

Iranian EFL Learners' Use of Self-regulatory, Test-wiseness and Discourse Synthesis Strategies in Integrated Writing Tasks

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ABSTRACT

Integrated writing tasks require the writers to juxtapose the concepts and ideas presented in the given reading and/or listening based prompts in their essays. The issue of integrated writing has received considerable attention in recent years. This study explores the essential strategies employed and preferred by EFL learners in dealing with integrated writing tasks. This study relied on Yang and Plakans' (2012) framework on the use of and relationship among discourse synthesis, self-regulatory and test-wiseness strategies. The Strategy Inventory for Integrated Writing (SIIW), adopted from Yang and Plakans (2012), was the major instrument of data collection in the study. A total of 101 EFL learners undertaking a TOEFL iBT preparation course completed the questionnaire in the last session of the course to ensure their familiarity with integrated writing tasks and explore the strategies used by the participants in doing the tasks. Based on Friedman rank test results, it was found that discourse synthesis was the most preferred strategy, while self-regulatory and test-wiseness strategies were favoured less by the participants. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient demonstrated a significant relationship between self-regulatory and test-wiseness strategies, but discourse synthesis strategy showed no significant relationship with the other two strategies. This study calls for accommodating the processes underlying integrated writing construct and raising further awareness on the use of integrated strategies in teaching and testing EFL/ESL writing skill.

Keywords: Discourse synthesis, integrated writing, self-regulatory, test-wiseness, writing strategy

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 11 May 2015

Accepted: 8 July 2015

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INTRODUCTION

Integrated writing tasks have been employed frequently for assessing academic writing ability in standard proficiency exams recently. Most scholars, researchers

and test designers have abandoned the traditional perspective in testing of writing ability and have advocated the application of source use in academic writing. This, however, has not invalidated the merits and benefits of writing-only assessment. The general tenet is that writing from sources, along with independent writing, is the best representative of successful academic writing competence of the second language learners and test takers (Cumming, Kantor, Baba, Erdosy, Eouanzoui, & James, 2005; Guo, Crossley, & McNamara, 2013; Gebril & Plakans, 2014). Many highly accredited language proficiency exams such as TOEFL iBT, Canadian Academic English Language (CAEL) assessment, Ontario Test of English as a Second Language (OTESL) and Certificate of Proficiency in English (COPE) have incorporated reading and/or listening based prompts as an integral component of their writing modules so that test takers compose an integrated essay drawing upon the provided source materials. According to Yang and Plakans (2012), the Internet-based Test of English as a Second Language (TOEFL iBT) is the most recognised worldwide and practiced proficiency exam with an integrated writing component.

The integrated writing tasks have been tapped from diverse perspectives, and their incorporation in academic writing assessment and in instruction has been an issue of controversy. Integrated tasks have mostly been researched in the field of second language writing assessment rather than writing instruction. Previous studies

dealt with comparing and contrasting integrated and independent writing tasks in order to find out and juxtapose the processes involved in carrying out both types of tasks, as well as to investigate the quality of the written products. These studies suggested that integrated writing requires more interactive processes and contains significant and distinctive linguistic features that can be used as predictors of scores and essay quality (Plakans, 2008; Guo *et al.*, 2013). Some studies also proposed that scores obtained from both integrated and independent writing tasks are as reliable as the composite score of both types of tasks and reported that inter-rater and intra-rater reliabilities are the same for both task types (Gebril, 2009, 2010). Recently, Yang and Plakans (2012) delved into the strategies second language writers employ in integrated writing tasks, as well as pertinence of those strategies to their overall performance in these tasks. As a matter of fact, this prompted the authors to pursue this issue in an EFL context. In fact, the main strategies that EFL writers employ during an integrated writing task have been under-investigated in the literature. This is truer in the case of Iranian context, where the use of integrated tasks mostly in teaching writing and to a lesser extent in testing writing is of marginal significance. Hence, the need is felt to explore the processes and strategies involved in carrying out integrated tasks in order to promote and institutionalise source-based writing in writing courses. The present study investigates Iranian EFL

