# CHAPTER TWO

# LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter aims to build the theoretical foundation upon which this research is based by reviewing the relevant literature on summary writing and assessing the problem of ineffective summary writing in the ESL context. The objective of this chapter is to identify the issues related to summary-writing in an ESL context and how these issues have been resolved in other related researches. This chapter is divided into three main areas: (i) summary writing, (ii) problems in summary writing and (iii) strategies in summary writing.

## 2.1 Summary Writing

### 2.1.1 Definition

A summary is a short but thorough, objective restatement of the main ideas and key points of a passage or text. A summary may also include some of the examples the author used to illustrate key points. According to the Wikipedia definition, a summary or recap is a shortened version of the original. The main purpose of such a simplification is to highlight the major points from the genuine (much longer) subject, e.g. a text, a film or an event. The target is to help the audience get the gist in a short period of time. A summarizer should not add his own opinions and thoughts, as well as the details of the text. In other words, a summary should be long enough to cover the subject matter and short enough to make it interesting.

### 2.1.2 Summary Writing Process

At this juncture, we can enumerate what are the processes involved in summary writing and what constitutes a summary. During the first reading, one has to read and understand the text. During the second reading, one can divide the text or passage into thought progressions (using the paragraph divisions to identify these stages) and indicate each new progression by using brackets in the margin or by highlighting. Then the main ideas can be gleaned by underlining or highlighting them. Next, a summary sentence for each thought progression should be written. After that, the thesis statement which is the summary of the whole passage should be identified and written in one or two sentences which includes the main idea of the passage ( the who, what, where, how and when ). For a persuasive text, this should include the author's conclusion while for a descriptive text; this should include what is being described and its important characteristics. In the first draft, one should combine the thesis statement with the one-sentence summaries of each thought progression. Repetitious parts and minor details should be left out while the summary should be rewritten in as few words as possible and in more general terms. In the third reading, further adjustments can be made by comparing the summary to the original passage. In the final draft, one has to check to see that transitions between sentences are smooth, and make sure the summary is coherent as a whole. Lastly, grammar, spelling and punctuation checks should be carried out. Finally, one should ensure that the summary is in prose form, in one paragraph and within one-third of the length of the original text. Therefore a summary has to be concise, accurate, cohesive and expressed in the writer's own words without distortion of the original meaning.

It is apparent from the description above that the task of writing a summary is cognitively and linguistically demanding even for a proficient L1 learner, what more for

the low proficiency learners, especially the L2 learners. At this point, it is relevant to explore the theoretical and conceptual explanations that underpin the summary writing process.

### 2.1.3    Theoretical and Conceptual Background

### 2.1.3.1    Summarization Model by Kintsch and van Dijk (1977) extended to Text Comprehension and Production Model (1978)

Summarization is a complex process which entails a system of mental operations employed in the processing of a text – comprehending it, extracting the main/relevant ideas, condensing the text into its gist and generating a new text which is a condensed version. During this process breakdowns are bound to happen in various forms due to various linguistic shortcomings, thus hindering the production of an accurate, truthful and effective summary. If these breakdowns can be avoided, through pedagogical methods, it is possible to train students to write effective summaries which are accurate and truthful. In other words, summary-writing practice reinforces, conditions and disciplines the mind to be truthful – not to write what is not implied in the original text.

In relation to that, Kinsch's and van Dijk's Text Comprehension and Production Model (1978) clearly expounds the mental processes involved in text comprehension and in the production of recall and summarization protocols. According to this model, the summarization process can be divided into three stages. First, the meaning elements of a text become organized into a coherent whole (**comprehension**). A second set of operations condenses the full meaning of the text into its gist (**condensation**). These processes are complemented by a third set of operations that generate new texts from the memorial consequences of the comprehension processes (**production**). At any of these three stages, the summarizing process may breakdown, thereby leading to the

production of an inappropriate representation of the original. Breakdowns may result from poor comprehension, perhaps due to errors in the activation of appropriate schemata. It may occur during condensation stage, when information is lost or confused; or it may occur during the production stage, when low-level processes, such as syntactic-coding, are insufficient (Johns and Mayes, 1990:254). Therefore, this model elucidates the three stages during summarizing process and possible breakdowns, thus facilitating researchers in the evaluation of summarizing skills so that improvement techniques can be employed to reduce breakdowns.

### 2.1.3.2   Summarization Theory by Kintsch and van Dijk 1983-1998

One of the most influential theories of text summarization is the theory of Kintsch and van Dijk (van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983). This theory describes the complete reading process, from recognizing words until the construction of a representation of the meaning of the text. The emphasis of the theory is on understanding the meaning of a text. Kintsch continued working on the theory until 1988, when it was extended to the construction-integration model (Kintsch, 1988), followed by a completely updated theory in 1998 (Kintsch, 1998). This theory underpins the current study as the three phases mentioned in this theory namely comprehension, condensation and production are used as the platform to infer and analyse the productive and unproductive strategies employed by the subjects.

### 2.1.3.3   Idea Units or Propositions

What are idea units? They are meaningful chunks of words or phrases which act as single units of ideas in a reading text. Kintsch and van Dijk (1978) refer to idea units as

propositions, main ideas as macro-propositions (Johns and Mayes,1990:255) and basic ideas as micropropositions (Friend: 2001:4).

