

WRITING STRATEGIES OF CHINESE EFL SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

It has been stated in a number of studies (Nooreiny & Mazlin, 2013; Roya Khoii, 2011; Tangpermpoon, 2008) that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as a Second Language (ESL) students faced difficulties when writing in English. Efficient writing strategies play an important role in enabling students to achieve their English writing success. The purposes of this study are to investigate the writing strategies employed by Chinese EFL senior high school students, identify the difference between proficient and less proficient students on their use of writing strategies in English and explore some possible reasons of using certain writing strategies. This study employed a mixed method approach by using a questionnaire, recall protocols and post-writing interviews. Initial findings reveal that the learners use more strategies at the while-writing stage as compared to strategies at the prewriting and revising stages. The findings also highlight that there is a significant difference between proficient and less proficient learners on the use of some writing strategies. In addition, EFL learners are mainly influenced by exam-oriented writing experience, attitude, writing difficulties, teaching approach and lack of confidence. The findings of this study could shed better understanding on some popular writing strategies used by these EFL learners. It also assists teachers and educators to develop better teaching methods in guiding students to be better equipped with efficient writing strategies.

ABSTRAK

Terdapat kajian-kajian (Nooreiny & Mazlin, 2013; Roya Khoii, 2011; Tangpermpoon, 2008) yang menyatakan bahawa para pelajar yang mempelajari bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa asing atau sebagai bahasa kedua menghadapi masalah penulisan dalam bahasa Inggeris. Strategi-strategi penulisan yang baik memainkan peranan yang penting dalam membolehkan para pelajar menulis dengan baik. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidik strategi-strategi penulisan para pelajar warga China yang belajar di sekolah menengah atas, mengenal pasti perbezaan antara pelajar berkemahiran tinggi dan pelajar berkemahiran rendah dari segi strategi-strategi penulisan dan meninjau sebab-sebab yang menyebabkan penggunaan strategi-strategi penulisan tertentu. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kaedah campuran yang melibatkan borang soal selidik, protokol ingat kembali dan temu ramah selepas penulisan. Pertamanya, hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa para pelajar menggunakan lebih banyak strategi penulisan pada peringkat penulisan berbanding dengan peringkat prapenulisan dan peringkat pascapenulisan. Hasil kajian juga menekankan terdapat perbezaan yang ketara antara pelajar berkemahiran tinggi dan pelajar berkemahiran rendah dari segi penggunaan strategi-strategi penulisan. Akhirnya, pemilihan strategi-strategi penulisan oleh pelajar berkemahiran tinggi dan pelajar berkemahiran rendah kebanyakannya terpengaruh oleh pengalaman peperiksaan, sikap, tahap kesukaran, pendekatan pengajaran dan kekurangan keyakinan diri. Hasil-hasil kajian ini membolehkan kita mengetahui strategi-strategi penulisan yang popular yang digunakan oleh para pelajar ini. Diharapkan kajian ini dapat membantu para guru dan pendidik untuk membangunkan kaedah pengajaran yang lebih baik untuk membimbing para pelajar agar mereka menguasai lebih banyak strategi penulisan yang baik.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Original Literary Work Declaration Form.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
<i>Abstrak</i>	iv
Acknowledgment.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Figures.....	ix
List of Tables.....	x
List of Appendices.....	xii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	
1.0 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Background of the Study.....	2
1.1.1 The History of Learning English in China.....	2
1.1.2 The Status of English Writing in China.....	3
1.1.3 English Teaching Methodology in China.....	4
1.2 Problem Statement.....	5
1.3 Objectives of the Study.....	7
1.4 Research Questions.....	7
1.5 Significance of the Study.....	7
1.6 Limitations of the Study.....	8
1.7 Definitions.....	9
1.8 Summary.....	10
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.0 Introduction.....	11
2.1 Analysing Writing from Product to Process.....	11
2.2 Theoretical Framework.....	12
2.2.1 Model of Writing Processes.....	12
2.2.2 Previous Studies Using Flower and Hayes's (1981) Model.....	16
2.2.3 Rationale for Using Flower and Hayes's Model.....	17
2.3 Petric and Czarl's Questionnaire (2003).....	19
2.3.1 Previous Studies Using Patric and Czarl's Questionnaire.....	22
2.3.2 Rationale for Using Petric and Czarl's Questionnaire.....	23
2.4 Stimulated Recall Protocol.....	23
2.4.1 Previous Studies Using Recall Protocols.....	25
2.4.2 Rationale for Using Stimulated Recall Protocols.....	27
2.5 Writing Strategies of Proficient and Less Proficient Writers.....	28
2.6 Factors Influencing Writing Strategies.....	32

2.7 Conclusion.....	35
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	
3.0 Introduction.....	37
3.1 Research Design.....	37
3.2 Selections of the Subjects.....	37
3.3 Instruments for Collecting Data.....	40
3.3.1 Questionnaire.....	41
3.3.2 Selections of the Task and the Input.....	43
3.3.3 Selection of Recall Protocol and Think-aloud Protocol.....	44
3.3.4 Stimulated Recall Protocols.....	45
3.4 Data Collection Procedures.....	46
3.5 Analysis of Data.....	50
3.6 Summary.....	52
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	
4.0 Introduction.....	53
4.1 Background Information of the Sample.....	53
4.1.1 English Writing Background.....	54
4.1.1.1 Interest in English Writing.....	54
4.1.1.2 Frequency of English Writing Per Week.....	55
4.1.1.3 Essay Types.....	56
4.1.1.4 Thinking in English/Chinese.....	56
4.2 RQ1: What writing strategies do Chinese senior high school students frequently employ when writing compositions in English?.....	57
4.2.1 Overall Responses to Writing Strategies Questionnaire.....	57
4.2.2 Most Frequently Used Writing Strategies.....	59
4.3 RQ2: How do proficient and less English proficient students differ in their writing strategies?.....	61
4.3.1 Overall Writing Strategies Used by Proficient and Less Proficient Students... 62	
4.3.2 The Most Frequently Used Writing Strategy by Proficient and Less Proficient Students.....	63
4.3.3 The Least Frequently Used Writing Strategy by the Proficient and Less Proficient Students.....	67
4.3.4 Significant Difference of Writing Strategies between Proficient and Less Proficient Learners.....	71
4.4 RQ3: What are the factors that influence students' choice of strategies in their writing process?.....	75
4.4.1 Influencing Factors at Prewriting Stage.....	75
4.4.1.1 Exam-oriented Writing Experience.....	76
4.4.1.2 Rote Memory.....	78
4.4.1.3 Topic.....	78
4.4.1.4 Attitude.....	79
4.4.1.5 Weak Planning.....	79
4.4.2 Influencing Factors at While-writing Stage.....	80
4.4.2.1 Exam-oriented Writing Experience.....	81
4.4.2.2 Poor Organisation of Ideas.....	82
4.4.2.3 Poor Expression of Ideas.....	85
4.4.2.4 English Writing Exercise.....	87

4.4.2.5 Attitude.....	88
4.4.3 Influencing Factors at Revising Stage.....	88
4.4.3.1 Exam-oriented Writing Experience.....	89
4.4.3.2 Lack of Vocabularies and Grammar Knowledge.....	91
4.4.3.3 Teaching Approach.....	92
4.4.3.4 Attitude.....	93
4.4.3.5 Lack of Confidence.....	93
4.4.3.6 Poor Correction in Sentence Structure.....	94
4.4.4 Summary of Factors Influencing EFL learners' Writing Process.....	95
4.5 Summary of Findings.....	99
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
5.0 Concluding Points.....	101
5.1 Research Summary.....	101
5.1.1 Research Question 1: What writing strategies do Chinese senior high school students frequently employ when writing compositions in English?.....	103
5.1.2 Research Question 2: How do proficient and less English proficient students differ in their writing strategies?.....	104
5.1.3 Research Question 3: What are the factors that influence students' choice of strategies in their writing process?.....	105
5.2 Implications of the Study.....	107
5.2.1 Pedagogical Implication.....	108
5.2.2 Methodological Implication.....	109
5.3 Recommendations for Further Studies.....	110
5.4 Summary.....	111
References.....	113

List of Figures

Figure 2.1: The Flower and Hayes's (1981) writing model.....	13
Figure 3.1: Phases of Data Collection Process.....	47
Figure 4.1: Senior High School Exam Results of the Participants.....	54
Figure 4.2: Frequency of Each Factor at the Prewriting Stage.....	76
Figure 4.3: Frequency of Each Factor at the While-writing Stage.....	81
Figure 4.4: Frequency of Each Factor at the Revising Stage.....	89

University of Malaya

List of Tables

Table 3.2: Background of participants.....	40
Table 3.3.1: Categorisation of EFL learners based on their writing strategies.....	42
Table 4.1.1.1: The Respondents Interests in English Writing.....	55
Table 4.1.1.2: Frequency of English-writing Per Week.....	55
Table 4.1.1.3: Type of Essay Students Write Most.....	56
Table 4.1.1.4: Respondents Thinking in English/Chinese When Write in English.....	56
Table 4.2.1 Summary of Writing Strategies Used at Different Stages.....	57
Table 4.2.2A Most Frequently Used Writing Strategies at the Prewriting Stage.....	59
Table 4.2.2B Most Frequently Used Writing Strategies at the While-writing Stage.....	59
Table 4.2.2C Most Frequently Used Writing Strategies at the Revising Stage.....	60
Table 4.3.1 Mean and Standard Deviation of Overall and Different Stages of Writing Strategy between Proficient (P) and Less Proficient (LP) Respondents.....	62
Table 4.3.2A The Most Frequently Writing Strategy Employed by Proficient and Less Proficient EFL Learners at Prewriting Stage.....	63
Table 4.3.2B The Most Frequently Writing Strategy Employed by Proficient and Less Proficient EFL Learners at While-writing Stage.....	64
Table 4.3.2C The Most Frequently Writing Strategy Employed by Proficient and Less Proficient EFL Learners at Revising Stage.....	65
Table 4.3.3A The Least Frequently Writing Strategy Employed by Proficient and Less Proficient EFL Learners at Prewriting Stage.....	67
Table 4.3.3B The Least Frequently Writing Strategy Employed by Proficient and Less Proficient EFL Learners at While-writing Stage.....	68
Table 4.3.3C The Least Frequently Writing Strategy Employed by Proficient and Less Proficient EFL Learners at Revising Stage.....	69

Table 4.3.4A: Independent T-test on Writing Strategy Use in Three Stages by Proficiency Level.....	72
Table 4.3.4B: Items of Writing Strategy Showing Significant Difference between proficient and less Proficient Groups.....	73
Table 4.4.4 Summary of Factors Influencing EFL Learners' Writing Process.....	95
Table 5.1: Summary of the Answers to the Research Questions.....	102

University of Malaya

List of Appendices

APPENDIX A.....	124
APPENDIX B.....	125
APPENDIX C.....	129
APPENDIX D.....	130
APPENDIX E.....	133

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

According to Nooreiny and Mazlin (2013), writings of senior high school students including native speakers, second and foreign language learners, are considered as a significant challenge. In fact, writing is said to be the most difficult skill in acquiring language compared to listening, reading and speaking (Roya Khoii, 2011; Tangpermpoon, 2008). It is essential to write efficiently because “writing is a method of knowing and of coming to know” (Beale, 1986, p.4). In other words, writing serves both writers and readers to communicate more precisely and efficiently as well as to keep their thoughts, actions and decisions, as Reinking, Hart and Von der Osten (1996) concluded. However, writing tends to be neglected in both first (L1) and second language (L2) programs before 1960s (Farhad & Juliana, 2012; White & Arndt, cited in Enas, 2013). According to Wang and Wen (2002), writing began to draw researchers’ attention to its functions in social communication in the early 1980. Among the researchers, Flower (1981, p.3) is the first to highlight that “writing is a thinking process” and she explains further that writing is a recursive rather than a linear process. The process is flexible where writers may “move back and forth between different process of writing i.e., planning, drafting, and reviewing continually and recursively” (Farhad, 2013, p.2). West (1973) also suggests that writing process helps students organise random thoughts, clarify what they really think, and develop their ideas. In addition, some empirical studies have proven that appropriate instructions on writing strategies in different stages of writing would facilitate students’ writing performance (Zhang, 2010; Enas, 2013).

This chapter first provides the background of this study by focusing on the English learning and teaching history as well as the status of English writing in China. Then it introduces the objectives of this study and the research questions. The next section discusses the

significance of the study and the following section introduces the limitation of the study. The second last section refers to some definitions used in the research and ends with a summary of the whole chapter to give readers a general idea of this research.

1.1 Background of the Study

1.1.1 The History of Learning English in China

Throughout Chinese history, English has experienced several changes in its role and status. English first became a compulsory course in 1902 with an aim to obtain access to the Western advanced skills (Adamson & Morris, 1997). However, because of the instability of policy and society as well as less standard of living, English language was not learnt by many students (Zhang & Shen, 2001). Since the establishment of People's Republic of China in 1949, Russian language was made a compulsory course in both secondary schools and colleges in the first 15 years. However, due to the failure between China and Soviet in the foreign affairs in the early 1960s caused English to become the main foreign language taught in high schools and universities. Nevertheless, from 1966 to 1976, the Cultural Revolution caused chaos throughout the school system. This revolution involved violence to many language teachers who were accused of spying for other countries during that period. English was only learnt from some messages and slogans in the textbooks for political publicity (Adamson & Morris, 1997). When schools went back to teach subjects after the Cultural Revolution, English became a compulsory subject for many secondary schools. Since the Chinese government adopted an open-door policy and began to establish contacts with the outside world in 1978, economy and science started to develop. English language, owing to its growing status as the world's main international language, is regarded as the most important foreign language for Chinese modernization and progress (Liang, 1999). Thus, English language has been officially taught in primary and secondary

schools as well as universities in China since 1983 (Hu, 2005). According to Lin and Block (2011), China has the largest number of English learners all over the world. China has over 200 million English learners in schools which represents 20% of the total number of learners in the world (Taylor, 2002). Therefore, mastering English skills becomes more important for Chinese students today.

1.1.2 The Status of English Writing in China

Embedded in the Chinese endeavor for modernization, English writing has always been a contested educational practice. Writing teachers struggle to balance between indoctrinating students into Chinese mainstream ideology and providing them with writing skill. They seek to adopt innovative writing pedagogies or have the luxury of having more time on teaching writing, but sometimes their teaching schedule did not allow them to do so (You, 2010). In their writings, students strive to inscribe their life experiences and feelings. They also wrestle with their “relatively less English proficiency, political turmoil, and fierce competition” in the job market (ibid., p.6). According to the present English Curriculum Criterion for Senior High School Students in China (2003), writing is one of the basic knowledge, which accounts for 25 points of the total 150 points in the National Matriculation English Test (NMET). In the year of 2005, students in Zhejiang Province obtained an average of 13 points in their NMET and some students even received zero points in the writing section (Chen, 2009). Past NMETs results showed that listening and reading skills of Chinese students have relatively improved: however, writing skills failed to make a significant progress (Lei, 2004). English writing is a big challenge for most students. However, little attention has been given by both students and teachers. According to Chen (2011), Chinese students are reluctant to discuss their English composition with peers, especially when facing problems with writing. Additionally, teachers provide very

limited help in making corrections either in English grammar or vocabulary. Teachers also spend little time to give a general explanation of writing, such as writing a short introduction and conclusion and longer paragraphs for the body. They seem not pay attention to utilise writing strategies in teaching writing skills (Chen, 2011). Thus, both teachers and students are having difficulties in teaching writing and writing in English.

1.1.3 English Teaching Methodology in China

With the high development of society and economic globalization, English has become a worldwide language and hence being proficient in English is considered an important prerequisite for EFL Chinese learners (Hu, 2002). With the aim to be competent English users in “professions, businesses, workplaces and enterprises” (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996, p.61), English as a foreign language has been taught as a compulsory subject in Chinese middle schools and colleges. Furthermore, in January 2001, China decided to make English a compulsory subject in elementary schools from Grade 3 (students’ around eight years old) onwards (Sung & Paderson, 2012).

In the Chinese education system, English language has been designated as one of the three major subjects alongside with Chinese language and Mathematics in the middle schools and senior high schools. According to the revised Program of English Instruction (2001), for at least nine hours every week every senior high school student learns English speaking, listening, reading and writing but with different emphasis. In relation to this issue, the instruction of English curriculum moves from the “emphasis on grammar and vocabulary only” (Ministry of Education of China, 2001, p.2) to the learning process by promoting “students’ authentic experience, practice, participation, collaboration and communication” (ibid., p.2). However, due to the large-sized class and a lack of self-confidence to evaluate

students' performance, most China's middle school EFL teachers still employ grammar-translation method and their students use rigid sentences with stilted expression (Cheng & Moses, 2011) which results in students being weak in writing skills.

This traditional method of teaching writing is experienced by the researcher, both as an EFL learner and as an EFL instructor, and resulted in the improvement of grammar and vocabulary more than in writing. The Chinese EFL writers seem to lack the required knowledge of writing strategies. Besides, very little information found studies done, if any, is available about the way Chinese EFL writers perform in writing. Thus, this study aims to investigate the writing strategies that Chinese EFL senior high school writers use while composing.

1.2 Problem Statement

It has been stated in a number of studies that students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and students of English as a Second Language (ESL) faced difficulties in writing English essays (Lim, 2006; Reid, 2009; Liu, 2013). Factors such as grammar and vocabulary, learners' L1 and background knowledge were found to cause difficulties in their writing performance (Nik, Azizah & Hasif, 2010). Several studies, which have been conducted in the Chinese context where the use of English as their foreign and official curriculum language in most Chinese schools, reveal that school students lack the essential writing strategies needed to improve the quality of their writing (Chen, 2009; Hou, 2011; Wang, 2012). Efficient writing strategies play an important role in enabling students to achieve their English writing success. Therefore, there are gaps in the Chinese EFL studies of writing strategies that need to be filled by further studies.

Firstly, there are lack of studies conducted on writing strategies employed by senior high school students, let alone studies that have examined the difference on writing strategies used by senior high school learners of different English proficiency levels. The participants involved in these studies are mainly EFL/ESL young adults in academic contexts and most of them are college students (Lu, 2010; Wang & Wen, 2002; Mu & Carrington, 2007; Wong, 2005). The reason for the above phenomenon is that collection of data from college students is easily accessible because most of the researchers are college teachers themselves (Lu, 2007). Secondly, the factors that influence students' choice of writing strategies are unclear. Although several studies (Yi, 2001; Khalid, 2011; Hu, 2014) reveal that cultural backgrounds and language proficiency may cause EFL students' writing difficulties, Hou (2011) points out Chinese senior high school students faced problems like inappropriate use of vocabulary and grammar in their English writing. Few studies have clearly identified the factors that may have impacted on the students' selection of writing strategies. Thus, an investigation is needed to explore why Chinese EFL learners tend to use certain writing strategies. In addition, this study attempts to fill a gap in the field of research methods. Although a variety of research methods have been employed in this field, most researches adopted only one method which was either a quantitative method such as a questionnaire or a qualitative method such as an interview, think-aloud protocol or stimulated recall protocol in investigating EFL students' writing strategies (Hu & Chen, 2007; Nor, Tan & Noraini, 2012; Nooreiny & Mazlin, 2013). The use of questionnaires to measure writing strategies is comparatively convenient and can reach a large scale of participants, however, it would not give sufficient information and the questions in the questionnaire may not be comprehensible (Kumar, 2005). Whilst the qualitative methods are more appropriate for complex situations to collect in-depth information even with a small number of participants (ibid.). Thus, this research intends to use a mixed method to analyse the Chinese senior

high school students' writing strategies and factors influencing their choice of writing strategies.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to investigate the writing strategies employed by Chinese EFL senior high school students. It also attempts to identify whether there is a difference between proficient and less proficient students on their use of writing strategies in English. Finally, this study explores some possible reasons of using certain writing strategies.

1.4 Research Questions

With the main aims identified above, the following three questions are addressed in this study:

1. What writing strategies do Chinese senior high school students frequently employ when writing compositions in English?
2. How do proficient and less English proficient students differ in their writing strategies?
3. What are the factors that influence students' choice of strategies in their writing process?

1.5 Significance of the Study

As Hou (2011) points out, students' effective use of learning strategies not only benefits them to grasp the direction of study but also improves their learning efficiency. This study offers an investigation on the writing strategies used by Chinese EFL students in providing a better understanding of their English writing processes. The findings of this study are expected to shed some light on some popular writing strategies used by these EFL learners. At the same time, this study is important to gain an understanding of some factors that might impede some Chinese senior high school students' success in English composition.

Therefore, this research can assist teachers and educators to develop more effective teaching methods to guide students to be better equipped with efficient writing strategies. In other words, the findings may assist the less proficient EFL writers to use appropriate writing strategies to write in English with more confidence even though they may lack the necessary vocabulary.

It should be noted that research on EFL writing strategies in China is still at its infancy and many questions related to writing strategies are still unanswered. It is hoped that the results of this research add some new knowledge in this area.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

Although this study aims to discover the writing strategies employed by Chinese EFL senior high school students and provide factors for using certain writing strategies, it must be noted that there are limitations in terms of the students used as samples and the employed methods.

Firstly, the sample size is small. Even though 90 senior high school students answered the questionnaire, only 60 Grade One Chinese EFL senior high school students were chosen when analysing the writing strategies employed and discover factors that may influence their choice of writing strategies. The main reason was that both Grade Two and Grade Three senior high school students were very busy preparing for their national College Entrance Examination. Even though 30 of Grade Two and Grade Three students filled in the questionnaire, they were not interviewed due to time constraints. Thus, the researcher had only access to the Grade One students and so the results are not all-inclusive to the high school students, but only Grade One students.

