THE EMPLOYMENT OF SELF-REGULATED STRATEGIES IN WRITING PROCESS BY ENGLISH-MAJOR FRESHMEN AT HO CHI MINH CITY OPEN UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The current study aims to investigate the employment of self-regulated strategies (SRS) and the gender differences in using SRS in learners' writing processes. Zimmerman's model of self-regulated learning and thirty SRS are used. This is the survey study and its research instruments are the questionnaire and the interview. The participants of the study are ninety-three first-year students who major in English language of Faculty of Foreign Languages at HCMC Open University. This study finds that learners used twenty-seven SRS in their writing processes including fifteen sub-strategies of self-efficacy strategies and twelve other SRS such as organizing and transforming strategies, goal setting and planning strategies, seeking information strategies, environmental structuring strategies, time management strategies, imagery strategies, self-instruction strategies, self-consequence strategies, keeping records and monitoring strategies, seeking for social assistance strategies from friends, seeking for social assistance strategies from teachers, and self-evaluation strategies. Also, the study finds the gender differences in using five SRS including self-efficacy strategy to write the introduction paragraph, organizing and transforming strategies, seeking information strategies, self-efficacy strategy to refocus on writing when the distractions are occurred, and keeping record and monitoring strategies for note taking.

Keywords: *self-regulated strategies, writing process.*

1. Introduction

Writing is considered as the sophisticated and complex process in academic context (Hammann, 2005, p.15; Limpo and Alves, 2013, p.401) while it plays a significant role in all learning tasks (Zimmerman and Bandura, 1994, p.846). Writing tasks are related to the critical intellectual (Bruning and Horn, 2000, p. 30). Academic writing towards educational goals involves in not only the task assessments but also the development of critical thinking and cognitive support.

A writing task always requires learners to possess not only content knowledge about ideas, lexicon, and grammatical structures and rhetorical knowledge such as writing genres, planning, and idea expressions but also individual regulation because writing is considered as the self-process (Zimmerman and Risemberg, 1997, p.73). Apart from these difficulties, there are the challenges from learners' behaviors that affect the writing success inside and outside the classroom contexts (Lane et al., 2011, p.322). It is

supposed that learners' writing processes can be enhanced when they effectively carry out the tasks by using the effective strategies. Using SRS is a suggestion since self-regulated strategies (SRS) can make learners pay more attention to their own cognitive processes and they are able to face with the problems for writing achievement.

Over the years, various studies have investigated the role of SRS in writing performance (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987; cited in Zimmerman and Risemberg, 1997, p.74). The term of SRS is regarded as the actions and processes for learners as agent of their own learning to acquire knowledge purposefully and consciously (Zimmerman, 1989, p.329). The cognitive processes of SRS contribute the supportive role to the writing performance (Pajares, 2003, p.141). In writing, using SRS is the process that enables learners to transfer their cognition to their performance (Zimmerman, 2008, p.166). It arises from a purpose of learning so that learners feel being motivated for their own learning. Learners become self-regulated learners or expert learners who successfully perform the academic tasks with confidence, diligence, and resourcefulness (Peggy and Timothy, 1996, p.1).

The current study has two aims for the issues of SRS in writing. Firstly, the study analyzes how learners apply SRS in different phases of their writing processes. The issue is exposed when learners express their opinions about the procedure through which they perform a writing task by using specific strategies for various writing actions in different writing contexts. Secondly, the study investigates the gender differences in using SRS to perform the writing tasks basing on the differences in selecting SRS by male and female students. To clarify the purposes of the current study, two research questions are presented as follows:

1. To what extent do learners employ self-regulated strategies (SRS) in writing process?

2. Are there any gender differences in using self-regulated strategies (SRS) in writing process?

2. Literature review

Zimmerman's model

When scholars around the world discuss strategies employed by the students in the writing process, the model of SRL will be mentioned. Among various models of SRS, Zimmerman's model is paid attention in the current study. Figure 1 describes Zimmerman's model of SRL where SRS are employed in learning processes. The initiative of the cyclical loop in the model is forethought phase which contains two main strategy-actions including task analysis and self-motivational beliefs (Zimmerman, 2008). When learners approach to a specific task, they analyze the requirements of the task and evaluate the task value to motivate themselves in task performance (Panadero and Alonso-Tapia, 2014, p.453). The cyclical loop of SRL continuously occurs in performance phase which engages learners in self-control and self-observation processes. Learners sketch the plans, give the priorities, and select the strategies towards the tasks (Timothy and Zimmerman, 2004, p.538). They also critically pursue the task processes and make the opportune adjustments to attain the setting goals. Self-reflection phase is the process of reflection about the learning outcomes and accumulation of experiences to improve the subsequent tasks with self-judgments and self-reactions processes (Panadero and Alonso-Tapia, 2014, p.456). In this phase, learners self-judge their learning outcomes and their experienced emotions to make the adaptive decisions for the learning approaches and learning strategies (Timothy and Zimmerman, 2004, p.539).

