

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter consists of six parts. The first part begins with a brief summary of the study. The second part reveals the results of the study. The third part relates to the results which discuss the findings. The fourth part presents the limitation of the study. The fifth part provides the pedagogical implications drawn from the study. The last part presents recommendations for further research.

Summary of the study

The population for this study was the five hundred and twenty two third year pre-cadets who were studying at Armed Forces Academies Preparatory School in Nakornnayok Province in the academic year 2007. The sample of this study was 31 pre-cadets. They voluntarily enrolled in the Self-monitoring writing strategies instruction course which was an extra course. Self-monitoring English writing strategies instruction was designed as a treatment for this research. The focus group used in order to analyze in depth data of both quantitative and qualitative consisted of three students who gained the highest improve scores from the pretest to the posttest.

The instruments used in this research consisted of topics of writing, writing journals, and learner interviews. All the instruments were validated by three experts and piloted to a group of students whose characteristics were similar to the samples.

From the review literature, there was no research study merging the teaching writing step and self-monitoring writing strategies. Thus, this present study created the self-monitoring writing strategies instruction adapted by the theory and pedagogical relevant to the area of this instruction.

The procedures of self-monitoring writing strategies instruction in this research consisted of four parts. At the beginning of the instruction, students were asked to write the paragraph (pretest). They were also introduced the writing paragraph. The further two lessons, the samples were introduced self-monitoring writing strategies focusing on content and form the content and the form. The checklist and the guideline for checking content and organization and the guidelines for verifying the form were modeled to the students during these weeks. The checklist provided guidelines for students to read and assess their content in order to identify the elements of paragraph while the guidelines for verifying the form helped students verified what types of errors they had to look carefully for in terms of language use, vocabulary, and mechanics (verb tense, word choice/word order, agreement, present/past participles, articles, punctuation, and nouns). Then the students practiced on the self-monitoring writing strategy for six weeks. Students had to practice revising the paragraph using the checklist and the guidelines while the researcher reviewed the writing issues and modeled specific content or form aspect. At the end of each lesson, students practiced revising their paragraphs by using the checklist and the guidelines. The last class, students were reviewed all instructions and were asked to write a paragraph as a posttest.

During the instruction, students were asked to write the journals three times (beginning in the lesson 1, during the lesson 6, and after instruction in the lesson 9). Also three students who improved their English writing ability the most based on the scores of the posttest when compared with that of the pretest were interviewed at the end of the instruction.

In order to answer the first research question, "How does the self-monitoring writing strategies instruction help students improve their English writing ability?", the

data obtained from pre and post test were analyzed by means of an arithmetic mean and t-test in order to compare the difference scores before and after the self-monitoring writing strategies instruction. In addition, the paragraph writing of pretest week 1 and posttest week 10 of the three students who improved their writing scores between the pretest and posttest the most were analyzed by content analysis. To answer the second research question, "How does the self-monitoring writing strategies instruction affect students' use of self-monitoring writing strategies?", the checklists from six writing assignments were analyzed for percentage. The additional findings from the participants' writing journals and interviews were transcribed and analyzed by content analysis to further measure students' use of self-monitoring writing strategies.

The criteria for grading the written paragraphs were based on Jacob and others (1981) (See detail on page 38). The possible total scores were 100 points and was evaluated on five aspects: content (30 points), organization (20 points), vocabulary (20 points), language use (25 points), and mechanics (5 points).

Inter-rater reliability was used to find reliability of grading students' writing in both pretest and posttest. The result revealed the correlation between the researcher and another rater were 0.90 on the pretest and 0.91 on the posttest which implied that grading students' writing from two raters was consistent.

Summary of the results

The findings of the study were summarized in two major areas: English writing ability and students' use of self-monitoring writing strategies.

1. English writing ability

Pre-cadets got higher scores of overall writing after they learned self-

monitoring writing strategies. To consider content and organization, it was found that posttest scores of content and organization were higher than the pretest. Similarly, they got higher scores of form (vocabulary, form, mechanics) in the posttest than the pretest.

The further in-depth analysis was performed with the writing of three students who improved their writing ability the most based on the difference scores between pretest and posttest as the case study. From the analysis, it can be concluded that in terms of the content aspect, their writing contained some knowledge of subject, adequate range, limited development of thesis, and mostly relevant to the topic but lacks detail. Second, their organization contained fluent expression, ideas clearly stated/supported, succinct, well-organized, logical sequencing, and cohesive. Third, their use of vocabulary items was at the level of sophisticated range, effective word/idiom choice, word form mastery, and appropriate register. Fourth, their language use was described as effective complex paragraphs with few errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, and prepositions. Fifth, their punctuation was implied that they demonstrated mastery of conventions; few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing.