writers' use of discourse synthesis, self-regulatory and test-wiseness strategies in doing TOEFL iBT integrated writing tasks.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Examining the related background in the field of foreign and/or second language writing uncovered the fact that academic writing ability consisted of two major types of tasks: independent or writing-only tasks and integrated or source-dependent tasks. Integrated tasks have been mostly applied and implemented in foreign and second language writing assessments. On the other hand, EFL and/or ESL writing instruction has been dominated by the use and practice of independent tasks, where integrated writing tasks have not been conceptualised sufficiently for both second and foreign language instructors and learners. There has been no comprehensive definition of integrated essay writing tasks in the literature. Source-dependent tasks have firstly been recommended by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) to the administrators of the Test of English as a Foreign Language in order to measure writing ability more accurately. The most accepted definition is that integrated writing tasks encompass several source texts to which the writers will respond by combining the concepts in the source texts (Weigle & Parker, 2012; Plakans & Gebril, 2013). Delaney (2008) provided the evidence for the uniqueness of integrated writing construct that was unrelated to the constructs of reading comprehension or essay writing abilities. Plakans (2008)

construed the meaning of integrated tasks as the inclusion of source texts, written or spoken, in the prompt in order to provide the writers with sufficient content, as well as to authenticate and validate the measures of testing academic writing ability. Plakans (2009a) also discussed the application of different modalities in testing of second language writing capability in order to maximise the concepts of authenticity and validity in writing assessment. Integrated writing tasks have been redefined as the process in which the writers scrutinise the prompts in looking for ideas, combine the different concepts, organise their ideas, and finally use their conventional knowledge of the basics of writing to compose the final draft (Knoch & Sitajalabhorn, 2013).

Integrated writing task mostly tests the writers' ability to compose an essay based on the ideas and experiences of others rather than their own opinions. As Weigle and Parker (2012, p. 118) stated "in a typical integrated assessment task, examinees read one or more texts and use the information from the reading as source material for a writing task". Testing writing in integration with other language skills is considered to be advantageous in some ways. Plakans and Gebril (2012, p. 18), for example, pointed out that "integration of writing with other language skills creates a view of language that is holistic rather than componential". In their reports, Leki and Carson (1994, p. 95) also contended, "We are convinced that EAP writing classes need to move away from writing tasks that require students to tap into their own

opinions and experiences and toward work that encourages students to integrate those opinions and experiences with external sources of information and argument". Plakans and Gebril (2013) also interpreted integrated tasks as the combination of multiple skills into one task which requires students to write about the points presented in one or more source texts. Writing-only tasks, that are also called independent writing tasks, have not been segregated from integrated tasks in the literature except in some academic English language tests such as TOEFL iBT. In TOEFL iBT, independent writing tasks are development of an essay in response to a prompt or a question in thirty minutes. Plakans (2008) interpreted independent writing task as an impromptu essay writing task in which writers compose an essay on a general topic within a time limit. He maintained the fact that writing-only tasks are mainly rebuked for the issues of rating, construct validity and authenticity in second language writing assessment. Guo *et al.* (2013, p. 219) strongly criticised independent writing task as a "decontextualizing writing activity". By taking a closer look at writing instruction in the past, it can be concluded that independent writing tasks have been employed in two major manifestations: feedback (error correction) and collaborative writing.

Recently, researchers and scholars have been attracted by the idea of employing integrated tasks in academic writing assessment (Cumming *et al.*, 2005; Gebril, 2009, 2010; Plakans & Gebril, 2012, 2013;

Gebril & Plakans, 2014). As mentioned earlier, independent tasks have not been an adequate measurement of second language writing ability on their own and they have been complemented by integrated assessment. Reviewing the related literature on manifold writing tasks discloses the fact that researchers have been striving to investigate the link between writing and other language skills and test the effects of other aspects of language on second language writing abilities in earlier years too, although the term integrated has not been attached to those studies. Primarily, the investigators were mostly interested in the probable impacts of speaking on writing ability. In one study, for instance, Shi (1998) researched the effects of prewriting discussions and brainstorming on the composition ability of adult ESL students. He aimed at discovering the relative effects of peer-discussion, teacher-led discussion, and no prewriting discussion on ESL writers' compositions. He concluded that it is better for writing instructors to employ a combination of all three conditions in teaching of second language writing in order to facilitate the processes involved in writing and to foster the generation of various ideas and discourse in writing.