To identify the idea units in a reading text is no easy task as it involves microprocessing and macroprocessing. Microprocessing or constructing microstructure, according to van Dijk and Kintsch (1983) is the basic process of reading comprehension in which words are grouped into propositions and meaningful links between sentences are established. On the other hand, Kintsch and van Dijk (1978:  ) state that:

> In the 'semantics of discourse, macrostructures are defined' via the 'macrostrategies', which 'map' 'propositions' or 'sequences' of them onto those of 'a higher level' and create a 'hierarchical' structure. These 'macrostrategies' include: 'deletion' of a 'proposition' that is not an interpretation condition for another'; 'generalization' to 'substitute' 'a proposition' for a 'sequence', 'each of whose propositions' 'entails' it; and 'construction' of a 'proposition' 'entailed' by 'the joint set' of a sequence as a whole (SD 190). These 'rules' 'reduce' materials, but at 'higher levels' they may also 'assign further organization to the meaning of a discourse'.

(Source: http://www.beaugrande.com/LINGTHER van Dijk and Kintsch.htm)

The above extract basically explains macroprocessing which is how an original text is reduced to a microstructure (gist) or a sequence of basic propositions or ideas by the workings of a set of macrostrategies namely 'deletion' – unimportant or redundant information is left out, 'generalization' – ideas are combined to produce a superordinate proposition and 'construction' – external information is introduced by reader inference (Johns and Mayes,1990:254) during the process of summarization in successful comprehension. However when a breakdown encounters during this process, comprehension is not successful, thus resulting in ineffective summaries. A number of studies based on the Kintsch and van Dijk model have investigated summary protocols of different groups of native English speakers (see Brown, Campione, and Day 1980;

Winograd 1984) and summary process breakdown of both native and non-native speakers (Carrell,1983; Connor, 1984 cited in Johns and Mayes,1990:254).

Hence, summarization is hard to teach because the gist of a passage is often not present in the surface structure of the text (Friend: 1987) and the cognitive processing which converts surface structure to the gist of a text is very complex. According to Friend (2001), Van Dijk and Kintsch's (1983) model shows that in summarization hierarchically organized memory traces are constructed through recursive processing involving the interplay of structural cues, new information and prior knowledge. Friend (2001) also concurs with van Dijk and Kinstch's model that in expert readers, semantic processing builds a dual-level cognitive representation consisting of microstructure, a detailed representation of the surface structure of the original text, and macrostructure, the gist of the text, a terse representation of material identified as most important.

Casteel (1990) carried out a study on idea units whereby he examined the effect of "chunking," or using spaces to divide information in sentences into meaningful thought units or phrases (e.g., noun phrases, verb phrases). Chunking information allows "perception and recall of idea units rather than letters or single words" (Gillet & Temple, cited in Casteel,1990:269). In the Casteel (1990) study, thought units were separated from each other by four spaces rather than the traditional one space between words. When compared with using traditionally spaced text, chunking, or placing extra spaces between meaningful thought units, resulted in significantly higher reading comprehension scores and the chunked passages did not significantly affect the comprehension scores though Casteel's subjects' comprehension scores for chunked text were relatively higher than their scores for traditionally spaced text. Casteel concluded that chunked text benefited low performers and was not a detriment for high

performers. While it may be difficult for teachers to chunk material in textbooks, Casteel suggested that students can be trained to chunk verb, noun, and object phrases by placing vertical lines between the chunks or underlining chunks prior to reading. Casteel's study (1990) suggests that chunking can be used as a successful strategy to identify idea units in a reading text. However, the study did not go another step further to suggest on how to ascertain that the identified idea unit is correct, partly correct or incorrect. Under such circumstances, the student's prior or background knowledge comes into play in the comprehension of the idea units.

So here arise the questions: what is prior knowledge, how does it influence comprehension and what is its role in summary writing? Prior knowledge refers to the background knowledge a person possesses in relation to any subject and according to several theories; it is the background knowledge that helps in understanding new information or knowledge. Prior knowledge is mentioned in Krashen's Input Theory, Selinger's Interlanguage Theory and it is also mentioned in the Schema Theory.

### 2.1.3.4 Krashen's Input Theory

The input hypothesis in Krashen's Input Theory answers the question of how a language acquirer develops competency over time. It states that a language acquirer who is at "level i" (our current level of competence) must receive comprehensible input that is at "level i+1" (the next stage that the acquirer is due to acquire, or ready to acquire) for language acquisition to take place. In other words, we acquire, only when we understand language that contains structure that is 'a little beyond' where we are now (Ellis, 1985). This understanding is possible due to using the context of the language we are hearing or reading and our knowledge of the world.

However, instead of aiming to receive input that is exactly at i+1 level, or instead of having a teacher aiming to teach us grammatical structure that is at our i+1 level, we should instead just focus on communication that is understandable. If we do this, and if we get enough of that kind of input, than we will in fact be receiving and thus acquiring out i+1.

Similarly, in the case of summary writing, 'i' can refer to prior or background knowledge while '+1' can refer to new knowledge. To decipher the new knowledge, a student has to fall back on the prior knowledge. In response to the questions raised at the end of Section 2.1.3.3, without prior knowledge, it would be difficult for a student to comprehend a reading text. Hence, by subscribing to Krashen's Input Hypothesis one can fathom the importance of general reading to increase the repertoire of vocabulary, phrases, sentence structures and other linguistic input which would be stored in the prior knowledge compartment and will be accessed during the comprehension process. However, sometimes articles that need to be summarized could be beyond the reader's comprehension whereby the i+1 concept does not apply directly.

