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METACOGNITIVE WRITING STRATEGIES MODEL USED BY ESL WRITERS IN THE WRITING PROCESS: A STUDY ACROSS GENDER

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Norhartini Aripin[1+]
Noor Hanim Rahmat[2]

[1,2]Akademi Pengajian Bahasa, UiTM Shah Alam, Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia.
[1]Email: hartiniaripin494@gmail.com Tel: (+60)0126599016
[2]Email: patanim@gmail.com Tel: (+60)0162155797

(+ Corresponding author)

ABSTRACT

Writing for English as a second language (ESL) is one of the challenging production skills. Writing skill requires learners to be competent in the use of vocabulary, syntax, grammar, sentence structure, strategies and lexical. In other words, ESL writers should possess adequate language proficiency in order to produce a meaningful text. In the writing process, ESL writers should be guided by writing strategies. Writing strategies are used as a writing regulator that guides the writers to compose productively. Metacognitive writing strategies is one of the writing strategies that involved three main components which are planning, monitoring and evaluating. Hence, this study was conducted to explore metacognitive writing strategies besides constructing a model used by ESL writers in the writing process. Two students from one public university in Johor, Malaysia are grouped according to their gender. This qualitative study used Think-aloud protocol (TAP) as the main method in collecting data. From the findings, it was found that both male and female ESL writers used a variety of metacognitive writing strategies in their writing process, and the female writer used more strategies compared to the male writer. Results of this study have given a great impact on teaching and learning of ESL academic writing.

Contribution/ Originality: This study originates new formula of a metacognitive writing strategies model. The model was retrieved by the authors from a think-aloud procedure of a male and female ESL writers.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Writing is one of the production skills that challenge writers to develop a comprehensible text or composition with good language use. In other meaning, a writer should concern on the vocabulary, coherent and cohesive, grammar besides applying critical thinking during a writing process. This shows that writing is a difficult task as the writer is not only conveying thoughts and ideas, but they are required to develop language proficiency that helps them to produce letters, essays, journals, and research papers. Writing is defined as a systematic skill that allows learners to inculcate their knowledge including vocabulary, grammar, and structure (Azizi, Nemati, & Estahbanati, 2017).

To begin with, even though writing is an essential skill and should be instilled in each writer, the process is not easy. To produce a good text, writers need to be taught at the early ages of their learning stage. During the learning process, they should be encouraged to think creatively and critically. This will help them to express

appropriate thoughts to the readers besides organizing the ideas coherently. Additionally, it is very important for the writers to present clear ideas and persuade the readers to accept the proposed ideas.

There are several types of features to be considered by the writers during the writing process including language proficiency, writing competence, the use of a cohesive, writing strategies and writers' personal characteristics. Among these features, writing strategies are said to influence the writers' writing process and writing performance as claimed by Chien (2012) writers who use writing strategies in their writing process will excel in their writing performance.

In ESL writing, writing strategies are grouped into five types which are rhetoric strategies, cognitive strategies, metacognitive writing strategies, communicative strategies, and social/affective strategies. The pioneer of ESL writing strategies is Mu (2005) produced groups and sub-groups of writing strategies that commonly appear in ESL writing. Among all the writing strategies, metacognitive writing strategies have been claimed to be frequently used by most ESL learners during their writing process Raoofi, Chan, Mukundan, and Rashid (2014). Hence, the study aims to explore metacognitive writing strategies used by ESL writers in the writing process besides determining a metacognitive writing model on the perspective of gender.

1.2. Problem Statement

In the writing process, writing strategies are used as a writing regulator that guides the writers to compose. These writing guidelines help them control their writing. One of the most common strategies used by ESL writers is metacognitive writing strategies that involve three main stages namely planning, monitoring and evaluating.

Due to its function as a writing controller, metacognitive writing strategies play an important role in the writing process. However, many writers do not realize the significance of using strategies in their writing due to lack of awareness. In fact, ESL writers also have problems to use the strategies as they have not been properly introduced by their teachers. Hence, this has caused them to have disorganized text which affected their final writing text in a negative way. The qualitative study is conducted to explore metacognitive writing strategies used by ESL writers in their writing process on the perspective of gender by using Think-aloud protocol (TAP). This study also aims to produce a metacognitive writing strategies model derived from the use of three stages of metacognitive writing strategies by both male and female writer.