Integrated essay writing tasks have mostly been researched in the field of second language writing assessment rather than writing instruction. Different factors have been researched with regard to the use of integrated tasks such as source text borrowing, scoring, reading-to-write construct, paraphrasing, strategy use and

processes involved while composing (Plakans & Gebрил, 2012; Weigle & Parker, 2012; Hirvella & Du, 2013; McCulloch, 2013). The comparison of writing processes in both integrated tasks and integrated assessment has been another area of interest to the researchers (Plakans, 2008).

Researchers mostly surveyed integrated writing tasks taking a comparative perspective. In fact, research has juxtaposed integrated and independent writing tasks in many contexts (Cumming *et al.*, 2005; Gebрил, 2010). Research reported that the discourse employed in the two types of writing tasks diverges dramatically in that writers involved in both tasks produced contrasting compositions with regard to lexical sophistication, syntactic complexity, argument structure, as well as voice in source evidence and message in source evidence (Guo *et al.*, 2013). Besides, particular sets of linguistics features were reported to predict proficiency levels in both integrated and independent tasks (see more in Cumming *et al.*, 2005; Guo *et al.*, 2013). Furthermore, Plakans (2008) also noted that processes engaged in integrated writing tasks differed from those of independent tasks, since dependent tasks proved to involve more interactive and engaging mechanisms than writing-only tasks. Moreover, integrated writing was favoured more by experienced writers who regarded integrated tasks to be more authentic (Plakans, 2008). Other comparative studies indicated the

generalisability and reliability of the scores obtained from both types of tasks across raters (Gebрил, 2009, 2010).

As mentioned earlier, the concept of prompt-based writing has been analysed with regard to numerous determining factors. As the following studies illustrate, some researchers investigated integrated tasks questioning the frequency of the formulaic and recurrent patterns in participants' essays. For instance, the function performed by the so-called lexical bundles in the written products of learners of diverse proficiency levels has been analysed in a few corpus-based studies (e.g., Staples, Egbert, Biber, & McClair, 2013). In addition, many comparative and case studies examined the possible processes writers engaged with while doing the reading-to-write task and figured that integrated writing deals more with interactive and idiosyncratic processes (Plakans, 2008; McCulloch, 2013). Another area of enquiry in the issue of integrated writing has been the concept of source use. Many investigators studied the role of source text from different perspectives and suggested that the source used in integrated tasks performs various functions (such as generating ideas, acting a language support, etc.) and acts as a predictor of scores in reading-to-write tasks, and assists in borrowing ideas (not verbatim) from the prompts (Weigle & Parker, 2012; Plakans & Gebрил, 2012, 2013). It is believed that writers employ countless disparate strategies and techniques in order to accomplish an integrated writing

activity. One of the major tenets has been the fact that most writers utilise a discourse synthesis process while occupied with integrated writing task. Plakans (2009a, p. 563), interprets discourse synthesis as “a constructive meaning-making process of reading for writing”. It has been reported that some writers made use of discourse synthesis process in doing integrated task and the way of application was different among individual writers (Plakans, 2009a). Yet, other studies suggested that reading strategies played a considerable role in reading-to-write tasks in that their use depended heavily on the proficiency level of the writers since high-level writer made frequent use of global, word-level and miming reading strategies during the task (Plakans, 2009b). In addition to discourse synthesis and reading strategies, other types of strategies were also emphasised by Yang and Plakans (2012) and Li and Casanave (2012), among others. For instance, test wiseness and self-regulatory strategies and their role in performing reading-listening-writing tasks have been investigated along with discourse synthesis strategy use by Yang and Plakans (2012). It has been concluded that all three types have direct effects on test performance; however, test-wiseness strategy influences the performance on integrated task negatively (Yang & Plakans, 2012).

