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Strategies In Teaching Writing For Ninth Grade Students At Junior High School

Author:

Faisa Laili Shofa¹, Irra Wahidiyati²

Affiliation:

UIN Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri
Purwokerto, Indonesia

Corresponding email:

faisaashf590@gmail.com

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Abstract: This study aims to investigate the strategies used by the English teacher at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Purwokerto in teaching writing and to identify the challenges faced during the instructional process. This study was conducted using a qualitative approach with a descriptive qualitative method. The data were collected through classroom observations, interviews, and documentation. The findings show that the teacher applied three strategies: Guided Writing Strategy, Cooperative Learning Strategy, and Expository Learning Strategy. Guided Writing Strategy helped students organize sentences correctly before writing independently, while Cooperative Learning Strategy encouraged students to exchange ideas and complete writing tasks through group collaboration. Expository Learning Strategy provided clear explanations of grammar and writing components to build students' understanding before practice. The study found four main challenges: students' limited vocabulary, differences in ability levels, managing a large class, and limited lesson time. Meanwhile, difficulties related to developing students' writing skills, using technology, addressing varied learning needs, lack of confidence in trying new methods, or depending on a single teaching method did not become major problems because the teacher was confident and flexible in managing those aspects.

Keywords: teaching writing; teacher's strategies; teaching challenges

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Introduction

Writing is one of the important skills for students to master, especially in learning English. Writing skills encompass the knowledge and abilities required to convey ideas effectively in written form (Muthoharoh, 'Ulya, Nawangsari, Fatin, & Mualim, 2021). According to Megista et al., (2023), writing is an activity of arranging and expressing ideas, thoughts, and feelings into written form so that the reader can understand the message being delivered. In addition, Purnamasari, Hidayat, & Kurniawati, (2021) argue that the activity of writing can improve students' writing skills and facilitate them to develop other language skills. Through writing, a person can convey their goals or intentions clearly to others, allowing the reader to understand the intended message (Inayah, Kuntarto, & Khoirunnisa, 2024).

The ability to write well does not come automatically. Writing skills need to be developed through regular practice and experience (Sasmita & Setyowati, 2021). During the teaching and learning process, students experienced difficulties in developing their writing (Inayah, Kuntarto, & Khoirunnisa, 2024). Students often have difficulties when trying to write sentences, paragraphs, or a complete text. Students who are not familiar with writing in English usually struggle when the teacher asks them to write down their ideas, thoughts, or experiences (Alisha, Safitri, & Santoso, 2019). They are unable to understand the material presented by the teacher because they consider it difficult and complicated, which causes them to pay less attention and have trouble staying focused during the lesson (Widiana & Sabiq, 2021). The findings also showed that their limited vocabulary, grammar mastery, and motivation made it hard for them to express their ideas in English (Astrini, Ratminingsih, & Utami, 2020).

To overcome these challenges, a teacher must try to find appropriate strategies to teach students because the teacher has a very important role in the teaching and learning process. Applying a strategy that allows students to start their writing and develop their ideas is considered an effective way to teach writing (Aminatun, Ngadiso, & Marmanto, 2018). According to Widosari et.al., (2017) as cited in Elmahida et.al., (2021), appropriate teaching strategies are required because many students perceive writing as a challenging aspect of language skills. The strategies used by teachers play a significant role in teaching writing to young learners, for instance by considering the characteristics of the students (Astrini, Ratminingsih, & Utami, 2020).

Based on preliminary research, it was found that the students still faced difficulties in writing. They had problems in generating ideas, organizing the content into a clear sequence, and selecting the important information to include in their writing. As a result, their written texts tended to lack structure and coherence. These difficulties made it challenging for them to express their thoughts effectively and to develop a complete and meaningful piece of writing. The problems indicated that students required guidance to help them understand the writing process and improve their ability to produce well organized written texts.

Several studies have been conducted previously. In a journal written by Astrini et.al., (2020), entitled "The Model of Strategies Employed by English Teachers in Teaching Writing Skill in National Plus Schools". The findings revealed that one of the teachers applied an additional writing strategy, namely creative writing, while the other teacher did not. In a journal written by Widiana & Sabiq, (2021) with the title "Scaffolding Strategy In Teaching Writing And Its Challenges". The findings revealed that the teacher implemented a scaffolding strategy to foster students' critical and higher order thinking skills. The study also indicated that the teacher faced several challenges, including students' varying academic abilities, low interest in participating in classroom activities, limited vocabulary, and difficulties in motivating them.

