THE INFLUENCE OF CONTEXTUAL FACTORS ON REVISION STRATEGIES: THE CASE OF FOUR MALAYSIAN NATIVE SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH IN A MAINSTREAM E.S.L. CLASSROOM

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Dedicated to

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ABSTRACT

This case study explored the revision strategies of four Malaysian native speakers of English when they composed aloud while writing an argumentative essay. Think aloud verbal protocols were analysed using the grounded theory approach in conjunction with written texts.

The findings suggest that contextual factors influenced classroom practices. The contextual factors included a teacher who was not provided with adequate training, administrative policies which did not provide support for the development of writers based on their abilities, writing instruction which viewed revision as a process of error correction and public assessment practices which were non-transparent. These classroom practices influenced the participants' beliefs about revision. These beliefs affected the quality of their essays as judged by Malaysian public examiners. Additionally, the findings suggest a mismatch between classroom instruction and public examination.

Suggestions are made to address these concerns by considering the theoretical underpinnings of the cognitive process, socio-cultural and community of practice models of writing and learning. These include instruction on revision strategies, considering alternative assessment practices, providing formative feedback, ability streaming, focussing on critical reading skills and providing adequate support to the teacher.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

LIST OF ABREVIATIONS

CDO   Compare Diagnose and Operate

CE   Central Executive

CV   Concurrent Verbalizations

ESL   English as a Second Language

KBSM   Kurikulum Baru Sekolah Menengah (New Secondary School Curriculum)

L2   Second Language

LTM   Long Term Memory

LT-WM   Long Term Working Memory

MNSE   Malaysian Native Speakers of English

NCWASC   National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges

SPM   Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (Malaysian Certificate of Education)

STM   Short Term Memory

ST-WM   Short Term Working Memory

TA   Think Aloud

WM   Working Memory

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

> Revision is fundamental. It is the writer's workshop. It is the anvil on which writing and thinking are shaped. We must, therefore, make revision a central component of writing instruction (Cramer, 1992: 4).

1. Scope of study

This study examined revision strategies of four Malaysian Native Speakers of English when they revised an argumentative essay. Data was collected from think aloud protocols, students' drafts, final version of essays and from comments of the essays from the classroom teacher and markers of public examinations at the end of high school public exam in Malaysia. Detailed reports of the students' thinking processes were then related to classroom teaching and the public examination standards. The findings demonstrate how contextual factors influenced the participants revising of their writing.

1.1. Brief background

As this study is about students in the Malaysian secondary education system, it is useful to provide details of that system by looking at the Malaysian Education Policy, the English syllabus, how English is assessed in the public examination and finally teacher training. The Malaysian National Education Policy stipulates that English is taught as a second language in Malaysia. English is introduced to Malaysian students at the age of 7. It is taught for an average of 90 minutes per week in primary schools and 240 minutes per week in secondary schools (Nunan, 2003: 594). At the time of this study in 2002, all other subjects were taught in Malay, the national language. However, as a result of a change in the education policy, students enrolled in the first years of primary, secondary and pre-university classes from 2003 are taught Mathematics and Science in English.

The Malaysian Education system follows the Integrated Curriculum for the Secondary Schools. This is better known as the KBSM (*Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah*). The KBSM

stipulates that the aim of the English Language Programme is "to equip students with skills and knowledge of English to communicate in certain everyday activities and certain job situations and to provide points of take-off for various post-secondary school needs" (Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran Bahasa Inggeris Tingkatan 5, 1991: 1). All schools are required to follow the national syllabus. Among the areas that are focussed on in the writing programme are spelling, punctuation, grammar, paragraph building, developing coherence and appropriate use of registers. Process writing is emphasised in the syllabus and teachers are expected to teach students to plan, draft, revise and edit. However, specific details of skills for the various components of these writing processes are not specified in the syllabus.

The KBSM culminates in a final assessment known as the SPM (*Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia*). Translated into English this means the Malaysian Certificate of Education. English is an important subject for this examination as the grades obtained are included in the points used to determine eligibility into tertiary education. Grades are awarded solely on the textual qualities of essays written in the exam. The English exam consists of two papers. Paper 1 is a multiple choice exam that tests students' grammatical competence and comprehension skills. Paper 2 comprises three sections which include directed writing, summary writing and essay writing. In directed writing, students are required to write narratives, descriptives, informal letters, letters to newspapers, minutes of meetings and reports, and speeches based on prompts provided in the exam. For directed writing, 15 marks are allocated for format and content and another 15 marks are allocated for language. In summary writing, students are required to write a 160 word summary. 20 marks are given for content and another 10 marks are given for language. For the section on essay writing, 5 topics are given and students have to choose one topic and write an essay of about 350 words. The topics could be narrative, descriptive, expository, factual and argumentative in nature. This section is allocated 50 marks based on holistic impression. (See Appendix 1 for a version of the marking band.) It is the writing of this type of essay which is investigated in this research. The final grade on the SPM English paper is based on the total marks a student gets on all these components. As an example, one has to get at least 90% of the total marks to be awarded an A1 in the SPM.

Considering the emphasis on writing tasks in the SPM, it is crucial that a student is able to write effectively. However, this can only be accomplished if one knows what qualities a good essay entails and what strategies are needed to produce them. There is a need for the teacher who prepares students for the SPM to have an understanding of these strategies. This understanding is usually gained during the teachers' training.

Most English teachers for Malaysian secondary schools receive their training either in Teacher Training Colleges or in local public universities. The writing part of teacher training involves two courses. The aim of the first course is to improve the teacher's own proficiency. The trainee teacher has to do weekly grammatical exercises from a prescribed text book and write creative essays as part of course assignments and evaluation. The second course provides the trainee teacher with theoretical knowledge of the writing process.

1.2. Previous research

As writing is an important component of the SPM, this section reviews previous research on revision strategies in writing. Writing research has looked at written products and the writing process. Some studies have provided insights into the types of revision, points of revision, levels of revision and functions of revision (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1983; Faighley & Witte, 1981; Monahan, 1984). These studies suggest that writers spend a considerable amount of time revising. Studies which probed the cognitive processes (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Flower & Hayes, 1981) provide additional evidence on the importance of revision. For instance, some studies have reported that writers revise sentences that have been written, revise sentences as they compose, and even revise ideas as they are being contemplated (Chenoweth & Hayes, 2001, 2003). In another study that observed second grade writers (Perez, 2001), it was reported that the writers revised recursively "before writing, while writing and between writing drafts" (p. 28). These findings suggest the importance of revision in the writing process and pave the way to an understanding that revision takes place throughout the writing process (Applebee, 2000; Butterfield, 1994).

Revision is also considered critical to the production of quality texts (Butterfield, Hacker, & Albertson, 1996; Hayes & Flower, 1980; Hayes & Nash, 1996; MacArthur, Graham, & Schwartz, 1991; Sengupta, 2000). Section 2.2 discusses in more detail the relationship between

revision and text quality. This judgement is based on two premises. First, it has been suggested that writing is a developmental stage where revision bridges the gap between one stage of creation and the next (Graves, 1994). In other words, the willingness and ability to revise is considered a crucial turning point in the development of a writer. Another reason why revision is considered a crucial stage of the writing process is because it is during revision that a writer revisits ideas, makes discoveries, attempts changes to improve clarity, modifies and re-crafts texts to improve textual quality (Butterfield et al., 1996; Hayes, 2004). This is done to make the text accessible to an intended reader (Alamargot & Chanquoy, 2001; Allal, Chanquoy, & Largy, 2004).

Given the importance of writing in the SPM and revision as an important component of the writing process, an understanding of revision strategies would enable us to judge the effectiveness of writers' strategies. As will be seen in section 2.1, internalised cognitive and meta-cognitive knowledge about writing and revision strategies have been suggested to influence the quality of writing. One can look to previous studies to gain insights into revision strategies (Rijlaarsdam, Couzijn, & van den Berg, 2004; Sengupta, 2000; Sommers, 1980). However, this would not be possible if one wanted to look at native English speakers in a non-English dominant learning environment as data is currently not available on this group of writers. Mainstream studies on revision have traditionally looked at native English speakers in English dominant countries or second language writers writing in their first or second language learning environments. A thorough search of journals on writing (*College Composition and Communication, International Journal of Applied Linguistics, Journal of Second Language Learning, Research in the Teaching of English, World Englishes, Written Communication*), composition scholars (Chan, Elbow, Flower, Graves, Matsuda, Ransdell, Rijlaarsdam, Smagorinsky and Silva) and World Englishes scholars (Davies, Higgins, Kachru and Mufwene) reveals that no previous research has looked at revision processes from the World Englishes perspective.

As this study is about native speakers, the following section discusses how native speakers are identified. It then discusses the criteria used to identify the Malaysian native speaker of English in this study. This section then suggests that new insights may be gained by understanding the revision processes of native speakers who are in a non-English dominant and ESL environment.

1.3 How native speakers are identified

The labelling of speakers who use English as either native speakers or non-native speakers is subjective as different criteria are used. Labels such as nationality, Standard English, competency and the dominant use of the language are used as criteria to identify native speakers.

The first label that is used to identify a native speaker is based on nationality. This identification of native speakers based on nationality/domicile suggests that native speakers from certain regions speak the core variety of the language (Smith, 1981; Phillipson, 1992). However, because of ethno-political factors, these core varieties of English have spiralled out into other regions of the world. It is these varieties that are the subject of controversy as they differ from the core variety of English. The identification of the varieties of English is based on the foundational work of Kachru (1990). He classifies native speakers into three groups: the inner circle native speakers, the outer circle native speakers and the expanding circle of native speakers (Kachru, 1992:356). This distinction comes from the role of English in the respective countries. The inner circle native speakers represent the "traditional cultural and linguistic bases of English" (Kachru, 1992:356). They are from the UK, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand where English is used as a first language and thus recognised as the core variety. The outer circle native speakers come from countries such as Ghana, Malaysia, Philippines, India and Singapore where English is used as a second language. These countries were former British colonies where English has been institutionalised as an additional language (Kachru, 1997: 214). English is used alongside other languages in these countries. As a result of this wide use of English, some speakers acculturated it as a first language. A third group of native speakers come from the expanding circle. The expanding circle refers to speakers from where English is primarily used as a foreign language. In these countries, English does not play any historical or governmental role. Some countries in the expanding circle are China, Indonesia, Korea, Egypt, Western Europe, Russia and Saudi Arabia.

A second label that is used to identify native speakers is based on "standard English" (Davies, 2004). This label suggests that a single variety and norm is used to identify English. As an example, students from the outer circle are required to sit for and pass proficiency tests based on either the American or British standards of English. One who is proficient in the Singaporean variety of English has to pass the TOEFL to gain entry into American universities. The IELTS is required by British institutions of higher learning. This gives the impression that a Singaporean's fluency in English is not recognised in the inner circle. Varieties from the outer circle are considered non-standard English. Based on this argument, it would seem that the inner circle native speakers consider themselves the "guardian of the true language" (Davies, 2004:447). One would be correct in assuming that ownership, control, authority and hence power on the use of English seems to be vested with the inner circle. However, a single norm for standard English does not exist (Davies, 1991; Mufwene, 2001; Nayar, 1997; Wee, 2002). The term "true language" or "Standard English" seems to a myth. It has been suggested that the inner circle English speakers are considered as "attitudinally and pedagogically privileged" (Kachru, personal communication, 8 May, 2002). As an example, countries in the outer circle and expanding circle prefer to employ only inner circle native speakers to teach English (Davies, 2003). Even though this seems to marginalise the status of outer circle native speakers, the outer circle English does not represent an "illegitimate offspring of [inner circle] English" (Mufwene, 2001: 139). Thus, Englishes from the different circles represent varieties of English which have their own "native norms" (Higgins, 2003: 619) or "kingdoms" (Davies, 2003: 198).

A third label attached to the definition of native speaker is based on competency in the use of English (Davies, 1984; Fillmore, 1979). Competency refers to one's grammatical and communicative competence. This is a controversial definition as someone who lives in the inner circle countries and does not have phonological, linguistics or communicative competence would still be considered a native speaker of English based on where they are domiciled. Another reason why this criteria is controversial is that linguistics and communicative competence is often incorrectly evaluated as it is based on the norms of a "divine group" (Fillmore, 1979). What this means is that, if one does not achieve linguistic and communicative competence based on the IELT or TOEFL, one would not be considered a competent user of the language.

A less controversial label is the biological definition of a native speaker. The Oxford Companion to the English Language (McArthur, 1992) defines a native speaker as a person who has spoken a certain language since early childhood. Davies (1991) refines this definition by postulating that speakers who acquire English as their first language in childhood are called native speakers of English (Davies, 1991). This definition is less contentious than the one which defines a native speaker based on domicile and competency. This is because, just as the traditional native speakers, outer circle native speakers acquire and use English as their first language. However, contrary to inner circle native speakers, they are in an environment which uses English as a Second Language (ESL).

1.4. The Malaysian Native Speaker of English

Given these differing and yet controversial definitions of a native speaker, this study adopts the view that the MNSE is one who has acquired English since childhood. The other labels attached to the definition of the native speaker seem controversial to be used in the definition of the MNSE. For example, the definition of the native speaker from the domicile/competency perspective groups all native speakers irrespective of their biological acquisition of language into non-native speakers of English. However, in terms of acquisition, English is the first language of the MNSE. In terms of communicative competence, the four participants in this study are able to communicate within social settings in Malaysia. This is based on their active involvement in both school and outside school activities (details provided in Chapter 4). As such, they are able to be identified with the English speaking community in Malaysia. In terms of grammatical accuracy or "Standard English", one needs to acknowledge that the English spoken in the inner circle represents varieties of English i.e. the British variety of English, the Australian variety of English, the American variety of English etc. None of these varieties can claim to represent a universal standard of English as each has its own norms. Similarly, the participants of this study speak the Malaysian variety of English which has its own norm. As varieties of English grow, there are societies (e.g. Kerala, Singapore) with high levels of English (Davies, 2004:441). This growth of varieties of English raises the concern whether societies with high levels of English will "continue to look towards the [inner circle] native speaker for authoritative norms of usage" (Graddol, 1999:68).

The MNSE seem to be a unique group to research. Based on a survey (discussed in detail in Chapter 3) by the class teacher in this study, 16% of SPM students in the school where this study was conducted were MNSE. Contrary to inner circle native speakers who are in English dominant environments, the outer circle native speakers are in an ESL environment. As such, it would be "interesting to identify theoretical reasons if they use the same strategies as native speakers in English dominant countries" (Matsuda, personal communication, October 2, 2002). Since the focus of classroom instruction might be to cater for the remaining 84% of ESL learners, one wonders if the native speakers are also challenged as writers in such a classroom.

As past studies (Butterfield et al., 1996; Flower, Hayes, Carey, Schriver, & Stratman, 1986; Hayes, 1996) have not investigated outer circle native speakers in an ESL classroom, this study is done to better understand how this group of writers' deals with revision as this may have instructional implications. This study aims to broaden our understanding of revision strategies and expand these theories to native speakers in non-English dominant classrooms.

1.5. Purpose of the study

Given the importance of revision in the writing process and the lack of data on outer circle native speakers, this case study explores the revision strategies of high school MNSE who will be sitting for a public examination. Specifically, this research sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the revision strategies of MNSE?
2. What are the similarities and differences in revision strategies among the participants and inner circle native speakers of English?
3. How is the final written product   judged by the class teacher and markers of the SPM examination ?

1.6. Overview of chapters in the study

This dissertation consists of five chapters. Following the introductory chapter, Chapter two discusses the importance of revision in writing by examining cognitive process models of revision which argue the importance of revision in the writing process. It also discusses the socio-cultural theoretical model and the community of practice model. It then discusses studies that linked revision to text quality. Following this, previous studies on high school inner circle native speakers of English are discussed to compare strategies with the participants of this study.

Chapter three provides a description of case study research and the think aloud methodology that was used to understand the revision processes. It addresses some theoretical and methodological concerns of the think aloud method and how these were resolved in this study. The chapter presents a detailed account of the participants, how this study was conducted and the use of a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software. Finally, it explores how data was analysed using the data driven approach.

Chapter four provides a detailed description of the revision processes of the four participants as they revised their drafts. A detailed profile of the participant, their writing experiences and perceptions of revision is given. Next, the chapter provides an analysis of their revision processes and the insights gained from these strategies. Finally, this chapter provides an evaluation of written texts by the class teacher and Malaysian public examiners with the aim of linking revision strategies and text quality.

Chapter five compares the revision strategies of the participants across drafts. These comparisons indicate the influence of the classroom. The strategies are then compared with those of the inner circle native speakers. While these comparisons show some similarities in strategies, there is evidence of the influence of the classroom. The chapter then puts forth an argument that contextual factors affected the potential of the participants as writers. These findings are then discussed with the underpinnings of the cognitive process model, the socio-

cultural theoretical model (Vygotsky, 1978) and the community of practice model (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

Chapter six summarises the study by discussing the theoretical implications. The chapter then suggests pedagogies and practices that can be used to exploit the potentials of outer circle native speakers who are in an ESL classroom based on the insights gained from the five theoretical models discussed in this study. These include instruction on revision strategies, alternative assessment, ability streaming, emphasis on critical reading and teacher development. Finally, reflections on this study and suggestions for further research are discussed.

CHAPTER TWO

REVISION AS A WRITING STRATEGY

Good writing is the result of rewriting. No writer ever gets a manuscript completely right the first time (Chittenden, 1996: 23).

2. Overview of chapter two

This study aims to understand cognitive processes in revision and relate these processes to text quality when high school outer circle native speakers revise. With this in mind, this chapter discusses the importance of revision in the writing process. It first discusses what revision entails and identifies two types of revision: revision as fixing errors and revision as discovery (Hayes, 2004). This understanding of the types of revision is important since revision as discovery has been suggested to result in better quality texts (Hayes, 2004). This chapter then discusses insights from cognitive process models of writing which propose that revision is an important sub-process of writing (Flower & Hayes, 1981) and that one needs to have both cognitive and meta-cognitive knowledge to revise effectively (Butterfield et al., 1996). It then discusses two alternative theoretical models: the socio-cultural theoretical model and the community of practice model.Since this study aims to relate revision processes to text quality, it also discusses previous research in this area. Next, this chapter discusses the findings from studies on revision strategies of inner circle high school students.

2.1. What is revision?

Revision means "making any changes at any point in the writing process. Changes may or may not affect meaning of text and they may be major or minor" (Fitzgerald, 1987: 484). Different terms have been used to describe revision. Revision takes place at two different levels: surface level and meaning level (Boiarsky, 1980). When one revises, one may make changes that do not change the meaning of a sentence. This is called surface level revision. In surface level revision, the focus of changes is on the words and sentences within paragraphs. Changes such as spelling, punctuation and grammar preserve the meaning of the text by maintaining the information content of the text (Faighley & Witte, 1984). Other features of surface level revision are eliminating repetition, finding synonyms, deleting words, correcting sentence fragments, correcting grammatical inaccuracies, refining word choices, adding descriptive

adjectives and figurative language (Brian, 1984; Monahan, 1984; Sengupta, 2000; Sommers, 1982). An additional feature of surface level revision is that there is no effort directed at changing the ideas or rewriting the paper (Cramer, 1992). Some expressions which have been used to denote surface level revisions are: editing (Sommers, 1980), error detection, proof-reading, reprocessing (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987), formal changes (Cramer, 1992), sentence level polishing, low-level concerns (Yagelski, 1995), rewording activity and thesaurus philosophy of writing (Sommers, 1980). Surface level revision is also known as revising to fix errors (Hayes, 2004).

When revising, one may perhaps change a sentence or a paragraph to incorporate new ideas, that is, make meaning level revisions. Meaning level revision is also referred to as global revision (Wallace & Hayes, 1991), interactive revising (Calkins, 1980), meaning preserving changes (Cramer, 1992) and revisions of higher level concerns (Yagelski, 1995). Some of the features of meaning revision include stylistic concerns, organisational goals and text development - that is, starting over again or rewriting most of the paper (Alamargot & Chanquoy, 2001; McCutchen, Francis, & Kerr, 1997; Rijlaarsdam et al., 2004; van den Berg & Rijlaarsdam, 2001; van Gelderen, 1997). Changes made at this level affect the content and include addition, deleting, replacing, re-ordering of information, eliminating portions of an argument, substituting or adding arguments to mould the text to its purpose and audience. Pausing often to reflect on what has been written or how to move forward indicates meaning level revision (Kellogg, 1994; Yagelski, 1995). As this type of revision involves making new connections between ideas and generating new ideas, it is termed revision by discovery (Hayes, 2004). Better writers do more of this type of revision (Breetvelt, van den Bergh, & Rijlaarsdam, 1994; Chan & Heng, 2001; Yagelski, 1995).

Studies which probed cognitive processes during writing show that writing processes occur in discrete stages. These stages include planning, drafting, writing and revising. These stages have been the focus of much research and theory in composition. The following section looks at insights from studies on one of these stages: revision. The section also discusses the importance of revision as a writing strategy.

2.1.1. Cognitive processes in writing

A model of writing that provides insights into the cognitive processes of writing is the "Model of Cognitive Process in Composing" (Flower & Hayes, 1981). In this model, writing is considered a problem solving activity. This is based on the premise that a writer has to attend to numerous considerations while writing. All these considerations which can be seen as processes do not occur in a linear pattern. According to this model, during these recursive processes, the writer may listen to voices (meta-commentary) with their suggestions, rules, and advice. These voices may orchestrate the writing. Some of these voices would be about past writing experiences and would perhaps include images of a teacher telling the writer to "write an outline first, check your grammar". The writer is confronted with many decisions to make or "writing problems". Among the problems are how to deal with these voices, a perceived audience, expectations of a genre, language and grammar. Additionally, writers have to work through their own ideas by moving back and forth to address these voices and concerns. These recursive processes place a heavy demand on the memory. As an example, a writer needs to weigh a rhetorical problem, explore the expectations of an audience and write according to the requirements of a genre when writing an argumentative essay.

Flower and Hayes (1981) model proposes that writing involves three main processes: planning, translating and reviewing. Planning is the stage where the writer generates ideas, sets goals and organises ideas. Translating is where the writer converts the text or plans into written language. Reviewing consists of evaluating and revising the text produced so far. These processes occur recursively as writers move back and forth between these processes. This model suggests that the writing processes are orchestrated by three main components, that is, the task environment, the cognitive writing processes and the writer's Long Term Memory (LTM).

The first component is the task environment and it "includes everything outside the writer's skin" (Flower & Hayes, 1981: 369). This takes account of classroom instruction and any other factors that influence the writer's knowledge of writing. The text produced so far is considered an important physical factor of the task environment as the writer re-visits it to see if it has met writing goals. The writer's LTM provides insights into previous writing experiences or stored topic knowledge.

A second component of the Flower and Hayes (1981) model is the cognitive processes. The cognitive processes involve planning, text generation and revision/reading and editing. The planning stage encompasses idea generation, organizing and goal setting. In idea generation, the writer searches the memory and retrieves suitable information from the LTM by considering the topic, the reader, the audience specified by the task and the purpose of the writing. In the text generation stage, the writer has to transform ideas from the planning stage to acceptable written English. The writer may write multiple drafts. According to this model, revision is described as reviewing and it refers to "a conscious … process in which writers choose to read what they have written … with an eye to systematically evaluating or revising the text" (p. 374). The process of reviewing is further explicated by two sub-processes: reading and editing. Editing leads a writer to evaluate the quality of the text. If the writer detects any ambiguity between his/her "intention" and the text while reading or evaluating, he/she attempts to revise any inaccuracies of meaning and/or violations in writing conventions under the guidance of an on-going goal and plan. Editing can occur at any time and interrupt any other processes throughout the entire composing process.

This model describes how ideas are generated or planned and transformed into written texts. The strength of this model lies in its claim to account for mental events during composition on the basis of a small number of sub-processes. Any sub-process can incorporate any other sub-process. As an example, the whole planning process may be called up for the purpose of reviewing or editing and so planning can take place even when a text is revised. This sub-process can even interrupt other processes such as planning and translating. This insight is useful for teachers of writing as writing instruction can be designed to help students think through and organise their ideas before writing and to rethink and revise their initial drafts. As is discussed in section 2.1, this form of knowledge influences the quality of writing. Another insight from this model is that writers set goals, plans and work in "episodes", that is, organise their writing in small tasks. It would seem that this goal setting and planning accounts for the difference between good and poor writers as good writers may use this planning and goal setting to guide their composing.

Even though this model provides valuable insights into cognitive processes during writing and has influenced much process centred research (Beal, 1993), it has drawbacks in its claim about

revision strategies. One of the drawbacks of this model is that it assumes that editing (a sub-process of reviewing) takes place automatically when a problem such as misspelling, factual inaccuracies or lack of clarity has been detected. In other words, problem detection automatically triggers problem correction. One would not be able to automatically correct errors if one does not have the knowledge to do so. A second drawback of this model is that it does not account for revision that is not error related, i.e. revision as a result of discovery. Thus, the model restricts revision to error detection.

2.1.2. Dissonance models

Besides looking at revision as a problem solving endeavour, some process models put forth an argument that revision is triggered when writers notice dissonance between what they intended to write and what they wrote (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1983; Bridwell, 1980; Hayes, Flower, Schriver, Stratman, & Carey, 1987; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1983; Sommers, 1980). The model by Hayes, Flower, Schriver, Stratman and Carey (1987) comprises three main processes: text evaluation (problem detection and diagnosis), selection of a revising strategy and execution. Execution refers to the process of modifying or revising the text. The authors of this model consider revision as a strategic activity where a writer is assumed to have knowledge to make revisions when a problem is detected. Even though this aspect seems similar to the earlier Flower and Hayes (1981) model, this model provides a framework of revising strategies by claiming that a writer chooses among five strategies when revising: to ignore the problem, to solve the problem later, to search for more information, to rewrite the text while preserving the basic ideas or to rewrite the text to "greatly preserve the already produced text" (Alamargot & Chanquoy, 2001: 107). A second insight from this model is that a separate component for evaluating mental representations is included. Evaluating involves identifying a problem, diagnosing it and then fixing it. Evaluation takes place at three levels. The first level takes place when a comparison is made between an intention and the text. The second evaluation is made between text plans and writer's goals and finally evaluation takes place when the text is compared with linguistics rules. This model extends the previous model by arguing that knowledge of revision, referred to as cognitive resources, is essential for a writer to identify problems and to make strategic conscious decisions on revision. Thus, an insight from the dissonance models is that revision takes place "when there is something wrong with the text"

(Hayes, 2004: 11). One needs to acknowledge that revision also takes place when no problems are detected. As an example, one may read a sentence and decide to elaborate – this certainly does not indicate that there is something wrong with the text. This omission of revision as a process of discovery seems a serious limitation of this model.

2.1.3. Meta-cognitive models

A third type of model that provides further insights into revision strategies are the meta-cognitive models. By taking into consideration the importance of the Working Memory (WM), Hayes (1996) provided additional information about revision by emphasising the importance of reading in writing. According to this model, a writer and a reader read a text with different purposes in mind. A writer reads for comprehension, to define the writing task and finally to "detect errors, problems or ambiguities" (Alamargot & Chanquoy, 2001: 109). However, a reader reads only to understand. The model proposes that writers need to have a task scheme (writing goals), fundamental understanding of processes involved in revising (problem solving and critical reading) and cognitive resources of the LTM and the WM to revise effectively. This model suggests that the writer has control on revision and that reading contributes to writing. This control comes from two aspects of meta-cognitive strategies; knowledge about revision strategies and the "activation of necessary knowledge" (Alamargot & Chanquoy, 2001: 113). In other words, revision is controlled by one's knowledge of revision – a lack of knowledge of revision would probably result in less or superficial revision. This model also emphasised that reading is the basis of revision – a writer has to be a critical reader in order to revise effectively.

Butterfield, Hacker and Albertson (1996) proposed another version of the Hayes (1996) model and named it the Procedural Model of Revision. This model takes into account the topic, audience and the text that is being revised by relating these to the cognitive and meta-cognitive systems. Cognitive systems are claimed to store the knowledge of the text (i.e. genre, facts, formulaic steps) while meta-cognitive systems store the knowledge of revision strategies. The LTM can be used to free resources in the WM if topic and discourse knowledge are automatised in the cognitive systems. What this implies is that in order to produce quality texts, one has to load the cognitive system with topic knowledge and the meta-cognitive system with knowledge of revision strategies.

The cognitive process models, the dissonance models and the meta-cognitive models consider revision as an important component of the writing process and that one needs to have the knowledge of revision strategies to activate the revision process. The necessity of a writer being a critical reader is also emphasised. Revision strategies are linked to the WM which is claimed to be over-loaded during revision (Hayes, 1996, 2004; Hayes & Flower, 1980, 1987). This overload results from the "absence of automatisation of some cognitive process linked to writing" (Alamargot & Chanquoy, 2001: 120) and seems to explain why many writers do not go beyond surface level revisions.

2.1.4. Socio-cultural model

The cognitive process model seems to lack the attention to contextual factors which shape cognition which is inherent in an ESL classroom with native speakers of English. Learning in the classroom involves the interaction of language with diverse social settings. This includes learners with different levels of proficiency, aims of curriculum and expectations of a pubic examination. A paradigm that captures the nature of the interplay of contextual factors is the socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978). The following section looks at the perspectives of writing offered by this theoretical model.

Vygotsky's social development theoretical model proposes that learning takes place in a social environment. Contrary to the cognitive process model which looks only at the individual, this theory posits that cognitive development is influenced by social interaction and social learning. In the classroom setting, students learn by interacting with their peers and teachers. It is these experiences that determine how students make sense of world, or in the case of this study, how "schemata networks" (Jaramilo, 1996 p. 134) are developed. In other words, these experiences of writing and revising become internalised. Vygotsky argues that a student's development cannot be understood by a study of only the individual but it has to be examined in the context of a social world.

Additionally, this theory suggests that learning takes place actively and that experienced adults or peers play an important role in the learning experience. The term zone of proximal development (ZPD) is used to describe the level of development one can achieve with the

support of experienced guidance. In other words, a teacher is expected to provide experienced guidance to motivate students to excel beyond their current skills and knowledge levels. Vygotsky claims that learning occurs in the zone of proximal development. The process where the teacher provides support to expand current skills and knowledge is called scaffolding. Thus, the teacher scaffolds and provides a learning environment for the writer to experience optimal learning by navigating across the ZPD of revision competence. This theory also postulates that skilled peers contribute to the social learning environment. In other words, collaborative learning is valued.

In sum, this theoretical model proposes that social experiences construct ones learning experiences.

2.1.5. Community of practice model

A fifth theoretical model that explains writing is the community of practice model proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991). In this model, learning to write is viewed as training to gain membership to communities of practice. In other words, learners enter a community by gaining knowledge and finally adopting a view of themselves as legitimate members of the community. Lave and Wenger stress that learning writing involves both gaining membership to specific communities and also the shaping of individual identity (appropriation). The community of practice model does not place a value on examinations as it posits that "the goal [of learning]… is to increase the exchange value of learning independently of its use value" (p.12). In other words, learning takes place only if it enables the learner to participate in communities of practice. Examination results do not necessarily indicate the ability of an individual to gain membership to specific communities. One is considered to have learnt writing successfully only if one is able to function in writing communities. However, this seems to be a problematic notion for this study as the membership criteria of target writing communities are not easily identifiable or even transparent. As an example, the Malaysian school curriculum stipulates that students should be prepared for out of school work. However, it does not specific any particular generic skills that would enable students to fit into workplace writing communities. Some students may join an academic community, that is, to further their studies. In line with this model, learning in the Malaysian context would require

students to gain membership to four different communities: the "classroom writing community", "exam (SPM) community", "work place community" and the "academic community". It would seem that "a deeper sense of the value of participation to [these] communities and the learner, lies in becoming part of these communities" (p.110-111). Schools seem to be the place to prepare one to gain membership to these communities.

2.1.6. Choice of model

The five models seem to view learning of writing from different perspectives. The three cognitive process models look at individual development of learning while the socio-cultural theory looks at the individual as part of a social interactive process. The community of practice model looks beyond classroom learning by associating learning to gaining membership to skilled communities. Both the socio-cultural and community of practice models seem to suggest the advantages for co-operative learning, where students of equal status are expected to work together to enhance their knowledge and skills. All three models seem to offer useful insights for educational practices.

The cognitive process model forms the main tool for enquiry in this study as it seems to account for the individual situations of each student. As verbal protocols represent the inner voice of the participants, they provide insights into their intentions and expectations of writing and revising. Besides, studying the inner voice may yield new insights into the complexity of writing. These insights can then be interpreted and linked to the socio-cultural and community of practice models. (Refer to chapter 6). Both individual and social settings are essential if one hopes to gain a wider theoretical understanding of MNSE writing in mainstream ESL classroom.

2.2. Revision and text quality

As the present study aims to relate revision processes to written text, the next section discusses previous studies which link revision processes and text quality (Beal, 1993; Breetvelt et al., 1994; Hayes, 2004). In a study which aimed to relate revision processes to text quality (Wallace, Hayes, Hatch, Miller, Moser & Silk, 1996), 57 students who were enrolled in a first-semester writing course were asked to write a letter of application for a summer job and then revise it.

These students were randomly assigned to two groups: the treatment group received eight minutes of instruction on global and local revision. The final written product was rated on a nine point scale which classified the revisions as negative change, no change, minor positive change and major positive change. Two experienced teachers of college writing courses rated the final written products based on the scale that awarded up to -2 marks if revisions made the text worse and up to +6 points if the revisions improved the text. Their judgements were based on whether there was a holistic improvement between the original and revised drafts. Besides this, the markers also considered the scope of revision which classified individual revisions based on single or multiple sentence changes and number of revisions. The results of this study suggested that revision helped the writers to improve their texts.

A second study that supports the argument that revision improves text looked at 20 students who wrote compositions on two themes which required elaborate planning (Breetvelt et al., 1994). The two topics assigned were: "Living alone, Yes or No?" and "Children, Yes or No?" Verbal protocols were recorded to "assess the writing processes underlying the production of these texts" (p. 103). Text quality was rated by three independent markers based on the persuasiveness of the text, structure and organisation, audience awareness and language usage. A multi-level analysis of variance showed that some cognitive activities were restricted to the first part of the writing process while some were spread across the writing phase. As an example, reading the topic and evaluating during the first phase of writing had positive effects on text quality. Actual revising, goal setting and structuring during the same phase correlated negatively with text quality but had a positive effect in the second phase of writing. In the final phase, planning, drafting and rereading had negative effects on the text quality. A general conclusion of the study is that revision is negatively correlated if it is done in the first part of the writing process. Based on these findings, the researchers argued that it would be better to attend to some revision process at the beginning of an essay while other processes may be better at different stages of the writing process.

