Comparative Analysis of Socio-affective Strategies in ESL Speaking and Writing: Implications for University Students

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the comparative use of socio-affective strategies (SAS) in ESL speaking and writing classrooms at a public university in Malaysia. Using a quantitative survey design, data from 130 undergraduates were collected through an adapted version of Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. A priori power analysis confirmed the adequacy of the sample size, ensuring reliable statistical validity. Results revealed that while most socio-affective strategies were employed similarly across both skills, task-specific differences emerged. Students reported significantly greater nervousness awareness in speaking ($d = 0.502$), whereas writing showed stronger use of reflective self-expression strategies ($d = 0.440$). These findings demonstrate that socio-affective strategies are not applied uniformly but vary according to the demands of each skill. The study extends Oxford's framework to a comparative skill-based context and provides context-specific insights from Malaysian university students. Speaking requires immediate anxiety regulation and peer interaction, while writing demands sustained motivation, self-monitoring, and delayed feedback. Such contrasts highlight the importance of recognizing socio-affective strategies as dynamic and task-sensitive rather than static across language skills. Pedagogically, the results highlight the need for tailored teaching interventions that integrate socio-affective support into ESL classrooms. For speaking, this may involve peer rehearsal, relaxation strategies, and real-time feedback; for writing, reflective practices, journaling, and scaffolded goal setting can sustain motivation and confidence. Overall, the study reinforces the value of socio-affective strategies in enhancing both linguistic performance and emotional resilience by offering practical guidance for improving ESL learning outcomes at the tertiary level.

Keywords— socio-affective strategies, ESL speaking, ESL writing, comparative analysis, tertiary education

INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized world, gaining mastery of English as a second language (ESL) is essential for academic success and career advancement. Effective communication in English is not only a basic requirement in educational settings but also a main qualification in professional and social contexts. However, acquiring proficiency in a second language presents numerous social and emotional challenges for learners (Chen et al., 2022; Soomro, 2022; Mardani et al., 2024; Rui & Liu, 2024). Among the strategies that ESL students use to navigate these challenges, socio-affective strategies (SAS) play a particularly crucial role. Socio-affective strategies help learners regulate their emotions, sustain motivation, and engage in social interactions to support their learning (Sumang et al., 2022; Hernandez & Mejía, 2022; Simion, 2023; Zhang & Dong, 2022). They encompass emotional regulation (e.g., reducing anxiety and building self-confidence), motivational support (e.g., positive self-talk and goal setting), and social interaction (e.g., seeking help from peers or instructors). Research has demonstrated that socio-affective strategies significantly affect students' language learning experiences by shaping both their performance and overall involvement in the learning process (Jihan et al., 2023; Shofiya & Basuni, 2023; Wang et al., 2024; Arcipe & Balones, 2023; Ceylan, 2022; Alqarni, 2023).

Although socio-affective strategies are recognized as important, most research has concentrated on their use in

speaking with comparatively little attention given to their role in writing contexts. Previous studies have also tended to examine them in isolation rather than comparing their application across different language skills. Yet such a comparison is important because speaking and writing, while both productive skills, involve distinct socio-affective demands. Speaking typically requires spontaneous interaction and real-time anxiety regulation whereas writing is often solitary and reflective, leading to sustained motivation and delayed feedback. Without a comprehensive understanding of how socio-affective strategies are utilized across these tasks, educators lack a robust foundation for tailoring language instruction. This issue is particularly relevant in Malaysia where English is commonly taught as a second language (ESL) rather than as a foreign language (EFL). English is widely used in academic settings, formal assessments, administrative communication, and is increasingly important in professional and social environments. Unlike EFL contexts, Malaysian learners are often required to use English both within and outside the classroom, as stated in Razawi and Mohamad (2024). This distinction highlights the need to investigate socio-affective strategy use in real-life communicative settings beyond formal instruction.

Accordingly, this study investigates how socio-affective strategies are employed in Malaysian ESL speaking and writing classrooms to address both theoretical and pedagogical gaps. More specifically, the study examines the degree to which Malaysian ESL university students use socio-affective strategies in each skill domain, the types of strategies they prioritize, and the teaching implications for classroom practice. By identifying contexts in which students require greater support, this research provides guidance for educators and curriculum designers seeking to enhance ESL practices at the tertiary level. Socio-affective strategies have the potential to boost confidence, reduce anxiety, and sustain motivation, thereby improving students' proficiency and academic performance (Hernandez & Mejía, 2022; Sumang et al., 2022; Esquivel et al., 2023; Stander, 2022). Essentially, this study contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the socio-affective dimensions of language learning and their implications for advancing ESL teaching and learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Socio-Affective Strategies in SLA

Socio-affective strategies (Oxford, 1990) are essential in language learning as they enable students to regulate emotions, sustain motivation, and engage with peers and instructors in ways that enhance performance. In speaking contexts, anxiety has been identified as one of the most common barriers with learners often fearing mistakes or negative evaluation. Strategies such as relaxation, positive self-talk, and desensitisation have been shown to lower the affective filter and increase oral fluency (Hernandez & Mejía, 2022; Yildirim & Atay, 2024).

