

EFL learners in Vietnam: An Investigation
of Writing Strategies

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and beliefs, it contains no materials previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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ABSTRACT

Research into second language strategies has started as a result of the shift of focus, from teachers and teaching to learners and learning which has taken place in the field of education over the last few decades. Strategies used by good language learners have been revealed, strategies used by successful and less successful language learners have been compared, and factors influencing the use of learning strategies have also been investigated. As an attempt to contribute to gaining more insights into language learning strategy, this research aims to investigate the writing strategies used by successful and less successful English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) learners and the relationship between strategy use and the learners' success. A multi-method approach combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches was used to answer the research questions. This approach was achieved by means of method triangulation which consisted of structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and learning diaries. Nine female adult native Vietnamese students, who were in their second year of a four-year Bachelor program at Hanoi University in Vietnam, participated in the study. Questionnaires were administered at the beginning of the data collection phase. Guidelines for diary writing were then provided to the participants. Semi-structured interviews which served as the primary method of data collection were finally conducted with each of the participants. Findings from the study showed that the successful writers not only used strategies more frequently but also used more metacognitive, memory, compensation, and cognitive strategies than the less successful writers. The study also found some strategies which were most and least frequently used by both the successful and less successful writers.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

According to Ellis (1997), it is the emergence of the so-called “global village” and “World Wide Web” that have given rise to the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) which studies how people acquire a second language (L2). In such a time “when communication between people has expanded way beyond their local speech communities”, the learning of a second language can be considered a “must” for the purposes of education or securing employment (p. 3). The increasing need for L2 learning has resulted in another need which is to investigate how second languages are learned, in order to facilitate L2 teaching. SLA, then, serves two functions. The first one is to describe the acquisition of a second language, and the other is to identify “the external and internal factors that account for why learners acquire an L2 in the way they do” (Ellis, 1997, p. 4).

External factors affecting the learning outcomes pointed out by Ellis include the social milieu in which learning takes place and the input that learners receive. Internal factors, also referred to as individual differences which mainly contribute to differences in learning outcomes, are divided by Gardner and MacIntyre (1992, 1993) into two groups of *affective factors* and *cognitive factors*. Affective factors consist of *language attitudes*, *motivation*, and *language anxiety*. Cognitive factors are *intelligence*, *language aptitude*, and *language learning strategies*. Ellis (1997) argues that such factors as language aptitude and motivation exert their influence on the rate and level of L2 achievement by affecting “the nature and the frequency with which individual learners use learning strategies” (p. 76) – procedures undertaken by learners to facilitate their language learning. Lots of questions have been posed concerning the role that language learning strategies play in explaining differences in learners’ achievement. SLA researchers have asked whether more successful language learners handle the task in some distinctive ways, whether they use strategies when facing problems; and if this is the case, whether less successful learners can improve their learning outcomes through strategy training.

Much research has been done to find out the strategies used by language learners and the relationship between strategy use and learning outcomes. The very initial research that investigated learning strategies used by good language learners was started by Rubin (1975) and Stern (1975), and then followed by a fruitful amount of research also in the search for good language learning strategies such as Cohen (1977, 1984), O'Malley and Chamot (1987, 1990), Oxford (1986a, 1986b, 1989a, 1989b, 1990b, 1993a, 1993b, 1994b), Prokop (1989), Rubin (1975, 1981, 1987), and Wenden (1987a, 1987b). This body of research has resulted in a list of strategies that characterize good language learners. Later research has focused on comparing strategies used by more and less proficient learners and revealed that more proficient learners use strategies which are different from those by less proficient learners.

However, there seems to have been an imbalance in the knowledge of learning strategies among different L2 skills. While much research has investigated learning strategies in speaking, reading, listening and vocabulary learning, strategies used in writing appear to have been largely overlooked. In addition, even this limited amount of composition research also reveals some limitations in findings as a result of using a qualitative approach as a major method of inquiry (Zamel, 1982, 1983; Lay, 1982; Raimes, 1983; Cumming, 1987). Most important of all, writing academic English seems to be a difficult task for EFL students in Vietnam. Being a teacher of writing at the university where the study was carried out, I find that most of my students cannot write effective academic English. Writing strategy use might be a factor that influences their writing outcome. A close investigation of how their writing occurs and what writing strategies they use may contribute to the teaching/training them to be more effective strategy users, thus help them become more effective academic English writers. As a result, this research seeks fill some of the gaps and seeks to make some contribution to the teaching of effective academic English writing to EFL students in Vietnam by providing a more comprehensive understanding of writing strategies via the research design.

1.2 Aims of the research

The current research aims at investigating learning strategies in writing used by successful and less successful English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) learners and the relationship between strategy use and the learners' success.

Participants in the research were nine second-year undergraduate students studying English as their major at a university in Vietnam. All were female students and their ages varied from nineteen to twenty-two. A mixed methods approach which combines quantitative and qualitative research was adopted in order to bring a more complete picture of the issue under investigation. Questionnaires were first administered at the beginning of the data collection phase and self-completed by the participants. The participants were then provided with some guidelines for diary writing which involved their writing task at the university. Interviews were finally organised with each of the participants and all were tape recorded.

The current study therefore seeks to provide a more holistic investigation of writing strategies via the use of the mixed methods approach. In spite of the fact that quite a lot of studies have been carried out to investigate writing strategies of ESL/EFL learners at different levels of proficiency, most of them relied heavily on qualitative research methods as their major source of data. This approach does not allow data to be corroborated. The incorporation of a quantitative aspect is the feature which makes the current research different from previous studies. Data drawn from qualitative methods of interviews and learning diaries were now cross-checked by those from questionnaires, thereby providing more confidence in the research findings. The study also contributes to our knowledge of composition strategies and is therefore of "potential value" to language teachers. As Ellis (1997) explains: "if those strategies that are crucial for learning can be identified, it may prove possible to train students to use them" (p. 78).

1.3 Organization of the study

This thesis is presented in six chapters. This introductory chapter comes first in order to present the background, the aims as well as a brief introduction of the content covered by the other chapters.

The Literature Review chapter, chapter two, then follows and focuses on reviewing the body of research related to the current study. Relevant theories and major findings from previous composition studies in both L1 and L2 will be provided. Gaps in the literature are then identified and the research questions are introduced.

Chapter three provides the theoretical framework in which the study is conducted. A mixed methods approach was adopted as the research design. The research instruments, as well as research procedures, are presented with justifications. Issues concerning data reliability and validity and research ethics are also considered in this chapter.

Description and statistical significance of findings are presented in chapter four. These include results from a content analysis applied to qualitative data drawn from interviews and learning diaries, and results from a questionnaire analysis using a quantitative method of data analysis.

An interpretation of research findings with explanations in reference to previous studies in the field is provided in the Discussion of Results chapter.

Chapter six summarises the research findings, evaluates the study in terms of significance and limitations, and draws some conclusions about practical applications for pedagogy.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the body of literature which is relevant to and of great importance to the current study.

In the first section, some background of second language acquisition will be provided to give a general understanding of the field. This includes an explanation about how language learning occurs and the role of language learning strategies in second language acquisition. Four most prominent second language learning theories will be presented to provide a better understanding of the importance of learning strategies in making input comprehensible for acquisition.

The second section then focuses on the body of literature involving language learning strategies in general. Issues regarding terminologies, definition and classification of learning strategies will be presented. Research into language learning strategies will then follow.

Three major approaches to teaching and researching writing will be discussed in the second section. Those include product or text-oriented approach, process approach, and genre approach. Three models of writing under the process approach (Hayes-Flowers, 1980; Hayes, 1996; Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987) will be discussed in depth for their role in guiding process composition studies.

The third and also the last section will provide space for research into writing strategies. Both first language (L1) and second language (L2) composition research will be reviewed in this section.

2.2 Theories of second language acquisition

... unless we know for certain that the teacher's scheme of things really does match the learner's way of going about things, we cannot be sure that the teaching content will contribute directly to language learning.

(Ellis, 1985a, p. 1)

The above statement was Ellis's argument for why language teachers should be familiar with second language acquisition (SLA) research. According to Ellis (1994), it is generally agreed that second language acquisition research became a field of enquiry around the end of the sixties. Since that time, a great body of empirical research has been carried out in order to fulfill the two goals of SLA, which are to describe learner language and explain its characteristics. This large amount of the empirical research also contributes to the construction of theory, which is reflected in the availability of a number of models and theories of second language acquisition. These theories represent different perspectives on factors which have an important role to play in the process of second language learning. These include Noam Chomsky's Universal Grammar (UG), Krashen's Monitor Hypothesis, Long's Interaction Hypothesis, and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory.

Universal Grammar was proposed by American linguist Noam Chomsky as a "system of principles, conditions, and rules that are elements or properties of all human languages not merely by accident but by necessity" (1995, p. 29). According to the UG approach, all human beings are born with a universal set of principles and parameters controlling the shape of human languages and responsible for the similarities between them. While principles (e.g. structure dependency) apply to all natural languages, parameters (e.g. head parameter) consist of values making languages different. Applied to second language acquisition, there are a number of hypotheses about the role of UG, including no access hypothesis, full access hypothesis, indirect access hypothesis, and partial access hypothesis. The first hypothesis, no access hypothesis, states that UG is no longer available to second language learners. Advocates of this hypothesis propose that adult L2 learners are out of the critical period for language acquisition; thus, they have to rely on other language mechanisms. The second UG hypothesis completely contradicts the first one in that "UG continues to underpin L2 learning, for adults as well as children" and "there is no such thing as 'a critical period' (a period of time that is ideal for the acquisition of a language in a linguistically rich environment) (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p. 66 as cited in Flynn, 1996). Standing in between the two extremes are the indirect access and partial access hypotheses. The indirect access hypothesis

claims that adults L2 learners still have access to UG but only via their L1. The last UG hypothesis – the partial access hypothesis states that some aspects of UG are accessible and some are not to adult L2 learners. However, the hypothesis is controversial in that there is less agreement on which aspects of UG might be accessible and which might not be.

Belonging to the second type of theory about second language acquisition, the interactionist theory, the Monitor model proposed by Krashen (1982) consists of five hypotheses, including the Acquisition-learning Hypothesis, the Monitor Hypothesis, the Natural Order Hypothesis, the Input Hypothesis, and the Affective Filter Hypothesis. The Acquisition-learning Hypothesis makes a distinction between acquisition and learning, which is reflected in an opposition between a subconscious process in natural settings and a conscious process focusing on form and error correction in formal settings like classrooms. One controversial argument rising from the hypothesis is whether learning becomes acquisition. Krashen (1982, p. 83-7) proposes that learning cannot turn into acquisition based on the following claims:

- Sometimes there is “acquisition” without “learning” – that is, some individuals have considerable competence in a second language but do not know very many rules consciously.
- There are cases where “learning” never becomes “acquisition” – that is a person can know the rules and continue breaking them, and
- No one knows anywhere near all the rules.

Krashen further stresses the importance of acquisition, arguing that only the language gained through acquisition is readily available for natural, fluent communication. However, McLaughlin (1987) points out that the concepts of “conscious” and “subconscious” have not been made clear by Krashen, thus, making it difficult to test whether the conscious or subconscious process is operating at a given moment. In addition, the matter of whether learning becomes acquisition also causes much debate.

The second hypothesis, the Monitor Hypothesis, states that “learning has only one function, and that is as a Monitor or editor” to make “changes in the form of our utterance, after it has been ‘produced’ by the acquired system” (Krashen, 1982, p. 15). Meanwhile, the acquired system acts as a trigger for utterances and “is responsible for fluency and intuitive judgements about correctness” (Lightbrown & Spada, 1993, p. 27). Once again, Krashen’s argument that conscious knowledge has little to do with

acquisition is obviously demonstrated in that it only plays the role of an editor to polish the knowledge acquired in natural settings. From this point of view, thus, the implication for language teaching, according to Krashen, is to focus on communication, not rules. However, in order for the Monitor to be used, three conditions must be met, including time, focus on form, and the knowledge of rules. In other words, in order to use the monitor, the learner must have time, which means he/she has to slow down. In addition, the learner must focus on form and know the rules, both are difficult as he/she has to focus on meaning and form at the same time, and has had explicit instruction on the language form he/she is to produce, respectively. The problematic nature of these three conditions causes the hypothesis to be criticized. Another drawback of the Monitor Hypothesis, like the Acquisition – learning Hypothesis, lies in the fact that it is difficult to test empirically whether the acquired system or the monitor system involves in the production of output.

The third hypothesis, the Natural Order Hypothesis, states that features of the target language are acquired in predictable sequences but it is not that the earliest rules are the first to be acquired. The fact that Krashen draws on morpheme studies in the building of the hypothesis is the reason for it to be criticized as the process of SLA “cannot be captured by research that focuses on the accuracy use of specific morphemes in large cross-sectional samples of second-language learners” (McLaughlin, 1987, p. 35).

Lying at the centre of the theory is the Input Hypothesis which is both influential and controversial. The Input Hypothesis is central in Krashen’s Monitor model in that it “attempts to answer the critical question of how we acquire language” (Krashen, 1982, p. 168). The answer claims a strong role for comprehensible input as the only means through which language is acquired. Krashen explains comprehension input using the formula $i + 1$, in which i is the learner’s current competence while $i + 1$ is the comprehensible input – “the next step in the development sequence” (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p. 38). Both Krashen’s claim for the exposure to comprehensible input as the only way for language to be acquired and his definition of comprehensible input are not clear enough to escape criticisms. The Input Hypothesis is thus criticized for the problem of how i and $i + 1$ are determined.

In addition to being exposed to comprehensible input, Krashen further claims that in order for acquisition to take place, such input must reach the Language Acquisition

Device - an innate built-in system allowing language acquisition. According to the Affective Filter Hypothesis, whether comprehensible input can or cannot reach the Language Acquisition Device is controlled by the so-called Affective Filter. Such affective variables as the learner's motives, needs, attitudes, and emotional states determine what input is allowed to enter the Language Acquisition Device. Thus, the filter will be 'up' or operating when the learner is stressed, self-conscious, or unmotivated" and "it will be 'down' when the learner is relaxed and motivated" (Lightbrown & Spada, 1993, p. 28). Krashen's idea of the affective filter is very useful in explaining why there are both successful and unsuccessful learners even when they have equal opportunities to learn. However, as Lightbrown and Spada (1993, p. 28) point out, it is difficult to say whether those affective variables "cause the differences in language acquisition" or vice versa.

Agreeing with Krashen on the role of comprehensible input in language acquisition, Long (1985) proposed the Interaction Hypothesis which incorporates the question of how to make input comprehensible, giving rise to interactional modification. Long's Interaction Hypothesis was drawn mostly from studies which observed interaction between native speakers (NS) and non-native-speakers (NNS). On the basis of the research findings, he claimed that through interaction, NS and NNS employ such conversational strategies as repetition, confirmation and comprehension checks, clarification requests to negotiate input, thereby making input more comprehensible and ready for acquisition. The relationship between interaction and language acquisition – the key idea of the Interaction Hypothesis – is illustrated as follow:

1. Interaction modification makes input comprehensible;
2. Comprehensible input promotes acquisition.

Therefore,

3. Interactional modification promotes acquisition.

(Lightbrown & Spada, 1999)

As mentioned above, Long's Interaction Hypothesis is derived from research on L2 interaction in negotiating meaning. However, it is criticized for failing to "specify how comprehending input lead to acquisition" (Ellis, 1994, p. 286), and "how interaction affects grammatical development" (Braid, 1995, p. 142-3). Moreover, the body of research on interaction has been done mostly "within western educational settings" (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p. 142), which makes it unwise to claim that interaction assists language acquisition in other cross-cultural contexts.

Another interactionist theory which “is more social in orientation” (Ellis, 1994, p. 244) is the sociocultural theory, proposed by Vygotsky. It is important to note that language, according to Vygotskian perspective, is “the prime symbolic tool available for the mediation of mental activity” and for directing “our own attention to significant features in the environment” (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p. 145). Thus, dialogic communication is seen as a key factor in jointly constructing knowledge to be developed first inter-mentally, then intra-mentally by individuals. This is the central idea in sociocultural theory and it sheds light on the major concepts embedded in it. Language learning in sociocultural theory is assisted by the concept of scaffolding – the process of supportive dialogue which directs learners to attend to key features in the environment and “prompt them through successive steps of a problem” (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p. 145 as cited Wood et al., 1976). Another important concept of the sociocultural perspective is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). According to Vygotsky (1978, p. 85), the ZPD is the difference between the child’s developmental level and the higher level of potential development determined by self-regulation (i.e. the ability to function autonomously) and other-regulation (i.e. guidance from a more knowledgeable person or peer group), respectively. Using scaffolding to make use of other-regulation within the ZPD is said to facilitate the learning of new concepts. The Vygotskian perspective also introduces activity theory which is influenced by Leontiev’s theory of activity. According to Leontiev (1978), an activity consists of a subject, an object, actions, and operations. In language learning, the subject is the learner learning a new language, the object is the goal which is achieved by a number of actions carried out at different operational levels and influenced by the conditions in which they are executed (Donato & McCormick, 1994).

According to Ellis (1994), second language acquisition cannot take place without access to L2 input. However, as reflected in the foregoing theories of second language acquisition, “there is little agreement about the role that input plays in L2 acquisition” (Ellis, 1994, p. 26). While Universal Grammar leaves little space for the importance of input, interactionist theorists such as those proposed by Krashen (1982) and Long (1985), argue for a direct and powerful contribution of comprehensible input to acquisition. Although it cannot be denied that input is necessary for language acquisition, the language learners themselves also have an important role to play in the learning process. In order to process new information and make input comprehensible, the language learners employ strategies; and this has been the concern of researchers in

the field of second language acquisition since the sixties. Some issues involving learning strategies, including terminologies, definitions, classifications, and some research into learning strategies, are discussed in the next section.

2.3 Learning strategies

It has been acknowledged by a number of researchers in the field (Lessard-Clouston, 1997; Hismanoglu, 2000) that research into language learning strategies has resulted from a shift in focus from teachers and teaching (teaching methods and instructional materials) to learners. This remarkable shift can partly be traced back to an increase in awareness of the role of learners in their own learning, as Griffiths (2004, p. 2) puts it: “even with the best teachers and methods, students are the only ones who can actually do the learning”. Embedded in this shift, with greater emphasis being put on the learners, is a growing awareness that “learning strategies are an important part of the second language acquisition process” (Baker & Boonkit, 2004, p. 299). However, it is interesting to see that there is an absence of consensus in terminologies, definitions and classifications within the field of language learning strategies despite the fact that a considerable body of research has been carried out.

2.3.1 Terminologies

Firstly, the lack of consensus is obviously reflected in the use of a number of different terminologies such as *learner strategies* by Wenden and Rubin (1987), *learning strategies* by O'Malley and Chamot (1994) and *language learning strategies* (LLS) by Oxford (1990a, 1990b). Wenden and Rubin (1987, p. 6) use the term *learner strategies* to refer to the three “distinct but closely related phenomenon” that guide research on learner strategies: what learners actually do to learn a second language or “language learning behaviors”, their knowledge about the strategies they use or “strategic knowledge”, and knowledge about “aspects of their language learning other than the strategies they use”. Although Macaro (2001, p. 19) admits that *language learning strategies* and *learner strategies* are synonymous and used interchangeably in the literature, he makes some distinctions between the two. He argues that while *learner strategies* are used by learners to help them accomplish all language-related tasks, *language learning strategies* may not be associated with any recognizable language task, thus the former will often cover the latter. Another distinction made by Macaro is that *learner strategies* seems to carry more emphasis that would be placed on the learners as “active participants” in the learning process. He further argues that the term *language learning strategies* is used to refer to strategies that are specifically related to the language learning process while *learner strategies* might cover techniques in the learning of any subject.

2.3.2 Definition

The fuzziness which characterizes the field of learning strategies as Ellis (1994, p. 529) comments is not only obvious in the use of terminologies but also in the use of definitions. The lack of consensus on defining language learning strategies was pointed out as early as 1975 by Naiman, Frohlich and Stern. It was then confirmed eight years later by Bialystok (1983, p. 100) as follow: “There is little consensus in the literature concerning either the definition or the identification of language learning strategies”. On explaining the absence in consensus, Macaro (2001) argues that researchers and authors from different spheres of interest are affected by their domains when looking at the same matter, some from a psycholinguistic viewpoint and some from a pedagogical one. A review of the literature provides the following definitions:

<i>Source</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Tarone (1983)	An attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language -- to incorporate these into one's interlanguage competence.
Stern (1983)	Strategy is best reserved for general tendencies or overall characteristics of the approach employed by the language learner, leaving techniques as the term to refer to particular forms of observable learning behavior.
Weinstein and Mayer (1986)	The behaviors and thoughts that a learner engages in during learning that are intended to influence the learner's encoding process.
Wenden and Rubin (1987)	Any set of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information.
Rubin (1987)	Are strategies which contribute to the development of the language system which the learner constructs and affect learning directly.
Chamot (1987)	Techniques, approaches or deliberate actions that students take in order to facilitate the learning, recall of both linguistic and content area information.
Oxford (1989)	Behaviours or actions which learners use to make language learning more successful, self-directed and enjoyable.
O'Malley and Chamot (1990)	The special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information.
Stern (1992)	The concept of learning strategy is dependent on the assumption that learners consciously engage in activities to achieve certain goals and learning strategies can be regarded as broadly conceived intentional directions and learning techniques.

