

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Overview

The purpose of this study was to trace the similarities and differences in the composing processes of pre-intermediate ESL students in their first language and the English Language. Another aspect of this study was to test the hypothesis that pre-intermediate ESL students use L1 as the dominant language to think when writing in their first language and the English Language.

The researcher used a case study approach to obtain data from five subjects through multiple data collection methods that included think-aloud protocol which was audio and video recorded, semi-structured questionnaire, retrospective interview and analysis of the written product. The five subjects were Malaysian-Chinese ESL students, three males and two females, studying in a private college where English is used as the medium of instruction. They were enrolled in the pre-intermediate level of English course at the time of this study based on their score in the English Placement Test administered by the college. The subjects were asked to think aloud whilst writing two descriptive essays using one topic, first in their L1 and then in the English Language.

Literature that was reviewed for the present study consisted of researches conducted on first language and second language composing processes. Researches in second language composing process especially comparative studies between L1 and L2 composing

processes were given more emphasis. The researcher also reviewed studies on usage of L1 in the L2 composing processes, all of which were relevant to the present study.

Findings obtained from this study were compared to previous studies of similar nature and many concurrences were noted. Amongst the findings made in this study that concurred with other studies were:

- i) Similarities of composing processes and behaviors between the first language and the English language writing indicate the transference of L1 composing skills to L2;
- ii) There were differences in the way each subject approached his or her writing although all the subjects were homogenous in terms of language proficiency and academic qualification.
- iii) When comparing the composing processes between the first language and the English language writing, two differences emerged amidst the similarities, that is, frequency of processes used were higher in the first language writing and usage of more than one language in the English Language composing process. The other languages noted in the English Language composing process were the subjects' L1 and Malay language.
- iv) Metacommenting was found to be unique in the Chinese composing whilst translating was only apparent in the English composing.

- v) Finally, L1 was the dominant language used by the pre-intermediate ESL students in the present study to think when writing in both the first language and the English language composing thus validating the hypothesis in this study.

## 5.2 Implications for Teaching

Similarities in the composing processes of our pre-intermediate ESL students' writing in their first language and the English Language indicate that our ESL students transfer their L1 writing skills to L2. It would be worthwhile for the teacher of writing to first obtain information from one's ESL students what writing strategies they have learnt in their L1. With this knowledge in hand, the teacher could then guide the students to transfer the appropriate strategies advantageously to the L2 composing process. For example, subjects in this study rehearsed more frequently in their L1 writing. Rehearsal seemed to give them confidence to transcribe what they wanted to express. Therefore, their L1 writing had more elaborate description than their English writing. Teachers of writing could encourage their ESL students to utilize such strategies in their L2 writing to enable them to write more effectively.

Another implication that can be drawn from this study is the usage of think-aloud as a teaching tool in writing, which is also recommended by Raimes (1987) as an effective pedagogical strategy. According to Flower and Hayes as quoted by Ardnt (1987), a major component of writing skill is the ability to monitor the process of one's writing; therefore, teachers can help their students to be consciously aware of the process of writing by getting them to think aloud. For example, when the students are rehearsing, the teacher can intervene by pointing out other processes that will help them write more effectively such as

generating ideas, revising and editing at that point. This would raise the students' awareness of the processes that are involved in writing which would reveal the recursive and generative nature of writing.

Subjects in this study have indicated that they were not able to make the changes in their English writing although they knew that there were changes to be made. Teachers could encourage and provide the opportunity for students to revise their assignments after helping the students identify the errors. As recommended by Van Gelderen (1997), students should be guided to revise the contents to represent what they intend to express with purpose and adapting it to their audience accordingly.

This study has shown the subjects' reliance on their L1 when writing in English where they not only used L1 to generate ideas but also translated such ideas to English. In fact, subjects in this study have indicated that they found it easier to write in their first language and then write in English using the same topic. While further research has to be done to examine the efficacy of translation in writing, teachers should impress upon these students the difference in the structures between L1 and English. Whilst generating ideas using L1 has been found to help students write in English, students should be taught how to translate them effectively into English.

### **5.3 Recommendations for further research**

The present study required the students to write essays using the descriptive mode of discourse. It is suggested that future research on composing processes of our ESL students in the local context should incorporate other modes of discourse. This would add further

insight as to whether our ESL students exhibit similar composing processes whilst writing in their first language and the English Language using different modes of discourse.

One of the findings in this study indicated that translation was used in the English language composing process. The pre-intermediate ESL students in this study indicated that it was easier to first write in their L1 and then in English using the same topic. Further research should be done to examine whether translation could help ESL students write more effectively in English.

This study has validated the hypothesis that pre-intermediate ESL students use L1 as the dominant language to think whilst writing in their first language and the English Language. Future researches should be done on advanced ESL students or skilled writers to examine whether this hypothesis is applicable to students of different proficiency levels.

In conclusion, findings from this study were similar with findings of other studies done in other contexts. As the number of subjects is small, it is difficult to make generalizations beyond this group. Despite this limitation, it is hoped that these findings will provide a basis for future research on our ESL students' composing processes in the local context as there are still very few comparative studies in this area.