

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a brief description of the whole content of the research. It covers background of the research, research questions, aims of the research, scope of the research, significance of the research, research methodology, and clarification of terms. The organization of paper is also enlightened in this chapter.

1.1 Background

Most language learners at all levels found that writing is the most challenging, demanding and the most difficult language skill to master (Abas & Aziz, 2006; Kurt & Atay, 2007; Salem & Dyar, 2014). Writing is a complex activity (Flower & Hayes, 1981) which calls for the mastery of different types of knowledge (Hillocks, 1987). Writing requires precise management of aspects such as the writing environment, the constraints arise from the writing topic and the processes and knowledge and skills involved in composing (Graham, Gillespie, and McKeown, 2013; Smedt and Keer, 2014). Writing involves cognitive, metacognitive, and affective processes at the same time (Hidi & Boscolo, 2006 in Smedt and Keer, 2014).

To produce a satisfactory written text is not instant. Instead, it is relatively time consuming. “Competent writers do not produce final texts at their first attempt, but writing is a long and often painful process, in which the final text emerges through successive drafts” (Nunan, 1991 as cited in Gonye et. al, 2012). In relation to writing as a process approach, White and Arndt (1991) mention that writing consists of some recursive steps of generating ideas, structuring, drafting, revising and editing. It presents a challenging task for both native and non-native speakers (Kroll, 1990 as cited in Al-Mekhlafi, 2011) especially novice ones. Novice writers experience cognitive constraints while composing texts (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987), which in result makes activities such as planning, revising,

and fluent text production processes barely occur (McCutchen, 2006; McCutchen, Teske, & Bankston, 2008 in Smedt & Keer, 2014).

At university, where students are expected to learn to write specific types of technical texts that are pertinent to the fields they are studying (Graefen, 1996 as cited in Piršl, Piršl & Kesić, 2011) and are required to express their thoughts, opinions, ideas as well as their feelings systematically which can be assessed partly through a real product or text, the strain of writing become more inevitable. It even becomes more complex since writing academically (a) includes adopting a style of writing appropriate to the academic field and genre the student is writing in, (b) involves applying rhetoric with exact, systematic logical argumentation and empirical rationale, and (c) requires students to incorporate and synthesize diverse sources of knowledge into an authoritative viewpoint (Piršl et al., 2011).

Considering these facts, writing, especially in academic context, requires a high level of self-regulation (e.g. planning, revision, and composition strategies) (Graham & Harris, 2000 in Smedt & Keer, 2014). A number of studies on writing have focused on strategy instruction and teaching methods to help students improve students' composition skill and to promote self-regulatory learning in writing (Bacha, 2010; Chalk, Hagan-Burke & Burke, 2005; Graham, Harris & Macarthur, 2006; Graham & Perin, 2007; Hasan & Akhnand, 2010; De La Paz and Graham, 2001). The studies reported that explicitly teaching strategy such as brainstorming to get ideas to write and the application of teaching methods such as collaborative learning and feedback writing can improve students' overall writing ability.

Learning strategies, defined as "specific actions taken by the students to make easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations" (Oxford, 1990 as cited in Wahyudi, 2014), are activities consciously chosen by students for the purpose of regulating their own language learning (Griffith & Oxford, 2014). They can enable students to become more independent and autonomous (Little, 1991 as cited in Oxford, 2003). Some researchers (Selinker, 1972 and Cohen, 1988 in Oxford, 1990) have made explicit distinction between learning strategies and communication strategies, while some

others stated that people often learn as they communicate and vice versa (Wenden and Rubin, 1987; Cohen and Macaro, 2007 as cited in Oxford, 2011). In this research, learning strategies are defined as strategies for learning which occur as students practice using the language (learning and communicating at the same time) in a form of writing task accomplishment.

The use of strategies in accomplishing a particular task may vary among students. “Each student has a number of possible ways to solve particular problems and choose one or several strategies to solve the problems” (Brown, 2000). Therefore, when language students face language learning tasks such as reading or writing, they can use different strategies to complete the tasks (Lee, 2010). Language students will be successful in the tasks due to the use of an appropriate language learning strategy (Richard, 1994 as cited in Lee, 2010).

Unfortunately, researchers may somewhat slip from the fact that what are expected from the application of methods and strategy instruction in the classroom is that learners will notice the patterns or automatically activate their implicit learning mechanisms which in the end enable them to play a much more active role in managing and controlling the learning process (Gu, 2010 in Oxford, 2011) and become more independent, self-regulated and autonomous learners. Only few studies have found to give attention on how learners’ independently apply as well as control and evaluate their learning strategies in writing.

Thus, this study aims at investigating learners’ ‘independent’ strategies in accomplishing writing task by firstly administering two questionnaire; a Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL) from Peñuelas (2012) and an open-ended questionnaire adopted from Honeck (2013) and Mohite (2014) then conducting in-depth interviews with participants to gain deeper understanding on the strategies application. The data was driven mainly from the students’ views and perspectives of the strategies used

1.2 Research Questions

Referring to the background above, this research attempts to answer the following research questions:

- a. What are the strategies that students use to accomplish writing tasks?
- b. What are students' considerations in selecting particular writing strategies?

1.2 Aims of the Study

Based on the statement of the problem, the aims of this research are as follows:

- a. To investigate the strategies that students use to accomplish writing tasks.
- b. To investigate students' considerations in selecting particular writing strategies.

1.3 Scope of the Study

This study concentrated on investigating students' strategies in writing particular text and the reasons for their choice of strategies. The text particularly used in this study is explanation text. This research is based on the theories stated by Oxford, 1990 and Zimmerman, 1989.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are expected to contribute and give some informative inputs on language learning strategies in writing both theoretically and practically.

From the theoretical perspective, the result of this study provides information regarding the use of strategies in accomplishing writing tasks in EFL context. This study can be used by future researchers as a reference to find out learning strategies used in writing activities.

For teachers, the information can serve as inputs in designing instructional planning for teaching writing that can accommodate students' learning. Meanwhile, students can use different strategies reported in this study that best suit their learning preference to help them improve their writing.

1.6 Clarification of Terms

Below are definitions about some terms that will be used throughout the study:

- **Self-regulation:** multi-component, iterative, self-steering processes that target one's own cognitions, feelings and actions as well as features of the environment for modulation to assist the achievement of one's own goals.
- **Self-Regulated Learning:** a concept of how students become a regulator of his/her own learning by controlling his/her cognitive, motivational and behavioral factors to assist them to achieve desired goals.
- **Writing process:** the process of writing that consists of several stages of planning, drafting, revising, editing.
- **Learning strategies:** steps taken by students to enhance their own learning.
- **Language learning strategies:** activities consciously chosen by students for the purpose of regulating their own language learning.

1.7 Organization of the Paper

This paper is presented into five chapters. The chapters are divided into sub topics that elaborate the given issues.

CHAPTER I Introduction

This chapter introduces the present study. It includes the background of the study, research question, aims of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study, research design, clarification of terms, and organization of the paper.

CHAPTER II Literature Review

This chapter provides the theoretical foundation of the topic related to self-regulation, learning strategies, writing strategies, writing skill.

CHAPTER III Research Methodology

This chapter consists of research procedures which explain how the research is conducted. It includes research design, site and participants, data collection, and data analysis.

CHAPTER IV Findings and Discussion

This chapter explains findings and discussion. This chapter describes the result of the instrument analysis such as the result of questionnaire and interview. This chapter will also explain the interpretation of the findings from the study.

CHAPTER V Conclusions and Suggestions

This chapter draws conclusion which describes the result of the study as well as the suggestion given for future research.