Oxford (1992/1993)	Language learning strategies -- specific actions, behaviours, steps, or techniques that students (often intentionally) use to improve their progress in developing L2 skills. These strategies can facilitate the internalization, storage, retrieval, or use of the new language. Strategies are tools for the self-directed involvement necessary for developing communicative ability.
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Table 2.1: Definitions of learning strategies from the literature

As Lessard-Clouston (1997) points out, there is a change over time in those definitions, and this is reflected through a shift from focusing on “the product of LLS” to “the processes and the characteristics of LLS”. In other words, rather than considering linguistic and sociolinguistic competence as objectives to be achieved in learning the target language by using language learning strategies, researchers in the field now put a greater emphasis on the nature of language learning strategies themselves.

However, according to Ellis (1994, p. 531-532), those definitions also reveal a number of problems. First of all, there is a distinction in the perception of learning strategies about whether they are behavioral or mental or both. For example, while Oxford (1989, 1992/1993) sees learning strategies as “behaviours”, Weinstein and Mayer (1986) view them as both “behaviors and thoughts”. Another problem is what kind of behaviours can be counted as learning strategies. While Stern (1983) makes a distinction between strategies and techniques, others such as Chamot (1987) and Oxford (1992/1993) have used the former to refer to behaviours called techniques by Stern. Stern argues that strategies are general approaches to learning while techniques refer to the kind of observable behaviours that are evident in particular areas of language learning such as grammar and vocabulary. The third problem revealed in those definitions is the matter of consciousness. Although not many researchers address this issue in their definitions, the argument that language learning strategies are consciously employed by learners has been put forward by several researchers such as Wenden and Rubin (1987), Oxford (1990) and Cohen (1998).

On describing the six criteria which characterize language learning strategies, Wenden and Rubin (1987, p. 8) state that “sometimes strategies *may be consciously deployed*”. They further provide situations in which this may happen, such as “when something new is being learned; when accuracy and/or appropriateness are considered important; when there is a need to correct or relearn familiar material; when there is an unexpected

breakdown in understanding”. Consciousness is also regarded as one of the features of language learning strategies by Oxford (1990). Cohen (1998, p. 4) confirms that “the element of consciousness is what distinguishes *strategies* from those processes that are not strategic” although “this is a controversial issue”. He argues that the term “process” should be used to refer to behaviours which are so unconscious that the learner cannot identify any strategies associated with them. Ellis (1994) also shares this view by pointing out: “if strategies become so automatic that the learners are no longer conscious of employing them, they are no longer accessible for description through verbal report by the learners and thus lose their significance as strategies” (Cohen, 1998, p. 11 as cited Ellis, 1994). The two other problems concerning the definitions of learning strategies pointed out by Ellis are whether learning strategies affect the development of the interlanguage directly or indirectly, and what motivates strategy use. For example, while Rubin (1987) claims a direct effect, Seliger proposes a more indirect one. Finally, concerning what motivates learning strategy use, learning strategies are said by almost all the definitions listed in Table 2.1 to be used in order to facilitate the learning of the second language. However, the definition by Oxford (1989) added that learning strategies can have an affective purpose, that is, they can make learning enjoyable.

2.3.3 Classification

It is important to note that how learning strategies are defined has an influence on how they are classified. Therefore, how to classify language learning strategies is also one factor which contributes to the “fuzzy” nature of the field. A number of taxonomies have been created in an attempt to classify language learning strategies; however, this “remains no easy task” (Griffiths, 2004). Those taxonomies created so far reflect both overlap and conflict. For example, Rubin’s (1975) very early classification has resulted in “a certain arbitrariness in the classification of learning strategies” as Stern (1992, p. 264) acknowledges. Rubin’s classification consists of two types of learning strategies: direct (clarification/verification, monitoring, memorization, guessing/inductive reasoning, deductive reasoning, and practice) and indirect ones (creating opportunities for practice and production tricks). That *communication strategies* are considered as a kind of indirect learning strategies by Rubin has led to controversy. Tarone (1980) also shares the same viewpoint as Rubin by arguing that communication strategies can help enhance language input which in turn results in learning. However, others such as Brown (1980) and Ellis (1994) view learning strategies and communication strategies as

“two quite separate manifestations of language learner behaviour” (Griffiths, 2004) with Brown’s argument that “communication is the output modality and learning is the input modality” (p. 87). Both Brown and Ellis point out communication strategies such as avoidance or message abandonment which aim to compensate for the lack of linguistic knowledge may even prevent learning. According to Tarone (1980, p. 419), it is the motivation of whether to communicate or to learn that determines if a strategy is considered as communication or learning strategy. This early classification of language learning strategies by Rubin is not only controversial but also incomprehensive since the system is based on research focusing only on successful language learners.

A later classification by O’Malley et al. (1985) has been broadened to include more social and communicative strategies. O’Malley et al.’s classification consists of three main categories: metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies and socioaffective strategies. This inclusion of socioaffective category, as Griffiths points out (2004, p. 4), “was an important step in the direction of acknowledging the importance of interactional strategies in language learning”. However, the most comprehensive classification of all as acknowledged by a number of authors (Griffiths, 2004; Brown, 2005) is Oxford’s (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning which consists of six groups of strategies embedded in two main classes, direct and indirect. Direct strategies include memory, cognitive and compensation strategies, directly involving target language. Indirect strategies which indirectly support language learning are metacognitive, affective and social strategies. Oxford’s classification of language learning strategies is most comprehensive in that it attempts to deal with the shortcomings of many previous inventories with “a severely limited number of items reflecting affective and social strategies” and “a relative overabundance of cognitive and metacognitive strategies” (Green & Oxford, 1995, p. 265). Oxford’s classification of language learning strategies was used in this research because of its comprehensiveness and applicability to writing.

2.3.4 Research into language learning strategies

Despite the lack of consensus in terminology, definition and classification, the amount of research in the field of language learning strategy in recent years has been growing. The earliest body of research in the field has focused on describing and identifying strategies used by successful L2 learners. Included in this body of research is the study carried out by Rubin in 1975 in an attempt to suggest a model of good language

learners. Such effort has resulted in a list of strategies and characteristics which describe good language learners as those who are *willing and accurate guessers, have a strong motivation to communicate, are often not inhibited, practise, monitor their own and others' speech, and attend to meaning*. Another list which consists of ten language learning strategies was also created by Stern at around the same time as Rubin. According to Stern (1975), the good language learner possesses the following: *positive learning strategies, an active approach to the learning task, a tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language which is empathetic with its speakers, technical know-how about how to tackle a language, strategies of experimentation and planning with the object of developing the meaning, willingness to practice, willingness to use the language in real communication, critically sensitive self-monitoring and language use, and an ability to develop the target language more and more as a separate reference system while learning to think about it*. These two different suggested models of the good language learners can be explained by the pursuing of two different definitions of learning strategies. More strategies have been added to the list as a result of studies carried out by a number of other researchers such as Naiman, Frohlich, Stern, and Todesco (1978), Reiss (1985), Ramirez (1986), O'Malley and Chamot (1990). In addition to the identification of learning strategies by good language learners, research findings also demonstrate that those learners often “use strategies in an orchestrated fashion” (Oxford, 1994). For example, Chamot and Kupper (1989) found that strategies supporting one another are selected and tailored by successful language learners to meet the requirements of the language task; and more specifically, cognitive and metacognitive strategies are the two that are often used together (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

While early research puts a great emphasis on describing good language learners, more attention has been paid to less successful language learners in recent times, based on the assumption that those learners lack strategies used by successful ones. This reflects an attempt to give remedy to the strategies of less successful language learners. Research comparing more and less successful language learners has confirmed that less successful language learners do use learning strategies and are even learning strategy active users (Chamot & El-Dinary, 1999; Khaldieh, 2000; Vandergrift, 1997a, 1997b). Vann and Abraham's (1990) case study using think-aloud protocols and task product analysis to investigate learning strategies of two Saudi Arabian unsuccessful learners demonstrates that these two learners are “remarkably similar to successful learners in

their repertoire of strategies” (p. 190). The research findings also provide counter-evidence for the claim by Wenden (1985, p. 7) that unsuccessful learners are “inactive”. However, the difference between more and less successful learners lies in the fact that successful learners are aware of the strategies used and why they use them (Lavine & Oxford, in press; Vann & Abraham, 1987; O’Malley & Chamot, 1990) while those less successful learners do not seem to be aware of the potential role of learning strategies in learning the target language (Graham, 2004). In addition, much research has also revealed that less successful learners apply strategies inappropriately (Block, 1986; Galloway & Labarca, 1991; Stern, 1975; Vann & Abraham, 1990) and in an unconnected and uncontrolled way (Abraham & Vann, 1987; Chamot et al., 1996).

In addition to the effort to suggest differences between more and less successful language learners, researchers in the field of language learning strategies are also interested in how factors such as language proficiency, gender, motivation etc. affect strategy use. Research investigating the relationship between language proficiency and strategy use has shown that more proficient language learners report not only to use higher level of overall strategy but to frequently use a greater number of strategy categories. Griffiths’ study in 2003 which involved 348 students in a private language school in New Zealand shows “language learning strategies were reportedly used significantly more frequently by advanced students than by elementary students” (Griffiths, 2004, p. 13).

In terms of gender, many studies have reported a greater overall strategy use for females than males. The study by Oxford and Nyikos (1989) reveals that strategies are employed far more often by females than males. The distinct gender differences in strategy use are also confirmed by Ehrman and Oxford (1989) in such strategy classifications as general study strategies, strategies for authentic language use, strategies for searching for and communicating meaning, and metacognitive or self-management strategies. In the Chinese context, Sy’s (1994) study found that cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, and social strategies are used more significantly by females than males. However, later research by Ehrman and Oxford (1990) found no evidence for gender difference. Griffiths (2004) concludes that although gender difference may not always be evident but “where differences are found women tend to use more language learning strategies than men” (p. 14).

Regarding motivation, more motivated students are reported to use more strategies than their less motivated peers. Career choice was discovered by Ehrman and Oxford (1989) to be the motivation that has a major effect on reported language strategies use. The relationship between strategy use and other factors such as learning style (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989), cultural background (Grainger, 1997; Wharton, 2000), attitudes and beliefs, types of task, and tolerance of ambiguity has also been investigated. However, the relationship is not as salient as proficiency, gender and motivation.

In summary, the body of research investigating language learning strategies which began in the sixties has yielded valuable insights into the strategies of language learners. Studies focusing on defining good language learners by Rubin (1975), Stern (1975), Naiman, Frohlich, Stern and Todesco (1978), Reiss (1985), Ramirez (1986), O'Malley and Chamot (1990) resulted in a list of strategies and characteristics describing good language learners. Learning strategies used by unsuccessful language learners as well as factors influencing language learning strategy use such as language proficiency, gender, motivation etc. has also been explored. An investigation of composition strategies took place at the same time as the body of research into learning strategies. There are three major approaches to teaching and researching writing, namely the product, process, and genre approach. These are presented in the next section before a review of composition research.

2.4. Three major approaches to teaching and researching writing

Each approach to teaching writing has its own focus and instructions which result in the use of different strategies to accomplish the writing task. As a result, the methods of investigating writing strategies are, to a great extent, influenced by the approach to teaching writing. A review of three major approaches to teaching writing, namely, product, process, and genre approaches will be provided before looking at what researchers in the field have found.

2.4.1 Product/text-based approach

The product approach came earliest and was popular in the 1960s until the 1970s. The source of this approach was the audio-lingual method, “the dominant mode of instruction” (Raimes, 1991, p. 407) in the sixties. The audio-lingual method puts a strong emphasis on speech, seeing it as primary; thus viewing writing as means of reinforcing oral patterns of the language. In this approach writing performs its function as tester of accurate application of grammatical rules by means of sentence drills such as fill-ins, substitutions, transformations and completions.

Later in the early seventies, writing instruction moved beyond sentence level to passages of connected speech and students manipulated linguistic forms within a provided text. It is also structuralism and Noam Chomsky’s Transformational Grammar that provides the basic premises for the product approach. At the center of this model is the view that writing is “a textual product, a coherent arrangement of elements structured according to a system of rules” (Hyland, 2002, p. 6). Texts are said to be independent of writers, readers and contexts in which they are produced. They have their own structures made up of words, clauses and sentences following correct orders. Accordingly, writing is seen as depending on neither writers nor readers but forms to encode meanings. The idea that texts are contextually independent implies that language is the means to carry out human communication by transferring ideas from one mind to another; meanings can be decoded by anyone having the right decoding skills regardless of context and writer; and conformation to homogeneous rules leads to no conflict of interpretations and understandings.

Since texts are considered contextually independent objects, “learners’ compositions are seen as *langue*, that is, a demonstration of the writer’s knowledge of forms and his or her awareness of the system of rules used to create texts” (Hyland, 2002, p. 7). Thus,

writing is assessed on criteria such as factual display and clear exposition, and instructions aim at explicitness and accuracy. Playing the center role in composition classes are teachers who use guided composition as the main teaching method. Learners passively receive knowledge of rules from teachers. The content of writing was often supplied and involved no context, what is expected to create good writing is the ability to recall and manipulate learned structures.

Not long after that, the product approach was strongly criticized for the fact that undue attention was paid to the evaluation of written products so that other “more important considerations such as purpose, audience, and the process of composing itself” (Zamel, 1982, p. 195) were ignored. This gave birth to a new approach to writing which dominated in the seventies, the process approach.

2.4.2 Process approach

The process approach started in the 1970s as a reaction by teachers and researchers against the product approach. This new approach to teaching writing was mainly influenced by first language writing research into composition process “under the assumption that before we know how to teach writing, we must first understand how we write” (Zamel, 1982, p. 196). Old concerns for textual products such as accuracy and patterns were replaced by the concern for the process that learners engage in when they write. In other words, process approach views writing as a “non-linear, exploratory and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning” (Zamel, 1983, p. 165). This “non-linear” process was described by Emig (1983) as a “recursive” process which entails left to right pre-writing → writing → post-writing activities. The recursive nature of composing lies in the fact that writers can move back and forth through different steps such as planning, drafting, revising, editing; thus, resulting in a variety of new classroom tasks. Journals, invention, peer collaboration, revision, and attention to content before form replaced the focus on grammar and patterns which were dominant in text-oriented, product approach. Instead of teachers’ intervention in the very first process of exploring ideas, students have opportunity to select topics, generate ideas, make outlines, write drafts, revise and give feedback. Any attention to grammar is delayed at least until after ideas have been generated.

A number of models of writing process have been proposed since the inception of the process approach. These include Hayes-Flower (1980) model, Hayes (1996) model and the Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) model.

2.4.2.1 Hayes-Flower (1980) model

The earliest and influential model introduced was the Hayes-Flower model in 1980. The writing process was described by Hayes and Flower to consist of the task- environment, the writer’s long-term memory and a monitor. The monitor plays the function of controlling the whole process of writing via a number of cognitive sub-processes of planning, translating thought into text, and revising (see Figure 1).

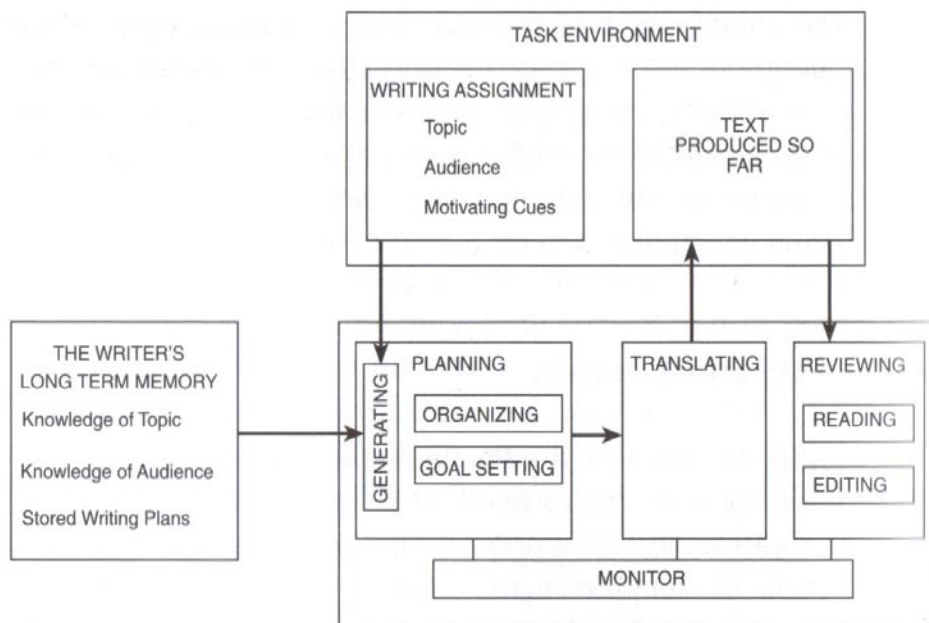


Figure 1 *The Hayes-Flower (1980) writing model*

According to this model, writing operates following three general phases, including planning, translating, and reviewing. The first phase, planning, works by retrieving the relevant information from the task environment and the writer’s long term memory via the operation of the generating sub-operation. The relevant information then undergoes another sub-operation called “organizing” which selects the most useful materials and organizes them to make writing plans. In the phase of translating, the materials from the writer’s long-term memory which are in accordance with the writer’s goals and plans are retrieved for the formulation of sentences. The outcome text produced by the translating phase then goes under a review for quality which aims to ensure that the text written meets the established goals. The reviewing phase first starts with the reading of the written text, and then finishes with the editing sub-operation which corrects grammatical errors, alters the contents, and improves the quality of the writing.

The Hayes-Flower model is useful in the explanation for individual differences in writing strategies “as different approaches to composing tasks can be represented by different models that fit into this general structure” (Hyland, 2002, p. 26). Although the model has contributed to our greater understanding of writing and strongly influenced the ways of investigating writing, it also reveals some limitations. Firstly, as Hyland (2002) stated, research into writing following this model uses think-aloud protocols as a major method, which has been claimed not to fully record writing process. This is because it is argued that think-aloud protocol, a kind of verbal self-report while performing a writing task, may cause an overload for the short-term memory. More importantly, according to Hyland (2002), the cognitive process being reported might be potentially distorted by participants’ explanation rather than their reflection on what they actually do. Think-aloud protocols are also criticized for the “difficulties of bringing unconscious processing to the level of conscious reporting” (Hyland, 2002, p. 27). Secondly, the Hayes-Flower model is criticized for “its claim to comprehensiveness”, that is, “to describe all possible composing behavior” (Bizzell, 1992, p. 185). The problem here, according to Bizzell (1992), is that although Hayes and Flower have acknowledged that not every act of writing will need every possible behavior, the claim has led some researchers to explain the difference between successful and unsuccessful writers on the basis of how fully the cognitive activities are used. Despite those limitations, the Hayes-Flower model was influential in providing a theoretical basis for other later models (Alamargot & Chanquoy, 2001, p. 20-21).

2.4.2.2 Hayes (1996) model

Developed on the basis of the Hayes-Flower model, Hayes’ model of writing process in 1996 shows a focus on various factors which influence the writing process, “particularly those internal to the writer” (Weigle, 2002, p. 24).

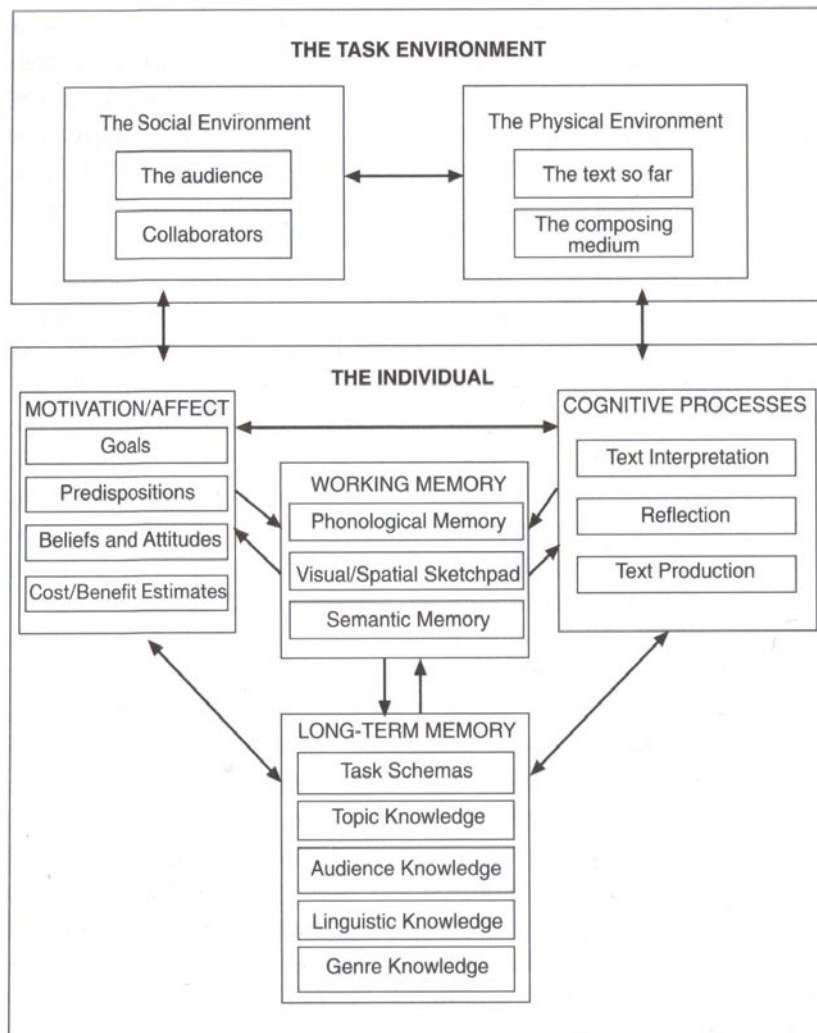


Figure 2 *The Hayes (1996) writing model*

This focus is reflected in the replacement of the individual rather than the writer’s long-term memory as a major component of the writing process. The writing process still consists of the task environment; however, it is divided into social and physical ones. The social environment includes the audience, whether real or imagined, and collaborators who interact with the writer during the writing process. The physical environment still comprises texts written so far but was broadened to add composing medium as an element. This addition of composing medium is explained by Weigle (2002) because of the profound influence of technological innovations “on both the cognitive and social aspects of writing”.