However, some researchers were not able to replicate the findings which showed a positive link between revision and text quality. Pennington and So's (1993) study aimed to investigate if skills in the writing process as defined by the utilization of strategies and behaviours characteristic of skilled writers predicted high rating on written products. These process skills

included planning, pausing, reading and editing. It should be noted that researchers defined editing as physically making a change in the text. The participants of the study were asked to write a narrative and their verbal protocols and final written texts were analysed. The written texts were rated by two native speakers based on content, organisation, vocabulary, language use and mechanics. The researchers failed to find a relationship between the process skills and the written product.

Unfortunately, these studies used varying sets of measures to rate the final written products. An essay which is classified as "good" by one criterion may not be given the same grade on a different set of evaluation. In Yagelsky's (1995) study, the class teacher rated the essays based on a three point scale: qualified, acceptable and unacceptable. If an essay was well organized and had smooth transitions between paragraphs it was rated as qualified. If the essay needed more transitions between paragraphs and contained errors in spelling and mechanics, it would be rated as acceptable. However, if the paper lacked accuracy, vivid details and organisations it would be rated as unacceptable. Ransdel and Levy (1994) used a much more detailed rating scale. In their study, they used an adapted version of a university-level English placement exam called Six-subgroup Quality Scale to measure writing quality. In the study, two independent markers provided scores based on word choice and arrangement, technical quality, engagement in content, purpose/audience/tone, organisation and development, and style. Markers had to undergo extensive training and moderated a large number of essays to ensure reliability in their judgements.

The findings from research on revision strategies and textual quality are inconclusive. This is partly due to the different rating scales which were used. Suggesting that knowledge of revision strategies improves text quality in all writing situations seems to be tentative. The link between revision strategies and text quality should be related to the purpose of the writing task. If a writer is to sit for a public examination, as is the case with the participants of this study, relating these strategies to the textual quality as judged by the examination standard would be a justifiable option.

2.3. Revision studies on inner circle high school students

This section discusses previous revision studies on high school students. These discussions of inner circle native speakers provide insights that can be compared and contrasted with the strategies of the outer circle native speakers of the present study. These strategies include the focus on meaning level revision, the extent of revision, the influence of an audience, the importance of reading comprehension, awareness of topic knowledge and the effect of delaying revision.

2.3.1. Focus on meaning level revision

It has been suggested that better writers revise more at the meaning level. Stallard (1974) found students made mostly word-phrase level revisions. He studied the revisions processes of 15 high school students who scored high on a standardised writing test and a randomly selected group of 15 of their lower-scoring classmates. Students in both groups wrote a brief essay on a recent news event of their choice. The "good" writers made 184 changes in their essay while the comparison group made only 64 changes. The findings of Stallard's study indicate that "good" high school students revise much more and their main concern was meaning level changes.

Skilled writers approach revision tasks differently (McCutchen, Francis, & Kerr, 1994). In their study, high, middle and low ability seventh graders were asked to revise and edit papers that had surface level and global level problems; some papers had the errors marked and some did not. Discussions between different level writers were recorded, transcribed, and analysed for the types of revisions they considered. The results support earlier findings that high ability writers were better able to consider texts holistically and low level writers never considered the paper above the paragraph level.

However, these findings have to be interpreted with caution. First, the participants did not revise self-written texts. Second, some of these studies did not report the criteria for labelling writers as good, high ability or effective writers. As such the "good writers" in one study may not be comparable to the "high ability writers" in another study. Third, it is not possible to

generalise the findings as the tasks assigned, the writing conditions and the purpose of writing were not similar.

2.3.2. Extent of revision

It would also seem that given the opportunity, all students make fairly extensive revisions (Bridwell, 1980). In her study, Bridwell asked 171 randomly selected students to write about a place they knew well. They were encouraged to write about facts they wished to remember. When they wrote, they were asked to write so that another twelfth-grader reading their composition would be able to recognise the place they were writing about. Students were allowed three days for the writing. Bridwell's students made a total of 6,129 revisions. She developed a classification system of seven levels which showed the types of revision made by writers. The easiest level was surface revision and was followed by lexical, phrase, clause, sentence, and multi-sentence and text revision, each one showing a higher type of skill in revising. None of the students changed the content or form of the essays and it was reported that there was no revision at the whole composition level. Bridwell argued that all students engaged in revision. This seems to support the argument that revision is an important part of writing.

2.3.3. Influence of audience

An awareness of audience also seems to influence revision strategies. Monahan (1984) asked twelfth grade writers to compose for different audiences. Results showed that writers revised in different ways when writing for the teacher or for peers. It was reported that some writers revised more extensively for peer audience than for the teacher. However, for others, writing for a peer audience meant a considerably shorter draft than one for the teacher. In another study where two groups of university freshmen wrote compositions, it was reported that the group which was specified an audience wrote better quality texts (Roen & Willey, 1988). In a study which used interactive dialogues between student-student or teacher-student, it was reported that discussing revision with an audience improved clarity (Wong, Butler, Ficzere, & Kuperis, 1994). Similar positive effects of the influence of an audience have been reported in other studies (Schneider, 2003; Schriver, 1992). Even though these studies claim a positive

influence of an audience, one has to be cautious in generalising these findings to high school students who sit for a public examination. Even though some of these studies report that the audience had a positive effect on text quality, it cannot be generalised as different criteria were used for assessing text quality. It would be enlightening to explore whether high school students in Malaysia appear to be influenced by their awareness of public examiners as their audience for their writing.

2.3.4. Reading comprehension

The importance of reading comprehension was highlighted in research done by Beal's (1996). In this study, high school students were asked to review prepared texts with embedded errors. These errors include paragraphs with gaps in the flow of ideas and inconsistencies in sentences or paragraphs. The students were required to evaluate the comprehensibility of the text by identifying and repairing problems in the text. It was reported that this exercise in "error detection" enhanced their ability to revise. As a result, Beal (1996) concluded that reading comprehension is essential for revision. Since the students revised text written by others, it is not possible to infer if this ability to revise improved their own writing quality.

2.3.5. Topic knowledge

Topic knowledge and peer conferencing may benefit high school students. In McCutchen et.al's (1997) study, forty-six seventh graders and twenty-eight undergraduates participated in two experiments. In the first experiment, students were given texts which were embedded with four spelling errors and four disruptions in the flow of ideas. It was reported that participants who had topic knowledge about the text were able to locate inconsistencies in the flow of ideas. On the other hand, students who did not have topic knowledge focussed on surface level revision. This finding led the researchers to propose that "students were better able to revise for meaning when they were knowledgeable about the topic" (p. 674). In their second experiment, pairs of students of different writing abilities were observed as they discussed faulty texts. The results of the study support the argument that less experienced students focussed on surface level revision and experienced writers focussed on meaning-based

revision. As with earlier studies, the results need to be interpreted with caution as the findings were not based on self-written texts.

2.3.6. Delay in revision

A delay in revision activity may result in better revision. Chanquoy's (2001) study of text revision required her students to write their own text and to revise it. In two out of three writing sessions, revision was postponed. Changuoy (2001) hypothesised that delayed revision reduces cognitive load associated with revision processes. She reported that the two delayed revisions resulted in more revisions compared to the revision done while writing. Postponing revision processes may increase the frequency and depth of revisions. However, there was no discussion about whether it affected text quality.

In summary, revision studies of high school inner circle native speakers seem to support the importance of revision in the writing process. The focus on meaning level revision, the extent of revision, the influence of audience, knowledge of reading comprehension and topic knowledge clearly suggest that revision is a significant writing process. These previous studies were done with inner circle native speakers. This study hopes to explore if similar strategies are used by outer circle native speakers.

2.4. Summary of chapter two

Chapter two surveyed studies on revision which argued the importance of revision in writing. The need for both cognitive and meta-cognitive knowledge to produce quality written texts was also emphasised. These theories were drawn from the experiences of native speakers in English dominant environments. However, one wonders if an outer circle native speaker is able to do the same, given the fact they are in an environment where English is not the dominant language. A study of revision processes of outer circle native speakers and relating these processes to the demands of the socio-cultural settings and membership to communities of practice would provide additional insights into revision and writing . The next chapter discusses a method known as the think aloud method that was used to understand cognitive processes of the MNSE.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

> Verbal protocols allow the researcher to listen carefully, to see into the heart of the matter, and to tell the story simply and (as) accurately as possible (Dobrin, 1994: 289).

Chapter one provided a brief background of English in Malaysia. It highlighted the importance of writing quality texts in an on-demand public examination called the SPM. It also highlighted the importance of having knowledge of revision strategies to write quality texts. Chapter two provided a brief account of what revision entails, the link between revision and text quality and finally the insights that have been gained from previous studies on inner circle high school native speakers. Chapter two then discussed that further insights on revision strategies can be gained by looking at the strategies of outer circle native speakers in an ESL classroom.

3. Overview of chapter three

Chapter three discusses the theoretical underpinning of the methodology used to gain an understanding of revision strategies. It first discuses the use of case studies. Then this chapter discusses in detail the think aloud method, the theoretical and methodological concerns of using this method and how these were addressed in this study. The second section of the chapter describes the data used in this study. The primary data was the verbal protocols gained from the think aloud method. The secondary data consisted of the written essays with comments from the teacher and examiners and email interviews with the participants, teacher and examiners. Finally, the chapter discusses the features of a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software, called NVivo (QSR International, 2002) that was used in this study. Following this, the chapter explores how the primary data was analysed using the data driven approach.

An earlier version of the Think Aloud Method was presented at the 1st International Conference on Language, Linguistics and the Real World (Kumar, 2002). A revised version appears in the Journal of Modern Languages (Kumar, 2004d).

3.1. Case study research

In the present study, the descriptive case study method was adopted to understand cognitive processes during the act of revision. This method provides the researcher with "insights, discovery, and … interpretation" (Merriam, 1998: 29). Merriam (1998) described these as thick descriptions as they provided extensive details of processes collected in the natural environment of the participants. As the study aims to understand revision strategies and relate these to text quality, the grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) appears to be the most suitable method. This data driven approach enabled data to be collected, categorised and identified with themes (Creswell, 2002). It is these categories and themes that were connected to provide an understanding of the revision processes of MNSE in a mainstream ESL classroom.

This study examined revision strategies of MNSE when they revised an argumentative essay. Writers often lament that the process of writing itself is complicated and difficult to understand (Torrance & Jeffery, 1999). Writing is one of the least understood and the most difficult cognitive tasks (Ransdell & Levy, 1999). One step towards understanding writing and its complex problem solving processes lies in a detailed and fine-graded analysis of its components. Case studies using the Think Aloud (TA) method provide this opportunity to probe individual cognitive processes. The TA method using case studies has provided the bulk of research on writing process studies and was the main source of data about writing over the last two decades (Owens & Newell, 1994; Ransdell, 1995; Sasaki, 2002). As a result, the TA method was selected for this case study to observe the complex processes and strategies that MNSE used while revising.

3.2. The Think Aloud method

The TA method relies on verbal think-aloud protocols as data. In this method, participants are asked to verbalise their thoughts continuously while performing a task and these verbalisations are audio-taped and sometimes video-taped. The protocols, defined as "description of activities, ordered in time, which a subject engages in while performing a task" (Flower and Hayes, 1981: 4) are transcribed, broken into protocol segments and analysed using a coding

scheme. This process of segmenting and assigning themes to the protocols is called protocol analysis and is understood as the "systematic … analysis of thought processing" (Smagorinsky, 1994: 3).

It has been suggested that a lot of what happens during TA entails the use of the participant's Short Term Memory (STM). The STM is considered to be a set of interacting subsystems that together are referred to as the 'Working Memory' (WM) (Baddeley, 1986). For example, when we think of something to write, we try to write it down. If our computer or a sheet of paper is not available, we hold on to these ideas. The ideas are held in temporary memory resources. These temporary resources are called the WM. The WM is the system responsible for processing and storing information on a short-term basis (Levy & Ransdell, 1996; McCutchen, 1996).

A first component of the WM is considered to be the central executive (CE) (Baddeley, 1986). In terms of writing, it is assumed that processes such as "planning, translating, reading and editing presumably make demands on the central executive" (Kellogg, 1996: 67). The CE is believed to co-ordinate, process and integrates information activities within the WM by regulating the information flow. The short term *store* holds information temporarily when the CE decides on the next course of action by retrieving information from other memory systems (sensory memory and long term memory). It is felt that the efficiency of the CE in terms of processing information depends on the number of demands placed on it. The WM is suggested to process stored information faster than the Long Term Memory (Kellogg, 2001).

A second component of the memory system is thought to be the LTM. The LTM is considered to have its own WM (Ericsson & Delaney, 1999; Ericsson & Kintsch, 1995). The Long Term Working Memory (LT-WM) has been proposed to explain processing fluency (Ransdell, Arecco, & Levy, 2001) and efficient retrieval of domain-specific knowledge (Ericsson & Delaney, 1999). In terms of writing, this would mean that skilled writers, who have a store of knowledge (writing processes, topic, genre, audience, conventions, etc), have instant access to relevant information in the LTM. Skilled writers "move beyond the limits of the Short Term Working Memory (ST-WM) and capitalise on the resources of the LT-WM" (McCutchen, 2000: 15) to solve writing problems.

It is the working of these memory systems that researchers are trying to tap in order to understand the cognitive processes. Verbal think aloud reports are believed to provide "the closest reflection of the cognitive process" (Ericsson & Simon, 1993: 16) during problem solving tasks such as writing. Protocols are assumed to have the "capacity of telling stories [that] trace these mental activities and provide a unique glimpse of the workings of the human mind" (Smagorinsky, 1994: xiii). As such, the TA method seems to be able to provide a route into writing problems and cognitive processes as writers revise.

Think aloud protocols about writing are usually collected by two types of verbalisations: retrospective reports and concurrent verbalisations. The following sections discuss these two types of verbal reports and argue that the concurrent method is more suitable for this case study.

3.2.1. Retrospective protocols

In the retrospective think aloud method, participants are asked to explain and describe their cognitive processes after the primary task of writing has been carried out. The validity of information procured using retrospective verbalisations depends on whether the reports are asked immediately after a specific task or after a lapse of time. If participants are requested for immediate feedback, it is believed that they may be able to fall back on their STM and provide information which is stored in the short term store (Ericsson & Simon, 1993). Whether the retrospective report is requested immediately, or after a lapse of time, it has been suggested that there is "a tendency for writers to include their own prefabricated theories about the process" (Ransdell, 1995: 90). This is because participants rely on the LTM to search for relevant information before transferring them to the STM for verbalisation (Matsumoto, 1994). During the process of transferring, unrelated information from the LTM may also be reported. Participants may also try to "tidy up what happened … to rationalise what occurred" (Green, 1995: 128) to impress the researcher. When all this happens, the TA protocols may be accounts of "reconstructive processes" (Leow & Morgan-Short, 2004), that is, verbalisations based on previously acquired information stored in the LTM. It has been reported that retrospective reports are not valid insights into cognitive processes that were heeded to by the STM during the writing task. This is based on the premise that retrospective reports might

"confound the concurrent trace of their [the writers'] thought processes while they work" (Ericsson, personal communication, September 2, 2002).

3.2.2. Concurrent protocols

A second type of verbalisation procedure is called concurrent verbalisation (CV). This type of verbalisation addresses some of the drawbacks of the retrospective procedure. In the CV think aloud method, participants are required to verbalise the sequence of events that enter their attention while writing. This is different from the retrospective method which focussed on the "decision outcomes" (Kuusela & Paul, 2000: 400). In the CV think aloud method, the researcher is interested in looking at these decision making processes, as these processes may be able to "reveal the sequence of information heeded" (Ericsson & Simon, 1993: 31). It is also believed that in the CV procedure "no thought, feeling, or action would be omitted" (Robinson, 2001: 211) because processing and verbalization occur simultaneously. As these verbalizations are audio-taped they can be analysed and the decision making processes and patterns identified. Consequently, it is felt that the CV method provides a more reliable route into the mental activities during revision. As such, it was decided to use the CV method in this study.

The next section discusses some of the theoretical and methodological concerns of using the CV think aloud method and how these were resolved in this study.

3.3. Theoretical concerns

Since cognitive processing is a silent activity, verbalising this private activity is accused of changing the natural thought processes by compromising the validity of the verbal data (Wilson & Schooler, 1991). As such, the interpretation of these data raises two theoretical concerns known as reactivity and veridicality.

3.3.1. Reactivity

The first theoretical concern of using the TA method for this study is that it is reactive. Reactivity is said to take place if the thinking and decision making processes are changed or

require a longer duration of time to perform a task (Russo, Johnson, & Stephens, 1989). While thinking aloud, participants are required to do two things – first perform a primary task, that is writing and secondly they have to think aloud (secondary task). The primary task may be compromised because it necessitates the additional task of verbalisations (Schooler, Ohlsson, & Brooks, 1993). This is based on the claim that some of the cognitive resources available may have to be utilised to perform both the primary task and the secondary task. Thus, the thinking process could be slowed down to accommodate additional cognitive demands of verbalisation. The artificial nature of requiring the writer to talk aloud while composing is unlike normal writing circumstances and is thus felt not to provide an accurate view of the composing process (Dobrin, 1986; Smagorinsky, 1989).

However, these claims that the TA method has an effect on the final written product, have been empirically refuted by studies such as the ones conducted by Stratman & Lyons (1994), Ransdell (1995) and Levy & Ransdell (1995). In a study to test for reactivity in writing (Stratman & Lyons, 1994), twelve participants were asked to revise two faulty texts. Some were asked to give TA protocols whilst others were not. The first task required students to revise the text using the TA method half of the time. In the second half of the time, they did not use TA protocols. After a lapse of eight weeks, the second task was administered to the same twelve students and the TA/non-TA conditions were reversed. The measure of error detection/removal, content changes and structural changes (meaning changes) enabled the researchers to suggest, "at most, the TA condition merely reduces the amount of certain kinds of verbal processing, without fundamentally altering the nature of the process" (Stratman & Lyons, 1994: 108).

A second study that provides empirical evidence to refute the claim of reactivity of the TA method was done by Ransdell (1995). Thirty-eight participants composed a letter based on their first day at college on a computer for twelve minutes under each of the following three conditions: a concurrent thinking-aloud protocol, a retrospective protocol based on watching a real-time replay of the original composition; and a no-protocol control. An empirical measurement of the rate of word and clauses used per minute confirmed that "thinking aloud slowed down the rate of composition; but did not reliably alter the syntactic complexity or quantity of words or clauses written" (Ransdell, 1995: 89).

In another study, Levy & Ransdell, (1995) had ten undergraduate students write several compositions in fifty minutes over a period of twelve weeks. After five weeks, the students were trained in the CV method and from then on, they had to write using the TA method. Levy & Ransdell's (1995) analysis of planning, text generation, revising/reviewing and the written text (scored on thirteen dimensions of writing quality including overall quality, content, purpose, style, word choice, organisational and mechanics) indicate that the effect of TA was negligible and that "writers are not adversely affected by generating verbal protocols" (p. 776).

Janssen, van Waes, & den Bergh, (1996) asked twenty students to write two business letters about scholarship and credit card problems. A second task required the students to describe Dutch customs/events with which they were familiar. The same students alternatively had to write using TA and being silent for both tasks. Key-strap computer software registered their activities, providing indirect observation of the pauses during the writing process. The conclusion from this study was that TA was reactive in both experiments as the processes were slowed down. One of the drawbacks of all these studies was that the researchers did not relate the final written product to reactivity.

The general conclusion from these empirical studies on reactivity is that verbal protocols slow down the writing but it would seem that "slowing of writing rate is at best transitory; writers are soon able to write efficiently even while generating protocols at the same time" (Levy & Ransdell, 1995: 776). It may be that processing time is slowed down because the WM has to attend to two major tasks, writing and thinking aloud. As a result of this, "additional time is required for verbalization of the heeded thought" (Ericsson & Simon, 1987: 51). However, reactivity should not be considered a limitation when using this method to study writing.

3.3.2. Veridicality

A second theoretical concern of using the TA method in this study is the veridicality of the verbal reports. Veridicality refers to "the extent to which … introspection is accurate or truthful or the degree to which … (verbalisations) represent their actual cognitive process" (Matsumoto, 1994: 379). Veridicality thus raises two concerns: validity and completeness of the verbal reports. The premise for these concerns is that cognitive processes involve both

conscious and unconscious processing. Since verbal reports are said to provide data only on normal conscious processing and not on the underlying unconscious processes, the validity of the data gathered and the verification of the mental processes using this method becomes questionable (Nisbett & Wilson, 1997). Since unconscious processing also takes place together with conscious processing, and only conscious processing is collected as data, the final data is considered to be incomplete (Beach, 1976; Belinger, Whitaker, Feng, Swanson, & Robert, 1996; Cooper & Holzman, 1983). On the other hand, there are suggestions that incompleteness of data gathered due to the absence of unconscious data "does not invalidate the information [conscious data] which is present" (Ericsson & Simon, 1993: 243). Similarly, there are also suggestions that even though the verbal reports may be incomplete, "what remains to be reported will not invalidate what has been reported" (Matsumoto, 1994: 377). Verbal reports based on conscious processing still contain useful information about cognitive processes. Even though incompleteness of verbal reports could be a limitation, the concurrent TA method provides information on the verbal consciousness of the writer.

The empirical evidence suggests that reactivity and veridicality do not affect the validity of the TA method. Besides these theoretical issues, the TA method also raises some methodological concerns.

3.4. Methodological concerns

This section addresses concerns relating to the selection of participants, warm up sessions, observer effects and the choice of topics used in TA writing tasks and how these were addressed in the present study.

3.4.1. Selection of participants

Selection of participants for TA studies is a concern because some participants may be able to write well but not verbalise. Others may be able to generate a lot of verbal data but may not produce sufficient written text. Verbalisation while performing a task is not always easy and learning how to do it requires practice. Some previous studies did not consider this issue and selected participants based on achievement tests (Emig, 1971; Stallard, 1974). In one study, for example, participation was made "a part of a course requirement" (Ransdell, 1995: 92). It may

be that some of these participants did not provide rich data and this could have led to a certain degree of unreliability in the interpretation of the data.

In this study, this problem was addressed by getting a pool of eleven volunteers who met the criteria of the study. Eleven students at the same year level who were identified as native speakers of English volunteered for this study. They were identified as native speakers based on the biological definition used in this study. Their native status was checked with school documents which provided information on languages used at home. These records showed that the eleven participants used only English as their first language. This information was further verified by telephone interviews with the parents. The aim of the interview was to ascertain if the participants had used English since birth.

The volunteers were given an information sheet (Appendix 2). Informed individual and parental consent was obtained from the eleven volunteers prior to the start of data collection (Appendix 3). Subsequently, all the eleven volunteers went through a practice session on the think aloud method. During the practice sessions, some of the volunteers felt uncomfortable verbalising their thoughts while others remained silent throughout the think aloud sessions. Only four volunteers who provided rich verbalisations during the warm up sessions were selected for the study. This is in line with the grounded theory approach which postulates that sampling should be "intentional and focused" (Creswell, 2002: 450). These four volunteers were then given a questionnaire (Appendix 4) which aimed to gather insights into their writing experiences and supporting language environments.

3.4 2. Warm up sessions

A second methodological concern is the warm up sessions. It is recommended that participants of the TA method are given ample time to practice on sample tasks to ease their initial reservation and feel comfortable composing aloud. These warm up sessions have been accused of influencing the final outcome of the study (Ericsson & Simon, 1993; Kormos, 1998). However, these warm up sessions are not intended to familiarise participants with the writing process but to give them "an opportunity to practice and familiarize themselves with thinking aloud" (Allal et al., 2004: 308).

For this study, demonstrations and practice sessions were carried out so that participants could see how composing aloud was done and to help them become comfortable with verbalising their thoughts. The researcher met the students in the school library after school hours. The researcher explained the TA method of composing and demonstrated how it is done using a mathematical task (Appendix 5). After the demonstration, the participants were asked to try it out using two similar mathematical tasks. The demonstration and warm-up session lasted 55 minutes. Two students felt uncomfortable and decided to withdraw from the study. The remaining nine students met with the researcher a week later for another warm up session. Mathematical tasks and a simple problem solving task (Appendix 6) were used for the practice sessions. In this session, volunteers had to write out their answers and talk as they were solving the problems. These sessions were conducted to familiarise volunteers in the methodological procedures used in this study and in particular the need to continually verbalise as they performed the task. All the volunteers were seated apart and given a mini-recorder. When they fell silent during the task, they were reminded to talk. As a result of these familiarisation session all the volunteers were able to provide more verbalisations. During this session, potential problems were identified: talking too softly, not switching on the recorder, manipulating the controls on the recorder, being silent for too long and only reading what had been written without verbalising their thoughts. Volunteers were reminded not to explain any of their decisions. The volunteers were then assigned a warm up topic: *Changes I would like to see in my school.* The volunteers confirmed that they had not written or discussed this topic prior to this task. They were each given a mini tape recorder, a clip on omni-directional microphone and a sixty-minute tape. The purpose of the warm up task was to monitor the amount of the verbalisations. The volunteers were asked to compose aloud only two paragraphs at home. They were also reminded to contact the researcher if they encountered any problems but none did.

The tapes and their final written products were collected the following week. These were checked for protocols that showed cognitive processes such as decision making, recursiveness in revision, addressing an audience etc. Four participants who provided rich verbalisations were selected for the study. Another familiarisation session was held and the final four participants were asked to continue composing aloud individually in front of the researcher. This warm up session focused on the technical aspects of recordings as it was observed that

some verbalisations were not recorded clearly. Technical difficulties were attended to so that all the volunteers were confident in recording their verbalisations.

3.4.3. Observer effect

A third methodological concern is the presence of the researcher. In previous studies (Emig, 1971; Stallard, 1974), the researcher sat in front of the writers. Their tone of the voice requesting the writer to keep on talking, the age and gender of the researcher and perhaps their gestures and body language may have influenced the data (Smagorinsky, 1994). The researcher was present to remind the participants to keep on talking when there was a long period of silence. Since the students may feel self-conscious of their writing, the researcher's presence may have had a negative effect on the verbalisations and participants may have produced socially acceptable data (Cohen, 1987). Thus, their verbalisations may not be an actual representation of their natural thought processes (Ericsson & Simon, 1993).

To address this drawback, in this study, the researcher was present only during the warm up sessions. Once the researcher was confident that the participants were verbalising and that the primary task of writing was adhered to, the participants were issued mini tape recorders so that they "could write and think aloud whenever/wherever they had the opportunity" (Smagorinsky, 1994: 14). It was anticipated that this would allow writing to take place in a natural writing environment so that the participants felt at ease (Li, 2004; van Someren, Barnard & Sandberg, 1994).

3.4.4. Choice of topics

A final methodological concern in a TA study is the choice of topics. This is important as what the researcher is trying to do is to identify cognitive processes which the students use when they solve writing problems. Studies on revision have concentrated on the writing of narratives and expositions (Butterfield, Hacker, & Plumb, 1994; Piolat & Jean-Yves, 1991; Ransdell & Levy, 1994). Among the reasons cited for using narratives is "even the least skilled writers would be able to draw on their own life experience" (Pennington & So, 1993: 48). However, participants of some studies have been claimed not to be "overtaxed" by narrative tasks

(Ransdell, 1995: 96) as participants could have retrieved narratives from memory. This view is supported in a study where narratives on Dutch culture and events were considered less demanding by the participants (Janssen et al., 1996). The researchers reasoned that the writers could have resorted to their LTM without any additional problem solving when performing narrative tasks. In the same study, participants who wrote business letters were claimed to be performing a more demanding task because they could not rely on their LTM for ready made plans. Flower (personal communication, May 2, 2002) summed this up by asserting that "narrative writing doesn't give much on a protocol tape because people are not thinking about other concerns."

A second contention about the choice of topics is that previous studies did not report whether students had written on these topics before. Narratives such as, *First days of college* (Ransdell, 1995), *Saddest day in my life* (Pennington & So, 1993) seem to be common college/school topics and it may be that writer narrates from memory. Thus, the WM is not constrained during narrative writing.

Besides addressing methodological concerns, an argumentative topic was chosen for this study because argumentative essays are valued at institutions of higher learning and the work place (National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, 2003) (NCWASC). While writing narratives and descriptives is important in the developmental stages of a writer, it has been suggested that high school students should be provided with support for two levels of writing, that is, high school writing (Biber, Conrad, Reppen, Byrd, & Helt, 2002; Conrad, 2000) and real life writing (National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, 2003; Yeh, 1998). The NCWASC (2003) report recommends that high school writing should include "complex summaries, lab reports, book reviews and reflective and persuasive essays of different lengths and levels of difficulty" (p. 34). It is also suggested that writing programmes should encourage analysis, synthesis and research and that students should be made aware of literary and non-literary types of writing. Argumentative essays provide opportunities for writers to justify competing points of views (Rojas-Drummond & Peon Zapata, 2004), take a position, support, present a coherent viewpoint and encourage students to think analytically. It is also suggested that argumentative essays "enhance … opportunities for higher education and better jobs" (Yeh, 1998: 124).

In this study, the participants were assigned an argumentative topic entitled: *It is better for children to live in the countryside than in the town*. The researcher had previously checked with their English teacher to see if this topic had been addressed in class. The students were also asked if they had written or discussed this topic previously. The participants confirmed that this would be the first time that they would be writing about this topic. They also confirmed that they had written two argumentative topics before. Participants were given two weeks and asked to revise their composition before submitting the final written product and tapes to the researcher. They were each given five empty tapes. No instruction was given on the number of revisions or the length of the compositions.

3.5. Data

The following section discusses two sets of data for this study: the primary data, that is, the verbal protocols and secondary data. The first source of the secondary data included final written essays marked with the teacher's and examiner's comments. Email interviews with the participants', teacher and examiners formed the second source of secondary data. The sets of secondary data were useful as they provided insights into the cognitive processes, text quality and also verified some aspects of the data. Data from more than one source were gathered for the purpose of triangulation, that is, to complement and support emerging themes.

3.5.1. Verbal protocols

A detailed analysis of the transcribed TA protocols was made. (See Appendix 7 for an example.) The researcher transcribed the tapes with the aid of a transcribing machine and typed them into a software called NVivo. (see section 3.6) The transcripts were then given to the participants with their tapes for verification purposes. Some sections of the transcripts were also given to an independent coder (a Malaysian post-graduate student) to be verified for accuracy of coding and transcription. The final transcripts were validated by the researcher, participants and some also by an independent coder.

3.5.2. Written essays

Besides looking at the verbal protocols, the written products were used in conjunction with the protocols. The written drafts and final composition were used for two purposes. Firstly, they were used to verify changes that were made in the text. There were instances where pronunciation in the tapes was not clear and the written composition provided clues as to what the word was. There were also instances where changes were verbalised but not shown in the text. Secondly, the written products were assessed by Malaysian public examiners to ascertain if the participants were writing to meet SPM standards. The teacher and the examiners were asked to make comments on the drafts and also to write any other comments in separately. However, all of them made comments on the essays. The participants were sitting for the SPM two months after the data was collected and so it was important to know what examiners perceived of these pieces of written work. The participants were not told that their essays would be graded by the class teacher or by examiners. As the official marking band is considered a confidential government document, a modified version of the marking band was used in this study. The examiners confirmed that this modified version resembled the original version very closely.

The final compositions were typed "as the subjects' idiosyncratic handwriting might have affected the markers' judgements on the quality of the essays" (Pennington & So, 1993: 50). They were then given to two independent examiners who had fourteen years of experience marking SPM papers. The class teacher was also asked to grade the compositions. The names of the participants were not identified in the scripts given to the teacher and the examiners. Both the examiners and the class teacher were asked to write comments as they graded the essays. The marked scripts were returned to the researcher within two weeks. The comments made by the examiners and the teacher, provided insights into their judgements.

3.5.3. E-mail interviews

E-mail interviews provided information about the participants' experiences with writing, the teacher's experiences with writing instruction, the examiners' judgements and verified aspects of data. In line with the grounded theory approach, where a researcher moves back and forth between the data, the email interviews were done for practical reasons. The data was collected

in Malaysia but the researcher was in New Zealand when analysing the data. As the data was analysed; emerging themes, hunches and questions were emailed to the participants, teacher and the examiners for comments. For example, the teacher and the examiners were asked what they understood by the term 'originality' in the rubrics of the marking scheme. The interviews provided additional information about the classroom instruction. The class teacher was able to verify that grammatical accuracy was the focus in the classroom and that she was unaware of the expected standard of the public examination. The participants were able to clarify that most of the time they were required to provide assistance to the other students in the class. With the permission of the participants, teacher and the examiners, all twenty two e-mail discussions were stored and used as data by the researcher. The email interview continued for a period seven months.

3.5.4. Questionnaire

There was a need to gain information about the participants past writing experiences and perception of writing. It was decided that using a questionnaire was the most effective and efficient method for gathering this information. However, it is well known that there are limitations in using questionnaires and these were considered before they were given to the final four participants. These limitations included the subjective nature of the questions, the nature of the samples and the intrusiveness aspect of the questionnaire (Wallace, 1998). To overcome these limitations, the original eleven volunteers were given the questionnaire to identify issues such as clarity of the questions, relevance, difficulty in answering questions and user friendliness. These students were similar to the participants in this study and so it was considered an appropriate test of the usefulness of the questionnaire. These students were also asked if they found any of the questions to be intrusive in nature. None of them reported that they found any of the questions intrusive. The class teacher was also given a copy of the questionnaire to get her feedback. The teacher suggested that parental consent should be obtained before the participants answered the questionnaire. This was addressed by the request for parental consent. The questionnaire was finally given at the end of the last session and four participants returned the completed questionnaires a week later.

The data set for this study was collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary source of data was the verbal protocols. Each of the participants recorded an average of three tapes and the researcher received thirteen tapes in all. This involved transcribing and analysing a large amount of raw data. Each tape produced approximately twenty five pages of data and it was time consuming to use manual methods to sort, highlight, cut and paste this volume of data. The researcher decided to use a computer software package to help manage this volume of data. The secondary data included the written text, email interviews and a questionnaire.

The next section discusses some of the features of a computer software called NVivo.