According to Krashen (1981: 6-7),

> "… The best methods are therefore those that supply 'comprehensible input' in low anxiety situations, containing messages that students really want to hear."

Krashen's Theory could also explain the dilemma being faced by pre-university L2 learners in summary writing. The lack of comprehensible input in this case could be due to the poor reading culture amongst secondary school students as shown by Pandian's (2001) study. Meanwhile the high anxiety condition could be attributed to the low motivational level coupled with the low self esteem that they are not good enough in the

language. Both these factors could have an impact on the poor performance of L2 learners especially in the productive skills, namely speaking and writing.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, poor reading culture and low literacy skills amongst secondary students is a serious phenomena in the educational field. In relation to that, it is the researcher's hope that the findings of the current study would probably contribute to addressing those issues in the L2 context.

## 2.2    Problems in Summary Writing

## 2.2.1    Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Problems

As the world becomes smaller and smaller, with the advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and the electronic media, the importance of English as second language worldwide becomes greater .With this, research in second language acquisition has increased tremendously in the past decade and is growing. Besides, the migration of people from third world countries to first world countries for educational pursuit, better job opportunities and better livelihood has extended the usage of English as a second language worldwide. This increased usage of English has also given rise to the need to expand research in second language acquisition.

What is acquisition? The term acquisition is used for the process where language is acquired as a result of natural and largely random exposure to language; the term language learning is used where the exposure is structured through language teaching (Wilkins, 1974:26). Several definitions of SLA have been given by several researchers in the SLA field such as Krashen (1981) who emphasized the differences in the way linguistic knowledge is internalized and stored; Kennedy (1973) who suggested that a structured    content    could    result    in    an    artificial    learning    context    which    was

counterproductive; and Cook (1969) who warned that L1 transfer and age would be major factors that cast doubts as to whether L1 and L2 learning involved similar processes.

According to Walqui (2000) and Ellis (1985), most discussions in SLA focus on methodologies, giving little emphasis to the contextual factors -- individual, social, and societal -- that affect students' learning, the learner, and the learning process. Walqui had listed the following contextual factors which influence SLA and writing in the ESL context:

(1) **Language distance -** Specific languages can be more or less difficult to learn, depending on how different from or similar they are to the languages the learner already knows.

(2) **Native language proficiency** - The student's level of proficiency in the native language including not only oral language and literacy, but also metalinguistic development, training in formal and academic features of language use, and knowledge of rhetorical patterns and variations in genre and style – all affect acquisition of a second language. The more academically sophisticated the student's native language knowledge and abilities, the easier it will be for that student to learn a second language. This leads to the question - Do Malaysian students possess a high level of proficiency in the national language or their respective mother-tongues?

(3) **Language attitudes** - Peer pressure often reduces the desire of the student to work towards native pronunciation, because the sounds of the target language may be regarded as strange. For learners of English as a

second language, speaking like a native speaker may unconsciously be regarded as a sign of no longer belonging to their native-language peer group. This attitude is unhealthy and hinders the acquisition of English as a second language.

(4) **Role models** - Students need to have positive and realistic role models who demonstrate the value of being proficient in more than one language. Do Malaysian students have such role models in their parents, teachers, community leaders or other adults whom they come into contact with daily?

(5) **Learning styles** - Research has shown that individuals vary greatly in the ways they learn a second language (Skehan, 1989). Some learners are more analytically oriented and thrive on picking apart words and sentences. Others are more globally oriented, needing to experience overall patterns of language in meaningful contexts before making sense of the linguistic parts and forms. Some learners are more visually oriented; others more geared to sounds and so forth.

(6) **Motivation** - According to Deci and Ryan (1985), intrinsic motivation is related to basic human needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Intrinsically motivated activities are those that the learner engages in for their own sake because of their value, interest, and challenge. Such activities present the best possible opportunities for learning.

While the above factors have focused on the second language acquisition process from the perspective of the language, the learner, and the learning process, it is important to point out that the larger social and cultural contexts of second language development have a tremendous impact on second language learning, especially in a multi-ethnic

setting like Malaysia. It is obvious that the status of students' ethnic standing in relation to the larger culture can help or hinder the acquisition of the language of mainstream society (Walqui, 2000). Interestingly this concept could be applied in a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual situation like Malaysia where students from Chinese and Tamil vernacular primary schools and national type Malay-medium primary schools converge into the national-type secondary schools carrying with them a repertoire of different if not the same language learning strategies. Hence, the subjects in the current study come from different types of primary school – Chinese medium, Tamil medium and Malay medium schools.

## 2.2.2 English Literacy and Literacy Skills

English Literacy can be generally defined as the ability to read and understand meaning of text and write meaningfully in the English language. According to a study carried out by Pandian (2001) in Malaysia a multi-lingual society, 80.1 % of university students and 76.2% of secondary school students are reluctant readers of English-language materials. These statistics send an alarming signal to Malaysian educationists especially when the Ministry of Education has been carrying out many programmes to promote English literacy including the teaching and learning of Mathematics and Science in English. This also partly explains why Malaysian pre-university students perform poorly in the MUET Writing component. Being able to write well is an important requirement in the pursuit of almost any field of education at higher learning institutions. Summary writing is an essential writing skill which facilitates this process directly and enhances the learning of other literacy skills. Hence, it is not wrong to say that summary writing itself is an important literacy skill and needs to be advocated especially at the pre-university level.

