

5. DISCUSSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

As seen earlier from Table 1, drafting took up most of the time Sean spent on composing. This was followed by the pre-drafting and the revising process took the least time of all, 20 minutes. As clearly evident, most of Sean's ideas were evolved during the pre-drafting stage. Although Sean claimed that his thinking is also done while writing, it is clear that most of the thinking is done prior to writing the draft. As a result, pre-drafting is very crucial aspect of the composing process for skilled writers. Language teachers should make English Language Paper writing assignments more interesting and informative. Although currently there is no proper texts to guide the teachers in teaching the subject, extra efforts must be taken by the teachers to introduce stimulating and informative materials to the class. It must be noted that these students are at a pre-university level and as such, are in a position to be more independent and matured in their thinking.

The research also highlighted the fact that revisions made by Sean were largely form focused or surface level revisions. A check of his form five English exercise books indicated that the English teacher merely marks the student's writing with a single tick at the end of the page, many times. In his essay book, it was obvious that the teacher adopted a marking scheme based on 'impression marking'. Comments were not included, and many times incorrect structures were just underlined. When questioned what he thought it meant, Sean replied that he

just underlined. When questioned what he thought it meant, Sean replied that he had no clear idea although he knew it was wrong. In the absence of feedback from the teacher, perhaps he had been misled to believe that writing correct English with emphasis on grammar, spelling and content is what writing is all about.

In Sean's case, although he is a proficient writer, he still tends to make many spelling mistakes. This is largely attributed to the fact that secondary school language teachers hardly stress on spelling as it is usually never part of a test or exam, as opposed to the primary level where spelling is always stressed upon. Secondary school teachers should include spelling tests from time to time to brush up the students' ability to spell correctly.

In my opinion, efforts should be made in students to be aware of the processes of composition, and more particularly revision. There is a need to shift the focus from language use to content (Dheram, 1995). Research have clearly indicated that students appreciate comments on content and language (Cohen and Cavalanti, (1990), cited in Dheram, 1995). The teacher should start getting into the habit of providing positive and practical feedback that help the learner focus on developing content and ideas. In view of the writing syllabus of English Language 940, this kind of feedback can motivate the weaker students who are taking up the subject as it is more factual based.

In analysing Sean's attitude, it is noted that he felt negative towards teacher feedback: *"I don't like to be criticized...I don't want any comments...it can be very embarrassing...people will think I'm stupid"*. To me, this calls for an investigation into, and re-thinking of the kinds of feedback students expect and want to be given.

From the task given, it is evident that Sean himself is not really interested in attempting factual based essays which he says are similar to what comes out in the General Paper. Although one of the aims of the writing paper is to gauge the students' competency in presenting information and opinion, teachers could look into a wider repertoire of factual based topics which are appealing and interesting, and most certainly doesn't overlap with the titles that are favorites with the General Papers. While this may appeal to unskilled writers, skilled writers dislike writing twice on similar topics and in Sean's own words *"...the points are all the same"*.

It is important that Science based students should be given the liberty to take up the English Paper 914 if they want to. As an international language, these science students will be better prepared to face their university or even working life later. Although this study only focused on one subject, it is clearly evident that Sean himself viewed writing as a grammar and spelling practice, for that is what his teachers have always stressed upon. English Language teachers

must be able to see through the complexities of writing and concentrate more on its process rather than the end products.

5.1 Conclusion

Although much has already been learned about second language writing processes, so much more lies undiscovered. Composing processes which are rather unique in nature still have many rooms for research. ESL researchers should attempt to investigate these areas which include age and proficiency level. As such, L2 research on this aspect is pertinent as the area of composing process is rich with potential and vitality.