3.6. NVivo

NVivo was chosen because it supported the grounded theory approach. The first feature of the grounded theory approach that is supported by NVivo is the coding. The initial stage of coding in grounded theory is called open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This is the stage where the text is read reflectively to identify relevant categories. During the early stages, numerous open codes were created. The NVivo tools for open coding are the free nodes (codes) and the tool for managing these free nodes is called the "tree". Figure 1 shows some of the free nodes that were created in the initial stages of the coding. NVivo made it easy and quick to code text on screen.
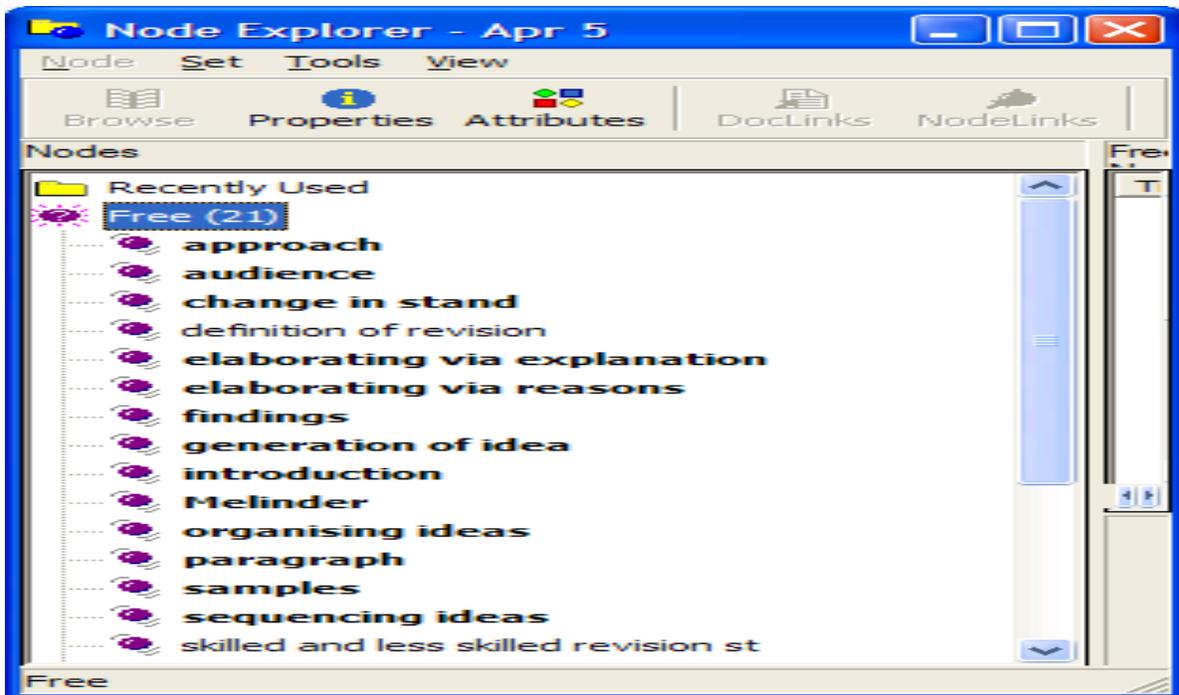
Figure 1: Free nodes
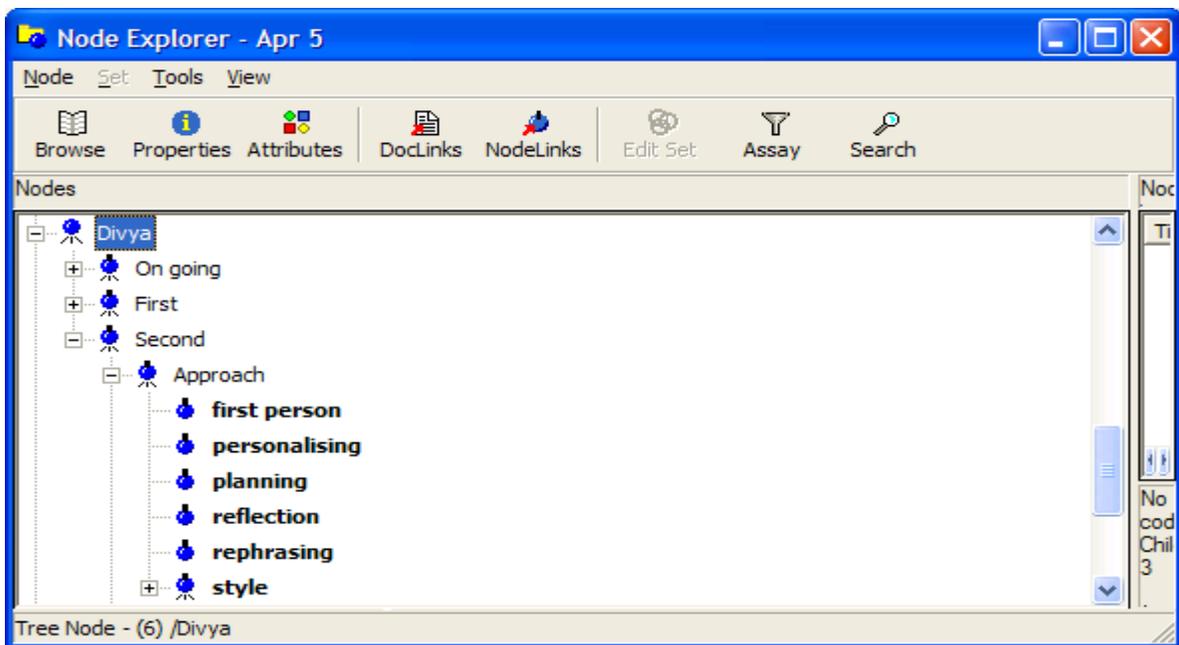
Figure 2: Tree nodes

Once the free nodes were created, they were then grouped and refined into "trees" based on categories. In Figure 2, the changes in approaches that a participant did while revising her second draft have been categorised under a tree called "approach".
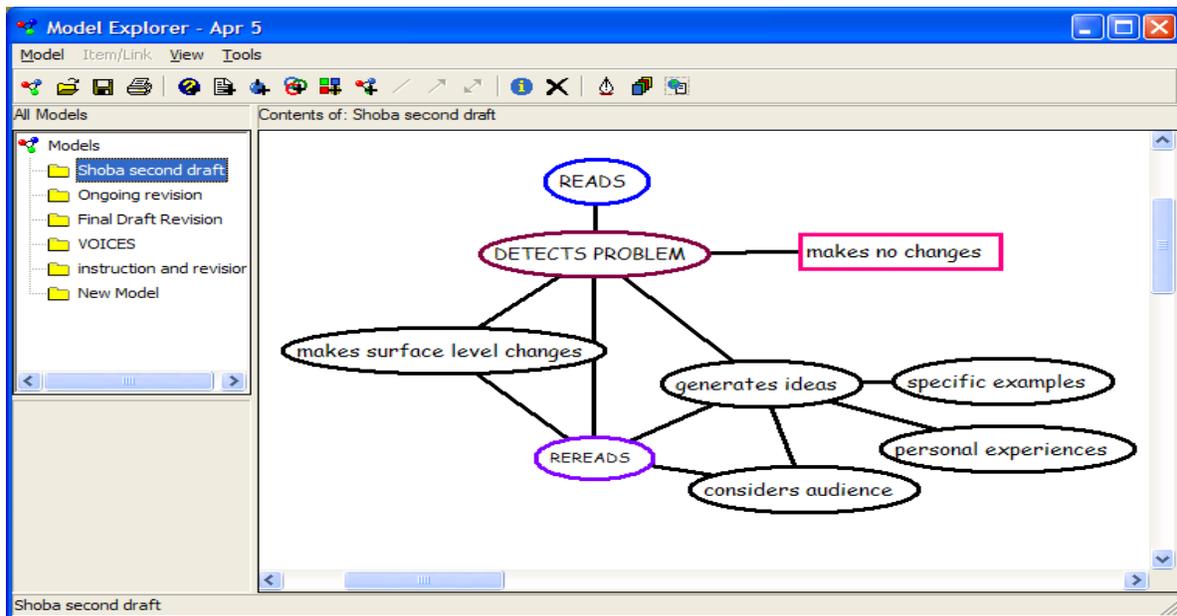
Figure 3: Model explorer

A second feature of grounded theory is the use of axial coding (Creswell, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This means that the codes are refined and developed. In other words, axial coding involves exploring the relationship of categories and making connections between them. Once axial coding is done, the third phase of coding, after free coding and axial coding, consists of selective coding. In selective coding, it is recommended that "the grounded theorist writes a theory from the interrelationship of categories in the axial coding model" (Creswell, 2002: 444). In NVivo, selective coding can be done in the Model Explorer. The Model Explorer allowed diagrammatic representation of emerging themes as shown in Figure 3. The advantage of using the Model Explorer is that all the items in the modeller could be linked with the nodes, memos and other documents in NVivo. This meant that all potential theories could be checked with the verbal protocols and other data in NVivo.
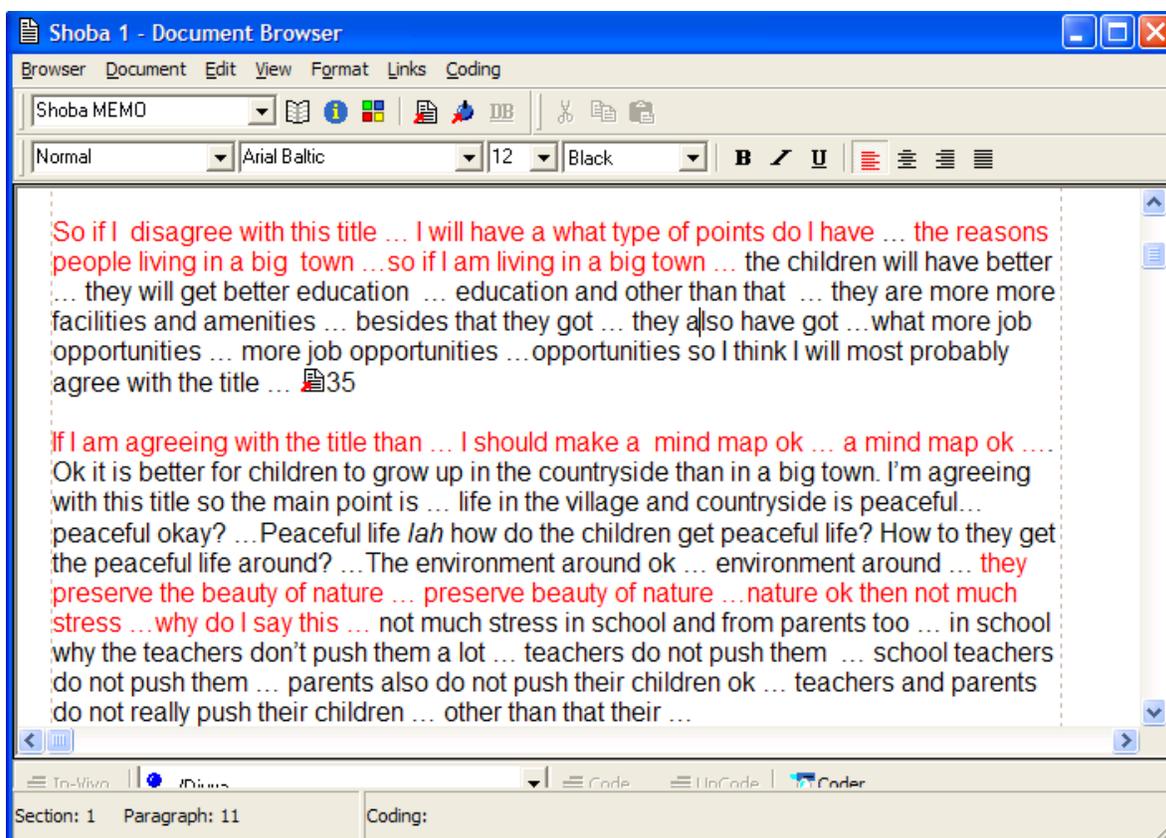
Figure 4: Text with link to memo

A third feature of grounded theory is the writing of memos. The memos are seen as way of commenting as the analytical framework is developed. Glaser defines memos as "the theorizing write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding … it can be a sentence, a paragraph or a few pages …" (Glaser, 1978: 83). Memos are used to keep a record of insights and decisions that were made in organising the data. NVivo made it possible for memos to be written as the researcher transcribed. Writing memos within the software so that different pieces of data could be linked made it relatively easy to build themes across data. As an example, when coding the text in Figure 4, the researcher wrote a memo about some emerging thoughts. This is identified with an icon numbered 35. (The number 35 written before the memo allows the researcher to identify memos from a memo list.) The memo that the researcher wrote is shown in Figure 5.
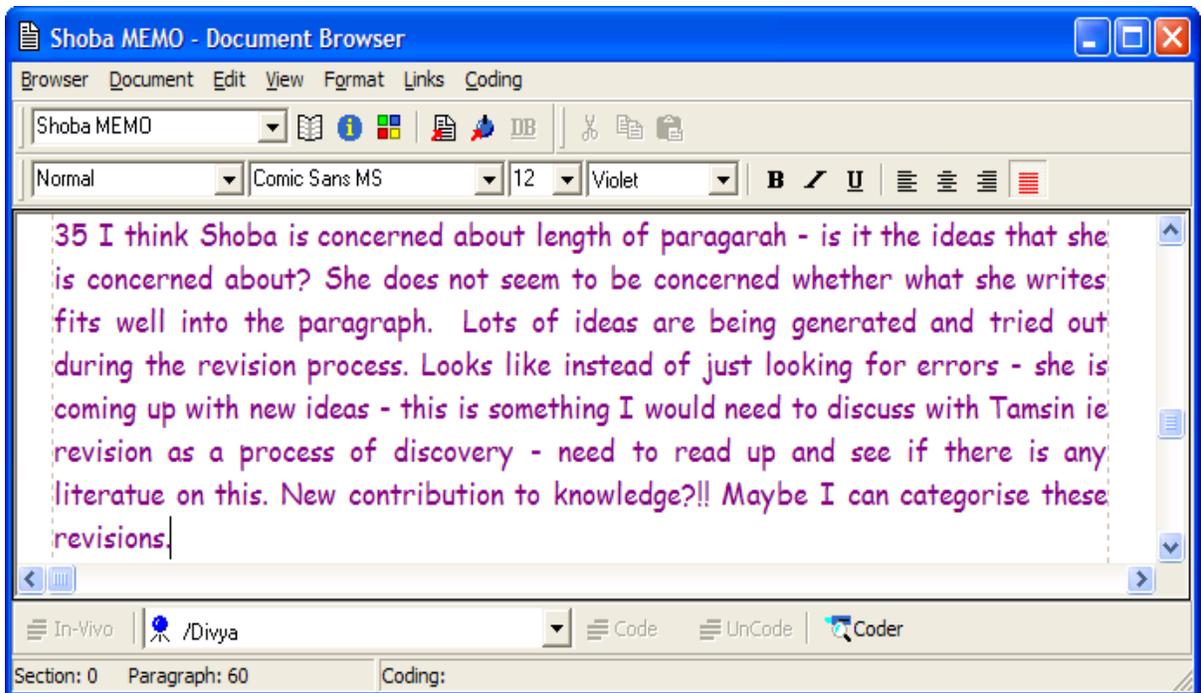
Figure 5: Memo

NVivo simplified and speeded the mechanical aspects of data management. It reduced the mechanical handling of the data by storing, managing, grouping and retrieving data effectively; this allowed more time for conceptual analysis.

The first feature of NVivo that simplified mechanical aspects was the coding strips. In NVivo coloured stripes were visible in the margin of the documents and this made it possible see sections of text that had been given the same code as seen in Figure 6. It was also possible to view specific codes and the corresponding texts. This made it easy for segments that were coded similarly to be compared.
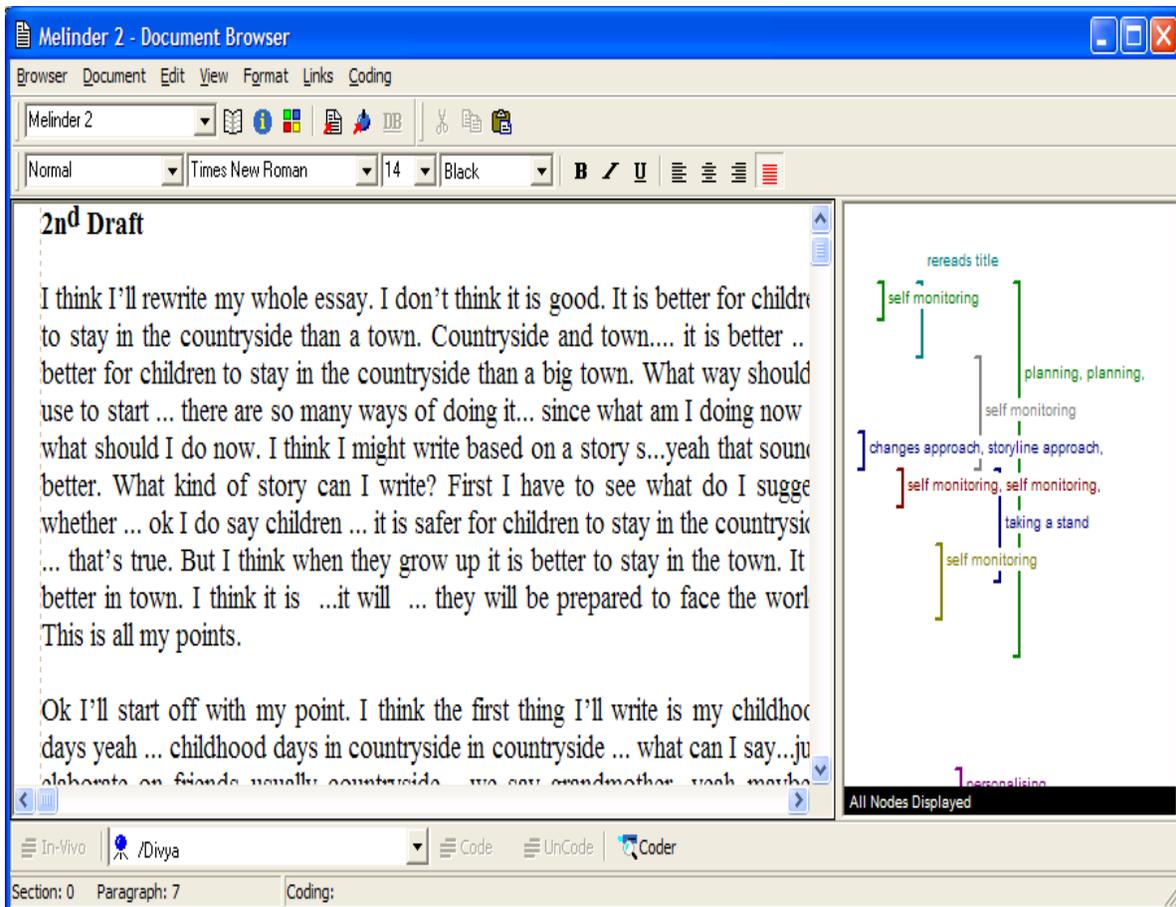
Figure 6: Coding stripes

A second feature that was simplified by NVivo was the possibility of importing documents directly from the word processing program Microsoft WORD and coding these documents in NVivo. This meant that the researcher could type the data (i.e. literature review, interview notes) into Microsoft WORD and then import them to NVivo and assign codes. By using the document browser, the researcher was able to see codes on screen and review what the literature said about a particular code. As seen in Figure 7, the researcher was able to view the protocols coded as 'teacher as audience' and related literature. This visual display enabled the researcher to conceptualise thematic ideas in a rigorous manner.
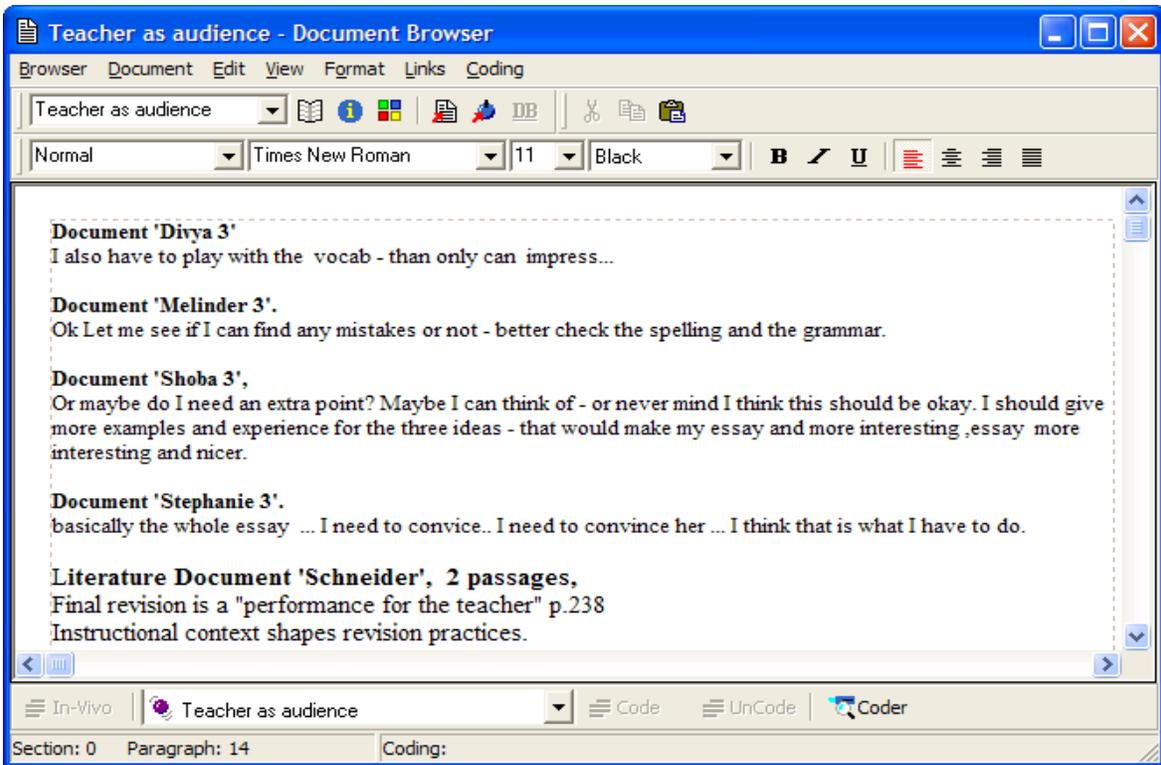
Figure 7: Document browser
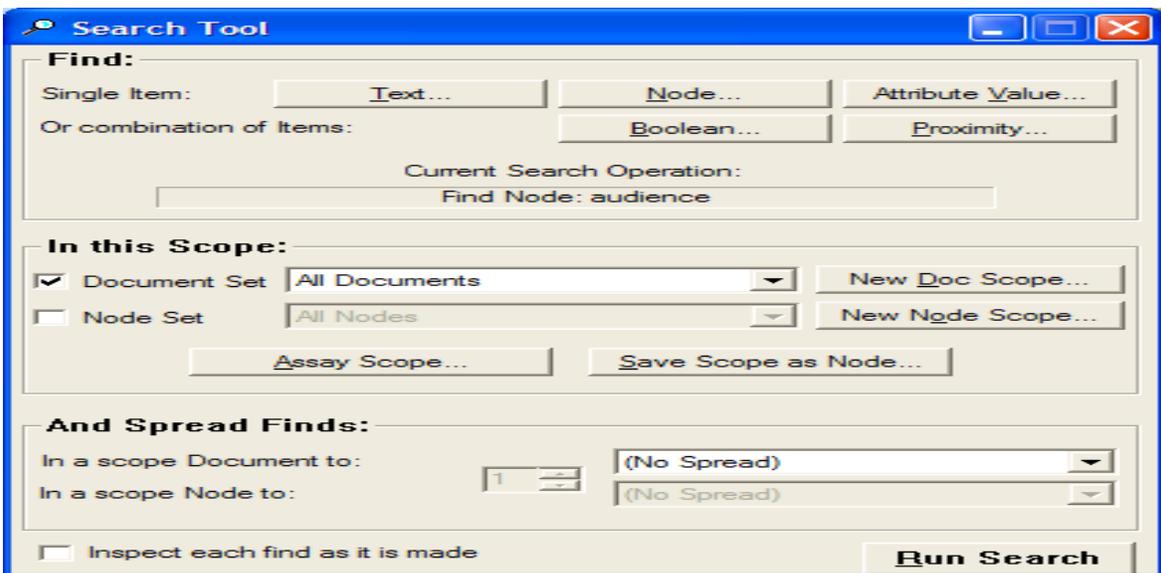
Figure 8: Search tool

A third feature which simplified the mechanical process was the search function in NVivo as shown in Figure 8. This function facilitated comprehensive retrieval of all instances in the data which shared similar codes or characteristics. This form of speedy electronic searching made it easy for an accurate cross-examination of data. By searching for 'audience', it was possible to see that all the four participants considered unnamed audiences in earlier drafts and considered the teacher only in the final drafts. The search tool in NVivo enabled the researcher to interrogate data at different stages of the protocols and this improved the rigour of the analysis process by validating (or not) some of the interpretations of the data.
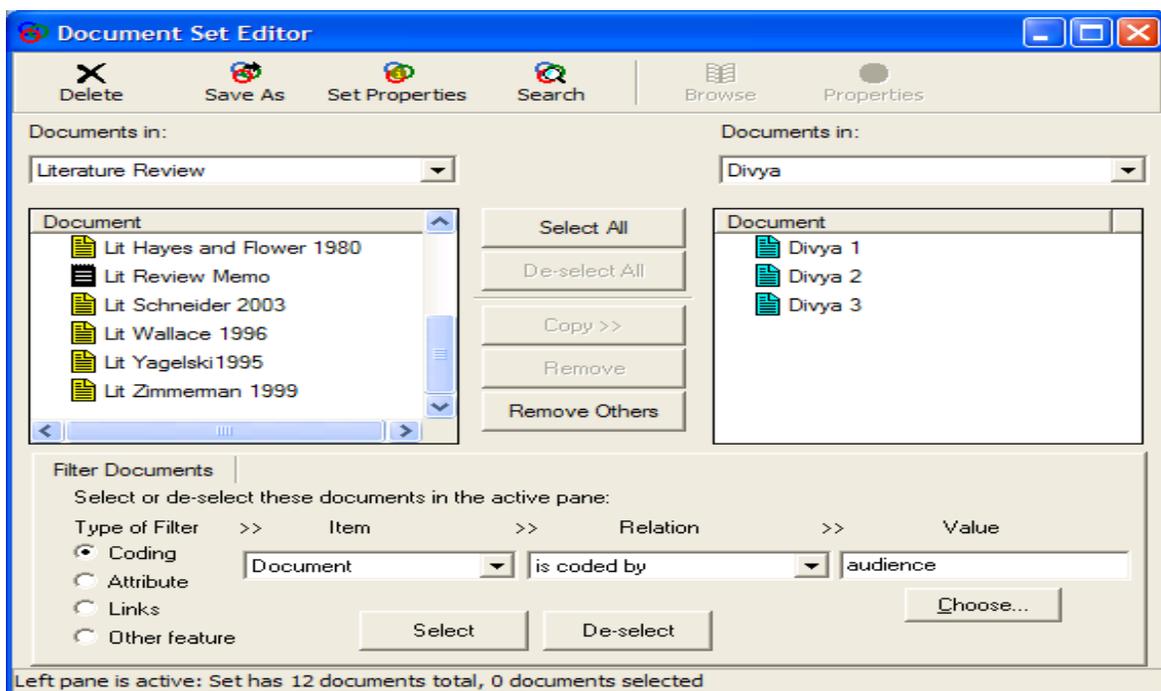
Figure 9: Assay tool

A final feature of NVivo that simplified mechanical processes was that the documents could also be "assayed". What this means is that rigorous searches could be limited to certain groups of documents. Data could be searched in terms of attributes. As an example, it was possible to search how many participants considered the teacher as an audience in the first draft. NVivo enabled speedy recovery of related data. In sum, the researcher decided to use NVivo to "free the mind … from the mechanics of qualitative data analysis so that the focus can be placed on …conceptual aspects of the data analysis" (Thompson, 2002: 9).

In section 3.6 the use of a CAQDAS to analyse the data was discussed. The next section discusses how the data was analysed using the grounded theory approach.

3.7. Analytical procedures

Qualitative data analysis is the search for patterns in data and for explanations for the presence of those patterns (Creswell, 2002). Two main strategies common to the grounded theory approach characterised the analytical procedures used in the study. First, the data transcription and analysis were done simultaneously (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to identify preliminary categories. These were then refined, developed and clarified until the categories were saturated, that is, the researcher made the "determination that new data will not provide any new information or insights for the developing categories" (Creswell, 2002: 450). Secondly, the interactive process of constant comparison was used (Creswell, 1998). What this meant was that the researcher connected the emerging categories with other incidents in the data and generated broad categories. Thus, the categories were "grounded" in the data. The analysis was then conducted according to a systematic format recommended for grounded theory by Creswell (1998), that is, data management and data coding. Data reviewing and coding were recursive processes.

3.7.1. Data management

The researcher first organised the data from the interviews, questionnaire, drafts and final written products into WORD documents and created folders for each participant. Transcripts of the verbal protocols, which were typed into NVivo, formed the study's database. Data links were used to link the NVivo documents (transcripts) to the WORD documents (literature review, interview and questionnaire). For example, while analyzing the transcripts in NVivo, the researcher referred to the final written product in WORD by clicking on the data-bit link in NVivo. There were always three copies of all data.

3.7.2. Data coding

Excerpts from the transcriptions which referred to revision or revision strategies were given descriptive labels (codes) such as *considering grammar, making spelling changes, deleting at word level, stylistic changes* etc. Coding involves searching, retrieving, sorting and organizing the data into

meaningful units called concepts (Creswell, 1998). Some of these emergent concepts were *addressing surface features, making mechanical changes, rereading* etc. Concepts were then organized into more abstract themes and linked to each other to show relationships. As an example, all occurrences of grammatical, punctuation and spelling concerns were connected to the concept of surface features. Occurrences such as replacing words and rephrasing sentences were connected to stylistic changes. These concepts (known as nodes in NVivo) were reapplied to new segments of data each time similar segments were encountered. These nodes were then categorised, that is, they were grouped at a more abstract level, e.g. *decides not to make changes, planning, considering audience.* Connections were made between these categories and sub-categories to show conceptual relationships. An initial theoretical framework was formed by integrating these categories. Once a theoretical framework relating to the first participant was generated, it was "tested" with the remaining three participants with the aim of confirming, extending and sharpening the emerging conceptual framework.

3.8. Summary of chapter three

This chapter described the use of case study research and the think aloud method. It looked at the different types of verbal protocols and argued that the concurrent method suits this study. It also highlighted some theoretical and methodological concerns of the TA method and how these were resolved in this study. In addition, it provided a brief description of the participants and how they were selected for this study. Finally, the data collection methods, how the data was managed using NVivo and analytical procedures were also discussed. The next chapter presents a descriptive account of the revision strategies of the four participants and provides an understanding of the revision strategies of outer circle native writers in an ESL classroom.

CHAPTER FOUR

CASE STUDIES

> The interest of case studies is in the process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation (Merriam, 1998: 19).

4. Overview of chapter four

This chapter provides a descriptive account of the revision strategies of the four MNSE which is presented in case studies. Each case study starts by looking at the individual profile of the four participants to show that they had a variety of experience in English. It then provides an overview of their perceptions of revision to gain insights into the choices that they made while revising. Finally, the assessment of the final written products by the class teacher and the examiners is discussed to answer the third research question: how do revision strategies of MNSE affect textual quality as judged by SPM examiners? The comparisons of the results across drafts and among participants (Research question two) occur in the next chapter.

4.1. Case study one: Shoba

Shoba (all names used in this study are pseudonyms) is the eldest child in a family of four children. English is the main language of the family. Shoba speaks only English with her siblings and parents. She uses English and Malay in school but her use of Malay outside the classroom is limited to conversations with her neighbours. Shoba is an active member of the school's English Language Club. She participates in games and activities that emphasise the use of English. She reads an English newspaper daily and also subscribes to *Reader's Digest* and *The Quest* (quarterly teen magazine).

A version of the first case study was presented at the *International Conference on Language, Education and Diversity* (Kumar, 2003). A revised version appeared in the *New Zealand Studies in Applied Linguistics* (Kumar, 2004a).

Shoba's questionnaire suggested that she was concerned with the quality of the compositions that she wrote. Sometimes, she asked her father to read her essays. She revised her essays based on his comments before submitting them to her teacher. This was usually done if the essays were to be completed at home. However, Shoba claimed that most of her compositions had to be written in class. According to her, the teacher provided guidance by discussing main ideas and expected her to work on these ideas by using rich vocabulary. Shoba indicated that her teacher was very concerned about neatness and the use of correct grammar, spelling and punctuation in compositions.

In order to prepare herself for the SPM, Shoba said that she read and imitated examples of compositions from model essays found in workbooks. All the students in the school had to purchase these commercially published workbooks. Although the Ministry of Education and the Malaysian Examination Syndicate do not vet or recommend any workbooks, the school policy is to ensure that students purchase and use these workbooks as part of their academic programme. When Shoba read model essays in these workbooks, she noted interesting phrases and recorded them in her journal so that she would be able to use these expressions when she wrote. Besides referring to model essays for guidelines, Shoba also discussed her ideas with her classmates with the hope of gaining some insights. However, she claimed that these discussions were not very useful as her friends who did not have English as a first language depended on her to contribute ideas and vocabulary for their compositions.

Shoba had some concerns with her writing. This included organisation of ideas and finding precise vocabulary to express her ideas. Shoba hardly revised her compositions to improve her ideas – her revisions were always to make sure her work was neat and without any spelling or grammatical errors. She hoped that by adhering to her teacher's instructions, she would be able to get good grades in the SPM.

Shoba viewed revision as a stage where one checked for grammar, punctuation and spelling. She indicated that what she normally did was to reread what she had written. She added in more vocabulary or sentences only if her father made such suggestions. Her main goal of reading the drafts was to check for surface level inconsistencies, such as grammatical and punctuation discrepancies. She claimed that her teacher had never asked her to rewrite any of

the essays or even to rephrase any of the sentences. At times, the teacher had requested Shoba to correct grammatically wrong sentences. She was also required to correct spelling errors. A glance at Shoba's school composition book showed that she had written seven essays over a period of nine months. All her essays were evaluated as good pieces of writing by the teacher. Thus, Shoba revised to ensure that her essay was free of surface level errors.