Specifically, this study is done to answer the following questions;

a. How does gender influence the planning, monitoring and evaluating stage in the writing process of the male and female writer?

b. What is the metacognitive writing strategies model of ESL Writers?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. ESL Writing and ESL Writers

Writing is a complex process that connects the writers to the readers via comprehensible text produced. Rahmat., Jauhari, Othman, and Ramli (2018) defined writing as a social-cognitive process as the writers should ensure that the written ideas are conveyed and successfully understood by the readers. Besides connecting the writers to the readers, writing is also known as a process of transferring ideas, information, and thoughts that the writers plan in their mind. Güneyli (2016) described writing as a process where the ideas are transferred by involving writers' emotions, opinions, thoughts, and past experiences based on language rules and letters. ESL writing requires ESL learners to communicate their ideas through writing using their second language. As such, this process becomes complicated when the language proficiency of the writers is taken into consideration. Al-Sawalha and Chow (2012) also stated that the writing process in the second language is far complicated than writing in one's native language due to its complexity to acquire that skill. The process demands ESL writers to

learn and apply some specific processes and strategies to produce good text. The most important thing is, the text should be effectively delivered to the readers.

In addition, the writing process also demands ESL learners to use their critical thinking besides inculcating their previous knowledge. Some researchers (Jennifer & Ponniah, 2017; Mastan, Maarof, & Embi, 2017) stated that the writing process is related to cognitive process, cultural, motivational and social factors. Having said that, it is undeniable that ESL writing is a complex process as it demands the writers to incorporate specific skills, language ability, and knowledge. In ESL writing, writers can be categorized into skilled writers and unskilled writers. Skilled writers are those who manage to control and direct the entire writing process, while unskilled writers usually do the opposite. Raoofi et al. (2014) found that skilled writers manage to present the ideas in an organized way and then able to produce a review upon their final composition. This is because writers' writing skill is determined by their writing proficiency or their language use. Additionally, good writers who excel at writing can use writing strategies in their writing process compared to less-skilled writers. Maharani, Fauziati, and Supriyadi (2018) in their study found that good writers used writing strategies often compared to less-skilled writers. Writers who apply strategies are said to perform better than those who write without any guideline as the strategies will closely guide them until the end of the writing process. Azizi et al. (2017) revealed that students who have greater awareness concerning the strategies they use in the writing process are considered as successful writers.

2.2. Writing Strategies

Several studies have been conducted in a varied area of writing strategies. Writing strategies is a part of ESL writing as it is related to writers' proficiency in using the second language to deliver the information. Writers' writing skill can be measured due to their capability to use strategies in the writing process. Penuelas (2012) in her research found that proficient writers used a wide range of writing strategies with women as prominent users.

In ESL writing, Congjun Mu pioneered a taxonomy of ESL writing strategies which turned out to be a major reference for many researchers. According to Mu (2005) there are five types of writing strategies identified and derived from ESL writing theories. The five writing strategies are rhetorical strategies, metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, communicative strategies, and social/affective strategies. These strategies have been explored by many researchers and they have come out with different findings on the composing strategies.

Table-1. Types of ESL writing strategies.

Writing strategies	Sub-strategies
Rhetorical Strategies	Organization
	Use of L1
	Formatting/Modelling
	Comparing
Meta-cognitive strategies	Planning
	Monitoring
	Evaluating
Cognitive strategies	Generating ideas
	Revising
	Elaborating
	Clarification
	Retrieval
	Rehearsing
	Summarising
Communicative strategies	Avoidance
	Reduction
	Sense of readers
Social/affective strategies	Resourcing
	Getting feedback
	Assigning goals
	Rest/deferral

Source: Adapted from Mu (2005).

