

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Rationale of the Study

Human beings are social animals for which the chief means of maintaining the bonds of society is language. Language is crucial for modern man's way of life: it is used as a tool for communicating, expressing feelings and ideas including seeking new knowledge to improve life.

Nowadays, English plays an important role in many countries around the world. English, alone of all the world languages, has come to be accepted as the tool and the symbol of a modern technologically advanced society. As Conrad and Fishman, (1977) cited in Wolfson (1989, p. 275), pointed out:

Growing school age populations coupled with a growing percentage of that population in fact enrolled in secondary school amounts for a demand for English instruction which is growing at a substantially greater rate than the population itself...in Asia...the percentage of age appropriate population in secondary schools doubled in the decade 1960-1970, a fact doubly significant for these purposes since overall 97% of that secondary school enrollment is in English classes (p. 14).

In Thailand, the Education Ministry appreciates the value of

English for learning. Consequently, English is provided in the curricula from elementary grades to university level for students to develop abilities in listening, speaking, reading and writing.

English language pedagogy denotes four basic language skills to be learned: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Although writing is the last skill, it isn't less important than the others. Reid (1993, p. 4) expresses his idea about the importance of writing by stating that even if writing were not as important for many public uses as it was in the past, it would still be valuable in education because it facilitates thought. Writing can help you to think critically. It can enable you to perceive relationships, to deepen perception, to solve problems, to give order to experience. It can help you to clarify your thoughts. Often you discover what you really think and feel about people, ideas, issues, and events only in the actual process of writing. In addition, Reid states that cultural psychologists have found that nonliterate people lag far behind literate people in a variety of cognitive skills. Their studies support the conclusion that literacy, especially writing, promotes intellectual development. Whatever may be the value of concrete, situation-bound thinking in nonliterate cultures, in a technological society a person who cannot think abstractly is at a disadvantage. To learn to write, then, is to learn to think in a certain way. As Russo (1987, p. 134) says writing is an exciting, challenging experience that

permits students to indulge in fantasy of their own while drawing on all their inner resources of imagination and self-expression. One of every English language teachers' goals then must be to have students reach a level of competency in written English. In addition, Britton (1980), cited in Freedman et al. (1983, p. 9), stated that writing is valuable not only because it helps us to acquire school knowledge but more significance because it allows us to come to terms with our lives.

In recent years more and more focus has been put on the role of the learner in the process of successfully acquiring competence in a language. Rubin and Tompson (1982, p. 3) states that the language learner is the most important factor in the language learning process. Moreover, many studies have focused on language learners. Empowering language learners by having them develop learning strategies may help them to cope with the demands of class and indeed, may help them to continue to learn on their own apart from the class (Freeman and Long, 1991, p. 214). It is generally known that good language learners maintain more strategies in learning a second language than poor learners. It's believed that learning strategies are special ways of processing information that enhance comprehension, learning or retention of the information. Weinstein and Mayer (1986, p. 315) noted that the goal of strategy use is to "affect the learner's motivational or affective state, or the way in which the learner selects,

acquires, or organizes, or integrates new knowledge". The teacher can encourage and assist students in using effective strategies for learning and can extend and challenge the students' mastery of the language by introducing academic language embedded in substantive content. Research efforts concentrating on the learner will identify strategies reported by students.

By discovering what writing strategies the learners use, it should be possible to help learners improve their writing and become more effective and independent learners. As a language teacher, it's necessary that he/she understands the nature of written discourse and the characteristics of effective writing as well as understand the strategies successful writers use in order to encourage and assist students in using effective strategies for learning and extend and challenge the students' mastery of the language. As a result it's expected that language teachers can apply research findings on writing strategies in second language acquisition to their classroom.

#### Statement of the Problem

Thai students have a lot of difficulties in writing. Pimsarn (1987, p. 2) stated that most Thai students have writing problems because they are anxious about what to write and how to start writing. Amnaj (cited in Dhannarattigannon (1990, p. 4) stated

that one of the reasons that Thai students fail to achieve more in English is the fact they are not taught how to learn English by themselves.

As for the findings of this study, they may benefit not only students but also teachers.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the learning strategies for writing that were employed by English major students in the United Rajabhat Institutes of Buddha Chinnaraj.

Specifically, the study focused on learners' strategies in writing for both good/poor and male/female learners. Consequently, this study attempted to answer these research questions:

1. What are the particular strategies that the college students employ to develop their English writing skill?
2. What are the particular strategies that good and poor students employ to deal with the English writing skill?
3. What are the particular strategies that male and female students employ to deal with the English writing skill?
4. Is there any significant difference between good/poor and male/female language learners' writing strategies?

#### Significance of the Study

This study was designed to identify how English major students

at the United Rajabhat Institutes of Bhudda Chinnaraj use learning strategies for developing their writing skill. Also it compared strategies used by good and poor learners, and male and female learners. The information obtained can help teachers and learners to understand how to write more effectively.

#### Definition of Terms

English writing strategies: refers to specific techniques or study behavior which the students perform to help them succeed in writing in English.

Rajabaht Institute students: the English major students studying in the fourth year in the academic year 1995-1996. There are four institutions: Phetchabun, Phitsanulok, Kamphaeng Phet, and Nakhon Sawan.

Good/skilled writers: the fourth year English major students studying writing courses in the academic year 1995-1996 at the United Rajabhat Institutes of Bhudda Chinnaraj in 4 provinces. In this study, the researcher focused only on those who were in the top 27% on the writing examination given by the researcher.

Poor/unskilled writers: the fourth year English major students studying writing courses in the academic year 1995-1996 at the United Rajabhat Institutes of Bhudda Chinnaraj in 4 provinces. In this study, the researcher focused only on those who were in

the bottom 27% on the writing examination given by the researcher.

Male writers: all of the fourth year English major male students studying writing in the academic year 1995-1996 at the United Rajabhat Institutes of Bhudda Chinnaraj in 4 provinces.

Female writers: all of the fourth year English major female students studying writing in the academic year 1995-1996 at the United Rajabhat Institutes of Bhudda Chinnaraj in 4 provinces.

#### Limitation of the Study

The study aimed to investigate the learning strategies for writing of Rajabhat Institute students. It was limited to a study of the good and poor students studying English courses in the fourth year of the academic year 1995-1996.

#### Basic Assumption

In this study, it was assumed that the good and poor fourth year English major students participating in the present investigation answered all statements on the questionnaire honestly.

#### Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the writing strategies employed by good/poor and male/female students at the United Rajabhat Institutes of Bhudda Chinnaraj.