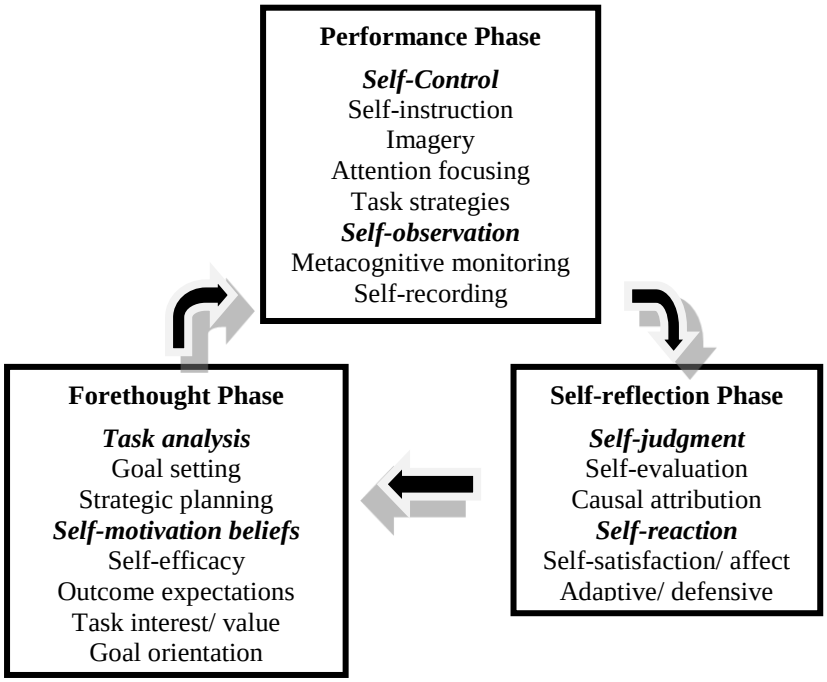

Figure 1. Zimmerman's model of SRL (cited in Zimmerman, 2008, p.178)

Regarding the issues of using SRS in writing performance, Castelló, Inesta, and Monereo (2009) highly appreciated the employment of SRS in writing process since it helped graduate learners to be independent thinkers and writers with their own identity and be able to overcome the arising problems during task performance. Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1986) exposed that tenth-grade learners differently used SRS, especially seeking information, keeping records and monitoring, organizing and transforming, and self-efficacy strategies. Zimmerman and Bandura (1994) particularly focused on the manipulation of self-efficacy strategies in freshmen' writing processes. The study found that the freshmen could control and evaluate their writing outcomes by using these significant strategies. Additionally, the strategies helped them to overcome the difficulties in their writing processes. Kaplan, Lichtinger, and Gorodetsky (2009) focused on the role of goal orientations for secondary learners to evaluate their writing outcomes with the setting goals.

In terms of gender differences in using SRS in writing process, Pajares, Britner, and Valiante (2000) pointed out the gender differences in the application of setting goals and self-belief strategies in writing performance by secondary students. In the study by Pajares and Valiante (2001), the use of motivational belief strategies for writing achievement by secondary male students was different from that of female students. Additionally, Williams and Takaku (2011) figured out the gender differences by undergraduate students in terms of using self-efficacy and help seeking strategies in writing performance. Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1990) assumed the gender differences in using self-efficacy strategies during elementary and secondary learners' writing processes. Pajares and Valiante (1996) also found the gender differences in using self-efficacy strategies among elementary students.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The current study was conducted under the permission of the Dean of Faculty of Foreign Languages at HCMC Open

University. The participants of the current study encompassed ninety-three first-year students from five classes. Their ages were from eighteen to twenty-four. There were seventy-three females and twenty males. Both male and female students responded to the questionnaires and joined in the interviews. In detail, all of the participants responded to the questionnaires and nine of them including four males and five females joined in the interviews. The participants of the study had finished Writing 1 course in the previous semester. It was supposed that they perceived the use of SRS to perform writing tasks and the data collection evaluated the hypotheses.

3.2. Instruments

This study used two research tools including questionnaire and interview. The contents of these instruments were adapted from the meaningful and comprehensible contents about SRS in three previous studies by Zimmerman (1989), Zimmerman and Bandura (1994), and Zimmerman (1998). In the questionnaire, only multiple-choice questions were used. They belonged to ratio data which were classified data into categories (Cohen, Manion, and Marrison, 2007, p.322). Specifically, the present study comprised five multiple-choice questions which referred to different writing contexts of a writing process. The contents of the interview were based on the contents of the questionnaire. The data also aimed to exploit learners' experiences about the employments of SRS in their writing processes. The interview encompassed ten open-ended questions which concentrated on the writing process from the preparation until the completion of a writing task. In detail, the contents of the questions aimed to exploit data about the way learners prepared their writing, performed their writing, solved the distractions, sought for help, and revised the final drafts.