However, the distinctive feature that makes Hayes’ model an update of the Hayes-Flower model is the emphasis on the individual. The four components making up the individual aspects of writing are working memory, motivation/affect, cognitive processes and long-term memory. The working memory in Hayes’ model derives from the conception of working memory of Baddeley (1986). Baddeley and Logie (1999)

define working memory as “functional components of cognition that allow humans to comprehend and mentally represent their immediate environment, to retain information about their immediate past experience, to support the acquisition of new knowledge, to solve problems, and to formulate, relate, and act on current goals” (p. 28-29). The working memory that was first developed by Baddeley consists of a central executive or controlling mechanism or executive controller which provides mechanisms for the control of all the processes in the working memory, and two subsidiary or “slave” systems – the phonological loop and the visuospatial sketchpad which are responsible for processing and maintaining verbally coded information and visual/or spatial information, respectively. Based on Baddeley’s working memory model, Hayes’ working memory also includes the two aforementioned systems, and semantic memory to store conceptual information.

Motivation and affect are acknowledged by Hayes to have an important role to play in writing. To be more specific, the way a writer handles the writing task and the effort that he or she puts into that task may be affected by the writer’s goals, predispositions, beliefs and attitudes, and cost/benefit estimates. This is evident in Dweck (1986) and Palmquist and Young’s (1992) research. Such research findings have revealed that the effort that students put into the writing task is strongly influenced by their beliefs about the characteristics of successful performance. Students who view writing as an innate ability are less likely to think of themselves as writers and tend to give up while those who believe effort leads to success tend to work harder.

A number of cognitive processes occurring through both drafting and revising in Hayes’ model are text interpretation, reflection, and text production. Listening, reading and scanning graphics are involved in text interpretation process during which “internal representations are created from linguistic and graphic input” (Weigle, 2000, p. 25-26). In the process of reflection, existing internal representations helps create new internal representations which in turn produce new linguistic or graphic output in the text production process. Embedded in this third component of the individual is another cognitive process – reading, which Hayes considers a central process in writing. According to Hayes, there are three types of essential reading involved in writing. Reading to evaluate is the kind of reading in which the writer’s own text is critically “scanned” by his or herself in order to detect errors and how to correct those. Reading to evaluate employs a number of cognitive processes such as decoding words, applying

both grammar and semantic knowledge, making instantiations and factual inferences, using schemas and world knowledge, and so on, and possible problems as well as possible discoveries while reading to evaluate. The type of revising, whether local (sentence level) or global (errors of content and organization), is determined by the writer's proficiency. Three reasons proposed by Hayes in order to explain the failure to revise on a global level are poor reading skills, inadequate working memory, and inadequately developed task schema for revision, or in other words, global errors may not received adequate attention of writers. Reading source texts and reading instructions are the two other types of reading for writing. Reading source texts is important because of the "obvious relationship between the ability to understand the source text and the ability to use the information from the text in one's writing" (Weigle, 2000, p. 28). Likewise, reading instruction relates to writing in that the understanding of the task instruction determines how the tasks are addressed.

The fourth and last component of the individual in the Hayes model is the long-term memory which stores relevant information and knowledge of writing. Embedded in the long-term memory are task schemas, knowledge about the topic, knowledge about the audience, linguistic knowledge, and genre knowledge. Task schemas are defined by Hayes as "packages of information stored in long-term memory that specify how to carry out a particular task" (1996, p. 24). Knowledge about the topic is all that the writer has in order to write about that topic and knowledge of the audience consists of considerations of social and cultural issues involved in writing. The last two types of knowledge, linguistic and genre knowledge refer to the knowledge about the language forms brought into the writing and the "knowledge about the socially and culturally appropriate forms that writing takes in a given situation for a given purpose" (Weigle, 2000, p. 28).

Although the Hayes model is the version which has added a number of new dimensions considering the various factors that influence writing, compared to the original model of Flowers and Hayes, it is still incomplete. First of all, according to Weigle (2002), the model is incomplete in that it lacks "specificity in defining the situational variables involved in writing" (p. 28). She then suggests Grabe and Kaplan's (1996) model of writing which describes the task environment in terms of participants, setting, task, text, and topic including a detailed taxonomy of examples of those variables, as a supplementary model. The second shortcoming in the Hayes model pointed out by

Weigle is the inadequate attention to linguistic knowledge. Grabe and Kaplan's model is once again suggested for this gap. Linguistic knowledge is a category of language knowledge relevant to writing that was developed based on the work of researchers such as Hymes (1972), Canale and Swain (1980), and Bachman (1990). Linguistic knowledge consists of knowledge of the written code, knowledge of phonology and morphology, vocabulary, syntactic/structural knowledge, awareness of differences across languages, and awareness of relative proficiency in different languages and registers. Weigle further argues that the Hayes model, when in combination with that of Grabe and Kaplan, will hold significant implications for second language writers.

Arguing that skilled writers are radically different from novice writers in terms of cognitive processes, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) propose a two-model description of writing in order to account for the difference.

2.4.2.3 Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) model

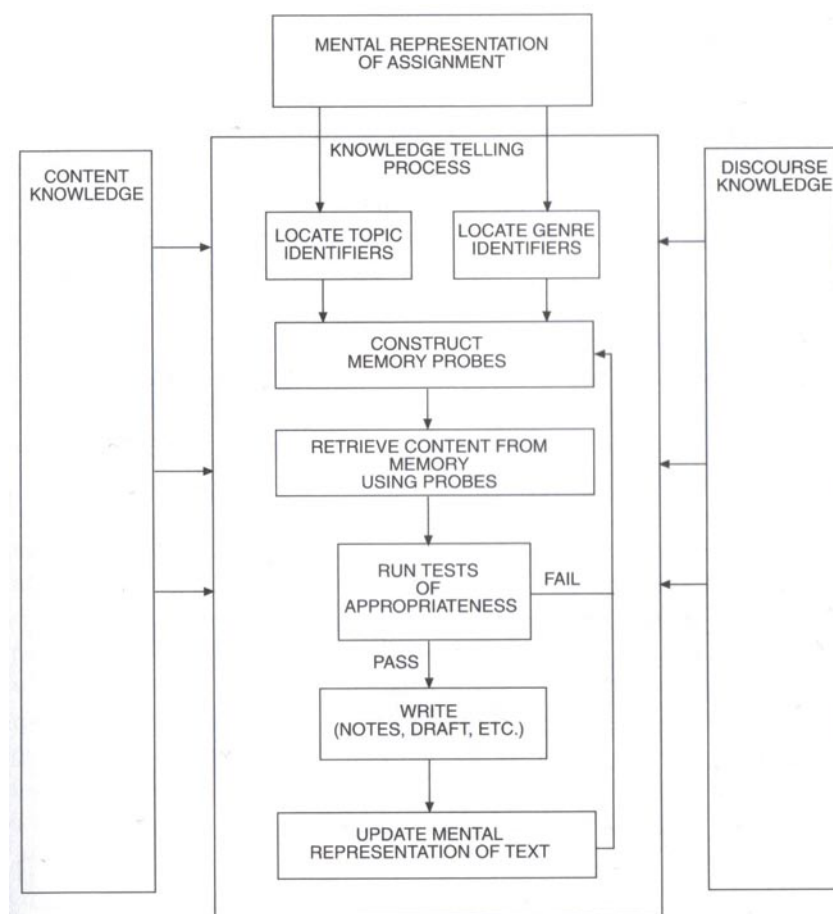


Figure 3 Structure of the knowledge-telling model (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987)

The model of writing by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) consists of two main components – Knowledge Telling Strategy (Figure 3) and Knowledge Transforming Strategy. Knowledge Telling Strategy is a “novice strategy that globally consists of producing a text by formulating ideas as they are retrieved or generated from Long Term Memory, without reorganizing the conceptual content or the linguistic form of the text” (Alamargot & Chanquoy, 2001, p. 6). This kind of strategy is called “natural” or “unproblematic” by Bereiter and Scardamalia because it involves hardly any planning or revision and more importantly, it involves no interaction with any partners who are said to provide “a continual source of cues” (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987, p. 55) to generate ideas like in conversations. Instead of relying on a conversation partner for ideas, beginning writers depend on three sources of input – the topic or the assignment, the writers’ discourse schema, and the texts written so far.

The operation of Knowledge Telling Strategy is as follow. Firstly, topic and function of the text will be defined by the mental representation of instructions (Mental Representation of Assignment) which also guides the Topic Identifiers and Genre Identifiers in identifying text topic and type. Those two, in turn guide the operation of Construct Memory Probe stage in which various memory probes are elaborated in order to retrieve knowledge related to the content and nature of the text occurring in the fourth stage of Retrieve Content from Memory Using Probes. Such knowledge, after being retrieved from Content Knowledge and Discourse Knowledge, will be examined for appropriateness in consideration of the text topic and nature by Test of Appropriateness. Appropriate content will be written down; some memory probes will be elaborated again in case of inappropriate knowledge. The whole operation ends when no appropriate knowledge is found. The same cycle is repeated but using the texts written so far as a source for additional memory probes.

Knowledge Transforming Strategy (see Figure 4) is different from Knowledge Telling Strategy in its “expert” nature involving “an important planning of the text content” (Alamargot & Chanquoy, 2001, p. 8), particularly in its complex problem-solving system which is activated by the interaction between the Mental Representation of Assignment component and the Knowledge Telling Process.

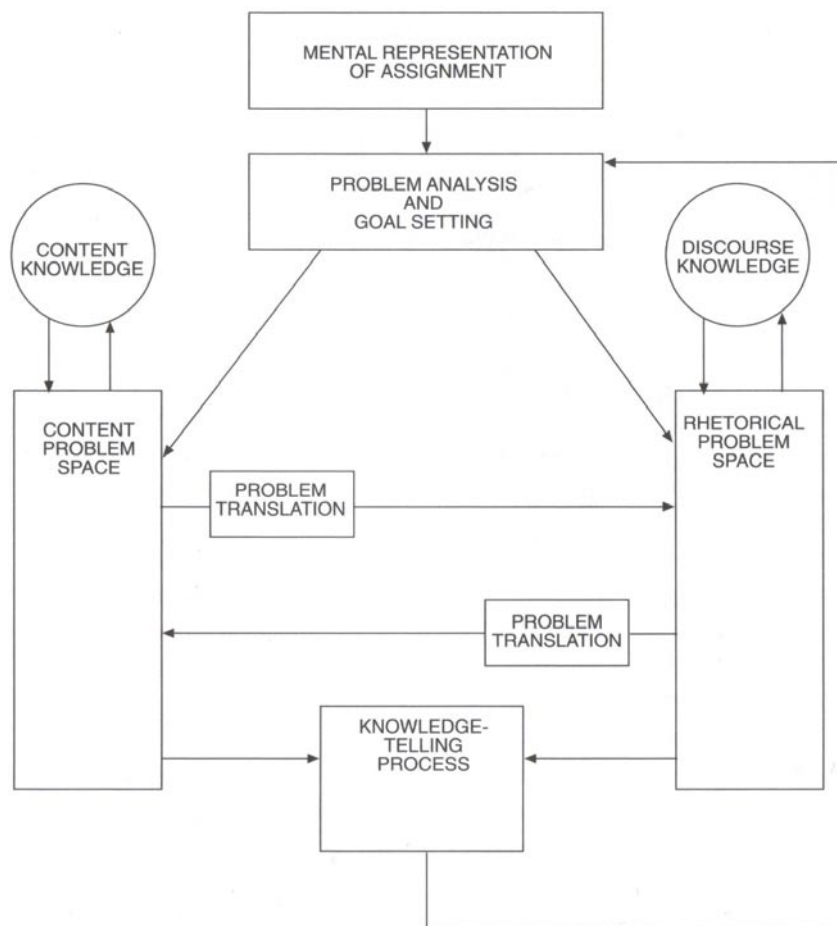


Figure 4 *Structure of the knowledge-transforming model (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987)*

The cycle starts with Problem Analysis and Goal Setting which gives rise to a number of complex analyses of tasks, objectives, and means to get those objectives. These problem-solving activities take place in two spaces, Content Problem Space responsible for dealing with issues of belief and knowledge, and Rhetorical Problem Space for means to achieve objectives having been set out earlier. However, unlike in Knowledge Telling Strategy, there is a close interaction between these two domains which is reflected in that “an attempt to find a solution to a content problem may lead the writer to a rhetorical problem and vice versa” (Weigle, 2000, p. 34) via the operation of Problem Translation. The Knowledge Telling Process will then perform its function of producing the written text based on solutions to content and rhetorical problems having been given. Knowledge Transforming Strategy is claimed by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) to be associated with expert writers.

According to Grabe and Kaplan (1996), Bereiter and Scardamalia’s model accounts for the differences not only between skilled and unskilled writers but also among skilled writers in terms of task difficulty. Skilled writers differ from unskilled writers in that

they use substantially different and more refined writing strategies than those unskilled writers. More effort is put into solving content and rhetorical problems with difficult writing task by some skilled writers than some others. The notions of knowledge telling and knowledge transformation themselves, as Grabe and Kaplan argue, are also very useful for writing pedagogy and writing assessment. However, the model is limited in that it does not show or explain “how writers actually make the cognitive transition to a *knowledge-transforming* model ... what occurs in the intervening stages and whether the process is the same for all learners” (Hyland, 2002, p. 28).

Although the process approach to teaching writing allows us to understand writing in a different way more comprehensively than with the product approach, there are limitations. Following is an evaluative summary of some pros and cons of the process approach adapted from Hyland (2002, p. 29):

Pros

- Major impact on both the theory and methodology of teaching writing in L1 and L2 contexts
- A useful corrective to earlier preoccupation with the accuracy of product outcomes
- Important in raising teachers’ awareness of what writing involves – contributing to a professionalisation of writing teaching.
- Gives greater respect for individual differences among student writers
- Raises many new research questions which remain to be answered

Cons

- Overemphasizes psychological factors in writing
- Focuses on the writer as a solitary individual engaged in a struggle to discover and communicate personal meaning and fails to recognize writing is a social activity
- Based on individualistic ideologies which may hamper the writing development of ESL students
- Ignores important influences of content, especially differences of class, gender and ethnicity
- Downplays the varied expectations and conventions of professional and academic communities
- Uncertain whether this approach greatly improves students writing

In spite of the fact that limitations are often an inherent part of any approach to teaching and researching writing, a process approach to investigate writing strategies was adopted in this study for the fact that it was the approach which was used to teach writing at the research site.

2.4.3 Genre approach

The last major approach to writing, which began in the eighties as a reaction against the process approach and has been now widely applied in teaching academic writing, is the genre approach. Based on the major concept of genres as “systems of complex literate activity constructed through typified actions” (Bazerman, 1994, p. 79), the genre approach views writing as the conformation to “certain conventions” to organize ideas for certain social purposes (Hyland, 2002, p. 16). However, there are three distinctive approaches to genre which are different from one another in theory and origin, thus, resulting in different genre-based pedagogies. Systemic functional linguistics developed by Halliday in Australia defines genres as “staged, goal-oriented” social processes in which participants achieve their purpose by following “a conventional, step-wise structure” (Hyland, 2002, p. 17). Accordingly, knowledge of genres serves as a means for achieving social purpose in everyday life. Therefore, genre analysts play a very important role in the elaboration of genres. The systemic functional approach to genres has its own genre-based pedagogy. Teaching writing involves the provision of genres which are “identified by their structure and by repeated patterns” such as procedure, description, report, and explanation (Hyland, 2002, p. 18). For certain type of genre, there are certain linguistic choices within and above sentence level which can be provided to students via the teaching of explicit grammar by teachers. Then, learning to write is actually the practice of selecting appropriate genres and appropriate linguistic materials for certain types of readers. However, such genre-based pedagogies have been influential primarily in Australia and have had major impact on L1 writing (primary and secondary school children) and adult migrant second language learners (Feez, 2002); thus, “they still have not exerted a great influence on ESL/EFL writing classes in tertiary education settings despite their great potential” (Poedjosoedarmo, 2005, p. 114).

The second approach to genre – the ESP (English for Specific Purposes) approach also views language as a means to accomplish social goals and desires to elaborate explicit recurrent features of texts for the teaching of genre. However, the type of genres under the ESP perspective is restricted by “shared purposes recognized by the member of a particular community” (Hyland, 2002, p. 17). Swales’ (1990) “Create a Research Space” model which proposes moves for writing introductions in research articles, for example, is the best-known analysis of a genre. Structures of other genres for professional and academic purposes have also been proposed such as abstracts (Hyland, 2000), Business response letters (Ghadessy, 1993), corporate mission statements

(Swales & Rogers, 1995) and so on. Since applications of this approach are closely associated with academic purposes, it has exerted little impact on general-purpose ESL/EFL writing classrooms.

While systemic functional and ESP approaches to genre make every effort to elaborate genres for the purpose of better understanding and teaching writing, New Rhetoric approach aims to raise students' awareness of "contextual features and the assumptions and aims of the communities who use the genres in order to provide a critical understanding of rhetorical features and their effectiveness" (Hyland, 2002, p. 19 as cited in Bazerman, 1988, p. 323). According to Coe (1994, 2002), like systemic functional approach, New Rhetoric approach to genre mostly dominates L1 contexts. Its influence on ESL/EFL writing is minimal.

Despite its significant influence on teaching writing to ESP learners, genre pedagogy is limited in that there can be a danger of perceiving genre as "sets of rules", which may be caused by a failure to acknowledge "variation and choice in writing" by untrained or unimaginative teachers (Hyland 2003, p. 22).

This section has presented the three major approaches to teaching and researching writing, namely the product, process, and genre approach. The product approach which was dominant in the sixties and seventies has no longer been an attraction as "the investigation of students' written products tells us very little about their instructional needs" (Zamel, 1983, p. 165). The genre approach, although it has been gaining status in the teaching of academic writing teaching, it has had little influence on ESL/EFL writing classes. On the contrary, the focus on writing behaviours which began in the eighties as a reaction against the product approach has led to a large body of research, yielding more insights into the writing behaviours of both L1 and L2 writers. A review of a number of L1 and L2 composition studies are presented in the next section.

2.5 Research into writing strategies

We cannot teach students to write by looking only at what they have written. We must also understand how that product came into being, and why it assumed the form that it did. We have to try to understand what goes on during the act of writing... if we want to affect its outcome. We have to do the hard thing, examine the intangible process, rather than the easy thing, evaluate the tangible product.

(Hairston, 1982, p. 84)

The inception of composition research following the process approach concerning what writers actually do when they write derives from the recognition that “the investigation of students’ written products tells us very little about their instructional needs” (Zamel, 1983, p. 165). Researchers in the field have been focusing on investigating writing behaviors, believing that an understanding of the composition process will provide more insights into ways of teaching it. This shift of focus in composition research occurred in both L1 and L2 research. However, it is interesting to note that “L2 composition teaching has generally not been based on theoretically derived insights gained from L2 composition research” (Kroll, 1990, p. 37). The simple explanation for this can be drawn from second language acquisition theorist Stephen Krashen’s (1984, p. 41) acknowledgement that “studies of second language writing are sadly lacking”. As a result, second language composition practitioners have relied on first language composition research for guidance and planning classes.

2.5.1 L1 composition research

The very first and most influential first language composition research was Emig’s (1971) *The composing processes of twelfth graders* which not only reflects the first attempt in making a shift of focus in composition orientation from product to process, also establishes “what has become the primary research design for conducting research into the writing process” (Kroll, 1990, p. 38). Emig’s participants were eight above average students selected from six different schools in Chicago. The writing process of those students was investigated using a case study approach through four sessions. Data was collected by means of think-aloud protocol in the first two sessions. Students were asked to compose aloud on whatever subject matter in the first session and were given a particular topic to compose aloud in the second session. The students’ think-aloud composition was both tape recorded and observed by the researcher. Interviews of the students’ writing experience both inside and outside schools were then carried out in the third session. The researcher also welcomed the students’ past writing samples. All interviews were, again, recorded. Before the final session, the students were asked to

produce “a piece of imaginative writing – a story, poem, sketch, or personal narrative” (Emig, 1971, p. 30). The whole process of producing the piece was recounted by those students and every plan and draft involving the written piece was collected at the final session. The students’ recounts were recorded on tape.