Although previous studies have examined teacher strategies in teaching writing, most of them discuss specific techniques in general classroom contexts and do not describe in detail how these strategies are implemented in the teaching process. Furthermore, research focusing on how teachers handle difficulties while teaching writing, particularly at the ninth-grade level, is still limited. In reality, teachers often face several challenges when teaching writing, such as managing students with different writing abilities, handling students who lack motivation, dealing with limited class time, and finding appropriate techniques to help students generate ideas and organize their writing.

Based on the descriptive above, the researcher is interested in conducting a study entitled "Teacher Strategies In Teaching Writing For Ninth Grade Students At SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Purwokerto". This research aims to explore What are the strategies used by the teacher in teaching writing for ninth grade students at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Purwokerto, and to identify What are the challenges faced by the teacher in applying those strategies in teaching writing for ninth grade students at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Purwokerto. By examining these aspects, the study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how writing instruction is carried out in real teaching situations. Furthermore, it is expected that the findings of this research will offer insights for teachers and schools in selecting and applying appropriate strategies to support students' writing development in the learning process.

Literature Review

Teaching Strategies

Teaching strategies play an essential role in the classroom because they strongly influence how the learning process takes place (Marsevani, Slikker, Pratiwi, & Hendra, 2024). Smith in 1963 state that teaching is a structured set of actions that involves a teacher, specific goals to be achieved, and a contextual situation. This situation includes elements that the teacher cannot control such as the number of students, their characteristics, and available facilities as well as elements that the teacher can adjust, including the teaching techniques and strategies used (Rajagopalan, 2019).

According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary (2016), a strategy refers to a carefully prepared plan developed to achieve specific objectives. It is an organized course of action intended to reach a particular aim (Hasanova, Abduazizov, & Khujakulov, 2021). It can be concluded that teaching strategies are a crucial component in the process of teaching writing. Choosing an effective strategy helps both teachers and students reach the learning objectives. Moreover, applying suitable strategies can increase students' motivation during the writing learning process (Astrini, Ratminingsih, & Utami, 2020).

Teaching strategies refer to the methods or approaches used by teachers to support the learning process and help students achieve their learning objectives (Paragae, 2023). In line with this definition, teaching strategies can be understood as planned and organized methods used by teachers to manage instructional activities so that learning goals can be achieved effectively.

Writing

Writing is one of the four skills in English that are important to master. Writing skill is very important because it is an integral part of learning. Writing is recognized as a productive skill in English language teaching, highlighting the importance of students' ability to express ideas through written communication (Indriyani & Dwinalida, 2025). Writing is a way of expressing ideas, emotions, and experiences through written language. Writing skills must continue to be honed so that students are skilled in writing (Suteja & Setiawan, 2022). Hyland, (1996) as cited in Rashid, Ye, Hui, Li, & Shunting, (2022), explained that writing is a way of sharing personal thoughts or experiences with others through writing. Nunan (1989) states that writing is not an activity that comes naturally; unlike speaking, people do not automatically acquire the ability to write but must learn it through practice and instruction (Rashid, M. H., Hui, Li, & Shunting, 2022).

Teaching Writing

According to Smith (1963) as cited in Rajagopalan, (2019), teaching can be understood as a system of actions that involves an agent, a goal to be achieved, and a particular situation. This situation consists of two sets of factors: those beyond the teacher's control, such as class size, student characteristics, and physical facilities, and those that can be adjusted, including teaching techniques and instructional strategies (Rajagopalan, 2019). Teaching refers to the various processes and activities intended to help learners acquire knowledge, skills, and understanding across all levels of education (Ayua, 2017). Meanwhile, according to Siddiq (2013) as cited in Indrilla & Ciptaningrum, (2018), writing is a means of expressing one's ideas and emotions through visible symbols that can be understood not only by the writer but also by others. Teaching writing can be summarized as the process of helping learners develop the knowledge and skills needed to express their ideas and emotions clearly in written form so that their messages can be understood by others. In the writing classroom, teachers are required to choose effective strategies, learning resources, and supplementary materials that facilitate the teaching and learning process for both teachers and students (Rianti, Hardi, Afriyeni, & Rasyidah, 2022). The aim of language teachers in teaching writing is to help students produce written English that is fluent, clear, accurate, and contextually appropriate (Ma'rufah, Muflihah, & Awaliyah, 2021).