### 2.2.3 Reading Culture

Malaysia is one of the countries which is rich in different cultures but still poor in reading culture. This reading poverty is evident from  a Malaysian National Library report (2003) entitled 'Experience and Efforts in Literacy Programmes', which stated that Malaysians only read two books a year on average ( Lyall, 2006). Lyall, a trainer under a special programme to teach reading strategies to primary school children in rural Malaysia stated that it can be surmised that rural Malaysians read even fewer books than this. She also reported that  for children to pick up reading skills easily, one of the core pre-requisites is that they should be able to  understand the pleasure of reading through having books read to them and seeing adults around them derive pleasure and meaning from print. Lyall (2006) observed that in rural Malaysia, most children come to school without having had this experience.

This non-nurtured reading culture which exists at primary school level seems to experience zero growth by the end of secondary schooling despite vigorous efforts from various quarters to carry out intervention programmes both at school and in the community at large. This also culminates in poor writing skills in general and ineffective summary-writing specifically. It is believed that this study would throw some light on the consequences of not practising an active reading culture and its impact on literacy in general and effective writing in particular.

**2.2.4  The Schema Theory**

It is interesting to take a look at what goes on in the minds of readers before delving further into why students are not reading. One theory that has been highlighted by linguists, cognitive psychologists, and psycholinguists is the Schema Theory (http://iteslj.org/Articles/Stott-Schema.html) which uses the concept of schema (plural: schemata) to understand the interaction of key factors affecting the comprehension process. Simply put, schema theory states that all knowledge is organized into units. Within these units of knowledge, or schemata, is stored information.

A schema, then, is a generalized description or a conceptual system for understanding knowledge -how knowledge is represented and how it is used. According to this theory, schemata represent knowledge about concepts: objects and the relationships they have with other objects, situations, events, sequences of events, actions, and sequences of actions. A simple example is to think of one's schema for birds. Within that schema one most likely has knowledge about birds in general (fly, two legs, beak, feathers, and wings) and probably information about specific birds, such as owls (active at night, live in tree holes, hooting, Barn Owl) or Hornbills (Malaysian, enormous bill, omnivorous, white-crested Hornbill). One may also think of birds within the greater context of animals and other living things; that is, birds breathe, need food, and reproduce. One's knowledge of birds might also include the fact that they are warm-blooded and all birds lay eggs as opposed to mammals that bear their young. Depending upon an individual's personal experience, the knowledge of a bird as a pet (caged) or as a free animal, living on trees (nest) may be a part of his or her schema and so it goes with the development of a schema. Each new experience incorporates more information into one's schema.

What does all this have to do with reading comprehension? Individuals have schemata for everything. Long before students come to school, they develop schemata (units of knowledge) about everything they experience. Schemata become theories about reality. These theories not only affect the way information is interpreted, thus affecting comprehension, but also continue to change as new information is received. On the other hand, information that does not fit into this schema may not be comprehended, or may not be comprehended correctly. This is the reason why readers have a difficult time comprehending a text on a subject they are not familiar with even if the person comprehends the meaning of the individual words in the passage.

As stated by Rumelhart (1980), schemata can represent knowledge at all levels - from ideologies and cultural truths to knowledge about the meaning of a particular word, to knowledge about what patterns of excitations are associated with what letters of the alphabet. We have schemata to represent all levels of our experience, at all levels of abstraction. Hence, our schemata are our knowledge. All of our generic knowledge is embedded in schemata (Rumelhart,1980: 41). The importance of schema theory to reading comprehension also lies in how the reader uses schemata to make sense of reading text. In summary writing, this a crucial process because without full comprehension, the summariser would fail to recognise and extract all the relevant idea units required for condensation. This issue has not yet been resolved by research, although investigators agree that some mechanism activates just those schemata most relevant to the reader's task.

### 2.2.5  Reading Comprehension Problems

The transactional model on reading comprehension takes into account the dynamic nature of language and both aesthetic and cognitive aspects of reading. According to

Rosenblatt (1994, p. 1063), "Every reading act is an event, or a transaction involving a particular reader and a particular pattern of signs, a text, and occurring at a particular time in a particular context. Instead of two fixed entities acting on one another, the reader and the text are two aspects of a total dynamic situation. The 'meaning' does not reside ready-made 'in' the text or 'in' the reader but happens or comes into being during the transaction between reader and text." Thus, text without a reader is merely a set of marks capable of being interpreted as written language. However, when a reader transacts with the text, meaning happens. Schemata are not viewed as static but rather as active, developing, and ever changing. As readers transact with text they are changed or transformed, as is the text. Similarly, "the same text takes on different meanings in transactions with different readers or even with the same reader in different context or times (Rosenblatt, 1994:1078).

Building on Rosenblatt's transactional model, Goodman (1994:1103) conceptualizes literacy processing as including reading, writing, and written texts. He states that texts are constructed by authors to be comprehended by readers. The meaning is in the author and the reader. The text has a potential to evoke meaning but has no meaning in itself; meaning is not a characteristic of texts. This does not mean the characteristics of the text are unimportant or that either writer or reader is independent of them. How well the writer constructs the text and how well the reader reconstructs it and constructs meaning will influence comprehension. But meaning does not pass between writer and reader. It is represented by a writer in a text and constructed from a text by a reader. Characteristics of writer, text, and reader will all influence the resultant meaning.

