questions.

- (1) Are there any differences in the reported writing strategy use between students from private/international and government/national schools?
- (2) Are there any differences in the reported strategy use between students who have different secondary qualifications Tawjihi (Tawjihi is a national secondary qualification awarded in Bahrain), High School Diploma IB, A-level, or other secondary qualifications?

It is worth noting that while the on-going study covers both reading and writing strategy use in relation to developing literacy in subject areas that would enable transition, we focus only on written strategy use in this paper. The conceptual framework of the entire research also covers areas of pedagogical practices in language education, school pedagogy, and practice of delivering subject-specific knowledge and these aspects will be discussed in subsequent publications.

## 2. Methods

**2.1. Subjects.** Participants in the study were a total population of 94 students who were enrolled in the first year of medicine at the university. The students were divided into 2 groups

according to their educational background and qualifications type to help us link English strategy use to their community of practice and to answer the research questions. To answer the first question, students were divided based on their school background. The total number of students who graduated from private/international schools was 53 and the number of students from government/national schools was 41. To answer the second question, the division was based on students' qualifications. There were 38 students that held Tawjihi qualifications, 21 were High School Diploma holders (High School Diploma holders are students who graduated from private schools in Bahrain which follow the national curriculum), 8 students had IB diplomas, 12 had A-levels, and 15 were categorized under "other qualifications" which included diplomas from schools other than Bahrain and those who offer IB or A-levels.

**2.2. Instrument.** The data for the study was collected through a questionnaire that was adapted from the work of Baker and Boonkit [7]. The questionnaire was composed of 39 questions which focused on students' reported use of writing strategies in English while studying other university subjects. The strategies in the questionnaire were grouped into cognitive, metacognitive, compensation, memory, social, affective, and negative strategies. These groups make up general learning strategies which are taken by learners to make learning the subject more effective and more transferable to new situations (ibid).

- (1) *Cognitive strategies* are utilised for specific learning tasks and they involve more direct manipulation of the learning material itself [8]. Repetition, resourcing, translation, grouping, note taking, deduction, recombination, imagery, auditory representation, key word, contextualization, elaboration, transfer, and inference are among the most important cognitive strategies [8]. An example from our study include *I edit for content (ideas)*.
- (2) *Metacognitive strategies* involve organizing, planning, and thinking about the learning process while it is taking place and, at the same time, editing one's mistakes [8]. They are classified as advance organizers, directed attention, selective attention, self-management, functional planning, self-monitoring, delayed production, and self-evaluation [8]. An example from our study includes *I read my feedback from my previous writing*.
- (3) *Compensation strategies* are strategies that an individual uses while writing a given assignment whether he/she may be writing a draft or editing grammar and vocabulary before submission of the assignment. By using compensation strategies, a learner tries to bridge the gap caused by the language barrier [8]. One of the examples from our study is *I like to edit my work as I am writing*.
- (4) *Memory strategies* require mental processing of the language. Memory strategies entail the mental processes for storing new information in the memory and for retrieving them when needed. Using memory

strategies allows the learner to make the mental link to retained information, practise through memory, send and receive messages, and analyze data [8]. An example of a memory strategy that we included is *I make notes or try to remember my feedback*.

- (5) Social strategies offer exposure to the target language through communication with others. They contribute to learning indirectly since they do not lead to obtaining, storing, retrieving, and using of language but give students opportunities to negotiate the meaning of that language [8]. An example from the study includes *I discuss what I am going to write with other students or teachers*.
- (6) Affective strategies are related to learner frustrations connected with learning a new language. The use of these strategies makes learners aware of their emotions associated with coping with the demand, hence, encouraging them to look for something that would help them view the situation more positively [8]. A sample affective strategy from this research includes *I give myself a reward when I am finished*.
- (7) Negative strategies are related to strategies used before, during, and after the writing process. These are strategies we would not like our learners to use and they are specifically developed in the social context in which writing occurs [7]. An example from our study includes *When I have finished my work I don't look at it again; it is finished*.

**2.3. Analysis.** A Likert scale was used to scale the responses. Five numbers followed each statement (1, 2, 3, 4, and 5) with 1 = I never or almost never do this, 2 = I do this only occasionally, 3 = I sometimes do this (about 50% of the time), 4 = I usually do this, and 5 = I always or almost always do this. Data were analysed using SPSS version 20. Nonparametric tests were used as the population was below 100 and not all samples were of the same size. The significance level ( $P$  value) was set at 0.05. The Mann-Whitney  $U$  test was used to compare differences between two independent groups (*government/national and private/international*) and the Kruskal-Wallis test was used to compare between students under five different categories of secondary qualifications (*Tawjihi, High School Diploma, IB, A-level, and other*).