Research Method

This research uses qualitative approach. According to Fiantika, et al. (2022), Qualitative research is a descriptive study that focuses on analysis. It pays close attention to the subject's point of view, the process involved, and the meaning that emerges from the situation being studied. This study is a field

study with a descriptive qualitative methods. The reason for using a descriptive qualitative design is to provide a detailed and comprehensive explanation of the teacher strategies used in teaching writing and to identify the challenges faced by teachers during the writing instruction for ninth grade students at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Purwokerto. This research aims to obtain data and explore the various writing strategies employed by the teacher, as well as the challenges that arise throughout the teaching process.

This research was conducted at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Purwokerto, with the English teacher and ninth grade students serving as the participants. The school is located at Jl. Gerilya Barat Tanjung, Purwokerto Selatan 53143, Banyumas, Central Java. The reasons for conducting the research at this school because SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Purwokerto provides a suitable environment for observing the implementation of various teacher strategies in teaching writing, particularly for ninth grade students. Furthermore, the writing scores of Grade 9A are noticeably higher than their speaking scores, making the class suitable for the study.

The subject of this research is Mrs. U, the English teacher at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Purwokerto, who serves as the main informant. She provides insights into the strategies used in teaching writing and the challenges she faces during the teaching process. The students of class 9A were observed to provide contextual information about the classroom environment and learning activities.

In conducting research, researchers use observation, interviews, and documentation as data collection techniques. In this study, the researcher used non-participant observation. Non-participant observation is a form of observation where the observer is not involved in the activities her observes. Based on this, the researcher observed the various strategies used by the teacher in teaching writing and the challenges encountered in applying those strategies for ninth-grade students at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Purwokerto. This research carried out in 4 meetings. The research period spanned from October to November 2025. In conducting this research, the researcher applied the theories of Romiszowski (1984), Spencer & Kagan (1994) and Ontario (2005), regarding types of teaching strategies. Observation checklists and field notes were used as the research instruments. The observation checklist was used to record the types of teaching strategies applied by the teacher during the lessons. Meanwhile, field notes were used to capture the challenges faced by the teacher during the lesson and important details that were not included in the checklist, such as notable events, student-teacher interactions, and classroom dynamics. Field notes also helped the researcher recall observations accurately when compiling the research report.

Table 1. Observation schedule

No	Date	Activity
1	Monday, 27 October 2025	Observation 1
2	Monday, 3 November 2025	Observation 2
3	Wednesday, 12 November 2025	Observation 3
4	Friday, 14 November 2025	Observation 4

In this study, the researcher used semi-structured interview guidelines as an interview instrument. The researcher interviewed the teacher Mrs. U who served as the English Teacher for ninth grade students at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Purwokerto. During the interview process, the teacher was asked 9 questions related to the strategies applied in the teaching writing and the challenges she faced while teaching writing.

The researcher collected various documents, such as lesson plans to identify the instructional design and learning objectives in teaching writing, students' writing assignments and performance records to provide evidence of students' progress and outcomes, as well as photos and recordings related to classroom writing activities.

The collected documents and records served as the foundation for the subsequent analysis. According to Miles and Huberman (1994) as cited in Sugiyono (2022), there are several steps in data analysis, including: Data reduction, Data Display, and Conclusion Drawing and verification. Based on this thorough review, the researcher then concentrated on identifying the teaching strategies applied by the teacher and the challenges encountered in implementing those strategies. Unnecessary information was discarded to ensure that the conclusions drawn were directly aligned with the research focus. The reduced data were then organized systematically so that the results could be seen more clearly and

could support the next stage of the research. If the data consistently support the findings, the conclusions are considered valid and relevant to the research objectives.