Writers’ strategies for writing from sources have been examined in the literature as well. In their case study, Li and Casanave (2012, p. 165) investigated the probable differences between patch

writing and plagiarism reported that the concepts of “plagiarism as cheating and misuse of source texts” needed to be differentiated from patch writing. Hirvela and Du (2013) elaborated the concept of paraphrasing when writing from sources in their case study and contended that writers might have different conceptualisations of paraphrasing and its functions. More recently, the incorporation of integrated tasks has been one of the major criteria in assessing academic writing construct (Gebril & Plakans, 2014).

Reviewing the related literature discloses the significance of reading-to-write construct in writing assessment and instruction. Moreover, diverse strategies writers draw upon while doing integrated writing have been proven to be instrumental. With insights from Yang and Plakans (2012), this study, however, attempts to tap the writers’ preferences of different strategies before, while, and after the integrated task. Hence, the study intends to discover the main strategies Iranian EFL writers use in doing integrated writing tasks as well as to explore the relationship among discourse synthesis, self-regulatory, and test-wiseness strategies.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants of the present study included 101 non-native English speaking students who enrolled in a four-month TOEFL iBT preparation course at two different private language institutes in

Urmia, Iran. The course was directed at developing reading, listening, speaking, and writing skills. Since the current study chiefly addressed the main strategies involved in the writing section, we referred to the institutes in the final session of the course, more specifically when the learners have had sufficient practice in integrated writing tasks in order to be able to identify the strategies they use in carrying out the tasks. Furthermore, the subjects were all graduate and postgraduate students, with fairly equal numbers of male and female participants. The reason for choosing graduate and postgraduate students from multiple disciplines in this research site was that mostly university students enrolled in TOEFL iBT preparation courses in Iran. These EFL learners were highly motivated and had paid tuition for these courses. The primary incentive for these participants in taking part in TOEFL iBT preparation courses, including its writing module, was to get prepared for sitting official TOEFL iBT tests and thereby meet one of the key requirements for admission into MA/MS or PhD programmes in their respective fields in Iran and abroad. Therefore, it was decided that integrated writing strategies could best be tapped among Iranian learners in this course. The participants mainly majored in three separate fields, namely, electrical engineering (N = 30), medicine (N = 30), and English (N = 41). The proficiency of these students was found to be intermediate or above based on an in-house placement and entry test which was based on a retired version of TOEFL

PBT taken from ETS-based archive of PBT TOEFL tests. All those who scored above 500 out of 670 in the main TOEFL PBT test and three out of six in its independent writing module, i.e. Test of Written English (TWE), were found to be eligible to enrol in the TOEFL iBT course. Moreover, after getting the initial approval from the institutes for carrying out the study in their site, the researchers sought and received the participants' written consent for their participation in this study and for the analyses of their integrated writing samples. The participants were assured that their writings would be solely used for the purposes of the present study. Their identities were kept confidential and their original writings were returned to them upon the completion of the study.

Instruments and Data Analysis

The main tool used in the study was the Strategy Inventory for Integrated Writing (SIIW) adopted from Yang and Plakans (2012). The questionnaire includes 24 five-response Likert Scale items and is composed of three parts: before, while and after the task. The questions are representative of three types of strategies that include discourse synthesis strategy use, self-regulatory strategy use, and test-wiseness strategy use. Yang and Plakans (2012) confirmed the fact that each type of strategy acts as a result of interaction with other processes and strategies. Discourse synthesis is the process of extracting meaning out of the reading passage for subsequent use in writing that

compromises three further sub-categories: organising, selecting and connecting (Plakans, 2009b). Self-regulatory strategy is a process that involves the acts of monitoring and evaluation. Test-wiseness encompasses the sub-processes of copying, using writing models and patch-writing (Yang & Plakans, 2012). Yang and Plakans (2012) also reported that content validity of the items had been established by a comprehensive review of four experts that led to the revision of redundant and unclear

items. Reliability analyses also indicated that ten items must be eliminated due to their low levels of reliability; therefore, the final version of the questionnaire included 24 items. Table 1 represents the number of items devoted to each strategy. It is worth mentioning that the questionnaire was administered and answered at the end of the final sessions in the research sites within two days. The participants responded to the items in about thirty minutes.