### 3. Results

The results were obtained separately in relation to the two research questions and they are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1 presents the results obtained for the first question: *Are there any differences in the reported writing strategy use between students from private/international and government/national schools?* Students' responses were examined in terms of individual strategy use, as well as in particular categories (cognitive strategies (COG), metacognitive strategies (MET), compensation strategies (CP), memory strategies (MEM), social strategies (S), affective strategies (A), and negative strategies (N)). As Table 1 shows, the means from

students from private/international schools ranged between 4.57 and 1.62 (overall  $M = 3.12$ ) and the means from students from government/national schools were recorded at 4.39–1.93 (overall  $M = 3.16$ ) The significance value for the overall strategy use was 0.457 (OWS). For specific groups of strategies, these values were 0.115 for the use of cognitive strategies (CWS), 0.158 for the use of metacognitive writing strategies (MWS), 0.053 for the use of compensation writing strategies (CP), 0.270 for the use of memory writing strategies (MEMS), 0.820 for the use of social writing strategies (SWS), 0.686 for the use of affective writing strategies (AWS), and 0.706 for the use of negative writing strategies (NWS). This indicates that there are no differences in the use of writing strategies between students from private/international schools and government/national schools and that these results are statistically insignificant.

Table 2 presents results obtained in relation to the second research question: *Are there any differences in the reported strategy use between students who have different secondary qualifications Tawjihi, High School Diploma IB, A-level, and other?* Similar to items in Table 1, the results presented here were examined based on individual strategy use, as well as the seven categories of strategies in English identified in the questionnaire (cognitive strategies (COG), metacognitive strategies (MET), compensation strategies (CP), memory strategies (MEM), social strategies (S), affective strategies (A), and negative strategies (N)). As Table 2 shows, the means from Tawjihi students ranged at 4.42–1.92 (overall  $M = 3.18$ ), from High School Diploma students at 4.48–2.00 (overall  $M = 3.21$ ), from IB students at 4.75–1.13 (overall  $M = 3.17$ ), from A-level students at 4.75–1.33 (overall  $M = 3.02$ ), and from students who were identified as holding "other" qualifications at 4.47–1.33 (overall  $M = 3.00$ ). The significance value for the overall strategy use was 0.358 (OWS). For specific groups of strategies, these values were 0.080 for the use of cognitive strategies (CWS), 0.361 for the use of metacognitive writing strategies (MWS), 0.067 for the use of compensation writing strategies (CP), 0.442 for the use of memory writing strategies (MEMS), 0.943 for the use of social writing strategies (SWS), 0.661 for the use of affective writing strategies (AWS), and 0.485 for the use of negative writing strategies (NWS). This indicates that there are no differences in the use of writing strategies between students who hold different school qualifications and that these results are statistically insignificant.

### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study reported on the findings from an on-going research project exploring the factors related to the transition of Bahraini students to higher education. Apart from focusing on specific factors related to school pedagogy, developing literacy in science in a foreign language and social identity, this research also hopes to contribute to the sociocultural theory of communities of practice (CoP). Particularly, through a series of research findings, we are interested in exploring whether CoP are a useful lens for understanding educational transitions when learners move from one community

TABLE 1: Differences in reported writing strategy use by students from different schools (private/intn'l and gov/national).