Furthermore, the proficient student and less proficient students were selected only based on their Senior High School Entrance Examination (SHSEE) results. However, unlike other official rating scale which based only on the students' exam results, students in Xinjiang Province in 2014 were rated by their English level for in both their examination results and ratio of examinees population for SHSEE results. The examinees' actual English results of SHSEE were not revealed. Thus, in the study the participants with A level of SHSEE are comparatively proficient in English than the participants with B and C levels of SHSEE.

In addition, one of the analyses for finding factors which influence writing strategies in this study is mainly based on a writing task and recall protocols. Writing is a complex process that may be affected by many other factors, such as emotional factors, the effect of training, etc. Moreover, the participants in this study may feel uncomfortable with their writing activity being recorded. Thus, their writing results may not reflect their normal level of performance.

1.7 Definitions

Due to investigate writing strategies used by EFL Chinese learners, this section provides a few definitions of certain terms used in relevance to this research.

1. Writing is a problem-solving process, including planning, actual composing and revising (Flower, 1981; Farhad, 2013).
2. Writing/composing strategies are regarded as an equal as the methods, actions and any observed writing behavior to solve the writing difficulties during writing (Manchon, 2001).

1.8 Summary

This chapter discusses the current issues about the teaching and learning of English in China as well as writing problems faced by Chinese EFL senior high school students in English. It starts with a brief introduction of the role of writing in a foreign language and challenges for EFL students to write in English. Next, it is followed by a discussion on the role of English as a foreign language and as a compulsory subject as well as the traditional English teaching method in China. The contexts of English language in China prove that writing English is a big challenge for Chinese students even though they are proficient in the grammar of the language. The chapter then demonstrates the research problem, objectives, research questions, significance of the study and its limitations. This chapter stresses that writing strategies are necessary for students to learn and apply in the improvements of their English writing performance. The following chapter reviews relevant literature of writing strategies.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present the theoretical background of the relevant studies concerning writing strategies. In the first part, the progress-based writing approach from examining features of students' written product to the students' writing behaviour is reviewed. Secondly, the theoretical framework of this study and its rationale for using this theory are highlighted. In the third section, the use of questionnaire by Petric and Czarl's study (2003) is explained in this research. The following section demonstrates a useful method named stimulated recall protocol which has been used in many second language acquisition studies. The next section illustrates the writing strategies used in ESL and EFL contexts and comparisons of writing strategies used by proficient and less English proficient learners. The second last section discusses the factors that influence EFL learners' English writing. Finally, a conclusion summarises the research gaps and significance of the study.

2.1 Analysing Writing from Product to Process

Writing is considered as an interactive method of communication that takes place between a reader and a writer via a written text (Khalid, 2011). Thus, the writer has to assume the reader's reactions, by producing a text which adheres to the cooperative activity (Grice, 1975, as cited in Khalid, 2011). Over two or three decades ago, a prototype of teaching writing has been noticeably shifted. Researchers (Graves, 1975; Flower & Hayes, 1981; Chien, 2008) have begun to realize that investigations in the writing products do not reveal much about learner's instructional needs. They have admitted that past persistent analysis of production of writing samples seems to be hopeless exercises. In reality, introducing linguistic forms and cramming rules do not help students to master the skill of writing

successfully (Baroudy, 2008). As Healy and Wallusayi (1997, p.8) say, “Good writing does not just happen; it is the result of considerable thought and a careful process”. Hence, their focus has shifted to the writer specifically, in their interest to find out what exactly the writer does when he attempts to finish his writing tasks. It is a major belief among the researchers (Graves, 1975; Flower & Hayes, 1981; Chien, 2008) that by exploring the writing behaviors, the process of writing would be better understood, thus giving better insights into how to teach the students to write. The process writing approach provides opportunities for students to develop ideas on what to write, draft sections that needs to be written, revise them based on feedback of different kinds and to continue with the drafting and revising process until they complete the final version of their composition (Subramaniam, 2010).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Model of Writing Processes

The writing process is a means of looking at what students think and do as they write instead of focusing on the students’ finished writing products. Britton and Emig (as cited in Tompkins, 2000) are two of the first researchers to examine students’ writing processes. Both of them studied high school English native students’ writing essays and Britton found that students’ “writing processes differed according to the type of writing” (ibid., p.9). Several years later, Graves (1975) examined a group of young children’s writing and documented that seven-year-old children like high school students, used a variety of strategies as they write. These early researchers generally divided the writing process into three stages: prewriting, composing and post-writing. Graves (1975) described that in the prewriting stage, writers chose topics and decided to write; in the composing stage, they wrote the composition; and in the post-writing stage, they shared their writing. In the

findings, writing was perceived as a linear activity. Flower and Hayes (1977, 1981) studied their students' writing and required them to speak out their thought processes while composing by using a think-aloud protocol. They then analysed the students' expressed thoughts to examine the strategies that writers used and further developed a model describing writing as a complex problem-solving process. According to the model, a writing process consists of three writing behaviours: planning (setting goals to guide the writing), translating (putting the plans into writing), and reviewing (evaluating and revising the writing). These behaviours are not linear steps, according to Flower and Hayes (1977, 1981), because writers continually monitor their writing and move back and forth among these activities. An important finding from their research is that writing is recursive, and writers who use this monitoring mechanism alternate back and forth from one process to another as they compose.

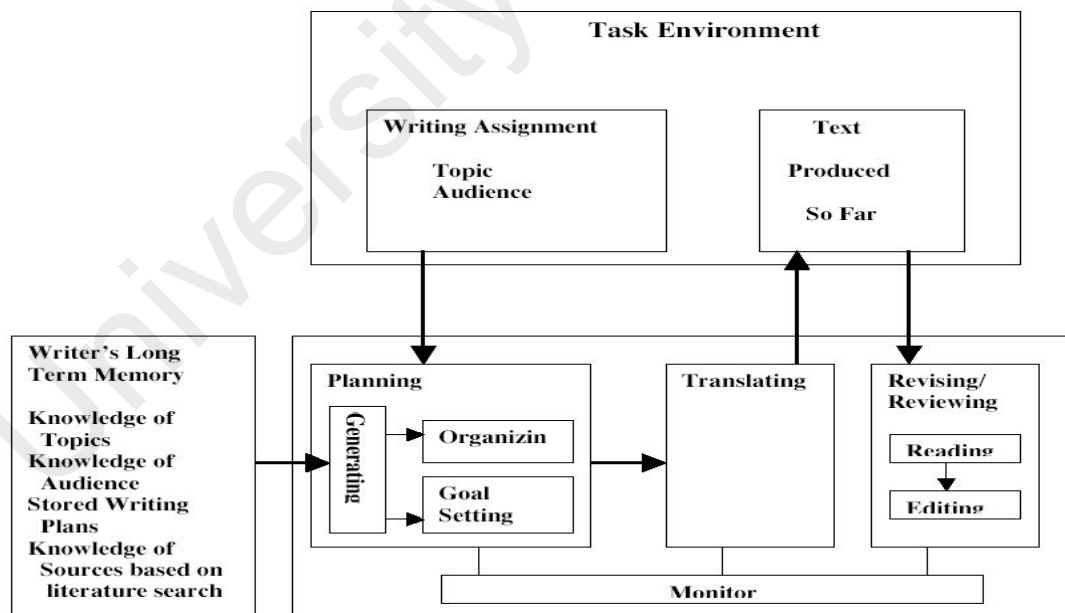


Figure 2.1: The Flower and Hayes's (1981) writing model

Flower and Hayes's model (see Figure 2.1) divides composing into three main components: the task environment, the composers' long term memory and the composing processor. Task environment includes "anything outside the writer's skin, starting with the rhetorical problem or assignment and eventually including the growing text itself" (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p.369) such as the topic, audience and relevant information. The writer's long-term memory involves storing knowledge of the topic, the audience and different writing plans. The composing processor includes the actual composing steps which are *planning*, *translating* ideas into written pieces and *reviewing*. All of these three stages are under the control of a monitor.

The aim of *planning* is to collect information from the task environment and long-term memory and use it in setting goals or establishing plans to guide the text output. Planning is "not a unitary stage, but a distinctive thinking process which writers use over and over again during composition" (Zamel, 1982, as cited in Ali, 2002, p.23). That is, planning includes more than one process of generating ideas, organising them and reaching goals. Generating ideas means accessing information in the memory of the writer while organising means confirming that the information reached is relevant to the task in hand. In addition, "all rhetorical decisions and plans for reaching the audience affect the process of organising at all levels" (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p.372). With regard to goal reaching, the writer establishes a set of goals and purposes in addition to what he has in mind and has given himself a space to work out how he plans to achieve them. Planning refers to thinking activities prior to putting words on paper.

In the *translation* stage, the ideas previously generated in the planning stage are translated into written words. In this stage, thoughts are put down into a recognisable language.

Translation is used to express what planning includes in a written form. But this does not mean that it is easy to determine when writers progress from planning to translation because the writers do not necessarily have a final meaning which is easily expressed. Thus, the act of translation can add enormous new constraints and often forces the writers to develop, clarify, and often revise that meaning (Ali, 2002). Moreover, writers tend to re-plan when they are hampered in translating their thoughts, in case they get more ideas.

Reviewing is the third component to evaluate or revise what has been composed. In this final stage, it involves revising and evaluating what has been written or planned. When the reviewing model is applied, it produces one more step forward. For example, it shows that the writers have internalised the basic as well as common writing conventions which, in turn, help the writers to recognise any inaccuracies in a standard language and know when and how to apply them. The reviewing process helps the writers to evaluate their texts in order to determine whether they meet their goals or not.

The monitor, as an additional activity, determines the boundaries of each stage and when to switch. The monitor is stable but its functions are different for one writer to another. For instance, some writers move from the planning stage to the translation stage as soon as they are able, while others are more patient and wait until every piece of planning completes. Furthermore, writers whose written task appears easier and shorter do not usually rely on planning in order to undertake the task (Ali, 2002). Rather, they are more likely to start writing from the goal-setting. When the monitor model is applied, it shows the individual differences in the goal-setting which reflects the differences in the students' writing styles.

2.2.2 Previous Studies Using Flower and Hayes' (1981) Model

Flower and Hayes helped researchers to track the actual writing strategies of EFL learners in real writing. Hence, researchers such as Farhad (2013), Khalid (2011) and Chien (2008) have used Flower and Hayes's model to investigate writing strategies used by EFL college students in the process of composing English essays.

Farhad (2013) employed Flower and Hayes's model to investigate proficient and less English proficient Iranian EFL students' writing strategies in different writing types. Her findings revealed that both groups used certain writing strategies in different writing tasks but the degree of recursiveness of using writing strategies at planning, translating, and revising stages varied. The proficient writers tended to focus on the meaning and content, while the less proficient ones were concerned with the accuracy of their written essays.

Khalid (2011) also used Flower and Hayes's model to explore the composing processes and strategies in the compositions of senior Saudi Arabia EFL male students. By using a writing strategies questionnaire and think-aloud protocols, he found that his participants valued the importance of writing strategies, but did not really practise them. Only proficient students planned their writing at the prewriting stage and their planning helped them to keep track of the topic main ideas and know the direction of their writing. So the writing process of the proficient learners is of a recursive nature which supports Flower and Hayes's model.

Chien (2008) identified five high and five less English proficient learners based on their TOEFL writing scores and asked them to write an argumentative topic. Based on their think-aloud protocols and interviews, he found that proficient learners had clearer writing plans, their writing behavior were more recursive to generate texts, and constantly

rethought and reflected during the revising stage in comparison with the less proficient learners.

The above researchers (Farhad, 2013; Khalid, 2011; Chien, 2008) have revealed that proficient learners perform better than the less proficient learners in terms of using strategies at the different writing stages. However, all the participants from the studies are college students, and whether the senior high school students have similar results is yet to be determined. Hence, this research employs Flower and Hayes's model to analyse writing strategies used by EFL senior high school students in the writing process and find factors that influence their usage of writing strategies.

2.2.3 Rationale for Using Flower and Hayes's Model

Although Flower and Hayes's model (1981) is commonly applied in EFL writing studies (Farhad, 2013; Liu, 2013; Plakans, 2008), some criticisms are noted by several researchers. Zimmerman (2000) claimed that Flower and Hayes's model (1981) missed a careful quantitative analysis and therefore, he believed that the model cannot be generalized by just a few data collected from L1 skilled writers. Deane, Odendahl, Quinlan, Fowles, Welsh and Bivens-Tatum (2008) also pointed out the vagueness of Flower and Hayes's Model. They claimed that the model did not explain its own internal structure and each elements in the sub-processes, which was assumed to have, for identifying cognitive processes in writing.

Although the cognitive process is popular, limitations of the method is another criticised point. Bizzell (as cited in Babin & Harrison, 1999) and Myles (2002) argued that the method lacked social emphasis. In other words, Flower and Hayes's model ignored the effects of the social environment on writing and presumed that writing is a personal act

(Babin & Harrison, 1999). Other researchers (Beriter & Scardamalia, 1987; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996) raised a question of reliability for think-aloud protocols data that Flower and Hayes structured. Beriter and Scardamalia (1987, as cited in Farhad, 2013) argued that the model was a description of process of conscious thought which revealed “only the product of cognitive activities but say nothing of cognitive process itself” (p.21).

Despite of the critics cited above, Flower and Hayes’s model, as discussed by several researchers (e.g. Mu and Carrington, 2007; Latif, 2009) is still one of the most influential models in L1 and L2 writing research. Although this model has been used for thirty years, it is still worthy of being employed by many current studies. Despite the fact that Flower and Hayes’s model is comparatively old, Hayes (2012) points out that this model “contains features that are still current in modern representations of writing. The distinction between the writer, the writer’s task environment, and the writer’s long-term memory; the attempt to identify separate interacting writing sub processes; and the importance of the text produced so far all are still regarded as useful ideas” (p.270). Frank (1990) and Healy and Walusayi (1997) maintained the use of the model and published their books to introduce ESL/EFL students a basic approach to writing an effective essay by going through prewriting, writing and revising stages. Their introductions are consistent with Flower and Hayes’s writing processes. According to the results of Manchon, Roca de Larios and Murphy’s research (2009), writing was a purely recursive process that cannot be regarded as a linear process from planning to translating and then to revising and confirmed writing process of Flower and Hayes’s model. In addition, Flower and Hayes’s model can be regarded as a foundation for writing process research because other cognitive writing models either employ this model or expand this model (Farhad, 2013).

In addition to the aforementioned discussed points about the general usefulness of the Flower and Hayes' writing model, there are also two more reasons why this study used their model. Firstly, Flower and Hayes's model has been widely used in ESL/EFL learners' context. Researchers besides Farhad (2013), Khalid (2011), Chien (2008), such as Liu (2013), Tapita (2006), Plakans (2008) also either adapted or adopted the model as their theoretical framework to investigate EFL Chinese, Thai and other non-native English speaking students' writing strategies. In addition, Flower and Hayes's model has been adopted by Petric and Czarl's questionnaire (see Section 2.4), which this study used for statistical analysis of Chinese EFL senior high school students' writing strategies. And also Flower and Hayes's model was employed to observe proficient and less English proficient students' writing process to find factors which influence the writing strategies of EFL learners. According to the Flower and Hayes's model, writers were influenced by the task environment, retrieved information from their memories and planned, wrote and reviewed under the control of a monitor. For example, in the composing process, participants were found generating some ideas based on the writing topic and their memories, wrote several sentences in their writing stage and then they moved to the planning stage to generate ideas for the next paragraph. Therefore, Flower and Hayes's model enabled researcher to understand deeper the writing strategies used by proficient and less proficient EFL students and the factors affecting their choice of writing strategies while composing.

2.3 Petric and Czarl's Questionnaire (2003)

Second language writing research has been growing fast in the last 10 years in the area of Second Language Acquisition since the introduction of some theories in this field. In order to obtain "the fullest range possible of strategies employed, that is, a catalogue" (Leki, 1995, p.240), writing researchers create questionnaires to investigate the self-reported writing

strategies of a large number of ESL/EFL learners. A writing strategies questionnaire would enable participants to reflect consciously on the relevant writing behaviours or thoughts and their responses can be used by researchers to evaluate other people favorably writing strategies if the participants belong to the same group (Haslam & McGarty, 2007). Meantime, this questionnaire should provide some suggestions for English teachers' writing pedagogy and for learners' writing self-improving.

Hartley and Branthwaite (1989) designed a questionnaire based on their pilot study with their colleagues and retrieved from other related questionnaires to investigate 88 British psychologists on their writing habits and writing attitudes. Only three range of options with 'always/often', 'sometimes' and 'seldom/never' were given be rated by respondents. Thus, without any reliability test such as test/retest reliability or inter-rater reliability, a question of whether their questionnaire can be measured exactly the same way at each time for individuals remained in their study. Torrance, Thomas and Robinson (1994) took the same method as Hartley and Branthwaite's (1989) but made a correction of five-point Likert-scale responses to create a questionnaire of writing strategies for science graduate students. The functions of the Likert-scale were to indicate attitude statements "with which the respondent is asked to agree or disagree", to "divide people into a number of broad groups with respect to a particular attitude" as well as to allow researchers "to study the ways in which such an attitude relates to other variables" in their survey (Oppenheim, 1992, p.187). With partial reference to Flower and Hayes's model (1981) and their own pilot studies, Torrance, Thomas and Robinson's (1994) survey included 35 items on students' writing strategy, problematic writing experience, students productivity and their background information. However, there is no reliability test used in their study. Khalid (2011) modified a questionnaire based on previous studies which reported writing strategies

used by EFL students. His questionnaire was designed to mirror the Flower and Hayes's model with forty-three items rated by 5 Likert-scale statements. He translated his questionnaire into Arabic with the aim to keep students from "feeling embarrassed when asking about the meaning of a word in front of their colleagues" (p.110). He claimed that his questionnaire was valid and reliable based on the evaluation of a group of seniors. However, the value of his questionnaire's reliability was not mentioned in his research.

With the aim to create a valid and reliable writing strategies questionnaire, Petric and Czarl (2003) constructed a list of written statements, each of which was a statement about how the participant use a writing strategy, with reference to a format from Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning. This questionnaire was rated by a five-point Likert scale with items "ranging from never or almost never true of me to always or almost always true of me" (p.190). The Petric and Czarl's questionnaire (2003) was based on Flower and Hayes's writing process model, including three main components of writing process: planning, translating/writing in text and reviewing with emphasis on recursive writing for the whole writing process. Hence, their questionnaire was divided into three main parts, generally reflecting the three writing stages of a writing process, with some other additional items relating to participants' general English learning background. Their questionnaire was in English and was checked for its content validity by both experts and target participants and then revised. Furthermore, Petric and Czarl performed test/retest reliability with the value 0.6 of the final draft of their questionnaire.

Petric and Czarl's questionnaire (2003) included 38 strategy items and 6 background questions. The first part has six questions asking about participants' general English background information. The main part focuses on students' writing strategies in their

composing process, which is separated into three sub-stages: planning stage (8 items), while-writing stage (14 items), and revising stage (16 items). Although these strategies were divided into three stages, it is not assumed that the writing processes are completely independent stages. Indeed, these strategy items “point to the overlap of the stages and the non-linear nature of the writing process” (Petric & Czarl, 2003, p.190). In addition, Petric and Czarl’s questionnaire also includes items which could point out that “the respondent does not use any planning or revising strategies” (ibid., p.190).

2.3.1 Previous Studies Using Petric and Czarl’s Questionnaire

Wu (2007) used Petric and Czarl’s questionnaire to analyse 184 English majors’ writing strategies from Taiwan. She found that college participants were moderate writing strategies users. However, strategies at the translating stage were high frequently used compared to strategies at the planning stage and at the editing stage. Similarly, Chen (2011) analysed the writing strategies used by 116 non-English major students from mainland of China with making minor changes on Petric and Czarl’s questionnaire. She concluded that students employed more writing strategies at while-writing stage than the other writing stages. Kalikokha (2008) also adapted Petric and Czarl’s questionnaire to investigate the writing behaviours of humanities and social science ESL freshmen in Malawi. His results showed that most students had difficulty generating ideas about related source text information at the planning stage. They instead reworded or translated information and employed a suitable academic writing style in the while-writing stage.

However, Nooreiny and Mazlin (2013) found senior high school students’ use of writing strategies is similar to college students. They adapted Petric and Czarl’s survey (2003) and asked Malaysian ESL senior high school students to fill a 33-item questionnaire to examine

their essay writing strategies. Their findings showed that the overall use of writing strategies by Malaysian senior high school students was at a medium level and the students employed more strategies at the while-writing stage than the strategies at other stages.

2.3.2 Rationale for Using Petric and Czarl's Questionnaire

Until today, there has been few researches involving Petric and Czarl's questionnaire in exploring adolescents' writing strategies. Whalen (1993, as cited in Manchon, 2001) suggests that a writing strategy should become powerful when the writer is aware of how he/she masters and uses the strategy in a practical writing task. However, senior high school students do not always consciously apply writing strategies in their English writing essays because they lack formal instructions from class teachers and their self-awareness of using some writing strategies (Nofriadi & Alicia, 2013). Thus, the detailed writing strategies listed in the Petric and Czarl's questionnaire (2003) would be a good choice to track EFL senior high school students' writing behavior as well as to employ some methods for English writing pedagogy.