Findings and discussions

This section discusses the findings of the research on the implementation of the writing program to improve students' English skills at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Purwokerto. The discussion connects the results of observations with Romiszowski's theory (1984), Spencer and Kagan's theory (1994), and Ontario's framework (2005) on guided writing. These findings are also compared with other relevant studies and theories to provide a comprehensive perspective on the program's effectiveness and challenges.

Based on observations, interviews, and documentation conducted in class 9A, the researcher identified three main strategies used by the teacher in writing instruction, namely guided writing, cooperative learning, and expository learning strategies as an effective strategy. As stated by the teacher during the interview.

"...In teaching writing, I use Guided Writing, Cooperative Learning, and Expository Learning Strategies. I use guided writing because it helps direct students through examples, patterns, or models so they have a clear picture before writing. Cooperative learning is applied because my students tend to learn better in groups where they can discuss and exchange ideas. Meanwhile, expository learning is used when I need to explain concepts or grammar directly so they can understand the basics first."

In the first meeting, the teacher implemented guided writing strategy. During the main activities, students were asked to explore recount texts by searching for definitions, functions, and examples online. They examined model texts collaboratively, discussed their characteristics, and analyzed the use of simple past tense. In the first step, Ontario (2005) states that students begin by exploring the focus skill through examining and discussing model texts. This step was implemented in the classroom, as the students were asked to search for a recount text on the internet and discuss it within their groups. Through this activity, they examined the content and structure of the text before completing the worksheet.

The second step, in which students work in groups to compose a text using the focus skill, was only partially applied. Ontario (2005) emphasizes that students ideally create their own text based on the skill being taught. However, in this lesson, the students did not compose an original recount text. Instead, they filled in the worksheet by rewriting the structural elements of the recount text they found on the internet. Thus, the activity remained within the framework of identifying and reconstructing text structure rather than composing a new text.

The third step, where the teacher guides students as they write their own texts independently, was also not fully implemented. According to Ontario (2005), the teacher should provide guidance during the students' independent writing process. In this case, the teacher only assisted students who were confused about the worksheet or task instructions, since the answers could be directly obtained from the internet. There was no guided support for producing an independent written text. The fourth step, in which students share their writing with the teacher or classmates, was carried out in a simple form. Students submitted their completed worksheets to the teacher at the end of the lesson. Because the class time was limited, the teacher reviewed their work in the next meeting.

In conclusion, the teacher implemented several parts of the Guided Writing steps by Ontario (2005), particularly in helping students understand the structure of recount texts through group work and providing support during the activity. The teacher guided students as they analyzed and completed the worksheet, monitored their progress, and clarified instructions when needed. However, the steps that involve composing a new text and guiding students in developing their own writing were not carried out, as the activity focused more on identifying and organizing the elements of an existing text rather than producing original writing.

In the second meeting, the teacher used cooperative learning strategy, specifically employing the Round Table type. Kagan (2011) states that when the Round Table structure is used, roles or group processing are unnecessary because the structure balances participation, allowing everyone to take part almost equally. From the findings, the activity reflected the four stages of Spencer & Kagan's (1994)

cooperative learning model, specifically through the Round Table structure described by Kagan (2011). First, the students worked collaboratively in small groups using the same groupings as in the previous meeting. This in line with the first step of Spencer & Kagan (1994)'s model, where students work collaboratively in groups. Slavin (1995) also state that Cooperative learning strategies refer to various teaching methods in which students work in small groups to help one another learn academic content. Kessler (1992) highlights that cooperative learning is an approach centered on organized group activities, where interaction between students is a key component. In cooperative classrooms, students are expected to help each other, discuss and argue with each other, assess each other's understanding of the topic, and fill in gaps in each other's learning (Bilen & Tavi, 2015). This familiar grouping allowed students to communicate effectively, share ideas, and participate actively. In their groups, they reviewed their previous recount texts and discussed key details, such as events, time, and place, that could be used to create questions.

Next, students took turns contributing questions to a shared sheet of paper. Each student wrote one question at a time while the others discussed which part of their text matched the appropriate WH question type. For example, a sentence like "I visited the museum last Sunday" could generate questions such as "When did you visit the museum?" or "Where did you go last Sunday?" This activity fully reflects the second step of Spencer and Kagan, which emphasizes taking turns to contribute written responses or ideas to a group project. Kagan (2011) structure ensure that all group members participate equally. By rotating contributions, all students participated equally, checked each other's work, and collaborated to ensure the questions were clear and accurate.