Name	Strategy	Private/Intn'l ( <i>n</i> = 53)		Gov/national ( <i>n</i> = 41)		( <i>P</i> value)
		M	S.D	M	S.D	Sig
COG1	I often write in Arabic (or if different—my native language)	2.02	1.135	3.56	1.119	0.000
COG2	I often write in English	4.57	0.821	3.70	0.853	0.000
COG3	I like to write a draft in Arabic (or if different—my native language) first and then translate it into English	1.62	1.228	1.93	0.932	0.011
COG4	I edit for content (ideas)	3.53	1.250	3.55	1.108	0.933
COG5	I edit my organization	3.38	1.348	4.05	0.904	0.018
COG6	I like to change and make ideas clearer when I write	3.84	1.155	4.17	0.958	0.166
COG7	I go back to my writing to edit and change the content (ideas)	3.57	1.217	3.35	1.292	0.403
COG8	I go back to my writing to edit and change my organization	3.49	1.171	3.40	1.128	0.648
MET1	I read my feedback from my previous writing	3.79	1.150	3.51	1.227	0.266
MET2	I consider the tasks and instructions carefully before writing	3.73	1.133	3.93	1.010	0.420
MET3	I brainstorm ideas and write notes	3.66	1.108	3.66	1.175	0.796
MET4	I use my background (world) knowledge to help me with ideas	3.92	1.234	4.39	0.891	0.050
MET5	I makes notes and plan in Arabic before writing	2.00	1.441	2.63	1.280	0.010
MET6	I makes notes and plan in English before writing	3.74	1.273	3.34	1.015	0.046
MET7	I make a timetable for when I will do my writing	2.87	1.225	2.49	1.165	0.180
MET8	I like to write a draft in English	3.81	1.455	3.22	1.194	0.015
MET9	I don't write a draft	2.64	1.194	2.02	1.129	0.009
MET10	I use the feedback to improve my writing next time	3.72	1.199	3.33	1.228	0.114
CP1	I like to edit my work as I am writing	3.85	1.092	3.37	1.337	0.098
CP2	I like to edit my work when I have finished writing my draft	3.52	1.379	3.76	1.319	0.378
CP3	I use a dictionary to check words I am not sure about while I am writing	2.96	1.414	3.56	1.379	0.041
CP4	I don't use a dictionary until I have finished writing my draft	2.10	1.287	2.12	1.100	0.611
CP5	I use a grammar book to check things I am not sure about while I am writing	1.79	1.215	2.03	1.187	0.270
CP6	I don't use a grammar book until I have finished my draft	2.26	1.631	2.30	1.344	0.609
CP7	I edit for grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation	3.40	1.391	4.07	1.095	0.016
CP8	I use an English-Arabic dictionary (if different—my native language), Arabic (if different—my native language)—English dictionary	2.25	1.467	3.18	1.357	0.002
CP9	I use an English-English dictionary	3.40	1.609	3.62	1.290	0.688
CP10	I go back to my writing to edit and change the grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation with a grammar book or a dictionary	2.70	1.395	2.95	1.154	0.313
CP11	I go back to my writing to edit and change the grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation without a grammar book or a dictionary	3.60	1.198	3.28	1.240	0.167
MEM1	I read my lesson notes, handouts and course requirements before writing	3.70	0.972	3.59	1.140	0.702
MEM2	I make notes or try to remember the feedback I get from my work.	3.40	1.306	3.32	1.269	0.781

TABLE I: Continued.

Name	Strategy	Private/Intn'l ( $n = 53$ )		Gov/national ( $n = 41$ )		$(P \text{ value})$ Sig
		M	S.D	M	S.D	
MEM3	I record the types of errors I made (e.g., grammar, vocabulary, organization)	2.66	1.358	2.23	1.310	0.114
S1	I discuss what I am going to write with other students or teachers.	3.00	1.085	2.88	1.029	0.709
S2	I like to discuss my work with other students or teachers when I finish	3.09	1.290	3.10	1.194	0.839
A1	I try to write in a comfortable, quiet place where I can concentrate	4.11	1.171	4.10	1.281	0.815
A2	I give myself a reward when I have finished	3.09	1.596	2.97	1.368	0.663
N1	I like to start writing immediately without a plan	2.58	1.292	2.32	1.254	0.319
N2	When I have finished my work I don't look at it again; it is finished	2.28	1.392	2.00	1.177	0.374
N3	I don't usually remember the feedback I get	2.23	1.296	2.60	1.033	0.057
CWS	Cognitive Writing Strategies	3.25	0.531	3.45	0.567	0.115
MWS	Metacognitive Writing Strategies	3.39	0.515	3.25	0.507	0.158
CP	Compensation Writing Strategies	2.90	0.605	3.09	0.627	0.053
MEMS	Memory Writing Strategies	3.25	0.862	3.02	0.820	0.270
SWS	Social Writing Strategies	3.05	1.016	2.96	0.931	0.820
AWS	Affective Writing Strategies	3.60	1.048	3.52	0.980	0.686
NWS	Negative Writing Strategies	2.36	0.975	2.32	0.745	0.706
OWS	Overall Writing Strategies	3.12	0.371	3.16	0.419	0.457

to another. We are specifically interested in exploring this move in the context of language and culture change.