Motivation is another cornerstone of socio-affective strategy use. Learners employ self-encouragement, goal setting, and persistence strategies to overcome difficulties. While speaking learners often draw on immediate self-talk and peer affirmation to remain engaged in real-time exchanges (Agustiawati, 2021; Griffiths & Slavkov, 2021), writing learners rely more on long-term persistence supported by reflective self-monitoring and journaling (Chen, 2023; Jin, 2023). In both skills, motivational strategies provide resilience against disengagement though their time scales and applications differ.

Social interaction further complements emotional and motivational strategies. In speaking, students benefit from immediate feedback, clarification requests, and peer practice that reduce nervousness and boost confidence (Maulida et al., 2024; Dogan et al., 2023). Writing learners, however, tend to experience delayed but equally important support through peer review, teacher comments, and collaborative editing (Lineback & Holbrook, 2023; Wijaya, 2024).

Task-Specific Theoretical Justification for SAS in Speaking vs Writing

Although socio-affective strategies are widely applied, their impact varies across different productive skills. Speaking tasks are spontaneous and demand real-time processing which makes them particularly vulnerable to anxiety and emotional stress. According to Krashen's (1985) affective filter hypothesis, high anxiety and low confidence can block language input and reduce fluency. Thus, learners must deploy strategies such as

relaxation, self-encouragement, or peer support at the moment of interaction to maintain oral performance. Writing tasks, in contrast, are delayed and reflective, allowing learners more time to process emotions and employ strategies such as journaling, goal setting, or seeking feedback after task completion. Zimmerman's (2000) self-regulated learning model supports this distinction by emphasizing that writing involves extended phases of planning, monitoring, and reflection where affective resilience is crucial.

This distinction highlights the pedagogical need to examine socio-affective strategies in speaking and writing comparatively. By identifying which strategies are shared and which are skill-dependent, the study contributes to extending Oxford's (1990) taxonomy in ways that are sensitive to task-specific demands. Such an approach provides both theoretical clarification and practical recommendations for ESL classrooms where speaking and writing instruction must address different socio-affective realities.
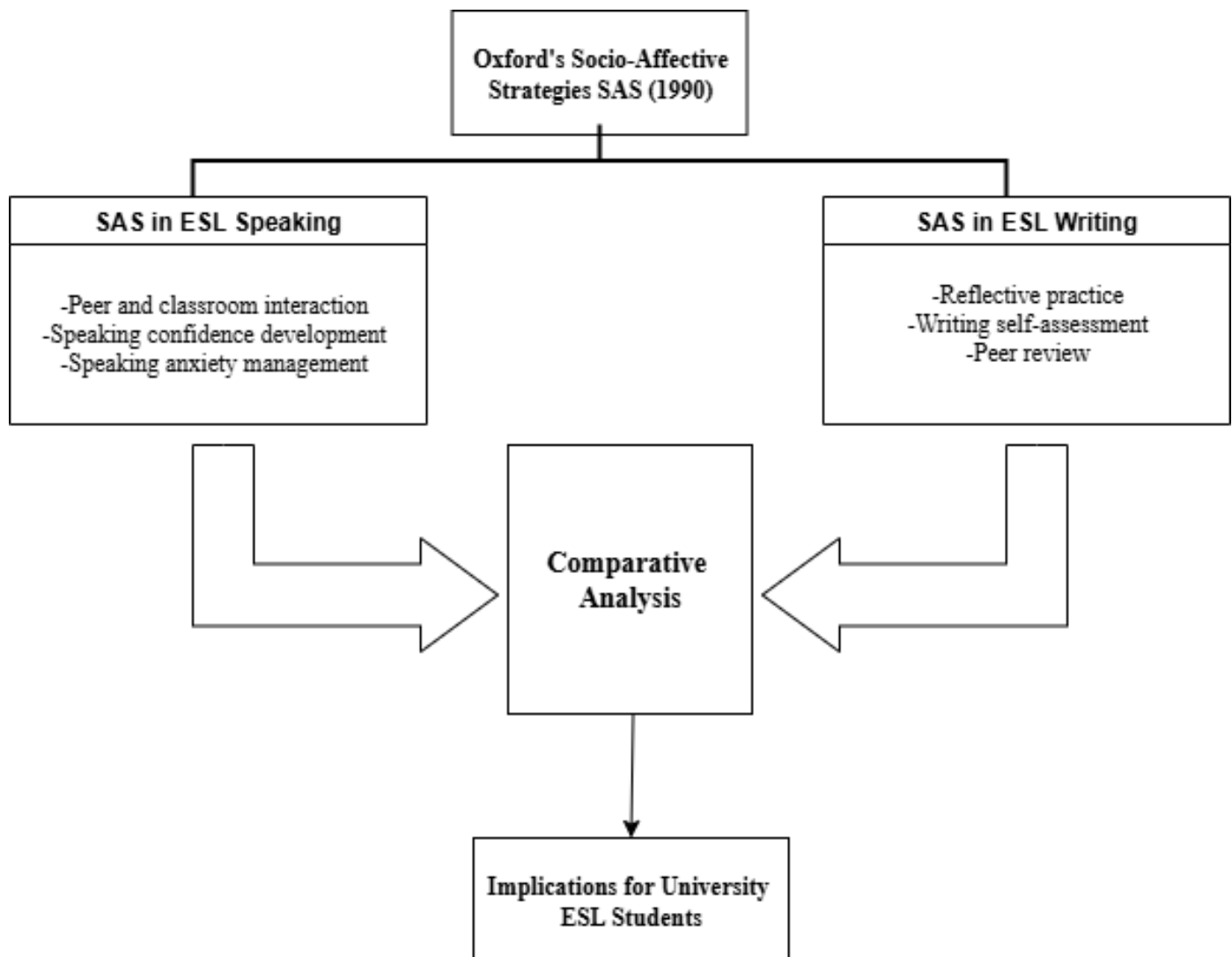