Despite some limitations regarding the research method, which are inherent in each method of data collection, this case study approach has been adopted by later L1 composition researchers in an attempt to explore the writing process. A body of L1 composition research has revealed the writing process of both skilled and unskilled L1 writers. Perl (1980) employed the case study approach and observed the recursive nature of the writing process in more proficient writers, in other words, they go back in order to move forward. Unskilled writers, in her study, were also reported to reexamine what had already been written as a strategy to guide the direction of their thoughts or to discover meaning. Although both groups of writers use what Perl calls “retrospective structuring” to discover meaning, what makes them different lies in their view of composition. One important finding in Perl’s research, and also an important aspect of the composition, is that “less skilled writers who view composing as more mechanical and formulaic are so inhibited by their concerns with correctness and form that they cannot get beyond the surface in order to anticipate the needs and expectations of their readers” (Zamel, 1982, p. 198 as cited in Perl, 1990b, p. 368).

Sommers’ (1980) study investigating revising strategies of student writers – twenty university freshmen and experienced adult writers including journalists, editors, and academics, to some extent, confirms Perl’s research findings. Sommers’ student writers demonstrated revision in a most limited way, reflected in their basic concerns with vocabulary and teacher-generated rules. They “decide to stop revising when they decide that they have not violated any of the rules for revising” (Sommers, 1980, p. 383). The reason for this, as explained by Sommers, lies in their view of composition as a linear process. Unlike student writers, Sommers’ experienced writers not only view revision as a recursive process “with different levels of attention and different agenda for each cycle” but also show concerns for their readers (Sommers, 1980, p. 385-386). Sommers explains that it is this holistic perspective and perception of revision that helps those experienced writers discover meaning and get rid of early concern for lexis.

Also in 1980, Rose carried out research in an attempt to understand why certain writers are blocked. Their findings corroborated Perl and Sommers' research findings. Rose's finding was that the blockers' composition is restricted by "writing rules or planning strategies that impeded rather than enhanced the composing process" (Rose, 1980, p. 390). On the contrary, her non-blockers, while following certain rules and plans, revealed an awareness that these are flexible and subject to modification.

In conclusion, the body of L1 composition research since the 1960s has provided insights into what L1 writers actually do when they write. The experienced writers possess a view of composition as a recursive and cyclical process to explore meaning, and they have a consideration for purpose and their readers (Perl, 1980a, 1980b; Sommers, 1980; Faigley & Witte, 1981). Furthermore, they also plan, and let ideas incubate. The unskilled writers are different from those experienced writers in that they pay more attention to form and correctness. They spend less time on creating meaning (Perl, 1990; Sommers, 1980; Rose, 1980), spend less time planning (Pianko, 1979), revise to make changes in terms of form rather than content, hardly rework ideas once they have put them on the page, and more importantly, they spend little time considering their readers (Flower, 1979). "The obsession with the final product ... is what ultimately leads to serious writing block" (Halsted, 1975, p. 82) in those inexperienced writers.

2.5.2 L2 composition research

Research in L1 composition process had an important role to play when second language composition researchers began their investigations. According to Kroll (1990), L1 composition research has had much influence on L2 research, especially with regard to research designs. Much L2 research has been carried out following L1 research designs and "seems to corroborate much of what we have learned from research in first language writing" (Zamel, 1984, p. 198). Early L2 composition studies demonstrated a central focus on the nature of L2 composition, particularly behaviors which either inhibit composition or result in successful and effective writing. The studies of researchers such as Jones (1982, 1983), Lay (1982, 1983), Zamel (1982, 1983), Tetroe and Jones (1983) reveal similarities between the writing process in L1 and L2. Second language writers are reported to use the same strategies as native language students in composition. Zamel (1982) adopted a case study approach, and interviewed each of eight proficient ESL students about their writing experience and behaviors to examine

the extent to which L1 findings apply to ESL writers. The findings were that, like skilled native language writers, Zamel's proficient ESL students experienced writing as a process of discovering meaning. Ideas and thoughts were explored on paper and attention was paid to both meaning and form that best expresses them. Moreover, they also considered their readers; and moved back and forth on their work.

Zamel went on with her investigation of the writing process of L2 students one year later. Her research participants were six advanced L2 students, and again, the case study approach was adopted. The participants in this research were her own university-level students who were both skilled and unskilled writers as decided by other L2 composition instructors. Those students were directly observed while composing, interviewed and were asked to provide all the written materials for the production of their essay. Again, findings from her previous study of skilled L2 writers were confirmed. Zamel found that the skilled writers not only spent more time writing but also revised more, which has been confirmed by Yang's research in 2002. Their primary concern was ideas, revision done at discourse level, and their writing process was recursive. Those findings also show that L2 skilled writers use similar writing strategies to those L1 counterparts described in Sommers' (1980) research. In contrast, the unskilled writers in Zamel's (1983) study exhibited the same strategies used by those unskilled writers in Sommers' research. Their attention was paid to small bits of the essay, and little time was spent on both revising and writing.

More information about unskilled L2 writers can be found in Raimes' (1985b) research. The eight participants were defined as unskilled writers by L2 composition instructors as in Zamel's (1983) study. The data derived from the students' score on the Michigan Proficiency Test, questionnaires, and think-aloud composition of forty-five minute essay. Raimes found that little planning was done by those unskilled writers before and during writing, a behavior typically observed among L1 and L2 unskilled writers. However, her unskilled writers exhibited some behaviors that make them different from their counterparts in previous studies. It is interesting to see that those unskilled writers appeared to possess a behavior often found in skilled writers, i.e. they let ideas develop by rereading their work. Moreover, they also revised and edited less than expected. These findings led Raimes to hypothesize that L2 writers might not be "as concerned with accuracy as we thought they were" (p. 246).

The role of first language use in L2 composition is also an aspect investigated by L2 composition researchers. Lay's (1982) investigation of four Chinese-speaking L2 students' L1 use in L2 composition showed that "when there are more native language switches (compared to the same essay without native language switches), the essays in this study were of better quality in terms of ideas, organization and details" (p. 406). However, the matter of whether first language use is a positive or negative strategy in L2 composition is still debated. In the study carried out by Zamel (1982), the most proficient writer was reported to use translation from L1 to L2 while her other subjects did not. This finding corresponds to those found by Cumming (1987). Using audio-taped think-aloud protocol, observation and questionnaire, Cumming found that L1 was not only used by expert writers to generate ideas but also check style. Meanwhile it was only used in the generation of ideas by inexperienced writers. The role of L1 use as a positive strategy in L2 composition was also confirmed by Friedlander (in Kroll, 1990) who provided evidence that writers are not constrained by translation, both in terms of time and quality of the composition.

Although there is evidence proving the positive effect of L1 use in L2 composition, studies by Johnson (1986) and Baker and Boonkit (2004) provide contradictory evidence. The subjects in Johnson's study showed that "the use of first language when writing in a second language was ill advised for advanced learners" (Kroll, 1990, p. 47 as cited in Johnson, 1986) as using L1 in L2 composition is like "being pulled by two brains" (Zamel, 1982, p. 201). In a study investigating learning strategies in reading and writing, Baker and Boonkit (2004) found that successful writers made less frequent use of the L1 than unsuccessful writers or that they did not use any at all.

This section has reviewed a number of L1 and L2 composition studies carried out as a result of a reaction to the focus on the writing product. Composition research started with Emig's study in 1971 and it has had a great influence on later research. It is important to note that the case study method used in Emig's study has effectively contributed to our understanding of the writing process of both skilled and unskilled L1 writers in such later studies as Perl (1980), Sommers (1980), and Rose (1980). This body of L1 composition research then, in its turn, lent its design to L2 composition research. Following L1 composition research designs, second language composition research has provided findings that corroborate with what has been found by L1 composition research. The writing process of both skilled and unskilled L2 writers has

been investigated. Second language writers are found to have the same writing process as native language writers (Jones 1982, 1983; Lay 1982, 1983; Zamel 1982, 1983, Tetroe & Jones 1983). However, L2 composition research has broadened its scope of investigation to examine the role of L1 in L2 writing. Although L2 composition studies have helped gain insights into the writing process of L2 writers, they have a number of limitations. Firstly, it is obvious that they relied heavily on qualitative methods of enquiry and so have been criticized for their inability to offer generalizations to other contexts. Secondly, there seems to have been a focus on native speakers of Chinese and Spanish. More research which combines quantitative and qualitative approaches and investigates other EFL contexts is needed in order to have a fuller picture of L2 writing strategies.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a review of the literature concerning areas of knowledge related to the focus of this study. Issues involving language learning strategies including terminology, definition and classification were firstly presented. Research into language learning was then reviewed. Secondly, three major approaches to teaching and researching writing were discussed in depth, with special attention being paid to three models of writing associated with the process approach. L1 and L2 composition research investigating writing strategies then followed.

It should be noted that a large amount of L2 composition research has followed L1 writing process research designs, employing mostly qualitative methods and case study approaches to address research questions. The qualitative data often included methods such as think-aloud composition, direct or indirect observation of students while composing, interviews, and the collection of written materials. There seems to have been a lack of research which combines qualitative and quantitative methods.

The present study reflects an attempt to fill in the gap in the literature. A case study approach, together with a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods, will be appropriate for answering the following research questions:

1. What are the writing strategies most frequently used by successful and less successful EFL students in Vietnam?
2. Is there any relationship between writing strategy use and the learners' success?

The participants were second year undergraduate EFL students at Hanoi University and divided into two groups of successful and less successful writers, based on the results from the final writing exam in their first year. Data was collected by means of questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and learning diaries. The study is, therefore, likely not only to add knowledge to the field but also benefit those students who participated, and potentially contribute to a more appropriate English writing teaching pedagogy at Hanoi University.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This methodology chapter is concerned with the framework in which the research was conducted. The chapter starts with the methodological approach that guided the research design. A mixed methods approach obtained by means of triangulation which combines quantitative and qualitative components was appropriate for answering the research questions. In the research design which then follows, the research instruments – structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and learning diaries are presented with justification. An overview of the context, participants and detailed procedures of data collection come next. These are then followed by the section specifying how data were analyzed. Data reliability and validity and ethical issues are addressed at the end of the chapter.

3.2 Methodological Approach

3.2.1 Mixed methods approach

Entertain mixed models. We have sought to make a virtue of avoiding polarization, polemics, and life at the extremes. Quantitative and qualitative inquiry can support and inform each other. Narratives and variable-driven analyses need to interpenetrate and inform each other. Realists, idealists, and critical theorists can do better by incorporating other ideas than by remaining pure. Think of it as hybrid vigour.

(Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 310)

The current study is an attempt to understand the learning strategies used by successful and less successful EFL learners. However, what makes it different from most previous studies is the use of a mixed methods approach, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, in answering the research questions. In the article “Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come”, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) presented mixed methods research as “the natural complement to traditional qualitative and quantitative research” (p. 14). Although it cannot be denied that both traditional paradigms are important and useful in tapping certain kind of knowledge, each has its own weaknesses and strengths. A quantitative approach is characterized by a focus on deduction, confirmation, theory/hypothesis testing, explanation, prediction, standardized data collection, and statistical analysis but it is criticized for its “reductionist nature”, because “it focuses on too few factors, it reduces these factors to numbers, and simply does not attend to much potentially important and interesting contextual information” (Johnson, 1992, p. 34). A qualitative approach is contradictorily characterized by an emphasis on induction, exploration, theory/hypothesis generation, the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection, and qualitative analysis. However, its limitations lie in the ability to make generalization to other people or settings, the difficulties in making qualitative predictions and testing theory/hypothesis, and not less important, the possibility that research results are influenced by the researcher’s personal bias.

Gaining its status as a third approach in research methodology over the past fifteen years, a mixed methods approach is attractive for a number of strengths (Dörnyei, 2007). The first and also the main attraction of mixed methods research is that it increases the strengths while, at the same time, reduces the weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative research. The strength of mixed methods research also lies in the fact that it helps to analyze complex issues at multi-levels by “converging numeric trends

from quantitative data and specific details from qualitative data” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 45). Thirdly, mixed methods research improves validity of the research outcomes, particularly, external validity when findings drawn from multi methods are corroborated.

The methodology is very important in guiding the process to find the answers to research questions. However, the “loyalty” to one approach in gaining understandings in certain areas may result in an incomplete picture of what is under investigation. As Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) point out, the research question is most fundamental, and “research methods should *follow* research questions in a way that offers the best chance to obtain useful answers” (p. 17-18).

A mixed methods approach produces a more complete picture of the phenomena under investigation in this study. Particularly, the product from mixed research will be superior to that in monomethod studies when Johnson and Turner’s (2003) fundamental principle of mixed research is effectively used. The principle of mixed research suggests that data should be collected using a combination of different strategies, approaches, and methods in such a way that results in complementary strengths and nonoverlapping weaknesses. Thus, qualitative interviews can be used to gain participants’ perspectives and meanings and thereby deal with potential problems with only a quantitative method. Similarly, a close-ended quantitative instrument will supplement a qualitative method by systematically measuring certain factors considered important (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). One way to combine qualitative and quantitative research, outlined by Bryman (1988), is by means of triangulation, a concept to be discussed in the following section.

3.2.2 Triangulation

Triangulation, also referred to as convergent methodology, multimethod/multitrait (Campbell & Fiske, 1959), or convergent validation is defined as “the use of multiple, independent methods of obtaining data in a single investigation on order to arrive at the same research findings” (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 181). In discussing how to triangulate, Denzin (1978) introduced four types of triangulation, including *data triangulation* (using several data sources), *investigator triangulation* (more than one investigator involved in the research process), *methodological triangulation* (using multiple methods to examine a social phenomenon), and *theory*. He acknowledged the

problematic nature of theory triangulation and suggested using methodological triangulation to add validity to research findings. He explained that this strategy works on the basis that “the flaws of one method are often the strengths of another: and by combining methods, observers can achieve the best of each while overcoming their unique deficiencies” (Denzin, 1978, p. 302). Jick (1979), in the article “Mixing qualitative and quantitative methods: Triangulation in action”, also discussed the role triangulation plays in research. The first and also the overall strength of triangulation is that it helps researchers be more confident in their research results. Second, the deviant dimension of a phenomenon may be uncovered with the use of triangulation as “different viewpoints are likely to produce some elements which do not fit a theory or model” (p. 609).

Unfortunately, not much research in the field of language learning strategies has employed triangulation as a method of inquiry. Some literature reveals that most L2 composition research (Zamel, 1982, 1983; Lay, 1982; Raimes, 1983; Cumming, 1987) heavily relied on qualitative methods such as direct observation, verbal reporting and retrospective interviewing to gain knowledge into the writing process. Although qualitative data, as Weiss (1968, p. 344-345) points out, “are apt to be superior to quantitative data in density of information, vividness, and clarity of meaning”, they are also difficult to use when generalizing in other settings and to other people, and for making quantitative predictions. In addition, the employment of qualitative methods alone also has limitations inherent in each of the qualitative methods. The key limitation of observation lies in the fact that it may produce a description of a learner’s use of strategies but ignores internal or mental strategies. Verbal reporting, while aiming to elicit the processes that underlie writing, has been criticized as “much of cognitive processing is inaccessible because it is unconscious” (Oxford, 1996, p. 97). Some other weaknesses of verbal reporting include its artificiality, incompleteness, heavy reliance on inference, and distortion of writers’ normal composing processes (Hyland, 2002).

Taking into consideration the limitations of qualitative methods in investigating learning strategies and the call for an increase in research method repertoire by Gao (2004), methodological triangulation was employed in this study. The prominent qualitative data drawn from semi-structured interviews and learning diaries together with the quantitative data from questionnaires, as Jick (1979) claims, can potentially

assist the researcher in the creation of what anthropologists call “holistic work” or “thick description” (p. 609).

A triangulated approach is particularly important in this research for the fact that the limitations of the quantitative method of data collection can be addressed by the qualitative methods. Baker and Boonkit (2004) as cited Brown (2001), point out that questionnaires are limited in their “artificial nature since they are usually completed away from the learning environment and at a single point in time” (p. 305). This limitation of questionnaires is addressed by the use of learning diaries which help collect longitudinal data about the participants’ experience of their language learning in their learning situations. Other limitations of questionnaires, according to Baker and Boonkit, are that they are made up of the researchers’ anticipated responses, and provide respondents no opportunity to elaborate their choices. Semi-structured interviews were, therefore, a good way to deal with these limitations by asking the participants to explain their answers in the questionnaires. A detailed discussion of the methods for data collection is provided in the next section.

3.3 Instruments

3.3.1 Structured questionnaire

Questionnaires are defined by Brown (2001) as “any written instrument that presents respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting them among existing answers” (p. 6). In the article “A critical review of questionnaire use in learner strategy research”, Gao (2003) states that questionnaires have emerged as one of the most widely used tools to elicit data in language learner strategy (LLS) research. L2 learning strategies are also confirmed by Dörnyei (2003) to be one of the second language topics which have been researched using questionnaire. Questionnaires have been used to investigate not only general language learning strategies but also specific L2 skills such as vocabulary learning (Gu & Johnson, 1996), reading (Hayashi, 1999), and writing (Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001; Baker & Boonkit, 2004) for their cost-effectiveness while providing a quick understanding of the participants’ strategy use (Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995). In addition, according to Mackey and Gass (2005, p. 182), the benefit of quantification by using questionnaires in qualitative research is that “numerical descriptions can make it readily apparent both why researchers have drawn particular inferences and how well their theories reflect the data”.

The questionnaire (Appendix C) used in this study is based on Oxford's (1990) classification of language learning strategies and is adapted from the one that was used in Baker and Boonkit's study in 2004. It has been recognized by Hsiao and Oxford (2002), and Zhang (2003) that there is a connection between learning strategy use and the context in which it takes place. In consideration of the language teaching and learning context in Vietnam which is culturally distant from the Western academic contexts of most previous studies, the adoption of the research instrument used in a similar context in Baker and Boonkit’s study in Asia (Thai context) can result in a better understanding of strategy use. Strategies asked in the questionnaire are divided into seven categories in which six belongs to Oxford's taxonomy: Memory, Cognitive, Compensation, Metacognitive, Affective and Social. The definition and examples of the six strategies are presented in the table below:

Table 3.1: Oxford's (1990) six categories of learning strategies

Category	Definition	Textual examples
Memory strategies	Strategies involving creating mental linkage and employing actions to aid in entering information into LTM (long-term memory) and retrieving information when needed for communication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I write down the new vocabulary in a notebook and refer to it often. - I do a lot of exercise on English grammar so that I'll remember.
Cognitive strategies	Strategies for analyzing and reasoning, used for forming and revising internal mental modes and receiving and producing messages in the target language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I write emails or letters in English twice a week. - I practice writing lesson plans in English.
Compensation strategies	Strategies that include guessing unknown words while listening or reading, or circumlocution in speaking and writing to overcome any gaps in knowledge of the language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I try to guess the meaning of words I don't know. - I try to understand the meaning through looking at the word in context.
Metacognitive strategies	Strategies that learners use to exercise executive control, planning, arranging, focusing, and evaluation of their own learning process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English. - I take note of how other people communicate in English.
Affective strategies	Strategies that enable learners to control feelings, motivation, and attitudes related to language learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I remind myself that I am going to be an English teacher. - I tell myself to be confident and not be afraid to make mistakes.
Social strategies	Strategies that involve asking questions, cooperating with others, and facilitating interaction with others, often in a discourse situation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I ask my friends to correct my mistakes when I talk in English. - I have group discussion with my classmates on how to complete English assignments.

Adapted from Oxford, Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know (New York: Newbury House/Harper & Row, 1990): 17.

The last category used in the present study is called Negative which consists of strategies regarded as deterring writing process. This additional category has been included because it adds validity to the questionnaire by offsetting "overly positive responses and any tendencies to simply agree with everything in the questionnaire" (Baker & Boonkit, 2004, p. 305). For example, negative strategy such as *When I have finished my work I don't look at it again; it is finished* can be used to cross-check the participants' answers to questions involving revision after finishing their writing such as *I go back to my writing to edit and change the content (ideas)*, and *I go back to my writing to edit and change the grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation*.

The original questionnaire, the one used in Baker and Boonkit's (2004) study, consisted of thirty-nine questions organised into three sections: Pre-writing, While writing, and After finishing my writing. A number of changes were made to fit the context of the current study. Firstly, the concepts of "feedback" and "brainstorm" were clarified for the participants by definitions in parentheses. Secondly, the last five questions in the third section were removed from that section to be put under a new fourth section entitled "After my written work has been marked". As a result, the last question in the questionnaire (I give myself a reward when I have finished) was moved to section three as it involves the activity after writing has been finished. Thirdly, one open question was added at the end to seek any strategy that may not have been included in the questionnaire. In addition, the questionnaire was then piloted, which resulted in the final number of thirty-nine questions. Answers to the questions are scaled from 1 (never true of me) to 5 (always true of me). The pilot study will be presented later in section 3.9.

Although questionnaires can be effective in exploring broad areas of strategy use, they are limited in a number of aspects. According to Cohen (1998), highly structured or closed questionnaires enable the researcher to have complete control over the questioning but they also restrict the respondents' elaboration. Moreover, "questionnaires only provide reports of what people say they think or do and not direct evidence of it" (Hyland, 2002, p. 166). Therefore, other qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews and learning diaries, were employed in order to cross-check the quantitative data drawn from the questionnaire.