4.1.1. Revision process

Shoba wrote three drafts in three days. (See Appendix 8 for her all her drafts.) A draft was considered to be new if it was written on a separate piece of paper. All her writing was done at home and she did not get any assistance in doing this task. Shoba started revising as she began to write. The first and second drafts were done in one sitting and the final draft was done three days later.

The following section describes the revision strategies in all her three drafts. These include making surface level changes, including personal experience, considering the teacher in the final draft and generating ideas when she revised. The revision strategies suggest that Shoba viewed revision as a recursive process and that her choice of strategies was the result of classroom instruction. The numbers before the verbal protocol quotations refer to line numbers from NVivo files.

4.1.1.1. First draft revision

Shoba did a mind map and contemplated on her ideas before writing her first draft. While Shoba wrote her first draft, she made some revisions. These are known as first draft revisions and concentrated on surface level changes (grammar and word choice) and some meaning level changes (elaborations).

Shoba started revising by reading part of a sentence or the whole sentence or a paragraph that she had written. She read until she detected problems with grammar, word choice or coherence as shown in the following protocols:

26: In the countryside is it at or during... I think it should be at …during is so out.

26: They think big towns have good good … uuh offer … have in their opinion … they think big towns have more … have more better …

39: Why? It doesn't suit here at all. It is about environment. No, I don't think so. It has no sequence ….

When a problem was detected during reading and if the problem had to do with grammar or word choice, she deleted or added words to correct it. The following examples provide a clear picture of how she dealt with grammar, word choice and coherence problems.

32: At the era of modern technology most people think that it is better to live in big cities than in countrysides… in the countrysidelah in the countryside.

32: It is better to have… it is better to say better facilities and … offer and offer better education for their children.

50: The clean environment in the countryside ensures good health. Other than that… if, I put other than that, here…

She solved perceived grammar problems by adding a definite article and changing prepositions; by substituting words when dealing with word choice problems and finally, added a linking phrase to solve a coherence problem.

While revising, Shoba also elaborated her ideas by self-questioning and then gave details to answer the question.

For example:

55: They hardly have time to acknowledge each another. Hmm…why? They hardly have time to acknowledge each another because they are so busy working.

There were also instances where, after rereading, she decided not to make any changes. For example, the protocols below indicate that she reread the problem sentence, questioned if it

was in a suitable place, reread and then decided it was not a problem and moved on to the next sentence.

39: By living in the …by living in the, countryside, countryside, our children will know how to appreciate, and enjoy the creation, the creation of mother nature. Does it suit here?. Now let's go to the second point.

Her on-going revisions seemed to be focused on surface features. She appeared to be preoccupied with writing grammatically correct sentences during the text production stage. Her surface level revisions identified via her protocols and confirmed by textual changes in the drafts, did not change the meaning of what had been written.

As suggested in Figure 10, Shoba utilised reading as a spring-board to revise while writing her first draft. When she read and detected a problem, she perceived three choices: to make surface level changes, not to make any changes or to reread. When she reread, she decided to include specific examples, generate new ideas or to go back and make surface changes. There were also instances where she reread and made no changes. The whole process is recursive as she keeps moving back and forth between these strategies. The on-going revision in the first draft seems to have been concentrated on grammatical features and the inclusion of specific examples.

[Note: In Figures 10 – 24, unidirectional arrows are used to indicate processes that are linear. Bi-directional arrows indicate a recursive process. As an example, In Figure 10, Shoba moved back and forth between re-reading and generating ideas. Similarly, when she included specific examples, she moved back and forth between the "rereading" and the "including specific examples" process. It should also be noted that in all the figures, "audience" is placed on the right –hand branch. However, the consideration of the teacher is placed in the main line. This is done to show the emphasis the participants placed when they considered the teacher while revising. As can be seen in figures 12, and 19, most of the changes took place when the teacher was considered during the revision process.]
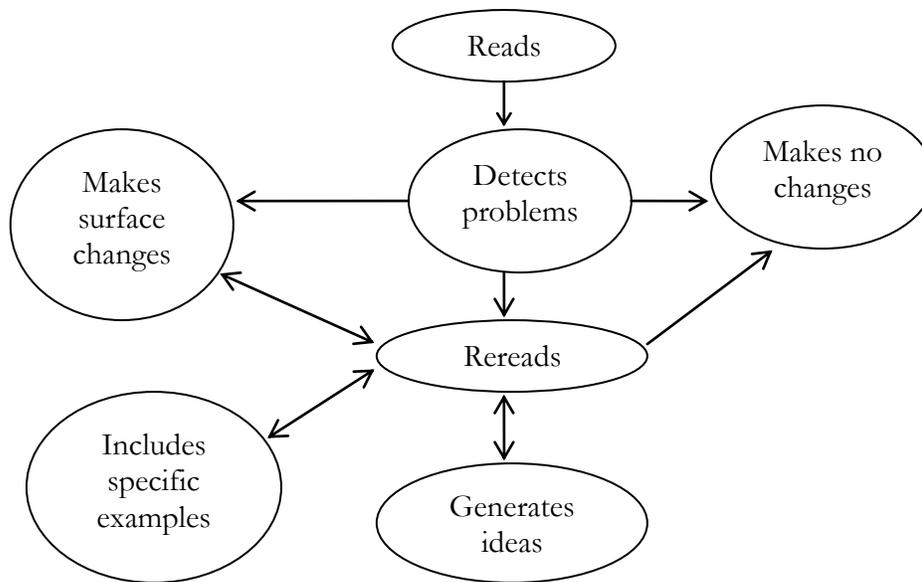
Figure 10 : Shoba's revision strategies in her first draft

4.1.1.2. Second draft revision

In the first draft revision, Shoba concentrated on making surface level changes and elaborating her ideas. In the second draft revision, there was a focus on extensive rereading and elaboration. As was the case during the writing of the first draft, reading triggered revisions in this draft.

Shoba read the first paragraph three times and with each reading, she made changes. For example, during the first reading, she detected a problem which concerned the degree of generalisation in her first paragraph. She decided to be more specific by changing the phrase *all people* to *children*. Rereading the new version of the sentence, she decided to elaborate using examples and personal experiences. During the third reading, she detected a grammatical problem and after fixing it, she continued reading until she was comfortable with the changes that had been made.

The same pattern of revision was seen while she revised subsequent paragraphs. She read the paragraphs at least three times and each of these readings prompted her to make revisions dealing with coherence and surface features. There were also instances where she reread the

paragraphs and made no changes. The last paragraph was read very quickly without stopping to identify if there were any problems in the paragraph.

There was a mention of an unnamed audience during this revision which had not occurred during the writing of the first draft. This may have prompted her to include examples.

27: You agree or not? …on the contrary …ok, I know … you want to know my experiences … ok so what can I tell you … Ok I think I will tell you about … wait, no no… I will change this for you first….

In terms of addressing surface features, there was a shift in focus from sentence level grammar problems to paragraph level coherence problems as seen in the following example:

8: I think because is really not necessary here … it's kind of weird ... because the earlier sentence I said I would prefer to stay in the countryside this is because actually I can start with, living in the countryside ensures peaceful life. Yeah … I think I'll just cancel this.

25: See I have written here ... they usually have gatherings and organisations to build up a closer relationship. You see if I am going to write on the contrary people who live in the countryside … I cannot be repeating here…. Yeah this paragraph would be kind of weird. Okay then I better change it.

Besides attending to surface features, Shoba revised this draft by including personal experiences to elaborate her ideas.

3: Ok maybe I should add it my own experience – aah … that's a better idea.

29: Referring to my past experiences, referring to my past … no … referring to my stay in a rural area, maybe I should start it maybe like something like hmm children.

As seen in Figure 11, most of the revision processes used while revising the first draft were also used while revising this draft. As an example, she read what had been written and when she detected a problem, she decided either to make surface changes, to reread or made no changes. Compared to the first draft, she considered coherence when she detected problems in

this draft. When she reread, her concerns were different. As she considered an audience, she included personal experiences and specific examples to generate ideas. These processes, as indicated by the bi-directional arrows, were recursive in nature.
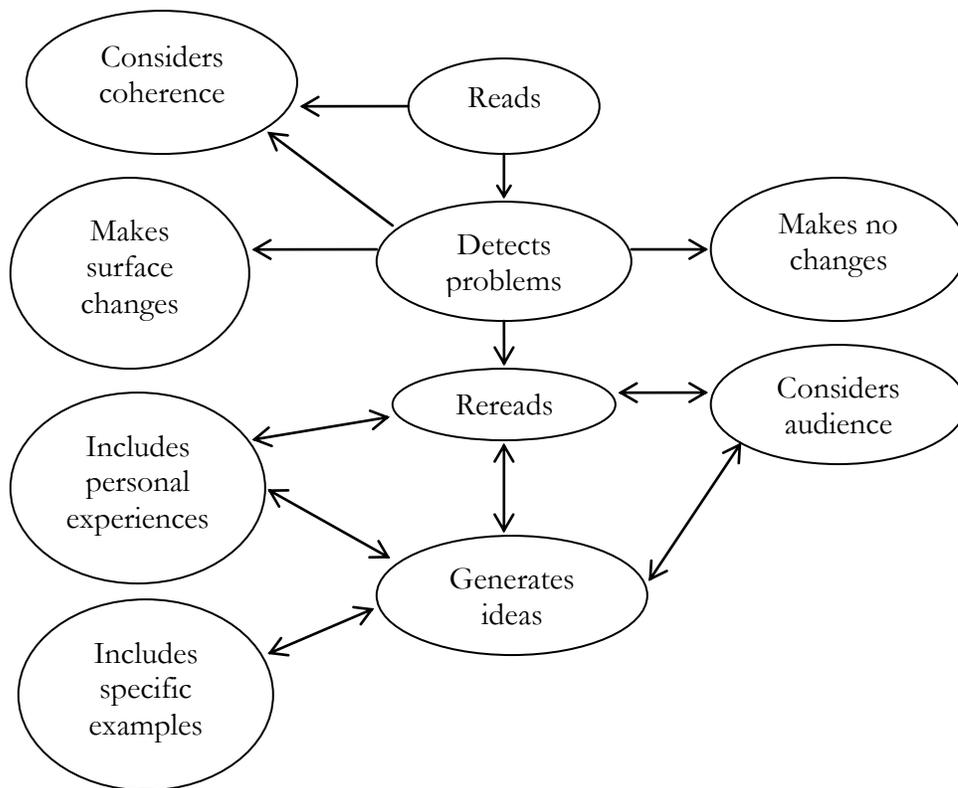
Figure 11: Shoba's revision strategies in her second draft

4.1.1.3. Final draft revision

Shoba did her first two revisions on the same day. In the first draft, most of the revision was on surface features while coherence and elaboration of ideas were the focus in the second draft. The second revision suggested that she was listening to a voice of an unnamed audience. Her final revision was done three days after having written the second draft. In the final revision, it became obvious that she was writing for her teacher and it seems this influenced her choice of revision strategies.

Shoba started her final revision by rereading the second draft and re-planning with the help of a mind map. In her initial planning stage she also used a mind map. During revision, she used the mind map to summarise, evaluate and elaborate the main points that she had written. The mind map prompted her to include an additional idea but this idea was abandoned.

7: Or maybe do I need an extra point? Should I … you think I should …add in another point? Maybe I can think of…- or ok ok never mind … I think … I think this should be okay.

A second difference between earlier revisions and this final revision was that the final draft had been turned into a more personalised piece of writing. She included a lot of her own experiences to justify her position. For example, to support her stand on living in the countryside, she said:

29: I did not have … I did not go for tuitions and classes… this gave me you know … it gave me freedom to enjoy my childhood … how do I say this? Ok you see I am trying to say … with no classes and tuitions around, I could play and enjoy myself in the evenings.

Shoba thought that personalising the text would make her writing more interesting and give her a sense of satisfaction as shown in the following protocol:

55: I should give more examples and experience for the three ideas - that would make my essay … more interesting, essay more interesting and nicer.

A third difference between this draft and an earlier revision was that she ensured that sentences were perfect before moving on:

19: Then the next sentence is … if I was given a chance to choose whether to stay in the countryside or big town. I think this sentence is okay.

Each revisiting of sentences triggered changes in terms of addition of details as seen on the next page:

29: Maybe this line … I change it into my own experience here. Ok maybe I should say … now I have to reconstruct my sentence right? Ok wait, let me write the first sentence down.

She mentioned an unnamed audience throughout this revision process and it seems she was attempting to convince this audience that she had a lot of ideas:

8: I know you agree … I have written very little about this when I can actually write a lot. Yes or not?

However, the subsequent protocols indicate that even though she had a lot of ideas she did not actually write them because her aim of writing seems to have been to meet classroom requirement:

56: I think I got enough points for her already. Can't include so many…

Figure 12 suggests that Shoba used the same strategies as the ones in earlier drafts. However, the final draft involved additional planning. There was focus on paragraphs and the inclusion of more personal details and specific examples. The changes that she made in this draft seem to be the result of writing to meet the expectations of classroom instruction.
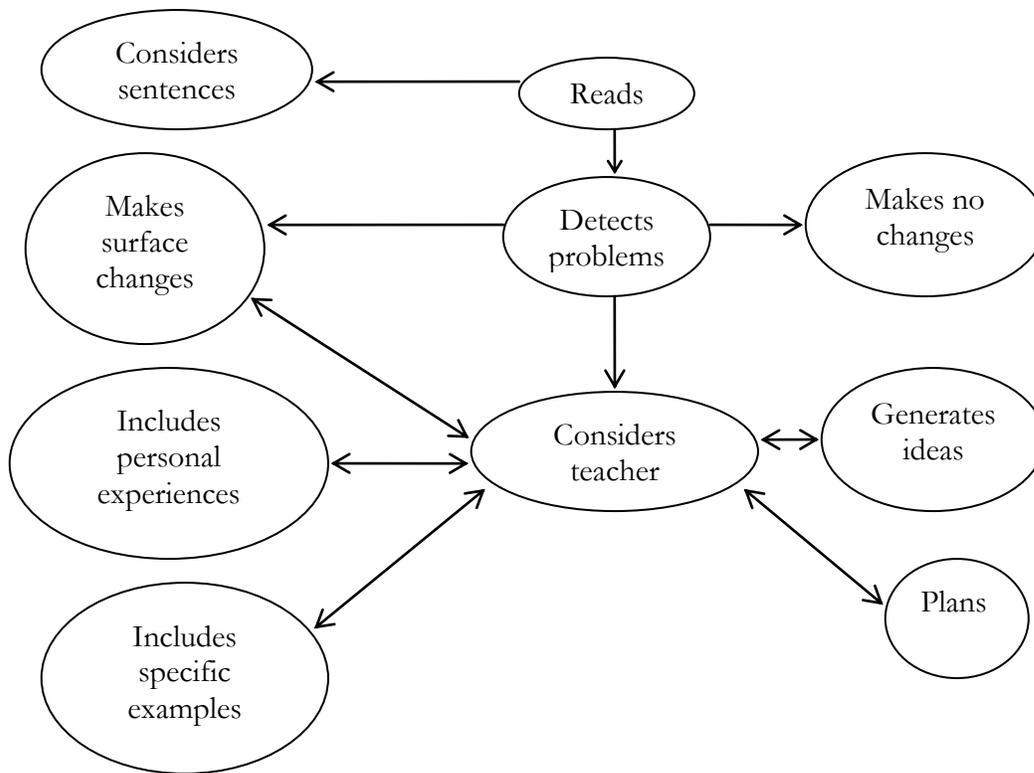
Figure 12: Shoba's revision strategies in her third draft

4.1.2. Evaluation of written product

As this study aimed to relate revision processes to text quality, Shoba's teacher was asked to grade the final version of the essay. The teacher classified Shoba as a competent writer and gave her an A. The teacher commented that the essay was well written with only three minor spelling and grammatical errors. Additional comments were that the essay stated Shoba's stand clearly and the meaning was understood clearly. The interview with the teacher suggested that the teacher thought Shoba had a wide range of vocabulary and the strength of Shoba's essay was the inclusion of personal experiences. The teacher thought that Shoba's experiences enabled the reader to understand the contrasting lives in the city and the village by giving a clearer perspective from a teenager's point of view. The teacher also commented that Shoba's paragraphs were well developed and her ideas were well linked.

However, the SPM examiners did not consider Shoba's final essay to be of high quality. The examiners commented that even though Shoba had clear competence and the writing task was addressed with some relevance, her essay lacked liveliness and interest value. The examiners commented that some of the paragraphs were not well organised and there were instances where there was no cohesion within the paragraph. Her main ideas were not substantiated with enough convincing details. To the examiners, this indicated lack of planning. Even though the examiners found Shoba's language to be largely accurate, they commented that some simple structures were not used correctly. They also commented that her vocabulary was not developed to show accuracy. Besides this, the examiners highlighted that Shoba seems to have a tendency to use only one type of structure and thus they found the essay monotonous. The use of personal experiences did not help convince the examiners of the stand that Shoba took. One examiner awarded a C while another examiner awarded a D for this essay.

As suggested by the questionnaire, Shoba viewed revision as a stage to free her essay of surface level errors and this was clearly evident from her protocols. Even though Shoba claimed that her father read and commented on her essays, her father's voice was not evident from the protocols.

4.2. Case study two: Melinder

The second case study looks at Melinder's protocols and written text. Melinder's main concerns were with surface features and she too considered the teacher as an audience in the final revision. This resulted in more surface level changes. Melinder's revision was a recursive and an on-going process.

Melinder's parents teach English in a primary school. Besides English, Melinder also uses Malay and Punjabi when she converses with her friends and older relatives. Melinder is actively involved with the *Interact Club* (an English club that promotes friendship among school children) and she is in charge of the international friendship section. She has played host to a number of foreign, English-speaking students. She also studied in Canada for about six months. She spends most of her free time listening to English music and reads English newspapers every day. Melinder is also actively involved in drama activities. She has been a

member of a Youth Theatre Group for 5 years and has directed and acted in English plays - she was the heroine in *The King and I* which was staged by her school. She has also taken part in story telling competitions and performed in numerous short sketches.

Melinder was more comfortable expressing her ideas orally. She acknowledged that she had difficulty expressing her ideas in writing. She said this was probably because verbalising ideas could be done with gestures and emotions. Melinder thought that her writing was not adequate because she was unable to structure sentences that could convey feelings. Her teacher had advised her to use a wider variety of vocabulary in her essays. In order to comply with this request, Melinder usually tried to imitate those found in the workbooks. She claimed that her teacher wanted her to use correct grammar and spelling, a wide range of vocabulary and to write neatly using a lot of personal experiences.

Melinder viewed revision as a stage to reorganise her ideas. Her major concerns were to make sure that grammar and spelling were correct. At times, she revised so that she was able to add in more examples to elaborate her ideas. To her, revision was viewed as a rewording activity, that is, to find more 'creative' words. Melinder claimed that she had never been asked to rewrite any of her essays and that her teacher only highlighted spelling and grammar errors in her essay. She was not required to correct any of these errors. The interview suggested that the teacher seemed to have shaped Melinder's perception of revision – that is, Melinder felt that surface features should be the focus in the final draft as these would be the ones that would be noticed by the teacher.

4.2.1. Revision process

Melinder wrote three drafts for this writing task. (See Appendix 9 for all her drafts.) All the drafts were written at home. Melinder stated that she took about three hours to write all three drafts. Her revision strategies indicate that she too viewed revision as a recursive process but she revised only on three main ideas.

4.2.1.1. First draft revision

Melinder started her writing by first brainstorming and making notes of her ideas. While writing her notes, she wrote the words *introduction, body* and *conclusion* on a piece of paper and then she started inserting ideas in the relevant section. For the body of the composition, she wrote the numbers *one* to *three*, indicating that she wanted to write three main points. An interview confirmed that classroom instruction had concentrated on including three main points in the body of the essay. Her idea generation can be viewed as a linear process in the sense that she did not consider choices during the planning stage. She jotted down her points and went straight on to write her first draft.

She started her draft by quickly generating a paragraph. There was no indication from the protocols of any reference to the outline. Once she had written the first paragraph, she moved on to the second paragraph. It was only after having written the first line of the second paragraph that she questioned if there was a link between the paragraphs and thus started her revision.

17: No I don't think there is a connection between the first one and this paragraph…

She kept rereading the last line of the first paragraph a few times before continuing to compose her second paragraph. It was also at this stage that she realised that she needed to talk about the countryside and thus referred to her outline.

17: I have to explain about countryside now

9: So… second point is activities, third point is crime rate and the fourth point is is…

Her main concern during this stage of writing was to get her ideas written down. There appeared to be an awareness that this was a first draft as seen from the following protocols.

9: I think I'll just end with four points ... I can actually elaborate on it.

Figure 13 shows that Melinder revised by reading the paragraphs that had been written while writing subsequent paragraphs. When she detected problems, she reread and decided to plan or to consider cohesion to link paragraphs. This process of writing paragraphs, planning and considering cohesion before starting on the next paragraph seemed to be the main revision activity in this draft.
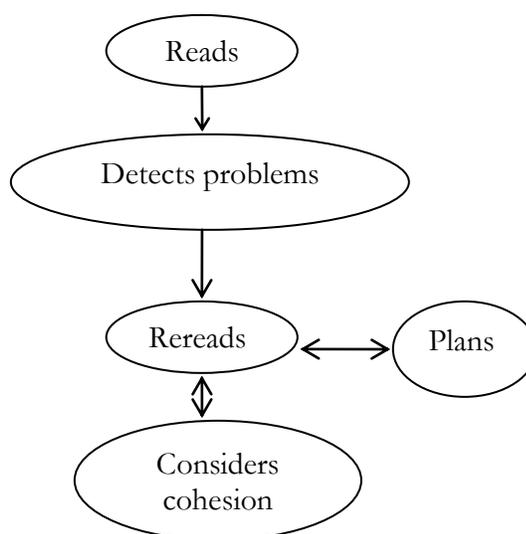
Figure 13: Melinder's revision strategies in her first draft

4.2.1.2. Second draft revision

In revising the first draft, Melinder focussed on linking paragraphs. However, in the second draft, the focus seemed to be on generating, organising and personalising ideas.

Melinder started on her second draft after a ten minute break. There was no indication from the protocols that she reread what she wrote. Instead, she stated that she wanted to rewrite her draft because she thought that her first draft was not good. She went on to do extensive planning before writing her second draft. She read the title a few times to get a better understanding of the requirement of the task – at the end of this endeavour, she decided that she should place emphasis on children in the countryside. Three themes emerged from her planning: new ideas were generated, ideas were reorganised; and there was a change in approach.

First, new ideas were generated while planning the second draft. She started her first paragraph by writing about her childhood experiences on a farm with her grandmother. She then planned to write about her reasons for moving to the town. When she wanted to write about visiting the farm during the holidays as her third paragraph, she commented that it was not enough just to write three paragraphs.

5: So first, I will say about my childhood days in the countryside and then I can go to my second paragraph …. Then the third paragraph … three paragraphs is not enough...

This seemed to be contrary to what she had mentioned in the interview : using a formulaic method to write her composition. It seemed that the act of organising and planning prompted more ideas and thus she ended up writing additional paragraphs. There was no indication from the protocols that she referred to her first draft while generating ideas for this draft.

A second pattern that emerged from her planning was the reorganisation of ideas as shown in the following example:

5: Okay wait, wait, wait … I think I will make this as my second … my childhood days … I will put as my second one, my first point would be about the countryside … where we live.

In the above example, she first decided to write about the childhood experiences in the beginning paragraph. After rereading, she decided that this should actually be in the second paragraph and that it would be better to start her essay by writing about something general and then narrowing it down to specific details. In rearranging the paragraphs, she seemed to be concerned with cohesion as she tried to link her ideas with subsequent paragraphs.

Besides generating new ideas and reorganising while planning, a third change in planning was a change in approach. While her first draft was an attempt at providing general information to the readers, the second draft showed a shift towards including personal experiences. She was of the opinion that personal experiences would give readers a sense of what she went through when staying in the countryside. Her consideration of an unnamed audience can be seen in the following protocol:

8: This seems a good story... sure they will like it one. Must convince them … they will like my experiences.

In order to strengthen her argument, Melinder decided to change her approach to an autobiographical account of her experiences. By doing this, she discarded all the ideas that she wrote in her previous draft. In the first draft, she wrote that the countryside was a better place for children but in the second draft she said that the countryside was better when children were younger and it would be better for them to move to the town when they were older. There seemed to be an indication that writing allowed her to think through the ideas and gain a better perspective of what she preferred while revising and planning her paragraphs for her second draft. Besides planning, Melinder also did a considerable amount of self-monitoring while revising her draft. This self-monitoring was done to evaluate content and cohesion as shown in the following examples:

6: I already conclude the conclusion - three paragraphs is not enough.

15: I was raised. I was ...raised yeah … I think that is better. I'll go for it.

Figure 14 provides an overview of Melinder's second draft revision processes. The main focus of her second revision was on planning, generating, organising new ideas and reorganising paragraphs. This was done as a result of the consideration of an audience and change in approach. The change in approach resulted in the inclusion of a lot of personal examples.
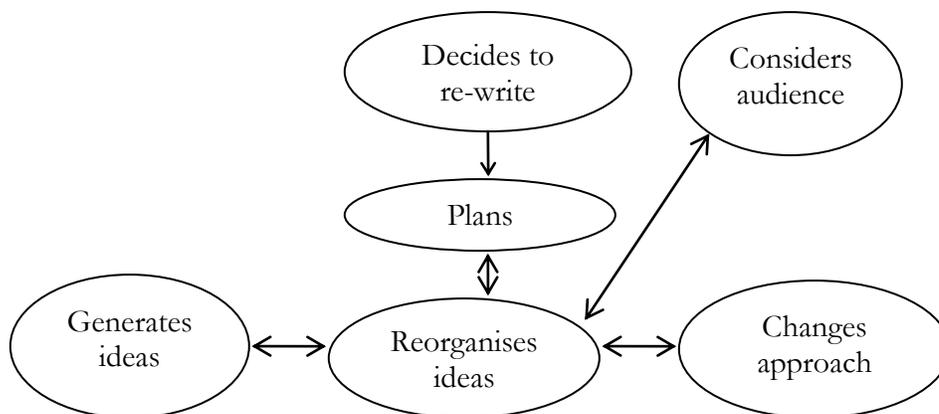
Figure 14: Melinder's revision strategies in her second draft

4.2.1.3. Final draft revision

In the first draft revision, Melider focussed on coherence between paragraphs and in the second draft, she concentrated on working with her ideas by reorganising and personalising them. However, in the final draft, some of these paragraphs were deleted and there was a focus on surface features. This seems to be the result of considering the teacher.

The final draft was written after a short break of twenty minutes. Melinder set her goal right at the beginning by saying that she was looking for surface level error hunt as indicated in the following protocol:

3: Ok. Let me see if I can find any mistakes or not - better check the spelling and the grammar … if not sure got problem one.

Melinder made some spelling and grammatical changes while reading her draft. She expressed concerns about word choice, which involved the addition and deletion of words. However, these addition and deletion of words did not change the meaning of her sentences as shown in the following example:

5. I think I should make this more creative... I mean my words must be different …than only can be ok. My active great grandmother, and my very active great grandmother, my very active lovely great grandmother... great grandmother.

3: It was my mum's no it was my mother's birthplace

Her protocols confirmed that she felt that she lacked the vocabulary to express her ideas and thus, she decided not to make too many changes as shown in the following protocol:

5: I stayed with my uncle no … no not nice... hmm... never mind just use that word... just keep it simple.

There was again a concern for an audience and in this draft she had her teacher in mind.

3: Think I have to be a bit more beautiful in my writing... then only can get good marks. Essay seems monotonous ...she won't like this type one.

5. Once I got chased ... I got chased by angry goose … angry goose all around the house all around the house - this is funny sure she will like one.

She was confirmed as the teacher during the interview.

Melinder also deleted a number of paragraphs. It is possible that she decided to have only five paragraphs because of her consideration for her classroom instruction. It also seemed apparent that this final revision was done to rewrite the draft neatly and to check for surface level accuracy so that it would be acceptable to her teacher.

5: I just check all over again for mistakes … don't want red marks everywhere.
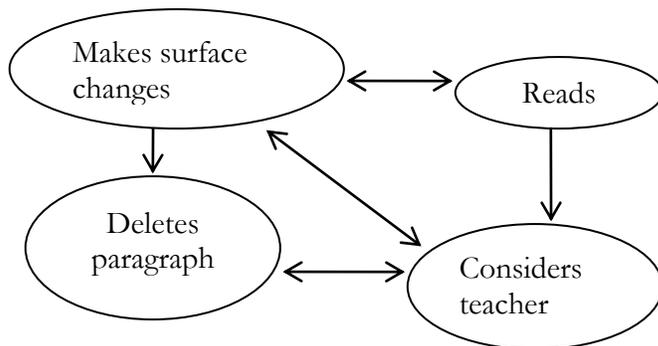
Figure 15: Melinder's revision strategies in her third draft

Figure 15 provides an overview of Melinder's revision strategies in her third draft. The final revision process was an attempt to meet classroom expectations. The consideration of the teacher as the final reader resulted in the deletion of paragraphs and surface level changes.

4.2.2. Evaluation of written product

Melinder's teacher awarded a B for the final essay saying that there were some clear paragraphs. The language was mostly accurate without any grammatical or spelling errors. The teacher particularly liked the autobiographical approach which personalised the composition. According to the teacher, this approach seems to include the reader in the ideas that were discussed. The class teacher was happy with the essay because Melinder had followed classroom instruction and felt that if Melinder had used a wider variety of vocabulary, she would have awarded an A.

Both the examiners however, awarded a D for this essay saying that Melinder started well but her lines of argument deteriorated gradually. They commented that her language was sufficiently accurate to communicate meaning clearly and that Melinder had adequate and simple vocabulary to convey her intended message but the vocabulary lacked precision and variety. One examiner commented that Melinder was able to balance both sides of the argument but towards the end, her ideas were not clear. Sentence structures were seen as being monotonous and thus the examiners did not find the essay interesting. One examiner commented that the essay lacked argument and that the autobiographical approach in the essay was weak, as it did not link and substantiate ideas. This examiner commented that writing an autobiography was not how to write argumentative essays and there were also no strong points to convince the reader on the position taken by Melinder. Both the examiners were not convinced by the conclusion.

In summary, like Shoba, Melinder too seemed to have written her essay to meet classroom expectations. Her focus on surface features, as suggested by the interview and seen from her protocols, strongly suggests the influence of classroom instruction.

4.3. Case study three: Stephanie

Compared to Shoba and Melider, Stephanie's revision strategies show that she was more concerned with stylistic changes. As a result of this, changes in approach and re-organising ideas were some of the revision strategies that are seen in her four drafts. Stephanie considered the teacher in her third draft and this resulted in more changes.

Stephanie is the only child in her family. Both her parents use only English in the work-place and at home. Stephanie uses English widely both in school and out of school. Even though she is bilingual, her use of Malay is limited to the classroom. Stephanie is an avid reader – her favourite magazine is *Reader's Digest*. She reads English novels and English magazines frequently. She also reads *Time, Cosmopolitan* and *Her World* regularly. Besides reading, she is also a "surface-level editor" of her school's monthly English club newsletter. In this role, she checks for grammar, spelling and punctuation. She has taken part in school level essay competitions and won prizes. She is also a school debater and has represented the district at state level English debating competitions. She is the president of the Church's Youth Wing and organises weekly activities which are all conducted in English. She has written short scripts for English plays and also acted in school plays.

In the questionnaire, Stephanie suggested that she learnt to write by imitating model essays from workbooks and by adhering to classroom instruction. The workbooks advocated that essays should be written in five paragraphs without any grammatical or punctuation errors. There was no mention of revising or rewriting main ideas in the workbooks. The interview with the teacher confirmed that the teacher too followed a similar pattern by requiring her students to write five paragraph essays. No opportunity was provided for revising or rewriting. To quote Stephanie – "my teacher gives us three points and tells us how she wants it to be done". She also indicated that the teacher emphasised vocabulary, correct grammar, spelling and punctuation. Stephanie's writing was also shaped by her parents as they encouraged her to use "words which other people do not normally use".

Stephanie's main concern while writing was grammar and spelling. She believed that each sentence and paragraph must be perfect before moving on to the next one. She also indicated that she rewrote to improve the neatness of her work as she thought that neat work gained more marks. Even though she enjoyed writing and did some writing outside the classroom in the form of diary entries and e-mails, she felt that her writing was ineffective. To her, effective writing meant writing articles of similar standard to the ones found in *Reader's Digest*. One of her concerns was that she found it difficult to organise her ideas and to write for an audience other than her teacher. She claimed that her main purpose for writing was to do well in the SPM which she would sit at the end of the year. As such, she was of the opinion that her

current writing was limited as she had to confine her writing to meet classroom expectations. She was of the opinion that as long as she did what the teacher wanted she would be able to excel in the SPM English paper.

Stephanie viewed revision as a stage where new vocabulary should be added to make ideas clearer. Stephanie thought that during revision, one must write as neatly and clearly as possible as it was the last opportunity to please the teacher by meeting classroom expectations. To her, this involved correct punctuation and grammar. Stephanie was also of the opinion that revision was a stage where one made sure that the ideas were logical and that there was a flow in the essay. However, she claimed that she had never been taught how to link ideas or how to make the essay flow. A glance at her composition book indicated that most of the time, she received positive feedback. The teacher said that Stephanie's essays were good; however, she encourager her to use a wider range of vocabulary. The teacher has also asked other students to emulate Stephanie's style of writing as the teacher was of the opinion that Stephanie's essays were good. As a result, Stephanie had no real necessity to revise her work other than to incorporate a wider range of vocabulary. Stephanie was of the opinion that her teacher believed her essays were of high quality and that she was a good writer.

4.3.1. Revision process

Stephanie wrote four drafts for this task over a period of two weeks. Stephanie started revision while writing the first draft. This first draft was revised immediately, while the revisions in the third and final drafts, were done after a lapse of one week. All of Stephanie's drafts are available in Appendix 10.

4.3.1.1. First draft revision

Revision done during the writing of the first draft concentrated on surface level changes such as punctuation and stylistic changes. She also planned and generated new ideas by considering an unnamed audience.

During the first draft, Stephanie revised by reading either sentences or paragraphs. Each reading triggered changes. Punctuation concerns were addressed eight times during the on-going revision to make segments of ideas clearer.

19: On the other hand … in the countryside, on the other hand the countryside provides cleaner water, cleaner water. Should I put a full stop?