2. Students' use of self-monitoring writing strategies

The use of the checklist showed that most students used the checklist while revising their content. It was assumed that the students were aware of the importance of completing the topic sentence, supporting details, and concluding sentence in their paragraph.

The findings from writing journals revealed that after the students learned self-monitoring writing strategies, they monitored writing by themselves. On the other hand, they had asked other people for help before the instruction.

According to learner interviews, the students thought that the checklist was an important tool for them to revise their paragraphs and they accepted the benefits of the checklist. In addition to the content aspect, the data obtained from the guidelines seemed to indicate that the students had some background of grammar. They also did not realize the benefits of the guidelines and rarely followed the guidelines. The self-monitoring writing strategies instruction was given opinion that using the example of paragraph given in the class as the model and the mistakes of the later paragraphs helped them compose the better paragraph. Finally, the students who learned this strategy were aware of editing the paragraph. They also had good attitude toward English writing.

Discussions

Many researchers (e.g., Charles, 1990; Darasawang, 2000; Lan, 2005) studied the self-monitoring strategies in writing and they found the benefits of the self-monitoring instruction. However, there is not any research undertaken to directly propose the steps of teaching self-monitoring writing strategies and investigate the effect of self-monitoring writing strategies instruction. In an attempt to investigate the effects, the researcher constructed a new teaching model. The procedures had been constructed based on the theoretical concepts related to self-monitoring strategy, teaching writing strategies, and the writing process. It thus challenged the researcher to study how this procedures which suggest a clear set of teaching steps and procedures would help enhance the students' self-monitoring writing strategies and their English writing ability. From the teaching steps of self-monitoring writing strategies in this study, it was found that self-monitoring writing strategies instruction was a significant tool that helps monitor students' paragraph writing and achieve their goal to edit their own paragraph.

The purposes of this study were to study the effect of self-monitoring writing strategies instruction on students' English writing ability and how the self-monitoring writing strategies instruction affect students' use of self-monitoring writing strategies. The findings were therefore examined in relation to two individual aspects: students' English writing ability and students' use of self-monitoring writing strategies.

1. Students' English writing ability

Based on the students' scores on the pretest and the posttest, it was found that self-monitoring writing strategies instruction helped students improve their writing ability both on the content and organization and on the form aspect. The result was also supported by other researchers in the past. Many researchers agree that self-monitoring strategies help students improve their writing (Nisbet & Schucksmith, 1986; Charles, 1990; Cresswell, 2000; Xiang, 2004; Lan, 2005; Vicker & Ene, 2006). Thus, it can be assumed that students would improve their English writing ability based on the self-monitoring writing strategies.

Although the finding revealed that the students improved their English writing ability both on the content and the form aspect, it was noticed that the scores on the content aspect was improved more than the scores on the form comparing between the pretest and posttest. This finding was consistent with the data found in the writing journals and the learner interviews which the students always used the checklist to identify content and organization while they did not often use the guidelines for verifying the form.

Taking an example of a student from the interview, he commented that he always used the checklist so that he recognized to complete the elements of paragraph and realized that a good paragraph should have enough details, not awkward, and

well-organized. In contrast to the checklist, he had more difficulty on verifying the form based on the guideline, as when one student was interviewed:

"I always use the checklist to review my writing. Finally, I learn how to write the good paragraph, how to use the punctuation, and how to use words. I know that a paragraph must have topic sentence, details, and concluding sentence. On the other hand, I rarely follow the guidelines for verifying the form. I had once looked at the guidelines at the beginning of the instruction. After that, I revise the mistakes on the form aspect by using the background of the study. I think revising grammar point is more difficult than revising the content."

Additionally, from the writing journals, this student mentioned on his first journal that the content was more difficult to learn than form. However, he wrote on his second and third journals that he learned to complete the elements of paragraph.

Thus, it seemed that during the self-monitoring writing strategies instruction, the students were likely to improve their writing on content rather than form. At this point, the findings may be relevant to what the researchers found in their studies e.g. Hedgcock & Lefkowitz (1994), New (1994), and Zamel (1983). Ashwell (2000) supports this finding stating that the students were worried more on the grammar they are writing than the content issues. From the study of Chinnawong (2001) and Pidchamook (2003), they found that structure is a big problem for Thai students, especially vocabulary and grammar. It is briefed that the form aspects are still the problems for the students although the present study showed that the students improved their scores focusing on forms as well.

From the analysis of three students who gained the highest improve scores from the pretest to the posttest, their English writing ability focusing on the content and organization was performed that the students developed their topic sentence and

details were relevant to topic. Also, the organization was clearly stated idea and logical sequencing. Apart from this writing ability, the students made fewer errors of vocabulary, language use, and mechanics after the instruction. They made effective word, mechanics, and complex construction.