2.3. Metacognitive Writing Strategies

Among the five ESL writing strategies developed by Mu (2005) metacognitive writing strategies have been highlighted as the most frequent strategies that are commonly used among ESL writers in the writing process. These strategies involve three main stages namely planning, monitoring and evaluating. Metacognitive writing strategies help learners to reach a higher level of writing content (Pitenoee, Modaberi, & Ardestani, 2017); reach desirable goals and have better control over the behavior and their learning ,allow the learners to be more confident and efficient in their writing (Rahmat & Ismail, 2014) have a proper guideline to regulate materials that they have learned (Azizi et al., 2017).

2.3.1. Planning

Planning is an essential part of the writing process and the major writing time is spent at this stage. According to Silin and Chan (2015) 70% of writing time should be spent at the planning stage. During the planning stage, writers are required to plan and recall their prior knowledge to construct the draft or outline. According to Bai, Hu, and Gu (2014) planning is the most prominent strategy chosen by primary learners in Singapore than other strategies. At this initial stage, writers will talk about arrangement and preparation before they start writing.

2.3.2. Monitoring

Monitoring is known as a controller that regulates the transferring process. During the monitoring stage, writers will check and identify problems during while- writing process. This while-writing process allows writers to convert their thoughts and ideas into language. At this stage, the writers will also verify other aspects such as content, organization, grammar, and mechanics.

2.3.3. Evaluating

This final stage of metacognitive writing strategies guides writers to carefully proofread and revise their product or text. This stage usually takes place after the writing process is complete. Likewise, ESL writers will repeatedly proofread the text to recognize grammatical mistakes and inappropriate use of phrases or words. After scrutinizing the text several times, writers will reconsider to see if there are any changes or amendments needed.

2.4. Past Studies

In a recent study on the use of writing strategies on the perspective language proficiency and gender by Maharani et al. (2018) they found the types of writing strategies used by the students covered the six strategies proposed by Oxford namely memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive affective and social strategy. Among these six strategies, the researchers found that the dominant writing strategy used by the male student was memory strategy, whereas the female students were prone to use metacognitive strategies. It was also found that the students who have good writing production used metacognitive strategies in their writing process. The study also revealed that the factors underlying the choice of writing strategies depend on the condition and situation of the students themselves. Meanwhile, another study was carried out by Yan (2019) who investigated the correlation of metacognitive writing strategies and writers' writing anxiety in EFL writing. Even though the correlation between these two variables is vague in this study, the researcher suggested the future researchers explore how metacognitive writing strategies are used to relieve writers' writing anxiety.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This qualitative study is conducted to explore the use of planning, monitoring and evaluating as components of metacognitive writing strategies by male and female writers in the writing process. Besides that, the researcher also

aims to determine a metacognitive writing strategies model that is derived from the exploration. The selected sample for this study is a male and a female writer from a public university in Johor, Malaysia who attended an English course called Integrated Language Skill III(Writing). Meanwhile, the instrument used for this study is Think-aloud Protocol (TAP). The aim of employing Think-aloud Protocols is to urge the participants to reveal what they are thinking about during the writing process. Alkhatnai (2016) found that think-aloud protocols (TAP) reveal the benefits of first language use in second language writing as the researcher has implemented TAP to understand the writing habits of Saudi EFL/ESL learners and to examine the Arabic speakers' experience when writing compositions in English.

To meet the purpose of the study, a male writer and a female writer were selected to perform a writing test for an hour. The whole writing process was videotaped by the researcher. Before the test was conducted, the writers were briefed on the whole procedure and they were in the know that all the processes and procedure were recorded. The writing process took about an hour and along the process, the writers were requested to say every single word out loud. They were also be permitted to use gestures, expressions and body movements. The obtained video was later analyzed by the researcher to determine the application of three-stage of metacognitive writing strategies; planning, monitoring and evaluating along the writing process including writer's spoken words and body language. The gathered information from the TAP was then interpreted by the researcher to attain the findings for the study.

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

This section presents the findings of the study based on the transcription gathered from think-aloud protocol procedure. The findings are discussed according to the three stages of metacognitive writing strategies used by both writers during an hour of the writing process. The elaboration for each stage.

4.2 Planning

Table-2. Planning components used by a male and female writer.