3.3.2 Semi-structured interview

Interviews have been acknowledged by Macaro (2001) as an excellent and productive way of complementing questionnaires. While highly structured questionnaires allow the researcher to take control of the questioning, interviews provide participants with an opportunity to elaborate on their answers, “to discuss their interpretations of the world and to express how they see situations from their own perspective” (Hyland, 2002, p. 181). Interviews have been used in different ways to investigate strategy use. They can be highly structured, semi-structured or unstructured. Highly structured and unstructured interviews stand at two ends of the spectrum, leaving the control of duration and choice of focus to the researcher and participants, respectively. Semi-structured interviews refer to the type of interviews that ask for certain information for which the exact shape of response is unpredetermined. In other words, semi-structured interviews allow researchers to have some fixed questions in their mind and participants to have considerable freedom in their response. Moreover, semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to ask supplementary questions in order to probe further and seek clarification or elaboration from the participants. In semi-structured interviews, the researcher prepares a list of general questions that he or she wants to have answered. He or she may then let the participants follow a diverging but useful route until he/she feels the topic under investigation has been fully explored.

Hyland (2002) in “Teaching and researching writing” stated the three purposes of interviews have been widely employed in composition studies: interviews as a primary method of data collection, interviews as a means of testing hypotheses or generating new hypotheses, and interviews as one method with others in triangulation for cross-checking data.

Semi-structured interviews are employed in this study as a primary method of data collection and as one method in triangulation for cross-checking data. The interview question list (Appendix D) consists of eleven questions divided into two sections. Section one includes two questions asking participants to explain more if there was any confusion when completing the questionnaire and if there were any other strategies not included there. The second section consists of a series of open questions which derive from the researcher’s knowledge of the literature, giving participants opportunities to discuss more about their writing. These open questions aimed to gain a better understanding about some of the content areas of the questionnaires, and some aspects

which were not included such as the teacher's approach to teaching writing and the participants' general writing behaviors. The interview questions were translated into the participants' first language so that they could decide whether to answer in Vietnamese or English. The questionnaire was also translated. As Macaro (2001) explains, it is important that researchers be mindful of "what will make the student feel more at ease and to what extent am I sacrificing a real in-depth understanding of how the student goes about learning for the sake of a few extra exchanges in the target language?" (p. 69)

Although interviews do allow researchers to investigate phenomena that are difficult to observe directly, they have some drawbacks. Hall and Rist (1999) point out that interviews may involve "selective recall, self-delusion, perceptual distortions, memory loss from the respondent, and subjectivity in the researcher's recording and interpreting of the data" (p. 297-298). Taking into consideration these limitations, learning diaries were used in this study in order to add validity to the interview data.

3.3.3 Learning diary

According to Bailey (1990), a diary study is defined as "a first-person account of a language learning or teaching experience, documented through regular, candid entries in a personal journal and then analysed for recurring patterns or salient events" (p. 251). There are a number of advantages in using diaries as a tool to investigate language learning strategies. Researchers such as Matsumoto (1987), Bailey and Ochsner (1983), and Nunan (1992) have explained that a learning diary is an effective tool for exploring the hidden parts of the language learning process which reveal what is important for learners. Nunan (1992) further argues that learning diaries provide researchers with data that may be inaccessible when employing other research techniques. In reality, quite a large amount of research has employed diary studies to gain valuable insights into language learning strategies (Halbach, 2000; Carson & Longhini, 2002; Baker & Boonkit, 2004; Siew & Wong, 2005). Take Baker and Boonkit's (2004) study as an example, their learning diaries revealed "the use of more affective strategies than were covered on the questionnaire" (p. 309).

However, the problem with diaries as a research tool, as Macaro (2001) points out, is that not everything written in the diaries is of direct relevance to the learner's strategies. In addition, diary keepers may forget, choose to write or not write things which may be

valuable data for the investigation of their learning strategies. Thus, he suggests providing some broad headings as guidelines of what to write when doing a diary entry.

Learning diaries were used in this study to elicit longitudinal data on writing strategies and allow the participants to “write about their language learning experiences without the constraints imposed by specific questions” (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 177). The guideline (Appendix E) for diary writing is a list of suggestions on what could be included. These suggestions were derived from the literature and instructed the participants to write down any activities involving their writing task before, during, and after their writing. The number of diary entries was not restricted.

3.4 Participants and context

The participants in this study were selected based on their willingness to participate and the results of their first year final writing exam. They were a group of nine female adult native Vietnamese students who were in their second year of a four-year Bachelor program at Hanoi University in Vietnam. Among those, three were 19 years old, four were 20, and the other two were 21 and 22. All the students had studied English as a foreign language for five to ten years prior to entering the university. English study generally begins at primary school level in Vietnam. In addition, the students' English level was determined by the university at intermediate level. In fact, no separate English test was conducted to determine their English proficiency. However, based on the course book for the teaching and learning of integrated skills provided by the university, which was New Headway Intermediate, it could be inferred that the participants' English proficiency was at intermediate level. English was also their major at the university. All were classified by their language program as being at an intermediate level. Therefore, their English level was relatively high compared to the general population of EFL students in Vietnam. The students were members of different classes where all four skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) were the focus of the teaching program.

Based on the results of their first year final writing exam, nine participants were divided into two groups of writers, the successful group and the less successful group. The successful group included six students who achieved 80% or over in the writing task of the final exam while the less successful group of writers were three students whose performance was over 50% but lower than 80% on the same task. In fact, there was a change in the selection criteria. The study originally intended to have two evenly balanced groups of successful (those who achieved 80% or over in the writing task of the final exam) and unsuccessful (those whose performance was under 50% on the same task). However, as there were no volunteers for the less than 50% group, the selection criterion was changed.

3.5 Data collection

The data were collected over a period of nearly two months in 2007. The participants were asked to self-complete the questionnaires in the context of their academic study during their second year at the university and at the first stage of the data collection phase. In addition to the questionnaire in English, there was also a Vietnamese version but it was not chosen by any of the participants. The participants were provided with enough time to read through the questionnaire carefully to check if there was any difficulty in understanding the questions before completing it.

After the questionnaires were collected, the participants were provided with some guidelines for diary writing by the researcher. These included suggestions on what could be included in the diary: brief descriptions of the writing task, activities involving before, during and after writing (Appendix E). The guidelines were explained carefully and some examples were also given by the researcher. The participants were asked to keep learning diaries right at the beginning of the data collection phase. The number of diary entry was not limited.

The participants' writing task was a one thousand word argumentative essay which they called secondary research. The participants were required to work in groups by their writing teachers. Each group was allowed to choose their own topic. After the topics had been selected and ideas had been generated by all group members, each group was divided in two pairs of students. One pair was responsible for finding ideas to support the topic while the other pair had to find counter arguments. Then, the two students in each pair wrote their own essay to be assessed separately. After receiving their mark, they were required to work in pairs again to combine the two separate essays into one whose mark was shared by the students in the pair.

The participants had all completed their individual work and were preparing to work in pairs again at the time they were asked to write learning diaries. Therefore, most of the participants only recorded activities involving their writing task from that time until they finished it. However, as they were encouraged to retell what they had done while writing separately, some also included activities they did when writing their own work in the diaries. The first diary entry was checked by the researcher to ensure that they understood what they were expected to do. Copies of the participants' diaries were then collected by the researcher.

Interviews were conducted in Vietnamese, with some parts of them in the foreign language. This, according to Macaro (2001, p. 68-69), is “perfectly feasible” as “some words express a concept better in one language than in another”. As the participants were all busy studying and preparing for their exams, interview times were arranged to suit them. All interviews were tape recorded. Each lasted around thirty minutes.

3.6 Data analysis

Quantitative data resulting from the questionnaire responses were analysed following methods for quantitative data analysis outlined in Baker and Boonkit's study (2004). Each strategy included in the questionnaire was coded for analysis according to seven categories of learning strategy. These include Oxford's (1990) six learning categories: Memory, Cognitive, Compensation, Metacognitive, Affective, Social; and one added Negative category which consists of learning strategies considered as having a negative influence on the writing process, e.g. I like to start writing immediately without a plan. The participants' responses to the questionnaire were tabulated for each learning strategy and the mean score for frequency of use was derived for each strategy, and subsequently, each strategy category. The two groups' mean scores for individual strategies as well as each of the seven categories were examined for statistical significance using paired t-tests. According to Mackey and Gass (2005), "the t-test can be used when one wants to determine if the means of two groups are significantly different from one another" (p. 272). Unpaired t-tests were also employed to determine the statistical significance among seven categories of strategy. The alpha level was set at $\alpha = .05$ for both types of t-tests as this is the "commonly accepted level for significance in second language research" (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 267).

Interviews were transcribed and any sections in the participants' first language were translated into English by the researcher. Two sample pages of the Vietnamese transcript and their English translation are provided in Appendix F. Data from interviews and learning diaries were analysed for content, guided by the framework technique of qualitative data analysis indicated in Dörnyei (2007).

In response to the argument that qualitative analysis invariably starts with coding, regardless of the specific methodology followed, Dörnyei (2007) argues that such argument is only partially true. According to him, in fact, a considerable amount of analysis has already been done before researchers begin the coding process. This analysis, called pre-coding, is very important as it helps researchers make sense of their first impressions. In the pre-coding step, transcripts are read and re-read, any thoughts and reflections may be noted down since these early reflections "shape our thinking about the data and influence the way we will go about coding it" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 250).

The qualitative data analysis in this study, therefore, began with the pre-coding step. Interview transcripts and diary entries were read again and again by the researcher in order to make sense of the data. The pre-coding step was then followed by the coding process which started first with initial coding. The traditional method of using hard-copy printouts of interview transcripts and diary entries was employed throughout the coding process. Relevant texts to the research questions were highlighted. An informative label was then added on the margin to the highlighted text. An example of the pre-coding step is provided below:

For this essay, I use the background of my own which I collect from the previous weeks to develop the ideas more details and easy to understand. **Actually, I have no plan for when I do my writing.** Although I'm shy, I can not deny that fact. I usually start doing any task just before the deadline 2 or 3 days. But it does not mean that I give no thought about the task. I think of it a lot. However, I really begin writing when the deadline is closer. **And I can only write in a comfortable, especially quiet place where I can concentrate.** This is one of the most important things affecting my working productivity. I am likely to work effectively in an absolutely place or at the night when no one can disturb me. I myself acknowledge that. **Instead of spending all the morning writing the introduction, it only takes me 30 minutes at night to do the same work. Sometimes, I cannot believe in it. I like to write during night.**

Informative label for the first highlighted text: make no timetable for writing.

Informative label for the second highlighted text: write in a quiet and comfortable place.

In the next step of the coding process, called second-level coding, all the codes identified in the initial coding step were listed. Five broad categories of writing strategies emerged from the code list. These were four categories corresponding to the four stages in the writing process, namely Pre-writing, While writing, After finishing writing, and After the written work has been marked; and one general writing behaviour category. The general writing behaviour category included strategies such as making a timetable for writing and practising writing. Codes were then clustered together under those five categories.

3.7 Data validity and reliability

According to Bryman (2004), reliability and validity are two of the three most prominent criteria for the evaluation of social research.

3.7.1 Reliability

Reliability “refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions” (Hammersley, 1992a, p. 67). Trochim (2006) points out two types of measurement errors that have a key role in degrading reliability: random error and systematic error caused by any factors that randomly and systematically affect measurement of the variable across the sample, respectively. According to him, these errors can be reduced by triangulating across multiple measures and piloting the instruments.

The interview questions in this study were piloted with a respondent who was comparable to the participants in the study. This allowed the researcher to identify problems related to the understanding of the questions, consider how well the questions flowed and revise and modify the instruments where necessary, based on new information (Bryman, 2004, p. 159-160). The piloting of interview questions led to the addition of more questions for a better understanding of writing strategies such as the question involving how writing was taught in the classroom. The problem of using a second language in elicitation was uncovered with the translation of interview questions into the participants’ first language to avoid difficulties in understanding and answering the questions.

According to Silverman (2001, p. 229), reliable interviews “must also satisfy the criterion of using low-inference descriptor”, that is, using “description phrased very close to the participants’ accounts and researchers’ field notes” (Johnson, 1997). In order to satisfy this criterion, all face-to-face interviews were tape recorded. Interviews were then carefully transcribed and extracts of data were presented in the research report.

In the case of the learning diaries, since the data was already available, the reliability of learning diaries as Silverman (2001) points out, lies in the categories used to analyze each text. To obtain reliability, data from learning diaries were coded following the seven learning strategies including (1) Oxford’s (1990) six learning categories of

memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies; and (2) the additional category of negative strategies.

3.7.2 Validity

“Validity refers to the issue of whether an indicator (or set of indicators) that is devised to gauge a concept really measures that concept” (Bryman, 2004, p. 72). First of all, the original questionnaire that was used in Baker and Boonkit’s (2004) study had its own validity. According to them, internal validity was added by the use of negative questions to “offset overly positive responses and any tendencies to simply agree with everything in the questionnaire” (p. 305). In addition, the fact that a number of questions were cross-referenced also increased the internal validity of the questionnaire. The external validity was enhanced by the fact that the questionnaire was reviewed by teachers of writing and experts in the field of learning strategies and questionnaire design at the university where the research was carried out. Therefore, the employment of this existing questionnaire allowed the researcher to use questions that have, in a sense, been already piloted (Bryman, 2004). Moreover, the questionnaire adapted from Baker and Boonkit’s study was revised for the context of the current study, which led to a number of changes. However, since changes were made, the questionnaire was tested by a pilot study to examine if there were any difficulties in understanding the questions.

Validity of interviews was increased by the use of member validation. Also referred to as member verification, member checking, or project reviews, member validation is the practice of “asking the source of information to verify that it is exact and complete” (Bygstat & Munkvold, 2007). According to Turner and Coen (2008), member validation can be applied to a variety of research materials including oral scripts, interview transcripts, and polished manuscripts. Bygstat and Munkvold’s (2007) study suggests that the significance of member validation varies through different phases of an interpretive case study; specifically, member validation may increase internal validity by verifying facts in the data collection phase. In order to increase validity of data drawn from interviews, interview transcripts and their translations were sent back to the participants for member checking.

The data validity of the current study was also enhanced by the use of triangulation, as Mathison (1988) points out:

Triangulation has raised an important methodological issue in naturalistic and qualitative approaches to evaluation [in order to] control bias and establishing valid propositions because traditional scientific techniques are incompatible with this alternate epistemology (p.13).

Method triangulation allows the researcher to cross-check the results of an investigation obtained by using a method associated with one research strategy against those derived from a method associated with the other research strategy (Bryman, 2004). The data drawn from self-complete questionnaires were validated by those from interviews and learning diaries. An illustration of how the interviews and learning diaries corroborated the questionnaire finding is provided in the following table:

Table 3.2: An illustration of how the findings from questionnaires, interviews, and diaries corroborate

Questionnaire finding	Interview finding	Diary finding
I try to write in a comfortable, quiet place where I can concentrate.	I think quietness is the first factor that affects my writing. I can't concentrate or think deeply in a noisy place. I find I can work better at night than during the day.	And I can only write in a comfortable, especially, quiet place where I can concentrate. This is one of the most important things affecting my working productivity. I am likely to work effectively in an absolutely place or at the night when no one can disturb me. I myself acknowledge that. Instead of spending all the morning writing the introduction, it only takes me 30 minutes at night to do the same work. Sometimes, I cannot believe in it. I like to write during night.

3.8 Ethical issues

The researcher enters a relationship with those he or she studies. The ethics of social research have to do with the nature of the researcher's responsibilities in this relationship, or the things that should or should not be done regarding the people being observed and written about. This is not significantly different in what we do in other relationships. We try to be polite, treat people with respect, and don't do or say anything that will harm them.

(Marvasti, 2004, p. 133)

Dörnyei (2007) claims that "social research – including research in education – concerns people's lives in the social world and therefore it inevitably involves ethical issues" (p. 63). The researcher's responsibilities to the people studied is one of the two issues that should be considered, as pointed out by Silverman (2006), when doing research. According to him, there are a number of goals to be achieved:

- ensuring that people participate voluntarily
- making people's comments and behaviour confidential
- protecting people from harm
- ensuring mutual trust between researcher and people studied.

Such ethical goals were achieved in the current research firstly, by gaining ethics approval for the study from AUT Ethics Committee, and by the use of informed consent, that is to say, "research subjects have the right to know that they are being researched, the right to be informed about the nature of the research and the right to withdraw at any time" (Ryen, 2004, p. 231).

A number of meetings were held between the researcher and the participants prior to the commencement of the research. Information about the research was explained both verbally and in written form to the participants. The aim of the research, the research procedures and answers to a number of questions that might be asked about the research were fully provided in the detailed but non-technical Participants Information Sheet. The Participants Information Sheet was also translated into Vietnamese for better understanding (Appendix A). The participants had enough time to read through and ask questions concerning the research. They were also encouraged to take the Information Sheet and Consent Form (Appendix B) away with them for consideration. Their voluntary participation was ensured by the signed consent returned to the researcher at the last meeting. Their right to withdraw from the research at any time without any adverse consequences was reserved.

The design of the study was another means to achieve the ethical goals. To be more specific, the study was designed so that while participants and their responses were known to the researcher, this information remained confidential. In addition, the research results are reported in such a way that does not allow individuals to be identified. To be more specific, instead of using the participants' names, the researcher used abbreviations.

3.9 Pilot study

A pilot study is defined by Mackey and Gass (2005, p. 43) as “a small-scale trial of the proposed procedures, materials, and methods, and sometimes also includes coding sheets and analytic choice”. Thus, a pilot study has an important role to play in the assessment of the feasibility of the data collection methods by uncovering problems, if any, in order to be addressed before the main study is carried out. Also according to Mackey and Gass, “it is crucial for researchers to allocate time for conducting pilot tests” as they can help reveal “subtle flaws in the design or implementation of the study that may not be readily apparent from the research plan itself” (p. 43). Taking into consideration of the importance of pilot testing, the research instruments for this study were all piloted before the actual research was carried out.

Bryman (2004) argues that “pilot studies may be particularly crucial in relation to research based on the self-completion questionnaire, since there will not be an interviewer present to clear up any confusion”. The questionnaire was piloted with two ESL students in order to detect ambiguity and any other problems and address them before finalizing the method. As a result of the pilot study, question 9 was divided into two separate questions to clarify the act of planning. After the revision, the questionnaire used in the main study comprises thirty-nine questions, of which thirty-eight investigated the frequency of strategy use and one open question asked for strategies not covered by the questionnaire.

The interview questions were piloted with one ESL student. The piloting of interviews questions added more questions, e.g. the one investigating the approach to teaching writing taken by the participants’ writing teacher. The investigation of the approach to teaching writing in the participants’ learning context is very important as it helps better explain why they used certain strategies. The pilot study of interview questions also revealed that using the foreign language in interviews was disadvantageous. This problem was solved by the researcher’s translating of the interview questions into the participants’ first language and all the interviews were undertaken in Vietnamese.

Learning diary was also piloted with one EFL student. This student was asked to record any of his behaviours related to his writing assignment in a period of one week. Before writing learning diary, this student was provided with some guidelines. The examination of his first diary entry revealed that the guidelines were not clear enough,

which led to the student's misunderstanding of what should be written in the diary. As a result, the guidelines were revised and re-piloted with the same student. His diary entries after receiving the revised guidelines showed that he understood the requirements and thus, proved the clarity of the guidelines.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research methodology with detail about the research instruments, procedures, data collection and analysis, research reliability and validity, as well as research ethics. A mixed method approach was employed as a response to the call for an inclusion of a quantitative aspect in the investigation of learning strategies. This was reflected in the use of triangulation combining quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection including structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and learning diaries. Semi-structured interviews were employed as the primary method of data collection. These data were then validated by the data drawn from structured questionnaires and learning diaries. Research reliability and validity were obtained by means of a triangulated approach. Issues concerning research ethics were dealt with at the end of the chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is to present the results of an analysis of the data collected by means of questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and learning diaries. It is first started with the presentation of quantitative results. Qualitative results from a content analysis of the interviews and learning diaries then follow. Although the quantitative and qualitative findings are presented separately in this chapter, they are discussed together in the next chapter in order to show how they corroborated.

4.2 Questionnaire findings

Questionnaires were employed in order to add the quantitative aspect to the mainly qualitative part in the current study. Questionnaires were administered at the beginning of the data collection phase. All nine questionnaires were self-completed by the participants. Data drawn from the questionnaires were analyzed following the quantitative method of data analysis as described in the previous chapter. The questionnaire findings are to be presented in the following sub-sections.

4.2.1 Overall writing strategy use

Table 4.1 below illustrates the results for overall writing strategy of both the successful and less successful writers.

Table 4.1: Overall writing strategy use

Category	Frequency	Mean	SD
Metacognitive strategies	344	3.47	0.86
Memory strategies	104	3.85	0.27
Social strategies	67	3.72	0.39
Compensation strategies	318	3.53	0.63
Affective strategies	74	4.11	0.31
Cognitive strategies	176	2.79	0.95
Negative strategies	48	1.78	0.11

From the table, we can observe that there is little difference in the frequency of use for the first four categories (metacognitive, memory, social, and compensation) with quite close mean scores. It is noticeable that the last two categories are used least frequently compared to the other five categories with cognitive and negative categories receiving lowest mean score of 2.79 and 1.78, respectively. However, results from unpaired t-tests reveal no statistical significance between the first six categories with $p > 0.05$ while they do provide evidence that there is a statistically significant difference between the first five categories and negative categories with $p < 0.05$.