Fig. 1 Conceptual Framework of Socio-Affective Strategies (SAS) in Speaking and Writing Tasks Based on Oxford's SAS (1990)

As shown in Fig. 1, this study reinterprets Oxford's (1990) socio-affective strategy framework by emphasizing the distinct ways these strategies are employed in speaking and writing tasks. Unlike Oxford's original model, which presents socio-affective strategies as a single and cohesive category, the present research reveals that learners adjust their use of such strategies according to the specific demands of each task such as spontaneity, real-time interaction, performance pressure, or delayed feedback. The visual model introduces a task-sensitive perspective for understanding socio-affective strategy use, thereby extending Oxford's taxonomy and offering educators a more precise basis for instructional design.

Accordingly, the study seeks to enhance theoretical insights and guide pedagogical approaches by examining how socio-affective strategies are applied across the two productive language skills of speaking and writing in the ESL learning environment. By exploring these dimensions, research can provide a deeper understanding of how ESL students use socio-affective strategies in speaking and writing. Educators can leverage these insights to develop targeted strategies that help students navigate the socio-affective challenges of language learning and ultimately enhance their overall proficiency and engagement. Therefore, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the most frequently used socio-affective strategies in ESL speaking and writing classrooms?
2. Are there significant differences in the frequency and use of socio-affective strategies between speaking and writing?
3. How do differences in socio-affective strategies use between speaking and writing tasks inform practical recommendations for enhancing ESL instruction?

By highlighting these distinctions, this study seeks to offer valuable insights into how socio-affective strategies can be utilized to strengthen ESL students' speaking and writing abilities. The results can support educators in designing focused interventions such as strategy-based training programs that help students manage their emotions, maintain motivation, and effectively engage in social support across both productive language skills.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative research design with a comparative survey approach. The comparative approach was employed to examine the differences in socio-affective strategies used by ESL students in two distinct skill areas which were speaking and writing. The main objective of this study was to identify whether students used different socio-affective strategies for each of these tasks and to assess the influence of these strategies on their overall ESL speaking and writing experience. This survey design was appropriate for gathering self-reported data from a large sample, allowing a comprehensive analysis of the strategies employed by university level ESL students.

The participants of this study were 130 ESL students with the mean age of 21.4 years who enrolled in two courses of different levels in a Malaysian public university. Group A consisted of 65 students enrolled in an ESL Speaking course, and Group B consisted of 65 students enrolled in an ESL Writing course. All the participants were degree-level undergraduates with an intermediate level of English ability, operationally defined as B1-B2 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This level was operationally verified by their academic program admission scores and the institution's placement tests. The participants were selected using purposive sampling in order to facilitate skill-specific grouping as well as with regard to the comparative aims of the study.

A priori power analysis was conducted using G*Power to determine the required sample size for an independent t-test comparing two groups. With a Cohen's d effect size of 0.50, an alpha level of 0.05, and a desired statistical power of 0.80, the analysis determined that a minimum of 51 participants per group (102 in total) was needed to detect moderate effect sizes (Murayama, Usami, & Sakaki, 2022). The allocation ratio was set to 1, ensuring equal group sizes (Thibault, Zavalis, Malicki, & Pedder, 2024). The achieved power was 0.81, indicating that the study had a slightly higher probability of detecting true effects (McKay, Bacelar, & Carter, 2023). The critical t-value was 1.66, with 100 degrees of freedom, confirming that the sample size was sufficient for robust statistical comparisons (Haile, 2023).

Data for this study were collected through self-administered questionnaires distributed via Google Forms. Each group completed a distinct set of 12-item questionnaires designed to assess the socio-affective strategies used in either speaking or writing tasks. The questionnaires included items measuring social and affective supports. Affective support focused on strategies used to manage stress and anxiety during speaking or writing tasks, and strategies used for maintaining persistence and engagement in the face of challenges. Social support assessed how students sought feedback or assistance from peers or lecturers during speaking or writing activities. The speaking group received a questionnaire tailored to speaking tasks, while the writing group received a

questionnaire focused on writing tasks.