Male writer	Female writer
(1) knowledge on the specific writing task, its difficulties, and skills needed for it,	(1) evaluate the necessity for writing,
(2) being aware of the task assigned	(2) understand the necessity of writing
(3) identifying the goal and identifying the necessity for developing a specific plan.	(3) applied knowledge on the specific task, aware of writing difficulties and skills needed for it.
	(4) aware of the task assigned,
	(5) identified the goal and the necessity for having a specific plan
	(6) prepared for drafts.
	(7) knew when, where, how and what is to be written for the introduction stage.
	(8) recall her prior knowledge during the planning stage.

Source: Adapted From Kodituwakku (2013).

Table 2 above, shows the planning components used by a male and a female writer during the writing process. It is stated that the female writer applied eight methods for her pre-writing to direct her for smooth writing. At this stage, the eight methods used by the female writer before she started her writing were (1) evaluate the necessity for writing, (2) understand the necessity of writing, (3) applied knowledge on the specific task, aware of writing difficulties and skills needed for it. She was also being (4) aware of the task assigned, (5) identified the goal and the necessity for having a specific plan and (6) prepared for drafts. Besides that, she (7) knew when, where, how and what is to be written for the introduction stage. Finally, the female writer was also able to (8) recall her prior

knowledge during the planning stage. The example of using prior knowledge mentioned by the female writer during the planning stage is illustrated below;

As compared to the male writer, there are only three methods during planning stage used namely (1) knowledge on the specific writing task, its difficulties, and skills needed for it, (2) being aware of the task assigned and (3) identifying the goal and identifying the necessity for developing a specific plan.

4.3. Monitoring

Table-3. Monitoring components used by a male and female writer.

Male writer	Female writer
(1) transformation of writing	(1) Transformation of writing
(2) Awareness of the facts and grammar needed for writing	
(3) Using the writing format effectively	(2) Awareness of the facts and grammar needed for writing
(4) Reflecting on the writing task	
(5) Self-monitoring of progress	(3) Using facts and instructions learned previously
(6) Organization of facts	
(7) Checking again while engaged in writing	(4) Thinking of the writing process
	(5) Using writing effectively
	(6) Using the writing format effectively
	(7) Reflecting on the writing task
	(8) Self-monitoring of progress
	(9) Making changes for a better document while engaged in writing
	(10) Organization of facts
	(11) Checking again while engaged in writing
	(12) Adjusting beginning, middle and end of the writing while writing.

Source: Adapted From Kodituwakku (2013).

Based on Table 3, the female writer used more methods during her while-writing process compared to the male writer. This can be seen in the table that the female writers used twelve (12) different methods when transferring ideas into language, as compared to the male who only used seven (7) methods during monitoring stage. According to Maharani et al. (2018) female writers used more strategies in the writing process compared to male writers. Since monitoring is considered as a controller that guides the writer to compose wisely (Goctu, 2017) the female writer allocated more approaches to produce a good text.

4.4. Evaluating

Table-4. Evaluating components used by a male and female writer.

Male writer	Female writer
(1) summarizing/paraphrasing,	(1) summarizing/paraphrasing,
(2) awareness on the necessity of revision, (3) checking the effectiveness of the approached solution,	(2) awareness on the necessity of revision, (3) checking the effectiveness of the approached solution,
(4) deep level revising to produce better writing,	(4) making surface-level changes to produce a better document,
(5) evaluating the quality of writing,	(5) deep level revising to produce better writing,
(6) taking action to collect extra information.	(6) evaluating the quality of writing,
	(7) taking action to collect extra information.

Source: Adapted From Kodituwakku (2013).

The final stage in a writing process is called evaluating stage where writers will scrutinize, proofread and revise their finishing product. At this stage, writers usually read the text several times to identify grammatical mistakes and inappropriate use of phrases or words. Based on Table 4 presented above, it shows that the female writer undergoes seven (7) approaches after completing her writing. The seven methods are (1) summarizing/paraphrasing, (2) awareness on the necessity of revision, (3) checking the effectiveness of the approached solution, (4) making surface-level changes to produce better document, (5) deep level revising to produce a better writing, (6) evaluating the quality of writing, (7) taking action to collect extra information. On the other hand, the number of methods used by the male writer is six(6) which are (1) summarizing/paraphrasing, (2) awareness on the necessity of revision, (3) checking the effectiveness of the approached solution, (4) deep level revising to produce a better writing, (5) evaluating the quality of writing, (6) taking action to collect extra information.