4.2.2 Overall writing strategy use by group

Table 4.2: Overall writing strategy used by Group

Strategy	Successful group		Less successful group	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Metacognitive	3.50	1.01	3.42	0.85
Memory	3.89	0.34	3.78	0.19
Social	3.92	0.58	3.33	0.00
Compensation	3.58	0.69	3.43	0.90
Affective	4.08	0.35	4.17	0.23
Cognitive	2.88	1.13	2.62	0.77
Negative	1.67	0.28	2.00	0.33
Total	3.36	0.84	3.25	0.72

Table 4.2 represents the frequency of use of each category of successful and less successful writers. As can be seen from the table, the successful writers generally use strategies more frequently than their less successful counterparts, apart from affective and negative category. The mean scores for each category of strategy of the two groups were tested for statistical significance using pair t-tests. The results indicated a significant difference between the two groups for metacognitive, memory, compensation, cognitive category, and even total strategy use with $p < 0.05$. Although the mean scores of two groups for social, affective, and negative category are different, t-tests revealed no statistically significant difference.

4.2.3 Most and least frequently used strategies by both groups

Based on the mean score of individual strategy, the most and least frequently used strategies by both the successful and less successful writers were identified. Writing strategies which were most frequently used by the participants in this study are listed in Table 4.3. As mentioned in the previous chapter, answers to the questions were scaled from 1 to 5 from “never true of me” to “always true of me”. Therefore, strategies with mean scores equal 4 or above, meaning usually true of the participants, were counted as most frequently used writing strategies. From Table 4.3, it can be seen that the use of the foreign language when writing outlines was most frequently used of all with highest mean score of 4.67. Strategies such as attending to teachers’ feedback about previous writing, using background knowledge to help with ideas, and writing in a place favorable for concentration also get high mean scores of 4.44, 4.33, and 4.33 respectively. Other strategies which were also used frequently by all the participants include reading lesson notes, handouts, and course requirements before writing, considering the task or instructions carefully before writing, brainstorming ideas and

writing notes, editing for grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation while writing, editing and changing the grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation after finishing writing, and discussing the finished work with other students or teachers when having finished.

Table 4.3: Most frequently used writing strategies

Strategy	Category	Frequency	Mean	SD
I read my lesson notes, handouts, and course requirements before writing.	Memory	37	4.11	0.60
I read the feedback from my teacher about previous writing.	Metacognitive	40	4.44	0.72
I consider the task or instructions carefully before writing.	Metacognitive	36	4.00	0.86
I brainstorm ideas and write notes.	Metacognitive	37	4.11	0.78
I use my background (world) knowledge to help me with ideas.	Metacognitive	39	4.33	0.70
I write the outlines of the organization in English.	Metacognitive	42	4.67	0.50
I try to write in a comfortable, quiet place where I can concentrate.	Affective	39	4.33	0.70
I edit for grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation.	Compensation	38	4.22	0.83
I go back to my writing to edit and change the grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation.	Compensation	37	4.11	0.78
I like to discuss my work with other students or teachers when I have finished.	Social	36	4.00	1.11

Table 4.4 shows the least frequently used strategies of two groups of writers. Those strategies include three strategies belonging to the negative category and one cognitive strategy which is the use of translation from first language to foreign language while writing. Among least frequently used strategies, writing in the first language then translating it into the foreign language was reported to be never true of all participants with minimum mean score of 1. The low mean scores of the two other negative strategies indicate that they are rarely used by the participants.

Table 4.4: Least frequently used writing strategies

Strategy	Category	Frequency	Mean	SD
I like to start writing immediately without a plan.	Negative	16	1.78	0.83
I like to write a draft in Vietnamese first and then translate it into English.	Cognitive	9	1	0.00

When I have finished my work I don't look at it again; it is finished.	Negative	15	1.67	1.00
I don't usually remember the feedback I get.	Negative	17	1.89	1.05

4.2.4 Individual writing strategy use by group

In consideration of individual writing strategy, there are a number of significant differences between the successful writers and their less successful counterparts as demonstrated in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Difference between the successful and less successful group in terms of individual strategy use

Strategy	Category	Successful group		Less successful group	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
I like to write two or more drafts.	Metacognitive	3.33	1.21	1.67	0.57
I like to write just one draft.	Metacognitive	2.33	0.81	4.00	1.15
I use a dictionary to check things I am not sure about before or when I write.	Compensation	3.33	1.21	5.00	1.52
I edit for grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation.	Compensation	4.67	0.51	3.33	0.57
I edit my organization.	Cognitive	4.00	1.09	2.33	1.15

As shown from the table, the successful writers are different from their less successful counterparts in the more frequent use of three strategies. The successful writers revised their work more frequently than the less successful writers at not only global level (content and organization) but also local level (grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation). They also wrote more drafts than the less successful writers. Results from t tests confirmed the borderline significant differences between the mean scores for the first and last strategies with $p=0.06$ and 0.07 respectively; and an extremely significant difference between the mean score for the fourth strategy with $p=0.009$. In terms of the metacognitive strategy – I like to write just one draft – a mean score of 4.00 for the less successful group indicates that they usually write just one draft. The last difference between the successful and less successful groups of writers regarding individual

writing strategy was the use of dictionary to check things that they are not sure about before or when they write. T-test did prove that this strategy was used less frequently by the successful writers.

4.3 Interview findings

Semi-structured interviews were the primary method to investigate writing strategies in the current research. Interviews were conducted with each of the participants in their first language, and each lasted about thirty minutes. Eight out of nine participants attended except for one student in the less successful group of writers.

Interviews were first transcribed and any sections in the participants' first language were then translated into English by the researcher. Data drawn from the interviews were analyzed for content.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the interview question list consists of two sections. Section one includes two questions aiming to allow the participants to explain if there was any confusion that may have affected their answers in the questionnaire, and ask for strategies they use but were not included. The participants' answers to the first question confirmed that there was not any ambiguity that may have affected their answers. Among the eight participants who attended interviews, the most successful writer reported using one more strategy which is not included in the questionnaire. In order to facilitate writing, this student spent time reading newspapers and magazines in English as much as possible. She said this activity helped her both enrich her background knowledge and accumulate vocabulary.

Section two includes a series of open questions probing detailed information about the participants' writing. The data from the interviews firstly revealed that all the students took a process approach to writing. Generally, they went through a series of steps to reach a finished product including pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing. In addition to the strategies used by the participants during the writing process, the interviews also identified a number of their general writing behaviours which are presented in the following table:

Table 4.6: The participants' general writing behaviours

Student	General writing behaviours
S1	-Make no timetable for practising writing. -Practise writing before exams only.
S2	-Make no timetable for practising writing. -Practise sometimes: free write when coming across interesting topics. -Write not very well when having little time.
S3	-Make no timetable for practising writing.

	-Rarely practise writing, only before exams. -Write topics of interest better.
S4	-Make timetable for practising writing. -Do practise writing. -Write topics of interest better.
S5	-Make no timetable for practising writing. -Rarely practise writing, only before exams. -Write topics of interest better. -Her writing is affected by her emotions.
S6	-Have no timetable for practising writing. -Free write when having inspiration. -Reading English to enrich background knowledge and vocabulary for writing.
S7	-Make no timetable for practising writing. -Seldom practise writing, only before exam. -Write topics of interest better.
S8	-Make no timetable for practising writing. -Practise writing before exams. -Her writing is affected by such other factors as the topic she writes about, time allowed to prepare for writing, her health state, and the weather.

Key: S = Student

Note: S1-S6: Successful writers; S7, S8: Less successful writers

Table 4.6 demonstrates that almost all the participants attending interviews didn't make time table for practising writing except for one student in the successful group of writers. In addition, these seven students didn't practise writing when it was not the task assigned by their teacher. They only practised writing before exams or free wrote when they were inspired by the topics they felt interested in. Regarding factors which affect their writing, five out of eight students reported that they wrote better when writing about the topics of their interest.

Table 4.7: Writing strategies used by both groups from interviews

Writing stage	Successful group	Less successful group
Pre-writing	-Brainstorm ideas using background knowledge. -Discuss with peers to generate ideas. -Search information and read about the topics to help generate ideas. -Take notes while reading. (2)* -Make outlines. -Write in a quiet and	-Brainstorm ideas using background knowledge. -Discuss with peers to generate ideas. -Search information and read about the topics to help generate ideas. -Make outlines. -Write in a quiet and

	comfortable place.	comfortable place.
While writing	-Write one draft. (3) -Write more than one draft. (3) -Think in both first and foreign language but write in English. (6) -Think totally in first language. (2)	-Write no draft. (1) -Writes one draft. (1) -Think in both first and foreign language but write in English.
After finishing writing	-Edit for grammar (3), vocabulary (2), and spelling (1). -Edit for content. (2) -Use peer and teacher edit. (3) -Self-reward.	-Do not edit much. (1) -Edit for both content and grammar. (1) -Self-reward.
After the written work has been marked	-Remember teacher feedback. (4)	-Remember teacher feedback.

*Note: * = the number of students who used the strategy*

The strategies used by the participants throughout the writing process are presented in Table 4.7. It can be seen that both the successful and less successful writers had a number of strategies in common at the pre-writing stage. They all used their background knowledge to brainstorm ideas on the topic. Two other strategies to help them with the generation of ideas included discussing with others and searching information and reading about the topic. Making outlines was the strategy also reported to be used by both groups of writers. Moreover, it is interesting to see that all eight students' writing was more or less affected by the place where they write. A quiet place where they could concentrate was said to be a good place to write by all the students.

At the writing or drafting stage, as Table 4.7 shows, seven out of eight students wrote at least one draft while only one less successful writer did not write a draft; as a result, she edited her work while writing, paying attention to grammar and vocabulary. The data also reveal that the successful writers wrote more drafts than their less successful counterparts with three among six reported writing more than one draft. Another strategy employed at this stage by six out of eight students was the use of first language while writing. However, there was a process of translation of their thoughts from the first language into the foreign language before their ideas were written down. The difference in this strategy between the two groups of writers was that two successful writers relied totally on the first language while writing.

Table 4.7 also represents the strategies used by the participants after they finished their writing. As mentioned earlier, seven out of the eight students reported writing at least one draft except for one less successful writer. However, they did not edit their work until they had finished writing a draft. There seems to have been a focus on accuracy rather than content. This focus is reflected in the revision for grammar, vocabulary, and spelling by almost all the writers while only three of them also edited for content. Regarding editing strategy use, the successful writers were different from the less successful ones in the use of peer and teacher editing by asking their peers and teacher to edit their work for them. The last strategy found at this stage of writing which was the affective strategy to help retain motivation such as self-rewarding was reported to be used by five students while self-rewarding was decided later by three others depending on the results of their work after it had been marked.

The only strategy revealed from the interviews after the writing has been assessed was remembering teacher feedback. Among eight students who attended the interviews, six answered they attended to and tried to remember the teacher's feedback to help them improve their writings later.

4.4 Results from diaries

Learning diaries were used in the present study to elicit longitudinal data on writing strategies and as a means to cross-check the data drawn from the other two research instruments. The number of diary entry varies among the participants. The minimum was three while maximum was nine. The data drawn from those learning diaries was analyzed for content using the same method as analyzing interviews.

A summary of the writing strategies reported in the diaries is presented in the table below:

Table 4.8: Writing strategies used by both groups from diaries

Writing stage	Successful group	Less successful group
Pre-writing	-Search information about the topic. (4)* -Take notes of phrases and structures while reading. (1) -Make outlines. (3) -Write in a quiet place. (3)	-Search information about the topic. (2) -Take notes while reading. (2) -Make outlines. (1)
While writing	-Use dictionaries for unsure vocabulary (2), sentence structures (1). -Use grammar books for unsure sentence structures. (2). -Use collocation book for vocabulary. (1) -Consult friends for difficult terminologies. (1) -Use dictionaries to deal with vocabulary. (1) -Use first language for complicated sentences. (2)	
After finishing writing	-Edit for content (2), organization, and vocabulary. (1) -Use teacher editing. (1) -Use peer editing. (2) -Self-reward. (2)	-Edit for grammar and vocabulary (1).
After the written work has been marked	-Make notes of teacher feedback. (1) -Use teacher feedback to help with other language skills. (1) -Use teacher feedback to help improve later writings. (1)	-Make notes of teacher feedback. (1) -Remember teacher feedback. (1)

*Note: * = the number of students who used the strategy*

According to Oxford (1994), the type of task is one factor which has influence on the strategies learners use to carry out the task. At the time when the participants started writing diaries, they had completed their individual writing and were working in pairs. Although learning diaries yielded limited information about writing strategies in this research, they contributed some interesting findings and useful corroboration of other data.

The first strategy found in the diary entries used by most participants at the pre-writing stage was searching for information about the writing topic. While this strategy was reported to be used by all the participants in interviews, it was reported by four successful writers and two less successful ones in learning diary entries. Diaries also revealed another strategy, that is, note taking while searching information about the topic. Note taking while reading about the topic was reported by two less successful writers in their diaries but this strategy was not found to be used by any writers in the less successful group through interviews. Making outlines was also one of the strategies used at the pre-writing stage by three successful writers and one less successful writer. Affective strategy such as writing at a quiet place found in the diaries of the three successful writers, again, confirmed this finding found in interviews.

The diary entries written by the less successful writers did not reveal any of their writing strategies used when they write, while those written by the successful group of writers did show some. Most of the strategies used by the successful writers at this stage were compensation strategies such as using dictionaries and collocation book to check unsure vocabulary, and grammar books for sentence structures. One cognitive strategy, that is, thinking complicated sentences in first language, was also apparent in the diary entries of two successful writers.

Editing strategies were used by both groups after they finished writing. Again, learning diaries repeated the finding from the interviews that the successful writers revised both forms and content. Moreover, social strategies such as using teacher and peer editing were also reported in diary entries of three successful writers while these strategies were absent in the less successful group of writers' both interview and diary data. Another strategy found in the diary entries of two successful writers was self-rewarding.

Like the finding found in interviews, most of the participants indicated an effort to remember their teacher's feedback by taking note of the feedback after their written work has been marked. One successful writer also reported using teacher feedback of the written work to help her with other language skills.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion of the key research results presented in the previous chapter, in relation to the research questions. Although the key findings from the questionnaires, interviews and learning diaries were presented separately in chapter 4, they are discussed together in this chapter to show how the findings from the three research instruments corroborated. The findings are discussed under the same four sections following the presentation of the quantitative results in chapter 4, but with the qualitative results included. To be in more detail, section 5.2 discusses the overall writing strategy use. The overall writing strategy use by each group of writers is discussed in section 5.3. Section 5.4 presents the most and least frequently used writing strategies by the participants and section 5.5 looks at the difference between the two groups in terms of individual strategy use.

5.2 Overall writing strategy use

As presented in the previous chapter, there was no statistical difference between Oxford's (1990) six categories of strategies (Metacognitive, Memory, Social, Compensation, Affective, and Cognitive). However, results from t-tests showed a significant difference between the six categories and the Negative category with negative strategies being used least frequently of all. It is not difficult to explain the low frequent use of the Negative category as negative strategies are perceived as those which have negative impact on writing. The interviews and learning diaries also provided evidence to support this finding. The low frequency of use of negative strategy such as *I like to start writing immediately without a plan* was corroborated by an indication by the participants during the interviews and in the diaries that they did make outlines at the pre-writing stage.

In addition to providing evidence to cross-check the questionnaire findings, the interviews and diaries also revealed more affective strategies that were not investigated by the questionnaire. The writing topic was reported to be a factor that affected the writing of five out of the eight participants. These students indicated that they wrote better when it was the topic they were interested in. Other affective factors found during the interviews included the amount of time allowed to prepare for writing, the writer's personal emotions, state of health, and even the weather. Another important affective strategy found in the interviews and diary entries was self-rewarding. Self-rewarding was mentioned by all the participants during the interviews. The diary entry of one successful writer showed an emphasis on the role of this affective strategy in creating her motivation as follows:

After finishing my writing, I usually give myself a reward such as listening to music, playing game, eating my favorite dishes or spend more time for myself. To sum up, I will do anything I like, which is good for me so that I can enjoy myself, remember how happy, comfortable I feel when finishing tasks. I will be encouraged by joy I myself make.

The identification of affective strategies from the interviews other than those covered in the questionnaire puts an emphasis on the presence of affective strategies which used to be ignored in language learning strategy research. It also lends support to Oxford's (1994) arguing for the role of affective strategies in language learning that "the L2 learner is not just a cognitive and metacognitive machine but, rather, a whole person".

5.3 Overall writing strategy use by group

As mentioned earlier, the participants were divided into two groups of writers based on the results of their first year final writing exam. The group with higher grades or the successful group consisted of six students while the group with lower grades or the less successful group consisted of three students. An examination of the two groups' overall writing strategy use did provide evidence to conclude that the successful writers generally used strategies more frequently than their less successful counterparts. This finding causes no surprise as previous research investigating learning strategies has indicated that successful language learners use strategies more frequently than less successful language learners (Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995; Oxford & Ehrman, 1995; Oxford, 1994; Politzer, 1983; O'Malley et al., 1985; Wenden & Rubin, 1987).

In addition to the more frequent use of writing strategies in general, the successful group of writers was also different from their less successful counterparts in the use of more Metacognitive, Memory, Compensation, and Cognitive strategies. This finding is useful for the answering of the second research question which aims to investigate the relationship between writing strategy use and the learners' success. It was not surprising to see the more frequent use of the four categories of strategies by the successful writers than their less successful counterparts. In fact, much research in the field has provided evidence for this.

Oxford (1996), in "Language learning strategies around the world" cross-cultural perspectives" states that "successful learners often use metacognitive strategies such as organizing, evaluating, and planning their learning" (p. xi). The finding that metacognitive strategies are often associated with successful learners was also so found by Cohen (1998) and Gregersen et al. (2001). Research has also found that successful language learners are good at combining strategies which work together in order to meet the demand of the task (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). According to Oxford (1996), using metacognitive strategies, "along with cognitive strategies like analyzing, reasoning, transferring information, taking notes, and summarizing – might be considered part of any definition of truly effective learning" (p. xi). Therefore, the success of the successful writers in the present research can be said to have a positive relationship with their use of metacognitive and cognitive strategies.

In addition to metacognitive and cognitive strategies, research has also found other strategies that are associated with successful learners. Compensation and memory strategies were reported by Oxford (1996) to be frequently used by competent learners. The identification of the four strategies (Metacognitive, Cognitive, Compensation, and Memory) associated with successful language learners from previous studies and this study has lent support for the conclusion of a positive relationship between strategy use and the learners' success.

5.4 Most and least frequently used strategies by both groups

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the results from the questionnaires revealed some strategies which were most and least frequently used by both groups of writers. The most frequently used strategies were those which scored 4 and above, meaning usually true to always true of the participants. On the basis of the mean score for individual strategy, ten were counted as most frequently used strategies by all the participants.

Of the ten most frequently used strategies revealed, the use of the foreign language when writing an outline was used most frequently of all. This finding was supported by the result from the interviews when almost all the participants except two successful writers reported that they thought in both Vietnamese and English but wrote down in English.

Concerning the use of the first language in second language writing, the results from the interviews provided some interesting insights. As mentioned previously in the literature review chapter, there has been much argument on the role of L1 use in L2 composition to date. Researchers such as Johnson (1985) and Baker and Boonkit (2004) found that L1 use was a negative strategy and was not used by successful L2 writers. Meanwhile, research by Zamel (1982) and Cumming (1987) provided counter-evidence. It is interesting to see that L1 was used by both the successful and the less successful writers in the current research. Despite the participants' effort to think in English in every stage of writing, L1 was used as a strategy to help them compensate for the lack of vocabulary, especially when writing about unfamiliar topics, as it was expressed in the diary by one successful writer:

We tried our best to think in English to make sentences more beautiful and natural. And in fact, we did it in some extents. However, with some sentences which are complicated to think in English, we had to think them in Vietnamese and then translated into English. I know that it is not good for students who study at a language university like us because we have to learn to think in English to use it fluently and naturally. But there are some words we do not know the meaning in English. Therefore, we must say Vietnamese sentences first and then, found English words.

It is interesting to note that L1 was even used in the whole L2 composing process by two successful writers. On explaining this total reliance on L1 while composing in L2, these two successful writers said that they were unable and did not have confidence to think in English. The following extracts from interviews illustrate this point:

- S1: I don't think I have the ability to do so because it is difficult for me to perform two tasks at the same time. I think in Vietnamese first, then, translate into English.
- S4: The teacher also advises us to think in English as we are learning English. However, I am not very confident, so I have to think in Vietnamese first to ensure I have enough ideas, then, I translate into English.

It can be concluded from the finding about the role of L1 in the current research that using L1 in L2 composition is not really a negative strategy when L1 is only used as a compensation for the lack of certain L2 knowledge.

The role of teacher feedback about previous writing was also noticeable. This was also one of the most frequently used strategies found in Baker and Boonkit's (2004) study. In addition, this finding further lends support to Ferris' (2001) report of the significance of the influence of teacher feedback on writers. Again, interviews and diaries provided more evidence to strengthen this finding.

- S4: I think the teacher's feedback is important, more important than the mark I receive.
- S3: I find the teacher's feedback valuable because it helps us avoid making mistakes in grammar and select related ideas.

All of those comments are very valuable that I will apply to the final one handed 2 weeks later.