This study focuses on various SRS which are useful for learners at different stages of the writing process. Firstly, self-efficacy strategies is one of the salient kinds of SRS which anticipate learners' behaviors during writing process better than any other strategies (Graham and Weiner, 1996, cited in Pajares, 2003). Depending on the academic goals, the beliefs of self-efficacy strategies vary in terms of academic motivation (Zimmerman, 2000). Organizing and transforming strategies refer to learners' initiative actions to arrange the relevant information of the tasks into the system (Zimmerman, 1989; Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons, 1986). Learners can adjust the directions of the implementation and the essential materials to satisfy the requirements of the tasks. To start a task, it is also indispensable to use goal setting and planning strategies. The strategies aid learners to carry out what they have planned due to the timelines (Huie, Winsler, and Kitsantas, 2014). The strategies can be described as learners' responsibility to look for the necessary materials related to the tasks. The strategies help them to ensure the reliability and validity of the contents in their performance.

Apparently, the tasks may sometimes go beyond learners' capacity and seeking social assistance strategies from friends or seeking social assistance strategies from teachers turn to useful when learners look for the social supports. The stage of task performance seems to be more important than the stages of task preparation and completion. Hence, environment structuring strategies make learners perceive that they should prepare for a writing environment without distractions or disturbances. Moreover, time management strategies support learners to arrange and organize their tasks into the schedules. They can anticipate the time-consuming to complete the tasks before the deadline. During task performance, imagery strategies aided learners to write the effective writing basing on a plot which is adequate of visual illustrations (Zimmerman, 1998). With the

support of self-instruction strategies, learners can overcome the sudden obstacles in their cognitive processes by saying aloud what they tend to write (Zimmerman, 1998). Self-consequence strategies refer to learners' ability to control their behaviors during their task implementation. Finally, learners can employ keeping records and monitoring strategies to store the experiences from their task performance for further uses.

3.3. Data analysis

Multiple-choice questions were statistically analyzed to eliminate the unreliable data for the study by using SPSS. The data from six questions were significant since the p-value of each question which was smaller than .05 was significant for analysis. The qualitative data supported for the findings from the questionnaire. Significantly, all of the ideas to build up the contents of the experiment were relied on the prior prominent studies as mentioned above. The questions thoroughly described how SRS permeated throughout the writing process from the forethought phase, performance phase to the self-reflection phase.

4. Findings and discussions

4.1. The employment of SRS in writing process

To respond to the first research question relating to what extent the learners employ self-regulated strategies (SRS) in writing process, both of the quantitative data and the qualitative data were used. The study used Multiple Responses to analyze the quantitative data and Content Analysis to analyze the qualitative data. The percentage from the quantitative data exposed the favored SRS in writing process and the contents from the qualitative data specifically described the use of SRS in writing process by the participants of this study. The results will be presented based on different phases of students' employing self-regulated strategies during the writing process.

4.1.1. Forethought phase

The use of SRS in forethought phase was measured due to the way learners wrote the effective topic statement and prepared for their writing. To write the topic statement effectively, learners deployed various sub-strategies of self-efficacy strategies.

Table 1. SRS to write the effective topic statement

	N	*Percent*
Write a brief but informative overview of the topic statement	40	23.0%
Encourage myself to write even the topic is not interesting	34	27.0%
Write a suitable topic statement in a short time	12	8.1%
Spend an appropriate time-consuming to write a topic statement	51	34.5%
Write a short informative topic statement for a complicated topic	10	6.8%
Others	01	0.7%
	196	100%

As shown in Table 1, 23.0% of the respondents preferred to employ self-efficacy strategy to write the brief but informative information of the topic statement in order to produce the successful topic statement. Table 1 also expose that 27.0% of the respondents particularly used self-efficacy strategy to self-motivate in case the writing topics were less interesting. The qualitative data showed that one interviewee found no difficulty in terms of the writing topic whereas five of them exposed that the topic was their consideration when it sometimes was difficult, less interesting, or demanding.

As can be seen from table 1, 8.1% of the respondents made use of self-efficacy strategy to write the topic statement in a short time. Significantly, the added option which was the dedication of the appropriate time-consuming to write the topic statement highly obtained 34.5% of the agreement from the respondents. It meant that learners planned their time schedules and prepared their efforts logically for the whole writing process so that they would not waste much time to write the topic statement. As shown in table 1, 6.8% of the respondents appreciated self-efficacy strategy to write a short but informative topic statement for the complex writing topics. Apparently, a large part of the difficult topics required abundance of writing ideas and it was impossible for learners to grasp every idea of the writing within a sentence. At that time, writing a brief topic sentence to represent for the contents of the writing was the precise determination. Table 1 reveals that 0.7% of the respondents personally expressed that most of the writing topics were uninteresting and they must spend more time to write the satisfactory topic statements.