2.4 Stimulated Recall Protocol

Introspective methods which "tap participants' reflections on mental processes, originated in the fields of philosophy and psychology" (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p.77), have been a common means used in the area of second language acquisition. Two of the introspective methods that are well known are verbal reporting: both think-aloud protocol and stimulated recall protocol. Think-aloud method, also known as online technique, is used to ask individuals what goes through their minds as they are solving a problem or completing a task. In this way, a researcher can gather information about the way people approach a problem-solving activity. Similar to think-aloud protocol, stimulated recall protocol also

focuses on real-time thoughts of the subjects. Stimulated recall stands for a way of eliciting data of thought processes by carrying out a task or activity (Mackey & Gass, 2000). By this means, a researcher is able to explore a learner's thought processes or strategies and prompt the learner to "recall and report thoughts that she or he had while performing a task or participating in an event" (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p.78). The difference between think-aloud method and stimulated recall method is that think-aloud protocol requires subjects to verbalize their thoughts during a task (Wang & Wen, 2002), while stimulated recall protocol videotapes the subjects' completing process in the task first and ask them to recall their thoughts while watching the video after finishing their task.

Although native speakers may retrieve more sufficient language resources in relation to the writing task than non-native speakers when writing in their own language, they frequently face the same writing problems as those of non-native speakers (White and Arndt, 1995). In order to think of effective ways of coming to grip with these problems, what actually goes on when people write needs to be understood. Researchers (Yang, Hu & Zhang, 2014; Gafoordeen & Kaseh Abu Baker, 2013; Kang & Pyun, 2013) have employed either think-aloud protocols or stimulated recall protocols to observe writers at their work. The transcripts from each method help to reveal that writing is more than just applying linguistic or rhetorical rules (Ali, 2000). Moreover, writing is a form of problem-solving which involves processes such as planning, translating and evaluating (Flower & Hayes, 1981). However, the following criticisms discussed the weakness of the thinking-aloud protocols when used as a data collection instrument:

- It is not always applicable for potential writers to bring in 'think-aloud' data when writing in their non-native language. Moreover, it is even harder when they are

demanded to speak in the target language (e.g. Raimes, 1985, as cited in Ali, 2002) because these writers often think in their native language while composing (Cumming, 1989).

- Although writers are permitted to speak in their mother tongue, some of them feel difficult to finish the task (Whallen and Menrad, 1995).
- Think-aloud protocol significantly influences the quality of participants' essays and the whole writing process (Sasaki, 2000).

On the contrary, stimulated recall protocol is conducted with some degree of support. For example, learners may be shown a videotape so that they can watch themselves carrying out the task, or they may be given their second language written product so that they can follow the changes they made, commenting on their motivations and thought processes along the way (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Hence, stimulated recall helps participants to explain their decision making. The multimedia sources in recall sessions provide both participants and a researcher to replay and reintroduce cues that happened during the writing task.

2.4.1 Previous Studies Using Stimulated Recall Protocols

Bosher (1998) is one of the most famous researchers who studies EFL writing processes. In order to investigate writing processes of eight Southeast Asian students with different educational background, post-high school participants were asked to read an article and write their opinions about the topic. Stimulated recall protocol was employed by using a camera to videotape the movements of their writing. They were then interviewed about their thoughts during pauses as recorded in the video. The result showed that participants varied in the extent of metacognitive awareness and suggested that EFL learners with similar language proficiency may have different writing problems in their writing.

Manchon (2001) highly praised his procedure of data collection as an influential methodology to later studies because recall protocols is less disruptive than the think-aloud methodology.

Sasaki (2000) collected data from eight Japanese university students and four college English instructors. These participants wrote an argumentative essay and produced stimulated recall protocols to elicit their writing strategies. By doing so, the results demonstrated that English proficiency was partly influenced by the use of different writing strategies.

Lu (2007) asked 12 undergraduates (four English major freshmen, four English major juniors and four non-English major sophomores) to write an argumentative essay by employing recall protocol to identify their writing strategies and to explain the main problems in their writing. The results showed that English major students focused on more “global” strategies, such as planning, while non-English major students were more concerned about “local” strategies, such as grammar and spelling. In other words, proficient writers composed more systematically and cared more entirely than the less proficient ones. However, both English major students and non-English major students could not deal with the coherence of the essays effectively.

Recently, Barkaoui (2015) aimed to describe the writing activities when EFL test takers were engaging writing tasks in TOFEL test and to investigate whether the task type influenced these activities. He asked twenty-two EFL students to watch the playback of their writing process and tell what they think at that time. His findings revealed that students conducted various writing activities including interacting with the writing task and

resources, planning, generating, evaluating and revising based on their recall protocols, and that writing task had an effect on their writing performance.

According to the former studies (Bosher, 1998; Sasaki, 2000; Lu, 2007; Barkaoui, 2015), stimulated recall protocol successfully help researchers to track the EFL learners' writing activities. Use of argumentative essays in studies conducted by Bosher (1998), Sasaki (2000), and Lu (2007) serves researchers to look deeper in EFL writing process, because argumentation calls for "very careful and logical reasoning" (Nanday, 2001, p.19). The argumentative essay has an ability of generating and organising ideas with instances or evidences (Lu, 2010), involving complex cognitive functions. Furthermore, argumentative writing is one of the common essay genres that senior high school students practise and encounter across their English curriculum and tests. Hence, this research has assigned an argumentative writing task for Chinese EFL senior high school students to write and used the stimulated recall protocol to investigate factors influencing their use of writing strategies.

2.4.2 Rationale for Using Stimulated Recall Protocols

Stimulated recall protocols are used to gain qualitative insight into the actual working memory processes (Fox-Turnbull, 2009). Mackey and Gass (2005) claimed that the issues of memory, retrieval, timing and instructions must be extremely taken into consideration. They suggested that the stimulated recall interviews should be carried out immediately, stimulus should be strong as possible, and participants should be less minimally trained to enable them to carry out the procedure but not be cued to extra and unnecessary knowledge.

As Sasaki (2000) suggested, collecting concurrent verbal reports is important to get real-time data from subjects. A pilot study was done in the study to let participants use both think-aloud method and stimulated recall in investigating their writing process. As mentioned before (see Section 2.5), the limitations of think-aloud protocols prevented the participants from writing smoothly, because the Chinese EFL senior high school students have adopted habits of writing an essay without speaking out their thoughts. The writing habits were formed by their prior writing experiences (see Section 3.3.3). In addition, participants felt at ease and not distracted to smoothly write their essays. They produced stimulated recall protocols by only watching their video immediately after they finished the writing task, with the reference to their written products. Thus, stimulated recall can be a reliable method for the researcher to investigate factors which influence the writing strategies of Chinese EFL senior high school students.

2.5 Writing Strategies of Proficient and Less Proficient Writers

Writing strategies are careful thinking processes that writers employ to solve problems they face during writing (Collins, 1998). Leki (1995, as cited in Manchon, 2001) suggests strategies are equal to the methods that writers used to deal with and finish the writing tasks. In other words, writers with strategies consciously and deliberately choose and employ proper strategies to organise ideas, monitor their whole composing process, and revise what they wrote to refine their essays (Tompkins, 2000). Cumming (1989) found that skilled writers set goals and managed goals. Their writing activity monitored their whole writing process in which they made decisions about what to do and how to write. They engaged themselves in a decision-making process dealing with main points and a systematic body of their writings, as well as the linguistic expression of their purposes. In contrast, less skilled

writers were weak on using appropriate control strategies in their writing which resulted in an unguided writing production.

Several studies in the college context (e.g., Hu & Chen, 2007; Li, 2005; Sasaki, 2000) have analysed the difference between proficient and less proficient EFL college students. Hu and Chen (2007) employed think-aloud reports to collect data from one unskilled and two skilled Chinese EFL college students while they were performing two different types of writing tasks (description and argumentation). The results showed that the unskilled writer used more strategies of planning than the skilled writers, but the skilled writers rehearsed more than the unskilled one.

In addition, Li (2005) investigated 30 Chinese EFL graduates' learning strategies by using questionnaires, interviews, a think-aloud protocol and diary writing. He discovered that his participants were moderate strategy users and high-level students employed metacognitive strategies, cognitive and compensation strategies more often than the low-level students.

Sasaki (2000) distinguished the difference between novices and experts, unskilled and skilled EFL writers in their writing quality and writing strategies. It was noted that the novice writers were found to pause frequently and translate their ideas into English while expert writers tended to refine their written English expressions when they paused. In addition, the skilled students were similar to expert writers in using more "rhetorical refining" than the less skilled ones.

Apart from investigating the difference between proficient and less English proficient college students, several researchers (e.g., Tompkins, 2000; Hou, 2011; Nooreiny & Mazlin,

2013) also pay attention to writing strategies of school students. Tompkins (2000) concluded a comparison research of capable and novice seventh grade native writers. It was shown that the most remarkable difference between proficient and less proficient writers was that those who were less successful in writing were not strategic users. They were reluctant to employ unfamiliar strategies. In addition, it seemed that less proficient writers were not motivated to be successful writers in their future. These writers did not know how to employ all stages of the writing process efficiently. In fact, they did not monitor their composing stages. Even when employing strategies, they remained dependent on simple strategies, and most of the time employed a “knowledge-telling” strategy in which they wrote everything they knew about a topic without selecting information that meets the needs of their audiences or organising the information and putting them together. Thus, less proficient writers used a linear approach to move through the writing process. On the contrary, proficient writers knew the writing process was recursive and asked their classmates for feedback to check whether their meaning was expressed well or not. They were responsible for the needs of the readers, and they worked to “organize their paper in a cohesive manner” (ibid., p.74).

To investigate a group of Chinese senior high school students’ writing strategies, Hou (2011) used a quantitative method to collect information from 120 subjects of Grade Three in a senior high school in China. This study focused on comparing the proficient and less proficient learners’ choice of writing strategies. The results demonstrated that all the senior high school participants still lack the awareness of using resourcing strategies and communication strategies and paid more attention to English writing words, phrase, sentences and structures. However, proficient writers were found to employ more metacognitive strategies and cognitive strategies than the less proficient writers.

Nooreiny and Mazlin (2013) divided their 50 Malaysian ESL participants into high-intermediate level group and less proficient level group according to their Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR) results. It was found that both groups paid more attention to grammar and vocabulary when they were writing and also thought about the organization of their writing when revising. Planning strategies were shown to be the most frequently employed by high-intermediate English proficiency students. However, there was no significant difference between the two groups.

Manchon et al. (2009) conducted a comparative study of seven pre-intermediate (secondary-school level), seven intermediate (college level) and seven advanced (college-graduated level) Spanish EFL writers. It was found that the advanced level English proficiency learners spent more time at the planning stage. In contrast, the pre-intermediate and intermediate levels of English proficiency learners spent more time at the writing stage. However, due to the age difference of their participants, who were of secondary school pupils and graduates, a critical question was raised about whether the results were influenced by the writers' own literacy experience or increasing command of English writing practices. Thus, this research adopts participants of the same age with similar English writing practice background.

The above researches on analysing ESL/EFL proficient and less proficient writers' writing strategies are limited in two ways. One problem is the small sample size around five writers which could be regarded as a case study (e.g., Hu & Chen, 2007). The number of subject populations has prevented researchers from "forming conclusive generalizations" (Manchon, 2001, p.62). Furthermore, except for studies of Hou (2011) and Nooreiny and Mazlin (2013), participants from the above researches are mostly consisted of young adults

in an academic context whose English proficiency level is generally higher than the adolescents in senior high schools. Very few studies focus on the most and least frequently used writing strategies employed by proficient and less proficient senior high school learners, and whether there is a significant difference of writing strategies between proficient and less proficient learners. Thus, this research intends to increase the number of proficient and less proficient learners and extend the sample to involve senior high school writers.

2.6 Factors Influencing Writing Strategies

Many factors have been identified to influence learners in the selection of appropriate writing strategies. These factors include prior writing experiences, attitudes, teaching approaches, writing difficulties and level of confidence.

The writing of EFL learners is influenced by the educational context where they learn to write. This educational context which includes views of audiences and goals of writing, affects the ways in which students process and produce writing (Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2009). Ma (2012) highlighted that the EFL learners' writing experiences not only had an effect on their writing knowledge and writing ability such as using rhetorical features in writing, but also changed their writing beliefs. However, she did not describe how the writing experiences influenced the EFL learners use of writing strategies. Rinnert and Kobayashi (2009) discovered that while inexperienced Japanese EFL students tended to judge the content, students with writing experiences mainly focused on clarity, logical connection and organization when evaluating an English essay. Furthermore, Ahmad (2010) conducted a study in analysing Egyptian students and teachers' English writing problems on cohesion and coherence and found topic-specific background knowledge did influence

the quality and coherence of students' essay writing. Therefore, writing experience is regarded as an important factor for EFL students to revise their writing.

Attitude is one essential factor influencing EFL students' mastering English language. An individual who possesses a positive attitude is highly related to his success in writing (Graham, Berninger & Fan, 2007; Gupta & Woldemariam, 2011). Zarei and Elekaei (2013) investigated the effect of Iranian EFL learners' attitude on their selections of compensation and metacognitive strategies. Their results revealed that the level of attitude has significantly influenced the choice of learners' compensation strategies (e.g., If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing). However, the findings also indicated that attitude did not influence students' use of metacognitive strategies. There is a need to further investigate whether the positive or negative attitude influences the Chinese EFL students' use of writing strategies.

Trang and Hoa (2008) carried out a case study, applying interviews, stimulated recall and interpretation of a participant's essay, to explore a Vietnamese university student's writing problems and writing strategies in his whole writing process. The findings revealed that their participant had difficulties writing an introduction, generating ideas for the body of his essay as well as expressing his ideas in English, but was not very concerned about grammatical errors or spelling mistakes. Furthermore, Ahmed (2010, p.213) discovered that less English proficient Egyptian students found it difficult to make progress on coherent writing because they paid too much attention to "language matters" instead of "making meaning".

English writing is considered as a tough task for EFL learners, especially for Chinese students because of cultural and linguistic differences (Yi, 2001). According to Yi (2001), both of the cultural and linguistic differences might lead to writing difficulties for EFL learners. In particular, the linguistic differences might result in grammatical errors. Making these learners be aware of such difference was of great importance in producing authentic English compositions (Wu, 2007). Wang (2012) suggested that Chinese middle school students employed few writing strategies and faced writing difficulties to express their ideas in English due to lack of vocabularies, grammar knowledge, and writing strategies learnt. Similarly, Hou (2011) pointed out that Chinese senior high school students had many writing difficulties, including spelling mistakes, wrong words, insufficient vocabulary, semantic mistakes, poor sentence patterns, improper tense, voices, monotonous words and structures. Furthermore, Chinese EFL students also found difficulty in structuring paragraphs and producing coherent paragraphs in English essays (Liu, 2013). In order to overcome these writing difficulties, students may choose to use some strategies such as reading the model essays, looking up vocabularies by using dictionary and asking teachers for feedback (Chen, 2011) .

Teaching approach is another factor that affects EFL students' writing performance. Deng and Wang (2007) highlighted that one of the Chinese traditional teaching approaches, recitation input, was obviously helpful for Chinese students to acquire and reinforce the vocabulary and formulaic chunks that were needed in their writing output. At the same time, problems in the traditional teaching approaches also exist. Most of the China's school teachers employ grammar-translation method to teach Chinese EFL learners (Cheng & Moses, 2011). In the process of teaching writing, teachers always pay little attention to the cultivation of writing strategies and they usually "step away and give no directions about

how to write” (Hou, 2011, p.1). Hence, whether a teaching approach has a positive or negative effect on Chinese senior high school students’ the choice of writing strategies has yet to be investigated.

Santangelo, Harris and Graham (2007) argued that writing strategies are related to the writer’s confidence. They suggested that students without confidence might result in a poor writing performance. For instance, a sense of confidence might hide student-writers’ embarrassment of their writing difficulties. It might lead the students to fail in improving their writing performance because they believed that they are good writers and hence would not make the effort. However, the degree of confidence may reflect the extent of students’ willingness to develop their writing skills. Kleitman and Stankov (2007) found that there was a significant relationship between accuracy of performance and the participants’ self-confidence. Furthermore, the results of Prat-Sala and Redford (2010) showed that students with high self-confidence tended to use more strategies than students with low self-confidence. Thus, students’ confidence may support them to use more writing strategies in achieving good writing results.

Although prior writing experiences, attitudes, writing difficulties, teaching approaches as well as level of confidence have been considered as factors influencing EFL students’ choice of writing strategies, how these factors affect the choice of writing strategies used by Chinese EFL senior high school students need to be further investigated.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter reviews previous studies on using Flower and Hayes’s (1981) model of writing process, Petric and Czarl’s questionnaire (2003), stimulated recall protocols, the difference

of writing strategies used by proficient and less proficient EFL learners as well as the problems they may face in their writing process. This chapter also provides certain limitations and implications that this study aims to achieve. Regarding writing strategies and the way previous studies mentioned such cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, this research attempts to follow the Petric and Czarl's writing strategies listed in their questionnaire (2003). There are three reasons for it. Firstly, Petric and Czarl's writing strategies are consistent with Flower and Hayes's writing process model, including planning, translating and reviewing stages and all the writing strategies listed reflected writers' recursive thinking. Secondly, some writing strategies in the previous studies were not accepted by all researchers due to different standards of the classification of writing strategies (Mu, 2005). Furthermore, some writing strategies in the previous studies are similar, such as revising strategy is the same as editing strategy.

The final section in this chapter writes about factors which influence the writing strategies of EFL learners. As discussed, certain factors such as writing experiences, attitude, teaching approaches, writing difficulties and level of confidence have been found by previous researches to be influential. However, whether those factors really influence senior high school students in their English writing process has not been proven. This study hopes to provide more understanding of what writing strategies Chinese EFL senior high school writers employ, the difference of writing strategies used by proficient and less proficient learners and reasons why they use certain writing strategies.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the design taken to enable the fruition of this study. The chapter consists of seven sections. The first section discusses the research design to generate data for analysis which is followed by a section on background of the participants involved in this research. The third and fourth sections discuss the research tools used and the process of data collection, respectively. The final section is a discussion of the analysis.

3.1 Research Design

This research adopted sequential mixed methods which consist of first collecting quantitative data to get “a general picture of the research problem” and then collecting qualitative data to “refine, extend or explain the general picture” (Cresswell, 2010, p542). The nature of the study aims at establishing the writing strategies of Chinese EFL senior high school students and the reasons why they choose to use certain writing strategies. Silverman (2011) claimed that quantitative survey can be used on much larger samples which allow inferences to be made to wider populations. Thus, quantitative method facilitates the researcher to find out the frequency of writing strategies used by Chinese EFL senior high school students through Patric and Czarl’s Questionnaire (2003). However, with the analysis striving for exploring reasons behind the choices indicated in the questionnaire, as well as how the participants actually made use of the strategies at different stages of writing in English, a qualitative research was adopted.

3.2 Selections of the Subjects

Byrne (2002) points out “sampling is a special but extremely important example of the issue of generalization”(p.72). The sampling procedure can be considered as the most

important element in a survey. In order to investigate writing strategies used by Chinese senior high school students in writing English, a total of 60 students from Altay No.2 Senior High School in Xinjiang Province participated in the questionnaire investigation. Their ages ranged from 16 to 18. They all spoke Chinese as their mother tongue and learned English as a foreign language. They shared a similar educational experience and received English as a formal instruction between six to eight years. They all had Senior High School Entrance Examination records and obtained their English scores from A to C. The English test in a senior high school entrance examination includes listening, reading and writing components. Therefore, they were able to manage writing an English composition. The researcher selected the group of students as subjects for two reasons. Firstly, compared with students in a primary school or middle school, senior high school students are more proficient in writing in English and have more experience using writing strategies in their English composition. In addition, No.2 Senior High School in Altay in Xinjiang was established in 1958 and has been authorized as an example school. This school was purposively chosen due to some reasons: the researcher was a learner in the school for three years and is in close contact with teachers who taught the researcher. Thus, the researcher had no problem having access to the school. Moreover, the students in the school still finds difficulty writing a good English essay in their English exams. Hence, the researcher hopes this investigation will assist them in solving their writing difficulties.

With the aim of selecting proficient and less English proficient students, the researcher identified 60 participants according to their Senior High School Entrance Examination results. The Senior High School Entrance Examination is held annually by Ministry of Education of China and it is usually taken by students in their last year of middle school. The English test of Senior High School Entrance Examinations is rated by several

experienced English teachers for different sections and re-examined further by other English teachers. Thus, this examination results can be regarded as an official student's English proficiency level. However, unlike other official rating scale based only on the students' exam results, students who sat for English test of Senior High School Entrance Examinations in Xinjiang Province in 2014 were rated by both their test results and ratio of examinees population. This means that students with grade A occupied 15% of the entire population of examinees in the city Altay, and students with grade B occupied 35% of all the examinees. Those who obtained a grade C were in the 45% of the total candidates as well as those D-grade students occupied the least part of the population with only 5% (Xinjiang Education Bureau, 2013). Only after passing the Senior High school Entrance Examination with grade C and above, can they apply to study in senior high schools. Due to the limited number of participants, students with grade A were regarded as proficient EFL learners in this study and students with grade B and C were considered as less proficient EFL learners.

