



COGNITIVE STRATEGIES USED BY EFL STUDENTS IN THEIR PROCESS-BASED WRITING

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Abstract : This study aimed to analyze cognitive strategies employed by EFL students in their process-based writing. It used descriptive qualitative method that carried out undergraduate students of TBI at STIT Miftahul Midad Lumajang as the subjects of the study. In order to collect the data, observation and semi-structured interview were conducted. The findings revealed that the students use several writing cognitive strategies. In planning stage, they use brainstorming, outlining, and setting goal in order to help them generate and organize their ideas. In composing stage, they use drafting process, focusing on the audience and using self-regulation strategies to help them write effectively and efficiently. Further, in reviewing stage, they use several cognitive strategies to help them improve the quality of their text by proofreading, revising and seeking feedback. In addition, cognitive strategies have been proposed as an effective tools in order to enhance EFL students' writing performance.

Keywords: Cognitive Strategies; English as a foreign language (EFL) Students; Process-Based Writing

Abstrak : Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi kognitif yang digunakan oleh mahasiswa EFL dalam menulis berbasis proses. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif yang melibatkan mahasiswa S1 TBI di STIT Miftahul Midad Lumajang sebagai subjek penelitian. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan observasi dan wawancara semi-terstruktur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa menggunakan beberapa strategi kognitif dalam menulis. Pada tahap perencanaan, mereka menggunakan brainstorming, penyusunan kerangka tulisan, dan menetapkan tujuan penulisan untuk membantu menghasilkan dan menyusun ide-ide. Pada tahap penulisan, mereka membuat draf tulisan, fokus pada audiens dan menggunakan strategi pengaturan diri untuk membantu menulis secara efektif dan efisien. Selanjutnya, pada tahap review, mereka menggunakan beberapa strategi kognitif untuk membantu meningkatkan kualitas tulisan dengan mengoreksi, merevisi, dan mencari umpan balik. Selain itu, strategi kognitif disarankan sebagai cara yang efektif untuk meningkatkan kinerja menulis mahasiswa EFL.

Kata Kunci : Strategi Kognitif; Mahasiswa Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL); Menulis Berbasis Proses

INTRODUCTION

Learning English as a foreign language (EFL) is a complex and challenging process that requires students to develop various skills, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Writing, in particular, is a crucial skill that plays a vital role in students' academic

and professional success. However, most of students agree that writing is difficult skill to be mastered since in the learning of language, writing has a unique position that involves a knowledge and practice of other three language skills (reading, listening and speaking). Another problem arises during the writing process where students have difficulties on getting started to write due to the lack of writing experiences. They confuse to find the idea, organize and develop it clearly. It is in line with the study conducted by Arifiana (2015) that writing is the most difficult English skill for students. They face some problems in the process of writing such as they are not sure of how to arrange sentences into good paragraphs, they difficult to develop the ideas, they have lack of vocabulary, they tend to use only certain words so that their writing will be monotonous, and they apply incorrect grammar in their writing.

Dealing with the issues stated above, writing cognitive strategies can be used as a solution, and applied in writing class of EFL higher education students. Cognitive strategies in writing are the conscious and deliberate processes that writers use to plan, monitor, and evaluate their writing, such as generating ideas, organizing information, and revising drafts. As stated by Hayes & Flower (2017) that writing cognitive strategies are the mental processes used by writers to generate and organize their ideas, monitor their writing, and revise and edit their texts. Similarly, Kellogg (2008) defines cognitive writing strategies as the mental operations that underlie the production of written language, including planning, translating, and reviewing. In addition, Pintrich & De Groot (2015) point out that cognitive strategies is the conscious use of mental procedures to facilitate the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information.

There are some importances of writing cognitive strategies in EFL students. First and foremost, writing cognitive strategies can help students to think critically because these strategies require students to engage in higher-order thinking processes, such as analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information. When students use cognitive strategies in writing, they are encouraged to think deeply about their ideas, organize their thoughts, and revise their writing based on feedback and reflection. Here, students learn how to identify assumptions, select supporting evidences, consider different perspectives, and develop reasoned arguments. These skills are essential to critical thinking that involve the ability to analyze and evaluate information, identify biases and assumptions, and make judgments based on evidence. The idea above is supported by O'Malley & Chamot (2008) that cognitive strategies are the mental processes used to learn, remember, and use new information. Further, the process of writing allows students to clarify their thinking and express their ideas in a structured and coherent manner so that it can enhance their ability to communicate effectively and persuade others with their arguments. Overall, writing cognitive strategies can help students to develop critical thinking skills that are essential for academic success and lifelong learning.

Second, cognitive writing strategies help students become more self-aware writers because these strategies require students to reflect on their thinking and writing processes.