The questionnaires were adapted from Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) and customized for the speaking and writing contexts. A Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) was used to assess the frequency with which students employed each strategy. The instrument was piloted before full data collection to ensure clarity and reliability. The adapted version of Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) used in this study has been included in the appendix for reference and replication purposes.

The responses collected were analyzed using SPSS Version 29. Descriptive statistics were conducted to summarize the responses for each group including means and standard deviations for each item on the questionnaires. An independent samples t-test was performed to compare the use of socio-affective strategies between the speaking and writing groups. This test determined whether there were significant differences in emotional regulation, motivation, and social support between the two groups. By examining the use of socio-affective strategies in both speaking and writing, this study provided valuable insights into how these strategies differed across language tasks and informed ESL teaching practices.

RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the study based on the research questions. The results were organized according to the socio-affective strategies used by ESL students in speaking and writing classrooms. Descriptive statistics including mean and standard deviation values were reported to be the most commonly used strategies in each skill.

TABLE I Reliability Analysis of Socio-affective Strategies Scale

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Socio-affective strategies in Speaking	.883	12
Socio-affective strategies in Writing	.918	12

The reliability analysis of the socio-affective strategies questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which demonstrated high internal consistency for both skill-specific questionnaires. The speaking questionnaire comprising 12 items yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .883, indicating strong reliability (Willems, Verbestel, Calders, Lapauw, & De Craemer, 2023). Similarly, the writing questionnaire, also consisting of 12 items achieved an even higher reliability coefficient of .918, further supporting the internal consistency of the questionnaire (Oo, Khine, & San, 2022). These results confirmed the questionnaires' robustness in measuring socio-affective strategies across both speaking and writing contexts.

RQ1 Results

To address RQ1, this study examined descriptive statistics across 12 socio-affective strategies items grouped by skill (speaking vs. writing) and strategy type (social vs. affective). The results are presented in Tables 2 to 5, each followed by interpretive commentary.

TABLE II Speaking – Social Strategies

Socio-affective Strategies Item	Mean	SD
Learn about English-speaking cultures	4.06	0.90
Ask lecturer for correction	4.02	0.93
Ask lecturer for help	3.97	0.88

Practice with peers	3.95	0.93
Ask lecturer to slow down/clarify	3.78	1.07
Use English when asking questions	3.78	0.88
Talk to friends about speaking feelings	3.60	1.10

The results showed that students relied heavily on lecturer-related strategies such as learning about English-speaking cultures (M = 4.06) and asking lecturers for correction (M = 4.02). These preferences suggest that students placed strong value on formal authority for feedback and cultural enrichment. Peer practice (M = 3.95) also ranked highly indicating a balance between institutional guidance and collaborative learning. An anomaly appears in asking lecturers to slow down/clarify (M = 3.78), which, despite being a support strategy, scored lower perhaps because students may hesitate to interrupt classroom flow. Pedagogically, this highlights the need for lecturers to proactively provide clarification opportunities and encourage students to request adjustments without fear of disrupting lessons.

TABLE III Speaking – Affective Strategies

Socio-affective Strategies Item	Mean	SD
Self-encouragement despite fear	4.17	0.78
Notice nervousness when speaking	4.12	0.94
Try to relax when afraid of speaking	4.06	0.79
Self-reward for speaking well	3.92	1.04
Keep a speaking diary	2.88	1.26

Affective strategies were clearly central to speaking. Self-encouragement despite fear (M = 4.17) and noticing nervousness when speaking (M = 4.12) ranked highest, reinforcing that learners are acutely aware of affective barriers in oral performance. The consistent use of relaxation (M = 4.06) further demonstrates attempts at real-time emotional regulation. However, keeping a speaking diary (M = 2.88) was strikingly underused, contrasting with higher scores for writing diaries (see Table 5). This suggests that speaking learners prefer immediate coping strategies rather than reflective and delayed approaches. Instructionally, lecturers should consider integrating brief reflective activities (e.g., post-presentation self-notes) to help learners build longer-term affective resilience in oral communication.

TABLE IV Writing – Social Strategies

Socio-affective Strategies Item	Mean	SD
Explore culture through reading/writing	4.03	0.90
Ask lecturer for writing feedback	4.02	0.72
Use English when asking questions	4.00	0.81
Ask for help from lecturer	3.94	0.79
Ask lecturer to clarify instructions	3.91	0.84
Practice writing with peers	3.69	0.93
Discuss challenges with friends	3.65	0.87

Writing learners also prioritized lecturer support, with asking for feedback (M = 4.02) and clarification (M = 3.91) among the most frequently employed strategies. Interestingly, using English when asking questions (M = 4.00) shows a deliberate effort to embed target language use even during help-seeking. Peer practice (M = 3.69)

and discussing challenges with friends (M = 3.65) scored lower than in speaking (see Table 2), reflecting writing's more individual nature. However, this reliance on lecturers may also signal a lack of peer-review culture in writing classes. Pedagogically, this highlights the importance of structured peer-feedback tasks to reduce overdependence on lecturers and promote collaborative confidence building.