In brief, the teaching steps of self-monitoring writing strategies have improved students' English writing ability. Although there is no evidence on the step of teaching this strategy, this model is also found as the successful learning tool. This is agreed by the students as a following example of a student:

"I think the steps of teaching are clearly understood. Especially, the many paragraphs I compose and the exercises are important tools which help me practice a lot of knowledge of the content and grammar points."

This evidence is relevant to what Charles (1990) suggested. That is before self-monitoring writing strategies instruction is undertaken, some learners training may well be necessary in order to introduce students to the ideas of revising their own paragraphs. From his study, it is additionally shown that the whole class discussion and editing of a sample of self-monitored writing will allow students to practice the skill of revision while furthering their understanding of the needs of both readers and writers.

The wiring journals showed the similar idea with Charles (1990). An example of the student who gained the highest improves scores states as follows:

"I will ask teacher or friends when I get stuck with writing. I also take teacher comments when I edit the paragraph."

This data reflects the fact that the students may gain advantages of peer assistance. This is known as co-construction knowledge and scaffolding. This concept is derived from Vygotsky (1978) who has believed that social interaction is

an important fundamental to develop students' ability. Vygotsky (1978) mentioned that students have their own actual development; nevertheless, with practical, it lead them to reach their potential development. This development is called zone of proximal development (ZPD). The interview data gives the similar idea with this theory as follows:

"Before I learn this model, I do not know what I should write in the paragraph. Nevertheless, after practicing the self-monitoring writing strategies, I write more sentences in the paragraph. On the other hand, I use my background knowledge when I edit the grammar aspects... I always practice on the exercise and use knowledge from those exercises to help me edit the paragraph."

From this result, ZPD is believed to develop students' English writing ability which appears twice: social interaction and individual level

Therefore, self-monitoring technique which combines the social interaction with the individual potential level, and learner training develop students' English writing ability.

2. Students' use of self-monitoring writing strategies

The result from the checklist revealed that students had gradually built their confidence to complete the topic sentence, controlling idea, and concluding sentence. It was confirmed by the writing journals and interviews from the students who improved their English writing the most. One of three students who were interviewed commented that he used the checklist with all assignments so that he was familiar with the questions in the checklist. Practicing on the checklist helped him aware of completing the topic sentence and concluding sentence, and writing the good supporting details. Thus, it may be claimed that the students who gained the highest

improved scores used self-monitoring strategies in order to help them revising the paragraphs.

According to another student who improved his writing's scores the most, the additional finding is found that, at the end of the instruction, he remembered all questions and explanation in the checklist without looking at it. When he wrote the posttest, he recognized what he had to complete. This action is accepted by Cresswell (2000) that self-monitoring in student writing provides the students the degree of independence so that they are willing to continue using this strategy.

From the two students above, it is seen that the checklist task helped the students to monitor themselves and developed their writing effectively. Lan (2005) also studied the effect of self-monitoring strategies and found similar results. His study revealed that the high achievers used more complex self-monitoring strategies more frequently than the lower achievers. Nevertheless, Hyland (2003) argued that the level of proficiency of students was also another important variable in their ability to self-correct apart from their use of self-monitoring strategy.

Through the content analysis conducted with students' journal writings, it showed that the strategy the students used in common before learning self-monitoring writing strategies was asking the teacher or friends when they had difficulty in writing. In other words, they tended to use outside resources to help them write. However, during the instruction and at the end of the instruction, students were more likely to rely on themselves and follow the guideline to monitor their writing. They could identify their own mistakes better and learned how to correct them. This strategy of learning was supported by many researchers e.g. Selinker (1992), Truscott (1996), and Ferris (1999). These researchers believe that learning from mistakes helps the students to develop their writing abilities. There was evidence that the

students tried to solve their problems or learn by self learning; for example, they practiced writing many paragraphs and remembered more vocabularies. With these results, the students creatively employed various self-monitoring writing strategies in their learning. It seems that when the students want to reach their goal, they will try to utilize self-monitoring writing strategies. Zimmerman (1989) commented that if the students are not value the outcomes of the learning task, they are lacking in incentive to employ self-monitoring strategies to improve their learning.

Apart from the evidence after receiving the instruction through the self-monitoring writing strategies' model, the students gained significant scores in their posttest. There is also evidence to support the model based on data from the interview. One of the students; for example, gave the data on interview that when he practiced self-monitoring writing strategies many times, he remembered what he had to write chronologically and he was aware of completing the elements of paragraph and editing the grammar points as follows:

"After I practice writing many paragraphs and do the exercises in the class, I realized the elements of paragraph so that I can complete the paragraph. Also, I realize what I practice in the exercises. It thus helps me when I edit the grammar points."

With this result, it is supported by O' Malley and Chamot (1999) that self-monitoring is an important strategies for learning writing which the students will succeed in learning writing for a long term memory.