 In a transactional sociopsycholinguistic view, the reader has a highly active role. It is the individual transactions between a reader and the text characteristics that result in

meaning. These characteristics include physical characteristics such as orthography the alphabetic system, spelling, punctuation; format characteristics such as paragraphing, lists, schedules, bibliographies; macrostructure or text grammar such as that found in telephone books, recipe books, newspapers, and letters; and wording of texts such as the differences found in narrative and expository text.

Problems in reading comprehension can lead to a host of writing problems and certainly in summary writing because it is a test of reading comprehension itself. This section looks at some familiar problems an ESL learner faces in reading comprehension.

(1) The person has a language problem: Language plays a vital role in reading. Its role in reading can be compared to the role of running in the game of football or ice-skating in the game of ice hockey. One cannot play football if one cannot run, and one cannot play ice hockey if one cannot skate. One cannot read a book in a language unless one knows that particular language. If a child's knowledge of English is poor, then his reading will be poor.

(2) The foundational skills of reading have not been automatized: When a person attempts to speak a language in which he has not achieved automaticity yet, he will necessarily have to divide his attention between the content of his message and the language itself. He will therefore speak haltingly and with great difficulty. It has been explained that if the skill on the primary task is automatized, it will not be disrupted by concurrent processing on the secondary task because automatic processing does not take up attentional resources. If, on the contrary, the skill is not automatized, it will be disrupted by concurrent processing of a second skill

because two skills are then competing for limited attentional resources. This also applies to the act of reading. The person, in whom the foundational skills of reading have not yet become automatic, will read haltingly and with great difficulty. The poor reader is forced to apply all his concentration to word recognition, and therefore has "no concentration left" to decode the written word, and as a result he will not be able to read with comprehension.

(3) The reader is unable to decode the written word: The decoding of the written word is a very important aspect of the reading act. Without being able to decode the written word, reading comprehension is impossible. This explains why some children can "read" without understanding what they are reading.

To decode the written word the reader must be able to integrate what he is reading with his foreknowledge. Foreknowledge can be defined as the range of one's existing knowledge and past experiences. If one reads something that cannot directly be connected to or tied in with knowledge that one already possesses, one cannot decode or decipher the contents of the message. As Harris et al. (1995) stated that what a child gets from a book will often be determined by what the child brings to the book.

A decoding skill that is closely related to that of integration is classification. When a person sees a chair, although he may never have seen a chair exactly like this one, he will nevertheless immediately recognize it as a chair, because he is familiar with the class of objects we call "chair." This implies that, whenever a name is ascribed to an object, it is thereby put into a specific class of objects, i.e. it is 'classified'.

The Gestalt principle of 'closure' means that the mind is able to derive meaning from objects or pictures that are not perceived in full. W- -re s-re th-t y-- w-ll b- -ble to und-rsta-d th-s s-ntenc-, although more than 25 percent of the letters have been omitted. The mind is quite able to bridge the gaps that were left in the sentence. The idea of closure is, however, more than just seeing parts of a word and amplifying them. It also entails the amplification of the author's message. No author can put all his thoughts into words. This stresses the importance of foreknowledge. If it were possible for an author to put everything related to the subject he is dealing with on paper, the possession of foreknowledge would not have been necessary. That, however, is impossible, as an author can at most present a very limited cross-section of reality and the reader must be able to expand on this before comprehension becomes possible. Poetry is a good example of the importance of foreknowledge. Any person, who is unfamiliar with springtime and pictures of fields of flowers, will probably derive little meaning from a reading of "Daffodils" by William Wordsworth.

Lastly, imagination plays a role in decoding. It is doubtful whether a person really understands something unless he is able to think about it in terms of pictures. When we read, the words and thoughts comprising the message call up images in our mind's eye. If this does not occur, the message will not make any sense. If you read or hear a sentence in an unfamiliar language, it will not make any sense to you, simply because none of the words will call up any pictures in your mind's eye. This ability plays a very important role in the decoding of the written word. Furthermore, by using one's imagination while reading, one's emotions can be addressed during the reading act.

The range of reading comprehension problems listed above besides impeding the reading development of learners also impact on their writing ability in general and

writing of summaries in particular due to the close connection between reading and writing in the summarization process. This close connection between reading and writing in summarization process also gives rise to plagiarism when L2 learners fail to extract the gist in their reading texts.

## 2.2.6  Plagiarism and Summary Writing

Plagiarism is an issue that has plagued generations of educators, broadly defined, is the use of the words or ideas of another without giving proper credit. There is an urgent need to address the problem of plagiarism to understand why students commit this type of academic dishonesty and to establish ways to limit or eliminate its presence in the academy.

While there are many causes to plagiarism such as information overload and uncertainty, poor time management skills, not having the English to express a complicated idea and being taught to memorise and copy well-respected authors and leaders in certain Asian cultures to show intelligence and good judgement in their writing (Thompson and Williams, 2001:27-28); one of the most striking one is the inability to paraphrase and summarise.