The importance that the participants attributed to teacher feedback can be partly explained by the role of teachers in this teaching and learning context. In an Asian country like Vietnam, teachers still play a central role in the classrooms as a source of knowledge as expressed by one of the participants:

Although I discuss my writing with peers before handing it in for assessment, I think the person who assesses my writing has more knowledge than those. So I pay more attention to his/her feedback.

Another important strategy found in this research was using background knowledge to help generate ideas in writing. The results from the interviews not only provided evidence to support this finding but gave more insights. In order to help them generate ideas, the participants always consulted their world knowledge first. However, according to them, world knowledge was only useful in generating ideas for topics which they were familiar with, and which did not require any reading before writing. When background knowledge could not help, particularly, when writing unfamiliar topics, they discussed with their peers and searched information and read about the

topics to help them with the generation of ideas. These strategies were evident in the following excerpts:

- S8: I use my background knowledge to generate ideas for familiar topics. I must search for more information for unfamiliar topics.
- S8: If I can't generate ideas using my background knowledge, I ask my friends or anyone around who has better understanding about that topic.
- R: What else do you do to generate ideas?
- S8: I read books and newspapers. I use my background knowledge. I discuss with friends and teachers but not often.
- R: You don't usually discuss with teachers?
- S8: Usually with friends.
-
- R: Do you use any other ways to help you generate ideas? What do you do if both the relying on your background knowledge and discussing with peers cannot help you with the generation of ideas?
- S7: I search information on the internet or in the library. I usually read related readings and think nothing. I only read to have some surface understanding about the topic. I can generate ideas after I have done all readings.

Taking into consideration of the role of background knowledge in generating ideas, Baker and Boonkit (2004) suggest choosing writing topics which are relevant to the writers in order to motivate and interest them.

An affective strategy such as choosing to write in a comfortable and quiet place where they can concentrate was also one of the strategies most frequently used by the participants. This finding is strongly supported by the interview finding when all the participants reported that their writing was affected by the place where they wrote. The diaries further confirmed this finding:

And I can only write in a comfortable, especially, quiet place where I can concentrate. This is one of the most important things affecting my working productivity. I am likely to work effectively in an absolutely place or at the night when no one can disturb me. I myself acknowledge that. Instead of spending all the morning writing the introduction, it only takes me 30 minutes at night to do the same work. Sometimes, I cannot believe in it. I like to write during night.

In terms of revising strategies, the research results showed a strong emphasis on revision at a local level. This is reflected in the frequent use of revising strategies such as *I edit for grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation* at the "While writing" stage and *I go back to my writing to edit and change the grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation* after the written work had been finished. This focus on local revision can be explained by the participants' learning background. The participants had been learning English as a subject since they were at secondary schools. However, the

method of teaching English at schools in Vietnam is still mainly grammar translation method which places a strong focus on forms and correctness. As a result, English learners often pay attention to correctness rather than how their ideas are expressed. Another explanation for the local rather than global revision expressed by the participants was that once they had made outlines, they would never change their ideas. The participants' primary concern of grammar while editing their work was also found during the interviews and in diary entries.

R: You have written a draft. It is not a finished essay, isn't it? Do you pay attention to grammar when you come back to edit it?

S9: Yes.

R: How about ideas? Do you change ideas?

S9: Normally I don't change ideas when I edit my draft.

R: So you keep your ideas and check for grammar, right?

S9: Yes.

Moreover, the interviews and diaries help gain more insights into the participants' editing strategies. In addition to self-editing, peer and teacher editing were the strategies reported being used by the successful writers. These strategies also make the difference between the successful and less successful writers in terms of their revising strategies. The use of peer and teacher editing, to some extent, can explain for the frequent use of the social strategy *I like to discuss my work with other students or teachers when I have finished*.

There were four least frequently used strategies found in this study. These were the three strategies belonging to negative category and one cognitive strategy which was writing a draft in Vietnamese and translating it into English. It is not surprising that negative strategies such as *I like to start writing immediately without a plan* and *When I have finished my work I don't look at it again; it's finished* were used least frequently by both groups of writers as they all took a process approach to writing. These findings were corroborated by the participants' indication of making outlines and editing their work presented in the interview findings section in the previous chapter. The low mean score for the remaining negative strategy, which is forgetting feedback could be easily explained by the importance that the participants credited to teacher feedback as discussed earlier. In fact, they all indicated their attention to teacher feedback during the interviews and in the diary entries:

R: Do you read the teacher's feedback immediately when you receive your assignments back?

S2: Of course. I read it immediately and I even highlight it.

- R: So you read the teacher's feedback and use it to improve your later writings?
- S4: Yes, I also remember teacher feedback.
- R: Do you pay attention to the teacher's feedback? Do you read it carefully and remember it so that you can improve your writing?
- S8: Yes. I usually pay attention to teacher's feedback as soon as I get back my assignment.
- R: Always attend to teacher's feedback?
- S8: Always.

I received my first draft from my teacher. I read the feedback (comments, suggestions). Almost mistakes I made in this one are those I mentioned in 2nd entry. Also, there are some minor typing mistakes. It's not necessary. However, I make note in order not to repeat them. I think this feedback's also important for me to improve other English skills (reading, speaking, listening).

The least frequently used cognitive strategy which received lowest score of all involves the use of L1 in writing a draft which was then translated into English. Although L1 was used by all the participants, any translation from Vietnamese into English occurred only in their mind as evident in the following interview passage:

- R: Do you write the outlines in Vietnamese or English if you think ideas in Vietnamese?
- S2: Although I think ideas in Vietnamese, I write the outlines in English.
- R: It means there's a step of translation before you write down ideas in the outlines, right?
- S2: Yes, but it occurs in my mind.

5.5 Individual writing strategy use by group

In terms of individual writing strategy use, the results from an analysis of individual strategy use of the two groups revealed a significant difference between the successful writers and their less successful counterparts in the use of five strategies. First of all, the successful writers reported writing more drafts than the less successful ones. The interviews result further confirmed this finding with three successful writers reporting writing more than one drafts. The finding that the less successful learners usually wrote only one draft was also reflected in the fact that one less successful writer mentioned in the interview that she wrote no draft at all. The teacher's method of teaching writing could be a good explanation for this. There seemed to be a relationship between the habit of writing drafts of the participants in the research and the teacher's requirements. One successful writer who reported writing more than one drafts said that this strategy use derived from her teacher's requirement of writing drafts as follow:

S3: I think we were lucky to have an enthusiastic writing teacher when we learned to write paragraphs. She required us to write quite a lot of drafts so that she could have a look and gave feedback.

An examination of the participants' interviews lends more support to this finding when one less successful writer said "I don't write drafts if it's not compulsory".

The successful writers are also different from their less successful counterparts in the more frequent use of editing strategies such as *I edit for grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation* and *I edit my organization*. This concern for grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation, as well as the organization of their work confirmed Zamel's (1982b) that proficient ESL students paid attention to both meanings and form.

The last strategy that makes the successful writers different from the less successful ones, regarding individual writing strategy use, was the use of a dictionary to check unsure things while writing. The interviews provided no information about this strategy but the diaries did confirm this finding:

I am not sure about my vocabulary, when and how to use it. That is the reason why I had to use Oxford dictionary and Vietnamese-English dictionaries very frequently.

I often use grammar book to check sentence structures and an English dictionary for vocabulary.

In addition to providing evidence to cross-check the findings from the questionnaires, the data from the interviews also yielded some useful insights into the participants' general writing behaviours as presented in Table 4.4. It is interesting to see that seven out of eight participants who attended interviews made no timetable for practising writing. This finding corresponds to Baker and Boonkit's (2004) report that making a timetable for practising writing was never or usually not true of their Thai participants. It is appropriate to follow Baker and Boonkit's explanation that the reason lies in the perception of time among cultures pointed out in O'Sullivan and Tajaroensuk (1997). According to O'Sullivan and Tajaroensuk, Thai students are polychronic, or in other words, they consider time commitments an objective to be achieved and change plans often and easily. Choi (2007) indicates that the polychronic perception of time is one of the three cultural characteristics which make East Asian culture unique. Therefore, the use of a timetable for practising writing may also be a culturally appropriate strategy for Vietnamese students. Instead, there seemed to be a tendency to focus on the writing outcomes which was reflected in the participants' report that they only practiced writing before exams, or otherwise, they only did extra writing when they were inspired by a certain topic. The data from the interviews also provided some possible reason as expressed by one of the successful writers as follow:

S2: ((smile)) To be honest, I'm quite lazy, so I sometimes practice. I only write when I find an interesting topic. It's not my habit to practice writing.

The absence of a timetable for practising writing, especially in the successful writers provided counter-evidence to Rubin's (1975) description of good language learners that they practise.

5.6 Conclusion

The chapter has discussed in details the key findings in the research. Research question one which aimed at identifying the strategies used by the participants was answered in section 5.2 – 5.5. Meanwhile, section 5.2 has also provided the answer to the second research question, which investigated the relationship between writing strategy use and the learners' success. The research limitations, pedagogical implications, as well as recommendations for future research are to be provided in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

A summary of the key research findings are first provided in this chapter. Pedagogical applications for L2 writing teachers as well as implications for further research then follow. The limitations of the research are presented and addressed at the end of the chapter.

6.2 Summary of key research findings

The current study primarily aimed to investigate the writing strategies used by successful and less successful EFL learners in Vietnam context. Its secondary aim was to investigate the relationship between strategy use and the learners' success.

The research was carried out in a university in Hanoi, Vietnam. Nine second-year students who were enrolled in a four-year Bachelor programme participated in the research. The research questions were addressed by means of a triangulated approach to collect data, including structured questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and learning diaries. The data were collected over a period of two months.

The results from an analysis of the quantitative data showed that the successful writers not only generally used writing strategies more frequently but also made more frequent use of metacognitive, memory, compensation, and cognitive strategies than their less successful counterparts. A number of writing strategies which were most and least frequently used by the writers were identified. Regarding individual writing strategy use, the research found that the successful writers were different from the less successful ones in that they wrote more drafts, used editing strategies more frequently, and used a dictionary to check unsure things.

The qualitative results from interviews and diaries not only provided supportive evidence to the questionnaire results but gave more insights into the writers' writing process and some factors affected their writing. The qualitative results indicated that the writers all took a process approach to writing and generally made no timetable for their writing. Some important affective factors identified were the place of writing, the writing topic, self-rewarding, the amount of time allowed to prepare for writing, the writer's personal emotions, state of health, and even the weather. The theoretical and pedagogical implications resulted from the research findings are to be provided in the next sections.

6.3 Theoretical implications

The research highlighted some notable points regarding the explanation of how writing occurs based on the three writing models presented earlier in the literature review. Firstly, the study confirms the view of writing as a process by the fact that the writers generally went through a number of steps as proposed in the three writing models before they achieved the finished product. However, the research also found a gap between theory and practice. According to Hayes' writing model and Hayes and Flower's model, knowledge of the audience has some role to play in determining the writing plan. The writing plan is also affected by linguistic knowledge in Hayes' model. However, the research presented here found no relationship between knowledge of audience and writing plan. On the contrary, there was a strong connection between writing plan and linguistic knowledge – knowledge about the language forms like grammar. It may, therefore, be concluded that factors which influence writing may have a role in one context, but not in another. This raises a question about the influence of audience on the writing plan in Hayes and Flower' and Hayes' writing models in different contexts.

On explaining the difference between novice and skilled writers in terms of cognitive processes, Bereiter and Scardamalia's model proved to be relevant. As proposed by this model, novice writers are associated with Knowledge Telling Strategy in which a text is produced by "formulating ideas as they are retrieved or generated from Long Term Memory, without reorganizing the conceptual content or the linguistic form of the text" (Alamargot & Chanquoy, 2001, p. 6). This is confirmed by the research finding that very little revision of content and/or forms was made by the less successful writers while more revision in terms of both content and forms was made by the successful writers.

In summary, it can be concluded from these theoretical implications that it would be unwise for a theory to claim comprehensiveness when it has not been tested in a wide range of contexts. A number of pedagogical implications drawn from the research are presented in the next section.

6.4 Pedagogical implications

Language learning strategies has been viewed by authors such as Lessard-Clouston (1997) and Oxford (1990) as having a positive relationship with the development of the communicative competence. Oxford (1990, p. 1) states that language learning strategies “are especially important for language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed movement, which is essential for developing communicative competence”. Hismanoglu (2000) as cited Fedderholdt (1997, p. 1) states that “the language learner capable of using a wide variety of language learning strategies can improve his skills in a better way”. Much research into language learning strategies has been done in an effort to identify the strategies used by good language learners in order to teach those to less or unsuccessful learners. The present study found that the successful writers used metacognitive, memory, compensation and cognitive strategies more frequently than the less successful writers. As learning strategies help develop the learners’ communicative competence, it is first suggested that the strategies found in this research should be informed to language teachers so that they can help their students extend their repertoire of writing strategies.

In addition to getting familiar with learning strategies, language teachers should particularly understand the factors affecting the acquisition of a second language. Rossiter (2003), states that there has been an increasing focus on individuals’ emotions and feelings recently as a result of the development of humanistic psychology. The positive relationship between attention to affect and good language learning outcomes, also according to Rossiter, has been confirmed over the last three decades by such researchers as Gardner (1985), Gardner and Clément (1990), Gardner and Lambert (1972), Gardner and MacIntyre (1993). If it is true that there exists an affective filter (the learner’s motives, needs, attitudes, and emotional states) as Krashen (1982) proposed, then, helping language learners control these affective variables will greatly contribute to their learning process. To this end, the language teachers should create an environment which is open and comfortable for their students to partly help them control and understand the affective factors to use them in a productive way.

6.5 Implications for further research

The study has investigated the writing strategies used by successful and less successful EFL learners and the relationship between strategy use and the learner's success. As learning strategies are useful tools that facilitate learning, the identification of strategies used by both successful and less successful writers will contribute greatly to the development of language skills.

However, the matter of whether the successful writers are different from their less successful counterparts in terms of their awareness of strategy use has not been addressed in this research. Green and Oxford (1995, p. 262), based on the think-aloud studies carried out by Abraham and Vann (1987), O'Malley and Chamot (1990) and the diary research by Lavine and Oxford (in press), concluded that "effective L2 learners are aware of the strategies they use and why they use them". As the learner's awareness of strategy use plays an important role in his/her language learning effectiveness, it should not be taken for granted. Further research should incorporate this aspect into the investigation of writing strategies to determine if awareness of learning strategies makes successful and less successful writers different.

Oxford (1994) shows that inadequate attention has been paid by L2 research to investigate social and affective strategies. As Habte-Gabr (2006) points out, "socio-affective strategies are even more essential in the EFL context as the student does not have the social and cultural environment as in the ESL environment". In addition, socio-affective strategies, according to her, are considered the most effective strategies which enhance learning among students. Taking into consideration of the importance of social and affective strategies in language learning, it is suggested that further research should pay more attention to those.

It could be noted from the review of literature that most research into language learning strategies used case study approach which is weak in making generalization. As generalizability is one of the important criteria in making good research, further research should use a larger sample size with a caution in choosing the range of settings that represent the wider population. A larger sample combined with the use of triangulation would be effective in providing a holistic view of learning strategies.

6.6 Limitations

The research was first limited in that it was a small scale study, which involved a small sample size, and thus affecting generalization. A small sample of nine participants can though allow certain generalizations, makes it inadequate to generalize from one case to another. A larger but less homogenous sample size would provide a clearer picture of writing strategy use of successful and less successful EFL learners.

The second limitation in the research was the poor data collected from learning diaries due to the time of the data collection. As mentioned in the Methodology chapter, at the time the data collection phase started, the participants' writing task was a one-thousand word argumentative essay. In order to accomplish the task, the students worked in groups of four or five, decided by their teachers. Each group first decided their own topic. The students in each group then worked in two pairs, one found supporting ideas for the topic, and the other found counter-arguments. In each pair each student wrote individually on the same ideas. They finally combined their individual writing into one. When the guidelines for diary writing were given to the participants, they had completed their individual text and were combining their writing to make the final one. Therefore, the activities involving their writing task recorded in the diaries may exclude some strategies they used when writing. However, this problem was, to some extent, overcome by means of retrospection. The participants were asked to include in the diaries what they actually did when they wrote individually.

Lastly, the research was also limited by the limitations inherent in the research instruments. The retrospection method used in the diaries, a method in which data are collected some time after the event under investigation has taken place, has been criticized in that "the gap between the event and the reporting will lead to unreliable data" (Nunan, 1992, p. 124).

6.7 Conclusion

The current research was carried out in order to address two research questions. The research primarily aimed at investigating the writing strategies used by both successful and less successful EFL learners. It also answered a second question of whether there was a relationship between strategy use and the learners' success. Nine students, who were in their second year of a four-year Bachelor program at Hanoi University in Vietnam, participated in the research. The data was collected by means of a triangulation, including structured questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and learning diaries.

The research showed that the successful writers not only used strategies more frequently, but made more use of Metacognitive, Memory, Compensation, and Cognitive strategies than the less successful counterparts. Ten most frequently used and four least frequently used strategies were revealed. In terms of individual writing strategy use by group, the successful writers were found to be different from the less successful ones in that they wrote more drafts, they edited more frequently and they used a dictionary to check things they were unsure of.

A number of theoretical and pedagogical implications for second language instruction were drawn from the research. Firstly, it was suggested that the writing teachers should be informed of the importance of writing strategies and incorporate them into their instruction. Secondly, writing instructors should pay special attention to the affective factors in order to help their students control these.

Taking into consideration of the importance of affective factors in second language learning, further research was suggested to pay more attention to them. Moreover, the question of whether there is any relationship between the learners' awareness of learning strategies and their success should also be incorporated in further research. This knowledge will be valuable in understanding if awareness of learning strategies really distinguishes successful writers from less successful ones.

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APPENDIX A

Participant Information Sheet



Date Information Sheet Produced:

27 July 2007

Project Title

EFL learners in Vietnam: an investigation of writing strategies.

An Invitation

Dear students,

I am a post-graduate student at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) in New Zealand. I would like to invite you to participate in a research project about learning strategies in writing which makes up a part of my two-year Master of Applied Language Studies programme. I am interested in exploring learning strategies in writing which are most frequently used by undergraduate English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) students of Arts during their academic study at Hanoi University. The study will analyse the relationship between strategy use and students' success. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without any adverse consequences.

What is the purpose of this research?

The research is the thesis for my master programme at AUT. It is also expected to help identify learning strategies most frequently used in English writing that contribute to success. It will also attempt to contribute to the development of appropriate methods in teaching the writing of English and to improvements in both the learning processes and learning outcomes of EFL learners.

How was I chosen for this invitation?

All second-year undergraduate EFL students will be invited to a meeting where the researcher will provide detailed information about the study. You will have an opportunity to ask questions. Those who have either achieved 80% or over or less than 50% in the writing task in the first year final exam are invited to participate in the study. Your grade will not be revealed to any of the fellow students but the researcher. You will then have several meetings with the researcher who will explain the data collection methods and processes. There will be an opportunity to ask questions and to discuss these before you agree to participate.

What will happen in this research?

The study is an investigation of most frequently used learning strategies in writing employed by second-year undergraduate EFL learners and the relationship between strategy use and learners' success. Firstly, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire which aims to investigate broad areas of learning strategies that are used in the context of the academic study during the second semester of your second year. Questionnaires will be completed by the students and then collected by the researcher after one week.

You will then be asked to participate in interviews with the researcher to explain more about your answers in the questionnaires. Each interview takes around one hour and will be recorded.

Finally, you will be asked to keep a learning diary for a period of 8 weeks. Your learning diaries will be written on a weekly basis and will be checked regularly by the researcher to see if you understand what you are required to do. Some guidelines for diary writing will be provided by the researcher before you start. The researcher will make a copy of the diary and then return it to you.

What are the discomforts and risks?

The recruitment and data collection processes have been designed to remove the risk that participants' proficiency as English learners will be identified by people other than the researcher. Those who wish to take part will only identify themselves to the researcher confidentially and in private. The confidentiality of the questionnaire will be maintained by asking participants to deposit the completed questionnaires in a locked box, which will be provided. Furthermore the study has been designed so that while participants and their responses or data will be known to the researcher, this information will remain confidential.

What are the benefits?

This study aims to bring to light successful learning strategies in writing most frequently used by EFL learners. Therefore, the research findings are likely to be beneficial to learners in achieving more effective language learning. It is hoped that this study will make you more aware of the usefulness of strategy use which characterises good language learners. In addition, the study will contribute to the development of appropriate teaching methods for English writing in Vietnam.

How will my privacy be protected?

You will not be required to write your name on either the questionnaires or learning diary unless you wish to. The information you provide will only be read by the researcher and will be kept confidential. The research findings will be written up in such a way that no individual participants are identified.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

The questionnaire will take you about twenty minutes to complete. However, you should expect to spend about an hour in interviews and an hour per week over a period of 8 weeks writing learning diaries.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

The invitation to participate will be sent to you before the second half of your semester. You will have some time to consider and decide whether to participate after several meetings with the researcher.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

A Consent Form will be provided to you to discuss at the first meeting with the researcher during the recruitment process. If you wish to join the study please bring the completed Consent Form with you to the last meeting before the data collection starts.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

If you wish to have a copy of the research findings please tick the Yes box in the Consent Form and provide me your email address so that I can send them back to you.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor:

Associate Professor John Bitchener Tel 64 921 9999 ext 7830
john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz

Elizabeth Turner Tel 64 921 9999 ext 6121
elizabeth.turner@aut.ac.nz

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEK, Madeline Banda, madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz, 64 921 9999 ext 8044.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Researcher Contact Details:

Thi Ngoc Nguyen Mobile 84 912624561
brd1515@aut.ac.nz

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Associate Professor John Bitchener Tel 64 921 9999 ext 7830
john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz

Elizabeth Turner Tel 64 921 9999 ext 6121
elizabeth.turner@aut.ac.nz

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 12
November 2007, AUTEK Reference number 07/160.**

THÔNG TIN THAM GIA NGHIÊN CỨU



Ngày

27/07/2007

Đề tài nghiên cứu

Tìm hiểu chiến lược viết (writing strategies) của người học tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ ở Việt Nam.