By using cognitive strategies in writing, students learn to identify their strengths and weaknesses as writers and develop strategies to address their challenges. It can be illustrated when students use cognitive strategies such as brainstorming and outlining, they are encouraged to reflect on their ideas and how they will develop them. This reflection helps students become more self-aware of their thinking processes and how they organize their ideas. When students use strategies such as self-editing and peer feedback, they learn to identify errors and inconsistencies in their writing and develop strategies to revise and improve their work. It helps students become more self-aware of their writing processes and how they can improve their writing. In addition, cognitive writing strategies are able to develop students' metacognitive skills, which involve the ability to monitor and regulate their own thinking and learning processes, observe their progress, set goals, and evaluate their own work. Besides, it helps students become more self-aware of their learning processes and how they can improve their writing skills. It is in line with Weinstein & Mayer (2011) that cognitive strategies are techniques that enhance learning and memory by allowing students to better process, organize, and retain information.

Third, cognitive writing strategies help students develop the skills they need to write in a variety of genres and contexts because these strategies teach them to focus on the purpose and audience of their writing. When students use cognitive writing strategies, such as analyzing the writing task and audience, they learn to adapt their writing style and language to different genres and contexts. They learn to use appropriate vocabulary, tone, and style for different purposes, such as writing an argumentative essay or a research report. This adaptability is essential for writing in different genres and contexts, such as academic writing, business writing, or creative writing. In addition, cognitive writing strategies can help students develop critical thinking skills, which are essential for writing in different genres and contexts. By using cognitive strategies such as analyzing and evaluating information, students learn to think critically about the topic and develop well-supported arguments. These skills are transferable to different genres and contexts, as they enable students to analyze and evaluate information in different contexts. In other words, cognitive writing strategies help students develop effective writing processes that can be applied to different genres and contexts. By using strategies such as prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing, students learn to develop a structured and organized approach to writing that can be applied to different types of writing. Overall, cognitive writing strategies can help students develop the skills they need to write in a variety of genres and contexts by teaching them to focus on purpose and audience, developing critical thinking skills, and developing effective writing processes.

Concerning to the importances of writing cognitive strategies in the context of EFL teaching and learning process elaborated above, it is interested to investigate those strategies, specifically, in the process-based writing of EFL higher education students. There are three stages in process-based writing; planning, composing and reviewing. Planning is

the stage where the writers build up their ideas in the mind. It determines the order of information which is going to be written such as how to organize the information and set the goals of writing. Composing is the stage where the writers express their ideas on paper. While, reviewing is the stage where the writers revise, examine, and evaluate their writing results. Hence, this study is conducted to explore cognitive strategies employed by EFL students in their process-based writing.

METHOD

This study used descriptive qualitative as the research design. Descriptive qualitative research deals with the study of human behavior and social life in natural setting, and applied when the study does not use statistically analysis. Thus, the qualitative method is used for interpreting and presenting the data descriptively (Ary et al., 2010). As stated by Bogdan & Biklen (2003) that the study is considered as qualitative based on some reasons: (1) a natural setting in classroom is adopted as source of data; (2) using the researcher as the key instrument; and (3) describing the facts of the subjects. Furthermore, Miles, Huberman & Saldana (2014) define that descriptive qualitative focus on naturally occurring and ordinary events in natural settings, so that it has a strong handle on what real life is like. It produces descriptive data of people's own written or spoken words, and their observable behavior by concerning with how social processes occur, and understand the meaning of what people say and do.

This study was carried out in STIT Miftahul Midad Lumajang. While, the subjects of this study involved undergraduate students of TBI at STIT Miftahul Midad Lumajang. In order to collect the data, it used observation and semi-structured interview. Interview was one of the data collection techniques that was used to gather data from people's point of views, opinions, beliefs, and feelings of situations in their own words. Specifically, this study employed semi-structured interview which enabled both the interviewer and interviewee to have flexibility in carrying out the discussion. The aspect to be interviewed was cognitive strategies used by EFL students in their process-based writing. Further, observation used to find out and capture the real classroom activities. In this case, it was carried out to investigate students' activities, particularly on the practiced of writing cognitive strategies. In order to maintain the trustworthiness of the data, observation was done in several times to minimize the biases of parts being observed. It also compared between the obtained data of observation and the result of interview.

Furthermore, the data were analyzed by using three stages as proposed by Miles, Huberman & Saldana (2014); those are data condensation, data display and conclusion drawing / verifying. Data condensation refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, transforming, and/or coding the obtained data of the research. Data display is an organized and compressed unit of information that drives to draw conclusion. While, in conclusion drawing / verifying, there are several points to be done in order to interpret the data, those are, summarizing the findings, conveying personal reflections, making

comparison to the literatures provided, and offering limitations and suggestions for further research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents description of results and discussions of the study. It elaborated in two sub-section, and each results and discussions were explained based on the problem of this research.