Second, students took turns contributing written responses. Each student wrote one interrogative sentence on the shared sheet of paper based on the results of their group discussion. This aligns with Spencer and Kagan's second step, where students contribute sequentially. Kagan (2011) notes that the Round Table structure balances participation so that every student contributes equally. Third, the teacher provided a task that allowed for multiple possible answers, which aligns with Spencer and Kagan's third step. Students created 5W+1H questions based on the recount text, a task that required them to analyze different elements such as time, place, participants, and reasons. This variety encouraged students to think carefully and consider multiple possibilities before deciding on the most suitable question. The fourth step, in which students pass a sheet of paper and take turns writing their contributions, was fully implemented. After rewriting their recount text, the students wrote the 5W + 1H questions and answers on a sheet of paper. Each student contributed by writing at least one question, and the paper circulated within the group as members took turns adding their work. This corresponds to Spencer and Kagan's final step, where group members collectively develop a unified product. As noted by Bilen and Tavi (2015), such cooperative structures help students participate actively, build confidence, and engage more meaningfully with the learning process. Through these stages, the activity successfully incorporated all components of Spencer and Kagan's cooperative learning model, with the Round Table structure helping ensure balanced participation and collaborative accountability.

In both the third and fourth meetings, the teacher consistently applied the expository learning strategy to teach the present perfect tense. The implementation of the expository learning strategy in the third and fourth meetings demonstrated a clear and consistent progression through the stages of Romiszowski (1984)'s framework. The first step was clearly implemented in both sessions, as the teacher presented the material through structured explanations, relevant examples, and supporting vocabulary that helped students grasp the present perfect tense. The teacher also reviewed the previous lesson at the beginning of each meeting, which aligned with her stated intention to strengthen students' readiness by helping them recall prior knowledge before learning new concepts.

The second step was also achieved in both sessions, as the teacher continuously provided clarification and corrective feedback whenever students made errors. Mispronunciations, incorrect verb forms, and structural mistakes were corrected directly, and the teacher ensured students understood the reason behind each correction. This activity allowed the teacher to check students' comprehension and provide immediate clarification, which corresponds to Romiszowski (1984)'s second step of administering mastery checks and ensuring understanding. This immediate clarification prevented misunderstandings and supported students in improving the accuracy of their work.

The third step, which focuses on giving students opportunities to apply the material through practice of increasing complexity, appeared differently across the two meetings. In the third session,

this step was partially realized because students practiced only by creating positive sentences. In contrast, it was fully achieved in the fourth session, where students practiced constructing negative and interrogative forms after observing the teacher's demonstration. The teacher supervised their work closely and provided support when needed, allowing students to apply the rules more confidently.

The fourth step, which emphasizes meaningful and authentic application of the material, could not be fully implemented during classroom time in either session due to time limitations. Instead, the teacher addressed this step by assigning homework that required students to write interrogative sentences using the present perfect tense. This task encouraged independent practice and allowed students to apply the structure outside the classroom, even though real communicative contexts were not explored during the lesson.

Overall, the teacher's movement from explanation to guided practice and individual application was consistent with her stated teaching intention that expository instruction is used when foundational concepts and grammar rules need to be conveyed clearly. The consistent use of this strategy across both sessions helped students build a structured understanding of the present perfect tense, increased their confidence in using it, and highlighted the need for more opportunities to practice the tense in real-life contexts.

During the teaching of writing, the teacher faced several challenges that required careful handling to keep the learning process running effectively. In general, challenges in teaching writing often arise when classroom instruction does not fully engage students in developing their writing skills, making it difficult for teachers to balance explanation with practice. This aligns with Othman (2006) theory as cited in Adam, Abis, & Bantulu, (2021) which state that a key challenge in teaching writing occurs when the instruction does not actively develop students' writing skills.