After getting permission for collecting data from two Grade One teachers, the researcher purposely selected five English proficient and five less proficient Grade One senior high school students from two classes based on their Senior High School Entrance Examination results and recent English test's results. Their English writing performances were evaluated by their own English teachers and found to be consistent with their recent examination's results. Among the 10 participants, the first five students were top EFL learners of the two classes and the last five students were EFL learners who obtained low grades in their English tests. The researcher assigned each participant a pseudonym according to their Chinese names. The Table 3.2 below shows the background of the students.

Table 3.2: Background of participants

No.	Gender	Participants*	Age	Senior High School Entrance Examination	Recent English test's results
1	M	Liu	16	A	95
2	F	Ren	17	A	96
3	F	Zhang	16	A	94
4	F	Hao	17	A	96.5
5	F	Sun	16	A	97
6	M	Cao	16	C	75
7	M	Ma	17	B	70
8	M	Xu	16	B	70
9	M	Man	16	C	65
10	M	Wang	17	C	72

*Not their real names.

3.3 Instruments for Collecting Data

With the aim to discover the students' writing strategies, a questionnaire was distributed. After identifying their frequently used writing strategies and different writing strategies by proficient and less proficient students, the selected ten proficient and less proficient participants were asked to write an argumentative essay and their writing processes were videotaped. In order to investigate some reasons behind their writing strategies, students' recall protocols and interviews were employed. The proficient and less proficient participants were asked to complete the task as usual in a quiet place so that they were not interrupted when writing the English composition. The researcher explained to them that a video camcorder would be placed close to them as they perform the task prior to the whole writing process. Once finished, the video camcorder was switched off. Thus, four instruments were used to collect the data: a questionnaire, a writing task, a video camcorder and an audio recorder.

3.3.1 Questionnaire

A questionnaire with two sections was adapted from Petric and Czarl (2003). The first section has 10 questions aiming at collecting participants' personal details, such as sex, native language, years of studying English, attitude towards to English writing, times of practising English writing every week, kinds of essay they mostly write and English grade in Senior High School Entrance Examination. The second section requires information about participants' English writing strategies at different stages which involves 38 items with a 5 point Likert scale (see Appendix B). This questionnaire includes three stages: prewriting stage, while-writing stage and revising stage which follows the Flower and Hayes's model (1981) and has been widely used by ESL and EFL learners (Nooreiny & Mazlin, 2013; AbdulRahman,2013; Wu, 2007; Chen, 2011). Based on the Chinese high school English teaching context, English teachers normally give EFL students some model essays in class. Thus, item No.14 in the revising stage, "essay models" was added to the original item "I compare my paper with the essays written by my friends on the same topic" (see Appendix B). Furthermore, in order to make the questionnaire clearer for the Chinese participants, item No.8 was changed from "I write notes or an outline in my native language" to " I write notes or an outline in Chinese" at the prewriting stage; the original item No.12 "I use a bilingual dictionary" was changed to "I use an English-Chinese dictionary or a Chinese-English dictionary" and item No. 13 "I use a monolingual dictionary" was changed to "I use an English-English dictionary" at the while-writing stage section.

Then a translated Chinese version was used to "obtain higher quality of data" (Dornyei and Taguchi, cited in Nooreiny & Mazlin, 2013, p.49) because the Chinese version may benefit participants from different proficiency level to understand the questionnaire better.

According to Petric and Czarl (2003), this questionnaire is a valid instrument which uses both qualitative and quantitative methods (see Section 2.4). Then the validated questionnaire was distributed to the potential 30 participants, who were involved in the process of providing responses in order to be used for validating the instrument, were also involved as the participants who took part in the actual study. By using the SPSS 16.0 to calculate Cronbach's Alpha of their responses, it shows that the reliability was 84.7%, which is acceptable and reliable based on the claims proposed by Gorge and Mallery (2003). Lastly, the questionnaire was distributed to the final 60 participants.

The responses from the questionnaire (Petric & Czarl, 2003) were analysed to identify the frequency of different strategies used. For this study, an average frequency for each strategy used by learners was calculated, and the results from the questionnaires were tabulated to match with the findings of the interviews. Based on the average frequency for proficient and less proficient students, the EFL learners were categorised as high, medium, and low level users of strategies. To compute the average frequency for each group, the scores based on the responses for each statement in the group were summed up and the total was divided by the number of statements in that group. Categorisation (Oxford, 1990) of EFL learners according to their writing strategies is shown in Table 3.4.1.

Table 3.3.1: Categorisation of EFL learners based on their writing strategies

Level of Use	Frequency of Use	Average Score
High	Always or almost always used	4.5 to 5.0
	Usually used	3.5 to 4.4
Medium	Sometimes used	2.5 to 3.4
Low	Generally not used	1.5 to 2.4
	Never or almost never used	1.0 to 1.4

(Oxford, 1990)

3.3.2 Selections of the Task and the Input

With the purpose of generating writing that can be as natural as possible while under experimental conditions, the task designed for this study has to be familiar and common to the students. In addition, to encourage participants to produce more useful and informative data from problem-solving behavior while completing the composition, the task has to be designed as an argumentative essay (Sasaki, 2000).

Designing the Task

In designing the task, several factors were taken into consideration to ensure that the task could be carried out effectively:

1. The topic has not been practised before so that they had no memory to repeat what they had written.
2. The participants were informed that there would be no right or wrong answers. They were free to write based on the topic given and their writing should represent their original ideas.
3. The students are familiar with the format of the task which has been taught.

Writing Task:

Copying Other's Homework

Recently, there has been an intense discussion about the point of copying other people's homework in schools as reported in newspapers. Some people think that copying other people's homework is not a big deal. Do you agree or disagree? Support your answer in an essay.

(Retrieved and translated from an English model test in a high school from Xinjiang Province)

In the task, the participants were encouraged to discuss whether copying other's homework is right or not. Students were asked to write their opinion within 30 minutes and no word limit was given (see Appendix C). This writing task required students to write an argumentative essay which demands more complex processing and tends to elicit more meaning information (Sasaki, 2000; Boshier, 1998). It was aimed at finding out their writing strategies and identifying factors that influence their choice of writing strategies. It was predicted that if the participants did not have the linguistic ability to easily complete a task, they would be expected to use some writing strategies to overcome the problem.

Administration of Task

A general instruction was given to participants. The instructions are listed as follow:

1. To write in English except for their draft.
2. Cannot to ask the researcher questions after starting the task.
3. The whole writing process would be recorded for the purpose of research and not for public viewing.
4. To express their opinion openly and would not affect their English teachers' evaluation.

3.3.3 Selection of Recall Protocol and Think-aloud Protocol

The researcher firstly selected two Chinese EFL senior high school students to help her in the selection of using either a recall protocol or think-aloud protocol. Based on their English teacher's evaluation, one of the participants was regarded as a good writer and the other was considered as a poor writer. Initially, a think-aloud protocol was used by each student to write an argumentative essay. Before using the think-aloud protocol, the researcher instructed them how to express their ideas in their minds when writing and later asked them to practise. The researcher then asked them to complete an argumentative topic

from a model of college entrance test to compose in 30 minutes by using think-aloud protocols. The researcher observed that both students found the task challenging when expressing their ideas in the writing. As they were accustomed to not saying anything when they writing either in English or their mother tongue. Even though the researcher tried to encourage them to speak their minds, both good and poor writers only repeated what they had written on the paper. After resting for about half an hour, both students were required to finish another argumentative topic individually by using recall protocols. On the contrary, the researcher was able to capture the students' real thoughts. Participants were happier and more comfortable recalling their thoughts on how they used some writing strategies to overcome their writing difficulties while watching their video recordings. Therefore, the researcher decided to use the recall protocols in identifying factors influencing the Chinese EFL senior high school students' choice of writing strategies.

3.3.4 Video Recorder and Audio Recorder for Stimulated Recall Protocols

The process of each participant's English writing was firstly recorded by a video recorder, and then, each participant was prompted by his/her recorded video tape to produce recall protocols. The recall protocols were recorded by an audio recorder.

Video Recording

Video tape recording was the main tool for researcher to collect qualitative data. A video recorder was placed where it can capture all the writing processes of the participants. Thus, the video recorder was set up close to the participants for clear recording. The video recording started before each participant began to read the task topic and ended after he/she handed in their English composition to the researcher. Each participant took around 15 minutes to 30 minutes to complete the writing task.

Audio Recording

The whole writing process of each participant was observed and an interview was conducted. For each stop longer than two seconds made by students while writing (see Sasaki, 2000), the researcher would ask what they were thinking and the reasons. The whole conversation took about half an hour.

3.3.5 Audio Recorder for Post-writing Interview

After completing the recall protocols, participants were required to explain their choice of certain writing strategies in the questionnaire. This is to identify some other factors that were not reflected in the recall protocols. The whole post-writing interview was audio recorded.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

Before collecting data, the researcher informed the teachers concerned of the purpose and asked their permission to allow their students to take part in this research. The data collection consists of four main phases: questionnaire survey, a writing task, students' stimulated recalls and post-writing interview as illustrated in Figure 3.1. Each phase is described in the following section.

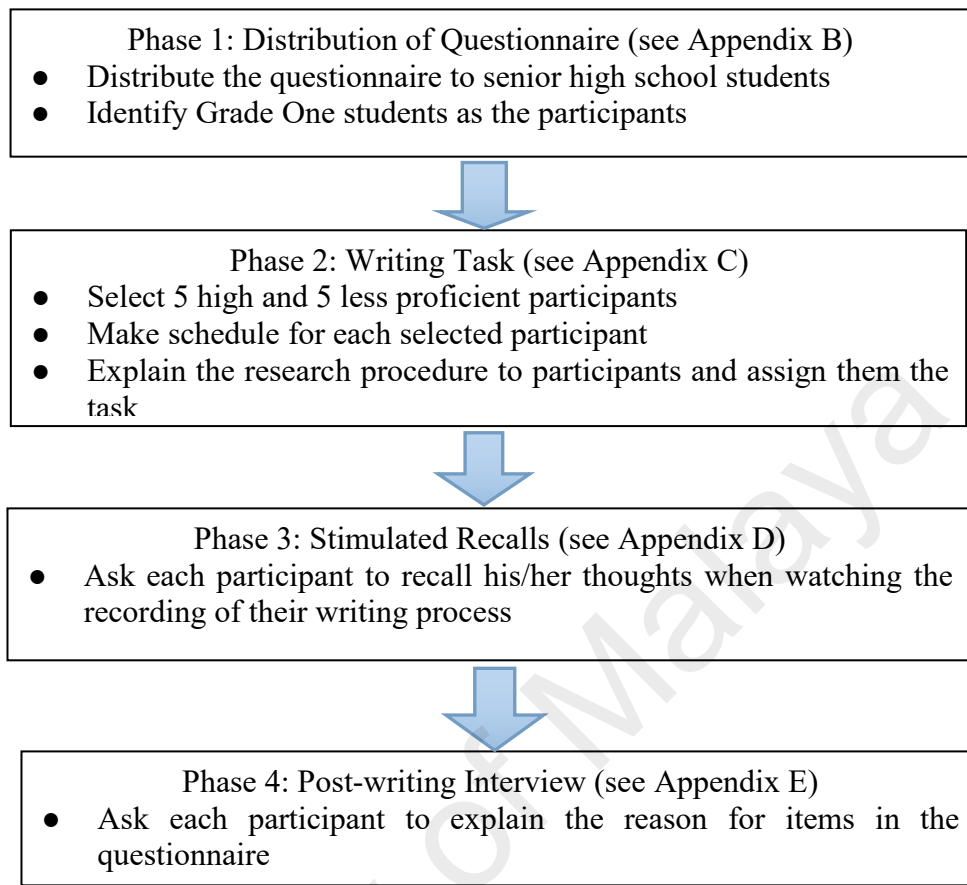


Figure 3.1: Phases of Data Collection Process

Phase 1: Distributing the Questionnaire

In the first phase, a total of 90 participants are required to complete the Chinese version of the questionnaire (see Appendix B) which was adapted from Petric and Czarl's research (2003). However, the researcher found that Grade Two and Grade Three senior high school students were unable to take part in the writing task section because of their busy schedule. The researcher only collected 60 Grade One participants' questionnaires and identified 52 completed questionnaires. Of the total the participants, 20 were males and 32 were females. Their average age was 16.41. Data were collected over three days with the help of their English language teachers. The subjects were required to sign a consent form (see Appendix A) and asked to give their honest responses. Participants who obtained grade A

of Senior High School Entrance Examination were categorised as proficient students and those who obtained grade B or C were in the less proficient category. SPSS Version 16.0 can calculate Cronbach's Alpha of participants' responses of the questionnaire to analyse the questionnaire inter reliability and also can describe main features of the data collected by the questionnaire and calculate means of writing strategies at each stage, with an aim to answer the first Research Question (RQ). The second RQ would be answered based on comparisons between the proficient and less proficient students on the most and least frequently used writing strategies, and identification on a significant difference on certain writing strategies. Proficient learners and less proficient learners are two independent groups, in which a learner in one group cannot also be a member of the other group and vice versa (Jackson, 2006). An independent-samples t-test is used to compare the mean score for two different groups of subjects (Caldwell, 2007). Thus, independent samples t-test was conducted to examine whether there are significant differences between the mean scores on writing strategy used by both proficient learners and less proficient learners.

Phase 2: Writing Task

In the second phase, participants were invited to a quiet and private room to complete a writing task. This room provided a relaxed and informal setting to preserve participants' anonymity and confidentiality. Researcher had earlier arranged a time for each participant to conduct their writing task (see Appendix C) so they had enough time to talk to the researcher about the following stimulated recalls. In the writing task, there was no word limitation but participants were encouraged to write as much as possible within the 30 minutes time limit. Each participant's writing behavior was video taped and shown to the individual participant after completing the writing task. The researcher sat near the participant and took some field notes for further reference.

In the writing task phase, some of the participants were accustomed to using their left hand to cover what they have written or they attempted to use their left hand to keep their writing sheet stable as they were using the right hand to write. Thus, the participants' writing behaviors were hidden by their left hands. When watching those participants' video recordings, the researcher felt difficult to distinguish their pauses in their writing process. However, with the help of the participants' recall protocols and their compositions, researcher was able to identify each pause in their English essays.

Phase 3: Stimulated Recalls

Stimulated recalls is an effective method that has enabled the researcher to collect the main source of data. The researcher asked the selected five proficient and five less proficient participants to watch the individual recorded writing process. The participants recalled their thoughts with the help of the recordings and their compositions (Lu, 2007; Barkaoui, 2015). For a pause of two seconds or longer (Sasaki, 2000; Lu, 2007), the researcher asked "What were you thinking about then?" and "Why did you use this writing strategy?" in Chinese to reduce participants' stress. The participants were free to respond in either Chinese or English. The whole stimulated recalls section was audio recorded.

Phase 4: Post-writing Interview

The researcher asked the five proficient and five less proficient participants to explain their responses in the questionnaire to find more factors that influence students' choice of writing strategies. For example, "Why did you choose 'disagree' as your answer for this item?" If their answer was not consistent with their explanations of stimulated recall protocol, the follow-up question was "Compare to your writing strategies used in your writing task just now, you are supposed to choosebut you choose...why?". The whole interview session

was conducted in Chinese instead of English with the aim of putting the participants at ease when expressing their opinions. The session was also audio recorded. Each participant took around one hour to complete both the retrospective recall protocol and interview. However, two participants were in a hurry to leave after the writing task. Participant 08 answered only a few questions for his responses in the questionnaire and participant 09 skipped the post-writing interview session. The data which has been collected by the two participants were also used in this research.

The data of participants' recall protocols and post-writing interviews were later transcribed and translated to answer RQ3. Each utterance was transcribed as closely as possible to reflect the exact thoughts expressed by the participants. The transcriptions were then translated by the researcher and validated by a Chinese and English bilingual peer to ensure accuracy of the translated data.

3.5 Analysis of Data

Since a questionnaire is a quantitative instrument, the data were firstly recorded and then analyzed by SPSS Version 16.0 to run the descriptive analysis and frequency to answer the first question. Each individual high or less proficiency student was coded and assigned a folder. In order to find the differences of writing strategies used by the proficient and less proficient groups of writers, their responses of questionnaire were compared by using Independent samples t-test.

As for the participants' recall protocols and interviews, researcher transcribed and translated all the participants' recordings with reference to their final written texts. Firstly, the researcher watched the proficient and less proficient students' writing behaviors' tapes

and inserted slash (/) for every pause of more than two seconds. Then the researcher manually transcribed the participants' recall protocols with reference to the slashes. Next, the researcher transcribed the recordings of participants' interviews. The researcher then listened to all the tapes again for accuracy of transcriptions so that no data were lost. The ten Chinese EFL senior high school participants used Chinese, their mother tongue, throughout the stimulated recall protocols to interviews. There were a total of 20 transcriptions that the researcher had to translate. When translating, the researcher was careful to find the closest English equivalents for their Chinese utterances so that the resultant written English discourse and the intended Chinese concept they had in mind would almost convey the same concept (Farhad, 2013). For example, by the time the writers used Chinese to generate ideas, the focus of translation was on the ideas and concepts of the participants. Below is an example of Participant 03's recall protocols.

Participant 03 (Zhang), proficient learner

“我划掉 remember, 改为 make us, 使句子读起来比较顺口, 易于理解”

Translation

“I wrote the sentence in a simple and understandable way by changing 'remember' to 'make us'”.

To ensure the interpretation and analysis is valid and reliable, the researcher employed a service of a Chinese Ph.D candidate who is proficient in English with IELTS Band 7.5 to check the translations of all the transcriptions.

Responses based on the recall protocols and interviews with similar themes were grouped together and coded. The themes, “similar codes aggregated together to form a major idea in the database” (Creswell, 2010, p.248) are used to code the qualitative data. This approach

to analyse the responses was a type of inductive generalization. In order to investigate specific factors that influence EFL students' use of writing strategies in their English writing processes, related categories were not combined (Zhu, 2001). For example, some students found it challenging to organise ideas of an essay and they had difficulty to express ideas in English. Despite the fact that organising ideas are related to expressing ideas, the two categories (poor organisation of ideas and poor expression of ideas) were not combined. This information was useful to investigate factors that affect participants' solutions to composing problems.

3.6 Summary

This chapter gives detailed information on all issues related to the research method. It starts with a preview on the research design adopted. A questionnaire was first distributed to collect the data. Then, qualitative methods including recall protocols, observation and post-writing interviews were used. Next, the participants' selection process and details of their background were introduced. This chapter then gives details of the instruments used for collecting the data. This chapter also highlights the design and administration of the task from start to finish. The data collection and data analysis in this research are also presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

The first aim of this study is to investigate the writing strategies used by senior high school students and the second aim is to compare the difference of writing strategies used by proficient and less English proficient students. Thus, this chapter first reports the results of the adapted Petric and Czarl's questionnaire by using SPSS. The final aim of this study is to find the reason why these proficient and less proficient students select or use these writing strategies. The procedure for collecting the recall protocol data and interview are described in detail in Chapter 3. The data was recorded, transcribed and translated.

In the analysis of data, the presentation is organised in the following sequence: background information of the samples; mean scores for the descriptive analysis and frequency distributions to answer RQ1 and compare means to answer RQ2; the transcriptions of recall protocols and interviews are analysed to find the factors influencing writing strategies of EFL proficient and less proficient students during their writing process (RQ3).

4.1 Background Information of the Sample

A total of 52 of 60 participants' questionnaires were analysed, because the remaining eight participants did not complete all the questions in the questionnaire in this study. The sample comprised 20 (38.5%) male and 32 (61.5%) female students. All the samples have passed the English language subject in the Senior High School Entrance Exam: 31 (59.6%) students obtained As, 17 (36.7%) students got Bs and 4 (7.7%) students with Cs. The Figure 4.1 showed the information as follow:

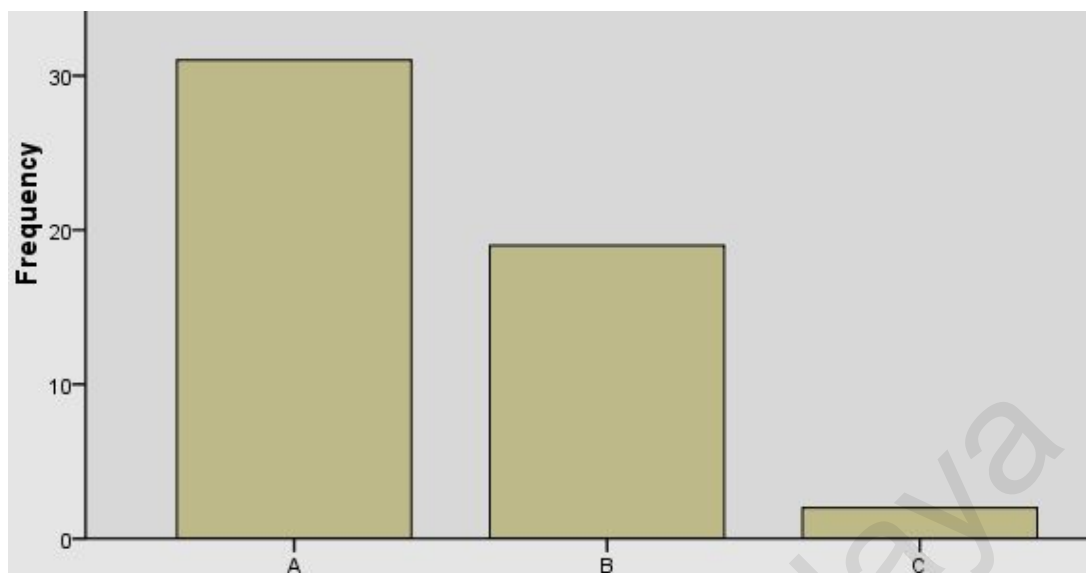


Figure 4.1: Senior High School Exam Results of the Participants

Based on the Figure 4.1, participants in this study who obtained grade A of Senior High School Entrance Examination in China were regarded as proficient learners and those with grade B or C of Senior High School Entrance Examination were grouped as less proficient learners (refer to Section 3.3). In total, there were 31 proficient participants and 21 less proficient participants.