The findings reported above have shown that no differences in the strategy use exist between students from different educational backgrounds and with different secondary qualifications. The proximity of mean responses from all student groups and standard deviation indicates that on average all students use similar writing strategies. No differences were recorded between the student groups in terms of overall strategy use and in each subcategory of strategies in the questionnaire. This made us reject our initial hypothesis which assumed that differences in the strategic use of the English language to study science exist between students from different communities of practice.

Our findings contradict a similar work by Sheorey and Mokhtari [9] who reported differences in strategy use by students whose native language is English and are nonnative speakers. Taking the perspective of CoP as a theoretical framework, it could be argued that Sheorey and Mokhtari [9] also classified their students into different communities of practice. It would have to be understood that their division though, unlike ours, was based on students' language ability as opposed to secondary qualifications and educational background. Their findings showed that nonnative students report using certain strategies significantly more than native speakers. These results suggest, if we consider native and nonnative speakers as members of two different communities of practice, that the differences in reported strategy use may

be linked to different patterns of language formed through practice in native and nonnative context. The authors imply this by stating that forces that drive reported usage of reading strategies especially for nonnative speakers are linked to how teachers increase students' awareness of such strategies in their own communities [9]. This also supports the view by Eckert [6] who was cited in Section 1 of this paper to explain our focus on language and who proposes that patterns of language and strategies of language use created in one learning environment might affect how learners use language in new situations.

Our findings, on the other hand, suggest that we reject this view for they demonstrate that, regardless of their education background, students still use the same strategies in a new situation, which here is understood as entering the new community of university. Sheorey and Mokhtari [9] propose that it is important for specific language strategies instruction to be integrated within the overall practice of language teaching in a community so as to enhance students' use of these strategies when they study at university. Our work implies that there might be no links between instruction (i.e., practice) and students' strategic use of the English language when studying university subjects.

Here, we report only on what happens on the periphery stage; that is, how students strategically approach their study in English in the very few weeks of their university studies. Using the perspective of CoP, it is expected that this might change for students because they will have to negotiate

TABLE 2: Differences in reported writing strategy use by students who hold different qualifications (Tawhiji, High School Diploma, IB, A-levels, and other).