Another example of the student from the interview showed that the self-monitoring writing strategies instruction helped him to monitor himself edit his own paragraph. He used his mistakes from the previous work as the model of revising the paragraph as the following:

"I think my mistakes while writing helps me to succeed in writing. When I write the new paragraph, I am aware of grammars which I used to make the mistakes. So, I realize not to make those mistakes again."

This is relevant to the information from Charles (1990) and O'Malley and Chamot (1999) which they claim that self-monitoring technique enables students to use their errors in the second language in order to raise their awareness.

Another discussion based on the learner interviews, the students stated interesting idea at the end of the instruction that they had learned something from the teacher's feedback, as when one student was interviewed:

"I use the teacher feedback from the previous work to help me aware of making the mistakes in terms of both content and form and edited the later paragraphs. The teacher wrote me many comments more than my friend's comment."

The teacher's feedback encourages the students to improve the accuracy of their writing (Zamel, 1985; Ashwell, 2000; Ferris, 2005). Cresswell (2000) inserted that students are promoted autonomous learning through giving feedback.

From the three examples of the students toward the self-monitoring writing strategies instruction, these are the way of increasing the element of learner autonomy described by Little (1991), Dickinson (1995), Cresswell (2000), and Benson (2001) which they define autonomy among the students as the capacity to take control and responsible of one's own learning and to make decision independently. Darasawang (2000) also stated that the development of learner autonomy is involved by "the students' willingness, confidence and capability to take responsibility for their own learning especially in an independent learning mode."

Limitation of the study

The present study contains some limitations from the context of the study. First, the study was conducted and collected with the pre-cadets and so all the participants were males. The gender may affect to the topics of writing and generating findings. Second, the course was an extra course with recruiting voluntarily students as participants and was not given any grades. It is possible that the students may not pay attention to the class or homework as much as they should.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings from this study can be applied to self-monitoring writing strategies instruction. The goals of self-monitoring writing instruction were to help pre-cadets develop paragraph writing ability and their use of self-monitoring writing strategies, and several suggestions for EFL writing teachers can be made on the basis of the findings of the study.

First, teachers should focus more on the integration of the self-monitoring strategies and writing strategies instruction. The checklist and the guidelines for identifying content and form facilitate the students to revise their errors. As a result, teachers should combine these tools with the teaching steps of writing strategies, while the students are identifying, scaffolding, and editing.

The second implication deals with the implementation of self-monitoring writing strategies instruction. In relation to student activities, teachers should plan the lesson which gives students an opportunity to work more on the guidelines for verifying the form because the finding found that the guidelines for verifying the form was not useful for students. In addition, students did not have more time to work with the guidelines while they were editing the text. In writing EFL instruction, sometimes

students lack an opportunity to be exposed to activities. These meaningless writing activities might interfere students' English writing ability.

Third, the findings of this investigation suggest that self-monitoring writing strategies instruction was effective. In other words, students need to know what to learn as well as how to learn. Self-monitoring writing strategies should be taught explicitly by telling students what the procedures of self-monitoring writing strategies are. When students feel familiar with the procedures, they can then write and edit their work well-organized. Additionally, teacher should tell students what the criteria of grading their scores at the early stage in order to help understand what they should not be avoided.

Forth, teachers should recognize what kind of the topics the students are interested in and whether the topic is appropriate for them. As shown in the result from the checklist, the topic in the second assignment, "My Style of Fashion", the students had a hard time composing with this topic since the topic was too broad for the students. Thus, if students are focused on areas of interest, they do not obstruct to generate the idea.

Fifth, based on the learner interviews, the students showed their opinion on study time. They did not have enough time to study and revise their writing so that they did not revise the work. Thus, pressure on time obstructs self-monitoring strategies instruction because students are not encouraged to check critically and analytically on their writing (Xiang, 2004:238; Charles, 1990). Furthermore, as many of the studies shown by EFL writers were also language related, students should be encouraged to take extra time and effort so that it results in better quality of paragraphs. In short, teachers should focus more on time management while they are planning the lessons.

Recommendations for future research

Further research related to self-monitoring writing strategies instruction may be employed to provide more empirical evidence on this issue.

1. The study may explore other independent variables such as gender, level of study, and the field of study.
2. The future research may examine the issue by using different English proficiency level. For instance, the research might investigate how students with different proficiencies use this strategy.
3. Further research should apply the concepts of needs analysis on the topics which students are interested in and may expand from paragraph writing level to discourse analysis of writing level such as an essay.
4. Further research may employ an in depth study of how students monitor themselves to the grammar aspect.
5. Another possible for future research may extend the time of study to be longitudinal study because additional research accomplished will increase the scope of data collected. Students will also improve their scores and abilities.