4.1.1 English Writing Background

According to the participants' responses in the questionnaire, all the participants were moderate writing strategy users (see Section 4.2.1). Below are some of the reasons why they are not good writing strategies users.

4.1.1.1 Interest in English Writing

There were 23 proficient and nine less proficient students from the sample (61.5%) who liked English writing while eight proficient students and nine less proficient students from the sample (32.7%) were neutral about English writing. Only three less proficient students

(5.8%) said they disliked English as shown in Table 4.1.1.1. The interest in English writing may help the students in achieving better English results. Some students explained that English is a global language to communicate with people from other countries and an important ticket to get better career. However, some students who dislike English writing claimed that they can use Chinese in their normal life and there were few opportunities for them to get access to English anyway. Hence, they perceived English as of no use in China.

Table 4.1.1.1: The Respondents Interests in English Writing

English Proficiency	Interest in English Writing		
	Like it.	Neutral.	Don't like it.
Proficient	23	8	0
Less proficient	9	9	3
Total	32	17	3

4.1.1.2 Frequency of English Writing Per Week

There is an old saying, "Practice makes perfect". We can assume that the more times the students practise English writing, the better results they would get. However, according to the findings in the questionnaire, most of the participants write an English essay at one or less than once every week. There are 35 students (67.3%) with 19 proficient students and 16 less proficient students who never write or only write an English essay once every week. A total of 13 students (25.0%) with nine proficient students and four less proficient students write English essays two to three times a week. Only four students (7.7%) with three proficient students and one less proficient student write four to five times of English writing essays per week (see Table 4.1.1.2).

Table 4.1.1.2: Frequency of English-writing Per Week

English Proficiency	Times of Writing in English Every Week		
	0-1	2-3	4-5
Proficient	19	9	3
Less proficient	16	4	1
Total	35	13	4

4.1.1.3 Essay Types

As illustrated in Table 4.1.1.3, nearly half of the respondents (44.2%) with 13 proficient students and 10 less proficient student agreed that they write narrative essays most frequently. Descriptive essays and argumentative essays were the second and third frequently written by proficient and less proficient students with 17 (32.7%) and 12 (23.1%) respectively. However, expository essays (0%) were hardly attempted by senior high school students in China.

Table 4.1.1.3: Type of Essay Students Write Most

English Proficiency	Type of Essay Students Write Most			
	Argumentative	Narrative	Descriptive	Expository
Proficient	8	13	10	0
Less proficient	4	10	7	0
Total	12	23	17	0

4.1.1.4 Thinking in English/Chinese

As Table 4.1.1.4 shows, most of the proficient students and less proficient students thought in Chinese when they write in English. According to their self-reports, 76.9% of respondents with 22 proficient learners and 18 less proficient learners thought in Chinese when they write an English essay. On the other hand, there are 12 (23.1%) participants including nine proficient students and three less proficient students, who used English to think and write.

Table 4.1.1.4: Respondents Thinking in English/Chinese When Write in English

English Proficiency	Think in English/Chinese When Write in English	
	English	Chinese
Proficient	9	22
Less proficient	3	18
Total	12	40

4.2 RQ1: What writing strategies do Chinese senior high school students frequently employ when writing compositions in English?

This section firstly introduces the overall writing strategies used by Chinese EFL senior high school students. Next, the writing strategies that Chinese students used most frequently at prewriting stage, while-writing stage and revising stage will be discussed to answer the first research question.

4.2.1 Overall Responses to Writing Strategies Questionnaire

Based on the results of the questionnaire, descriptive statistics are used to describe the overall responses. In this section, average scores of students' profiles and scores of frequency of use are discussed respectively.

In statistics, the **mean** indicates average. The **standard deviation (SD)** explains how reliable the data are and how close they are to the mean.

Table 4.2.1 Summary of Writing Strategies Used at Different Stages

Stage	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Prewriting	3.07	0.58
While-writing	3.11	0.47
Revision	2.56	0.49
Overall writing strategies	2.85	0.44

The table 4.2.1 indicates that the overall mean of writing strategies is 2.85 ($M = 2.85$) with a standard deviation 0.44 ($SD = 0.44$). According to Oxford (1990), the learners' mean score above 3.5 ($M \geq 3.5$) on the questionnaire items is considered to be high strategy user, while those who scored between 2.5 and 3.4 ($3.4 \geq M \geq 2.5$) are moderate strategy users, and

the ones scoring below 2.4 ($M \leq 2.4$) are less strategy users. Thus, those Chinese senior high school students were identified as moderate strategy users.

Comparing to ESL Malaysian senior high school students (Nooreiny & Mazlin, 2013), the frequency of using writing strategies for Chinese EFL senior high school students is relatively less than Malaysian students (“ $M = 3.10$; $SD = 0.43$ ”) (p.50). However, both of them are moderate writing strategies users. Furthermore, the results support Wu (2007)’s and Chen (2011)’s researches. Their findings reveal that Chinese EFL college students also moderately use writing strategies.

In terms of writing stages (see Table 4.2.1), the findings show that the participants used more strategies at the while-writing stage ($M = 3.11$; $SD = 0.47$) as compared to strategies at the revising stage ($M = 2.56$; $SD = 0.49$) and strategies at the prewriting stage ($M = 3.07$; $SD = 0.58$).

Similar to the results of writing strategies used by the Chinese EFL senior high school students in this research, Malaysian ESL students (Nooreiny & Mazlin, 2013) use more writing strategies at the while-writing stage than strategies in the other stages. However, except for the strategies at the planning stage, Chinese EFL senior high school students use less writing strategies than Malaysian students at the while-writing stage and revising stage.

4.2.2 Most Frequently Used Writing Strategies

The findings (see Table 4.2.2A, Table 4.2.2B & Table 4.2.2C) in this section show the most frequently used writing strategies with the mean scores larger than 3.5 ($M \geq 3.5$) (Oxford, 1990) based on the results of samples' questionnaire.

Table 4.2.2A Most Frequently Used Writing Strategies at the Prewriting Stage

Prewriting Stage	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Level
2. Before I start writing I revise requirements.	4.25	0.99	High
4. I start writing with a written or mental plan.	4.10	1.07	High
5. I think about what I want to write and have a plan in my mind, but not on paper.	3.50	1.11	High

The most frequently used strategies at the prewriting stage or planning stage were “*before I start writing I revise requirements*” ($M = 4.25$; $SD = 0.99$), “*I start writing without having a written or mental plan*” ($M = 4.10$; $SD = 1.07$) and “*I think about what I want to write and have a plan in my mind, but not on paper*” ($M = 3.50$; $SD = 1.11$) (see Table 4.2.2A).

Table 4.2.2B Most Frequently Used Writing Strategies at the While-writing Stage

While-writing Stage	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Level
1. I start with the introduction.	3.52	1.08	High
3. I stop after a few sentences or a whole paragraph to get an idea.	3.54	1.15	High
7. I make sure there is no grammar and vocabulary mistakes.	4.00	0.97	High
8. I simplify what I want to write if I don't know how to express my thoughts in English.	4.40	0.82	High
10. If I don't know a word in English, I find a similar English word that I know.	4.23	0.78	High
12. I use an English-Chinese or a Chinese-English dictionary.	3.51	1.26	High

Six out of twelve strategies at the while-writing or translating stage were most frequently used by the students (see Table 4.2.2B). Most of the students chose to “*start with*

introduction” ($M = 3.52$; $SD = 1.08$) when they start to write their essays. Another frequently used strategy was “*I stop after a few sentences or a whole paragraph to get an idea.*” ($M = 3.54$; $SD = 1.15$). Next, the students chose the strategy “*I make sure there is no grammar and vocabulary mistakes*” ($M = 4.00$; $SD = 0.97$). Perhaps they may “*simplify what I want to write if I don’t know how to express my thoughts in English*” ($M = 4.40$; $SD = 0.82$) or they would overcome some problems “*If I don’t know a word in English, I find a similar English word that I know*” ($M = 4.23$; $SD = 0.78$). Apart from that, those students preferred to “*use a English-Chinese/Chinese-English dictionary*” ($M = 3.51$; $SD = 1.26$).

Table 4.2.2C Most Frequently Used Writing Strategies at the Revising Stage

Revising Stage	Mean	SD	Level
3. I hand my paper in after reading it.	3.83	1.18	High
11. I check if my essay matches the requirements.	3.96	0.99	High
16. I check my mistakes after getting back the paper with feedback from the teacher, and try to learn from them.	3.60	1.13	High

In the revising stage, the three most popular writing strategies were employed by the senior high school students (see Table 4.2.2C). Two of three favourite choices were “*when I have written my paper, I hand it in after reading it*” ($M = 3.83$; $SD = 1.18$) and “*I check if my essay matches the requirements*” ($M = 3.96$; $SD = 0.99$). In addition, the students selected “*I check my mistakes after I get back the paper with feedback from the teacher, and try to learn from them*” ($M = 3.60$; $SD = 1.13$).

Some of the high frequently used writing strategies used by Chinese senior high school students in this research coincide with writing strategies used by Malaysian ESL senior high school students (Nooreiny & Mazlin, 2013, p.50), such as “*I think about what I want to write and have a plan in my mind, but not on paper*” at the prewriting stage, “*start with*

introduction ($M = 4.60, SD = 0.70$), “*use bilingual dictionary* ($M = 3.68, SD = 1.50$)”, “*stop after few sentences covering an idea* ($M = 3.56, SD = 0.99$)” at the while-writing stage, and “*check mistakes after feedback from teacher* ($M = 3.90, SD = 1.07$)” as well as “*check if essay fulfills requirements* ($M = 3.70, SD = 1.18$)” at the revising stage.

In summary, the Chinese senior high school participants generally read the requirements and had a plan in mind at the prewriting stage, began with the introduction, frequently stopped after a few sentences to get an idea and simplified the words to ensure corrections for grammar and vocabularies at the while-writing stage, and then rechecked the requirements and errors at the revising stage. The present findings also support Nooreiny and Mazlin’s (2013) study which concludes that the strategy of having a mental plan is ineffective in helping students develop ideas for their essay writing. It could be the reason why students frequently stop and reread a few sentences to get an idea and then continue to write. Kalikokha (2008) explains the reasons why students focus more on changing of grammar and spelling could be caused by students’ lack of English proficiency as it is their second language. However, the proficient learners and less proficient ones differed in the selections of writing strategies as their most frequently and least frequently used methods. These findings are discussed in the following sections.

4.3 RQ2: How do proficient and less English proficient students differ in their writing strategies?

This section firstly shows the findings of overall writing strategies used by proficient and less proficient students. Then, the most and least frequently used writing strategies by the proficient and less proficient EFL learners are listed. Finally, a comparison of strategies

used by proficient and less proficient students by using an independent t-test to check whether there is a significant difference is discussed.

4.3.1 Overall Writing Strategies Used by Proficient and Less Proficient Students

Table 4.3.1 Mean and Standard Deviation of Overall and Different Stages of Writing Strategy between Proficient (P) and Less Proficient (LP) Respondents

Level	Overall Writing Strategy		Prewriting Stage		While-writing Stage		Revising Stage	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
P	2.94	0.38	3.28	0.51	3.14	0.41	2.59	0.07
LP	2.72	0.50	2.76	0.55	3.07	0.55	2.52	0.13

Table 4.3.1 indicates the overall mean of writing strategies employed by the proficient respondents ($M = 2.94$; $SD = 0.38$) were slightly higher than the less proficient ones ($M = 2.72$; $SD = 0.50$). At the prewriting stage, the proficient students used more strategies ($M = 3.28$; $SD = 0.51$) than less proficient students ($M = 2.76$; $SD = 0.55$). However, there was a slight difference between the high ($M = 3.14$; $SD = 0.41$) and less proficient English learners ($M = 3.07$; $SD = 0.55$) at the while-writing stage. With reference to the revising stage, the data show a similar result of writing strategies used by proficient group ($M = 2.59$; $SD = 0.07$) and less proficient group ($M = 2.52$; $SD = 0.13$). In the study, both groups were moderate writing strategy users, which is similar to that of Malaysian English proficient and less English proficient senior high school students (Nooreiny & Mazlin, 2013).

4.3.2 The Most Frequently Used Writing Strategy by Proficient and Less Proficient Students

The findings (see Table 4.3.2A, Table 4.3.2B, & Table 4.3.2C) in this section show frequently used writing strategies with the mean scores larger than 3.5 ($M \geq 3.5$) (Oxford, 1990) based on the results of the samples' questionnaire.

Table 4.3.2A The Most Frequently Writing Strategy Employed by Proficient and Less Proficient EFL Learners at Prewriting Stage

Writing strategy	Proficient learners			Less proficient learners		
	Mean	SD	Level	Mean	SD	Level
2. Before I start writing I revise requirements.	4.38	0.88	high	4.05	1.12	high
4. I start writing having a written or mental plan.	4.42	0.67	high	3.62	1.36	high
5. I think about what I want to write and have a plan in my mind, but not on paper.	3.65	1.05	high	3.24	1.18	medium

Two of eight strategies at the prewriting stage (see Table 4.3.2A) were most frequently used by both the proficient and less proficient learners. The learners attempted to “*revise requirements*” ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 0.88$; $M = 4.05$, $SD = 1.12$) and “*have a plan*” ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 0.67$; $M = 3.62$, $SD = 1.36$) “*before starting to write*”. However, the proficient learners employed one more highly used writing strategy than the less proficient ones, which was “*I think about what I want to write and have a plan in mind, but not on paper*” ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.05$).

In contrast to Chinese EFL students, both proficient and less English proficient Malaysian students frequently employ only one writing strategy at the prewriting stage which is “*I think about what I want to write and have a plan in my mind, but not on paper*” ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 0.58$; $M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.97$)” (Nooreiny & Mazlin, 2013, p.52).

Table 4.3.2B The Most Frequently Writing Strategy Employed by Proficient and Less Proficient EFL Learners at While-writing Stage

Writing strategy	Proficient learners			Less proficient learners		
	Mean	SD	Level	Mean	SD	Level
1. I start with the introduction.	3.61	0.95	high	3.38	1.24	medium
3. I stop after a few sentences or a whole paragraph to get an idea.	3.65	0.98	high	3.38	1.36	medium
7. I make sure there is no grammar and vocabulary mistakes.	4.23	0.88	high	3.67	1.02	high
8. I simplify what I want to write if I don't know how to express my thoughts in English.	4.29	0.90	high	4.57	0.68	high
10. If I don't know a word in English, I find a similar English word that I know.	4.23	0.76	high	4.24	0.83	high
12. I use an English-Chinese dictionary or a Chinese-English dictionary.	3.45	1.21	high	3.62	1.36	high

At the while-writing stage, four of fourteen writing strategies were most frequently used by both proficient and less proficient groups as shown in Table 4.3.2B: “*I make sure there is no grammar and vocabulary mistakes*” ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 0.88$; $M = 3.67$, $SD = 1.02$); “*I simplify what I want to write if I don't know how to express my thoughts in English*” ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 0.90$; $M = 4.57$, $SD = 0.68$); “*If I don't know a word in English, I find a similar English word that I know*” ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 0.76$; $M = 4.24$, $SD = 0.83$); “*I use an English-Chinese dictionary or a Chinese-English dictionary*” ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 1.21$; $M = 3.62$, $SD = 1.36$). Furthermore, the proficient group tended to perform better than the less proficient group, who employed two more writing strategies. The two writing strategies were “*I start with the introduction*” ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.95$) and “*I stop after a few sentences or a whole paragraph to get an idea*” ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.98$).

Similarly, one of the writing strategies at the while-writing stage is also most frequently used by both Malaysian proficient and less proficient students, which is “*If I don’t know a word in English, I find a similar English word that I know* ($M = 3.48, SD = 1.29; M = 4.00, SD = 0.91$)”. The proficient learners in Malaysia also employ “*start with the introduction* ($M = 4.67, SD = 0.52$)” and “*I simplify what I want to write if I don’t know how to express my thoughts in English* ($M = 3.56, SD = 0.92$)”. However, in comparison with Chinese senior high school students, Malaysian students do not pay much attention to use the strategy “*I make sure there is no grammar and vocabulary mistakes* ($M = 3.12, SD = 1.05; M = 2.40, SD = 1.00$)” (Nooreiny & Mazlin, 2013, p.52).

Table 4.3.2C The Most Frequently Writing Strategy Employed by Proficient and Less Proficient EFL Learners at Revising Stage

Writing strategy	Proficient learners			Less proficient learners		
	Mean	SD	Level	Mean	SD	Level
3. When I have written my paper, I hand it after reading it.	3.94	0.96	high	3.67	1.46	high
5. I make changes in vocabulary.	3.45	0.89	high	3.33	1.02	medium
11. I check if my essay matches the requirements.	4.23	0.85	high	3.57	1.08	high
16. I check my mistakes after I get back the paper with feedback from the teacher, and try to learn from them.	3.84	1.07	high	3.24	1.14	medium

As illustrated in Table 4.3.2C, only two writing strategies at the revising stage were most frequently used by both proficient and less proficient learners: “*When I have written my paper, I hand it in after reading it*” ($M = 3.94, SD = 0.96; M = 3.67, SD = 1.46$) and “*I check if my essay matches the requirements*” ($M = 4.23, SD = 0.85; M = 3.57, SD = 1.08$). The other two writing strategies which were most frequently used by proficient students but

moderately used by less proficient ones were “*I make changes in vocabulary*”(M = 3.45, SD = 0.89) and “*I check my mistakes after I get back the paper with feedback from the teacher, and try to learn from them*”(M = 3.84, SD = 1.07).

Similar to the writing strategies used by the Chinese proficient students, Malaysian proficient students also highly employ “*I check if my essay matches the requirements* (M = 4.04, SD = 0.98)” and “*I check my mistakes after I get back the paper with feedback from the teacher, and try to learn from them* (M = 4.16, SD = 0.80)”. However, compared to the Chinese learners, both Malaysian proficient and less proficient learners do not use the strategy “*when I have written my paper, I hand it after reading it*” frequently “(M = 3.40, SD = 0.82; M = 3.08, SD = 1.22)” (Nooreiny & Mazlin, 2013, p.53).

In summary, both proficient and less proficient students read the requirements and thought about how to write before writing, and then they made sure of using the correct vocabulary and grammar, simplified their words if they could not express their ideas in English, and they used a dictionary during writing if necessary. In the final stage, they double checked their paper and rechecked the requirements. In comparison with less proficient learners, proficient ones used five more writing strategies. They emphasised having a mental plan instead of writing the plan on paper, starting with writing an introduction and pausing after several sentences to get an idea, making changes to wrong vocabularies. They checked mistakes after getting feedback from their teachers. Kalikokha (2008) argues that some reasons may prevent students from getting the feedback. These reasons include the unavailability of teacher feedback due to his/her lack of time and unwillingness to provide feedback because of large class sizes. This discussion is consistent with the view of the Cheng and Moses’s (2011) research which explores Chinese teaching context in China.

4.3.3 The Least Frequently Used Writing Strategy by the Proficient and Less Proficient Students

The findings (see Table 4.3.3A, Table 4.3.3B & Table 4.3.3C) in this section show the least frequently used writing strategies with the mean scores smaller than 2.4 ($M \leq 2.4$) (Oxford, 1990) based on the results of samples' questionnaire.

Table 4.3.3A The Least Frequently Writing Strategy Employed by Proficient and Less Proficient EFL Learners at Prewriting Stage

Writing strategy	Proficient learners			Less proficient learners		
	Mean	SD	Level	Mean	SD	Level
Prewriting stage						
1. I make a timetable for the whole writing process.	2.16	0.93	low	1.86	0.79	low
7. I write an outline of my paper.	3.16	1.07	medium	2.10	1.22	low
8. I write notes or an outline in Chinese.	2.06	0.85	low	1.76	0.89	low

At the prewriting stage (see Table 4.3.3A), both proficient and less proficient students were low strategy users in terms of two writing strategies: “*I make a timetable for the whole writing process*” ($M = 2.16, SD = 0.93$; $M = 1.86, SD = 0.79$) and “*I write notes or an outline in Chinese*” ($M = 2.06, SD = 0.85$; $M = 1.76, SD = 0.89$). In contrast to proficient learners ($M = 3.16, SD = 1.07$), less proficient learners ($M = 2.10, SD = 1.22$) rarely used “*I write an outline of my paper*”. Nooreiny and Mazlin (2013, p.52) found similar results when analysing writing strategies used by less proficient Malaysian learners which show that the less proficient learners hardly use “*I write an outline of my paper* ($M = 2.24, SD = 1.09$)”.

