ABSTRACT

This study investigated the writing strategy use of undergraduate students at Jimma University, Ethiopia with the prime objective of identifying effective writing strategies that can be recommended for application and use in teaching students in order to improve their writing competence. The study also aimed at examining major factors influencing the use of writing strategies.

To investigate the undergraduate students’ writing strategy use and factors influencing the use of these strategies, the study used three types of instruments: a questionnaire, proficiency test and interviews. The study sample comprised about 680 students who were randomly selected from 12 fields of studies and these subjects completed the questionnaire consisting two parts (38 item close-ended questionnaire and mixed type of questionnaire) and took a writing proficiency test. 46 students who were randomly selected from the total number of subjects were interviewed about their writing strategy knowledge and writing experiences.

Two types of data, quantitative and qualitative were collected from the subjects and analyzed using quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative approaches include descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, percentages and frequencies that were used to discover the most and the least frequently employed writing strategies by respondents. Chi-square tests were used to assess if there was a significant relationship between the use of individual writing strategy and writing ability level. Pearson correlation coefficients were also used to examine the relationship between the use of writing strategy categories and writing ability. A stepwise multiple regression was conducted to identify writing strategies that predicted significantly the subjects’ writing competence and multivariate analysis of variance was utilized to check the effects of motivational variables on writing strategy use. A one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run to assess any significant deviation among the means of writing strategy use by the groups. Post hoc tests were performed to identify the groups that showed significant differences in the use of categories and of individual writing strategies. On the other hand, the qualitative research analysis techniques employed to analyze the qualitative data obtained from the subjects include summarizing, categorizing, and looking for recurring themes and
quantifying the frequency mentions of these themes, and providing illustrative examples.

The results of the descriptive statistical analyses revealed that, out of the 38 writing strategies, 14 strategies are found to be employed frequently of which items 14 and 15 are the two most popular writing strategies among the participants. In contrast to these, only item 31 is the least popular writing strategy with the participants. Moreover, the chi-square test and regression analyses revealed that there are four writing strategies that have a close positive relationship with writing ability. This indicates that the students who employ these strategies frequently are found to have a better writing performance than those who use them less. Other quantitative and/or qualitative analyses showed that there is a close relationship between fields of study and the writing strategy use, between approaches to writing instruction and writing strategy use and between motivational variables and writing strategy use.

Finally, the study discusses the conclusions drawn from the findings and the pedagogical implications of the findings and suggestions are given for future research along with the limitations of the study.