27: Besides that, ok let me put the comma first, besides that, I cannot really talk about movies.

Stephanie also dealt with grammatical inconsistencies by either choosing between two correct responses or by changing it to an incorrect form as shown in the following examples.

19: The countryside provides a better environment for children growing up, not for growing up, should be for children to grow up.

27: Many of these have influences, no, many of these, hmmm, many of these come, no, these comes from the mass media ...

She also considered an audience while making these changes. For example, the following protocols indicated her collaboration with an unnamed audience.

15: I told you.

21: You see or not basically, we are going to talk about peer.

Self-monitoring was another strategy Stephanie used to keep track of her global ideas and to monitor her satisfaction with what she had written:

25: Did I write too much?

29: I say it is quite easy for a child to buy magazines which can have un-educational material in it. Hmmm, interesting.

It seems reasonable to speculate that her concern for her audience and self-monitoring shaped the direction she took while writing this essay.

Stephanie also made some stylistic changes while writing her essay. Stylistic changes refer to the changes that she made to her choice of vocabulary. A pattern that seemed to emerge in her on-going revision was deleting words and substituting them with more evocative phrases as seen below:

15: It is a serene and peaceful place, no, no, no … its surroundings are peaceful, and filled with tranquillity

19: And give like sickness or so … wait, the air which one breathes in can contribute.

Another pattern that emerged was her constant attempt to generate ideas and do further planning. When she read sentences, she questioned how she could elaborate her ideas and then she planned before actually putting them into words.

27: First I'm going to talk about mass media then I'll talk about the friends. Okay, how am I going to start, hmmm…all right, I think I'll do this.

Figure 16 provides an overview of Stephanie's revision strategies in her first draft. Stephanie's reading of sentences and paragraphs while writing the first draft started with a focus on punctuation concerns. As she continued rereading, she detected problems in her text. As she reread she either made stylistic changes by using wider vocabulary or considered an unnamed audience. The consideration of an unnamed audience resulted in more planning and generation of ideas. As she reread, she also self- monitored the text.

```
                          Reads
                            │
                            ▼
    Makes                 Detects
    surface    ◄───       problems
    changes
                            │
                            ▼
    Makes                                    Considers
    stylistic  ◄──►     Rereads    ───►      audience
    changes
                   ▲                      ▲   ▲
                    ╲                    ╱     ╲
                     ╲                  ▼       ▼
    Self                          Generates
    monitors                        ideas        Plans
```
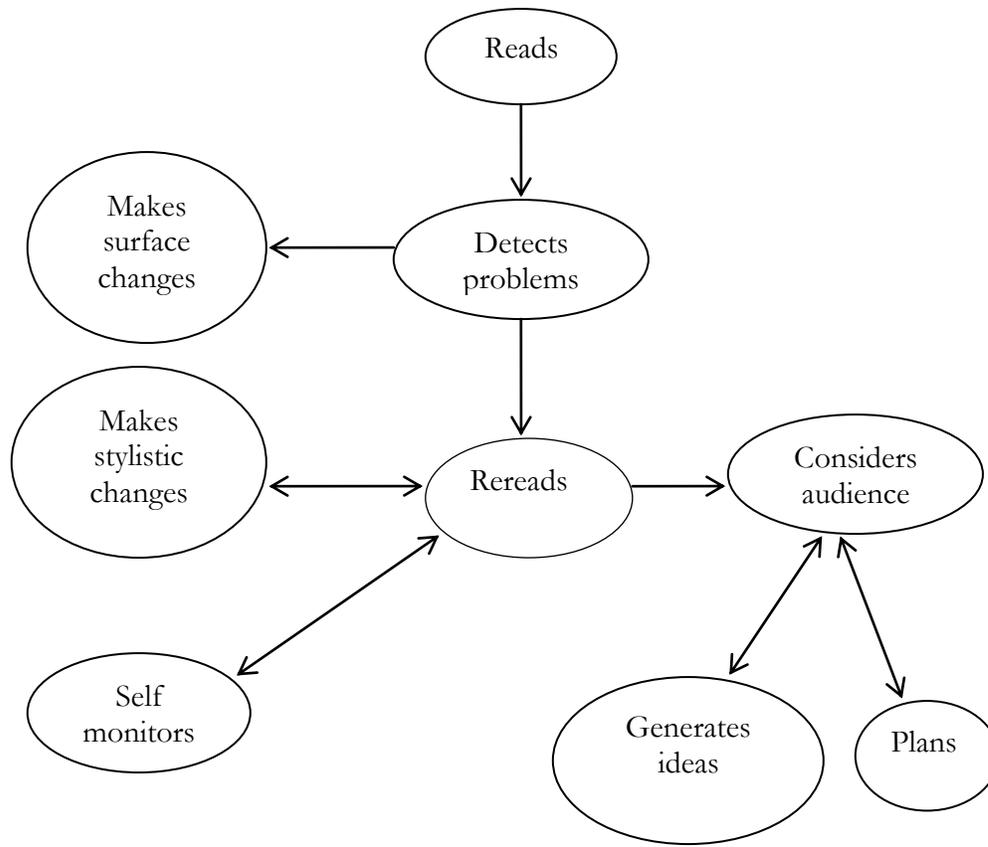
Figure 16: Stephanie's revision strategies in her first draft

4.3.1.2. Second draft revision

In the first draft, Stephanie was concerned with development of her ideas. In the second draft, she continued with further development of her ideas. She started her revision by saying that all she wanted to do was to rewrite, that was to make a neat copy of whatever she had written. However, this was not what happened when she started reading. She read only some of the sentences that she had written and this prompted her to add more information to elaborate her ideas. It seemed that stylistic changes prompted meaning level changes.

Stephanie had an awareness of the importance of vocabulary. This was seen when she shortened sentences or rewrote sentences by adding or deleting words and replaced them with

more specific terms. These 'stylistic changes' seemed to be prevalent in the revision of the draft.

5: Sight of the other paddy fields ... the sight of clear streams yellow golden … golden yellow paddy fields.

13: This is not bad this is not a very conducive.

Revision also resulted in Stephanie reworking her ideas. She did this in two ways. First she generated more ideas after reading what had been written. Then, she questioned if what she had written was sufficient and decided that more had to be added as shown in the following example:

7: What can the countryside offer what can ... no ... I should put why is the countryside better compared to the town.

23: Ok why is this so? Well in the town, children face a lot of pressure especially from their parents.

Secondly she reworked her idea by reorganising them into more coherent chunks as shown in the following examples:

21: I should talk about the countryside first … cannot jump from countryside to town side.
19: Ok I want to change the way I've written this paragraph. I don't quite like it this way.

While making stylistic changes and attending to ideas, Stephanie also kept monitoring her own writing to ensure that she was satisfied with what she had written.

7: Ok hmm this is nice.

5: But I don't think ... that sentence is quite nice because I'm just saying surrounding. Here I'm talking about … it's beautiful with scenic views … so I'm making it more creative right.
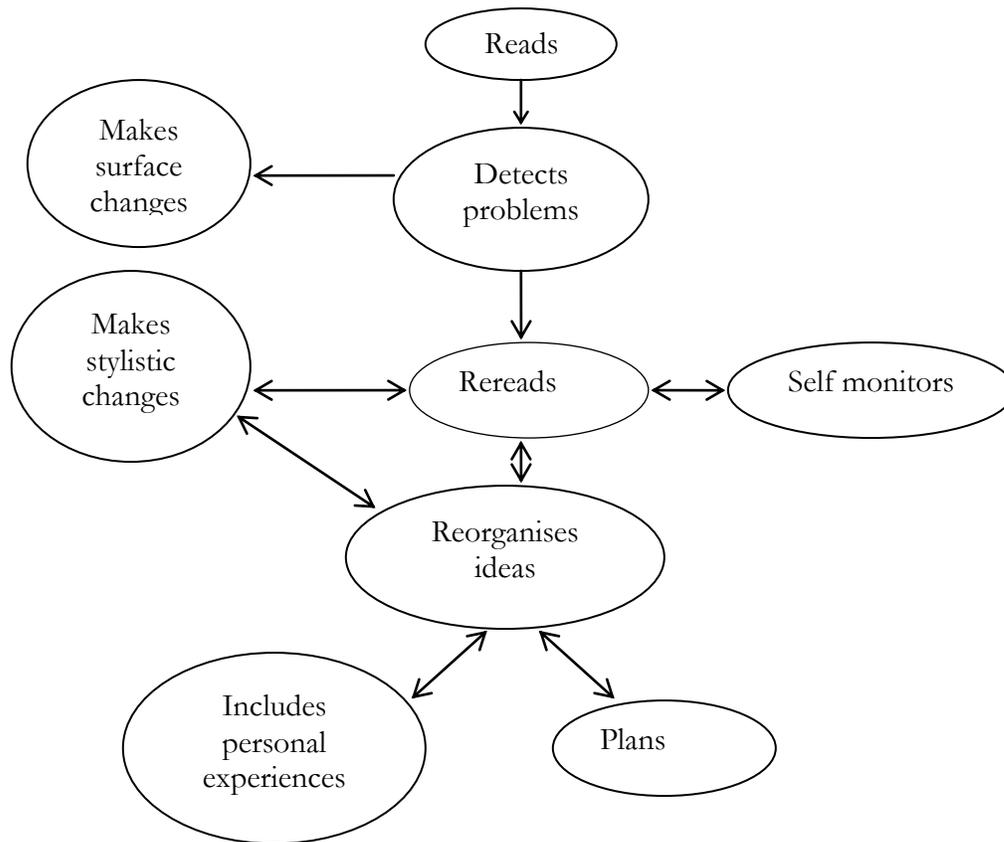
Figure 17 : Stephanie's revision strategies in her second draft

In Figure 17, it can be seen that Stephanie continued to attend to surface level changes which dealt with punctuation, grammar and spelling. However, most of her changes were stylistic. These resulted in the reorganisation of her ideas and more planning which resulted in her including more personal experiences. Her focus on making vocabulary changes, rewriting sentences and monitoring the evolving text seemed to indicate that clarity of ideas was the main purpose of her revision activity.

4.3.1.3. Third draft revision

As seen earlier, Stephanie's focus of revision in the first two drafts was on generating ideas and making these ideas clearer. Stylistic changes were made to meet these purposes. In the third draft she continued with generation of ideas, but there was a change in approach.

Stephanie did her third revision a week after having written the first draft. More changes occurred when Stephanie did this revision. This may have been because she had a fresh look at her piece of work after a lapse of time. She read through the whole essay quickly and then went on to read sentences or parts of sentences.

One of the most distinct differences between this revision and previous ones was the sudden surge in ideas. Two major themes emerged when she worked with her ideas: change in the approach and reworking of ideas. Three changes in approach seemed to be apparent: the first was the inclusion of dialogues; the second was including flashback technique and the final change involved incorporating personal experiences to elaborate. While the first and second revisions were focussed on content, she decided to include dialogues in the third draft to make her content more interesting as shown in the following example:

5: Ok my introduction I want to start with a dialogue. Ok I want to start with a dialogue. Ok first … what am I going to say … I think I will start with a dialogue?

Stephanie added dialogues in four instances and these dialogues seem to have been used to elaborate her ideas. In the introduction, she used dialogue to show the reader how naive she was about the countryside – she did this by including a dialogue with her father. In the second instance, she used a dialogue to question her father about the freshness of the air and water in the countryside. The third instance included a sarcastic comment from a teenager in the playground to show how difficult life was in the town, as shown in the following example:

11: Ok then I think will do what you call that, a dialogue here "oh I am so sad for you" … like in a sarcastic tone. Oh I am so sad for you.

Finally a dialogue was included where her grandmother reprimanded the younger generation for their lack of table manners to show the change in family values. The use of dialogues seems to have been done to give the reader an inside picture of the intricacies of town and country life, thus involving them personally in the essay.

A second change in approach was seen by her use of a flashback to reinforce her stand that the environment in the countryside was cleaner. She included her own bad experience with the hope that the reader would be persuaded by her argument that living in the countryside was a healthier choice.

7: Now I think I'll do a flashback. I think ok let me see should I what to write here huh? Yeah I think I'll do a flashback.

A third change in approach was personalising her essay. She not only included dialogues and flashbacks to strengthen her argument but she also incorporated other details by relating them to herself.

3: I'm going to personalise it a little bit more ok?

5: Now I will say where I am I'll be ok I'll talk ... write about me in a village and where it is situated and I will also say why my father has brought me here ok.

Stephanie spent a considerable amount of time reworking her ideas. She did this by more planning, generating and reorganising ideas. Planning seems to have taken place throughout this stage of revision. She planned either at the beginning of a paragraph or planned before rewriting sentences that she had read. The examples below provide some evidence of this:

3: It's something similar to the last one except that I think I will add in a bit of dialogue and I will be saying well - I am in a village I'm visiting a village and stuff like that. From there, and then at the end of the essay, I'll make my decision....on where I think is better to live.

9: Now what shall I write for the third aah? The second I just talk about water and the third I think I'll talk about air only.

Stephanie also generated new ideas while planning. These additional ideas substantiated her line of argument that living in the countryside was better.

11: Ok what to write now I think I will tell them about my life.

18: Ok so maybe here I can do a part where I am going to sit for an exam.

Another pattern found in her revision was that she reorganised her ideas both at the paragraph and sentence level as shown in the following examples:

20: That is what I wrote for my old one. Think here I'll write ... today is Sunday and no no not today is Sunday ok today is Sunday that idea is out. What about … as I packed my bag? Yeah that's nice, as I packed my bag.

Cohesion concerns were also addressed in this draft as shown in the examples below:

9: Ok ... how to start must be connected to the second one. How to connect it now?

11: Now just now where I was ... I was outside the house walking right... so I shall continue my walking in these paragraphs.

As in the previous stages, she kept mentioning an unknown audience but in this draft, the audience seemed to be specified right at the beginning of the revision. The interview confirmed that she was writing for her teacher.

3: Basically the whole essay ... I need to convince. I need to convince her ... I think that is what I have to do.
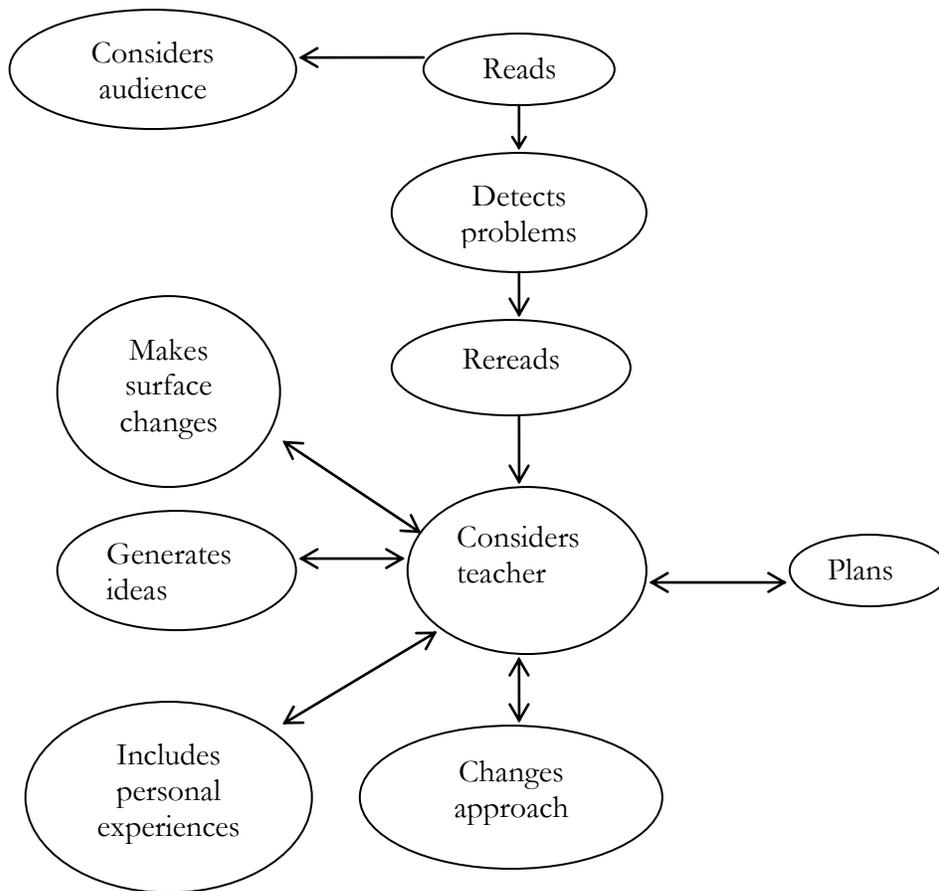
Figure 18: Stephanie's revision strategies in her third draft

Figure 18 presents an overview of Stephanie's revision strategies in her third draft. Stephanie seems to have put a lot of effort into the third revision. It was at this stage that she refined her ideas, did more planning, changed her approach, included more personal experiences and ensured that these were well linked without any surface level errors. The strategies in this draft seem to have been the result of considering the teacher as the ultimate reader.

Stephanie's earlier drafts indicated that her main concern was in developing her ideas. This was apparent in the first two revisions. However, in the third revision, there was a change in approach. Stephanie continued with idea generation and reorganisation of ideas in the final draft.

4.3.1.4. Final draft revision

The final draft was rewritten immediately after the third draft. Stephanie started her final revision by assuming that she would not have to make any more changes as she seemed satisfied with her previous draft. This had been how she started her first and second revision – by assuming that no changes were necessary. All she planned to do was to make a clean copy of what had been written. However, as had happened previously, her final revision included further changes to her ideas. There was continued generation, reorganising and personalising of ideas. Some cohesive concerns were addressed in the final draft. There were hardly any surface level changes as in earlier drafts.
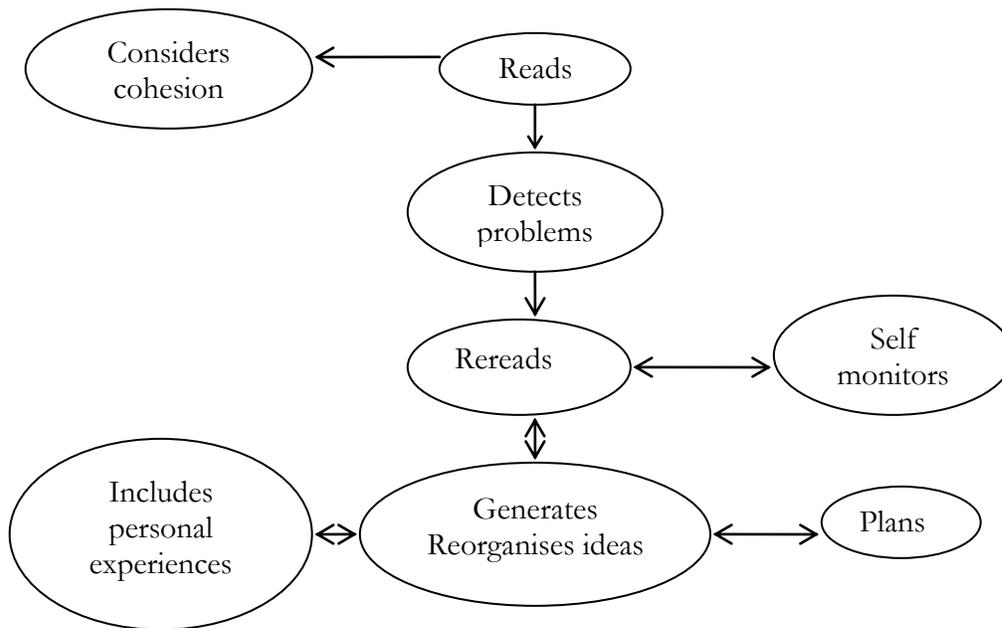
Figure 19: Stephanie's revision strategies in her fourth draft

As seen in Figure 19, Stephanie was concerned with cohesion in this draft. She continued detecting problems and as a result, she reread and generated and reorganised her ideas, continued generating, planning and re-organising her ideas. She personalised her essay, and continued self-monitoring and planning. The absence of reference to an audience, particularly

the teacher, allows one to speculate that this draft may have been written to meet personal satisfaction.

4.3.2. Evaluation of written product

Stephanie's final essay was graded as an A by her class teacher. The teacher commented that Stephanie's essay had a wide range of vocabulary and there were no grammatical or spelling errors. The teacher found the piece of work to be well organised. According to the teacher, the strength of this essay was that it was not monotonous and the use of dialogues and flashback technique added variety to the essay. The teacher particularly liked Stephanie's approach of including her own personal experiences which showed the reader the advantages and disadvantages of living in a town and countryside. To the teacher, this seemed to have been a well written essay.

The examiners agreed with some of the teacher's points. They commented that the language used was largely accurate and that some complex sentences were used. Another positive comment from the examiners was that the interest of the reader was aroused and sustained throughout the composition. The examiners also made some positive remarks about the range of specific vocabulary that Stephanie used. However, the examiners considered wrong spelling of simple words, grammatical errors, lack of precise vocabulary, dull, irrelevant dialogues and the lack of originality as drawbacks of this essay. As an example, Stephanie used the word 'corcking' twice to indicate the sound of the rooster. This was not noticed by the teacher. Besides this, the examiners identified numerous grammatical errors such as, "I usually fall sick on an average of two months" and "he use to play as a little boy". Words such as "cripst", "live" (life) were wrongly spelt and used. The examiners also noted that some of Stephanie's ideas lacked depth and thus the arguments were weak. Another point highlighted by the examiners was that the conclusion was weak as it did not have any impact to strengthen her ideas. As a result of these drawbacks, the essay did not convince the examiners as one that was well planned and linked. One examiner awarded a C and the other examiner awarded a D for this essay.

In summary, Stephanie seemed to have concentrated on both surface and meaning level revisions. Her strategies in the drafts seem to indicate that her understanding of revision was strongly shaped by classroom instruction. Her choice of strategies in the third draft clearly supports this argument. In the fourth draft, she viewed revision as a stage to make her ideas flow.

4.4. Case study four: Divya

While Shoba, Melinder and Stephanie retained all their original ideas and had a concern for surface features to meet classroom expectation, Divya revised by writing new ideas in each draft.

Divya is also an only child in her family. Her father is a manager with an international company and her mother is a well-known fashion designer in Malaysia. Both parents use English at work and also at home. Divya uses English widely in school and out of school. She converses only in English with her friends. Even though she is bilingual with good command of Malay, she uses it only during her Malay classes.

Divya reads a wide range of books which includes biographies, novels and magazines like *Time, Newsweek, Reader's Digest* and *National Geographic.* She is eager to learn and is challenged by new ideas. She watches a lot of English programmes on TV and her favourites are *CNN International, BBC News* and the *David Letterman* show. She claimed that she watches these shows to learn new words, intonation and to be up to date with current world events. She also watches English movies every week. She has taken part in state level essay competitions and won top level prizes. She has written short stories in English which were published in local newspapers. Besides this, she also gives English tuition in reading and writing to four primary school children where she emphasises extensive reading, learning new words and spelling.

A version of case study four was presented at the *Applied Linguistics Association of New Zealand (ALANZ) Symposium* (Kumar, 2004c).

When she was asked to write on a topic, she said that her ideas kept flowing as Divya related these topics to her extensive readings. She said she had enough ideas to tackle any topic but she felt that she needed guidance in constructing sentences that would have an impact on the reader. She was fascinated with words and sentences that had an emotional influence on her.

She kept a record of these words in her journal and referred to them frequently when writing. Her teacher had always advised her to read model essays to improve writing styles but Divya was against this idea as she found the model essays to be monotonous and structured for examination purposes. She was confident that she would be able to do well in the exams as her teacher had always given her excellent grades and commented that her essays were exceptional pieces of writing.

Her main source of inspiration for her writing was her mother – both of them spend a lot of time talking about the books and articles that they had read. Divya looked forward to these intellectually stimulating discussions. This was because her mother always guided her to reflect on what she had written. She also played *Scrabble* with her parents during week-ends with the hope of practicing her vocabulary and spelling. She spent more time with her parents than her friends because she claimed that her friends were put off with her knowledge of current issues.

Divya's experiences with writing suggested that her main concern was to get the reader hooked. She felt that all her writing should be articles of enduring significance as the ones found in *Reader's Digest*. She was of the opinion that school writing was dull as she was required to conform to a formulaic method of writing. She was more interested in trying out new styles of writing that may grab the attention of her reader. What she liked doing while writing was to experiment with new vocabulary. She was also interested in writing that would provide her with the opportunity to exploit her general knowledge. However, she felt that she was not able to do this for fear of loosing out in the SPM. Her teacher kept suggesting that she choose topics that were descriptive so that she could exploit her wide range of vocabulary to impress the examiner. Divya agreed to concentrate on descriptive essays on the grounds that her extensive reading provided her with a repertoire of vocabulary which would help her get excellent results for her SPM English paper.

Divya said that she took pleasure in revising as it gave her the opportunity to experiment with her ideas and the effects it had on her readers. One of Divya's main concerns with revision was that she wanted more input from her teacher on how to impress the readers. However, she claimed that her teacher kept saying that she was on the right track because the teacher was impressed with her error free texts. She felt that she needed more guidance to move beyond writing grammatically correct sentences to writing essays that would leave an impact. The seven essays that she had written as class assignments over the year were all graded as A's by her English teacher. Based on classroom feedback, Divya felt that there was never a need for her to revise. Even though she did not have to revise her school essays, she did revisions whenever she wrote for her own interest. She found that revision was an opportunity for her to backtrack, reflect and evaluate her written work.

4.4.1. Revision process

Divya wrote three drafts (See Appendix 11 for all her drafts) for this task over a period of five days. Her revision strategies seem to suggest that she was utilising her repertoire of vocabulary to revise and generate new ideas.

4.4.1.1. First draft revision

Divya's interest in writing sentences that used a large range of vocabulary seemed to be evident as soon as she started writing her first draft. She wrote her sentences and then read them over a few times. As she revised, she did two things; first she changed vocabulary to elaborate her sentences as shown in the following example:

3: Colourful flowers bring about a sense of happiness … bring happiness brings happiness … radiates … not bring ... radiates … happiness and the colourful flowers radiate happiness and warmth.

Secondly, she rephrased sentences without making any meaning level changes as seen in the example below.

3: Everything can be got in this place. No … I think … wait …These things are within reach… that's more like it.

Making vocabulary changes and rephrasing seemed to be the focal revision activity while writing the first draft. While doing this, Divya also self-monitored her writing to ensure that it would be understood as shown in the following protocols:

3: Ok … is a classic all time alarm clock. The smell of flowers seeps into your … Doesn't sound right...

3: The air and the food are unpolluted. And so this causes a lesser chance in countryside the air and the food is unpolluted and this helps us ... this maintains our health this maintains our health and no something is not right here.

Divya had a reader in mind but it was not clear who this reader was. It seemed that her reader was someone who needed to be provided with more information for the essay to be worth reading.

8: I know … you want to know how I coped.

8: Now I'm sure you would want to know how the country girl ….

Divya started her writing by reading the topic. She then wrote words or parts of sentences and read them over and over before adding in more details. Most of her ideas and sentences were generated after writing sentences. She revised these ideas as they were generated as shown in the following example:

8: As a child, I grew up in countryside until the age of ten. As a child, I grew up in countryside, which I grew up in a plantation, living in a palm oil... no I grew up in countryside... my father as my father was a manager of a palm oil factory. As child, I grew up in the countryside until the age of ten ... my father ... The life there was ... no the atmosphere there was healthier.

It can be seen from Figure 20 that Divya read and reread her text by considering an unnamed audience and made stylistic changes. These stylistic changes resulted in more rereading and generation of ideas. She was concerned with getting her ideas across elegantly by trying to convince a reader. She rephrased most of her sentences by making changes to her vocabulary. Her first draft suggested that she generated her content by backtracking and reading previous sentences. She started writing immediately after reading the title without making any plans.
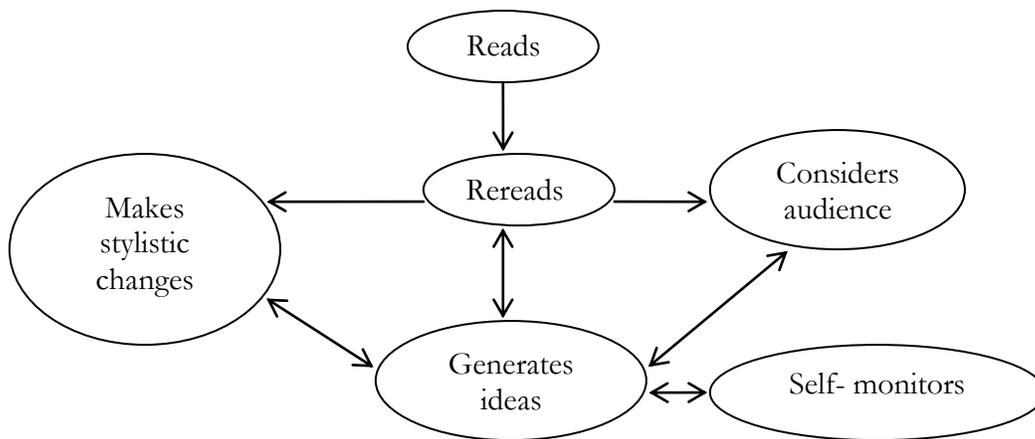
Figure 20: Divya's revision strategies in her first draft

4.4.1.2. Second draft revision

In the first draft revision, Divya focussed on generating ideas and rephrasing words by considering an unnamed audience. In the second draft, she continued doing the same things but changed the approach of her essay. Divya revised her first draft the next day. She started off by saying that it was time to change. She then self-questioned as to how many pages she had to write.

Divya's revision of the second draft indicated that even though she read only parts of sentences, she made a lot of changes in terms of word choice, phrases, and sentences. Most of the additions of vocabulary were done to provide a better visual picture to her readers as shown in the following example:

6: Everything is within reach.

6: A dash to the right and you're at the mall and a turn to the left you're at the cinema.

Divya also added elaborations while revising her draft. She maintained some of the original ideas, but also included details to show the reader her experiences. For example, she initially wrote about being lonely and that her parents were the only two people that she saw everyday. However, when she read the sentence, she added in the following details to show how close she was to her parents and how comfortable she felt with them being around.

13: They were her only playmates and soon became her best friends. Until the age of ten, the age of ten, she was quite happy in her comfort zone.

A second pattern that emerged in her revision process was the inclusion of idiomatic expressions. The interview with Divya confirmed that she included idiomatic expressions because her teacher had suggested that using such expressions was a trait of good writers.

15: A fish out of water
15: A stone's throw

Besides enriching her essay with wider range of vocabulary and expressions, Divya also changed her approach. In the first draft, she described her own personal experiences in both the town and the countryside. In the second draft however, she changed this idea to read as though she was telling it from a third person's point of view.

13: Now I am going to tell you a short story which is absolutely true in every way.

The interview with Divya indicated that this change in approach was designed to garner sympathy from the reader. It was only at the end of the essay that she revealed that the story was actually autobiographical as shown in the following example.

18: This is my story ... my story and I am that girl in real life...

She decided to strengthen this 'sympathy seeking' approach, by persuading the reader that the story was based on real experiences by including the following phrase.

5: Is this true or a mere figment of my imagination? I can only tell you one thing …I was deprived of activities which I wanted … to pursue.

While the first draft seemed to be an attempt at providing information, the second draft changed to a piece designed to persuade the reader to accept her argument. This was done by contrasting town and country life and by relating personal sacrifices and experiences as shown in the following example:

5: For example, I dreamt of being a ballerina … but I didn't take up ballet. When I had the time in the countryside, it was at a distance … when I moved to town … and distance was no more a problem … I picked up other activities as well.

A major change in this draft was that ten new paragraphs were added and these included new ideas based on the story-line approach. This addition of new vocabulary resulted in changes to her stand as to which was a better place for children to live. In the earlier draft, she was in favour of the big town. However, in the concluding paragraph of this draft, she took a neutral stand.

18: In the end, the place which is suitable for one's physical, mental and emotional growth is the best place to live.

As in the previous draft, Divya addressed an unknown audience and also self-monitored as she revised. There was also a concern for cohesion, as shown in the following example:

6: Yeah, at least there is flow ... first countryside than town. Yeah … that's okay, there is a flow...

Divya's revision strategies in the second draft are summarised in Figure 21. New paragraphs embedded in the second draft showed an extensive generation of ideas as a result of a change in approach. Her major concern was to improve and clarify content using a wide array of

vocabulary. It would also seem reasonable to speculate that there was a change from informing to persuading in the second draft.
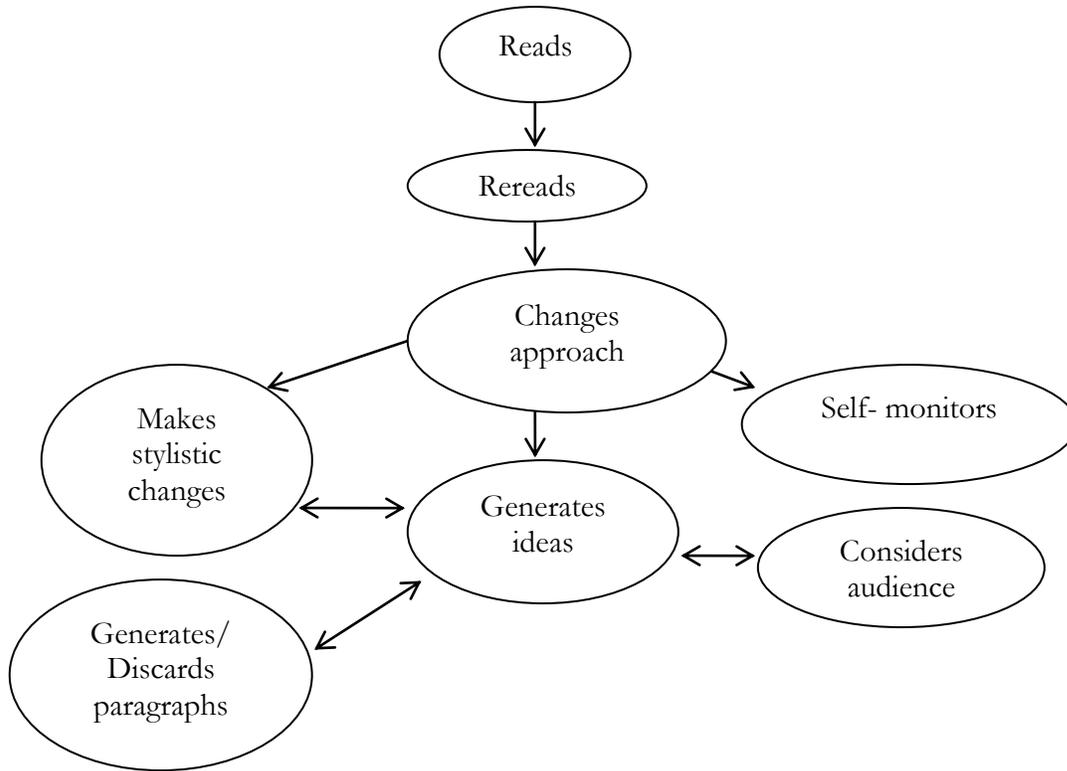
Figure 21: Divya's revision strategies in her second draft

4.4.1.3. Final draft revision

Divya's main revision strategies in the first two drafts were the generation of ideas. The final draft suggested a similar focus and there was another change in approach. Divya's final revision which was done three days later showed more changes. She started by quickly reading through the first two paragraphs of her previous draft and said that she did not like her previous draft at all. She claimed that her previous draft did not have an impressive beginning and that there was a mismatch between her story and the facts that she was discussing, thus making her arguments illogical.