Lời mời

Gửi các bạn sinh viên

Tôi là nghiên cứu sinh tại trường Đại học Công nghệ Auckland (AUT), New Zealand. Mời các bạn tham gia vào đề tài nghiên cứu về chiến lược viết. Nghiên cứu này là một phần yêu cầu trong khóa học thạc sĩ ngôn ngữ học ứng dụng kéo dài hai năm của tôi tại AUT. Đề tài mà tôi quan tâm là tìm hiểu các chiến lược viết được các bạn sinh viên sử dụng nhiều nhất trong thời gian học tại trường Đại học Hà Nội. Nghiên cứu sẽ phân tích mối quan hệ giữa việc sử dụng chiến lược học tập và thành công của người học. Sự tham gia của các bạn hoàn toàn mang tính tự nguyện, các bạn có quyền rút lui khỏi nghiên cứu tại bất kì thời điểm nào mà không gặp phải bất lợi hay khó khăn, trở ngại nào.

Mục đích nghiên cứu

Nghiên cứu này là luận án thạc sĩ của tôi tại AUT. Nghiên cứu này hướng tới việc phát hiện những chiến lược học tập được sử dụng thường xuyên nhất và đóng góp vào sự thành công trong khả năng viết tiếng Anh. Nghiên cứu cũng là một nỗ lực nhằm góp phần xây dựng một phương pháp thích hợp trong dạy viết tiếng Anh và nhằm cải thiện quá trình học cũng như kết quả học tập của sinh viên học tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ.

Điều kiện tham gia

Tất cả các sinh viên tiếng Anh năm thứ hai sẽ được mời tham gia vào buổi gặp mặt với nghiên cứu sinh và sẽ được cung cấp thông tin chi tiết về nghiên cứu. Các bạn sẽ có cơ hội để nêu thắc mắc và đặt câu hỏi. Những sinh viên đạt 80% hoặc cao hơn và những sinh viên chỉ đạt dưới 50% trong bài thi viết cuối năm thứ nhất sẽ được mời tham gia vào nghiên cứu. Điểm của các bạn sẽ không được tiết lộ cho các sinh viên khác trừ nhà nghiên cứu. Sau đó, phương pháp và quá trình thu thập dữ liệu sẽ được nhà nghiên cứu giải thích tại một số cuộc gặp mặt khác. Các bạn sẽ có cơ hội đặt câu hỏi và thảo luận các vấn đề này trước khi quyết định tham gia vào nghiên cứu.

Quá trình tiến hành nghiên cứu

Nghiên cứu này nhằm mục đích tìm ra những chiến lược viết được sinh viên tiếng Anh năm thứ hai sử dụng thường xuyên nhất và mối quan hệ giữa việc sử dụng chiến lược học tập với thành công của người học. Các bạn sẽ điền vào bản câu hỏi điều tra với mục đích tìm hiểu rộng rãi các chiến lược học được sử dụng trong môi trường đại học suốt học kỳ 2 năm thứ 2 đại học của các bạn. Bản câu hỏi điều tra sẽ do các bạn tự điền và sẽ nộp lại cho nghiên cứu sinh sau một tuần.

Sau đó các bạn sẽ tham gia phỏng vấn với nghiên cứu sinh để trao đổi sâu hơn về lựa chọn mà các bạn đưa ra trong bản câu hỏi điều tra. Phỏng vấn sẽ kéo dài khoảng một tiếng và sẽ được ghi âm.

Cuối cùng, các bạn sẽ viết nhật kí ghi lại quá trình học trong vòng 8 tuần. Nhật kí học tập được viết hàng tuần và được nghiên cứu sinh xem xét thường xuyên để đảm bảo các bạn nắm rõ yêu cầu. Các bạn sẽ được hướng dẫn trước khi bắt đầu viết nhật kí học tập. Nhật kí này sẽ được sao ra một bản và sau đó trả lại cho các bạn.

Những bản khoản khi tham gia nghiên cứu

Quá trình tuyển chọn người tham gia cũng như quá trình thu thập dữ liệu đã được xem xét kĩ lưỡng sao cho trình độ của người học sẽ không được tiết lộ cho bất kì ai trừ nghiên cứu sinh. Những người tình nguyện tham gia sẽ chỉ cung cấp riêng các thông tin cần thiết khi tham gia nghiên cứu cho nghiên cứu sinh. Bản câu hỏi điều tra sau khi điền sẽ được cho vào một chiếc hòm khóa nhằm đảm bảo tính bảo mật. Hơn nữa, phương pháp tiến hành nghiên cứu được sắp xếp nhằm đảm bảo chỉ có nghiên cứu sinh được tiếp cận với các dữ liệu thu được.

Nghiên cứu sinh rất sẵn lòng trao đổi những vấn đề này với các bạn.

Lợi ích khi tham gia nghiên cứu

Nghiên cứu này nhằm phát hiện các chiến lược viết được sử dụng thường xuyên nhất và được xem là đóng góp vào sự thành công của người học tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ. Do đó, những phát hiện từ nghiên cứu này có thể sẽ góp phần mang lại hiệu quả cao hơn trong việc học ngoại ngữ. Việc tham gia vào nghiên cứu cũng giúp các bạn nhận thức rõ hơn tính hữu ích của việc sử dụng chiến lược học tập vốn là đặc điểm của người học ngoại ngữ giỏi. Ngoài ra, nghiên cứu cũng góp phần xây dựng các phương pháp dạy viết tiếng Anh thích hợp tại Việt Nam.

Bảo vệ thông tin cá nhân

Tất cả những thông tin mà bạn cung cấp sẽ được giữ bí mật và chỉ được tiết lộ cho nghiên cứu sinh. Kết quả nghiên cứu sẽ được báo cáo theo cách thức không xác định cá nhân cụ thể.

Bạn cần bỏ ra những gì khi tham gia nghiên cứu

Các bạn chỉ cần dành 20 phút để điền bản câu hỏi điều tra. Phỏng vấn sẽ mất khoảng 1 tiếng và nhật kí học tập cũng chiếm 1 tiếng mỗi tuần và kéo dài trong 8 tuần.

Thời gian xem xét lời mời tham gia nghiên cứu

Các bạn sẽ nhận được lời mời tham gia vào nghiên cứu vào nửa sau của kì học. Sau một vài cuộc gặp mặt với nghiên cứu sinh, các bạn sẽ có một khoảng thời gian để cân nhắc và quyết định.

Đồng ý tham gia nghiên cứu

Các bạn sẽ được phát Đơn chấp thuận tại buổi gặp mặt đầu tiên với nghiên cứu sinh và trao đổi về vấn đề này. Nếu bạn muốn tham gia vào nghiên cứu, hãy mang theo Đơn chấp thuận đã điền hoàn chỉnh đến buổi gặp mặt cuối cùng với nghiên cứu sinh trước khi quá trình thu thập dữ liệu bắt đầu.

Để nhận bản sao kết quả nghiên cứu

Nếu các bạn muốn có một bản sao kết quả nghiên cứu, hãy đánh dấu vào ô “Có” trong Đơn chấp thuận kèm theo địa chỉ email. Kết quả này sẽ được gửi qua địa chỉ email mà bạn cung cấp.

Liên hệ trong trường hợp có thắc mắc về đề tài

Mọi thắc mắc có liên quan đến nội dung nghiên cứu, vui lòng liên hệ giáo viên hướng dẫn đề tài:

Phó giáo sư John Bitchener Điện thoại: +64 921 9999 / 7830

Email: john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz

Elizabeth Turner Điện thoại: +64 921 9999 / 6121

Email: elizabeth.turner@aut.ac.nz

Mọi thắc mắc liên quan đến việc tiến hành nghiên cứu, vui lòng liên hệ thư kí điều hành ban Đạo đức nghiên cứu Đại học Công nghệ Auckland (AUTEK).

Madeline Banda Điện thoại: +64 921 9999 / 8044

Email: madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz

Để có thêm thông tin về nghiên cứu, vui lòng liên hệ:

Nghiên cứu sinh:

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Giáo sư John Bitchener Điện thoại: +64 921 9999 / 7830

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Được AUTEK thông qua ngày 12/11/2007, số đối chiếu 07/160

APPENDIX B

Consent Form



Project title: EFL learners in Vietnam: an investigation of writing strategies

Project Supervisor: Associate Professor John Bitchener, Elizabeth Turner

Researcher: Thi Ngoc Nguyen

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 27 July 2007.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- I understand that my learning diary will be copied by the researcher.
- I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one):
Yes No

Participant’s signature :

.....

Participant’s name:

.....

Participant’s Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....

.....

.....

.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 12 November 2007

AUTEC Reference number 07/160

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE



Writing strategies (specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques to improve writing)

This questionnaire lists a wide range of writing strategies most frequently used by English-as-a-foreign-language learners. Its aim is to identify which of these are used by you. Please tick the box which best expresses your answer to each question. The information you provide in this questionnaire will be kept confidential. Thank you very much for your time.

About you

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you? (years)
3. Are you male or female? Male Female
4. What was your grade in the final writing exam in your first year?

Pre-writing

- | | | | | | |
|--|--|----------------------|--|------------------------|--|
| | | | | | |
| | | Never true of me | | Usually not true of me | |
| | | Sometimes true of me | | Usually true of me | |
| | | Always true of me | | | |
-
1. I do extra study outside the classroom to improve my writing.....
 2. I read my lesson notes, handouts, and course requirements before writing
 3. I read the feedback (advice, comments, and suggestions about completed written work) from my teacher about my previous writing
 4. I consider the task or instructions carefully before writing
 5. I discuss what I am going to write with other students or my teachers.....
 6. I brainstorm ideas (create a list that includes a wide variety of related ideas) and write notes.....
 7. I use my background (world) knowledge to help me with ideas
 8. I search information and make notes in Vietnamese before writing
 9. I think about the organization of the writing in Vietnamese before writing
 10. I write the outlines of organization in English

- 11.I like to start writing immediately without a plan
- 12.I make a timetable for when I will do my writing.....
- 13.I try to write in a comfortable, quiet place where I can concentrate

While writing

- 14.I like to write a draft in Vietnamese first and then translate it into English
- 15.I like to write two or more drafts.....
- 16.I like to write just one draft
- 17.I like to edit my work as I am writing
- 18.I like to edit my work when I have finished writing a draft.....
- 19.I use a dictionary to check things I am not sure about before or when I write
- 20.I don't use a dictionary until I finish writing a draft.....
- 21.I use a grammar book to check things I am not sure about before or when I write
- 22.I don't use a grammar book until I finish writing a draft
- 23.I edit for content (ideas).....
- 24.I edit for grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation.....
- 25.I edit my organisation.....
- 26.I like to change, or make my ideas clearer as I write
- 27.I use an English-Vietnamese, Vietnamese-English dictionary
- 28.I use an English-English dictionary

After finishing my writing

- 29.I go back to my writing to edit and change the content (ideas).....

Never true of me
Usually not true of me
Sometimes true of me
Usually true of me
Always true of me

- 30.I go back to my writing to edit and change the grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation.....
- 31.I go back to my writing to edit and change my organisation
- 32.I like to discuss my work with other students or teachers when I have finished
- 33.When I have finished my work I don't look at it again; it is finished.....
- 34.I give myself a reward when I have finished

After my written work has been marked

- 35.I make notes or try to remember the feedback I get for my work.....
- 36.I record the types of errors I made (e.g. grammar, vocabulary, and organisation)
- 37.I use the feedback to help with my other English language skills (reading, speaking, and listening).....
- 38.I don't usually remember the feedback I get

Never true of me
 Usually not true of me
 Sometimes true of me
 Usually true of me
 Always true of me

Are there any writing strategies you employ which are not included in the questionnaire?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTION LIST

Questions for semi-structured interviews with participants may change in detail as a result of initial analysis of the responses to the questionnaires. However, at this stage the questions anticipated to be asked are as follow:

About the questionnaire:

1. Can you explain if there is anything in the questionnaire that makes you confused?
2. Could you describe any writing strategies you use that are not mentioned in the questionnaire?
Could you explain why you use this (or these)?

About writing:

1. How writing is taught in your class?
2. How often do you practice writing in English?
3. How much time do you spend each time you practice?
4. Could you explain what you do to practice writing in English?
5. Could you tell me what you do to help you with the generation of ideas before you write?
6. Do you read about the topic you are going to write about before writing?
Could you explain why?
7. Could you tell me whether you think in English or in your first language when you write?
Could you explain why you do this?
8. Do you write immediately in English or translate from your first language?
Can you explain why you do this?
9. Can you describe and explain any factors that affect your English writing (where you write, topic, etc.)?

APPENDIX E

GUIDELINES FOR DIARY WRITING

Your learning diary will be kept in eight weeks. The number of entry is not limited but you should write *at least* one entry per week. Please write down your name and date each entry in your diary. The diary should include any activities that involve your writing task *before*, *during* and *after* your writing, to be more specific the following points should be covered:

- A brief description of the writing task (e.g. writing topic, length of the writing, instructions for writing ...)
- Any activities to prepare for writing (if any) such as *searching information, reading, making notes, discussing with teacher and other students, planning...*
- Any difficulties you meet while writing in terms of content, vocabulary, grammar, or other difficulties.
- What you do to overcome those difficulties (if any).
- Any revision of content and form while writing
- What you do after writing e.g. rereading, editing (content and form), rewarding yourself, having a cup of tea ...
- Your feelings after you finish writing.

APPENDIX F

SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

R: Thế khi mà em viết ý thì em nghĩ, cái suy nghĩ của em thì là suy nghĩ bằng tiếng Anh hay là bằng tiếng Việt? Tức là nếu mà em nghĩ bằng tiếng Việt rồi em ngồi em dịch ra chẳng hạn hay là em nghĩ luôn bằng tiếng Anh và em viết bằng tiếng Anh luôn?

P: Thực ra là cách tốt nhất là nghĩ bằng tiếng Anh và viết bằng tiếng Anh mà đôi khi bởi vì kĩ năng của em cũng chưa tốt lắm nên em vẫn bị lẫn lộn giữa tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt. Đôi khi em nghĩ được bằng và đôi khi em lại nghĩ ý tưởng idea bằng tiếng Việt, sau đấy ((cười)) thì lại phải nghĩ cách diễn đạt bằng tiếng Anh.

R: Thế lập dàn ý đấy thì em lập dàn ý bằng tiếng Anh hay tiếng Việt khi mà em nghĩ bằng tiếng Việt? Khi mà em viết ý.

P: Nghĩ bằng tiếng Việt nhưng mà em vẫn phải ghi trên giấy viết outline thì em vẫn phải viết bằng tiếng Anh.

R: Tức là dựa trên cái đó là khi mà viết ra rồi là em phải dịch đúng không tại vì em nghĩ bằng tiếng Việt nhưng mà em viết ra giấy bằng tiếng Anh nhưng mà em lại phải dịch từ tiếng Việt sang tiếng Anh?

P: Vâng. Nhưng mà cái đấy là dịch trong đầu mình chứ không phải là viết ra giấy sau đấy là dịch.

R: Nhưng mà tức là khi mà ngay cả trong khi em viết nữa thì là em cũng nghĩ bằng tiếng Anh hay là nghĩ bằng tiếng Việt?

P: Nếu sau khi có outline rồi thì

R: Ví dụ như em muốn phát triển cái dàn ý đấy ra này xong rồi từng ý từng ý một này, em nghĩ là ví dụ trong đầu mình có những cái câu câu bằng tiếng Việt sau rồi em viết ra giấy, tức là trong quá trình viết thì em sẽ viết luôn bằng tiếng Anh bởi vì tức là từ cái ý tiếng Việt đấy em dịch ra luôn bằng tiếng Anh hay là em viết luôn hay là em nghĩ luôn bằng tiếng Anh?

P: Thường là em nghĩ bằng tiếng Việt và em viết ra tiếng Anh.

R: Thế tại sao tại sao em lại làm như thế? Khi nào em nghĩ bằng tiếng Việt?

P: Thường là chẳng hạn những chủ đề khó mà chưa tìm được cách diễn đạt thì em đành phải nghĩ bằng tiếng Việt, sau đấy thì em phải tìm những cấu trúc câu nào nó phù hợp để em diễn đạt lại bằng tiếng Anh. Còn chẳng hạn như những cái idea bình thường thì em có thể diễn đạt luôn bằng tiếng Anh.

R: Thế có cái nhân tố nào mà ảnh hưởng đến cái quá trình viết của em không? Ví dụ như là về mặt thời gian này, ví dụ như là nếu mà hạn chế về mặt thời gian này thì chắc là sẽ viết không tốt chẳng hạn, hay là về cái chủ đề, chủ đề mà cho mà nó chủ đề mà em không thích hoặc em cảm thấy rất là khó em thấy không thích làm cái chủ đề như thế. Hay là ví dụ như là về cái môi trường xung quanh ý khi em viết ý thì có cái nào đó ảnh hưởng đến cái quá trình viết đấy của em không?

P: Em nghĩ là em hay bị ảnh hưởng bởi cái môi trường xung quanh, chẳng hạn như nếu như mà âm ỉ quá hoặc là ồn ào quá hoặc là thời gian quá là eo hẹp thì em viết không được tốt lắm. Còn chủ đề thì không ảnh hưởng lắm bởi vì trước khi viết thì em đã tìm hiểu rất là kĩ rồi thì em mới viết.

R: Chủ đề thì không ảnh hưởng gì?

P: Vâng.

R: Thế còn ví dụ như là khi mà viết xong ý thế em cảm thấy cái cảm giác của em khi mà em viết xong thì em thấy như thế nào? Có bao giờ như kiểu là thấy vui hay ví dụ như là mình làm tốt mình cảm thấy rất là vui và mình tự thưởng cho mình cái gì đó không?

P: Thực ra nếu như viết xong mà cảm thấy tốt thì rất là vui. Mặc dù là có thể bài không tốt lắm nhưng mà dù sao viết xong rồi cũng cảm thấy rất là nhẹ nhàng. Nhưng mà tuy nhiên sau đấy một hai ngày thì em lại giờ ra và em sửa lại ((cười)).

R: Thế cái mà ý kiến của cô ý, cái feedback của giáo viên ý thì em có thấy em có bao giờ dựa trên những cái đó để em tức là nâng cao cái kỹ năng viết của em không, tức là để mình có thể như là tránh để lần sau mình không mắc phải những cái lỗi như thế nữa chẳng hạn ý hay là mình sẽ ghi nhớ là ví dụ như với thể loại này thì mình không được tức là không được viết như thế hay là không được dùng những cấu trúc như thế chẳng hạn ý, thì em có thấy nó có ích với cả em có bao giờ dựa với cả nhớ những cái điều đó để em có thể tức là cải thiện hơn cái phần viết lần sau không?

P: Thực ra thì em thấy là những cái feedback của cô rất là có giá trị bởi vì bọn em nhiều khi dùng cấu trúc nó không được tốt lắm hoặc là cái idea phát triển chưa đúng hướng thì những cái feedback đấy giúp bọn em lần sau tránh không lặp lại cái lỗi sai ý.

TRANSLATION OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

R: Could you tell me whether you think in English or in your first language when you write?

P: Actually, it's best to think and write in English. Sometimes I can think in English but sometimes I think ideas in Vietnamese and then, ((smile)) think how to express in English.

R: Do you write the outlines in Vietnamese or English if you think ideas in Vietnamese?

P: Although I think ideas in Vietnamese, I write the outlines in English.

R: It means there's a step of translation before you write down ideas in the outlines, right?

P: Yes, but it occurs in my mind.

R: But I mean you think in English or Vietnamese when you write.

P: Once I have made outlines

R: For example, you are developing a main idea. Do you think of supporting sentences in Vietnamese and write them down in English? Or do you think and write them down immediately in English?

P: I usually think in Vietnamese but write in English.

R: Could you explain why you do this? When do you think in Vietnamese?

P: I have to think in Vietnamese when I write unfamiliar topics for which English expressions are not available, then I have to translate. I can think and write simple ideas in English.

R: Can you describe and explain any factors that affect your English writing, for example, the deadline, the topic, and the place where you write?

P: I think I am affected much by external factors. I cannot write very well in a noisy place or when I have little time. The topic doesn't affect me much because I prepare very carefully before I write.

R: Topics have no influence?

P: No.

R: How do you feel after you finish writing? Do you reward yourself if you feel relaxed?

P: I feel very happy if I write well. I still feel relief even if I am not very satisfied with my work. However I will edit it again after one or two days ((smile)).

R: Do you rely on the teacher's feedback to improve your writing?

P: I find the teacher's feedback valuable because it helps us avoid making mistakes in grammar and select related ideas.

**Note:*

R = Researcher

P = Participant