Table 4.3.3B The Least Frequently Writing Strategy Employed by Proficient and Less Proficient EFL Learners at While-writing Stage

Writing strategy	Proficient learners			Less proficient learners		
	Mean	SD	Level	Mean	SD	Level
While-writing stage						
6. I write bits of the text in my native language and then translate them into English.	1.58	0.92	low	1.81	1.21	low
11. If I don't know a word in English, I stop writing and look up the word in the dictionary.	2.16	1.04	low	2.33	1.02	low
13. I use an English-English dictionary.	1.74	1.00	low	2.00	1.41	low

At the while-writing stage (see Table 4.3.3B), the findings reveal that both groups were poor users of the three writing strategies: “*I write bits of the text in my native language and then translate them into English*” ($M = 1.58$, $SD = 0.92$; $M = 1.81$, $SD = 1.21$); “*If I don't know a word in English, I stop writing and look up the word in the dictionary*” ($M = 2.16$, $SD = 1.04$; $M = 2.33$, $SD = 1.02$); “*I use an English-English dictionary*” ($M = 1.74$, $SD = 1.00$; $M = 2.00$, $SD = 1.41$).

However, there is no similarity between Chinese students and Malaysian students in terms of the least frequently used writing strategies at the while-writing stage. Furthermore, the results (Nooreiny & Mazlin, 2013) show that Malaysian students moderately use the writing strategies: “*I write bits of the text in my native language and then translate them into English*” ($M = 2.68$, $SD = 1.40$; $M = 3.20$, $SD = 1.38$); “*If I don't know a word in English, I stop writing and look up the word in the dictionary*” ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 1.28$; $M = 3.60$, $SD = 1.30$). It is noted that Nooreiny and Mazlin's (2013) research do not ask their participants about using an English-English dictionary. Chen (2011) explains that there are two possible reasons why Chinese EFL students rarely use English-English dictionary. The first reason is that the learners have difficulties to understand the English explanation in the

English context. The other reason is the students have formed a habit of using English-Chinese dictionary to look up a word explanation in Chinese but are not accustomed to the way of reading the explanation in English.

Table 4.3.3C The Least Frequently Writing Strategy Employed by Proficient and Less Proficient EFL Learners at Revising Stage

Writing strategy	Proficient learners			Less proficient learners		
	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Level	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Level
Revising stage						
1. I read my text aloud.	1.87	0.99	low	1.90	1.09	low
4. I use a dictionary when revising.	2.12	1.09	low	2.00	1.14	low
7. I make changes in the structure of the essay.	2.26	0.77	low	2.28	1.10	low
8. I make changes in the content or ideas.	1.77	0.67	low	2.14	0.91	low
9. I focus on one thing at a time when revising (e.g., content, structure).	2.10	0.83	low	2.48	1.12	<i>medium</i>
10. I drop my first draft and start writing again.	1.45	0.62	low	1.76	1.04	low
12. I leave the text aside for a couple of days and then I can see it in a new perspective.	1.65	0.80	low	1.95	1.16	low
13. I show my text to somebody and ask for his/her opinion.	2.03	0.91	low	2.10	1.09	low
14. I compare my paper with the essays written by my friends on the same topic or model essays.	3.03	1.28	<i>medium</i>	2.24	1.09	low
15. I give myself a reward for completing the assignment.	1.74	0.96	low	1.90	1.26	low

Eight least frequently used writing strategies were reported by both proficient and less proficient learners at the revising stage (see Table 4.3.3C), which formed a large portion of the total of least frequently used writing strategies. This result also explains further why the overall mean of writing strategies at revising stage is lower than the other stages (see Section 4.2). The eight writing strategies were: “*I read my text aloud*” ($M=1.87$, $SD = 0.99$; $M = 1.90$, $SD = 1.09$); “*I use a dictionary when revising*” ($M = 2.12$, $SD = 1.09$; $M = 2.00$,

$SD = 1.14$); “*I make changes in the structure of the essay*” ($M = 2.26, SD = 0.77; M = 2.28, SD = 1.10$); “*I make changes in the content or ideas*” ($M = 1.77, SD = 0.67; M = 2.14, SD = 0.91$); “*I drop my first draft and start writing again*” ($M = 1.45, SD = 0.62; M = 1.76, SD = 1.04$); “*I leave the text aside for a couple of days and then I can see it in a new perspective*” ($M = 1.65, SD = 0.80; M = 1.95, SD = 1.16$); “*I show my text to somebody and ask for his/her opinion*” ($M = 2.03, SD = 0.91; M = 2.10, SD = 1.09$); “*I give myself a reward for completing the assignment*” ($M = 1.74, SD = 0.96; M = 1.90, SD = 1.26$).

However, in terms of using the strategy “*I focus on one thing at a time when revising (e.g., content, structure)*”, the less proficient learners ($M = 2.48, SD = 1.12$) were moderate strategy users compared to the proficient learners ($M = 2.10, SD = 0.83$). In contrast, the proficient learners were moderate strategy users ($M = 3.03, SD = 1.28$) whereas the less proficient ones are low strategy users ($M = 2.24, SD = 1.09$) when they used the strategy “*I compare my paper with the essays written by my friends on the same topic or model essays*”.

Nooreiny and Mazlin (2013, p.53) also provide similar results with Malaysian senior high school students. The findings indicate that the proficient Malaysian learners also rarely use “*I drop my first draft and start writing again* ($M = 2.04, SD = 0.68$)” and moderately use “*I compare my paper with the essays written by my friends on the same topic or model essays* ($M = 3.00, SD = 1.26$)”. The findings also show that Malaysian students moderately used the writing strategies at the revising stage. As Kalikokha (2008) illustrates, several reasons may explain why students do not ask others for help when revising. It could be that students are unaware of the benefits of peer or teacher feedback on revising. It also could be a worry that some students think their peers may “steal” their ideas and score higher in the essay at

their expense. Furthermore, some students are afraid that their work would be copied by their peers and they might be penalised by their teachers for handing in the same work.

In general, neither proficient nor less proficient learners wrote a time table or an outline before writing. Furthermore, it can be concluded that both groups did not like to write in their native language first and then make a translation during writing. And they also rarely used a dictionary especially monolingual dictionary to look up for a word they did not know. One reason why they did not use those writing strategies is that most of the students only write English essays in examinations. The exam-oriented writing experience results in the strategies students do not use frequently such as not reading their essay aloud or using a dictionary at the revising stage. This also cause students to be reluctant in making major changes in the structure or content of their essays, unless they are totally dissatisfied with their essays. Kalikokha (2008) further explains that students' reluctance to introduce changes in the content of their essay is because it often requires more time and effort. However, as proficient learners have better linguistic knowledge than less proficient ones (Khalid, 2011), they tend to focus on a few aspects of an essay at a time when revising and learn this from their classmates' good essays.

4.3.4 Significant Difference of Writing Strategies between Proficient and Less Proficient Learners

This section first illustrates an overall significant difference of writing strategy used at the prewriting, while-writing and revising stages by proficiency level, and then states writing strategies which were significant difference between proficient and less proficient groups. Proficient learners and less proficient learners are two independent groups, in which a learner in one group cannot also be a member of the other group and vice versa (Jackson,

2006). Thus, independent samples t-test was conducted to examine whether there are significant differences between the mean scores on writing strategy used by both proficient learners and less proficient learners.

Table 4.3.4A: Independent T-test on Writing Strategy Used in Three Stages by Proficiency Level (Proficient = P, Less Proficient = LP)

Writing Strategy	Group	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
Before writing	P (n=31)	3.28	0.51	3.46	.001*
	LP (n=21)	2.76	0.55		
While writing	P (n=31)	3.14	0.41	0.52	.61
	LP (n=21)	3.07	0.55		
Revision	P (n=31)	2.59	0.40	0.50	.62
	LP (n=21)	2.52	0.61		
Overall writing strategies	P (n=31)	2.94	0.38	1.81	.08
	LP (n=21)	2.72	0.50		

*Significance at level $p < 0.05$

When a result is significant, the p value is reported as less than ($<$).05 (Jackson, 2006). As can be seen from Table 4.3.4A, there was a significant difference between proficient and less proficient learners in the use of writing strategy at the prewriting stage, $t = 3.46$, $p = .001 < .05$, which means the proficient group used more writing strategies than the less proficient one before writing. Nevertheless, there was no significant difference between both groups in terms of using writing strategies at while-writing stage ($t = 0.52$, $p = .61 > .05$) and revising stage ($t = 0.50$, $p = .62 > .05$). Overall, both groups were similar in terms of using overall writing strategies ($t = 1.81$, $p = .08 > .05$).

Table 4.3.4B: Items of Writing Strategy Showing Significant Difference between Proficient (P) and Less Proficient (LP) Groups

Writing Strategy	Group	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
Prewriting Stage					
3. I look at a model written by a native speaker or more proficient writer.	P (n=31)	3.35	0.88	2.37	.022*
	LP (n=21)	2.76	0.89		
4. I start writing after having a written or mental plan.	P (n=31)	4.42	0.67	2.50	.019*
	LP (n=21)	3.62	1.36		
7. I write an outline of my paper.	P (n=31)	3.16	1.07	3.25	.002*
	LP (n=21)	2.09	1.22		
While-writing Stage					
7. I make sure there is no grammar and vocabulary mistakes.	P (n=31)	4.23	0.88	2.05	.047*
	LP (n=21)	3.67	1.02		
Revising Stage					
11. I check if my essay matches the requirements.	P (n=31)	4.23	0.85	2.34	.025*
	LP (n=21)	3.57	1.08		
14. I compare my paper with the essays written by my friends on the same topic or model essays.	P (n=31)	3.03	1.28	2.40	.020*
	LP (n=21)	2.24	1.09		

*Significance at level $p < 0.05$

Although the proficient and less proficient students were shown to use similar writing strategies, Table 4.3.4B shows some writing strategies which were significantly different from each group. At the prewriting stage, the proficient students performed better than the less proficient ones when using strategies “*I look at a model written by a native speaker or more proficient writer*” ($t = 2.37, p = .022 < .05$), “*I start writing after having a written or mental plan*” ($t = 2.50, p = .019 < .05$) and “*I write an outline of my paper*” ($t = 3.25, p = .002 < .01$). However, there was a slight significant difference between the proficient and less proficient groups in terms of employing “*I make sure there is no grammar and vocabulary mistakes*” ($t = 2.05, p = .047 < .05$). In addition, there were two writing strategies at the revising stage which showed significant difference between the proficient and less proficient learners. Those strategies were “*I check if my essay matches the requirements*” (t

= 2.34, $p = .025 < .05$) and “*I compare my paper with the essays written by my friends on the same topic or model essays*”($t = 2.40, p = .020 < .05$).

Although Nooreiny and Mazlin (2013) claim that there is no significant difference between proficient and less proficient ESL senior high school learners in terms of using writing strategies in Malaysia, some studies such as Li (2005), Hou (2011) and Liu (2015) show a significant difference of writing strategies used by proficient and less proficient EFL learners.

Khalid (2011) highlights that proficient writers spend more time on planning before writing. The findings of this research might explain what the proficient students really do at the planning stage. Compared to the less proficient learners, the proficient learners like reading model essays and thinking how they can learn when writing their own English essays. They prefer to write an outline for their essays first.

At the while-writing stage, the proficient learners in this study tended to check mistakes in grammar and vocabulary, because the criteria of writing mainly focused on the words and sentence structures. As one proficient participant said, “it would deduct a lot of grades if I made mistakes in grammar”. Thus, most of the proficient students paid much attention on those two elements, with the aim of getting high scores for English writing. This finding supports Hu and Chen’s (2007) result that proficient college learners revise lexical and grammatical elements more often than less proficient ones. Furthermore, the less proficient learners in the study are found to be unable in coming up with correct or appropriate vocabularies or sentence structures when completing the writing task, due to the low proficiency in English.

At the revising stage, the proficient learners normally checked if their essays matched the requirements. It is a way to help them avoid losing marks in their English writing task. In addition, the proficient learners had better attitude toward the feedback given by their teacher for their English essays than the less proficient learners. The proficient learners liked to read similar model essays to improve their writing skills. One of the proficient learners claimed that the model essays helped him to identify the problems of his English writing and assisted him to make progress in his writing skill. In a study of investigating writing strategies used by EFL learners in a middle school, Liu (2015)'s findings support this claim. In contrast, less proficient learners were disappointed with their English writing results and preferred not to read their peers' good essays. This finding is supported by a claim made by a less proficient participant who said "I would not have the confidence to write an English essay after reading those model essays". Moreover, due to lack of vocabularies, some of the less proficient learners noted that they did not understand the model essays.

4.4 RQ3: What are the factors that influence students' choice of strategies in their writing process?

In answering research question three that focuses on investigating factors that influence proficient and less proficient learners' choice of writing strategies, the next sub-sections outline the factors based on the retrospectives of recall protocols and post-writing interviews of ten EFL Chinese senior high school students.

4.4.1 Influencing Factors at Prewriting Stage

Five major factors which are **exam-oriented writing experience, rote memory of model essays, topic, attitude and weak planning for English writing** have influenced the

Chinese senior high school students' choice of writing strategies at the prewriting stage. As the Figure 4.2 shows, nine of ten participants agreed exam-oriented writing experience was the main factor that influence their choice of writing strategies; five of ten participants mentioned rote memory could cause their use of writing strategies; and three of ten participants thought topic, attitude and weak planning were also the factors affecting the choice of writing strategies among Chinese senior high school EFL learners. Those factors are explained according to a frequency which is based on the number of participants mentioned (see Figure 4.2) in the following sub-sections.

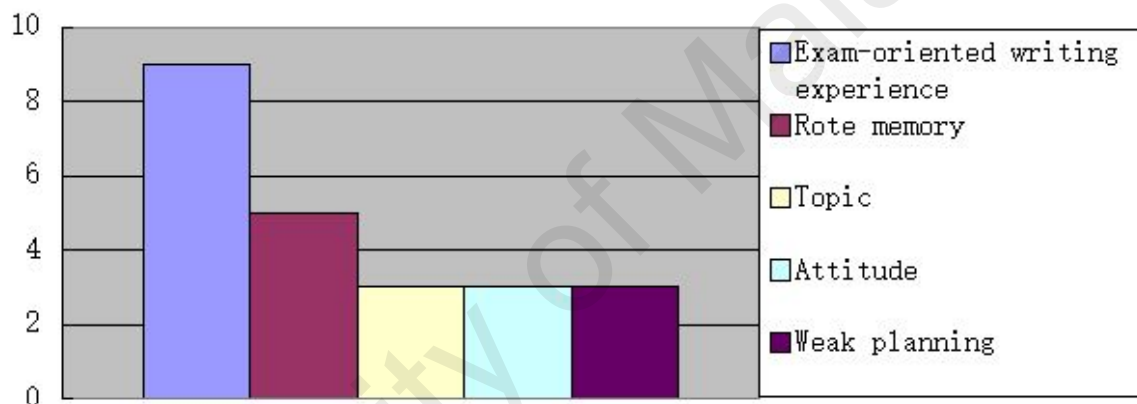


Figure 4.2: Frequency of Each Factor at the Prewriting Stage

4.4.1.1 Exam-oriented Writing Experience

Exam-oriented writing experience is one of the five major factors and has an important impact on the Chinese EFL students' choice of writing strategies. Based on the recall protocols and post-writing interviews, most of the Chinese senior high school learners have some concerns at the prewriting stage.

Firstly, participants felt that time constraint has influenced their choice of writing strategy such as “making a timetable for the whole writing process” at the prewriting stage. Six of the ten (60%) interviewed participants claimed that they only wrote English essays in

examinations, thus the examination time was much valuable for them. A proficient learner said, “I normally have enough time to write an English essay in an exam. So I write a draft first and then copy it to my answer sheet. It depends on the time left in an exam, then I will plan how long I will spend on writings.” Her point of view was confirmed by the less proficient learners. A less proficient learner stressed that “If I finished the former parts faster before writing, I would make a timetable to think of it. Sometimes if I had not done the former parts yet, I would rush my essay and then check back some other parts I had not finished, so I would not make it.” Thus, this could be a possible reason why making a plan for the whole writing process is one of the least frequently used writing strategy (see Table 4.3.3A). Most of the students started to write their English essay in an examination after finishing other sections of the test. Furthermore, the time constraint factor also influenced how both proficient and less proficient groups produce their essay outlines. For instance, one of the proficient learners said “I would think of an outline in mind instead of writing it on paper to avoid wasting time. Unless, the topic was much difficult”. The same idea was shared by a less proficient learner.

Furthermore, the various requirements of writing was another reason affecting the participants’ choice of writing strategies. Four of ten (40%) interviewed participants were worried that they would misunderstand the requirements, so they “re-read the requirements” several times before writing. However, some other participants said that they focused on some “special requirements”. For example, one participant said “sometimes the requests of the English writing asked us not to use our real name and limited the least number of words we should write. Sometimes, it not only provides a title for it but gives us some information about the title. I would read it”.

4.4.1.2 Rote Memory

Rote memory is the main issue that learners do not want to “look at a model written by a native speaker or more proficient writer”. Li (2012) concludes that Chinese rural high school students engaged in rote learning of isolated linguistic knowledge rather than used their known linguistic and non-linguistic information as the base to learn the new knowledge. The findings also show that the learners’ aim of looking at model essays is just to remember some classical sentences by rote. The way to write an English essay seems to receive less attention by both proficient and less proficient learners. For example, a proficient learner shared her English teacher’s instruction on English writing. She said, “my English teacher asked us to read some model essays and remember them. Then we can refer some sentences in them to our own essays”. This English writing learning experience was shown to be common among both proficient and less proficient learners. Thus, without clear instructions of how to write an English essay and equipped only with rote-learning to remember some model essays, most of the Chinese EFL students feel challenged having to remember model essays. They tend to write on their own without any reference.

4.4.1.3 Topic

Surprisingly, unlike less proficient learner, three of five proficient participants regarded the topic of the writing task as a factor that influences their choice of writing strategies. Those writing strategies are “having a written or mental plan” before writing and writing “notes or an outline in my native language” (Petric & Czarl, 2003, p.210). Participants decided whether to use similar writing strategies either by the type or the degree of difficulty of the writing topic. For instance, a proficient participant said that “It depends on the topic of the English writing part. If it was difficult, I would write a plan”. Another proficient learner also stressed that the type of essay writing was a factor that influenced her decision on

whether to write an outline or not. She explained that “what we most wrote recently was argumentative essay, so I would not write an outline for it. If I wrote a narrative essay, I would write an outline because my thoughts would be in a whirl in narration”. Ahmed (2010) stresses that the topic-specific background knowledge is an influential factor that impacts the quality and coherence of students’ essay writing.

4.4.1.4 Attitude

Although Zarei and Elekaei’s (2013) study reveals that there is no relationship between attitude and meta-cognitive strategies which are behaviors to arrange, plan or evaluate one’s learning, this study shows that attitude had an influence on the choice of writing strategies among Chinese senior high school EFL learners. The participants felt that it was troublesome to write an outline on paper especially in Chinese. The study reveals that not only the less proficient students reported that they were lazy or had no interest to write an outline, but the proficient ones also shared the same thought. “It would be more troublesome to write a plan on paper than to think it in mind” was a respond by a proficient learner. Furthermore, both of the proficient and less proficient learners preferred writing an outline in English rather than in Chinese, “because if I used Chinese, I would have to translate them into English. It would take much trouble”, as a proficient learner said.

4.4.1.5 Weak Planning

Trang and Hoa (2008) find their university EFL subject had difficulty starting the introduction for his academic essay. Similarly, in the current study, Chinese EFL senior high school participants face the same problem. The less proficient learners, especially had problem in planning for English writing. For example, a less proficient learner said “I did not know how to plan for my essay. It seems that the examiner did not require to write

logically very much for English writing”. He stressed that examiners only paid attention to corrections on grammar and sentence structure. That was why he just checked mistakes of those elements. Another less proficient learner concluded the difference between Chinese essay and English essay during examinations as: “English essay only needs to put all the relevant words together”. Therefore, problems arise with what is written does not match with what they have planned, they do not use their planned words when writing and they are not even certain about which word is to be used during their writing.

4.4.2 Influencing Factors at While-writing Stage

At the while-writing process, the participants claimed that they faced many problems. The problems can be divided into five main parts such as **exam-oriented writing experience, poor organisation of ideas, poor expression of ideas in English, lack of enough exercises in English writing and attitude**, which will be discussed in the sub-sections below.

The Figure 4.3 shows a frequency of each factor at the while-writing stage: all of the ten participants claimed that exam-oriented writing experience, poor organisation of ideas as well as poor expression of ideas in English were the main factors that influence their choice of writing strategies at while-writing stage; six of ten participants agreed lack of enough writing exercises cause their use of writing strategies; and four of ten participants mentioned attitude was also a factor affecting their choice of writing strategies at while-writing stage.

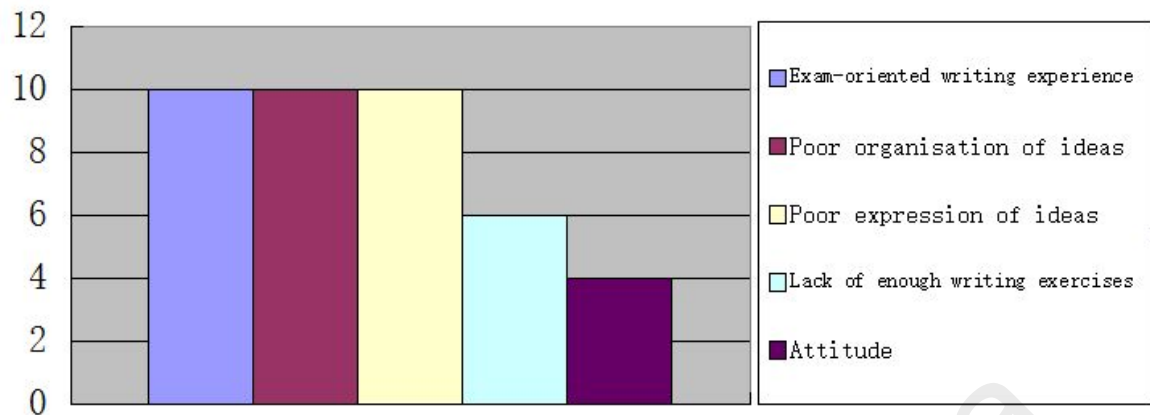


Figure 4.3: Frequency of Each Factor at the While-writing Stage

4.4.2.1 Exam-oriented Writing Experience

The exam-oriented writing experience such as **time constraint**, **the requirements of the writing task** (e.g. word limitation) and **the criteria in writing** (e.g. examining mistakes in grammar and vocabulary) have influenced the learners' writing behavior. The findings of the research highlight that exam-oriented writing experience played an important role in the students' writing process.

