

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION



English writing is one of the most complex and difficult skills for Thai students since it involves the process of transferring the writers' ideas to the readers' thoughts (Thammasarnsophon, 1991; Vivatanasan, 2000; Suwannasom, 2001). Most teachers found their students' English writing ability unsatisfactory (Suwannasom, 2001; Wiriyachitra, 2001). Although they have studied English for years, writing scholars suggest there are many contributing factors as to why students do not write well. Bruning, Gregory, & Royce (1999) proposed that students require a mastery of linguistic competence at a certain level in order to deal with the process so they need to have certain techniques to state their ideas, express their feelings, and persuade others. Students' lack of writing skill and confidence is also another reason leading the students' poor writing ability. Furthermore, the activity they mostly study in the classroom involves low-level writing activity such as making lists, copying instructions, and taking notes. These activities do not seem to help the students develop the skill, build up confidence, and create motivation to write in English.

Many research projects studied the best way to improve students' English writing abilities. The past decade, writing was examined from the aspect of writing products. Presently, "process" of writing is more emphasized than its "product". Not only the process of writing is concerned, strategies which students use are also necessary. Researchers investigated some writing strategies which can improve students' writing and attitudes about writing. The examples of the strategies are writing involves making a conscious search of meaning, using strategies of

experimentation and planning, using understanding of first language in order to develop the second language, encouraging students to plan, using revision strategies after finishing the first draft, using clarifying strategies, using focusing strategies, modeling writing strategies, giving students a schema for revision, and creating a supportive environment for writing (Sommers, 1980; Hughey et al., 1983; Leki, 1995; Bruning, Gregory, & Royce, 1999).

Although there are many strategies shown to develop students' English writing ability, many teachers still use their old styles to teach students; for example, teaching explicitly, correcting student's work directly, and giving teacher feedback. These styles of teaching may not be quite effective because students cannot gain self knowledge which leads to long term and autonomous learning.

In order to help students become autonomous writing learners, teachers have to raise students' awareness of noticing and editing their mistakes by themselves. Researchers claim that students who are aware of their errors, have a sense of self-motivation to learn (Selinker, 1992; Truscott, 1996; Ferris, 1999). Learning from mistakes themselves performs the ability of self-correction, self-learning, and getting intrinsic motivation. These performances lead students to be autonomous learners.

The strategy of monitoring is found to help students raise awareness of their learning so that they are able to correct their own mistakes (Xiang, 2004; Makino, 1993; Charles, 1990; Oxford, 1990). The present research examined the self-monitoring writing strategies instruction which was introduced to help students as a new way in learning English writing. It claimed that the self-monitoring strategy is the good instruction which changes students from low achievement to high achievement (Nisbet and Schucksmith, 1986). Furthermore, the self-monitoring strategy is promoted by National Education Act B.E. 2542 (1999) that the current

education have to emphasize on life long learning and cultivates general awareness about the learning process.

However, there is little research in the area of self-monitoring writing strategies. Moreover, there is no empirical evidence to show how the process of self-monitoring writing strategies instruction should be conducted.

In brief, self-monitoring writing strategies instruction seems to help students become autonomous learners because they can take control of their learning. Also, teachers do not need to spend excessive time correcting students' writing. To some extent, students' English writing ability is very likely to be improved by self-monitoring writing strategies instruction. As a result, it challenges the researcher to design the process of self-monitoring writing strategies instruction, investigate whether self-monitoring writing strategies instruction improve students' English writing ability, and examine the use of self-monitoring writing strategies.

Research Questions

The research questions addressed in the study were as follows.

1. How does the self-monitoring writing strategies instruction help students improve their English writing ability?
2. How does the self-monitoring writing strategies instruction affect students' use of self-monitoring writing strategies?

Research Objectives

The purposes of the study were:

1. To study the effects of self-monitoring writing strategies instruction on students' English writing ability.
2. To study how the self-monitoring writing strategies instruction affect students' use of self-monitoring writing strategies.