According to Guiliano (2000), one of the best ways to deal with plagiarism is not so much of imposing penalty or exercising punitive measures but to train students so that they are equipped with sufficient note-taking and summarizing skills in order to handle their text-processing on their own confidently. Taking into consideration the above mentioned ideas, this study suggests that one of the best ways to combat plagiarism which is a form of 'academic cancer' is to equip students with sufficient summarizing skills. Committing plagiarism is ultimately the student's choice, but by providing sufficient summarizing skills, it not only acts as a deterrent for such action but also a

motivation for honesty, eventually making plagiarism a less inviting option. Hence, studying summary-writing strategies used by ESL students, the problems they face in learning this skill and whether they are using productive strategies to write effective summaries would contribute immensely to the effective teaching and learning of summarizing skills which in the long run would help to reduce plagiarism, an academic crime.

In a nutshell, the problems in summary writing cannot be confined to just writing problems but it has a whole range of related problems arising from language acquisition to English literacy skills which are linked to the reading culture, giving rise to reading comprehension difficulties and the reading-writing connection when not activated results in ineffective writing of summaries.

## 2.3 Learner Strategies in Summary Writing

### 2.3.1 Language Learning Strategies

As Wenden (1985) reminds us, there is an old proverb which states: "Give a man a fish and he eats for a day. Teach him how to fish and he eats for a lifetime". Applied to the language teaching and learning field, this proverb might be interpreted to mean that if students are provided with answers, the immediate problem is solved. But if they are taught the strategies to work out the answers for themselves, they are empowered to manage their own learning. Similarly, if students have mastered summary writing skills, they are less likely to plagiarize.

Language learning strategies or LLS research began way back in 1960's, greatly influenced by developments in cognitive psychology. The principal research concern of LLS research has been to identify what good language learners do to learn a second or

foreign language. Amongst the early attempts of research on learner strategies were by Rubin (1971) on strategies of successful learners and Rubin (1975) on classification of strategies in terms of processes contributing directly or indirectly to language learning. Other LLS research include research by Bialystok (1979), Wenden (1982), and Chamot and O'Malley (1987). In the 1990's, the focus of LLS research shifted more to cognitive and metacognitive strategies. However, there has been a lack of similar research in the L2 context. Even the researches carried out on L2 learners were mostly on L2 learners who are immersed in L1 culture such as the migrant Asian students in US and UK. Hence, there is a need to replicate L1 researches in the L2 context proper such as the one carried out by Chimbganda (2007) amongst students in Botswana. This study has partly replicated Chimbganda's (2007) study (see Section 2.3.5) and hopes to fill the gap in related literature.

### 2.3.1.1  Definition of LLS

Various definitions of LLS has been given by renowned researchers such as Wenden and Rubin (1975), Chamot and O'Malley (1985) and Oxford (1990) and many classifications and taxonomies of reading and writing strategies had been drawn up with the intention to facilitate the learning and teaching of the English language.

According to Griffiths (2004), Oxford took this process a step further. Like O'Malley et al (1985), she used Rigney's definition of language learning strategies as "operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information" (Oxford, 1990:8) as a base. Attempting to redress the perceived problem that many strategy inventories appeared to emphasise cognitive and metacognitive strategies and to ascribe much less importance to affective and social strategies, she

classified learning strategies into six groups: memory strategies (which relate to how students remember language), cognitive strategies (which relate to how students think about their learning), compensation strategies (which enable students to make up for limited knowledge), metacognitive strategies (relating to how students manage their own learning), affective strategies (relating to students' feelings) and social strategies (which involve learning by interaction with others).

These six categories (which underlie the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) used by Oxford and others for a great deal of research in the learning strategy field) were further divided into direct strategies (those which directly involve the target language such as reviewing and practising) and indirect strategies (those which provide indirect support for language learning such as planning, co-operating and seeking opportunities).

Although Oxford's taxonomy is "perhaps the most comprehensive classification of learning strategies to date" (Ellis,1994:539), it is still, of necessity, somewhat selective since "dozens and perhaps hundreds of such strategies exist" (Oxford, Lavine and Crookall,1989:29). Oxford (1990) acknowledges the possibility that the categories will overlap, and gives as an example the metacognitive strategy of planning, which, in as far as planning requires reasoning, might also be considered a cognitive strategy. She also deals with the difficulty of whether a compensation strategy such as looking for synonyms when the exact word is unknown is a learning strategy or a communication strategy. Although Ellis (1994:539) comments that compensation strategies are included "somewhat confusingly", Oxford (1990:49) justifies including such behaviours as learning strategies on the grounds that they "help learners become more fluent in what they already know [and] may lead learners to gain new information about what is appropriate or permissible in the target language". However, she acknowledges that

there is no complete agreement on exactly what strategies are; how many strategies exist; how they should be defined, demarcated, and categorised; and whether it is - or ever will be - possible to create a real, scientifically validated hierarchy of strategies; hence classification conflicts are inevitable. (cited in Griffiths, 2004)

### 2.3.2 Productive and Unproductive Strategies

With regards to summary writing, this study adopts the definition that strategies are thoughts and actions that are used by learners when faced with a problem during the summary writing process with the aim of solving the problem. There are numerous problems students can face during the summary writing process and various strategies, both established and non-established, are used by students to tackle those problems. The argument here is not the type of strategies or number of strategies used by a student to solve his/her summarizing problem but the quality of the strategy that is whether it is productive or unproductive in solving his/her summarizing problem. In other words the researcher is more concerned about the efficiency of strategies used. Hence, one of the objectives of this research is to study whether the strategies used by pre-university students when writing summaries are productive or unproductive. In order to decide whether a strategy is productive or unproductive, the researcher has drawn up a set of criteria to determine productive and unproductive strategies which will be discussed at greater length in the next chapter on Methodology.