TABLE V Writing – Affective Strategies

Socio-affective Strategies Item	Mean	SD
Self-encouragement despite fear	4.14	0.61
Try to relax when anxious about writing	4.00	0.73
Self-reward for completing task	3.88	0.98
Notice nervousness when writing	3.63	1.01
Keep a writing journal	3.42	1.20

Similar to speaking, self-encouragement (M = 4.14) and relaxation (M = 4.00) were prominent strategies in writing. However, an interesting divergence emerges in keeping a writing journal (M = 3.42), which scored notably higher than the speaking diary strategy (M = 2.88). This anomaly aligns with writing's reflective nature that allows students to process emotions through extended self-monitoring. At the same time, noticing nervousness when writing (M = 3.63) was lower than its speaking equivalent suggesting that writing elicits less immediate anxiety. Instructionally, journaling can be promoted as a practical affective scaffold for writing learners to reinforce resilience and self-awareness over time.

Overall, self-encouragement emerged as the most frequently used socio-affective strategy across both speaking and writing, reflecting students' strong reliance on positive self-talk to sustain engagement. Yet the comparative analysis highlights clear skill-based differences. Speaking tasks demanded real-time regulation of anxiety and immediate interaction with peers and lecturers, while writing tasks fostered resilience through delayed feedback and reflective journaling. This contrast shows that learners are not uniformly socio-affective in strategy use but instead adapt to the immediacy or reflectiveness of the task. These results confirm the task-dependent application of socio-affective strategies and suggest that ESL lecturers should tailor support accordingly. Lecturers can support learners by embedding short relaxation and peer rehearsal activities before speaking tasks, and by promoting reflective practices such as journaling and structured self-monitoring for writing tasks.

RQ2 Results

In order to respond to RQ2, independent samples t-tests were conducted on all 12 socio-affective strategy items. These analyses examined whether students employed certain strategies more frequently in one task than the other. For practical significance, Cohen's d values were also calculated and interpreted using Sawilowsky's (2009) benchmarks.

Generally, most socio-affective strategies were employed at comparable levels in speaking and writing, suggesting a broad consistency in students' affective engagement across tasks. However, two strategies stood out with statistically significant differences and moderate effect sizes. The first significant difference was for noticing nervousness or tense feeling. Students reported using this strategy more frequently in speaking (M = 4.12, SD = 0.94) than in writing (M = 3.63, SD = 1.01). This was statistically significant, t(198) = 2.86, p = .005, with a moderate effect size of d = 0.502. This finding highlights the immediacy and visibility if oral communication where performance in front of an audience heightens awareness of anxiety and compels students to regulate emotions in real time. The second significant difference was for keeping a diary to express feelings which was more common in writing (M = 3.42, SD = 1.20) than in speaking (M = 2.88, SD = 1.26). This difference was also statistically significant, t(198) = –2.48, p = .014, with a moderate effect size of d = 0.440. This pattern reflects the reflective nature of writing which allows learners to externalize emotions through journaling and longer-term self-monitoring. The remaining strategies including self-encouragement, relaxation,

seeking feedback from lecturers, and discussing feelings with peers did not differ significantly across tasks ($p >$ .05, Cohen's $d < 0.20$). This suggests that while many socio-affective strategies are transferable across speaking and writing, some are distinctly task-dependent.

Table 6 presents the two strategies with significant differences, alongside their means, t-values, p-values, and effect sizes.

TABLE VI Significant Differences in Socio-affective Strategies Use Between Speaking and Writing Tasks

Socio-affective strategies Item	Speaking Mean	Writing Mean	t(df)	p-value	Cohen's d	Effect Size
Noticing nervousness or tense feeling	4.12	3.63	2.86 (198)	.005	0.502	Moderate
Keeping a diary to express feelings	2.88	3.42	–2.48 (198)	.014	0.440	Moderate

These contrasts highlight that students adapt their socio-affective strategies to the temporal and social demands of each task. Oral communication requires immediate anxiety management and heightened self-awareness, while writing affords delayed reflection and affective journaling. Pedagogically, this suggests differentiated scaffolding where relaxation and peer rehearsal activities can be embedded in speaking instruction, while reflective journals and affective logs can be formalized in writing courses.

RQ3 Results

In order to respond to RQ3, this section interprets the comparative patterns of socio-affective strategy use and draws instructional implications. Effect size analysis provided a more nuanced picture of practical significance beyond p-values.