TABLE 1
Proportional Items on Three Integrated Strategies

Strategy type	Items	Number of items
Discourse Synthesis		10
Organising	9-10-11-13	
Connecting	4-5-7-8	
Selecting	6-12	
Self-regulatory		11
Monitoring	16-21-24-25-26-30-32-33	
Evaluation	15-29-34	
Test-Wiseness		3
Copying	14	
Using writing models	18	
Patch-writing	20	Total= 24

The collected data represented no missing or invalid responses. The questionnaires were coded and imported to computer to run statistical analysis through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 21. Two major statistical techniques were performed to meet the objectives of this study. Friedman Rank test was employed to recognise and specify the strategies EFL learners used to accomplish integrated writing tasks. Moreover, the probable relationship

among the three types of integrated writing strategies was also analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient.

RESULTS

As mentioned before, one major objective of the study was to identify the strategies employed by EFL writers in carrying out the integrated tasks. For this purpose, Friedman rank test was used. The relevant descriptive statistics for three types of strategies are demonstrated in Table 2.

TABLE 2
Descriptive Statistics for the Three Types of Learner Strategies (N =101)

Strategies	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Discourse synthesis strategy	2.90	5	4.05	0.48
Self-regulatory strategy	2.64	4.64	3.72	0.51
Test-wiseness strategy	1.67	4.67	3.35	0.87

According to Table 2, the use of discourse synthesis variable with a mean of 4.05 and standard deviation of 0.48 proved to be the most preferred strategy type. On the other hand, the use range for self-regulatory strategy varied from 2.64 to 4.64 indicating the mean of 3.72 with a standard deviation of 0.51. For test-wiseness variable, the use represents a mean of 3.35 and a standard deviation of 0.87 that confirms its minor importance among writers. This information also indicates less variation among the participants in using discourse synthesis strategy.

Table 3 demonstrates the findings of the Friedman rank statistics. The table verifies that Friedman rank statistics is significant ($p = 0.001$, $X^2 = 33.84$, $df = 2$). Considering the mean ranks, a decrease is observed in the use of strategies from discourse synthesis to test-wiseness. In fact, the results of the Friedman test indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in the use of three types of learners' strategies ($2.42 > 1.97 > 1.61$). It is therefore inferred that the most important strategy for the learners was discourse synthesis ($M = 2.42$), followed by self-regulatory ($M = 1.97$), and test-wiseness strategy ($M = 1.61$).

TABLE 3
Friedman Rank Test Results (N =101)

Criterion	Mean rank	Rank
Discourse synthesis strategy	2.42	1
Self-regulatory strategy	1.97	2
Test-wiseness strategy	1.61	3
Test statistics (Friedman test)		
x^2	df	p value
33.84	2	0.001

Secondly, Pearson correlation coefficient was employed to analyse the possible relationship among the three strategy types across the individual

writers. Table 4 describes the information resulted from the correlational statistics. The correlation matrix of the variable is illustrated in Table 5.

TABLE 4
Correlations among the Three Types of Integrated Strategies

		discourse synthesis strategy	self- regulatory strategy	test-wisness strategy
discourse synthesis strategy	Pearson Correlation	1	.146	-.034
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.146	.739
	N	101	101	101
self-regulatory strategy	Pearson Correlation	.146	1	.288**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.146		.003
	N	101	101	101
test-wisness strategy	Pearson Correlation	-.034	.288**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.739	.003	
	N	101	101	101

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

TABLE 5
Correlation Matrix of Integrated Strategies

Number	strategies	1	2	3
1	Discourse synthesis	1		
2	Self-regulatory	0.15	1	
3	Test-wisness	-0.03	0.29**	1

**p<0.01

According to Tables 4 and 5, the relationship between discourse synthesis and self-regulatory strategies was found to be insignificant ($r = 0.15$). Similarly, discourse synthesis strategy was not significantly related to test-wisness strategy use ($r = -0.03$). The only significant relationship was between test-wisness and self-regulatory strategies ($p = 0.01$, $r = 0.29$). This finding suggests that the use of self-regulatory strategy entails the use of test-wisness strategy. Discourse synthesis strategy, however, was related to neither self-regulatory nor test-wisness strategies.