### 2.3.3 Paraphrasing As a Productive Summary Writing Strategy

There are numerous summarizing strategies that have been identified and researched upon namely note-taking, paraphrasing, combining and generalizing. However, for the

purpose of this study, paraphrasing has been singled out because this strategy would directly show to what extend subjects are able to use their own words.

A paraphrase is one's own rendition of essential information and ideas expressed by someone else, presented in a new form. It is one legitimate way (when accompanied by accurate documentation) to borrow from a source. It is a more detailed restatement than a summary, which focuses concisely on a single main idea. Paraphrasing is a valuable skill because it is better than quoting information from an undistinguished passage. It helps one to control the temptation to quote too much. The mental process required for successful paraphrasing helps one to grasp the full meaning of the original. In order to paraphrase correctly, one needs to have understood the idea clearly so that the original meaning is retained even though the words and sentence structures have been changed.

### 2.3.4   Copy Verbatim As an Unproductive Summary Writing Strategy

On the other hand copying verbatim is a rescue strategy commonly employed by low proficiency students especially in the L2 context when they fail to paraphrase because they believe it can save them from falling into the doldrums of distortion and total blankness. From the linguistic angle, copying has not helped to condense, reduce or shorten a text to qualify it as a summarizing strategy. It may appear to be grammatically correct and retains original meaning but it has not executed any function as a strategy. As such copy verbatim is an unproductive strategy to be employed in summary writing. Research Question 3 of this study aims to find out whether proficiency is a variable in the use of strategies, precisely whether there are any differences in the productive and unproductive strategies used by high and low proficiency students. As there are numerous productive and unproductive strategies that can be studied, the researcher has

decided to focus on one productive and one unproductive strategy in the belief that an in depth study would be more profitable. The productive strategy chosen is paraphrasing and the unproductive strategy is copy verbatim.

### 2.3.5  Relevant Empirical Studies

One recent study directly relevant to this study is by Chimbganda (2007) which is a study of the summarizing strategies used by ESL first year science students at the University of Botswana. Based on multiple data collection methods, otherwise known as triangulation or pluralistic research, which is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, one hundred and twenty randomly sampled students completed questionnaires and summarized a scientific text. In order to observe the students more closely, nine students (3 high, 3 average and 3 low proficiency subjects) were purposively selected from the sample and required to write a further summary. The nine students were later interviewed in order to find out the kinds of strategies they had used in summarizing the texts. To obtain systematic data, the summaries and the taped interview were coded and analyzed using a hybrid scoring classification previously used by other researchers.

The results from the Likert type of questionnaire suggest that the ESL first year science students are 'aware' of the appropriate reading, production and self-assessment strategies to use when summarizing. However, when the data from the questionnaires were cross-checked against the strategies they had used in the actual summarization of the text, most of their claims, especially those of the low-proficiency students, were not sustained. As a whole, the results show that high-proficiency students produce more

accurate idea units and are more capable of generalizing ideas than low-proficiency students who prefer to "cut and paste" ideas.

There are also significant differences between high and low proficiency students in the manner in which they decode the text: low proficiency students produce more distortions in their summaries than high proficiency students who generally give accurate information. Similarly, high proficiency students are able to sort out global ideas from a labyrinth of localized ideas, unlike average- and low-proficiency students who include trivial information. The same trend is observed with paraphrasing and sentence combinations: high-proficiency students are generally able to recast and coordinate their ideas unlike low proficiency students who produce run-on ideas. In terms of the discrete cognitive and meta-cognitive skills preferred by students, low proficiency students are noticeably unable to exploit pre-summarizing cognitive strategies such as discriminating, selecting, note-making, grouping, inferring meanings of new words and using synonyms to convey the intended meanings. There are also greater differences between high- and low-proficiency students when it comes to the use of meta-cognitive strategies. Unlike high-proficiency students who use their reservoir of meta-cognitive skills such as self-judgment, low-proficiency students ostensibly find it difficult to direct their summaries to the demands of the task and are unable to check the accuracy of their summaries.

The findings also show that some of the high-proficiency students and many average- and low-proficiency students distort idea units, find it difficult to use their own words and cannot distinguish between main and supporting details. This resulted in the production of circuitous summaries that often failed to capture the gist of the argument. The way the students processed the main ideas also reveals an inherent weakness: most

students of different proficiency levels were unable to combine ideas from different paragraphs to produce a coherent text. Not surprising, then, there were too many long summaries produced by both high- and low-proficiency students.

To tackle some of the problems related to summarization, Chimbganda (2007) has suggested that pre-reading strategies be taught, which would activate relevant prior knowledge, so that the learning of new knowledge can be facilitated. During the reading process students can become more meta-cognitively aware by monitoring their level of understanding of the text by using, for example, the strategy suggested by Schraw (1998) of "stop, read and think". Text analysis can also be used to help the students identify the main themes or macro-propositions in a text, and hence gain a more global perspective of the content, which is important for selecting the main ideas in a text. A particularly useful approach to fostering a deeper understanding of content is to use a form of reciprocal or peer-mediated teaching, in which students in pairs can articulate to each other their understanding of the main ideas expressed in the text.