Cohen (1988) offers small ($d = 0.2$), moderate ($d = 0.5$), and large ($d = 0.8$) guidelines for effect size interpretation. However, as Anvari and Lakens (2020) point out, applied linguistics effect sizes must be interpreted contextually, not according to numerical benchmarks. Therefore, this study also employed Sawilowsky's (2009) more sensitive criteria, which describe values below 0.2 as "very small." Across the 12 strategies, most effect sizes were very small or small suggesting broad overlap in socio-affective strategy use across tasks. Examples include managing nervousness ($d = 0.079$), self-encouragement ($d = 0.043$), and rewarding oneself ($d = 0.040$), all of which showed negligible differences across skills. Two strategies, however, stood out with moderate effect sizes and pedagogical significance. Noticing nervousness ($d = 0.502$) confirmed that speaking learners are more attuned to immediate emotional tension, highlighting the need for real-time regulation strategies in oral tasks. Keeping a diary ($d = 0.440$) was more common in writing, supporting the integration of reflective journaling and emotional scaffolding into writing pedagogy. Other strategies, such as practising with peers ($d = 0.280$) or using English when asking questions ($d = 0.261$) showed only small effects, reinforcing the overall overlap but still offering nuance for refining classroom instruction.

Table 7 summarizes Cohen's d values and their interpretations across all strategies.

TABLE VII Summary of Cohen's d Calculations for Socio-Affective Strategies Items Across Speaking and Writing Tasks

Socio-affective Strategies Item	Cohen's d	Effect Size Interpretation (Sawilowsky, 2009)
Noticing Nervousness	0.502	Moderate
Keeping a Diary	0.440	Moderate
Practicing with Peers	0.280	Small
Using English When Asking Questions	0.261	Small

Asking Lecturer for Clarification	0.135	Very Small
Managing Nervousness	0.079	Very Small
Discussing Challenges with Friends	0.050	Very Small
Self-Encouragement	0.043	Very Small
Self-Reward	0.040	Very Small
Asking for Help from Lecturer	0.036	Very Small
Exploring English-Speaking Cultures	0.033	Very Small
Asking Lecturer for Feedback	0.000	No Effect

In sum, socio-affective strategies serve as a facilitative resource across both speaking and writing but their optimal application is task-sensitive. Speaking tasks benefit most from scaffolds that lower real-time anxiety (e.g., breathing, self-affirmations, peer rehearsal), while writing tasks are better supported through reflective practices (e.g., journaling, goal setting, structured feedback). Instructional design that aligns socio-affective support with these task-specific demands can strengthen learner motivation, emotional regulation, and fluency in both oral and written production.

DISCUSSION

Main Findings and Implications

This study reveals that socio-affective strategies significantly influenced ESL students' speaking and writing processes. While some strategies, like self-encouragement and seeking feedback, were consistently used in both areas, others varied depending on the task. Interestingly, students felt more nervous during speaking tasks than in writing, indicating that the demands of real-time communication require immediate emotional regulation (Hernandez & Mejía, 2022; Yildirim & Atay, 2024). In contrast, writing tasks were more closely linked to managing long-term motivation as students utilized reflective strategies such as journaling and structured feedback (Park, 2024; Ardika, 2023). The results also showed that students engaged in speaking tasks were more inclined to seek immediate social support from peers and instructors, while those working on writing tasks relied more on self-regulated strategies such as goal-setting and structured self-evaluation (Widyaningrum & Hartati, 2023; Zhang & Dong, 2022). Overall, the findings indicated that socio-affective strategy use is shaped by both the urgency of the task and the availability of external support, highlighting the task-sensitive nature of SAS in ESL learning.

Implications for University Students in ESL Classrooms

The distinction between speaking-specific and writing-specific strategies carries important implications for ESL university students. Speaking tasks often heighten anxiety, making it essential for lecturers to incorporate techniques such as relaxation exercises, self-encouragement, and structured peer discussions that reduce stress while creating supportive environments for oral practice. Writing tasks, in contrast, require sustained motivation and structured feedback, suggesting the need for clear goal-setting practices, timely lecturer feedback, and reflective activities that foster a sense of ownership and progress. More broadly, the findings demonstrated that integrating both social and affective strategies into classroom practice enables students to thrive not only linguistically but also emotionally by cultivating resilient learning habits that extend into academic and professional communication.

## Pedagogical Recommendations

To strengthen the use of socio-affective strategies among university students, ESL lecturers should adopt methods that address both the immediate demands of speaking and the sustained requirements of writing. For speaking, activities such as role-playing, group presentations, debates, interviews, and organized peer

discussions can build speaking confidence and prepare students for real-life communication beyond the classroom. For writing, guided self-reflection, scaffolded tasks, structured peer review, and workshops that emphasize the writing process rather than only the final product can help sustain writing motivation and reduce anxiety. At the same time, blended learning approaches such as online discussion boards, video-based self-reflection, and collaborative digital writing tools can extend socio-affective practice beyond class time by allowing students to develop strategies at their own pace while reinforcing emotional regulation, motivation, and peer support in both spoken and written contexts. In sum, the discussion highlights that socio-affective strategies are not applied uniformly but adapt dynamically to the specific demands of speaking and writing. By revealing task-sensitive patterns and offering pedagogical insights, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how socio-affective strategies can be leveraged to enhance ESL students' confidence, motivation, and communicative competence in both academic and professional settings.

Novelty and Contribution of the Study

Fig. 2 illustrates the contributions of this study by adapting Oxford's (1990) socio-affective strategies framework to the comparative domains of speaking and writing by highlighting its theoretical, empirical, practical, and ESL university student-focused implications.