Generally, the study deduced that the first-year learners used four sub-strategies of self-efficacy strategies to write the effective topic statement including self-efficacy strategy to write the overview of the topic statement, self-efficacy strategy to self-encourage when the writing topics were less interesting, self-efficacy strategy to quickly write the topic statement, and self-efficacy strategy to write a short informative topic statement for the difficult topics.

Besides SRS were used in writing the effective topic statement, the use of SRS was evaluated by the way learners prepared for their writing. Table 2 presents the students' employment of self-regulated strategies (SRS) to prepare for the writing.

Table 2. SRS to prepare for the writing

	N	*Percent*
Search online to get relevant information before writing the paper	72	27.6%
Make an outline before writing the paper	66	25.3%
Set goals before writing the paper	46	17.6%
Write a brief but informative overview of opening paragraph	38	14.6%
Find an unusual opening paragraph to attract readers	27	10.3%
Construct a good opening sentence quickly	09	3.4%
Start writing with no difficulties	03	1.1%
	319	100.0%

As can be seen in Table 2, 27.6% of the respondents highly appreciated the manipulation of seeking information strategies in their writing processes. Similar to the quantitative data, the qualitative data showed that nine over nine of the interviewees looked for the essential materials before writing. Two interviewees added that they sometimes went to the school library to look for articles in books or use the computers in the library to search for the materials. The use of seeking information strategies in writing process was also found in the previous study by Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1986). As shown in table 2, another favored kind of SRS that was used by the respondents in forethought phase belonged to organizing and transforming strategies since 25.3% of them selected the option. Learners applied the strategies in forming the outline for their writing. The qualitative data from also supported the finding since all of nine

interviewees agreed with the idea. One interviewee added that she looked for the relevant ideas, gathered the relevant information into the outline, and finally edited the outline. Three interviewees expressed that the outline was done in groups and edited by teachers before it was used for their writing. The application of organizing and transforming strategies in writing process was also found in the previous study by Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1986).

The data in table 2 expose that 17.6% of the respondents deployed goal setting and planning strategies in order to finish the tasks according to the setting goals and plans. From the finding, the study concluded that learners frequently built up the outline before writing by using goal setting and planning strategies. Additionally, table 2 reveals that 14.6% of the respondents made advantage of self-efficacy strategies to write the brief information for the introduction paragraph, 10.3% of them write an interesting introduction paragraph by pursuing the unusual manner to impress the readers, 3.4% of them quickly write a good opening paragraph, and 1.1% of them self-regulated their behaviors and beliefs to be independent when they started to write.

The study acknowledged that the first-year students manipulated six SRS in preparation stage such as seeking information strategies, organizing and transforming strategies, goal setting and planning strategies, and three sub-strategies of self-efficacy strategies including self-efficacy strategy to write the opening paragraph in the unusual way, self-efficacy strategy to construct the good opening sentence quickly, and self-efficacy strategy to self-regulate their behaviors to reduce the writing anxiety. The self-efficacy strategy to write the overview of the opening paragraph was similar to the self-efficacy strategy to write the brief but informative overview of the topic statement. In short, the results of the study were that the first-year learners used ten SRS to write the effective topic statement and well-prepare for their writing in forethought phase.

4.1.2. Performance phase

The employment of self-regulated strategies (SRS) in performance phase was analyzed basing on the way learners performed the writing, solved the distractions, and sought for help. The study found that learners used various SRS in order to perform the writing effectively. Table 3 presents the students' employment of SRS during the writing process.

Table 3. SRS to perform the writing

	N	*Percent*
Manage time effectively for the pressure of deadline	60	12.0%
Try to finish my paper on time	81	16.3%
Adjust the writing methods to suit the needs of the writing	69	13.9%
Find a way to overcome the problems	55	11.0%
Quickly find memorable examples to illustrate an important point	66	13.3%
Use words to create the vivid picture to illustrate for the ideas	36	7.2%
Use imagination with visual details to image a plot	22	4.4%
Say aloud what will be written	08	1.6%
Take notes of useful words and frequent-used grammatical structures	52	10.4%
Take notes of wrong words and wrong grammatical structures	49	9.8%
	498	100.0%

The use of time management strategies by the participants in their task performance obtained the significant statistic of 12.0% of the agreement due to the data from Table 3. The added option about the punctual task completion also occupied the high agreement of 16.3% as shown in table 3. It implied that learners paid much attention to the use of time management strategies so that they could complete the tasks before the submission. Eight over nine of the interviewees exposed that they never missed the deadline of task submission while one of them said that their group used to hand in the assignments later than the deadline. However, all of them believed that the task completion was their responsibility and they tried to finish the tasks or their homework due to the time schedule.

