CHAPTER V
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter concludes the present study by summarizing the main findings, highlighting its limitations, and making recommendations for future research based on the findings and discussion chapter. The study has examined how tertiary-level EFL students with different writing proficiency levels engage with AWE tools throughout their academic writing process. By drawing on both document analysis and interview data, the research was able to explore the facilitation of AWE tools across various aspects of writing as well as how students' proficiency shapes their revision strategies and feedback engagement.

5.1 Conclusion

Aligning with previous research (Zhang & Hyland, 2018; Ranalli, 2018; Miranty et al., 2023), the findings of this study revealed AWE's meaningful role in facilitating academic writing, particularly in revisions of surface-level aspects such as grammar and vocabulary enhancement, but show less pronounced support in higher-order aspects such as content development and cohesion. Additionally, the students' development for every writing aspect varied according to each student's level of proficiency and tool literacy.

Mirroring Zhang's (2020) assertion that effective engagement with AWE feedback depends more on students' ability to critically interpret and apply feedback rather than mere availability of the tool, the study have also shown how high-proficiency students tendency to use AWE tools strategically and selectively while their lower counterpart often use them passively or inconsistently, which in return led to uneven improvements across drafts. Furthermore, the study also supports Bai and Hu's (2016) and Koltovskaia's (2020) observation that AWE tools are most effective when students possess both the ability to understand feedback and the awareness to apply it evaluatively. As seen in Raflesia's case, her high proficiency

allows her to filter and integrate AWE feedback thoughtfully into her revisions. In contrast, Zinnia's limited revision and heavy reliance on generative AI tools instead of AWE indicated the challenges lower-proficiency learners often face when using AWE tools without sufficient instructional support (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019; Miranty & Widiati, 2021).

These insights reinforce Tambunan et al.'s (2022) notion that AWE tools should serve as a complementary aid that encourages students to revise with intention rather than as a replacement for human feedback. Furthermore, proficiency level alone does not entirely determine effective AWE use. Other factors, such as learner motivation, awareness of academic writing norms, and familiarity with the tool, also made a contribution to students' engagement with AWE (Ware, 2014; Zhang, 2020). Asoka's mid-level proficiency showed an awareness of academic writing norms; however, her lack of consistent AWE use suggested a limited familiarity with the tool.

Thus, the conclusion that can be drawn from this study can be divided into two equal parts. First, the potential of AWE tools in supporting EFL academic writing development is quite high, particularly for higher-level proficiency users. Second, how learner engagement, self-regulation, and critical awareness for interpreting feedback become essential elements in utilizing AWE tools effectively.

5.2 Limitation

While this study offers valuable insight into the use of AWE tools among EFL students with different proficiency levels, several limitations should be noted. Firstly, the small number of participants, which is three in total, limits the generalization of the findings. As a qualitative case study, this research focused more on depth by prioritizing rich contextual insights over broad capability (Kumar, 2019; Cresswell, 2012).

Secondly, both grammar and writing proficiency were used to indicate and categorize participants. However, proficiency in academic writing is multifaceted,

and students' writing behavior may have also been shaped by other language and cognitive skills (Khadawardi, 2022; Dizon & Gold, 2023) not measured directly in this study.

Thirdly, some data, more particularly in interviews, relied on participants' self-reports, which may have introduced bias or incomplete reflections of their actual writing process. Additionally, other factors such as their current motivations or anxiety in writing may also impact their drafts and fail to reflect their reported behavior.

Fourth, the study only examined two drafts of each student's academic writing. Thus, earlier or later drafts produced independently by the students may not be fully accounted for, resulting in unexplored additional revision behaviors, writing decisions, and feedback interactions outside of the two main drafts, which could have influenced the trajectory of their writing.

Fifth, although students were recommended the use of AWE tools for surface-level revision, they did so without direct teacher feedback or structured guidance during their writing process. This lack of instructional support may have affected the effectiveness of students' engagement with AWE feedback, particularly those with low proficiency and moderate proficiency. Additionally, some students have also reported consulting with peers to discuss broader writing concerns beyond surface-level issues. However, these peer feedback instances were not the focus of this study and thus were not examined in detail.

Lastly, the study only focused on a limited set of AWE tools that were used by the students, which are Grammarly, QuillBot, and DeepL. The broader influence of generative AI tools in the realm of feedback, such as ChatGPT, was acknowledged but not analyzed in detail, leaving room for further investigation about its effect on writing development.

5.3 Recommendation

Based on the conclusions of both the findings and limitations of the study, some recommendations are proposed for teachers and students, as well as further research concerning the facilitation of AWE feedback across different proficiency levels.

For teachers, they are encouraged to support students not only in the recommendation of AWE tools but also in making the students learn how to use them reflectively. Classroom activities that combine AWE feedback analysis with guided peer or teacher feedback could help foster a more active revision culture (Zhang & Hyland, 2018; Shang, 2019) while designated learning tasks that ask students to compare AWE suggestions with their own decision may prompt better engagement and build tool literacy (Guo et al., 2021). For students, particularly those with lower proficiency, it is essential that teachers provide more guidance in interpreting feedback from AWE systems. This could include modelling common errors, explaining AWE feedback in simpler language, and offering mini-lessons that focus on grammar points commonly flagged by AWE (Wang, 2013; Zhang, 2020). Without this support, mid to low proficiency students may miss opportunities for learning when they blindly accept AWE suggestions or ignore them entirely.

Concerning the facilitation of AWE in academic writing, future research could expand on this study by involving more participants across a wider range of institutions and educational levels. Comparative research on AWE engagement between disciplines may also provide new insight into the writing expectations that shape tool use (Ranalli, 2018). Furthermore, future research could track how students' writing performance evolves with AWE assistance over an extended period of time, allowing a deeper understanding of learning outcomes and feedback uptake. Lastly, future studies might explore the interplay between various AWE tools and generative AI platforms, focusing on how students navigate, combine, or differentiate the feedback they receive.