Fig. 2 Adaptation of Oxford's (1990) Socio-Affective Strategies Framework and Study Contributions
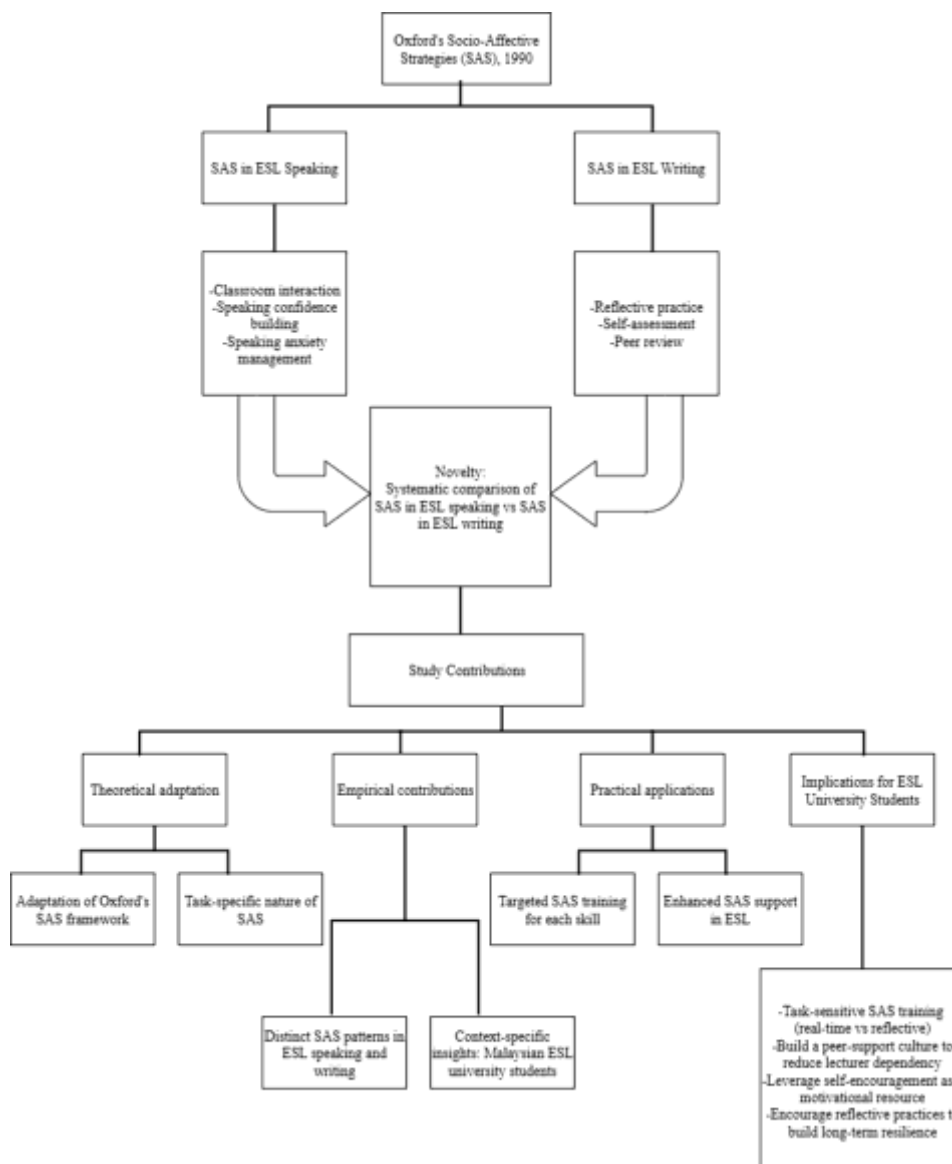
Numerous studies have investigated the impact of socio-affective strategies on ESL learning, yet most have concentrated on either speaking or writing in isolation (Anyau et al., 2024; Rahmat et al., 2024). Research on

speaking frequently highlights the role of socio-affective strategies in reducing real-time anxiety, building confidence, and facilitating peer interactions (Sumang et al., 2022; Hernandez & Mejía, 2022), whereas writing studies tend to emphasise cognitive and metacognitive strategies, often overlooking socio-affective factors (Mello et al., 2023; Park, 2024). Despite these insights, there has been no comprehensive study directly comparing the use of socio-affective strategies across both speaking and writing within the same group of students. Speaking involves spontaneous interaction and immediate regulation, while writing demands sustained motivation and organised self-regulation. Considering these distinct socio-affective requirements, it is essential to examine how students deploy strategies in each context, as such insights can guide more effective and task-sensitive instructional methods in ESL education.

This study addresses that gap by directly comparing socio-affective strategy use in speaking and writing by showcasing both shared and skill-specific preferences. It offers empirical contributions by identifying patterns of socio-affective strategy use and generating context-specific insights from Malaysian university students whose multilingual backgrounds create socio-affective experiences distinct from those in monolingual or English-dominant contexts. By systematically examining the frequency and prioritization of strategies across tasks, the study enhances understanding of how socio-affective strategies function in practice and informs targeted applications such as skill-specific training and improved classroom support systems.