Four of the ten (40%) participants in the post-writing interview clearly mentioned that their **writing time** in an examination is precious: if they were to spend much time in other parts, including Multiple Choice, Cloze Test and Reading ("A sample of the 2012 Beijing Gaokao English Exam", 2013), they would need to rush to complete the final part, Writing Essay, without checking.

Hou (2011) claims that all the senior high school students are eager to improve their writing ability so as to meet the requirement of the Gaokao English examination (National Matriculation English Test). The current study also found that the EFL learners tried their best to meet the word limitation of **English writing requirements** in examinations. Their writing behavior had been formed in the English examinations since they were in a middle school. Participants stopped to count words after writing a paragraph or a few sentences and planned to write only the number of words left to be written. As a proficient participant said, "sometimes the number of words I wrote was beyond the word limitation of the requirements. Therefore, I often pause after a paragraph to count the words I wrote and decide how many words I am going to write next". Nevertheless, less proficient learners

always aim to write the minimum number required in the writing. For example, a less proficient participant stressed that he wanted to describe the phenomenon of the writing topic “more seriously” so he could write “more words” in his essay. Likewise, another less proficient participant wanted to write further in his essay at first, but when he realised that he had written enough words to meet the word limitation, he decided to end the essay.

Again, meeting the **criteria** in writing was the main purpose for the students to not lose their writing scores. Students also preferred to write simple words and sentence structures instead of using complex sentences to avoid making grammar and vocabulary mistakes. A proficient participant explained that “the simple sentences would not allow me lose marks easily. If I wrote some complex sentences with some mistakes, it would probably cause me to lose many marks”. His view was supported by other participants. They emphasised that each grammar or vocabulary mistake they made may result in marks being deducted in the written examination.

4.4.2.2 Poor Organisation of Ideas

In exploring a Vietnamese student’s writing difficulties in writing an academic English essay, Trang and Hoa (2008) discover that their EFL student had no “direction” to follow when he wrote the main body of his essay and he found that his arguments for his essay were not strong. Similarly, participants in the current study faced the same problem. They failed to organise ideas for their English writing task, which consists of five specific writing behaviors. Both proficient and less proficient students found it difficult to **start the introduction, find an argument, expand an argument, make a conclusion** as well as **write coherently** during writing.

Students have no idea how to start their English essay. For example, a less proficient participant took 97 seconds to think how to start the introduction. Once he started writing, he wrote the “first” as the first word of his English essay, and then he crossed it off for a

while, and finally he wrote the “first” again. He said, “...English writing has no tradition to begin like that. But I have nothing to write, thus I wrote the first word again”. Few studies (Liu, 2013; Trang & Hoa, 2008) suggest that EFL students who spend too much time on planning for their English essay would probably reflect their low English proficiency.

Furthermore, how to **find an argument** and **expand the argument** have been obstacles that cause students to take a long time to write. After getting a general idea of the writing task, students tried to apply some arguments to support their ideas. For instance, proficient learners preferred thinking of all the arguments first before starting to write. However, less proficient learners preferred thinking of one point and write, and reread the first point to generate what they should write for the second one. Even though both proficient and less proficient learners had thought of some arguments for their writing task, they found it really difficult to expand their arguments. As a proficient participant said, “I was thinking whether I could add more sentences here, but I could not think of what else I could write, and finally I had nothing to tell, even in Chinese”. This difficulty was very common among other samples based on their recall protocols. And those problems did not only occur in English writing of the Chinese EFL senior high school students in this research but also were visible in some college students’ writing. Kolikokha (2008) also confirms that his Malawian freshmen found it difficult to obtain sufficient or relevant information for their essay.

In addition, participants struggled with **making a conclusion** in their English writing. The current study found that both proficient and less proficient learners were stuck when they decided to write the final part of their English essay. For instance, a less proficient learner had no idea what he should write at the end. And another proficient learner was thinking

how to write an appeal in the end. She explained, “I wanted to end my essay by one-sentence conclusion. Moreover, this exact sentence should be regarded as an official end once it was read...But I did not know what I should write to express a conclusion”.

Lastly, how to **write coherently** was a concern of most learners, especially the proficient ones. A proficient learner introduced her thoughts when writing the first paragraph of her essay, “I was wondering whether I should write about the phenomenon of copying other’s homework or write about the importance of doing homework, which was more coherent”. Although she was able to make a decision after some time and started to write some examples for her argument, she found it difficult to connect one example to the other. With the aim of writing English coherently, another proficient learner had to delete some words in the earlier part to “connect the next semantically”. This result is consistent with Ahmad’s (2010) finding which reports that less English proficient Egyptian students had issues with writing English coherently. The less English proficient ones paid more attention to language matter instead of meaning in the whole essay. Hence, it can be explained why the proficient learners in this study paid more attention to the coherence of their essays than less proficient learners.

In conclusion, Chinese EFL learners are not active in planning, arranging, expanding and summarising their ideas in an English writing, as reported in Liu (2013). Their dilemma was found based on their recall protocols. However, the post-writing interviews based on their responses of the questionnaire did not really reflect their dilemma in English writing. It will be discussed in Section 5.2.2.

4.4.2.3 Poor Expression of Ideas

The learners clearly had difficulties with organising ideas of an essay, and at the same time, they were bothered with expressing ideas in English. When a proficient participant chose “sometimes” for the writing strategy “I write bits of the text in my native language and then translate them into English”, he explained that “sometimes I felt it was hard to narrate in English, so I wrote bits of the text in Chinese on the draft”. Similarly, another proficient learner shared her embarrassment when she wanted to express her thoughts in English. She said, “I did want to express a point of view while expressing it well was above my level, so I had to simplify what I wanted to write”. When exploring Chinese students’ writing problems, Wang (2012) also reveals that students in her study faced such difficulty to express their ideas by only using basic sentence structures, such as subject-verb sentences or subject-verb-object sentences in their English essay writing. Furthermore, both Wang (2012) and Trang and Hoa (2008) suggest that the reasons behind the phenomenon are mainly lack of vocabularies and poor grammar.

There were three sub-problems that make Chinese EFL learners found difficulty in expressing their ideas in English, such as **lack of vocabularies**, **lack of mastering sentence patterns**, and **lack of knowledge in using modifier, inflexion and tense**. The findings of this research show that all the participants had the same issue of **lack of vocabularies** when they wrote English essays. For example, a proficient participant thought of a specific word meaning in Chinese but could not find the word in English, so she had to use the word, “thing” to replace the original. Moreover, a less proficient participant found it difficult to write each English sentence in his essay because of his very limited vocabularies. In fact, he even tried to use other ways to find enough vocabularies to use in his English essay, saying, “I would read the writing part in the exam first and then I would read the

multiple choice question and found some words that would be probably be used in my essay and made notes in one place”.

Lack of mastering sentence patterns was also a challenge for Chinese EFL learners, especially for those with less proficiency. A proficient learner complained that she realised a sentence she used was wrong, but she could hardly thought of other sentence pattern to replace it. Another proficient learner stated that he used many sentence patterns that he knew and still needed to think of other sentence patterns to make his sentences not “clumsy”. Unlike proficient learners, less proficient learners displayed more obvious evidence of not mastering sentence patterns which results in their vapid essay. For example, a less proficient participant had ideas to write but he had difficulty writing it in English without knowing enough sentence patterns and words. He said, “I wanted to express ‘If all the students copied other’s homework, they would be...’ in English. But I had no idea how to use ‘if’ sentence”. In the end, he had to use some phrases or simple words to replace his ideas.

Lack of knowledge in using modifier, inflexion and tense was another challenge for students when writing English. A proficient participant’s dilemma in his writing process can represent other proficient learners’ writing difficulties. Although he was a proficient student, he faced a lot problems in using modifier, inflexion and tense. At his first writing pause, he did not know how to use “who” in the attributive clause, and then he wondered whether “student’s” or “students” was fit for his sentence. In the middle of his writing process, the participant was thinking about the tense he used. He was not sure whether he should use the same tense for the following part. Compared to the proficient learners, the less proficient ones focused on the word only. A less proficient participant shared his

concern on the word “homework”. He realised that “homework” was an uncountable noun, so he chose to use “many” (which is wrong in his essay: he should use “much”) to modify the “homework”.

4.4.2.4 English Writing Exercise

Apart from finding difficulties in organising ideas of an essay as well as expressing ideas in English, **lack of enough exercises in English writing** is another factor that stops EFL learners writing fluently. Li (2012) suggests that school students seldom review, practise and apply the learned linguistic knowledge to their English writing, to improve their English competence. Similarly, most of participants in this study claimed that they only write or practise their English writing in examinations. As a result, most of the participants were **unskillful in using vocabularies or phrases** (e.g. spelling mistake) and **sentence patterns** which they had learnt before. For instance, a less proficient participant mentioned that the phrases he remembered were not really used in his English essays. Thus, once he needed one of the phrases to write in his essay, he would have to spend some time recalling the phrase. Another less proficient learner seemed to face many difficulties when recalling some words. In his recall protocol, he said “I remembered a phrase ‘make progress’ and I think ‘get a progress’ were same as ‘make progress’. After that, I thought ‘progress’ as ‘impress’ and later I realized I was wrong and crossed it off”. In this study, not only the less proficient students made mistakes on vocabularies or phrases, but did the proficient ones. Two proficient participants said that they kept checking and confirming some vocabularies’ spelling and correcting some phrases as well as sentence patterns they used in their writing process.

4.4.2.5 Attitude

According to Gupta and Woldemariam (2011) and Graham, Berninger and Fan (2007), positive attitude probably serves their EFL students to use writing strategies frequently in finishing the writing task. However, participants' negative **attitude** toward English writing kept them from being good English writers. In this study, both proficient and less proficient learners were lazy to use a dictionary especially English-English dictionary to look up for a word, because they felt troublesome to read an English explanation for a word. They might not understand the English explanation due to lack of vocabulary. Thus, they had to look up those unfamiliar English words which explained the original one. In addition, some participants were reluctant to ask other people's help for their English writing. Both proficient and less proficient participants mentioned that they rarely asked others' help to solve their writing problems because they were lazy to do that.

4.4.3 Influencing Factors at Revising Stage

Participants have given more reasons for the revising stage than at the other writing stages. Six main writing issues such as **exam-oriented writing experience, lack of vocabularies and grammar knowledge, teaching approach, attitude, lack of confidence and poor correction in sentence structure** (see Figure 4.4) that EFL learners encountered at the revising stage.

As the Figure 4.4 shows, eight of ten participants agreed exam-oriented writing experience was the main factor that influence their choice of writing strategies; seven of ten participants mentioned lack of vocabularies and grammar knowledge, and teaching approach could cause their use of writing strategies; six of ten participants claimed attitude also influenced them in choosing certain writing strategies; five of ten participants thought

lack of confidence affected their choice of writing strategies; and four of ten participants had difficulties in correcting sentence structures at the revising stage. Those factors are explained according to a frequency which is based on the number of participants mentioned (see Figure 4.4) in the following sub-sections.

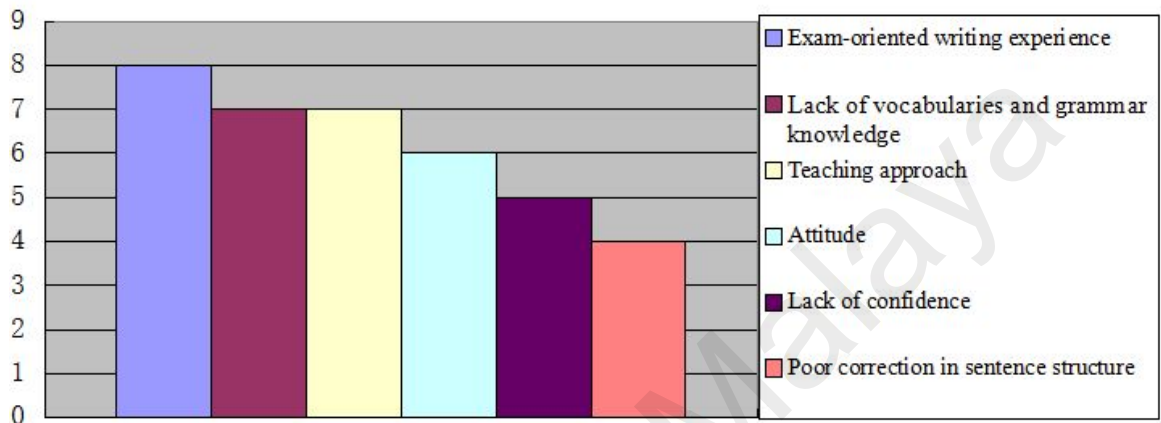


Figure 4.4: Frequency of Each Factor at the Revising Stage

4.4.3.1 Exam-oriented Writing Experience

The exam-oriented writing experience played a major role in influencing EFL learners' English writing. First, students stressed that limited **time** in examinations influenced their decision whether to revise their English essay or not. A proficient participant explained that if he did not have any extra time after finishing the essay writing, he would not read his essay again. Another proficient participant also said that if she had enough time in an examination, she would revise her essay by focusing on one element such as vocabulary or content at a time. If not, she would revise her essay by checking all elements at the same time. Moreover, if the participant had enough time remaining in an examination and did not like her previous English essay, she would write a new one. Thus, time was also a main factor that influences EFL learners' decision in using writing strategies at the revising stage.

Second, **meeting the requirement** was a main aim for most of EFL learners. Being afraid of straying from the topic was a main concern for all proficient learners. They expressed that they had experienced failing to meet the requirements which caused them to lose their writing scores. Since then, when the proficient learners revised their English writing, they would read the requirements again to check whether their essays had met the requirements or not. In addition, a proficient participant added that the requirement of an English writing task sometimes contains too much information, so she read it again after finishing her essay in case she had missed some important points. Furthermore, the participants' video showed that after completing writing an English essay, two proficient learners and two less proficient learners counted the number of words they had written to meet the word number limit although it was not stated in the writing task of this research.

Finally, the unified **criteria** in English writing also impelled students to check their writing mistakes. According to the participants' video taped writing performance, both proficient and less proficient students made changes in sentences after accomplishing the writing task. A less proficient participant clearly explained the reason behind it, as he said, "I would specially focus on the grammar, sentence structure and content of a sentence because the points I mentioned were the main focuses from exam markers". Hence, criteria is an extremely essential factor that influences EFL students writing behavior at the revising stage.

Rinnert and Kobayashi (2009) discover that Japanese EFL students with writing experiences evaluated their English essays by focusing more on clarity, logical connection and organization than students without writing experiences. Similarly, the participants in this study have the exam-oriented writing experience, which make them consider the time

limitation, requirements of the writing task and the criteria of marking English essay seriously to achieve good grades. Therefore, exam-oriented writing experience is considered as a main factor for EFL students to revise writing.

4.4.3.2 Lack of Vocabularies and Grammar Knowledge

Lack of vocabularies and grammar knowledge are major factors for both proficient and less proficient students. They shared their experience when they revise their English essays. A proficient student said that she always make mistakes in vocabulary and grammar. Another proficient student also mentioned that “when I was not sure a word I wrote was right or wrong, I would keep thinking of the word”. In English examinations, students have very limited time to write their English essay. Thus, when they do not have enough time to revise the structure or content of their essays, they probably just check spellings of the words and grammar.

This observation is similar to that of Khalid’s findings (2011) on analysing Arabic college students’ English essay. He found that Arabic EFL learners paid much attention on checking mistakes in vocabulary and grammar that did not influence the meaning. The main reason causing such writing behavior is the **criteria** of writing, because examiners mostly focus on their mistakes of using vocabulary and grammar. A less proficient student explained the phenomenon by saying that “checking the mistakes of words after finishing an essay would increase the marks of my essay”. Thus, lack of vocabularies and grammar knowledge would result in frequent checking for mistakes in vocabulary and grammar.

4.4.3.3 Teaching Approach

Teaching approach has also influenced the Chinese EFL senior students in choosing certain writing strategies. Most of the students would follow their teachers' method to improve their writing skills. For instance, a proficient student stated that her teacher sometimes taught them English writing by reading some peers' essays. Another proficient student added that his teacher pointed out their mistakes and corrected their English essays every week.

However, the teaching approach of English writing is limited. A proficient participant pointed out the weakness of the teaching method employed by her English language teacher. She mentioned that "some of the teacher's feedback was only about the corrections of some words with less suggestions about grammar". A reason for that is probably due to the large number of students in each class. It would take up the teacher's time and energy to correct each student's mistake, let alone giving each of them some suggestions for improving their essay. Kalikokha (2008) suggests that large class size impedes students' positive activation in class and keeps the teachers from using the pedagogy of learner centered approach. Furthermore, there is almost no attention to teaching how to write an English essay in English classes. A proficient participant said that their English course content was comparatively full and that they did not have time to read enough model essays. A less proficient participant added that his teacher did not instruct model essays to improve their English writing skills and the teacher only corrected the mistakes in the words used and sentence structures. Wang (2012) and Hou (2011) also confirm the participant's description. The school English teachers do not provide an instruction of how to write an English essay for their students. Moreover, teachers themselves have no idea of how to improve their students' English writing skills (Chen, 2011). Hence, teaching approach does affect the

students' choice of writing strategies. This could also influence why students do not write an outline first for their essay because the teachers never give them such suggestions.

4.4.3.4 Attitude

Attitude is a strong factor that affects Chinese senior high student's usage of certain writing strategies at the revising stage. In this study, a proficient participant had a positive attitude towards English writing. He checked his mistakes constantly after getting feedback for his English essay and learns from it. The proficient learner stressed that his writing level improved by using that method and he was positive to face the failure of an English writing task. Moreover, he believed that completing an English essay was good for him to improve his English proficiency and there was no need to be rewarded. Another proficient participant added that even though she did not get the feedback for her English essay, she would ask her teacher "what mistakes I made in my essay". However, most of the participants had negative attitudes towards some English writing strategies. A proficient learner felt making changes in the structure of essay or giving up her first essay draft and rewriting the essay was troublesome. Two less proficient learners did not value English essay writing and thought it was insignificant and not worth rewarding themselves. Gupta and Woldemariam (2011) conclude that EFL learners' lack of ability to develop the necessary knowledge and skills of writing is a major factor that contributes to the negative attitudes.

4.4.3.5 Lack of Confidence

As Santangelo, Harris and Graham (2007) and Kleitman and Stankov (2007) suggest, students who lack confidence may result in poor writing performance. Lack of confidence was a common problem faced by both proficient and less proficient learners. They felt

embarrassed having to read their essays aloud or to show their English essays to others. They believed that their English essays were badly written. For example, a proficient participant was annoyed when she was asked the reason of not asking others to read her essay. She thought that showing her English essay meant she would be looking for someone to mock her. What she did for her essay was just asking others “how to spell an English word or how to translate a sentence into English”. Another proficient learner also agreed that showing the written English essay to others was embarrassing. He preferred asking his teacher’s opinion on his essay individually. In addition, a less proficient participant said that he had no confidence comparing his essay with his classmates’ essays or model essays because what he wrote the essay poorly. However, Kalikokha (2008) highlights that EFL students with confidence agree that seeking the feedback of essay writing serves them to understand their writing contents better.

4.4.3.6 Poor Correction in Sentence Structure

Poor correction in sentence structure is also another factor influencing EFL writing process for most less proficient learners. They complained that they could not find their mistakes in the sentences. A less proficient participant tried to explain the reason for not revising his sentence structures in his English essay and said that “I wrote an English essay with Chinese style”: thus he was not sure what he wrote was correct or not. Another less proficient learner shared his frustration on the same problem. He said, “I cannot reread my English essay because I was not able to correct them”. Hence, this problem also explains why most of the participants mainly focused on the vocabulary mistakes.

4.4.4 Summary of Factors Influencing EFL learners' Writing Process

The former three sections (see Sections 4.4.1, 4.4.2, 4.4.3) discussed factors that interfere with Chinese EFL students' selection of certain writing strategies. Those factors are summarised in table 4.4.4.

