

PREFACE

Revision is an intense, mental cognitive activity, integral to the writing process. Recent view of writing as non-linear and exploratory has led to revision being recognised as an ongoing, recursive and a generative process which can occur at any time of the writing activity. Writing is a communicative act accomplished by language. Language is a tool which conceptualises accumulated experiences and knowledge. It gives form to ideas, intentions, concepts and is shaped by a definite social purpose. At the same time it is the practical need of the writers, to articulate their intended meaning. It is observed that through writing learners are unable to communicate meaning effectively. Revision being integral to writing, it is seen as a strategy which would enable writers to express their intention effectively.

There exists in each individual a universal core of knowledge based on experiences. Every individual writer uses language as a tool to share this knowledge. ESL writers also possess this kind of knowledge based on their experiences and which is acquired because multilingualism, brings with it culture, beliefs, customs and traditions, different to each one of them. These experiences, which are a part of the universal system, are stored within them in a language other than English. ESL writers need to share these

experiences; they try to convey these universals to the reader through writing. Whenever they write, they need to clarify, exemplify, so that readers can identify with it, believe it, understand it and respond to it. Most importantly, while conveying their intent, they must also attempt to perceive or imagine the knowledge, experience, emotions and expectations of the readers. It is to convey these shared experiences that cognitive forces of every individual play their respective roles.

Cognition refers to the mental processes that individuals require to transform and convey their perceptions which are culturally defined and characterised by stability, transferability and applicability. From the readers' point of view, it involves their mental state of minds by which they perceive the meaning embodied in language. Cognition embodies the concepts of awareness, intelligence, recognition, understanding and concerns with activities such as memory, imagination, judgment and reason. By exercising these faculties, the mind is forced to shift through a kaleidoscope of perceptions and thoughts to establish a pattern of what is meaningful. Cognitive forces help individuals to call upon what they have read, observed, experienced. They further verify, modify and crystallize thoughts. By arranging and sorting out perceptions and knowledge under a relevant and a more inclusive conceptual system,

individual's gain new insights, discover perspectives which in the process leads to meaning

To transform these ideas, perceptions or knowledge successfully from the mind to the page involves an ongoing cyclical process - writing. In this process, writers discover, analyze, synthesize ideas which they can shape and reshape, define and redefine, evaluate and re-evaluate as they write and rewrite them. It is an ever developing skill which allows individuals to draw upon their inner resources. This ability to realign, clarify and reshape information makes possible the never ending discovery of new ideas which trigger new cycles of sifting, searching and discovering. Writing then is a means to sift and refine our perceptions of the world around us.

For ESL students, and native speakers, writing is a primary medium through which they can demonstrate their understanding and interpretation of the concepts studied. Well developed writing abilities are essential for them to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the subject matter. They are required to write reports, research papers, essay type answers in the examinations to show that they know and understand the thoughts of others and can synthesize the acquired new knowledge into their own thinking.

Their success is determined on how efficiently they convey meaning by addressing the problems explicitly, accurately and precisely.

Sometimes ESL writers lack exposure to the basic skills in English. When this is the given situation, writers need help and encouragement in generating and creating both, ideas and forms in English. ESL writers' task is further complicated by the fact that they do not have the rules, conventions, grammar and rhetorical patterns to express the knowledge they may have in their own language. Inadequate vocabulary and grammatical structures may frustrate them in writing. They obviously have the knowledge of the subject, but lack adequate means to express that knowledge in English. The challenge therefore teachers face is to develop methodology/methodologies that expands experience and allows for the mastery of the written words. We need to take on the role of collaborators and help them find means to express clearly.

To quote Vygotsky (1962), "The relationship between thought and word is a living process; the thought is born through words. A word devoid of thoughts is a dead thing and a thought embodied in words remains a shadow" (242). It is true that without the use of precise words, the writer's messages too often remains uninterpreted or misinterpreted. Through frequent and

continuous practice in writing, writers/learners can make words communicate meaning. They need to be made aware that writing (which is a part of language), is a process - a meaning making activity and revising and rewriting their work (which is a process in which all cognitive forces of an individual are put to use), an opportunity to reflect on what they have written, respond to whatever is on the written page and restructure ideas. This interaction of language with the cognitive forces of each individual for the purpose of communicating, leads to discovery of meaning. If students understand that writing is a process, recognise revision integral to writing and a process by which meaning is discovered, they could then become effective writers