1. Result

In this sub-section, the researchers provide comprehensive descriptions about the results of the research that discussed cognitive strategies employed by EFL students in their process-based writing. The findings of this study showed that the students experienced three stages of process-based writing: planning, composing and reviewing. In planning stage, students use several cognitive strategies to help them generate and organize their ideas. These strategies include brainstorming, outlining, and setting goal. In brainstorming, students generate as many ideas as possible, without worrying about their quality. Then, they move to outlining. Here they organize ideas into a hierarchical structure, with main points and supporting details. Further, they go to setting goals to identify what they want to accomplish with the text, setting specific, and achievable goals. It can be explained clearly by referring to the observation results that here, students are asked to select one of five interesting topics to be discussed in their essay writing. After deciding what they want to write, they start by looking for relevant information by reading an article, a journal, or other appropriate texts to get an insight. Then, they take some notes and make an outline of the topic and fill in the important points of the sub-essay formats to make their essay organized. Further, in making the outline, students have to consider their writing purpose. In addition, specifically, in the context of EFL writing class, the ideas that have been established in the planning stage are translated by the students into foreign language, which is English.

In composing stage, students use several cognitive strategies to help them write effectively and efficiently. These strategies include using a drafting process, focusing on the audience and using self-regulation strategies. During a drafting process, students write one or multiple drafts of the text, with each draft build on the previous one. In selecting the audience, students consider who the text is for, and create the content as the needs. Further, in self-regulation strategies, students monitor and adjust the writing process as needed, such as by revising goals or changing the writing plan. In this stage, they are asked to put their ideas into visible language. In other words, it is called as translation, where the activity is transforming writers' ideas into sentences. It involves putting the ideas into language or text generation and then into written words transcription to create cohesive and coherent texts.

In reviewing stage, students use several cognitive strategies to help them improve the quality of their text by proofreading, revising and seeking feedback. During

proofreading, students check for errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and usage. In revising students make changes to the text to improve its content, organization, and style. Further, in seeking feedback students get input from others, such as peers or lecturer, and using it to revise and improve their writing. In this study, to make students' essay writing better, more interesting and easier to understand, they are asked to skim and scan their own essay, reread and revise, and also checking grammatical error and conduct consultations with the lecturer.

2. Discussion

This sub-section presents argumentative description about the results of this study by comparing and contrasting with the interrelated theories and relevant research findings. Concerning to the results of research explained above, in planning stage, students are making an outline after they decide a topic and get some knowledges by reading the informations that appropriate to their writing aim. It is supported by Pulungan (2016), that the purpose of planning is to encourage writers to gather information from their stored knowledge by using notes, and then use it to set a goal or to create a plan which is useful for improving their writing results. In composing stage, what the students do are in line with Pulungan (2016) that states in the process of composing a writing, the students gradually try to express their thoughts on a paper. Here, students begin to write and link up their ideas in a piece of writing, start from one sentence to the next one and then arrange them into well-written and easily-grasped paragraphs. They are encouraged to construct an English writing by using proper grammar with correct spelling and punctuation. Further, in reviewing stage, students use proofreading, revising and seeking feedback as writing cognitive strategies in order to assess and improve their quality of works. As stated by Pulungan (2016), in after-writing, there are some activities which carried out, such as re-reading, doing peer-review, making notes on the parts of the writing which need to be revised, and/ or asking the lecturer to do some corrections. The corrections may in the form of checking the spelling, vocabulary/collocations, punctuation, cohesiveness of the sentences, and coherency of the paragraphs. After incorporating revisions and suggestions a final writing can be published since it can be expected that this stage can produce a better English writing result. Moreover, Chien (2012) point out that revision is crucial part of writing process since along with this stage, the ideas originate and evolve, and the meanings are reshaped and defined.

CONCLUSION

Cognitive strategies were found to be one of the most frequently used strategies by all writers. Generally, in EFL process-based writing, students use several writing cognitive strategies. Each of these strategies involves conscious and deliberate mental processes that they use to manage their writing. However, these writing cogitive strategies are not necessarily sequential, and writers may use a combination of strategies depending on their

goals, the audience, and the task requirements. The effective use of cognitive strategies is able to help students in organizing their ideas, structuring their writing, and expressing their thoughts more clearly and cohesively. In other words, by using cognitive strategies in planning, composing, and reviewing stage of writing, students can become more effective and confident writers so that it can lead them to bring out better writing outcomes. Further, these strategies can be taught and learned through instructions and practices.

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