Table 4.4.4 Summary of Factors Influencing EFL Learners' Writing Process

Factors	Examples of Factors at Writing Stages
Exam-oriented writing experience - time - requirement - criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Planning stage - students starting English writing by depending on the time of exam left; checking requests to know word limitation. ● While-writing stage - if students spent much time on the former parts, they would need to rush their essays without checking. ● Revising stage - checking the content to meet the requirements and correcting mistakes to get high grades of writing
Attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Planning stage - lazy to write an outline (negative attitude) ● While-writing stage - lazy to look up a word and ask other's help (negative attitude) ● Revising stage - lazy to make changes in the whole structure of the essay (negative attitude); check the feedback of the essay and learn from it (positive attitude)
Writing difficulties - poor organisation of ideas - poor expression of ideas - lack of enough writing exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Planning stage - having problem remembering the model essay; having problem in planning for English writing ● While-writing stage - failing to organise ideas of an essay; finding difficult expressing ideas in English; unskillful in using vocabularies and sentence patterns ● Revising stage - lack of vocabularies and grammar knowledge; poor correction in sentence structure
Teaching approach - rote memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Planning stage - teacher asking students to remember model essays with vocabularies & sentence structures ● Revising stage - only underlining mistakes in vocabulary and sentence structure
Lack of confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Revising stage - don't compare model essays with their own essays; don't show their English essays to others especially to their peers

The five major factors are identified based on both five proficient students' and five less proficient students' stimulated recall protocols and their post-writing interviews on responses of choosing certain writing strategies in the Petric and Czarl's (2003) questionnaire. The findings revealed that exam-oriented writing experience, attitude and writing difficulties influenced all the writing processes and only two factors, such as teaching approach and confidence impacted on certain writing stages.

Participants reported that exam-oriented writing experience such as time, requirements of the writing task and criteria of writing helped them in deciding whether to write an outline or not at the planning stage; whether the number of words was within the limitation, use of simple words to avoid making mistakes during writing, and remaining time for them to check the mistakes at the revising stage. Manchon et al. (2009, p.116) confirms that when writing under time constraint, EFL writers tend to focus on "lexical and syntactic problems" to compensate their linguistic deficits. Lu (2010) also shares his concern about the effects of the time constraint. The timed essay writing task probably makes the essay writing difficult for the participants to make extensive changes to the overall structure of the essay and a concern for neat and clear handwriting on the answer sheet. Furthermore, writing requirement is another issue for students to make changes in their whole writing process. The word limitation and other detail requirements in the writing task play important roles in the learners' essay writing. The learners wrote and counted the number of words they had written for the essay and read the requirements again after completing the writing task in case of missing some important points in the requirement. They explained that if their essay strayed away from the requirements, they would get low grades. In addition, learners rarely thought of making changes in content or the whole structure of their essays, and they thought their ideas on a certain writing task was unchangeable or they

were lazy to think of how to improve their essays. Their main concern was to meet the criteria of the writing task and get high marks for their English tests. Ma (2012) suggests that students' conceptualized revision mainly involves surface level changes, which is language change instead of content or organization change. Students may use the word limitation as an excuse to avoid content-related changes.

In addition, participants tended to have negative attitude at the prewriting stage and the while-writing stage. They were reluctant to write an outline and use a dictionary to look for a word or check their mistakes. However, at the revising stage, some of the participants appeared to be positive when reading the comments made by their instructors and benefit from them. They thought learning from the feedback helped them improve their English writing skills. Similarly, this idea has also been supported by Kalikokha (2008). He finds that attitude towards writing and writing difficulties have some effects on EFL learners' writing process, especially in the strategies they employ and their level of writing performance.

Moreover, writing difficulties are serious problems for EFL learners in the whole writing process. Participants reported that they did not know how to write an outline at the planning stage, as they felt organising ideas and expressing ideas during writing stage were very challenging. Furthermore, lack of vocabularies, mastering sentence structures and grammar knowledge made their writing even harder. As Khalid (2011) says, EFL students are unable to use "complex grammatical structures due to their limited linguistic competence and insufficient vocabulary" (p.138). When they finally completed their essays and started to check their mistakes, another problem appeared. The less proficient participants were unable to find their mistakes in the sentence structure due to lack of vocabularies and

mastery of sentence patterns. Wu (2007) finds that inefficient English competence is most responsible for student writing difficulties. To be more specific, insufficient vocabulary knowledge is found to be the main writing-difficulty factor at the sentence level, and first language interference, at the discourse level. Proficient learners have fewer writing difficulties than less proficient learners in both of the sentence and organisation level. The less proficient learners were much affected by Chinese. Interestingly, these learners were also found to use more translation strategies while writing English composition. Generally, the effect of first language interference is well-revealed on EFL learners of less English proficiency (Yi, 2001).

Furthermore, teaching approach plays a vital role in interfering with students' writing process. Participants said that their English teachers only used rote-learning some model essays as well as some classical sentence patterns in the text book. They also said that their teachers were in the opinion that if students remembered those useful words and sentence patterns, those students could apply them in their own essays. Furthermore, after the students completed the writing task, their English teachers just corrected mistakes in vocabulary and grammar without teaching how to write an English essay. As Reichlt, Lefkowitz, Rinnert and Schultz (2012) suggested, language instructors may think "addressing writing issues is not their job" (p.34). Hence, teachers pay little attention in addressing the writing strategies employed by learners and they try to avoid giving students guidelines about how to write (Hou, 2011). Teachers are more familiar and comfortable with the identification of grammar problems in their students' writing and are less focused on the meaning-level errors of students' writing (O'Donnell, 2007; Zhang, 2005). The same finding is reported by Liu (2013) where teachers do not pay enough attention to writing strategy training in middle schools in China.

Last but not least, lack of confidence is another issue for most EFL learners. On one hand, they were scared to lose confidence when comparing their own essays with similar model essays. On the other hand, they felt embarrassed about showing their English essays to others, especially to their classmates. They thought their English essays were not worth showing to their peers.

4.5 Summary of Findings

The current study revealed that Chinese EFL senior high school students read the requirements and had a mental plan before writing. They started with the introduction and came up with an idea after writing a few sentences as well as simplified their written language to avoid making mistakes in grammar and vocabulary during writing. Then they read their essays to ensure their English essays match the requirements at the revising stage. Chinese EFL senior high school students would check mistakes of their essays after getting feedback from their teachers.

This study also shows that both proficient and less proficient students displayed different ways of using writing strategies. The proficient learners employed more writing strategies than the less proficient ones based on the results of frequently used writing strategies. It is in line with the previous studies (e.g., Tompkins, 2000; Hou, 2011; Nooreiny & Mazlin, 2013) that less proficient learners just used a few writing strategies. Furthermore, there was a significant difference between proficient and less proficient learners in terms of using writing strategies. Compared to the less proficient learners, the proficient learners tended to read some model essays and wrote an outline before writing, made sure the correction of grammar and vocabulary during writing, and compared their English essays with other essays or model essays.

In addition, the findings highlight five major factors that influenced the choice of writing strategies of Chinese EFL senior high school students. Participants clearly knew that they had some writing problems or difficulties, but some of them did not know how to deal with the problems. Hence, creating awareness of these factors and writing strategies would be one of the recommendations that the current study would propose in chapter five.

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CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Concluding Points

This study is conducted to analyse Chinese senior high school EFL students' writing strategies. It aims to identify whether there is a difference between proficient and less proficient students' choice of writing strategies and factors affecting their choice of these strategies. In this final chapter, the research questions are revisited and the findings are summarised (Section 5.1). Then the implications of the study is discussed (Section 5.2). Finally, some recommendations are made for further studies (Section 5.3).

Table 5.1 presents the research questions in the first column, the data collected in the second, and the chapters and sections that provide answers in the last column.

Table 5.1: Summary of the Answers to the Research Questions

Research questions (RQs)	Data that answer each RQ	Chapters that answer RQs
RQ 1: What writing strategies do Chinese senior high school students frequently employ when writing compositions in English?	Writing strategy questionnaire	Background and Likert-scale questionnaires were administered to 52 students. Data collected were analysed and presented in Chapter Four section 4.1 and 4.2.
RQ 2: How do proficient and less English proficient students differ in their writing strategies?	Writing strategy questionnaire	Findings were analysed as reported students in the questionnaire. Chapter Four section 4.3.1 discusses the overall writing strategies and presents a comparison of writing strategies used by proficient and less proficient learners at the prewriting stage, while-writing stage and revising stage.
The most frequently used writing strategy by proficient and less proficient students	Writing strategy questionnaire	Analysis of responses of the questionnaire provided answers to show the difference in the most frequently used writing strategy between proficient and less proficient students. Chapter Four section 4.3.2 presents the results of the analysis.
The least frequently used writing strategy by the proficient and less proficient students	Writing strategy questionnaire	Analysis of responses of the questionnaire provided answers to show the difference in the least frequently used writing strategy between proficient and less proficient students. Chapter Four section 4.3.3 presents the results of the analysis.
Significant difference of writing strategies between proficient and less proficient learners	Writing strategy questionnaire	Analysis of responses of the questionnaire provided answers to show the significant difference of writing strategies between proficient and less proficient students. Chapter Four section 4.3.4 presents the results of the analysis.
RQ 3: What are the factors that influence students' choice of strategies in their writing process?	Recall protocols and Post-writing interviews	Analysis of recall protocols and post-writing interviews revealed the factors influencing students' choice of writing strategies. Chapter Four sections 4.4.1, 4.4.2 and 4.4.3 present factors at the prewriting stage, while-writing stage and revising stage respectively. Section 4.4.4 in Chapter Four summarises the findings.

5.1 Research Summary

The overall conclusion of this study is reported in accordance with the research questions.

The research questions will be presented with following sub-sections.

5.1.1 Research Question 1: What writing strategies do Chinese senior high school students frequently employ when writing compositions in English?

Considering the aim of the first research question, 52 Grade One senior high school EFL Chinese learners of the study were asked to complete the questionnaire adopted by Czarl and Petric (2003). Analysis of the writing strategy questionnaire indicates that in general the students are moderate writing strategy users. The findings also reveal that the participants used more strategies at the while-writing stage as compared to strategies at the prewriting stage and strategies at the revising stage. The major findings on Chinese EFL senior high school students are summarised as follows:

Firstly, at the prewriting stage, the Chinese senior high school participants generally applied the strategies “read the requirements” and “have a plan” in mind instead of writing the plan on paper. Secondly, at the while-writing stage, the participants began with the introduction, stopped after a few sentences to cover an idea, made sure the correction of grammars and vocabularies, simplified their ideas when they did not know how to express them in English, found a word that had similar meaning when they did not know the word in English and used a bilingual dictionary. Finally, at the revising stage, the participants reread their English essays before handing them and rechecked the requirements to see whether their finished essays match the requirements or not. After submitting their essays and getting feedback from the teacher, participants checked their mistakes and learnt from

them. This is consistent with Nooreiny and Mazlin's (2013) findings, who state that their Malaysian ESL senior high school students employ similar writing strategies.

5.1.2 Research Question 2: How do proficient and less English proficient students differ in their writing strategies?

Based on the data collected from the writing strategies questionnaire, 31 proficient students and 21 less proficient students participated in this study. In general, the proficient learners employed more writing strategies than the less proficient ones. This study has shown three different aspects of writing strategies used by proficient and less proficient participants.

Firstly, in terms of the most frequently used writing strategy, the proficient learners employed five more writing strategies than the less proficient ones. The proficient learners emphasised that having a mental plan instead of writing the plan on paper, starting with writing an introduction and pausing after a several sentences to get an idea, making changes in vocabulary as well as checking mistakes after getting feedback from their teachers were important.

Secondly, some differences between proficient and less proficient EFL learners have been revealed on the least frequently used writing strategies. In contrast to proficient learners, less proficient learners rarely wrote an outline on paper at the prewriting stage. Although both proficient and less proficient learners were poor users of three writing strategies at the while-writing stage, compared with less proficient learners, proficient learners rarely "focus on one thing at a time" at the revising stage. However, less proficient learners were low strategy users when employing "compare my paper with the essays written by my friends

on the same topic or model essays” while proficient ones were moderate strategy users of this strategy.

Finally, results derived from the statistical analysis (t-test) of the data show that in general, there is a significant difference between proficient and less proficient learners in the use of writing strategy at the prewriting stage. The results also reveal that some writing strategies are significantly different from each group. At the prewriting stage, the proficient students performed better than less proficient ones when using strategies “I look at a model written by a native speaker or more proficient writer”, “I start writing after having a written or mental plan” and “I write an outline of my paper”. However, there is a slight significant difference between proficient and less proficient groups in terms of employing the writing strategy “I make sure there is no grammar and vocabulary mistakes”. In addition, there are two writing strategies at the revising stage which show significant differences between proficient and less proficient learners. The two strategies are “I check if my essay matches the requirements” and “I compare my paper with the essays written by my friends on the same topic or model essays”.

5.1.3 Research Question 3: What are the factors that influence students’ choice of strategies in their writing process?

The selection of writing strategies by the proficient and less proficient EFL learners is mainly influenced by exam-oriented writing experience, attitude, writing difficulties, teaching approach and lack of confidence. These five major factors were identified based on the five high and five less English proficient participants’ stimulated recall protocols and post-writing interviews on responses of choosing certain writing strategies in the Petric and Czarl’s (2003) questionnaire.

Exam-oriented writing experience such as time, requirements of the writing task and criteria of writing help participants in deciding whether to write an outline or not at the planning stage; whether the number of words is within the limitation, use of simple words to avoid making mistakes during writing, and remaining time left for them to check the mistakes at the revising stage. This writing experience is not discussed clearly by other studies (e.g. Ahmad, 2010; Hou, 2011; Ma, 2012; Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2009). The reason could be related to the Chinese senior high school students' learning context (see Section 1.2).

Having a negative attitude seems to discourage the learners in this study to further enhance their writing performance. They were reluctant to write an outline and use a dictionary to look for words or check their mistakes at the prewriting stage and the while-writing stage. However, at the revising stage, some of the participants appeared to be positive when reading the evaluation made by their instructors. They wanted to learn from the feedback and thought it would help them improve their English writing skills.

Writing difficulties include weak planning for English writing, poor organisation of ideas, poor expression of ideas and poor correction in sentence structure. Writing difficulties have impacted on the EFL learners' whole writing process. Participants reported that they did not know how to write an outline at the planning stage, as they felt that organising ideas and expressing ideas during writing stage as a very challenging process. When the learners revised their essay, they could hardly find their mistakes in the sentence structure. Thus, the lack of vocabularies and the inability to master sentence structures and weak grammar knowledge made their writing even more difficult.

Teaching approach has also affected on the learners' writing process at the prewriting stage and the revising stage. Participants said that their English teachers only required them to rote learn some model essays as well as some classical sentence patterns in the text book. Furthermore, after the students completed the writing task, their English teachers only corrected their mistakes in terms of vocabulary and grammar without teaching them the mechanics of writing. Hence, the teaching approach taken by the teachers has played a role in guiding the learners to use some less efficient writing strategies in their English writing.

Lack of confidence is another issue for most EFL learners. On one hand, they were scared to lose confidence when comparing their own essays with similar model essays. On the other hand, students felt embarrassed to show their English essays to others, especially to their classmates. They thought that their English essays were not worth showing. Therefore, lack of confidence could contribute to learners' poor writing performance.

5.2 Implications of the Study

This research is stimulated by the lack of studies on the Chinese EFL senior high school learners' writing strategies. Thus, this study mainly investigates the Chinese EFL senior high school writers' writing strategies and the factors that influence their choice of the writing strategies. A few methods were used to obtain the data. First, a writing strategies questionnaire adapted from Petric and Czarl (2003) was used to explore the EFL writers' writing strategies, and second, stimulated recalls, post-writing interviews as well as written drafts were employed to discover the factors influencing students to choose the specific writing strategies mentioned in the Section 4.4. Therefore, this study contributes to two main areas of EFL pedagogy and composition analysis methodology.

5.2.1 Pedagogical Implication

The teaching approach and educational system in China have played a major role in influencing the EFL learners' choice of writing strategies. The learners of this study are found to rely heavily on their teachers and the writing instructions they have received. This is obvious for the less proficient EFL learners. In fact, they seem to only follow what they have been instructed to do and use certain learned rules in their writing. However, knowing the rules which are instructed by teachers has not guaranteed them a good writing performance. Thus, it is recommended that instead of providing Chinese EFL learners with a list of rules to memorise, the teachers should understand the writing difficulties learners face and recommend the type of writing strategies which can really help them to improve their writing skills.

One of the results reveals that senior high school students are facing writing difficulties such as poor planning for English writing, weak organisation of ideas, poor expression of ideas and poor correction in sentence structure. Thus, teachers should teach the learners how to plan in a writing task. They should encourage students to practise some pre-task activities by enabling them to write an outline for their writing. This would improve the quality of their writing results and reduce the overall mental burden during writing (Khalid, 2011). It also helps students to organise their ideas before writing. This is a very important step especially if the task is complex, as it directs learners' attention and efforts to the composing process.

Furthermore, teachers should teach some commonly used sentence structures and words (Hou, 2011), tell students how to simplify their ideas when they do not know how to

express them in English, and let them practise to use the commonly used ones skillfully. This method would serve them to make full use of the above skills in their English writing.

In addition, adequate grammar knowledge is necessary for all EFL learners. Both proficient and less proficient learners in the study have said that even though they knew the vocabularies that can express their ideas, they are still scared to make grammar mistakes in their sentences. Hence, teachers should pay attention to their students' grammar knowledge and let them master the adequate grammar knowledge to enhance their writing quality.

Finally, one of the results also shows that less English proficient participants paid very little attention to revision strategies: therefore teachers should be aware of the role revision plays in the development of good writing. Samples of revised works should be displayed to the students for them to revise and edit their work. This step should supply enough opportunities for students to practice writing of different genre.

5.2.2 Methodological Implication

This study also provides some implications for methodology. First of all, this study has adopted Petric and Czarl's questionnaire (2003) to investigate EFL writing strategies. This questionnaire employed the Flower and Hayes's writing model (1981) by listing the writing strategies EFL students may use at prewriting stage, while-writing stage and revising stage which emphasizing the process of writing. In fact, this questionnaire has been successfully used to discover writing strategies employed by the Chinese EFL senior high school students in this research. Hence, this study contributes to the field of both theory and research tool for other researchers to analyse EFL learners' writing.

Furthermore, recall protocols which has been reported by other researchers (e.g., Boshier, 1998; Sasaki, 2000; Lu, 2007; Barkaoui, 2015) are proven to successfully help this study track the EFL learners' writing activities. It gives more support to what Fox-Turnbull (2009) held about recall protocols. He states that recall protocols help researchers gain qualitative insight into the actual working memory processes. Thus, the recall protocols can be used in the EFL writing class so that teachers are able to investigate how their students write an English essay, problems during writing and how they employ some strategies to overcome their problems. This is consistent with Lu's (2007) observation.

In addition, interview, as another useful tool, is also used to find factors that influence EFL writers' choice of writing strategies. The post-writing interview helps researcher to elicit more information that is probably not revealed by recall protocols. The recall protocols just reflect participants' while-writing process and cannot track their writing strategies and factors influencing choice of writing strategies especially at the prewriting stage and the revising stage. For example, some writing strategies at the prewriting stage such as reading some model essays, memorising some English vocabularies and strategies at the revising stage such as asking other students for help and learning the feedback from their teachers, will not be traceable using the recall protocols. Therefore, post-writing interviews on responses of choosing certain writing strategies in the Petric and Czarl's (2003) questionnaire serve the function to help this study to explore more factors that influence Chinese EFL learners' choice of writing strategies.

5.3 Recommendations for Further Studies

This section addresses some limitations of this study and provides recommendations for the way forward.

Firstly, the main limitation of the current study is that it is solely based on the analysis of Grade One senior high school students. Due to the time constraint for Grade Two and Grade Three students in a senior high school, the researcher was unable to get access to analyse their writing process. It could be the reason why the standard deviation values of some writing strategies were comparatively high. For example, the writing strategy at the prewriting stage “I think about what I want to write and have a plan in my mind, but not on paper” ($M = 3.50$; $SD = 1.11$) (see Table 4.2.2A). Hence, the same study can be replicated with more participants of different grades to better generalise the findings.

Secondly, although the participants of this study are distinguished by proficient and less English proficient learners, the difference between their English proficiency level is not clear. Due to the special high school students’ selection system of Xinjiang Province, students’ actual English results of Senior High School Entrance Examination are not revealed. Thus, if further studies analysed EFL students with clear rating scale of English proficiency level, the study may reveal much clearer difference on the use of the writing strategies.

Thirdly, longitudinal study is another suggestion for future research. This study only finds Grade One participants’ writing strategies and factors influencing their choice of writing strategies in a short time. However, whether the number of writing strategies will increase, and whether other factors affect their strategy use within the whole three studying years at the senior high school are unknown. Hence, the writing strategies they adopt and the problems they face can be further explored.

Fourthly, the relationship between time and English proficiency is unclear. It is unclear whether there is a positive relationship between the pause taken during writing and EFL learners' English proficiency. For example, in this study, the less proficient writer, participant 06, spent 1 minute 28 seconds to think how to end his second paragraph of the English essay. He explained he was thinking a word and tried to use the other word with similar meaning to express his ideas at that time. Due to the limited number of participants, this study cannot contribute this issue. Hence, this study encourages future studies to investigate such related issues.

Lastly, this study is based on the Chinese context in the mainland China. Replicating this study with other language contexts could be an interesting comparison. As noted by Farhad (2013), considering the aforementioned backgrounds can enrich the field of EFL writing analysis.

5.4 Summary

This chapter reports the conclusion, implications and recommendations that resulted from this study. It comprises the summary of frequently employed writing strategies of Chinese EFL senior high school students, the difference between proficient and less proficient learners on use of writing strategies, as well as factors that influence students' choice of writing strategies. Additionally, it entails a discussion of pedagogical and methodological implications of this study. This chapter highlights that recall protocols help the researcher to track the EFL learners' writing activities and post-writing interview assists the researcher to elicit more information that is probably not revealed by recall protocols. Based on the limitations of this study, this chapter also provides recommendations for further studies.

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