She also thought that the essay would not be well liked by her teacher:

3: Not impressive. I think it is like ... is totally taken out from the essay book ... it's so common ... sure cannot impress her one. I think I want to change my whole essay.

Her was confirmed to be the teacher in the interview.

As a result of her belief about the poor quality of her essay, she decided to change her approach by using a wider range of vocabulary to please her teacher as shown in the following protocol.

3: I have a gut feeling that if I don't like it … it is not good... I also have to play with the vocab - then only can impress her.

This first change in approach was the use of a wider range of vocabulary. Divya picked up key words from her earlier draft. These key words triggered her writing episodes which resulted in new paragraphs. She continued adding words and phrases. As indicated in her goal-setting at the beginning of this revision, the changes in vocabulary resulted in longer sentences and paragraphs as seen in the following example.

7: Even though, she was happy in this cosy and comfortable nest, being cooped up at home wasn't enough.

A second change in approach was her use of the first person's and the third person's point of view. In the second draft, she began her essay by writing general things about the topic and then narrowed it to a narrative written from the third person's point of view, before finally revealing that the third person actually referred to her. Next she chose to tell a story from the third person's point of view before moving back to the first person. However, in the final draft she changed the story to the first person. There was an interchange of the first person and third person points of view throughout the final draft. This shift in perspective by personalising her essay right from the beginning seemed to have been done to provide a convincing picture to her reader about her experiences.

A third change in approach was in terms of elaboration of ideas. After reading a sentence or a key word, she elaborated with more details to show her reader what she was experiencing as seen from the following extract.

13: There was no classes nearby and the nearest was a forty minute drive.

14: Because of one disturbing factor, which affected her … distance. It took easily 55 minutes to reach a class and this tired her.

These elaborations of ideas resulted in new paragraphs. She picked up key words from the earlier draft and elaborated them with more examples and personal experiences. Compared to earlier drafts, where she provided general information to her reader, she used her own experiences to provide an 'emotional' picture as shown in the following examples:

15: I think that these two places had that … these two places, two places were right for me that I lived and left the two places at the right time.

15: I am so ungrateful

Nine paragraphs from the previous draft were deleted and new paragraphs were incorporated in this version of the draft. Besides this, Divya constantly generated new phrases, sentences and paragraphs but there seemed to be a lack of holistic planning during her revision. As a result, she was panicky at some instances.

7: Ok … Now calm down. Breathe in breath out … breath in, breath out …

9: Now … I don't know what I want to say. God … I'm going to be dead!

She went through this stressful phase because she did not know where to insert new sets of ideas. Judging from the protocols, she seemed to have an outburst of ideas for elaborations. Her decisions to constantly elaborate ideas and personalise her points indicated that she was

planning only at the local level. Based on the protocols and the written essays, it seems reasonable to speculate that she lacked the ability to organize her ideas into a cohesive text.
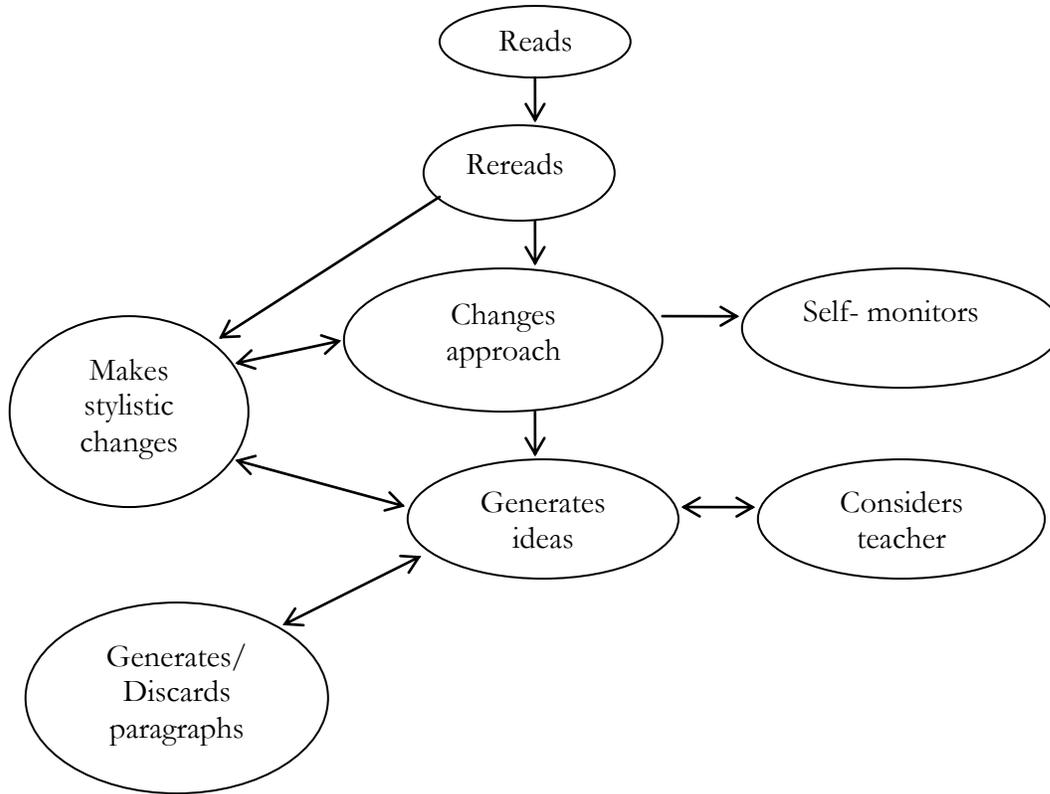
Figure 22: Divya's revision strategies in her third draft

As seen in Figure 22, the revision strategies seem to be the same in this draft as in her second draft but the focus in the final draft resulted in the addition of new paragraphs, making stylistic changes by using a wider range of vocabulary and writing longer sentences. The other noticeable difference was the change in approach in terms of writing from differing points of views. It was also clear that the revisions in the third draft were done to impress her teacher.

4.4.2. Evaluation of written product

Divya's final essay was first marked by her class teacher. Her teacher gave an A and provided many interesting comments. She said that Divya's essay grabbed the attention of the reader as

it was definitely different from how most students would approach the topic. Divya's use of lyrics from two songs to introduce the topic fascinated her. According to the teacher, Divya's choice of precise and wide range of vocabulary, idiomatic expressions and the use of a story with lots of personal experiences certainly deserved a high grade. Her teacher also said that Divya's essay showed an excellent proficiency level and this could be attested by the absence of any grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors. Among the other comments from the teacher were that the sentences used were varied and the strategy of shifting focus between the first person narrative and third person narrative and including personal experiences to substantiate arguments maintained the interest level. All these added a sense of truth in the essay, indicating that any reader would sympathise with her and be convinced by her arguments.

The examiners concurred with the teacher by saying that Divya's essay was a good piece. This judgement was based on the fact that Divya's sentences were diverse and there was an extensive range of vocabulary. There were no grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors and her sentences were easy to comprehend. The essay was considered an original piece on the grounds that Divya's style of telling a story from different point of views was unique; thus the examiners found the essay appealing. The personal experiences which were described vividly added forte to the line of argument. The examiners also commented that Divya showed maturity and had knowledge of the things that she was talking about in her arguments. The examiners found the essay to be relevant to the topic and that interest was aroused and sustained. However, the examiners' main concern was that the paragraphs were not well planned and linked. Another comment was that the essay was presented as a persuasive piece and not as an argument. The examiners were also not convinced by the conclusion as it did not emphasise her position on the argument. The examiners awarded a B for this essay citing lack of cohesion and argument as the main drawback.

In summary, Divya's revision strategies seem to be different from that of Shoba, Melinder and Stephanie in the sense that she was more concerned with stylistics. Unlike the other three participants, Divya's protocols do not give an indication that she focussed on what was considered important in classroom instruction - surface features of writing. As indicated in her questionnaire, Divya viewed revision as a stage to make her words work for her and this was evident from the changes between drafts.

4.5. Summary of chapter four

The background information of all the participants gives an indication that they were in a linguistically stimulating home environments and this influenced their writing. This is based on the grounds that their families provided a supportive environment and the participants themselves were voluntarily involved in enriching activities such as reading, participating in plays and English language clubs. Participants' perceptions of what revision entailed seemed to differ; Shoba, Melinder and Stephanie considered revision as a final step to ensure that their written texts met classroom expectations. However, the protocols showed that this was not the case when they revised; their revision was an on-going recursive process. Divya considered revision as a stage to experiment with vocabulary and this was evident in all her drafts. Although the participants have been regularly awarded A's for their essays by the class teacher, the assessment of their final essays by SPM examiners was less favourable.

The next chapter compares and contrasts the revision strategies of the participants to gain further understanding of their considerations when they revised their drafts. The revision strategies of the participants are compared and contrasted further with the revision strategies of inner circle high school native speakers of English.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Letter grades are inappropriate in writing because writing development is a nonlinear process that can't be quantified by looking at any isolated piece of writing (Perchemlides & Coutant, 2004: 54).

5. Overview of chapter five

This study aimed to find out the revision strategies of MNSE in an ESL class, the similarities and differences in strategies between inner and outer circle native speakers and how revision strategies affected the quality of writing. Participants were asked to think aloud while revising an argumentative essay. The resulting verbal protocols provided insights into their revision strategies. The classroom teacher and public examiners provided an evaluation of the final written products based on a modified version of the SPM examination marking band.

This chapter puts forth the argument that contextual factors influenced the way the participants viewed their revision. The comparison of revision strategies and comments on the written essays suggest that conflicting agents influenced classroom practices. The conflicting agents include the teacher, administrative policies and non-transparency of SPM expectations. Among the classroom practices which influenced the participants are lack of instruction on revision, summative feedback, the focus on sentence level reading and writing, limitations on planning and revision as discovery. This chapter argues that conflicting agents and classroom practices limited the participants' understanding about revision and this affected the quality of their writing.

A version of this chapter was presented at the *2nd International Conference on Languages, Linguistics and the Real World*, (Kumar, 2004b).

5.1. Comparison of revision strategies among participants

In the following section, the revision strategies of the four participants are compared across drafts. Among the similarities are the concern for surface features, elaboration using personal experiences, reading at sentence or paragraph levels, considering an unnamed audience in early drafts and considering the teacher in the final drafts. The differences include planning, reading and the use of stylistic expressions.

5.1.1. Comparison across first drafts

Four themes seem to emerge from the similarities and differences in the first draft: generation of ideas, surface features, planning and reading. It is these themes that are the focus of discussion in this section.

Table 1: Revision strategies of participants while revising first drafts

Shoba	Melinder	Stephanie	Divya
Makes surface changes		Makes surface changes	
Generates ideas		Generates ideas	Generates ideas
		Self- monitors	Self monitors
		Makes stylistic changes	Makes stylistic changes
		Considers audience	Considers audience
Reads sentences	Reads sentences	Reads sentences	Reads sentences
	Plans		
	Considers cohesion		
Detects problems		Detects problems	
Includes specific examples			

Table 1 shows the similarities and differences in strategies between and among the participants when they revised their first drafts.

The first similarity is that all participants viewed the first revision as a step to add in ideas. During revision, new ideas in the form of elaborations, personal experiences and specific examples were included. A second similarity is that the participants seemed to have considered

reading as an important component of revising. All of them read at the sentence and paragraph levels while revising.

There were also similarities between participants. Shoba and Stephanie, for example were concerned about surface features such as grammatical accuracy and punctuation in their first drafts. While Shoba's concern was for grammar, Stephanie focused on punctuation. Stephanie and Divya also exhibited similar concerns in their revising as both of them self-monitored their work, made stylistic changes and considered an unnamed audience. For example, Stephanie self-monitored by asking herself if she had written too much. Divya made stylistic changes by using elegant words, as *bring a sense of happiness* was altered to *radiate happiness and warmth.*

Besides similarities, there were also differences between the participants. The first difference among the participants was their focus in the first drafts. Shoba and Stephanie were concerned with surface features while Melinder was concerned with cohesion among paragraphs. Divya on the other hand, was more interested in making stylistic changes.

A second difference was that generating ideas and improving content seemed to be a trait of three participants, that is, Shoba, Stephanie and Divya. Melinder, however, continued working on the same ideas. Shoba, Melinder and Stepanie included a lot of specific examples for elaborating but these were confined to ideas that had already been written. Divya too included a lot of personal experiences, but she continued generating new ideas and writing new paragraphs.

A third difference was in terms of planning. Even though Melinder and Stephanie planned while revising, their planning was limited to local planning, that is, considering how to elaborate ideas within paragraphs. This seemed to be the result of their focus on reading at sentence and paragraph levels. Shoba's and Divya's protocols did not suggest any indications of planning while writing this draft.

A fourth difference was in reading what had been written. Shoba and Stephanie read paragraphs before revising. In reading the paragraphs, their concern was to ensure that the subsequent paragraphs were linked. However, there was no indication in the protocols that

their concerns for cohesion went beyond linking two paragraphs together as they did not look at the cohesion of the whole text.

In generating ideas, all participants, with the exception of Divya, seemed to have been restricted by the five paragraph formula. In this formula, students were expected to write an introduction, three main points and a conclusion. The participants read only at the sentence level to link two paragraphs. This is to say that they did not read completed paragraphs to link their ideas with subsequent paragraphs. They were involved only in local planning as the sentences and paragraphs were not viewed as part of a complete text. The participants did not seem to consider global planning in their first drafts.

In relating these strategies to the literature, four themes seem to be evident. First, the participants were engaged in two types of revision, that is, revision to fix errors and revision to create meaning and make new discoveries. Stephanie and Divya seem to be more engaged in discovering more ideas as they revised. Secondly, all the participants viewed revision as an on-going recursive process. Thirdly, contrary to Flower and Hayes' (1981) Model of Cognitive Process in Composing, the participants of this study were not involved in planning when revising their first draft. Even though they generated new ideas, these ideas were used only at paragraph levels without a consideration of a global text plan. This seems to suggest that they were probably unable to detect any dissonance in the text that had been written. According to the dissonance models (section 2.1.2), dissonance takes place when the writer notices a difference in their intentions and what they had written. Finally, critical reading, as suggested by the meta-cognitive models (section 2.1.3) was not evident from the protocols in this first draft as no reading identified ambiguities or problem detection and correction.

5.1.2. Comparison across second drafts

Table 2 shows additional similarities and differences when participants revised their second drafts. The similarities include elaborations via personal experiences, consideration of an unnamed audience and making stylistic changes. The differences include focus on surface features and changes in approach. The protocols suggested that the participants' beliefs about revision in this draft were the result of classroom practices.

Table 2: Revision strategies of participants while revising second drafts

Shoba	Melinder	Stephanie	Divya
Makes surface changes		Makes surface changes	
		Makes stylistic changes	Makes stylistic changes
Personalises	Personalises	Personalises	Personalises
Generates ideas	Generates ideas		Generates ideas
	Reorganises ideas	Reorganises ideas	
Considers coherence			
			Changes approach
		Self monitors	Self- monitors
Considers audience	Considers audience		Considers audience
Reads paragraphs		Reads sentences	Reads sentences

One similarity in the second drafts is that all four participants included personal experiences. Shoba, for example, included details about her stay in a rural area, Melinder provided an autobiographical account of her childhood experiences while Stephanie included details of her experiences in a rural area. Divya described her own personal experiences in both the countryside and the town. It was confirmed in interviews that the teacher had always requested the participants to include personal experiences to strengthen their essays. The interviews also suggested that the participants were of the impression that personal experiences should be included in all essays irrespective of the types of essays. The participants claimed that they had never been taught to write differently for different types of essays.

Another similarity between three of the participants - Shoba, Stephanie and Divya, is that they reread what had been written before making any changes. However, this was done either at the paragraph or sentence level without a concern for the entire text. Shoba for example, read paragraphs to ensure that the paragraphs were cohesive but did consider cohesion between paragraphs. Stephanie and Divya on the other hand, were focussed on sentence level reading and their concern was to ensure that the sentences 'sounded' elegant. Melinder's protocols did not suggest rereading of earlier drafts.

Both Shoba and Divya referred to an unnamed audience in this draft. This suggests that they were aware that they were writing for someone and thus made changes to accommodate this person's needs, as they revised. Divya for example, attempted to persuade her reader into accepting her line of argument as shown in this protocol: "*I must convince her. Ok maybe I can write, ok. I can tell you only one thing… … I was deprived of activities …yeah, she will like it … if I make it as though I suffered … sure she will be like it.*"

Stephanie and Divya too showed similarities in the sense that both continued to be concerned with stylistic changes, planning and changing their original ideas. Stephanie reorganised some of her ideas by grouping her paragraphs around similar arguments. Divya continued generating new ideas by changing her approach from a first person to a third person narrative.

Besides similarities between some of the participants, there were also some clear differences. A first difference is that while Stephanie was concerned with both surface and stylistic features, Shoba continued to focus on surface features and Divya on stylistic changes. A second similarity is that Shoba, Melinder and Stephanie continued to work on the same original ideas. Even though they generated ideas, these ideas were elaborations of original ideas. As an example, Stephanie included a dialogue to elaborate a point about the countryside. Divya, on the other hand, discarded a lot of her original ideas and continued generating new ideas as a result of changing her approach.

There were similarities and differences in the revision strategies employed during the writing of the first and second drafts. All the participants considered revision as an on-going process and continued to add new ideas. However, unlike their revision during the first drafts, the participants generated more ideas as a result of including personal experiences, thus making use of their topic knowledge. Butterfield et al., (1996) suggests that topic knowledge results in more meaning level revisions. This seems to be the case with all the participants. However, one needs to be cautions in linking only topic knowledge with text quality as genre knowledge also plays a role in writing.

In writing their second drafts, the participants displayed three strategies that were comparable to inner circle native speakers. The first is considering revision as a process of discovery.

Revision as a process of discovery is linked to skilled writers (Breetvelt et al., 1994; Yagelski, 1995). If this is the case, then the participants of this study can be said to be displaying strategies of skilled inner circle native speakers. Even though their discovery was limited to personal experiences, they reorganised ideas, personalised the essay and seem to have revised the text for a particular audience. A second strategy comparable to inner circle native speakers is the lack of attention to textual cohesion. The participants of this study like the inner circle native writers (McCutchen, 1994) never considered the text beyond a paragraph level. This indicates that critical reading and text comprehension were lacking. A third comparable strategy is that the participants of this study did not show any concern for the organisation of ideas. This seems to be similar to Yagelski's (1995) claim that some skilled writers paid less attention organising their ideas.

The discussion on the revision strategies in the first and second drafts suggests that some revision strategies of the inner circle writers are comparable with that of outer circle native writers. However, the revision strategies in the third draft indicate that there are differences and the main reason for this is the consideration of the teacher as the ultimate reader of the text.

5.1.3. Comparison across third drafts

Table 3 suggests that the largest number of changes took place when the participants revised their third draft. This could have been because the teacher was considered as an audience by all the participants, thus, there seems to be more similarities among the participants in this draft.

The interviews suggested that consideration of the teacher's concerns resulted in the participants concentrating on particular parts of their essay. The participants were not informed that their essays would be evaluated by the class teacher. Even so, Shoba for example, remarked that she had enough points to convince the teacher. Melinder went on an error hunt to ensure that there "would be no problem". Stephanie wanted to convince her teacher and thus she reorganised her ideas and changed her approach. Divya wanted to impress the teacher with her vocabulary but concentrated on stylistic changes and on reworking her ideas by generating new paragraphs, deleting paragraphs and reorganizing

paragraphs. Clearly, this indicates that classroom instruction had a very strong influence when the participants were writing and revising this draft.

Table 3: Revision strategies of participants while revising third drafts

Shoba	Melinder	Stephanie	Divya
Makes surface changes	Makes surface changes	Makes surface changes	
			Makes stylistic changes
Considers cohesion		Considers cohesion	
Includes personal experiences		Includes personal experiences	
Generates ideas		Reorganises ideas	
Plans		Plans	Plans
	Deletes paragraphs		Deletes paragraphs
			Changes approach
		Self- monitors	Self-monitors
Considers teacher	Considers teacher	Considers teacher	Considers teacher
Reads whole essay	Reads whole essay	Reads whole essay	Reads only two paragraphs

First, the focus on surface features and error detection influenced their beliefs about revision. They had no instruction on what constitutes revision and did not reflect and develop ideas while revising. This resulted in the participants' adding information and changing approach without providing evidences to support their argument. As suggested by the interview, the participants seemed to have the impression that once they had three ideas, their essays would be acceptable to the teacher. Secondly, the continued emphasis on personal experiences which has been encouraged in classroom instruction, proved detrimental as the examiners did not consider this appropriate in an argumentative essay. The focus on surface features also seemed to have sidetracked the participants from identifying text problems such as cohesion and argumentative topic when they read the complete essay. As well, although the participants worked on using a wide repertoire of vocabulary as instructed by the class teacher, the use of vocabulary was not exploited to yield quality texts as perceived by the examiners.

The revision strategies in the third drafts provide additional evidence of the influence of classroom instruction in the choice of revision strategies which seemed to have shaped the task environment. The revision strategies in this draft indicate that the participants are capable of meaning level revisions. It has been argued that skilled writers make more meaning level changes in the final draft (Breetvelt et al., 1994; McCutchen et al., 1997). In the case of these outer circle native speakers, the potential to make meaning level changes and make new discoveries appear to be limited by the task environment. As suggested by Alamargot & Chanquoy (2001) through the dissonance model, the participants of this study evaluated their text with their goal, that is, to write for the teacher. In relating the strategies of this draft to the Meta-cognitive Models of Revision, it appears that the revision strategies in the final draft were not fully developed because the cognitive system had limited knowledge of the text requirements and the meta-cognitive system lacked the knowledge of revision.

5.2. Comparison of strategies with inner circle native speakers

Having compared and contrasted the revision strategies among participants across their drafts, the next section compares and contrasts these findings to insights from previous revision studies on high school students which were discussed in section 2.3. This is done to answer the second research question: what are the similarities and differences in revision strategies between the participants and inner circle native speakers of English. Some of the similarities include better writers revise more, revision is a recursive and on-going process, revision is related to fluency, better writers revise for meaning, writers revise more in the final draft, effective writers consider their audience more and the effects of delaying revision. Some of the differences relate to peers as audience, topic knowledge, reading comprehension and the link between revision and text quality.

Flower & Hayes, (1981) found that revision is an on-going and recursive process. The findings from this study indicate that these outer circle native speakers' revision strategies are both on-going and recursive. As was evident from the protocols, all the participants revised in all drafts. Previous studies have not reported if recursiveness was the result of classroom instruction but on the other hand have argued that writers can be trained to revise recursively (Butterfield et al., 1996; Perez, 2001). The interview with the teacher confirmed that revision was never

taught to these participants and participants themselves could not explain this. It would seem that some writers may revise naturally.

Competent writers revised more extensively for a peer audience and clarity was improved if an audience was specified (Monahan, 1984; Roen & Willey, 1988; Schneider, 2003; Schriver, 1992; Wong et al., 1994). Although the participants of this study were not told that their essays would be read by their class teacher, they all referred to an unnamed audience in early drafts and this consideration may have resulted in some of the revisions. However, in all the final drafts, the participants considered the teacher as the audience. This study is unable to ascertain if this consideration resulted in better quality texts. However, what seems evident is that the consideration of the teacher resulted in changes in the final draft. The participants were listening to the voices of their teacher and this seems to have influence their task environment and LTM. As a result of this, it can be argued that the outer circle native speakers in this study had a specific writing goal to meet classroom expectations. This seems to have limited their understanding of an audience as they were used to writing only for the teacher. Contrary to claims by previous studies that an awareness of an audience had a positive influence on the final written texts, one is able to speculate that the consideration of the teacher in this study did not result in such a favourable assessment of their final written text as judged by the markers of the public examination. If one considers that the purpose of classroom instruction was to prepare students for the public examination, then, it can be argued that the consideration of the teacher as an audience did not advantage the participants in this study.

Previous studies on inner circle high school native speakers have highlighted the importance of reading (Beal, 1996; McCutchen, et al., 1994, Stallard, 1974). McCutchen, Covill, Hoyne, & Mildes, (1994) suggested that skilled writers consider the texts holistically while less skilled writers never went beyond the paragraph level - error detection was also said to improve one's ability to revise. However, these claims were based on revisions made to texts written by others. If reading the whole essay is taken to mean considering the text holistically, Shoba, Melinder and Stephanie considered their whole essays. However, if considering the text holistically means evaluating the text for dissonance, it would not be the case as no changes were identified in the protocols when they read the whole essay. All the changes were the result of considering text at sentence and paragraph levels. Divya also did not consider the text

holistically as her reading was limited to paragraphs. However, it should be noted that despite this, her essay was given a better grade compared to the other three participants. Van den Berg & Rijlaarsdam (2001) and Yagelski (1995) reported that skilled writers in their studies did not consider organisation of ideas. As such, relating holistic reading of a text to text quality may be tentative in nature.

Previous studies on high school inner circle native speakers have suggested that topic knowledge results in more meaning level revisions (Kellogg, 1987; MacArthur, 1991; McCutchen, 2000). The protocols suggest that all the participants had topic knowledge for writing this essay. Stephanie and Divya for example elaborated and incorporated meaning level changes based on their personal experiences. While the teacher was happy that they were adhering to classroom instruction, it seems obvious that the examiners were not in favour of the use of this kind of topic knowledge. The findings of this study suggest that topic knowledge is only one aspect in producing a quality text. Besides topic knowledge, one also has to have knowledge of writing an essay based on the requirement of the type of essay. Narrating personal experiences is certainly not the format of an argumentative essay. All the participants resorted to personalising the argumentative essay as a result of classroom instruction.

Chanquoy (2001) stated that delaying revision may result in more revisions. Shoba revised her drafts over a period of three days and it seems there were more revisions in her final draft, which was written three days after the second draft. Stephanie's third and fourth drafts, which showed the most changes, were written after a week. Divya took five days to revise and her final draft was written three days after the second draft and there were numerous changes. On the other hand, Melinder did all the drafts within three hours and her final draft also indicated numerous changes. The findings of this study seem to support Chanquoy's suggestion that delaying revision may result in more revisions and the type of revisions. However, it should be noted that there were numerous changes in Melinder's final draft even though there was no lapse in time. As a consequence, it would seem that Chanquoy's (2001) findings cannot be generalised.

In sum, the discussion of the comparison of the similarities and differences in strategies between drafts suggests that these outer circle native speakers used some strategies which were

similar to the ones used by skilled high school writers of the inner circle. However, the findings suggest that contextual factors (detailed discussion in section 5.4) seem to have orchestrated their choice of revision strategies.

As this study aimed to relate process to text quality, the final written products were evaluated by the class teacher and public examiners.

5.3. Assessment of final written products

This section looks at the assessment of the final written products by the class teacher and SPM examiners. This section first compares the grades awarded by the class teacher and the examiners to show that there was a disparity in terms of evaluation. It then compares the comments made by the examiners and the class teacher to show their differences in judgement criteria. The assessment and comments provide additional evidence to support the argument that there was a mismatch between classroom instruction and expectations of public assessment.

Table 4: Assessment of final written products

	Teacher	Examiner 1	Examiner 2
Shoba	A	C	D
Melinder	B	D	D
Stephanie	A	C	D
Divya	A	B	B

Table 4 shows that there is a disparity between the grades awarded by the teacher and the examiners – the teacher assessed all the participants as being proficient but the examiners did not concur with this decision.

A closer look at the comments made by the teacher indicates that the teacher's focus was on surface features, overall impression of the essay, use of personal experiences, cohesion and

coherence, vocabulary, approach/style and clarity of the essay. The examiners evaluated the same things; however, their judgements were extended to relevance of ideas, varied sentence structures, conclusion, originality and maturity of arguments.

The teacher and the examiners differed in some comments on the overall impression of the essays. The teacher, for example, commented that Shoba was a competent writer and her essay was 'good'. However, the examiners commented that Shoba's essay lacked liveliness and had no interest value. The teacher also felt that Stephanie's and Divya's essay were well written and sustained her interest. The examiners did not share this opinion and commented that these essays were stereo-types. It would seem that the teacher and the examiners had differing expectations of an argumentative essay although neither the teacher nor the examiners commented about the arguments in the essays.

The teacher and the examiners commented on the style used in the essays. While the teacher seemed satisfied with the use of personal experiences, dialogues, flashbacks and autobiographical approach, the examiners did not find them relevant to an argumentative essay. As an example, the teacher considered Melinder's autobiographical approach as a positive point of the essay and considered Shoba's inclusion of personal details a strength of the essay. The teacher commented that Stephanie's use of dialogue sustained her interest but the examiners commented that the dialogues were dull and irrelevant. Divya's essay for example, was considered an argument by the teacher but the examiners thought it was more of a persuasive piece. Thus, contrary to the teacher's belief, the examiners felt that the use of autobiographical approach and personal experiences were not convincing or relevant to an argumentative topic.

A third point of disagreement was in terms of clarity, cohesion and coherence. The teacher was of the opinion that all the participants wrote clearly, had well linked paragraphs and that their ideas were well supported with personal experiences. For example, the teacher commented that Shoba's paragraphs were well developed and her ideas were well linked. However, the examiners commented that there was no coherence in Shoba's essay; and that her ideas were not well developed. The teacher was of the opinion that Divya wrote an excellent essay as all her ideas were well developed, linked and aroused the interest of the

reader. However, the examiners commented that the main weakness in her essay was that the paragraphs were not well planned and linked.

A fourth point of disagreement was the conclusions of the essays. The examiners commented that both Stephanie's and Divya's conclusions were neither effective nor appropriate for an argumentative essay. Previous essays written at school by the participants indicated that the class teacher had never commented on conclusions. All four participants did not spend much time on their conclusions and none planned or revised their conclusions. This seems to support the claim that "few writing teachers allot enough teaching time commensurate with the importance of endings" (Murphy, 2003: 461). The examiners felt that the conclusions had to effectively summarise and strengthen the main points in an argumentative genre. This oversight to expose the participants to the importance of conclusions could have limited the effectiveness of their essays.

A final point of disagreement is that the examiners commented that they found originality and maturity only in Divya's essay. The examiners viewed originality as essays that were not stereo-typed. The examiners were not in favour of a five paragraph essay but expected an essay which was well developed and supported with evidence. Maturity according to them meant that ideas were acceptable and reasonable. The interview with the teacher revealed that she believed that writing a five paragraph essay was normal. She had not heard of originality and maturity in school writing tasks. She encouraged her students to write formulaic essays as she felt that this would support students achieving a high grade in the SPM.

The discussion on the assessment of the essays clearly indicates a mismatch between classroom instruction and expectations in the public examination. While the examiners were looking for ideas which were well substantiated, argued and linked, the class teacher had never highlighted these aspects in classroom instruction or feedback. The examiners were of the opinion that none of the participants argued their case even though this was an argumentative essay. However, the teacher was satisfied with the essays. The participants' understanding of an argumentative essay was based on their classroom experiences. This did not match the public examiners' expectations.

Based on the discussion, it would seem that the SPM marking band needs to be evaluated critically. This band seems to award marks based on a holistic band irrespective of the type of essays. The examiners confirmed that this marking band is used to mark all types of essays. It may be that the requirements for different genres of essays are not taken into consideration. As an example, the marking band in Appendix 1 does not have any rubrics that cater for logical appeal or strength of arguments. In studies which explored holistic ratings on argumentative essays (Connor, 1990; Durst, Laine, Schultz, & Vilter, 1990), it was reported that there was a strong correlation between text coherence, logical appeals and holistic ratings. In an argumentative essay, it is essential that one has to make an assertion and support this with evidence. However, the SPM marking band does not take into account genre specific criteria.

5.4. Conflicting agents

One of the aims of this study is to understand how revision strategies affect text quality. The discussion on the cognitive processes during revision and the evaluation and comments on the essays suggest that the participants had a limited understanding of revision strategies. The next section provides information on some of the conflicting agents which contributed to this lack of awareness of revision strategies. This includes a teacher who had not been provided with adequate training to teach writing, textbooks that do not challenge the writers, administrative policies which do not support individual development of writers and examination policies that are not transparent.

5.4.1. The class teacher

The same teacher taught English to all four participants. The teacher qualified with a B. Ed in Teaching ESL from a local university two years before the study was conducted. While at university, she had undergone a course on writing which dealt with some theoretical aspects of process writing. She was exposed to the different components of the writing process but indicated that she never considered revision as a process. Her perception of revision was that one had to ensure that that there were no grammatical mistakes. She also considered revision as a stage where one 'polishes' the final draft. Her own writings as an undergraduate did not involve any revisions as she claimed that her assignments were never returned to her. She had never been exposed to writing conferences or given formative feedback on her written

assignments. Thus, her perception of revision was limited. The teacher lacked "the kind of knowledge necessary for this activity" (Chanquoy, 2001: 20) as she was not familiar with the recursive nature of writing and revision as a process of discovery. It seems clear that teacher training had not provided the teacher with adequate skills to teach process writing. This lack of training affected her classroom instruction.

The teacher has been assigned exam classes because of her qualification in English. There were no induction programmes to accustom her to teaching exam classes or to the requirements of the SPM English paper. She was told that the aim of English classes was for communicative purposes and she should not focus on examination but on completing the syllabus by using the text book prescribed by the school. However, the reality was that at the end of high school the students had to sit for and get good grades in the SPM for their future.