As part of the solution to the problems faced by students when processing information, Chimbganda (2007) suggests that we need to take Sewlall's (2000: 170) advice that there should be "a paradigm shift in the learning philosophy from content-based to an emphasis on the acquisition of skills". In this regard, both content and ESL teachers need to train their students in the explicit use of summarizing strategies, and to plan interwoven lessons and learning activities that develop the learners' intellectual ways of dealing with different learning problems so that they can make learning quicker, easier, more effective and exciting.

This study stands out in the ESL world as one of its kind as it addresses the issues confronting the ESL learner in his own environment unlike several studies involving L2 learners in L1 environment. However, the Botswana study did not address the issue of successful and unsuccessful strategies employed by ESL learners thus leaving a gap in strategy related research. Thus the present study would attempt to fill the gap by looking into the effectiveness of strategies used by L2 learners.

A Canadian study by Luxin Yang and Ling Shi (2003) which explored the summary writing processes of six first-year MBA (Master of Business Administration) students in a North American university also has relevance to the current study. The participants, three Chinese who speak English as a Second Language (ESL) and three native-English-speaking (NES), each completed a course-related summary task while thinking aloud. The analyses of the think-aloud protocols, retrospective interviews, and written drafts reveal similarities and differences in the writing processes of the participants. Depending on their perceptions of the nature of the writing task, business employment background or related writing experiences, the participants either wrote confidently or struggled through the writing processes, relying to varied degrees on such strategies as verbalizing what is being written, planning content, referring to the sources, reading what has been written, reviewing and modifying one's writing, and commenting on the source texts. The study highlights the role of students' previous writing expertise in learning disciplinary writing, the complexity of a course-related assignment in terms of its unclear and inexplicit expectations perceived by students, and the need to identify key strategies for good summary writing across and within disciplines.

Another relevant study is the one conducted by Friend (2001) to study the effects of strategy instruction on summary writing of college students. Unskilled writers in a large

urban university were taught summarization strategies based on Kintsch's (1983) text-processing theory. College freshmen enrolled in a pre-freshman writing course (*n* = 147) were randomly assigned to three conditions for 2 days of classroom instruction in constructing a summary. Summarization instruction conditions were argument repetition or generalization with a control group taught to examine personal judgments of importance. Analysis of test summaries showed instruction in generalization was significantly more effective for stating a thesis statement. Both argument repetition and generalization were significantly more effective than the control condition in judging the importance of content. This study generally proved that strategy instruction definitely helps in the production of better summaries.

One more relevant empirical research that deserves mention here is the study on the Summary Writing Performance of Japanese Exchange Students in Canada by Quoqing Feng and Ling Shi from the University of British Columbia, Canada, in 2002.This study, though it contributes to the understanding of summary writing performance of some ESL Japanese exchange students, has at least two limitations. First, the source texts used for the summary task might have been too difficult for some students as they complained in the follow-up interviews. As Anderson and Hidi (1988/89) have noted, texts that are too difficult or complicated for students can hinder their summary performances. The study, therefore, might not have reflected the actual summary abilities of the participants. The researchers of this study have suggested that future research should consider using a reading comprehension test to make sure that students fully understand the texts before they approach the summary task. A second limitation of the study concerns its textual analysis. The study also focused on the source information included in students' summaries using sentences marked orthographically

by the students themselves. Some of the student sentences that were identified to contain combinations of ideas were actually erroneous run-on sentences.

Although such sentences indicate students' effort to combine information, an analysis of the language quality could have helped to fully understand the quality of students' summaries. As previous studies have noted the important role of language proficiency in L2 summary writing, the researchers of this study too suggested that future study needs to explore how students' language errors or the quality of their writing interacts with how they include source information or use various summarization skills. Finally, this study has only explored how one group of ESL students wrote and revised their summaries.

Results from such research have specific implications for classroom teaching where two levels of English proficiency (intermediate and advanced) and three levels of writing expertise in L1 (experienced, average, and basic) performed some writing tasks including a summary in English. As a result, students with higher English proficiency received higher scores for their summaries and those who are experienced L1 writers were found to have attended more efficiently to the overall gist of the source text.

Based upon the reviews of recent studies, it can be seen that there is a strong inclination for studies to be more focused on strategy use and that many of these studies are conducted with high proficiency or matured L2 learners such as undergraduates and postgraduates unlike the research in the past especially those conducted in L1 context involving primary and secondary school children. Two gaps in research are evident. First, if language proficiency plays an important role in L2 summary writing as previous research suggests, we need to know what are the proficiency related problems

encountered during the summary writing process from the students perspective so that we can address those problems and pave the way for better summary production. Second, if there is a developmental trend in how students use various summarization rules as previous research suggests, we need to know whether ESL pre-university students are using successful or unsuccessful strategies in writing summaries so that steps can be taken to enhance productive strategies and rehabilitate unproductive strategies. At the end of the day, what matters most is that students have sufficient productive strategies and language skills to write effective summaries.

## 2.4  Conclusion

The issues related to summary writing that have been raised in this chapter are an attempt to highlight the role summary writing plays as a cumulative skill of all other language skills taking into consideration the contextual factors and the strategic nature of ESL language acquisition. This chapter has also attempted to analyse the problems related to summary writing and the strategies employed (both established and non-established) to overcome those problems.  The theoretical framework and empirical research carried out in this area help to lay the foundation for the above issues to be raised and discussed with further clarity and comprehension.