One of the most prominent difficulties was students' limited vocabulary. Bilen & Tavi, (2015) state that teaching vocabulary is a crucial aspect of language instruction, as the words in a sentence are essential for conveying meaning. The teacher noted that this issue often slowed the lesson because she needed additional time to explain meanings and guide students step by step in constructing sentences. To address this problem, she used several approaches. The teacher provided repeated explanations and encouraged students to try constructing sentences on their own before she offered clarification. She also introduced new vocabulary items such as verbs in V1 and V3 forms or words needed to form question sentences to help students expand their vocabulary gradually. This addition of vocabulary was intended to give students more lexical options so they could express their ideas more easily and understand the structures being taught.

Another challenge was insufficient time, which often made it difficult to complete all planned activities in one meeting. Teachers also noted that incorporating writing tasks into their lessons was challenging because the curriculum was already full and the time allocated for writing instruction was limited (Endarwati, Anwar, & Maruf, 2023). To maintain continuity in learning, the teacher asked students to complete unfinished exercises at home so they could continue practicing even outside the classroom.

"...In teaching writing, the most frequent challenge I encounter is students' lack of vocabulary. Because their vocabulary is limited, they struggle to construct sentences, develop ideas, and understand the examples I provide. When teaching grammar to support their writing, many of them are still confused about choosing the right words or determining the correct sentence forms. In addition, the learning time is often insufficient."

Classroom condition also influenced the flow of writing lessons. Class condition refers to the situation in which most Indonesian classrooms are large, containing a high number of students (Hidayati, 2018). Some students were noisy, sleepy, or easily distracted. To handle classroom condition, she gave gentle reminders, paused instruction to regain attention, and occasionally used short ice breaking activities to help students refocus. For students who appeared sleepy, the teacher woke them gently and reminded them about classroom expectations.

Differences in students' abilities required additional adjustments. Teachers must differentiate their instructions to address the diverse needs and abilities of their students, which requires careful planning and appropriate allocation of resources (Endarwati, Anwar, & Maruf, 2023). The teacher often looked for teaching materials online and simplified them to suit the learners' proficiency levels. She

grouped faster and slower learners together to encourage peer support during writing activities. Additional explanations were provided to those who needed further help. To ensure that all students had the opportunity to complete their work, she accepted late submissions for one to two weeks, giving slower learners enough time without feeling pressured.

In the context of this study, the teacher did not encounter problems related to developing students' writing skills, using technology, accommodating different learning needs, experimenting with new strategies, or depending on only one method. These aspects did not become challenges because the teacher had already developed effective ways to manage them. The teacher demonstrated confidence, flexibility, and familiarity with diverse instructional techniques, allowing those potential challenges to be handled smoothly.

However, several challenges still emerged during writing instruction. The teacher faced difficulties caused by students' limited vocabulary, which often affected their ability to express ideas clearly. Differences in students' ability levels also required her to provide differing amounts of support. Additionally, managing a large class made it harder to offer individual guidance, and insufficient time in each lesson limited opportunities for comprehensive explanations or extended writing practice. From the wide range of challenges described in the literature, only a few were actually found in this classroom. The findings indicate that four of the commonly reported issues did emerge, while the others did not appear because the teacher handled those areas well.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the English teacher at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Purwokerto employed three main strategies to support students' writing development, namely guided writing, cooperative learning, and expository learning. Each strategy was selected intentionally to address different learning needs and stages of the writing process. Guided writing provided structured support through models and examples, enabling students to understand text organization before attempting independent writing. Cooperative learning encouraged active participation, peer collaboration, and shared idea construction, which strengthened both comprehension and confidence. Expository learning allowed the teacher to deliver clear and systematic explanations of grammatical concepts, ensuring that students built a strong foundation before applying the rules in their writing. The teacher's use of guided writing, cooperative learning, and expository learning shows a thoughtful effort to support students at different stages of the writing process.

The findings of this study show that although the literature mentions many possible challenges in teaching writing, only four of them actually appeared in this classroom: students' limited vocabulary, differences in their ability levels, managing a large class, and the insufficient time in each lesson. These factors sometimes made it difficult for the teacher to give individual support or help students express their ideas clearly. Meanwhile, difficulties related to developing students' writing skills, using technology, addressing varied learning needs, lack of confidence in trying new method, or depending on a single teaching method did not become problems because the teacher was confident and flexible in managing those aspects. Overall, the results suggest that even though some challenges naturally arise during writing instruction, many potential problems can be reduced when the teacher is able to adapt and respond effectively to the needs of the classroom.

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