5.4.2. Textbook

It was customary in the school to follow a text book prescribed by the Ministry of Education. All written work had to be based on the exercises in the text book. These included a lot of short answer exercises which were designed for language learners. There were also directed writing exercises. The text book did not provide any guidance or exercises on the writing process, nor argumentative essays. The school policy was to assign written work from the text book and this was checked regularly by the school administrators. The participants of the study expressed their concern about the simplicity of the textbook as it did not provide opportunities to explore the various genres of writing. They often completed the short answer and directed writing exercises quickly and assisted other weaker students to complete them.

The school also required students to buy additional workbooks from commercial publishers to help them prepare for their exam. These workbooks were selected by the Head of English panel and the class teacher did not have any say in the selection of these workbooks. These workbooks were extensions of the exercises in the text book in the sense that they provided supplementary exercises. The workbook used in this school had a section on argumentative essays. The workbook recommended that students only attempt argumentative essays if they have enough facts. No other information was provided on how to write an argumentative

essay. The textbook and workbooks did not provide clear guidance or opportunities for the participants to develop their writing strategies. On the whole, the textbook and workbook catered for language learners. As such, the participants did not feel challenged.

5.4.3. Administrative policies

The school's Head of English panel requires English teachers to assign at least two compositions per month and this was checked regularly. The rationale for this was that writing more compositions would make the students competent. This directive gives the implication that the school administrator "assumes the existence of declarative knowledge" (Schoonen & Glopper, 1996: 99) in all students. Declarative knowledge refers to both cognitive and meta-cognitive knowledge. In other words, the administrator was of the view that students had internalised knowledge and skills to write essays frequently. However, one needs to be aware that these knowledge and strategies have to be developed systematically.

Besides this, the administrators required the teacher to embark on an error hunt as it was assumed that red ink corrections have great face value when administrators decide to check a teacher's work (Keh, 1990). The Head of English required the teacher to show that she had read the essays and this could only be done through the numerous red ink marks in the essays. Besides the essays, the teacher was also required to assign at least three grammar assignments weekly and comprehension and summary work every fortnight. Appendix 12 provides a copy of the school's policy on assigning written work.

Clearly, the teacher had a heavy workload. It is therefore understandable that the participants' were asked to assist other students who were less proficient. Under these circumstances, the teacher could not be expected to support the participants' development as writers.

5.4.4. Transparency in SPM

The teacher and the participants were unaware of the expected standards of writing in the SPM. Classroom instruction and assessment made the participants believe that their writing was of quality. The teacher was of the opinion (as suggested by the interview) that the participants' fluency in the language would result in good grades but the teacher did not know

the criteria that was used to judge essays. She was also unaware of the marking band and some rubrics such as maturity and originality that were used to judge the essays. Additionally, she was unaware of what was required for her students to get excellent grades despite their proficiency. The lack of transparency in the SPM limited the teacher's and participants' perception of what was expected. This seemed to have deprived the participants of vital information they needed to write favourably for the SPM. If the participants were sitting for a public examination, "there is a reasonable expectation that the instructions provided will be explicit enough to allow the candidates to understand what it is they have to do to fulfil the requirements …" (Kuiper & Gunby, 2004: 5). This would mean that the one who teaches examination classes has to be well informed about the expectations of the examinations.

The above section discussed the conflicting agents that influenced the teacher. The next section discusses how these conflicting agents influenced classroom practices.

5.5. Classroom practices

It needs to be recalled here that the participants in this study are outer circle native speakers of English in an ESL classroom. The classroom practices which did not challenge the participants' potential as writers are: writing instruction, feedback, sentence level reading, sentence level writing, focus on sentence level planning; and limited understanding of revision as a process of discovery.

5.5.1. Writing instruction

An interview with the teacher and the participants revealed that the participants were left to develop their writing skills by themselves because the teacher considered them proficient users of the language. Her judgement was based on three qualities which the participants displayed in their writing: no grammatical mistakes, no spelling errors and a wide range of vocabulary.

The participants were required to write essays in class and give them to the teacher immediately for evaluation. This did not encourage reflection on ideas but was very similar to the exam situation they would be facing. The teacher was of the opinion that this form of writing provided exam oriented practice to these students. However, this practice did not

provide an opportunity for the participants to revise or share their work with other writers. The only reader of participants' essays was their teacher who provided a summative evaluation of the essay. This did not encourage revising for a wider audience. As a result of this, they had "difficulty in evaluating their own text and in acting as readers" (Chanquoy, 2001: 20). Some studies have argued that writers who displayed a sense of audience used more sophisticated writing (Bereiter & Scardamalia , 1987, Schriver, 1992; Wong et al., 1994). In most cases, the awareness of the teacher in the final draft was an important component of the changes that were evoked. The participants' revision in the final drafts showed the most changes. This was where they worked harder for their real audience – the teacher. As they believed that the ultimate reader would be the teacher, their focus was on "projective restructuring" (Chan & Heng, 2001: 7), that is, they reread to check if their writing was moving in the right direction to meet classroom expectations. As a result of these considerations, the final revision was a "perform[ance] for the teacher" (Schneider, 2003: 370) on the grounds that the participants aimed to comply with classroom preferences. However, both Stephanie and Divya seemed to have planned as they wrote. They reviewed instance by instance. This process has been called "retrospective restructuring" (Chan & Heng, 2001: 7). Shoba and Melinder, for example, orchestrated their final draft to meet the 'end-product evaluation' of classroom demands. Stephanie and Divya, however, stretched the boundaries by trying out new approaches.

Besides this, during essay writing classes, the focus of teaching and feedback had been on deleting faulty sentences and correcting them using simple sentences. Simple sentences were favoured as the teacher was of the opinion that this would avoid grammatical and spelling errors. Shoba and Melinder claimed that since the teacher was always in favour of simple sentences, these were to be emulated. Stephanie and Divya, on the other hand, claimed that they were confident of varying their sentence structures and thus did not limit themselves to simple sentence structures.

The teacher and the participants confirmed that no lessons on specific writing strategies were conducted.

5.5.2. Feedback

The teacher's feedback had always focussed on surface features. She had also awarded A's for all the essays that the participants had written which gave them the impression that their writing was good and that "it can't get any better" (Holaday, 1997: 37). The teacher's focus on summative evaluation provided no specific guidance on how the participants could write for different audiences or purposes. The teacher viewed feedback as something that happened at the end of the writing task and not as something that happened continuously throughout the teaching of the writing process. The participants were also not provided with the opportunity or guidance to revise.

5.5.3. Sentence level reading

Another classroom practice was the focus on sentence level reading which did not encourage critical reading of the whole text. Faulty sentences were written on the board and the students worked in groups to correct the faulty sentences. The focus of reading was on error detection and correction. This was exhibited in the revising of Shoba's and Melinder's essays. As an example, Shoba's reading of her first draft focussed only on identifying surface level faults. In the second draft, the continued focus on surface features was evident. In the third draft, it was clear that the purpose of reading was to ensure that the text met classroom requirements. Melinder's reading indicated a similar focus in her first draft. In her second draft, however, the protocols did not show any rereading. The third draft, however, indicated that the focus of reading was to ensure the essay had met all classroom requirements and it was error free. Stephanie displayed similar focus in her reading but extended her reading to paragraphs. Stephanie's reading in her first draft indicated that her concern was for surface features. However, subsequent reading of her first draft included stylistic changes in terms of vocabulary and also surface features, that is, punctuation. In later drafts, her focus on reading seemed to be on text evaluation as she reorganised ideas and generated new ideas. However, this text evaluation was limited to individual paragraphs and not the whole text. Divya, on the other hand, extended her reading to include comprehension monitoring and text evaluation right from the first draft. Her text evaluation, that is, checking if the text conveyed the intended message, resulted in stylistic changes and generation of new ideas. However, like

Stephanie, her reading was limited to specific paragraphs without a concern for the complete text.

Recent models of revision (Beal, 1996; Butterfield et al., 1996; Hayes, 1996) have emphasised the importance of reading strategies in revision by suggesting that the potential of a student as a writer is limited until a writer develops critical reading skills. Some studies claim a relationship between reading and text quality (Alamargot & Chanquoy, 2001; McCutchen et al., 1997; van den Bergh, Rijlaarsdam, & Breetvelt, 1993). Hacker (1994), for example, points out the importance of reading by saying that revision necessitates reading and adds that comprehension monitoring is considered a part of the writing process. Hayes' model of revision (1996) focuses on reading and comprehension and argues that reading is necessary to decide what must be corrected in the text. What seems to be apparent in all these studies is that revision requires attentive reading (Alamargot & Chanquoy, 2001). As was seen in the dissonance models of revision, comprehension monitoring and text evaluation are considered two essential components of critical reading skills.

The verbal protocols in the present study suggest that participants were not critical readers of their own writing. This may have been because there was no opportunity for the participants to evaluate their essay for comprehensibility and reader-friendliness in the eyes of other readers as the teacher never provided any critical feedback that would have alerted the participants to comprehension concerns in their texts. The lack of focus on evaluation of ideas in the classroom via comprehension monitoring adds to the assumption that critical reading was not an important component of classroom instruction.

5.5.4. Sentence level writing

The protocols also suggested that some participants lacked textual understanding. Textual understanding is essential as this has an implication on their revision strategies. Studies on native writers have suggested that some writers eliminate whole sections of their texts while others are less able to abandon a text once it has been written (Breetvelt et al., 1994: 105). Studies which looked at sentence structures during revision claim that native speakers used strategies such as changing entire paragraphs to convey new meanings or initiating multiple word changes and revised extensively from the first to the final draft (Hall, 1990). Besides this,

McCutchen, et al., (1994: 256) claim that some writers show more fluent sentence-generation processes. Studies have also looked at word level changes and reported that native writers wrote a few words before moving on to generate new materials (Beal, 1993). In all these studies, the revision strategies are felt to improve text quality in terms of structure, organisation, cohesion and language use. The findings from this study seem to support the findings of earlier studies in some aspects. Stephanie and Divya for example, eliminated paragraphs and generated new ones while Melinder and Shoba did not deviate from their original texts. Melinder and Shoba did not change as many sentences or initiate multiple word and paragraph changes as Stepanie and Divya. All four participants did not seem to have problems generating sentences as there were no long pauses or hesitations while generating sentences.

However, the strategies used by the participants did not result in cohesive texts as judged by the examiners. Even though the participants used similar strategies as other writers to generate texts, they were unable to write effective texts according to the examiners.

5.5.5. Planning

Planning is considered an important component of revision because when writers rewrite, they re-work and organize these ideas (Hayes & Flower, 1987). It is also during planning that writers generate more ideas, reorganise them and look for new links. Shoba planned by looking for ideas to support her stand (i.e. agreeing with the title) and then moved on to making a mind map. Melinder referred to an outline while revising her first draft, but, like Shoba, did not go beyond this outline. Their protocols did not provide any evidence of planning the introduction or conclusion. While Shoba continued with local planning by including elaborations, Melinder's protocols did not indicate further planning. Stephanie, on the other hand, planned in all her three drafts. However, Stephanie's planning, just as Shoba's, was limited to elaborations of ideas that had already been written. Divya's planning was not evident from the protocols.

Even though Shoba, Stephanie and Melinder referred to their mind maps, there was no attempt to review or re-organize their global plans. These three participants viewed planning during the revision process as a stage to add in more details as opposed to working with more

ideas, reorganising ideas or establishing new links in the ideas. To these participants, planning equated to an addition of details. Divya kept reorganising her ideas but the examiners cited lack of cohesion as a drawback in her composition. The strict adherence to plans by making changes only to original ideas suggests that the participants' meta-cognitive strategies were not fully challenged.

5.5.6. Revision as process of discovery

It appeared that the participants also considered revision as a process of discovery. It was during this stage that they saw new connections and links in their ideas. Shoba's process of discovery began with the inclusions of specific examples. This was done after she read some of the sentences and this reading triggered the use of a wider range of examples to substantiate her claims. In the second and final drafts, she included more personal experiences and included specific examples to elaborate her ideas. In terms of discovery, what can be said is that she discovered new connections that could enable her readers (unnamed and the teacher) to relate her line of argument to real life experiences. However, this was not developed further as she adhered rigidly to the five paragraph formula for the essay.

Melinder's revision processes were not confined just to fixing errors but included revisions that enabled her to make discoveries in her text. First, her concern for coherence in linking paragraphs enabled her to see new connections to ideas. Secondly, she reorganised some of her ideas, generated some new ideas and then included personal experiences. Melinder's revision was limited by her need to stick to only three main ideas.

Stephanie's process of discovery started with her first revision. The stylistic changes that she made and the planning during the first revision indicate that revising enabled her to make new discoveries in terms of relating new vocabulary to drafted ideas. As she self-monitored her revision with a consideration of an unnamed audience, she discovered alternative word choices and rephrased ideas to make them clearer. In the subsequent draft, the same pattern of discovery was seen and there was an addition of new ideas in the form of personal experiences. Stephanie also saw new connections in her ideas and decided to change her line of argument by including new experiences and reorganising old ones to link her ideas. In doing these, she

discovered new possibilities of linking ideas and making them coherent. In the final draft, the same pattern of discovery was seen, but in the third draft she mentioned her teacher. This seems to have influenced her decisions to change approach so that she included dialogue, flashback and more personal stories. It seems her process of discovery was tailored to meet classroom instruction.

Compared to the other participants, Divya did not seem to have encountered any errors that required fixing. Divya's revisions were focussed on generating ideas and in so doing, she displayed that revision was a process of discovery. Her process of discovery started when she read sentences and this triggered her use of a wider repertoire of vocabulary. In using new vocabulary, she changed ideas and reorganised them to make them sound elegant. By self monitoring and considering an unnamed audience, she was able to orchestrate her revision process to produce new ideas. In the second draft, paragraphs were discarded and new ones added and there was evidence that revision was a process of discovery, in the sense that she changed her point of view. She included idiomatic expressions and made a lot of changes to her vocabulary. All these changes indicate that she viewed revision as a step to add more ideas. In the final draft, Divya revealed that the audience was her teacher but unlike the other participants, she continued generating more ideas and discarding paragraphs. There were further changes in approach.

One conclusion that can be drawn from the above discussion is that the participants had a limited understanding of revision. Hayes & Nash (1996) and Yagelski (1995) claimed that some writers continually generate many ideas during the revising stages. This is because as they write there is a "change in intention and the direction of thoughts" and this results in "deeper discoveries which reflect more enriching insights" (Chan & Heng, 2001: 8). Breetvelt et. al (1994) provided empirical evidence and argued that better writers revise more frequently at higher levels by rewriting whole paragraphs. Their final drafts were different from their first drafts in terms of the number of ideas evolved as it was assumed that during the revision process, writers worked on more ideas and reorganised these ideas. Unlike participants in Breetvelt et.al's (1994) study, the participants of this study seemed to have a limited understanding of the possibilities in revision because they focussed only on elaborating the three main ideas.

It seems reasonable to argue that classroom instruction had an influence on the way the participants viewed writing and revising. Revision involves both fixing errors and a process of discovery and both are necessary for improving text quality. It would also seem that classroom instruction did not facilitate learning of the range of revision skills which would enable the participants to write effective argumentative essays to SPM standards.

5.6. Summary of chapter five

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        │ Conflicting │
        │   Agents    │
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        │Native speakers'│
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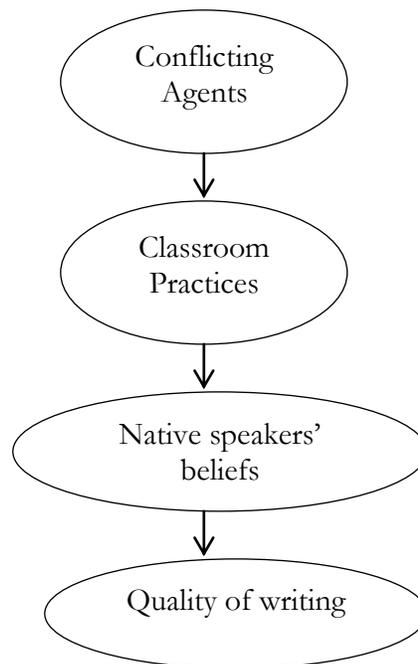
Figure 23: Factors affecting revising strategies

Figure 23 summarises the main argument of this chapter based on the insights of the cognitive process model. The discussions in this chapter suggest that conflicting agents limited classroom practices. The conflicting agents include the class teacher, administrative policies and the non-transparency of the SPM. The classroom practices which influenced the participants' beliefs about revision include writing instruction, feedback, sentence level reading, sentence level writing, planning and limited understanding of revision as a process of discovery. As a result of these beliefs, the participants wrote essays which were not judged favourably by public examiners.

The next chapter discusses pedagogical suggestions that one can consider to develop the full potential of these writers. Suggestions are made to overcome some of the shortcomings associated with the various conflicting agents and classroom practices.

The next chapter discusses theoretical implications from these findings. It then discusses pedagogical suggestions that would support the development of the participants writing and revising skills. Suggestions are made to overcome some of the shortcomings associated with the various conflicting agents and classroom practices.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Writing today is not a frill for the few, but an essential skill for the many
(National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, 2003).

6. Overview of chapter six

This study was done to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the revision strategies of four MNSE?
2. What are the similarities and differences in revision strategies among the participants
   and inner circle native speakers of English?
3. How is the final written product   judged by the class teacher and markers of the SPM
   examination ?

In order to answer the above questions, four MNSE were asked to think aloud while writing an argumentative essay. The verbal protocols were analysed using NVivo which supported the grounded theory approach. The final written essays of the participants were graded by public examiners using a modified version of the SPM marking band. The findings suggest that the participants were not challenged in the classroom. Additionally, the findings indicate a mismatch between classroom instruction and expectations in the SPM.

This chapter first summarises the findings in relationship to the research questions. It then provides suggestions to address concerns relating to conflicting agents and classroom practices by considering the five theoretical models discusses in chapter two. These include instruction on revision strategies, assessment practices, providing classroom feedback, ability streaming, focussing on reading and text generation, and finally teacher development. The chapter then discusses briefly the SPM 2002 results of the participants. Finally, this chapter provides suggestions for future research.

6.1. Research questions

Question 1: What are the revision strategies of four MNSE?

Figure 24 shows the summary of revision strategies of the four participants. Shoba, Stephanie and Melinder read the text that had been written and this triggered revision strategies. This included local planning, generating and re-organising ideas by including personal details. The participants self-monitored their strategies while revising and considered an unnamed audience in early drafts and the teacher in the final drafts. The consideration of the teacher resulted in additional surface changes and stylistic changes. All these processes were recursive (as shown by the bi-directional arrows) and on-going in nature.
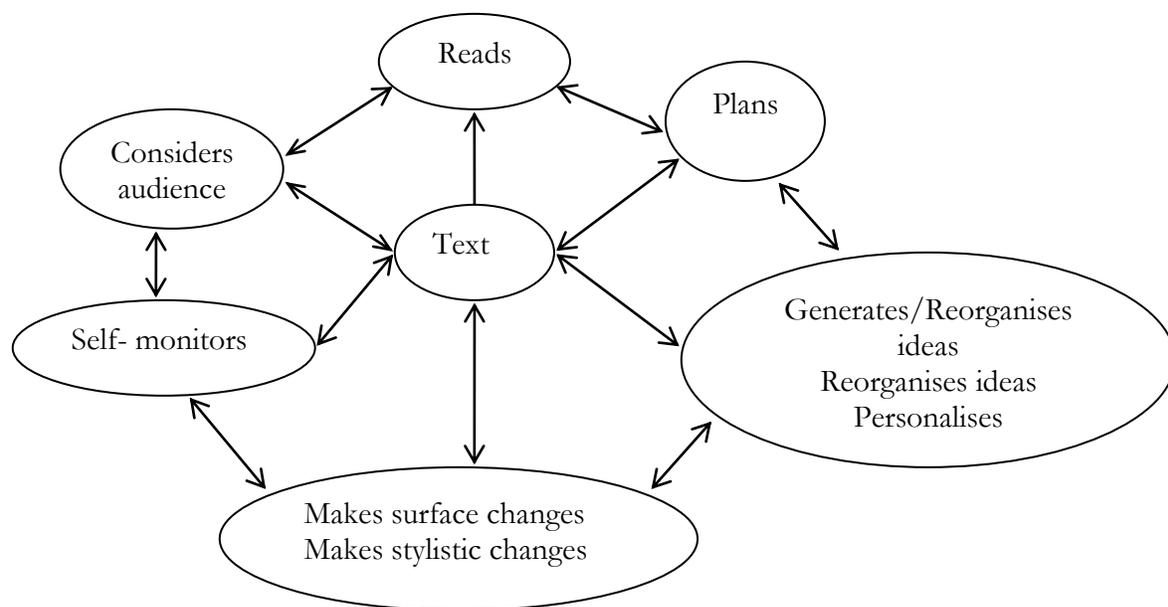
Figure 24: Summary representation of revision strategies of MNSE

Question 2: What are the similarities and differences in revision strategies among the participants and inner circle native speakers of English?

Answers to this question were sought to find patterns in revision strategies. The similarities and the differences among the participants were discussed in detail in Chapter 4. In general,

Shoba and Melinder seemed to show similar strategies in that they were more concerned with following classroom instruction. Stephanie and Divya too adhered to classroom instruction but they focussed on stylistic changes. All the participants included personal details and adhered to expectations of classroom instruction. The similarities between participants strongly suggest the influence of classroom practices.

The revision strategies of the participants of this study and of inner circle native speakers were compared and contrasted. Similarities in term of considering revision as an on-going recursive process, the extent of revision and patterns in reading comprehension were found. However, there were also differences in terms of the consideration of an audience, fluency and writing, topic knowledge and delaying writing.

Question 3: How is the final written product judged by the class teacher and markers of SPM examiners?

The final written texts were evaluated by the class teacher and two Malaysian public examiners. Based on the teacher's judgement, all the argumentative essays were considered high quality. However, this judgement was not supported by the examiners. As the participants were sitting for a public examination, and the school was preparing them for this examination, it seems reasonable to argue that the participants were not provided support to help them write to meet the required standards.

6.2 Theoretical Implications

This section discusses the findings from all five theoretical models and how these contribute useful understanding for pedagogical purposes and educational policies.
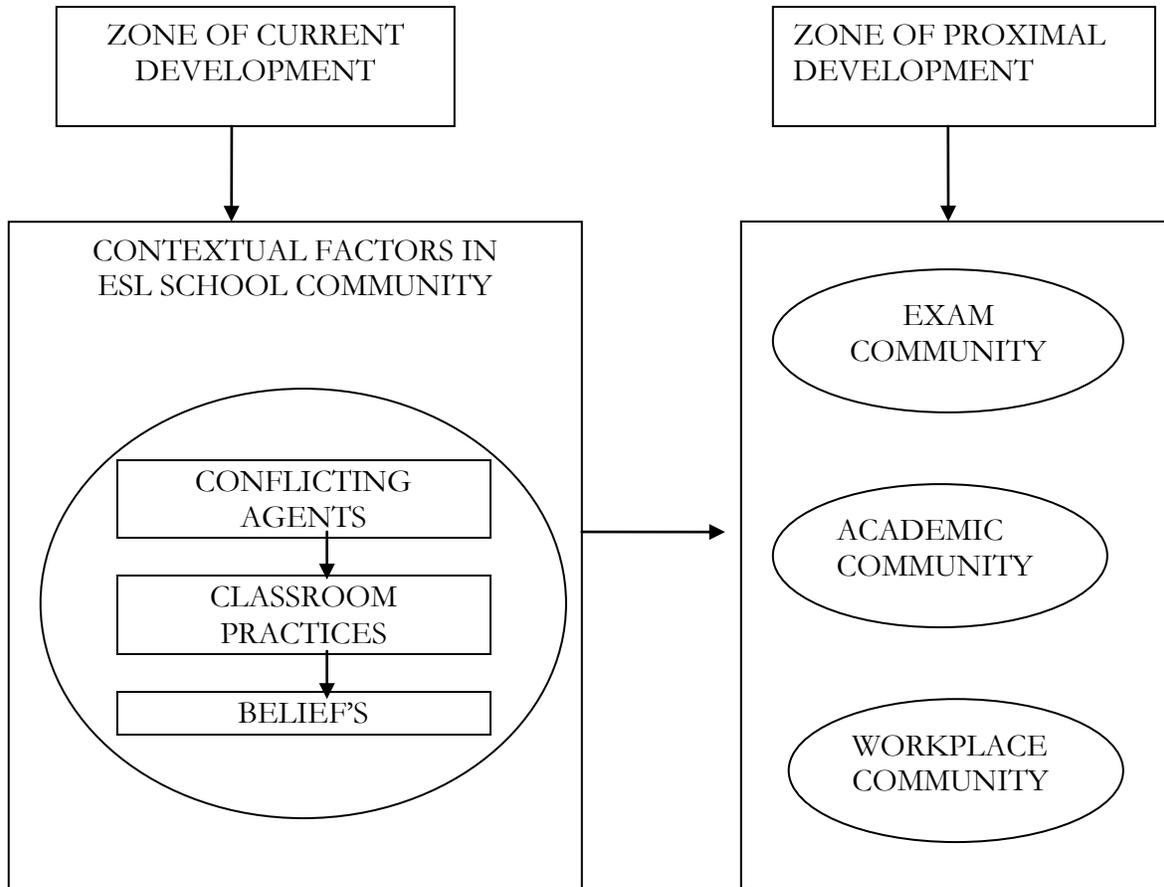
Figure 25: Malaysian native speakers in mainstream ESL classrooms

Figure 25 summarises the main argument of this chapter based on the cognitive process model, socio-cultural theoretical model and the community of practices model. As posited by the socio-cultural theoretical model, the MNSE entered a social setting in the mainstream ESL classroom with their zones of current development. As discussed in Chapter 5, the cognitive process model suggest that conflicting agents influenced classroom practices. The conflicting agents include the class teacher, administrative policies and the non-transparency of the SPM. The classroom practices which influenced the participants' beliefs about revision include writing instruction, feedback, sentence level reading, sentence level writing, planning and limited understanding of revision as a process of discovery. As a result of these beliefs, the participants wrote essays which were not judged favourably by public examiners. In relating this to the community of practice model, the MNSE did not gain membership to the exam community.

As the influence of contextual factors and writing for specific communities are not addressed by the cognitive process model, the following section discusses these findings from the perspectives of these theoretical models.

Vygotsky's theory (as discussed in section 2) seems to provide three theoretical perspectives: the importance of social interaction, the role of peers and finally the role of experienced adult in providing guidance to reach the zone of proximal development. The MNSE in this study viewed the self as the ultimate agent who constructs meaning by way of actively interacting with the ESL classroom learning environment. This is based on the notion that all of them adhered to classroom practices which included the emphasis on grammar. With this social setting in mind, meaning was constructed and conceptualized, that is, grammatical accuracy is of utmost importance in writing essays. The secondary data (interviews) suggests that there was hardly any interaction (in the writing process) among the participants of the study and the adult in the classroom. Neither writing progress nor feedback was discussed within the social environment of the classroom to provide the schemata required for writing to reach the ZPD. To the participants of this study, the ZPD represented the SPM – the end of high school Malaysian public examination. Thus, it seems reasonable to argue that the social interaction limited the participants constructs (schemata) to the requirements of an ESL classroom setting.

A second area that seems pertinent in constructing a schemata is the role of peers in a social setting. Vygotsky posits that competent learners should be paired with less competent ones so that the competent learners can elevate the latter's competence. The interview confirmed that the participants of this study played this role as competent writers by assisting less proficient writers. Unfortunately, they themselves were not provided peer support to elevate their own level's of writing competence. If the participants had been in a peer group by themselves, this would have created a rich social setting as the interactions and new learning experiences would have been internalised and seen in the verbal protocols. However, this was not the case.

Vygotsky also posited that experienced adults play an important role in the learning experience of the learners. It was suggested that adults passed on knowledge and skills that are vital for social interaction and for one to reach the ZPD. In relating this understanding to this study, it the teacher is expected to provide expert support on writing to enable the participants to move

beyond their current levels of skills and knowledge. However, the secondary data (evaluation of essay) seems to suggest that it was not possible to do this in the ESL classroom. The interview provides additional insights on the constraints of the teacher. Based on Vygotsky's theory, it would seem that an adult has to be well informed to provide learners the support needed to take them to their ZPD. Scaffolding did not take place in this classroom as the teacher was not well informed about the ZPD that the students had to reach i.e. SPM standards of writing. Based on the theoretical underpinnings of the socio-cultural theory, it seems reasonable to argue that the writing skills and knowledge of the participants of this study did not extend beyond their zones of current development.

The perspectives offered by the social cultural theory seem to provide additional theoretical understanding which refines the theoretical insights uncovered by the cognitive process model in this study. The importance of a rich social classroom setting and support to reach one's potential are key elements that one has to be given consideration in classroom instruction.

The community of practice theory provides additional theoretical insights. The MNSE became automatic members of the ESL class community based on their proficiency as acknowledged by the class teacher. However, their membership to the exam community was not favourably accepted by markers of public examination. It would also seem reasonable to argue that the participants of this study were not provided the support to elevate them to the zones of proximal development to gain membership to the exam, workplace and academic communities. .

6.3 Pedagogical Implications

The following section discusses some pedagogical strategies based on the insights provided by these models.

6.3.1. Instruction on revision strategies

Instruction on revision strategies has been reported to have a measurable influence on writing performance (Butterfield et al., 1996; Cresswell, 2000; Fitzgerald, 1992; Harper, 1997;

MacArthur, 1991; MacArthur, Schwartz, & Graham, 1991; Owston, Murphy, & Wideman, 1992; Perez, 2001; Sengupta, 2000; Wallace et al., 1996). A study by Wallace and Hayes (1991), for example, investigated the effects of instruction on global revision. In this study, a group of writers were given eight minutes of instruction – they were told that experts made more revisions and addressed global issues such as reorganizing the text and semantic changes. They were then asked to revise by considering a target audience and their revisions were compared with a control group. An analysis of global revision and the quality of the written texts, which were rank ordered by 2 markers (Spearman correlation .805), showed that the group which received the instruction was judged both to be of significantly better quality and to have included more global revision. The researchers concluded that with instruction, "the potential for doing better is there" (p. 64). It has also been suggested that process writing instructional practices are associated with high test scores. As an example, in a study that examined high school students, the students reported that they were constantly asked to write multiple drafts. These students achieved comparatively higher test scores (Greenwald, Persky, Campbell, & Mazzeo, 1999). The researchers also suggested that students who are trained in process writing may transfer their writing skills and strategies successfully to different demands of writing. One potential implication from this study is that instruction in revision does help writers focus on what to do. Perhaps, with constant instruction and practice in the classroom, revision strategies could become internalised and be part of one's topic knowledge.

A pedagogical suggestion would be to separate revision tasks (van Gelderen, 1997) into smaller tasks such as reorganizing text, considering audience, identifying coherence problems and reading for dissonance. These could be the focus of revision strategy instruction in the class so that meta cognitive knowledge would be available during writing tasks (Hayes, 1996: 26). This would mean that the Working Memory (WM) would have the knowledge base to retrieve and apply relevant procedures (Kellogg, 1994). As a result, revision strategies, just like any other skills, would become more fluent as they are practised. The 'fluency' of the WM memory has been suggested to "lighten the cognitive load and incite writers to more attentive reading of their texts" (Chanquoy, 2001: 20). This might provide more opportunities for a writer to focus on text generation and comprehension. Besides this, the teacher can also assign genre-based writing tasks to provide participants with a wide variety of writing experiences (Badger &

White, 2000; Hyland, 2003; Mesana, 2004). This would expose them to different types of writing and thus prepare them for multiple writing tasks.

Students need to learn how to pass exams and at the same time they also need to perceive writing as a tool "that can be useful to them throughout their professional and personal lives" (Raimes, 1991: 245). The 1991 Malaysian English syllabus stipulates that the aim of the English Language programme in schools is to "equip [students] with the skills and knowledge of English to communicate … and to provide points of take-off for various post-secondary school needs" (Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran Bahasa Inggeris Tingkatan 5, 1991: 1). The teacher needs to prepare the students for examinations and also ensure that they are "aware of the choices they make in revising their texts" (Harris, 2003: 577). As writing continues after one has completed high school or tertiary education, it seems essential they are aware of writing strategies to enable them to "build ladders, bridges and blockades outside the classroom" (Schneider, 2003: 373). Schools therefore need to place more emphasis on writing as it is a skill of great importance. As noted in the discussion, discovery by revision is an important aspect of writing as this reflects "a mind equipped to think" (National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, 2003: 11).

6.3.2. Assessment

Neither the marking band nor the expected standards of the SPM were made known to the class teacher and the participants. The teacher's perception of what good writing entailed did not meet the expectations of the examiners. A suggestion to overcome this would be to make the marking band and the expected standards transparent. Rubrics such as *relevant, original* and *very interesting* in the marking band are vague terms and need to be made specific and translated into achievable teaching and learning goals. The examiners expect paragraphs to be well planned and to have only one controlling idea to be considered cohesive. An interview with the examiners also indicated their preference for sentences that move away from the standard Subject-Verb-Object structure and used semi-colons and colons. The examiners suggested that they encouraged the use of idioms, idiomatic expressions, similes, metaphors. To the examiners, this indicates mastery of the language and thus, deserves higher marks. An examiner commented that she expects shades of meaning in words so that marks can be

awarded for the category of wide vocabulary. As an example, she would give more marks to someone who wrote *stroll* instead of *walk*. However, neither the class teacher nor the participants of the study were aware of these considerations. In Malaysia, the public examiners do not discuss the marking guide. This confidentiality about the rubric means that it is difficult for anyone to discuss or suggest changes to it.

Teachers who are appointed as examiners have the advantage of knowing the marking band and perhaps tailoring their writing classes to these standards. Unfortunately, the teacher in this study was not entitled to be appointed as an examiner as she has not taught English at the SPM level for at least three years. It seems logical that all teachers and SPM candidates should be aware of the marking band. Teacher modelling, the whole class marking a piece and scoring it using the marking band, students marking in peer groups or students self-evaluating their composition based on the marking band, may provide valuable insights to the teacher and the writers. This would certainly allow them to benchmark their textual quality. Major language examination boards such as TOEFL (http://www.toefl.org) and IELTS (http://www.elts.org) make the marking band and model essays easily accessible. TOEFL for example provides opportunities for the teacher and the students to practice and score writing via its on-line writing evaluation programme called Criterion (http://www.ets.org/criterion).