Name	Strategy	Tawhiji ( $n = 38$ )		High School Diploma ( $n = 21$ )		IB ( $n = 8$ )		A-level ( $n = 15$ )		Other ( $n = 15$ )		Sig	(P value)
		M	S.D	M	S.D	M	S.D	M	S.D	M	S.D		
COG1	I often write in Arabic (or if different—my native language)	3.66	1.072	2.14	1.195	2.63	1.598	1.75	0.866	1.80	0.862	0.000	0.000
COG2	I often write in English	3.68	0.852	4.48	1.078	4.50	0.756	4.75	0.452	4.47	0.743	0.000	0.000
COG3	I like to write a draft in Arabic (or if different—my native language) first and then translate it into English	1.92	0.941	2.24	1.609	1.13	0.354	1.33	0.888	1.33	0.724	0.020	0.020
COG4	I edit for content (ideas)	3.55	1.132	3.62	1.284	3.75	1.165	3.50	1.314	3.29	1.204	0.936	0.936
COG5	I edit my organization	4.08	0.850	3.38	1.465	3.75	1.389	3.67	1.303	2.93	1.207	0.049	0.049
COG6	I like to change and make ideas clearer when I write	4.18	0.955	3.57	1.363	4.13	0.835	4.09	1.300	3.92	0.760	0.399	0.399
COG7	I go back to my writing to edit and change the content (ideas)	3.34	1.321	3.57	1.287	4.25	0.886	3.42	0.996	3.29	1.326	0.400	0.400
COG8	I go back to my writing to edit and change my organization	3.42	1.130	3.57	1.165	3.87	1.246	3.17	1.403	3.36	0.929	0.693	0.693
MET1	I read my feedback from my previous writing	3.55	1.179	3.76	1.091	4.25	0.886	3.50	1.243	3.67	1.447	0.601	0.601
MET2	I consider the tasks and instructions carefully before writing	3.97	0.972	3.75	1.251	4.13	0.991	3.50	1.382	3.57	0.852	0.517	0.517
MET3	I brainstorm ideas and write notes	3.74	1.131	3.48	1.209	4.25	0.886	3.75	0.965	3.33	1.234	0.365	0.365
MET4	I use my background (world) knowledge to help me with ideas	4.42	0.889	3.86	1.352	4.75	0.463	3.42	1.505	4.00	0.784	0.023	0.023
MET5	I makes notes and plan in Arabic before writing	2.63	1.282	2.43	1.502	2.13	1.553	1.67	1.371	1.73	1.335	0.039	0.039
MET6	I makes notes and plan in English before writing	3.39	1.028	3.43	1.363	4.25	0.707	3.50	1.382	3.87	1.246	0.274	0.274
MET7	I make a timetable for when I will do my writing	2.45	1.179	2.86	1.389	2.88	1.246	2.75	1.138	3.00	1.069	0.586	0.586
MET8	I like to write a draft in English	3.26	1.131	3.86	1.389	3.37	1.685	3.83	1.642	3.73	1.534	0.265	0.265
MET9	I don't write a draft	2.05	1.161	2.71	1.271	2.25	1.035	2.67	1.303	2.53	1.125	0.211	0.211
MET10	I use the feedback to improve my writing next time	3.37	1.239	3.86	1.195	4.00	1.195	3.75	1.215	3.14	1.167	0.291	0.291
CP1	I like to edit my work as I am writing	3.42	1.328	3.71	1.189	4.50	0.535	3.50	1.314	3.71	1.069	0.241	0.241
CP2	I like to edit my work when I have finished writing my draft	3.84	1.242	3.52	1.327	3.38	1.598	3.18	1.662	3.67	1.345	0.727	0.727
CP3	I use a dictionary to check words I am not sure about while I am writing	3.58	1.426	2.95	1.359	2.50	1.309	2.75	1.485	3.47	1.356	0.127	0.127
CP4	I don't use a dictionary until I have finished writing my draft	2.11	1.110	2.29	1.231	2.38	1.598	1.82	1.250	1.93	1.223	0.708	0.708
CP5	I use a grammar book to check things I am not sure about while I am writing	1.97	1.197	2.00	1.342	1.13	0.354	1.50	1.168	2.29	1.204	0.095	0.095
CP6	I don't use a grammar book until I have finished my draft	2.26	1.369	2.67	1.770	2.38	1.923	1.83	1.528	2.07	1.207	0.705	0.705
CP7	I edit for grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation	4.08	1.100	3.81	1.167	4.00	1.414	3.00	1.477	2.86	1.406	0.016	0.016
CP8	I use an English-Arabic dictionary (if different—my native language), Arabic (if different—my native language)—English dictionary	3.21	1.379	2.57	1.568	1.88	1.356	2.18	1.537	2.07	1.269	0.026	0.026

TABLE 2: Continued.