DISCUSSION

The current study was an attempt to draw attention to the theoretical concept that academic writing ability consists of the combination of diverse cognitive and metacognitive processes that build up the construct. For this purpose, a total of 101 advanced Iranian writers completed the inventory integrated strategy use questionnaire (Yang & Plakans, 2012). One of the major findings of this study was that foreign language writers relied heavily on discourse synthesis strategy when involved in the listening-reading-writing task. The data analysis demonstrated that the most

favoured integrated writing strategies among foreign language writers were the sub-processes of connecting, organising and selecting. This concurs with the research findings of Spivey (1990), Spivey and King (1989), and partly with those of Yang and Plakans (2012). These researchers found that EFL writers follow a series of meaning-making processes during which they organise and select ideas from the reading or listening texts and then integrate them into their writing. This, in turn, upholds the determining role of reading strategies in integrated writing tasks. According to Plakans (2009b), reading acts as a pre-writing stage in integrated writing tasks that assist the writers to comprehend the texts and topics. Elsewhere, Plakans (2008) pointed out that reading establishes the context for the tasks and cannot be put aside in listening-reading-writing tasks. In a case study by Plakans (2009a), some writers also employed a discourse synthesis process in carrying out the integrated writing task. Another important finding of the present study was the rare use of self-regulatory and test-wiseness strategies by the writers compared to discourse synthesis strategy. This does not support the dynamic nature of integrated writing tasks proposed by Yang and Plakans (2012) who suggested that such tasks required the use of a mixture of strategies by the writers.

With regard to the existing relationship among the three strategy types, it was concluded that discourse synthesis strategy was related neither to self-regulatory nor to test-wiseness strategies. In contrast, the

relationship between test-wiseness and self-regulatory strategies was statistically significant. In fact, they were related positively in a way that higher use of test-wiseness strategy was associated with a similar rise in the use of self-regulatory process. This finding is partially in line with the findings of Yang and Plakans (2012). While the present study proposes that there is no significant relationship between discourse synthesis and other types of strategies, Yang and Plakans (2012) asserted that self-regulatory strategy was positively related to discourse synthesis processes used by the writers in their test performance. This study accords with Yang and Plakans (2012) in regard to the conclusion that self-regulatory and test-wiseness processes correlated with each other when used in integrated writing tasks. It is noteworthy that Yang and Plakans (2012) investigated the sub-processes within each strategy, as well as the possible relationships among them, but this study directly targeted the general strategies employed by foreign language writers to carry out the integrated writing tasks.

Given the contradictory findings in the literature, the question remains as to why Iranian writers incline heavily towards a discourse-based model in dealing with integrated writing tasks. One plausible reason for this preference of EFL writers may arise out of the fact that writing fluency is not practiced and well-developed in these writers. As Kuhi, Rasouli and Deylami (2014) corroborated, the most

important problem in developing writing fluency is related to the cognitive processes since the writers have to think in another language and to translate their thoughts into English. This, in turn, can be attributed to the restricted levels of multiple resources among Iranian writers, as suggested by Doughty and Long, (2003). Since Iranian writers seem to be less fluent in foreign language composition, they heavily rely on the processes of organising, selecting and connecting the ideas. Consequently, they find fewer opportunities to do the tasks of monitoring, evaluating, modelling, copying and patch-writing as subcategories of self-regulatory and test-wiseness strategies. In other words, the attentional resources, which allow the attention to be allocated to diverse tasks simultaneously, might be limited for these writers (Doughty & Long, 2003).

This study also found that the writers underused test-wiseness strategy. In the first place, it can be postulated that writers in language exams or testing contexts do not have sufficient access to the listening and/or reading prompts, while this is not the case in authentic settings where the texts are available during the writing task. Hence, the lack of sufficient access to the reading and listening texts may hinder the writers' use of test-wiseness processes.