Table 3 indicates that 13.9% of the participants highly appreciated self-efficacy strategy to make the adjustment of writing methods depending on the task requirements. They selected the appropriate method to increase the accurateness and effectiveness of their writing. The qualitative data exposed that three out of nine interviewees agreed with the idea of flexibly adjusting the writing methods and one of them pursued the academic writing method. Table 3 also indicates that 11.0% of the participants manipulated self-efficacy strategy to face with the difficulties occurring during their writing processes. They found that problem-solving was essential and important so that they could go on their task implementation. Additionally, the role of self-efficacy strategies was helpful for learners to build up the contents of their writing. 13.3% of the participants used self-efficacy strategy to find memorable examples to illustrate the important ideas and 7.2% of them used another self-efficacy strategy to create the vivid illustrations for the supporting ideas in their writing as shown in table 3. Apparently, using examples and vivid pictures was an effective manner for learners to write the supporting ideas because the writing became more practical and valid with the interesting and appealing ideas through the illustrations and images.

To write the main ideas and the supporting ideas effectively, 4.4% of the participants applied one significant kind of SRS which was imagery strategies in their writing processes due to the data in table 3. When they performed a writing task, they built up the plot for their writing by using the strategies. The reason was that their writing would be not only comprehensible but also meaningful within the setting plot. Another significant kind of SRS which was self-instruction strategies was also used during learners' writing processes since the data from table 3 reveals that 1.6% of the participants selected the option of saying aloud their cognitive processes for what they tended to write. Learners used the strategies to think aloud their intentional ideas first and write the ideas later. One interviewee said that she formed the ideas in the cognitive processes first and then wrote down the ideas on the drafts, and edited the contents in the final drafts later. Although the use of imagery strategies and self-instruction strategies received the low percentage, it was significant for the findings of this study because the strategies described the characteristics of professional writers.

Table 3 reveals that 10.4% of the respondents made advantage of the keeping record and monitoring strategies to take notes of the useful information such as vocabulary and grammar structures and 9.8% of them took notes of the incorrect use of grammar and vocabulary during writing process. The qualitative data also supported the point since seven out of nine interviewees agreed with the idea of taking notes of the contents in their task performance. In detail, one interviewee said that he took notes of the well-organized writing layouts. It was also important for him to note the interesting and useful ideas and the way to brainstorm the ideas for the writing.

He experienced the ideas development in the cognitive processes and should be more appropriately developed. Three interviewees expressed that they took notes of the new and helpful grammatical structures or the useful vocabulary which frequently appeared in the writing. Another interviewee gave an example that she used pronouns to replace the previous words such as "ones" instead of "people" to reduce the frequency of its repetition. One more interviewee said that he noticed the vocabulary in academic writing. Another male interviewee added that he took notes of the vocabulary that initially appeared in the writing. Two interviewees said that they would notice this kind of SRS for the next writing tasks.

Generally, the study found that the first-year learners employed eight SRS to perform the tasks effectively including time management strategies, four sub-strategies of self-efficacy strategies which were self-efficacy strategy to adjust the writing methods, self-efficacy strategy to overcome the potential problems, self-efficacy strategy to use examples for supporting ideas, and self-efficacy strategy to use words to illustrate for supporting ideas, imagery strategies, self-instruction strategies, and keeping record and monitoring strategies. The fact was that dealing with distractions was unavoidable when learners implemented their tasks. The study found that learners applied SRS to solve the distractions during writing. Table 4 presents the students' use of SRS to solve the distractions during the writing process.

Table 4. SRS to solve the distractions during writing

	N	*Percent*
Find a way to concentrate on my writing	62	34.8%
Refocus on writing when thinking about other things	27	15.2%
Control the disturbance from the around environment when writing	53	29.8%
Put off the entertainments when writing	36	20.2%
	178	100.0%

As shown in table 4, the respondents focused on the manipulation of self-efficacy strategy to solve the distractions during writing since 34.8% of them found a way to pay attention to their task performance and 15.2% of them controlled their behaviors and beliefs to refocus on their task performance whenever they were distracted to other things. Six over nine of the interviewees agreed that it was essential for them to self-motivate their behaviors and beliefs to face with the distractions occurring in writing. Specifically, one interviewee revealed that it was straightforward for her to jump on the entertainment sites when she performed the writing on the computer. However, she would reconcentrate on the writing and put off her personal enjoyments. Five interviewees said that they were distracted by the television and the noises during writing. To overcome the distractions, they might stop writing for a while and paid attention to their writing afterwards. The similar result about the use of self-efficacy strategies during writing was also found in the previous study by Castelló, Inesta, and Monereo (2009).

Table 4 exposes that 29.8% of the respondents used environmental structuring strategies to face with the disturbances around them during their writing processes. From the qualitative data, two out of nine interviewees revealed their solutions of these disturbances. One interviewee said that the distractions could be arisen from other people in case

these people disturbed him when he performed his writing. It caused the anticlimax of the inspirations or the loss of the ideas. To recreate the inspirations for writing, he interrupted his writing for a while and refocused on the writing afterwards. Another interviewee added that she chose a place without the distractions of television and noises. She frequently made use of the private peace in the evening to write when the things around turned to quieter.