Name	Strategy	Tawhiji (n = 38)		High School Diploma (n = 21)		IB (n = 8)		A-level (n = 12)		Other (n = 15)		P value
		M	S.D	M	S.D	M	S.D	M	S.D	M	S.D	
CP9	I use an English-English dictionary	3.59	1.301	3.29	1.419	3.00	2.138	3.67	1.670	3.64	1.550	0.839
CP10	I go back to my writing to edit and change the grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation with a grammar book or a dictionary	3.00	1.162	3.14	1.276	2.00	1.604	2.42	1.084	2.57	1.505	0.142
CP11	I go back to my writing to edit and change the grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation without a grammar book or a dictionary	3.29	1.250	3.81	1.209	4.25	0.707	3.00	1.279	3.36	1.151	0.081
MEM1	I read my lesson notes, handouts and course requirements before writing	3.63	1.076	3.81	0.873	3.38	0.744	3.75	1.055	3.53	1.356	0.837
MEM2	I make notes or try to remember the feedback I get from my work.	3.32	1.297	3.48	1.209	3.00	1.512	3.58	1.311	3.36	1.336	0.900
MEM3	I record the types of errors I made (e.g. grammar, vocabulary, organization)	2.21	1.339	2.86	1.276	2.13	0.991	2.83	1.697	2.50	1.286	0.338
S1	I discuss what I am going to write with other students or teachers.	2.95	1.012	3.19	1.209	3.12	1.126	2.55	0.934	2.80	1.014	0.530
S2	I like to discuss my work with other students or teachers when I finish	3.08	1.217	3.00	1.225	3.13	1.356	3.33	1.371	3.07	1.328	0.98
A1	I try to write in a comfortable, quiet place where I can concentrate	4.16	1.263	3.71	1.347	4.62	0.518	4.33	1.155	4.07	1.163	0.404
A2	I give myself a reward when I have finished	2.92	1.363	3.33	1.560	2.63	1.685	3.58	1.564	2.71	1.590	0.403
N1	I like to start writing immediately without a plan	2.26	1.288	2.48	1.327	2.13	0.641	2.67	1.371	3.00	1.309	0.295
N2	When I have finished my work I don't look at it again; it is finished	1.92	1.148	2.67	1.426	1.63	0.916	2.00	1.651	2.50	1.225	0.119
N3	I don't usually remember the feedback I get	2.55	1.032	2.33	1.354	2.38	0.744	2.42	1.730	2.00	1.109	0.531
CWS	Cognitive Writing Strategies	3.48	0.571	3.32	0.541	3.50	0.555	3.20	0.525	3.02	0.439	0.080
MWS	Metacognitive Writing Strategies	3.28	0.495	3.39	0.597	3.62	0.305	3.23	0.531	3.25	0.498	0.361
CP	Compensation Writing Strategies	3.12	0.587	3.07	0.593	2.85	0.543	2.63	0.468	2.83	0.779	0.067
MEMS	Memory Writing Strategies	3.05	0.777	3.38	0.784	2.83	0.959	3.39	0.886	3.04	0.999	0.442
SWS	Social Writing Strategies	3.01	0.911	3.10	1.146	3.12	1.026	2.95	0.782	2.87	1.093	0.943
AWS	Affective Writing Strategies	3.54	0.954	3.52	1.239	3.63	0.916	3.96	0.753	3.37	1.093	0.661
NWS	Negative Writing Strategies	2.25	0.722	2.49	0.923	2.04	0.518	2.36	1.410	2.53	0.824	0.485
OWS	Overall Writing Strategies	3.18	0.390	3.21	0.454	3.17	0.153	3.02	0.240	3.00	0.465	0.358

their identities as they progress through the educational system and as they become influenced by the practice of the university. Previous research [10] showed, however, that what English teachers in Bahrain teach in schools cannot be linked to the strategy use of students from Bahraini national schools and with Bahraini qualifications demonstrated in this study. This provides initial grounds to claim that student strategy use is perhaps linked more to their individual agency than practice in their respective school communities. Future work in this research will focus on finding correlation between what was discovered earlier in terms of teacher practice [8] and student strategy use reported in this study. We also discovered through the course of an on-going research that there are no differences in English writing strategy use between native and nonnative speakers considered in our study, which is contradictory to the findings by Sheorey and Mokhtari [9] cited earlier. We wish to disseminate these findings in our future publications to further highlight the lesser importance of practice in the old community for students' empowered action (i.e., agency) on the periphery of the new one.

Baker and Boonkit [7] whose work was adapted here to develop the questionnaire for our study illustrate the need to take account of culture in learning strategies because some strategies are more common in certain cultures than the others. It is the belief of these researchers that strategies in English use can be successfully taught as their findings showed that a successful group of readers and writers (i.e., students who were taught appropriate English strategies) often apply what they have learned to other university subjects, thus suggesting the link between practice and strategy use. We contradict this view by presenting findings which indicate that despite different cultures of learning, students still report the same strategy use. This is supported, for instance, by findings obtained from students with qualifications from Western contexts such as A-levels or IB and from students from the local Bahraini context who hold Tawjihii qualifications. The data from these groups of students, and not only these, suggested the same frequency of specific strategy use and no differences in their overall use. This provides additional evidence that students' choice of strategy use might be linked to their individual agency rather than practice.

While we agree with Baker and Boonkit [7] that specific language strategy use is more common in some cultures than the others, we would like to challenge their point about linking student strategy use to the practice in their culture. The findings discussed above already suggest this but we also developed research that demonstrates no difference in strategy use between students of different nationalities and ethnic origin. This research strengthens our argument about the power of individual agency on the periphery, even if we expand our definition of community of practice beyond the school context and focus on the broad sociocultural framework of our students. Similar to our findings with regard to native and nonnative speakers of language, we also hope to disseminate these findings soon to make a valuable contribution in terms of CoP as a useful model for understanding transitions.

## Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this paper.

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