The underuse of test-wiseness strategy, however, can be attributable to the limitations of short-term memory that hamper EFL writers' attempts in doing patch-writing tasks, copying, and modelling. Moreover, it may be

challenging for the writers to adjust their own style of writing to that of source texts, while this is what is expected from them to accomplish, should they intend to employ test-wiseness strategy. Presumably, Iranian writers may find it too hard to manage the sub-processes of test-wiseness strategy in carrying out integrated writing tasks along with the other two main strategies.

Finally, it can be posited that EFL writers may have developed low levels of note-taking strategies while listening or reading. Thus, they could not afford copying, using others' models and patch writing. In fact, it is widely recognised that this act of dual processing, listening and writing simultaneously places a burden on EFL and/or ESL learners and overloads them both cognitively and linguistically (Thompson, 2003). As a matter of fact, note-taking skill during a lecture generates numerous problems for EFL learners and should be a basic module in EAP curriculum (Kirkgoz, 2010).

All the above-mentioned points may shed further light on the nature and possible interpretations of the findings of this study and clarify why EFL learners prefer overusing discourse-based processes during integrated writing tasks. Of course, further studies are warranted to explore why EFL learners underuse self-regulatory and test-wiseness strategies.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The present study set out to explore the underlying strategies involved in carrying out listening-reading-writing tasks.

The findings offer both theoretical and pedagogical implications to the field of second and foreign language research. Theoretically, this study clarifies the inherent nature of academic writing construct by discerning the individual processes that influence the performances in integrated writing tasks. To put it differently, the presence of disparate types of processes in integrated writing substantiates the fact that academic writing is a dynamic and complex construct that involves countless underlying structures which affect writing competence. Furthermore, the concept of writing ability has frequently been explored taking an impromptu-based viewpoint (Plakans, 2008), that is, the processes involved in independent writing (writing-only) have been mainly the issue of enquiry. This study, however, authenticates the fact that academic writing construct can be looked upon from an integrated view, as well in a way that other language skills, such as reading and listening, might have determining contribution in successful academic writing.

Pedagogically, the present enquiry may reshape the instruction of second and foreign language writing. Firstly, while not devaluing the significance of impromptu and independent writing, syllabus designers and instructors can incorporate more integrated writing tasks into the writing courses by raising the writers' awareness of the rudimentary structures that form integrated writing construct. For instance, one of the basic processes involved in integrated writing

is the strategy of discourse synthesis that assists the writers to extract the gist of the listening or reading texts and to use it proportionately in subsequent writing. Once the fundamental processes and strategies in integrated writing have been well comprehended, the assessment of academic writing ability can be modified dramatically. Instructing foreign language learners about the nature of integrated writing and the techniques engaged in these types of composition may gradually alter the way academic writing is evaluated. In fact, through integrated and independent writing tasks, a writer's competency in this skill can be assessed more reliably, and the results can be more accountable. As mentioned earlier, this is the case with many well-known English language tests, such as TOEFL iBT that attempt to catch a true evaluation of the test-takers' academic writing abilities in parallel with the writing competences requirements at tertiary settings. Furthermore, writing instruction curricula can include some specific strategies that lead to improvements in writing fluency and accuracy in doing integrating writing tasks such as note-taking. Foreign language writers are not instructed enough in note-taking strategies (Thompson, 2003) which may cause their underuse of basic integrated writing strategies such as test-wiseness.

This study mainly reported on the general processes and strategies involved in listening-reading-writing tasks and the most favoured strategies among foreign language writers. Further research can be

directed at investigating the sub-categories of each strategy type to examine the probable relationship among them or to identify the most preferred sub-processes among foreign language writers. This study surveyed the strategy preferences of both male and female writers, so subsequent research can concentrate on the effects of the gender in deciding what strategies to employ in integrated writing tasks. The findings of this study should be interpreted with caution since the number of participants was limited, the participants were from only university students in three majors, and the strategies were explored based on a single instance of integrated writing in a TOEFL iBT course.

In conclusion, it is hoped that this study would assist in the successful development of the field of second and foreign language acquisition and offer helpful insights to the future instructors, educational officials and researchers in the field.

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