The data in table 4 reveal that 20.2% of the respondents used self-consequence strategies to control their behaviors and beliefs during their writing processes. Seven over nine interviewees also expressed the way they balanced the task implementation and their personal recreation. One interviewee said that she preferred to finish the tasks before enjoying the entertainments. Another interviewee exposed that she spent a definite time-consuming to perform the tasks without the interruptions of other things. Two interviewees said that they tried to complete the tasks before deadline. One more interviewee said that he might complete the writing tasks later but it did not negatively affect the deadline of submission. Two other interviewees added that the entertainments or their part-time jobs did not influence their task performance since they also put the task completion as the priority.

Generally, the findings of the study were that the first-year learners employed three SRS to face with the distractions including one sub-strategy of self-efficacy strategies to find a way to refocus on task performance when there were distractions, self-consequence strategies, and environmental structuring strategies.

During the writing process, the fact was that solving the potential problems was based on not only learners' own capacity but also other sources such as materials and human. The result of the study was that learners applied SRS as a source of seeking help (Table 5).

Table 5. SRS to seek for help

	N	*Percent*
Locate and use appropriate reference sources	79	23.4%
Ask friends for helps if there are problems in writing	55	16.3%
Ask teachers for helps if there are problems in writing	46	13.6%
Find a solution by yourself	36	10.7%
Get directions from teachers to solve the problems	48	14.2%
Get feedback from classmates to solve the problems	44	13.1%
Use the solution by yourself to solve the problems	29	8.6%
	337	100.0%

Table 5 shows that 23.4% of the participants frequently employed self-efficacy strategy to search for the reference sources in order to solve the potential problems in their writing processes. One interviewee said that the difficulties were how to write the precise sentences and her volume of words was still limited. For instance, using homonyms was challenging to her because different words which belonged to the similar meaning but their expressions in specific contexts were different. Another interviewee added that the difficulties could be how to use the academic lexicons for academic writing. The result

about the use of self-efficacy strategies was also found in the prior study by Zimmerman and Bandura (1994).

As can be seen in table 5, 16.3% of the participants manipulated seeking social assistance strategies from their classmates as a source of social help. Six out of nine interviewees also believed that their classmates, especially talent students, could provide them with the helpful solutions to deal with the difficulties. Additionally, the data from table 5 show that 13.6% of the participants employed seeking social assistance strategies from their teachers. Four over nine interviewees exposed that it had better for them to come to their teachers and ask for help. Learners evaluated the difficult degree of the writing tasks and selected the satisfactory sources of seeking help. The fact was that 10.7% of the respondents selected the option of finding out the solutions by using their own efforts to face with the arising problems as shown in table 4.5. When the difficulties were beyond their own capacity, they looked for help from their classmates and asking their teachers for directions was more appropriate. The data revealed that the first-year students preferred to ask their friends for help to the teachers when the tasks were not too complex and they also made their own determination for the common difficulties.

Regarding their favored sources of solving the problems, 14.2% of the participants preferred the help from their teachers' directions, 13.1% of them preferred the feedback from their classmates, and 8.6% of them preferred their own solutions for problem solving respectively. It meant that they tried to face with the difficulties by their own efforts but they most preferred the help from their teachers to solve the difficulties. The finding about the use of help seeking strategies was also found in the previous study by Kaplan, Lichtinger, and Gorodetsky (2009).

Generally, three SRS including one sub-strategy of self-efficacy strategies to use reference sources, seeking social assistance from friends and teachers were used by the first-year learners for problem solving. In short, the study confirmed that learners manipulated fourteen SRS for writing the effective body paragraphs, solving the distractions, and seeking help in performance phase.

4.1.3. Self-reflection phase

In self-reflection phase, the employment of SRS was evaluated due to the way learners revised and edited the use of vocabulary and grammar structures in their final drafts.

Table 6. SRS to revise the vocabulary and grammar of the final draft

	N	*Percent*
Find and correct all grammatical errors	81	18.1%
Find and correct all spelling errors	81	18.1%
Find and replace similar words by synonyms and antonyms	68	15.2%
Find and replace vocabulary to suit the writing contexts	55	12.3%
Write very effective transitional sentences for ideas	49	10.9%
Write very effective transitional sentences for paragraphs	38	8.5%
Rewrite the confused sentences	49	10.9%
Rewrite the wordy sentences	27	6.0%
	499	100.0%