In addition, the study offers a theoretical adaptation of Oxford's (1990) socio-affective strategies framework by contextualising it for comparative analysis between speaking and writing tasks. While previous research has largely examined socio-affective strategies as if they functioned uniformly across skills (e.g., Durán et al., 2022), this study demonstrates that their use is shaped by the demands of each task, thereby providing a more nuanced and contextual extension of the model. The findings also yield clear implications for ESL university students by emphasizing the need for real-time anxiety regulation in speaking, reflective scaffolds in writing, a stronger peer-support culture to reduce lecturer dependency, and the leveraging of self-encouragement to sustain motivation across tasks. Overall, the study establishes the task-sensitive nature of socio-affective strategies and positions this adaptation of Oxford's framework as a meaningful contribution to ESL pedagogy and learner support.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the importance and specific use of socio-affective strategies in ESL learning focusing on speaking and writing skills. Speaking involves managing anxiety in real time, while writing requires sustained motivation and structured support. The outcomes are particularly relevant for tertiary students as they highlight the need for targeted teaching methods that incorporate socio-affective strategies into ESL classrooms. With the implementation of task-specific interventions, the challenges associated with both spoken and written communication can be more effectively addressed. The findings therefore highlight the pedagogical value of socio-affective strategies in fostering learner confidence, motivation, and resilience.

While the results provide clear patterns of socio-affective strategy use across tasks, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the study. Reliance on a self-reported questionnaire may introduce response bias and cannot fully capture the dynamic and interactive nature of strategy deployment. Moreover, the study was conducted at a single Malaysian university, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other contexts where institutional cultures, teaching practices, and student backgrounds may differ. To address these constraints, future research should adopt mixed methods by combining surveys with classroom observations, stimulated recall interviews, and longitudinal learning diaries. Such approaches would provide richer and more nuanced insights into how students adapt socio-affective strategies in real time and across diverse educational settings. Future studies should also examine the long-term effects of strategy implementation on proficiency, academic achievement, and learner confidence.

Enhancing the incorporation of socio-affective strategies into university ESL programs creates a more supportive and engaging learning environment that promotes both linguistic development and emotional resilience. By embedding these strategies into classroom practice, ESL lecturers can enhance students' speaking and writing abilities by contributing not only to their immediate academic performance but also to

their long-term communicative competence in academic, professional, and social contexts. In essence, by demonstrating that socio-affective strategies are task-sensitive, dynamic, and pedagogically vital, this study positions them as a cornerstone for more effective and humanized ESL teaching instruction.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire A: Socio-Affective Strategies in ESL Speaking Classroom

Please circle the number that best represents how often you use each strategy.

1 = Never   2 = Rarely   3 = Sometimes   4 = Often   5 = Always

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1. I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of speaking English.	○	○	○	○	○
2. I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake.	○	○	○	○	○
3. I give myself a reward or treat when I speak well in English.	○	○	○	○	○
4. I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am speaking English.	○	○	○	○	○
5. I write down my feelings in an English Speaking diary.	○	○	○	○	○
6. I talk to my friend about how I feel when I am speaking English.	○	○	○	○	○
7. I ask my lecturer to slow down or say it again if I do not understand when he/she is speaking English.	○	○	○	○	○
8. I ask my lecturer to correct me when I speak English.	○	○	○	○	○
9. I practice speaking English with other students.	○	○	○	○	○
10. I ask for help in speaking English from my lecturer.	○	○	○	○	○
11. I speak English when I ask questions.	○	○	○	○	○
12. I try to learn about the culture of English speakers.	○	○	○	○	○

Questionnaire B: Socio-Affective Strategies in ESL Writing Classroom

Please circle the number that best represents how often you use each strategy.

1 = Never   2 = Rarely   3 = Sometimes   4 = Often   5 = Always

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1. I try to relax whenever I feel anxious about writing in English.	○	○	○	○	○
2. I encourage myself to write in English even when I am afraid of making mistakes.	○	○	○	○	○
3. I give myself a reward or treat when I complete a writing task successfully in English.	○	○	○	○	○
4. I notice if I feel tense or nervous when I am writing in English.	○	○	○	○	○
5. I keep a writing journal to express my thoughts and experiences in English.	○	○	○	○	○
6. I discuss my challenges with writing in English with my friends.	○	○	○	○	○
7. I ask my lecturer to clarify instructions or provide examples if I do not understand a writing task in English.	○	○	○	○	○
8. I ask my lecturer to give feedback on my writing to help me improve.	○	○	○	○	○
9. I practice writing in English with my classmates.	○	○	○	○	○
10. I ask for help from my lecturer when I have difficulty with English writing.	○	○	○	○	○
11. I try to write in English when asking questions in class or in assignments.	○	○	○	○	○
12. I explore the culture of English speakers through reading and writing activities.	○	○	○	○	○