

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Chapter four has displayed and discussed the data analyses from think-aloud protocols and post-writing questionnaires. Chapter five concludes the study by proposing the contribution or consolidation of the reported study to the previous studies in writing processes and strategies (Section 5.1). Besides that, this chapter also warns the readers with the limitations of the study (Section 5.2.) and puts forward the implications of the study to the teaching of writing that may be beneficial for English as a foreign language writing teachers and lecturers (Section 5.3.). Finally, in the same section, some recommendations are also suggested for further think-aloud protocol based studies of writing processes and strategies.

5.1. Conclusions of the Study

This thesis reports the results of a think-aloud protocol-based study of the writing process and meta-cognitive strategies gone through and applied by four Indonesian tertiary EFL students in writing an English essay. The purpose of the study is to discover the processes of writing as well as the way the meta-cognitive strategies used by the participants.

Findings of the study, both from the think aloud protocols as well as the post-writing questionnaire analyses, suggest that all participants in this study underwent complex, non-linear, recursive processes of writing, in which the sub-processes of planning, monitoring, revising/editing, and reviewing may occur repeatedly in any

stages of writing process. This finding is relevant to the findings of previous researchers (e.g. Emig, 1971; Perl, 1978, 1979, 1981; Pianko, 1979; Stallard, 1979; Flower and Hayes, 1980, 1981; Sommers, 1980; and Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987).

Besides that, it is also shown that all participants, in accordance with the scores of the writing products and their levels of language proficiency, applied all meta-cognitive strategies differently. It is evident that some writers are able to undertake a writing approach that is more conducive to produce better writing products than others with lower or higher levels of language proficiency. Interestingly, lower scored essays were written by participants with advanced and low-intermediate levels of language proficiency. This corresponds to previous researchers (e.g. Cumming, 1989, Whalen & Menard, 1995; Sasaki & Hirose, 1996; Victori, 1997) that there is a lack of interdependence between linguistic and writing competence.

From the analyses of the think-aloud protocols and the post-writing questionnaire in chapter four, it was revealed that the higher-scored writers were found to be more interactive in approaching the writing processes. This was evident in the larger numbers of meta-cognitive strategies (i.e. planning, monitoring, and evaluating strategies) applied at different levels. First, they planned the overall ideas, by generating more ideas and alternatives and setting more numbers of procedural and organizational goals than the lower-scored ones. Second, they constantly and effectively monitored what and how they were doing, by identifying oncoming problems and assessing their texts against their intended meanings. Finally, they

evaluated their essays by applying larger numbers of revision. Besides, they also set a wider range of reviewing and editing objectives, including reviewing and editing the topic knowledge and the content of the essays.

Furthermore, the higher-scored writers were found to have approached the writing processes with more effort than the lower-scored ones. This was indicated by their efforts in getting their intended meanings across, besides having enough knowledge about the topic of writing. These efforts and possessions of enough topic knowledge has led them to the generation of more alternative ideas, more rehearsing attempts, more evaluations of both ideas and word choice, and more revisions on ideas and coherence. As a result, these meta-cognitive strategies seemed to have brought the use of stronger words, more elaborated ideas and more cohesive and coherent paragraphs than those of the lower-scored ones.

The findings are consistent with those obtained in other first, second, and foreign language writing studies, in which the more successful writers were found to be more interactive (e.g. Raimes, 1987), to put more effort into their writing approach (Stallard, 1974), and to engage in a larger range of problem-solving or decision-making strategies (Flower & Hayes, 1980; Cumming, 1990), especially strategies for planning, organizing, evaluating, and revising/editing content. Finally, in terms of learning strategies, the findings of this study are also relevant to those of other research in the field (e.g. Brown, 1980; Brown & Palinscar, 1982 cited in Victori, 1997; and Wenden, 1991, 1993), which suggest that there is direct relationship between the use of meta-cognitive strategies and more successful language learning.

5.2. Limitations of the Study

Some factors in this study may exhibit some limitations, one of which is the size of the sample, i.e. four Indonesian university level EFL students. This small sample may result in a low level of generalization. However, considering the limited time and budgets provided to conduct a research with larger subjects, the researcher decided to conduct a small sample one instead. Moreover, there might be unnoticeable biases on behalf of the researcher in synthesizing the results of the study. The overall synthesis of the findings may be affected by the limitations of the researcher's knowledge of the subject matter as well as her analytical and expressive abilities. Therefore, a second rater was employed in analyzing as well as evaluating the data and drafts of this thesis, so that more objective results may be obtained.

Besides, the opportunities to demonstrate the subjects' strategies in composing may be limited, since they were required to write only in one specific writing mode, i.e. argumentative. As argued by some experts (e.g. Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Cumming, 1989; Grabe, 2001; Wang & Wen, 2002; Hu & Chen, 2006), the same writer writing in different modes (e.g. argumentative and descriptive) may apply different processes and strategies. However, the application of the think-aloud procedure may serve as a rich-data source that provide the researcher with loads of data to be analyzed.

Finally, the limited time available had caused the participants only given limited time to do the writing task. A more complete data may be obtained if they were given more time to revise their essays, as that in a more natural setting. The

factors above may result limitations in demonstrating subjects' overall writing processes and strategies.

5.3. Recommendations

Concerning the limitations of this study, some measures are recommended to be done for further research. Among them are, first, in order to obtain the feasibility of the findings to be generalized, further study should involve more participants, with specific characteristics, such as those with certain level of language proficiency or those with certain experience of English writing.

Second, in order to avoid biases that commonly appear in think-aloud based studies, other procedures of data collection technique, such as interview and questionnaires should be used. This is done as a member-check in order to support or validate the data obtained from the think-aloud protocols.

Finally, more think-aloud protocol-based studies in writing process and strategies should be applied, since studies using this method are still rare, especially in Indonesian context. However, more writing tasks, with different modes of writing (such as argumentative and descriptive or narrative) should be employed in order to demonstrate more process and strategies in writing. By applying the recommendations above, further studies are hoped to be more improved than the present.