The data in Table 6 reveal that the most frequent-used SRS for learners to revise the vocabulary and grammar in the final drafts belonged to self-evaluating strategies since 18.1% of them found and corrected the grammar errors and equivalently, 18.1% of them found and corrected the spelling errors. Nine out of nine interviewees expressed that the most common errors in the writing were grammar structures such as verbs, tenses, run-on sentences, fragment sentences, and spelling mistakes. Table 6 shows that 15.2% of the participants modified the repeated vocabulary by synonyms and antonyms and 12.3% of them adjusted the inappropriate words in their writing by the context-based vocabulary. The fact was that the modification helped them to not only correct the wrong words but also avoid the repetition of the similar words. It made the use of vocabulary in their writing became abundant and diverse. All of nine interviewees admitted that they frequently met errors of vocabulary such as repeated words, incorrect words, and inappropriate words for specific writing contexts. Specifically, four interviewees said that they edited the vocabulary by using synonyms and antonyms. One interviewee expressed that he rewrote the vocabulary by using formal vocabulary. Another interviewee added that she looked up in the dictionary for the unknown words. Table 6 exposes that 10.9% of the participants deployed self-efficacy strategy to write the transitional sentences for the ideas and 8.5% of them used self-efficacy strategy to write the transitional sentences for the paragraphs in their writing. 10.9% of the respondents also employed self-efficacy strategy to rewrite the confused sentences and 6.0% of them used self-efficacy strategy to rewrite the wordy sentences. They rewrote the unpleasant sentences to better the forms and the contents of the sentences. Four out of nine interviewees expressed that they paid attention to the review of the ideas in the drafts.

In short, the study confirmed that the first-year students employed three SRS which were self-evaluating strategies and two sub-strategies of self-efficacy strategies to revise and edit the vocabulary and grammar in their final drafts in self-reflection phase. The sub-strategies of self-efficacy strategies were self-efficacy strategy to write the effective transitional sentences and self-efficacy strategy to rewrite the wordy and confused sentences.

4.2. Gender differences in using SRS in writing process

To respond to the second research question with regards to gender differences in using self-regulated strategies (SRS) in writing process, the study used Mann-Whitney U Test to analyze the quantitative data. The p-value (p), the mean rank (MR), the U score (U), and the Z score (Z) from the data made the study accept the alternative hypothesis (H_1) that there were significant gender differences in using SRS in learners' writing processes in the forethought phase and the performance phase.

4.2.1. Forethought phase

To compare the differences in employing SRS in writing process, the current study attempts to investigate these differences in two phases: the forethought phase and performance phase. Table 7 presents the gender differences in the way the first-year male and female students used SRS in forethought phase.

Table 7. Gender differences in using SRS in forethought phase

	Gender	*N*	*MR*	*U*	*Z*	*p-value*
Construct a good opening sentence quickly	Male	20	56.45	541.00	-3.45	.001
	Female	73	44.41			
Search online to get relevant information before writing the paper	Male	20	36.58	521.50	-2.69	.007
	Female	73	49.86			
Make an outline before writing the paper	Male	20	37.25	535.00	-2.32	.020
	Female	73	49.67			

Regarding the data analysis for the gender difference in using self-efficacy strategy to quickly write the introduction paragraph, table 7 shows that the U score of this option (U=541.00), the Z score of this option (Z=-3.45), and the p-value of this option (p=.001) accepted the H_1. The study found that there was gender difference in using self-efficacy strategy to quickly write the introduction paragraph since the p-value of this option was significantly smaller than .05. Table 7 also shows that the MR (male students) = 56.45 while the MR (female students) = 44.41 in terms of constructing good opening sentence quickly. The statistics revealed that the MR of the male students was larger than the MR of the female students. From the points, the male students could write the introduction paragraph faster than the female students. The reason might be that the male and female students pursued different methods to write the introduction paragraph and each method took them much or less time-consuming. The study assumed that the male first-year students more frequently used self-efficacy strategy to start their writing than the female first-year students.

When the study evaluated the gender difference in using seeking information strategies, the data from table 7 expose that the U score of this option (U=521.50), the Z score of this option (Z=-2.69), and the p-value of this option (p=.007) made the study admit the H_1 since the p-value of this option was significantly smaller than .05. It implied that there was gender difference in manipulating seeking information strategies. Table 7 reveals that the MR (male students) = 36.58 whereas the MR (female students) = 49.86. As could be seen, the MR of the male students was smaller than the MR of the female students. The calculation gave out the assumption that the female students gave more concern on the searching for relevant materials than the male students. Possibly, the sources of materials were various and the male and female students differently used the materials, which were reliable and valid, to build up the supporting ideas for their writing. The study acknowledged that the female first-year students were better in use of seeking information strategies than the male first-year students.

As shown in table 7, the data for the gender difference in using organizing and transforming strategies reveal that the U score of this option (U=535.00), the Z score of this option (Z=-2.32), and the p-value of this option (p=.020) accepted the H_1. On the other words, the study assumed that there was gender difference in using organizing and transforming strategies since the p-value of this option was moderately smaller than .05. Table 7 exposes that the MR (male students) = 37.25 while the MR (female students) = 49.67. It could be seen that the MR of the male students was moderately smaller than the MR of the female students. The statistics

revealed that the female students frequently carried out the strategy-action of making outline before writing than the male students. Apparently, the outline is considered as the spine of their writing which organizes and connects all of the ideas in their writing into the system. However, the finding posed the supposition that some of the male learners might ignore the stage of forming the outline before writing. It made the study conclude that the use of organizing and transforming strategies was more significant towards the female first-year students than the male first-year students.