Statement of hypotheses

Previous research on self-monitoring strategies in writing clearly supported the idea that self-monitoring writing strategies instruction develops students' English writing ability. For instance, Charles (1990) found that self-monitoring technique gave students the opportunity to contribute to a dialogue concerning the text and to receive direct answers to their queries which resulted in better writing ability. Bartholomare (1980) has supported that the use of self-monitoring strategies facilitated students to correct their mistakes; students could be strengthening their critical thinking so that it contributes to autonomous learning. It claimed that students who can practice noticing their own mistakes and be able to correct them can improve their paragraph writing. In addition, previous research shows that students who receive writing strategy training generally learn better than those who do not. For example, Oxford (1990) have suggested that the self-monitoring strategies in writing help students to identify and eliminate errors both content and form. Therefore in this study, the hypotheses were as followed:

1. Students who learn self-monitoring writing strategies will gain significantly higher average scores on the post English writing test than the pre English writing test at the significance level of 0.05.
2. Self-monitoring writing strategies instruction affects students' use of self-monitoring writing strategies.

Scope of the study

The scope of the study in this research consisted of the following.

1. The population for this study were Pre-Cadets of Armed Forces Academies Preparatory School, Nakornnayok Province.

2. The variables in this study were:

2.1 Independent variable was teaching method which was self-monitoring writing strategies instruction.

2.2 Dependent variable was English writing ability and the use of self-monitoring writing strategies.

The Definition of Terms

The terms used in this present research are defined as the following.

1. **Self-monitoring writing strategies instruction** referred to teaching strategies of writing which taught students to revise their paragraph so that they were aware of how to *identify the content* effectively and how to *verify the form*. Four main stages of self-monitoring writing strategies instruction were instructed: the overview of paragraph writing, introducing and reviewing the writing issues, strategy stages (modeling, scaffolding, and practicing), and editing stage.

2. **English writing ability** was the ability to write in English. It was evaluated by the English writing test's scores before and after self-monitoring writing strategies instruction. The written paragraph was measured by the criteria of Jacob and others (1981).

3. **Pre-cadets** referred to third-year pre-cadets who were studying at Armed Forces Academies Preparatory School in Nakornnayok Province in the academic year 2007. They studied at the level equivalent to grade twelve in a normal school program in Thailand.

4. **The use of self-monitoring writing strategies** referred to the students' use of self-monitoring writing strategies in order to help them revise their paragraph. It was examined by the students' self-report taken from the checklist, the writing journals, and the learner interviews.

Significance of the study

In this current study, the findings are expected as the following.

1. Self-monitoring writing strategies instruction can help students raise awareness of their English writing and also serve as an alternative assessment to create more authentic and meaningful learning English writing skill.
2. The students who learn self-monitoring writing strategies, to some extent, can correct their own English writing. This can help teachers to have more time focusing on other aspects of their students' writing to improve their quality of writing paragraph.

An Overview of the Study

The research entitled "Effects of Self-Monitoring Writing Strategies Instruction on English Writing Ability of Pre-Cadets" comprises of five main chapters.

The first chapter presents the background of the study, research questions, research objectives, statement of hypotheses, scope of the study, the definition of terms, and significance of the study.

The second chapter reviews the underlying theories, principles, and concepts that are relevant to the study of self-monitoring writing strategies instruction. The literature review has topics which range from the process of writing, learning strategies, self-monitoring writing strategies, teaching writing strategies, paragraph writing, English writing ability, writing assessment, and controversial issues being raised from the study.

The third chapter presents research methodology. This includes the research design, research instruments, data collection, and data analysis.

The fourth chapter presents the findings from the study. Both qualitative and quantitative findings obtained from the English writing tests, writing journals, and learner interviews are revealed.

The last chapter summarizes the study and results, discusses the findings, limitation of the study, pedagogical implications, and recommendations for future research.