Table-5. Metacognitive Writing Strategies Model of ESL Writers.

Planning	Monitoring	Evaluating
1.Knowledge of the specific writing task, its difficulties, and skills needed for it	1. Transformation of writing	1. Summarizing/ paraphrasing
2.Being aware of the task assigned	2. Awareness of the facts and grammar needed for writing	2. Awareness of the necessity of revision
3. Identifying the goal and Identifying the necessity for developing a specific plan.	3. Using the writing format effectively	3. Checking the effectiveness of the approached solution
	4. Reflecting on the writing task	4. Deep level revising to produce a better writing
	5. Self-monitoring of progress	5. Evaluating the quality of writing
	6. Organization of facts	6. Taking action to collect extra information
	7. Checking again while engaged in the writing	

Source: Kodituwakku (2013).

Based on Table 5, it can be summarized from the study that in the writing process of ESL writers, all the three main components of metacognitive writing strategies: planning, monitoring and evaluating are used by both genders. From the findings, there are three (3) methods similarly used by the male and the female writer during the planning stage which they are aware of the task assigned besides having knowledge and skills to answer the question. Besides that, both writers found the requirement to identify the writing goal and having a proper plan before engaging themselves in the writing process. Raoofi et al. (2014) in their study revealed that all the participants are more focused on pre-writing activities as they are aware of their writing problems before they start writing.

Moreover, in the monitoring stage, there are seven (7) methods used by both male and female writer. At this stage, both writers are concerned about the language use, a correct format and the organization of the paragraph. Both ESL writers used more methods during the while-writing stage. In a study by Kodituwakku (2013) one of the findings revealed that the writing stage was dominant in the writing process of male and female students. After completing the writing process, ESL writers used six (6) methods to evaluate their product. They summarized, checked, evaluated and revised the whole text to identify errors or mistakes.

4.5. Discussion

To recapitulate, from the analysis derived from the data of both genders, it can be observed that the female writer applied more methods during the planning stage compared to the male writer. This can be concluded that the female writer plans better during the planning or before writing compared to the male writer. Arrastia, Zayed,

and Elnagar (2016) have reported that female writers seem to frequently use strategy in learning English. In addition, Mutar and Nimechisalem (2017) found a significant difference between female and male students in using writing strategy. They discovered that female students use writing strategies more than male students. Referring to both tables, it shows that the female writer used more methods during the monitoring process compared to the male writer. From the data gathered to figure out the methods applied by both writers during the evaluating stage, we can conclude that both writers were alike to apply similar methods after completing their writing process. According to Goctu (2017) At this stage, learners will reread and reconsider the product to see if there are any changes needed. Learners will get themselves familiar with peer and self- editing skills.

Based on the metacognitive writing strategies model presented above, it can be concluded that planning, monitoring and evaluating are used by ESL writers in the writing process. Among the three stages, monitoring has been found as the most dominant stage compared to planning and evaluating.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1. Summary of Findings

ESL writers, be it male writers or female writers use metacognitive writing strategies in their writing process. However, the use of subcategories in metacognitive writing strategies throughout the process is different across gender. It has been proven in the study that female writer applied more subcategories of metacognitive writing strategies in their writing process compared to male writers. From the planning stage until evaluating stage, female writer performed more strategies as compared to the male writer. Hence, this can be summarized that metacognitive writing strategies are practiced differently across gender. However, from the table derived from the writing process of ESL writers, planning, monitoring and evaluating play its significant role to guide writers to produce a good text.

5.2. Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should explore a more thorough investigation of the implications of using these strategies and the factors that influence ESL writers to use strategies in the writing process. In fact, writing strategies can also be studied by comparing metacognitive writing strategies with other strategies in ESL writing. Besides that, the use of other instruments to collect the data such as observation, narrative enquiry and interview would help researchers to probe deeper on writers' use of writing strategies in the writing process.

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