The results of the present study were different from those in the prior studies. The prior studies gave out no differences for the use of self-efficacy strategy, organizing and transforming strategies, and seeking information strategies between the male and female students. Also, the present study found no gender difference in using goal setting and planning strategies but in the previous study by Pajares and Valiante (2001), the gender difference in goal orientation strategies was significant for the male students. With the similar objectives to figure out the gender differences in using SRS in learners' writing processes, the prior study by Pajares, Britner, and Valiante (2000) found the gender difference in goal orientation strategies, particularly performance-approach, which was towards the female students. Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1990) also found the gender differences in using goal setting and planning strategies and the female students revealed the significant use of the strategies.

Generally, the study assumed that the first-year male and female students differently used three kinds of SRS including self-efficacy strategy to quickly write the first opening sentence, organizing and transforming strategies, and seeking information strategies before writing.

4.2.2. Performance phase

Table 8 presents the differences for the use of SRS in performance phase by the male and female participants.

Table 8. Gender differences in using SRS in performance phase

	Gender	*N*	*MR*	*U*	*Z*	*p-value*
Take notes of useful words and frequent-used grammatical structures	Male	20	37.28	535.50	-2.12	.034
	Female	73	49.66			
Refocus on writing when thinking about other things	Male	20	38.15	553.00	-2.11	.035
	Female	73	49.42			

In performance phase, the study measured the gender difference in using keeping record and monitoring strategies. As can be seen from table 8, the U score of this option (U=535.50), the Z score of this option (Z=-2.12), and the p-value of this option (p=.034) made the study accept the H_1. As being shown, the gender difference in using keeping record and monitoring strategies was found in this study since the p-value of this option was slightly smaller than .05. Table 8 also shows that the MR (male students) = 37.28 while the MR (female students) = 49.66. As could be seen, the MR of the male students were significantly smaller than the MR of the female students. The data implied that the female students frequently took notes of the useful vocabulary and grammar structures than the male students. From the points, the study confirmed that the female first-year students could use keeping record and monitoring strategies better than the male

first-year students. The similar finding about gender difference in using keeping record and monitoring strategies which was more significant for females was also found in the prior study by Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1990). The finding of this prior study (p=.010) was more significant than the current study (p=.034).

Regarding the gender difference in using self-efficacy strategy to refocus on task performance, the data from Table 8 expose that the U score of this option (U=553.00), the Z score of this option (Z=-2.11), and the p-value of this option (p=.035) also accepted the H_1. The data showed that the use of this kind of SRS by the male students was different from that by the female students since the p-value of this strategy was moderately smaller than .05. From the data of Table 8, the statistics showed that the MR (male students) = 38.15 whereas the MR (female students) = 49.42. As being shown, the MR of the male students was moderately smaller than the MR of the female students. The data exposed that the female students were able to reconcentrate on their task implementation faster than the male students. The fact was that the female students tended to stay away from the distractions and disturbances and they frequently prepared a quiet writing environment when they carried out their writing assignments. In case they were distracted from the task implementation, they were able to refocus on their writing immediately. The study deduced that the female first-year students were able to use self-efficacy strategy to refocus on writing when they were distracted to other things better than the male first-year students.

In sum, the study concluded that the first-year male and female students differently used two kinds of SRS including keeping record and monitoring strategies for note taking of useful information and self-efficacy strategy to regulate their behaviors during writing.

To respond to the second research question, the study concluded that the male and female first-year learners differently used five SRS in forethought phase and performance phase. None of the gender difference was found in self-reflection phase.

5. Implications and conclusion

From the results of this study, it is implied that self-regulated strategies (SRS) are beneficial and satisfactory for successful learning, particularly in writing. Using the strategies can enhance learners' learning proficiency and evoke the capacity of independent learning (Field, Duffy, and Huggins, 2014, p.2). Learners can alter SRS to systemize and organize their learning in an effective way so that they have a feeling of being motivated, consider learning as their own responsibility, and feel comfortable to cooperate with others for their own sake in learning (Zimmerman, 1986, p.308; cited in Field, Duffy, and Huggins, 2014, p.2). They become autonomous in their own learning when they control their learning with a proper schedule, arrange time for learning scientifically, and understand their learning competence towards the tasks deliberately. They are provided with opportunities to accumulate learning experiences through motivation and curiosity, self-confidence, and self-reliance basing on their comprehension and ability.

The knowledge in human' mind can be forgotten and the perception of SRS is not the exception. Hence, this study is a reminder about the manipulation of SRS which principally aims to evoke its contents in learners' minds so that they can continue to make use of the usefulness of the strategies in their own learning, particularly in writing performance. Additionally, the unfamiliar SRS are approached to them so that they can exploit the use of these strategies in the further tasks.

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