The reality for these participants is that their future is decided based on the grades that they get in the public examination and not on classroom assessment. However, one wonders if the assessment itself is a fair reflection of their writing abilities as an evaluation is made only on a final essay. Testing theorists have insisted that this form of standardised tests are limited in scope (Berlak, Newmann, Adams, Archbald, Burgers, Raven & Romberg, 1992; Smith, 1991; Wolfe, Bixby, Glenn, & Gardner, 1991) as they do not take into consideration the developmental stages of writers, classroom instruction and real writing. One can infer that an on-demand writing test betrays the writing process as it does not consider writing as a process. As such, questions have also been raised about the ethical nature of writing assessment (Hamp-Lyons, 2001; White, 1996) as writers are not given the opportunity to revise and receive feedback. In Malaysia, although the syllabus emphasises process writing, the examination is product oriented. As well, the participants do not have an opportunity for engaging in multiple drafts and processes by considering a different audience. Previous studies

on audience stated that it is important for writers to discover how words impact on the audience and this outside voice is vital in orchestrating the text. Finally, the drawback of on-demand writing tests is that participants are not given enough time to reflect and revise. This hinders them from producing quality written texts (Porte, 1996: 114). As on-demand writing deprive the writers of opportunities to revise and get feedback, it has been criticised for not providing an authentic assessment of writers in the real world.

An alternative would be to use portfolios to overcome the difficulty of assessing someone's writing skills based on one piece of writing produced in test conditions (Elbow, 1996: 84). A strength of portfolio assessment is that it has been reported to be more authentic assessment of learner centred achievement in writing (Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 2000; Linnakyla, 2001; Song & August, 2002; White, 1996) as the assessment is based on agreed goals. An example would be when a writer and teacher decide that the goal for two drafts is on producing effective introductions. A second strength of portfolios is that a collection of writing samples has greater validity than a single sample (Camp, 1993; Cumming, Kantor, & Powers, 2002; Dyson & Freedman, 1990; Elbow, 1991). Portfolio assessment supports the theoretical aspects of process writing by providing students with an opportunity for revision (Hamp-Lyons, 1994) and reflection. With adequate time to revise (Crawford, Helwig, & Tindal, 2004; Hamp-Lyons, 1994), writers can develop at their own pace. The class teacher can negotiate writing tasks (Linnakyla, 2001) based on the writers' abilities. Besides this, the teacher could allow the students to write on topics of their own choice as they have been claimed to result in texts that are well-informed (Schoonen & Glopper, 1996; Silva, 1997). It has also been suggested that topic knowledge may be necessary "if we hope to focus student revision on meaning rather than on surface features" (McCutchen et al., 1997: 674).

Another option would be to change the assessment criteria by providing grades for the process and the final product. The process of learning to write is important and the developmental stages of a writer should be considered in writing assessment. A final holistic assessment via public examination does not seem to do justice to the developmental stages of a writer (Hayes, Hatch, & Silk, 2000). This is based on the argument that writers benefit if they set their own writing goals. Some writers who are in the early stages of 'writing growth' may set goals that are not to the expectations of a public examination. As an example, the writing teacher and the

writer may decide that the individual goal of writing could be to describe appearances. Based on this claim, the "classroom teacher is arguably in the best position to make informed judgements" (Calfee, 1994: 6). This is based on the notion that evaluations of writers' competence as writers must be based on the support that had been made available. However, this suggestion can only be accepted if one who teaches writing has both theoretical and practical knowledge of writing as a process. The Centre for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing at the University of California, for example, considers classroom goals in its evaluation. One of the criteria it uses for evaluating writing is "how well the assignment appears to promote the achievement of the teacher's goals for student learning" (Matsumura, Patthey-Chaves, Valdes, & Garnier, 2002: 9). With this approach, a writing programme would develop the potential of the participants as writers based on goals agreed with their teacher.

As learning and writing tasks are often technology supported (Linnakyla, 2001), one could also consider asking students to prepare multimedia portfolios to demonstrate their abilities beyond their text-based confinements of ideas. As an example, a teacher can ask students to prepare a PowerPoint presentation of their main points to be shown to their peers. In a study that required high school students to make PowerPoint presentations on assigned topics (Perry, 2003), it was reported that 90% of the students were able to be creative, learned more and targeted their presentations to an audience. This strategy would be useful for the demands of writing for an examination and also for writing outside school. The teacher could also ask students to write e-mails on assigned topics. This form of writing has an immediate audience and there is a good chance that the audience will email back with questions, thus, encouraging interaction (Yancey, 2004). These would be a realistic goal in this school as it is well equipped with three computer laboratories.

6.3.3. Classroom feedback

The findings from this study suggest that the participants did not receive effective feedback. Research indicates that students improve drafts if they receive formative feedback. (Sitko, 1991; Wallace & Hayes,1991). In a study that investigated the relation between quality of written text and teacher feedback (Matsumura et al., 2002), texts were rated before and after feedback. The rating included assessment of learning goals and holistic rating. The researchers

analysed teacher feedback and reported that it focussed on content, organisation and mechanics. It was also reported that an emphasis on surface-level feedback resulted in a decreasing number of errors in students' writing. Feedback on content prompted writers to work on meaningful ideas. In another study, college students who were given positive teacher feedback over a semester were reported to have written improved essays. Their essays were reported to "contain much more information and specific details … were livelier … and were more focused" (Zak, 1990: 51). As such, it seems important that the teacher provides formative feedback to writers to help them develop their writing strategies.

As these students are considered proficient, the teacher could provide facilitative feedback. Facilitative feedback includes comments that include the teacher's opinion on the essay or positive remarks and suggestions on developing ideas. The feedback could be made to assist the writers to think critically and to view their work from different perspectives Facilitative comments have been reported to improve written products and encourage writers to "gain greater authority over their writing" (Zak, 1990: 40). This is based on the premise that teacher feedback would enable the students to evaluate and orchestrate their thoughts over subsequent drafts. However, this would only be beneficial if the teacher views feedback as a 'dialogue' (Troen & Katznelson, 1996) where she challenges these writers to think critically and provide sufficient guidance. Feedback needs to allow the writers to know how others are reading their texts and what impact their choice of words and strategies have on the audience. Feedback should also provide guidance on how to revise and strengthen the text. If teachers provide only evaluative feedback, as was the case in this study, students may perceive this as an indication that there is no necessity to critically review and reflect on their texts.

Another suggestion is for the teacher to structure activities in the class so that students can understand teacher comments. This is based on earlier studies which claim that students may not know how to respond to teacher comments (Saito, 1994) or may find the comments confusing (Arndt, 1993; Goldstein, 2002). There are also claims that students may feel uncomfortable with some aspects of feedback (Ravichandran, 2002). Given these research findings, it seems appropriate that the teacher discusses feedback with writers so that the writers can understand what is expected and also how to go about revising. With such

'dialogue', students would perhaps feel that they are given appropriate guidance not only to write for examination purposes but also to reach their potentials as writers.

6.3.4. Ability streaming

Considering that 16% (36 out of 246) of the SPM students in the school were native speakers based on a survey assisted by the class teacher, it seems realistic to suggest that 16% of these native speakers should be taken away from "mainstream [ESL] writing classes which [seem] … inappropriate" (Silva, 1993: 670) and be streamed according to their ability as language users. This would provide them with the opportunity to reach their potential as writers based on their proficiency. Language proficiency and writing expertise are two separate variables. With the assistance provided by more capable writers such as teachers, peers or parents, the participants' abilities as writers can be challenged and exploited.

Previous research supports the argument that ability streaming would benefit these participants. In a study that looked at the writing experiences of pre-service teachers, the participants reported their "appreciation for the support" (Street, 2003: 43) provided by their writing instructor. They found that this support from a capable writer validated them as developing writers and this helped them build their self-confidence. Similarly, a study that looked at peer tutoring in an intermediate classroom reported that in some circumstances, peer tutoring by able partners benefits learners to "enhance the quality of …learning" (Barnard, 2002: 67).

In terms of writing, it seems reasonable to infer that writing strategies can be scaffolded with the assistance of capable writers. Scaffolding refers to a process where a writer is provided temporary support and as the writer is able to use new skills independently, the scaffold is gradually removed (Bruner, 1983). Psychologists refer to the process of scaffolding as one of becoming a self-regulated writer (Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997). By being in peer groups based on abilities, the participants can "benefit from structured experiences" (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997: 205). There are suggestions that peers are better at scaffolding than the teacher because they are more accessible than the teacher (Barnard, 2002). This is based on the "opportunity to provide appropriate and amicable guidance and feedback at the time when most immediately needed" (Barnard, 2002: 68) In other words, peers provide an "immediate

audience and thus supply the most legitimate context for revision" (Chrenka, Balkema, Kuzma, & Vasicek, 1996: 5). Besides this, peer groups can provide an opportunity for the students to substantiate their points of view. This would provide opportunities for discovering new connections. Finally, the group can provide an opportunity for the writers to "sharpen and refine their thoughts" (Peterson, 2003: 267) and this could promote critical thinking.

The peer group could also provide opportunities for feedback and understanding of revision strategies. Both teacher and peer feedback has been suggested to cue writers to certain revision strategies, improve drafts (Beason, 1993; Sitko, 1991; Wallace & Hayes, 1991) and reduce errors in subsequent drafts (Chandler, 2003). Some studies suggest that inner circle native students prefer peer feedback as teacher's feedback has been found to "confuse the student's purpose in writing" (Sommers, 1982: 149). Others have suggested that teacher's comments are preferred over those of peers (Nelson & Carson, 1998; Zak, 1990; Zhang, 1995). In the case of the present study, the questionnaire suggested that all the native speakers of this study preferred teacher feedback. This was based on their opinion that the teacher would be able to provide information on the SPM standards. The participants had never received any peer feedback and as these students were sitting for the SPM, they viewed the teacher's opinion as authoritative. Unless this situation was to change, it is unlikely that peer feedback would be appreciated by these students.

It may be that the participants would benefit from being taken out of the mainstream ESL classroom and given guidance based on their writing ability. It would not be too difficult for school administrators to re-schedule classes based on the abilities of the writers. Even though the data from this case study cannot provide generalisations to other students in the classroom, it seems reasonable to speculate that other students may also benefit by ability streaming.

6.3.5. Reading and text generation

The students were not encouraged to read critically, develop and evaluate their ideas effectively. However, it is these skills that have been suggested to have a strong bearing on writing strategies (Breetvelt et al., 1994; Butterfield et al., 1994; Hayes, 1996). One approach would be to include "reader-protocol teaching" (Schriver, 1992). In this method, the teacher

provides faulty texts to students and asks them to predict readers' problems as they read the texts. This is done with the aim of enabling students to "solve text problems from the reader's perspective" (Schriver, 1992: 181). This approach would benefit the participants as it would provide them with an opportunity to evaluate text from a reader's point of view.

Students can also be trained in comprehension monitoring (Beal, 1996; Beal, Bonitatibus, & Garrod, 1990; Hacker, 1994). Comprehension monitoring requires students to evaluate the comprehensibility of a text by looking for specific types of text problems. Both the reader-protocol teaching and error-detection methods (Berninger & Swanson, 1994) have been reported to help writers identify "sources of ambiguity and to add information so as to clarify the text" (Chanquoy, 2001: 17). Revision is considered a step to evaluate and clarify one's ideas as perceived by readers. This approach may benefit the participants as it would provide an opportunity for their written text to be critically evaluated.

6.3.6. Teacher development

The findings from this study clearly suggest that the teacher lacked support to prepare students for SPM writing and beyond. As the teacher was not exposed to both the theoretical and practical aspects of writing, she was unable to provide sufficient support to these writers.

There is a need for the school administrators to provide professional development to support the teacher and to help improve classroom practice. This can be done by conducting in-service workshops on teaching writing The workshops could provide opportunities for the teacher to experience process writing, practice providing feedback and understand what constitutes good writing. Experienced teachers can also act as mentors and provide guidance to new teachers who teach examination classes. Thirdly, the teacher needs to be well-informed about the requirements and expectations of the examination, particularly the marking band. As well, administrators who are responsible for the English development programmes have to be informed about the writing process so that they would not "emphasize writing for linguistic forms" (Foong, 1999: 6) but provide support for the development of writing skills.

Additionally, teachers who are assigned to teach examination classes need to be provided with the kind of support to enable them to prepare students to meet the expectations of public examinations. Training in the writing process, marking according to the SPM expectations, a clear understanding of the rubrics for the marking band are essential if one is to function effectively. Practical marking sessions with examiners from Malaysian Examination Board seems essential to ensure that the teachers have a schemata of the required standards.

6.4. SPM 2002 results

All four participants scored an A1 in their SPM English. The final grade is based on the cumulative total marks the students received in different sections of the English paper (see section 1.1). This final grade indicates that the participants received a cumulative total of 90% marks for all components (listening, speaking, reading and writing) of the SPM English paper. The essay topics set for the exam indicated that there were no argumentative topics. All four participants confirmed that they chose the topic: "*Which country would you like to visit? Give reasons to support your choice*". They chose this topic as they felt that it was the easiest for them to write and score well on. However, one wonders if this is an indication of their ability to write beyond the classroom.

A study of 151 students who completed the SPM and sat for an IELT examinations supports the speculation that the participants may not be well prepared for writing tasks beyond the classroom. Students who completed their SPM were asked to work on academic modules of the IELT. It was reported that "the students' present schemata could not handle the unfamiliar contexts due to inadequate exposure in the curriculum" and that "students lacked the lexical resources and organisational skills required" (Celestine, Ming, Rajaratnam, & Ismail, 2003: 114). What this implies is that the Malaysian native speakers in this study and perhaps other proficient students are not provided with enough support to write critical, argumentative essays and reports that are valued at institutions of higher learning and the work place.

6.5. Reflection

6.5.1 The think aloud methodology

The think aloud method provides an opportunity for one to tap into the mental processes when participants are engaged in a task. As discussed in Chapter three, various measures were taken to ensure that issues of reactivity and veridicality were addressed in this study. One suggestion for future studies using this method is to give students more practice so that they become comfortable thinking aloud while doing a task. As was seen in this study, only four participants were able to provide rich verbalizations. Most of the other participants were not only hesitant but also had problems verbalising their thoughts. Perhaps, future studies could use a larger sample and provide more training opportunities in the use of this method. With a larger sample size, quantitative data could be collected to be support the qualitative perspective of the research.

It would also be practical to transcribe the verbal protocols immediately as this would enable the researcher to identify if participants are actually verbalising their thoughts or providing reasons for their thoughts. In this study, this was not possible because of the time frame and the lack of equipment to transcribe immediately. The data was collected in Malaysia but transcribed only in New Zealand. he researcher needs to have access to computing and transcribing facilities to facilitate immediate transcribing and analysis.

Another suggestion is to use wireless microphones to record the verbalizations. There were instances where participants' movements were restricted by wires. As an example, Shoba wanted to erase what she wrote and she had to take off the microphone and walk to another part of the room to get the eraser. When she returned, there was long pause before she continue with her verbalisations.

Future studies could also look into the possibilities of newer versions of recording/transcribing machines which are able to save transcriptions onto computers. An option to consider is the "Dragon Naturally Speaking Version 6" which allows one to code the

sound files directly without transcribing. Another device is the Sony portable Mini Disc Recorder: MZ-R900. One could record on mini disk tapes and then use "Sound Edit" to record on Quick Times files. The control bar allows one to forward and rewind the files. Positioning the control bar to the bottom right of the screen means that transcribing is not too much of an ordeal compared to the use of a foot pedal.

6.5.2 NVivo

The use of NVivo as a research tool seems to have been extremely useful in this research. While there were some hesitations on the capability of a computer software to assist qualitative data analysis at the initial state of this study, it seems obvious now that it was an extremely useful tool which enabled the researcher to focus on the thematic development of ideas and not be bogged down with the mechanical aspects of data handling.

A theoretical understanding of the specific form of qualitative research being done seems essential before one ventures into using NVvivo as a research tool. An understanding that qualitative research aims to look at patterns and trends would be useful when one contemplates using NVvivo. Additionally, the importance of memoing is crucial when one is utilising the grounded theory approach as NVivo utilises this function to assist the researcher in the conceptual development of emerging themes. It is strongly suggested that one familiarises with the demo-software before attending a workshop to understand the use of the software. The availability of a strong support group (www.qsrinternational.com/forum) makes learning NVivo a less formidable task.

Some other features of NVivo which can potentially lead to different forms of analysis include the ability of NVivo to provide text, document and node reports. NVivo is also able to intersection, union, negation, co-occurrence and sequence searches. All these features allow graphic representations and in-depth analysis of the emerging theoretical models. This seems to be a strong point of NVivo which supports the grounded theory approach by allowing one to check the consistency and comprehensiveness of the coding. These functions may also be utilised for research that aims to study correlations and inter relationships within variables as it is able to provide statistical data.

One of the main drawbacks of using this software is the tendency for one to over-code. As the software allows one to assign numerous codes to the same section of the data, the researcher may end up with hundreds of codes. This may pose a difficulty when one tries to find common patterns and trends.

6.5.3 Quantitative data

The question could be raised about whether quantitative data could have provided a richer understanding of the questions posed in this study. This section discusses some theoretical underpinnings of qualitative data to explain why quantitative data was not used in this study. It then puts forth an argument that future studies could use both quantitative and qualitative data to gain better understanding of the perspectives offered by naturalistic studies.

Qualitative methodology recognises that the "subjectivity of the researcher is intimately involved in … selecting methodologies and interpreting data" (Ratner, 2002). It is for this very reason that case studies which turned up evidence supporting personal, social and local factors are generally dismissed by some social disciplinary communities (Breuer, Mruch & Roth, 2002). The basis for such an accusation is that, qualitative research does not use standardized procedures and is thus looked down as research with low reputation. However, this is not true in the case of this study as it used the theoretical underpinnings of a well-established data driven approach to study the cognitive processes in writing. In fact, this form of qualitative research monopolised writing research and influenced pedagogical perspectives for the teaching and learning of writing for the past 20 years (Sasaki, 2004).

This study did not use quantitative data as its aim was to understand a complex human phenomenon by providing a rich description of the process; revision strategies within the writing process. Methodologically, this study used meaning centred approaches as opposed to variable-centred ones that are the features of a quantitative research. Quantitative research investigates variables within large data-sets, that is, a relatively small number of features of cases are studied across a large number of cases (Duncan,2003; Gorard &, Rushforth, 2004) . So the focus is on both the 'variable' and the relationships among the variables. This is done in

an effort to identify general patterns of co-variation. However, in the present study, data conceptualization, natural language and speech were used as data as opposed to the quantitative view of formal measurement of variables. Thus, this study did not seek to generalise the findings to a wider population but aimed to provide an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon or social unit" (Merriam, 1988, p.21). In other words, the aim of this research was to focus on "a single heuristic which illuminates the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study". (Merriam, 1988: 30)

Secondly, this study aimed to answer the "how" and "why" question as opposed to the "what" and "how much" questions that are usually posed by quantitative methods. Ragin (1994: 92) sums this up by saying that "most quantitative data techniques are data condensers and qualitative methods, by contrast, are best understood as data enhancers". Based on this understanding, it would seem that, the crucial feature of data treatment in this qualitative research was to search for unheard voices from the classroom. All these involved abstraction. As posited by Glaser (2002: 1), "Abstraction frees the researcher from data worry and data doubts, and puts the focus on concepts that fit and are relevant". What this means is that, the final product is conceptual and it provides an abstract distance from the data.

Thirdly, this study did not use quantitative approach because it is based on the grounded theory and data driven approach. Grounded theory is perspective based (Creswell, 2004). People's perspectives vary, amongst other things, on their theoretical orientation. While quantitative research seems to be focussed on summary characterizations and statistical explanations (Nash, 2005), qualitative research offers a complex description and tries to illuminate possibilities of interpretative research.

Additionally, as the number of samples in this study was only four, it limited the value of quantitative date for statistical analysis. Coding of the categories was done subjectively, that is, at times entire paragraphs were given a code while on other occasions, only phrases were coded. As this research was not set up to quantify the processes, frequency counts or any other statistical data would not have provided valid data for statistical analysis. Qualitative researchers avoid numbers when expressing data numerically to pre-emptively reduce their data (Ratner, 2002). As an example, the number of revision strategies can be easily reduced to a

number (i.e. stylistic features were seen more frequently than grammatical features) but if one wants to explore the many dimensions of these strategies, (as was the case in this study) then listening and abstracting the hidden "voices" with their complexities seem to be an appropriate research methodology. As such, the analysis in this study was flexible and adaptive to discovery. The link between revision strategies, contextual factors, education policies and literacy may not have emerged significantly if the data was interrogated and reduced to numbers.

Even though this study used only qualitative data, it does not invalidate the use of quantitative research for future studies. It would seem that qualitative and quantitative data may have a natural fit in the sense that when used together, they may give us more useful information than either one can. As an example, the study by Ransdell (1994) and Wallace (1996) as discussed in chapter two, utilised both qualitative and quantitative data to understand how classroom instruction had an effect on the revision strategies. In these mixed method studies, quantitative data was used to analyse and relate textual changes to revision strategies. Pedagogical implications were drawn based on the link between qualitative and quantitative analysis. One can also utilise the quantitative functionalities of a compute software such as NVivo to understand the patterning of certain topics, not as a way of generating 'results' but as one of a range of ways to identify relevant questions that can be helpful for the analysis.

In sum, this study utilised a qualitative approach to answer the research questions as its aim was to understand cognitive processes. This study acknowledges that both qualitative and quantitative data may provide additional interpretations for educational policies and writing instruction. It does not preclude quantitative data as a source of analysis but acknowledges that it would be useful for future naturalistic studies with a larger sample size.

6.6 Suggestions for further research

This study raises a number of questions about what we know and what we want to know about writing in general and revision in particular. The grounded theory approach allows one to begin with broad questions which then tend to narrow to more complex questions. Sometimes even the original questions change as was the case in this study. The original aim of this study was to understand the writing strategies of these participants and compare them with other

native speakers, but the protocols revealed additional issues. This study also indicated that although these students had had no instruction on revision, they already had some revision strategies.

6.6.1 Ethnographic studies

This study was done using a small sample size and with only one written task. Further research could be done using a larger number of students of varying ability levels or cultural backgrounds, with more, extended, ethnographic attention to the contextual details of classroom and family settings. Studies could also look at native speakers who are taught by teachers who are themselves native speakers. One can then evaluate it there is a relationship between the writing strategies taught by native speakers and non-native speakers. Participants could also be assigned a range of writing tasks to get a better understanding of task based writing strategies.

6.6.2 Intervention studies

Further research could be done to investigate the effects of intervention on revision strategies using the SPM marking band. Global revision strategies and practice in peer marking using the SPM marking band could be the focus of classroom instruction and investigation. One can also investigate teacher's understanding of the rubrics of the marking scheme. Studies of this nature can inform educational policies on assessment practices.

6.6.3 Studies on beliefs

There is a growing interest in understanding student beliefs (Kalaja & Barcelos, 2003; Maher, 2003). As this study suggests that the participants' beliefs were shaped by classroom instruction, outer circle native speakers' beliefs about writing would be worth exploring further. This could be related to cultural aspects. As an example, it would be theoretically interesting to find out if one's cultural background influences writing strategies. Studies could be done to identify the influence of cultural differences about native speakers from the

different circles. Similarly, writer's family background/expectations, education, influence of society and one's own motivation could be the subject of investigation to understand how these shape one's belief about writing.

6.6.4 Outer circle native speakers

Further research is also needed to explore how outer circle native speakers' potential as writers can be supported in mainstream ESL classes. As the MNSE forms a unique group, they deserve serious consideration in contrast to the mainstream learners. As suggested by the socio-cultural theory, they have to be provided expert guidance to extend their skills and knowledge about writing to reach their zones of proximal distance. This may have potential pedagogical implications as identified in this study. What this implies is that, perhaps only teachers who are well informed about the theoretical aspects of writing process could be assigned to support this group of writers as they are clearly language users in a language learning classroom. Additionally, comparative studies can be done between patterns of revisions strategies among inner circle and outer circle native speakers. As an example, it would be theoretically interesting to find out if Malaysian native speakers and New Zealand native speakers utilise similar strategies when writing an argumentative essay. Their consideration of an audience, planning, revising and also the influence of classroom instruction may provide theories for educational practices and literacy. It would also be theoretically interesting to examine how examiners from the different circles evaluate essays. Essays written by New Zealanders could be evaluated by Malaysian examiners and vice versa. This may perhaps provide insights into the issue of the varieties of English.

6.6.5 Writing communities

Another area of research would be to investigate if these native speakers are able to cope with tertiary writing or writing in the workplace. This is essential as the Malaysian English syllabus stipulates that the school should prepare students for various post-secondary needs. However, the findings of this study seem to suggest that this might be a problematic area. As suggested by the IELTS report (see section 6.3), some post-SPM students were not able to cope with the demands of academic writing. Since not all post-SPM students go on to pursue higher

education, it seems pertinent that one should also prepare secondary school students to fit into the "work place community". Perhaps, a needs analysis of the requirements writing in the workplace could be done and this could be translated into a writing curriculum.

6.7. Conclusion

Although the present study is by nature exploratory as it looked at only four case studies, it is significant because it combines the World Englishes framework and the writing process protocol analysis. This study suggests that the writing abilities of the Malaysian native speakers of this study were shaped by contextual factors. The present study elaborates and expands current knowledge on native speakers in a non-English dominant environment. Information from these areas may be vital in understanding native speakers and taking into consideration their potential as language users in teaching revision. It also provides a baseline for identifying how other outer circle native speakers adapt to the requirements of their communities.

Figure 25 summarises the findings, discussion and suggestions. The participants' beliefs about revision and the quality of writing were limited by conflicting agents and classroom practices, that is, the contextual factors. The concerns of the conflicting agents may be resolved if the teacher is better informed about the writing process, the expectations of the SPM are made transparent, alternative writing assessments are considered and administrative policies that support the teacher are put in place. Classroom practices could be improved by providing instruction on revision, placing greater emphasis on critical reading, providing formative feedback and providing support for the development of writers. This may perhaps change the native speakers' beliefs about writing and revising. These suggestions may develop their full potential as writers to fit into any writing communities.

Conflicting Agents

Well informed teacher
Transparency in SPM
Alternative assessment
Administrative policies

Classroom Practices

Native speakers'
beliefs about revision
and writing

Instruction on revision
Importance of reading
Formative feedback
Development of writer

Quality of writing

SPM
Writing beyond the classroom
(Writing communities)
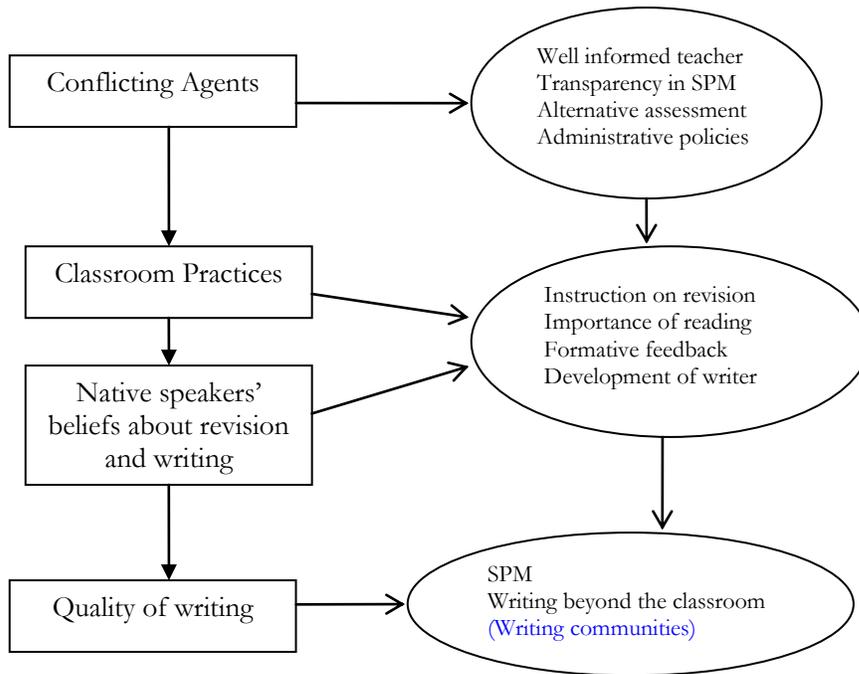
Figure 26: Malaysian native speakers beyond mainstream ESL classrooms

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APPENDIX 1: Modified SPM marking band

GRADE	MARKS GIVEN	USE OF LANGUAGE, SENTENCE STRUCTURE, PARAGRAPHING, VOCABULARY, ORIGINALITY AND RELEVANCE
A (Excellent)	36 - 40	Perfect or near perfect grammar Effective and varied sentence structure Very well-organised and well-linked paragraphs Wide and precise vocabulary Accurate spelling and punctuation Relevant, original and very interesting essay
B (Good)	31 - 35	A few minor mistakes in grammar Varied sentence structure Well-planned and well-linked paragraphs Wide vocabulary Nearly accurate spelling and punctuation Relevant, original and interesting essay
C (Fair)	26 - 30	Some minor mistakes in grammar Tendency to use only simple sentences Some paragraphs not well-linked Limited vocabulary A few errors in spelling and punctuation Essay may lack originality and relevance
D (Pass)	21 - 25	Minor and a few major mistakes in grammar Tendency to use simple sentences Paragraphs not well-linked Limited vocabulary Some errors in spelling and punctuation Essay lacks originality and relevance
E (Weak)	15 - 20	Many mistakes in grammar which hampers comprehension Tendency to use simple sentences Paragraphs not well-linked Very limited vocabulary Some errors in spelling and punctuation Essay lacks substance, originality and relevance
U (Unsatisfactory)	Below 15	Too many mistakes in grammar Too many simple sentences Very weak paragraphing Very basic vocabulary Inaccurate spelling and punctuation Essay shows very weak language ability, making it impossible for candidate to deal with question adequately.

Adapted from Lim, A (2004: 11-12).

COMPOSING STRATEGIES IN MALAYSIAN ENGLISH:
A PROTOCOL ANALYSIS
Information Sheet for Participants and Parents

Thank you for having volunteered to participate in this research project for a doctoral dissertation at the University of Otago, New Zealand.

The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of what young Malaysian writers do when they write, in terms of planning, the writing goals they set, the strategies they use, the kinds of revisions they make and their attitudes towards writing. Ten writers will participate in this research study.

The project will take place between September 10th and October 30th and you will meet with the researcher for at least 5 times at a mutually agreed to time. Each meeting will last about an hour. You will participate in a briefing about the composing aloud technique of writing. You will attend training and practice sessions to become familiar with this method of composing. You will then be asked to participate in a writing task. While writing, you will be asked to think-aloud and to say everything you are thinking during writing. These think-aloud sessions will be audio taped. The audiotapes will provide the data for analyzing and understanding how Malaysian writers of this study compose. You have the right to review the audiotape and the transcriptions and may request that all or any portion of the tapes be destroyed. Finally, you will participate in an interview to tell the researcher about your writing experiences. You will also be asked to provide some basic demographic information, such as age, hobbies, use of English at home and outside, reading habits, writing experiences etc. All such information will be treated in total confidence.

The results of this study may be published but any data included will in no way be identified and linked to you. In the event that you begin to feel hesitant or uncomfortable in any way about your involvements, you are free to withdraw without causing offence. It is understood that you will not be required to share your reasons for withdrawal.

The researcher is the only person who will have access to the tapes. It may also be necessary for the supervisors to inspect some part of the data. At the end of the project, any personal information will be destroyed immediately except that, as required by the University of Otago's research policy, any raw data on which the results of the project depends will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed.

I have read the information sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions regarding this project have been answered satisfactorily. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I understand that:

My participation in the project is entirely voluntary;

I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without disadvantage;

All personal data will be kept strictly confidential, and the audio tapes will be wiped at the conclusion of the project;

The results of the project, including some sections of the transcripts, may be published but my anonymity will be preserved at all times.

I agree to participate in this research project and affirm that I will give my fullest cooperation during the course of this study.

Name of participant:

Signature:

Date:

PARENTAL CONSENT

I have read the information sheet regarding this research and give my consent for my son's/daughter's participation.

Name of parent:

Signature:

Date:

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Linguistics Programme of the Communication Studies Department of the University of Otago, PO Box 56, Dunedin, New Zealand.

PARTICIPANT DATA
CONFIDENTIAL

PERSONAL DETAILS
1   Name:
2   Age:
3   Sex:
4   Place of birth:
5   Current address:
6   Phone number:

FAMILY BACKGROUND
1   Father's occupation:
2   Mother's occupation:
3   Number of brothers:
4   Number of sisters:
5   You are sibling no:

LANGUAGE BACKGROUND
1   Language spoken since birth:
2   What other languages do you speak at home:
3   What language do you use when you are with your friends:
4   What is your favourite subject:
5   Do you go for any additional English classes?
6   Do you take part in any other activities where Eng is used? Explain briefly.

READING BACKGROUND

1   What magazines/newspapers do you read?
2   How often do you read them?

This section of the questionnaire aims to find out about your writing experiences. Please circle the number that applies to you.
 1 strongly agree **2** agree **3** unsure **4** disagree **5** strongly disagree.

1	I usually plan what I am going to write first	1 2 3 4 5
2	I prefer to write a composition on my own topic	1 2 3 4 5
3	I like pre-writing activities like brainstorming and discussion	1 2 3 4 5
4	I pay a lot of attention to the intro, body and conclusion	1 2 3 4 5
5	I always reread to check for unity in the composition	1 2 3 4 5
6	I always reread to check for grammar and spelling	1 2 3 4 5
7	I always rewrite to improve my ideas	1 2 3 4 5
8	I always rewrite to improve the neatness of my work	1 2 3 4 5
9	I usually believe I am writing for someone	1 2 3 4 5
10	I cater my writing to my reader's level	1 2 3 4 5
11	I usually practice my ideas by doing many drafts	1 2 3 4 5
12	My first draft is usually my final piece	1 2 3 4 5
13	I have difficulties searching for the right word	1 2 3 4 5
14	I keep a record of my mistakes in my writing	1 2 3 4 5

15	I am able to express my ideas well in written English	1 2 3 4 5
16	I find it difficult to explain my ideas	1 2 3 4 5
17	I find it easier to express my ideas by speaking	1 2 3 4 5
18	I enjoy writing	1 2 3 4 5
19	My writing does not match real good writing	1 2 3 4 5
20	My first paragraph has to be perfect before I continue	1 2 3 4 5
21	I prefer to express my ideas in writing	1 2 3 4 5
22	At times, I find it difficult to start writing	1 2 3 4 5
23	I start writing when I have found the right word/phrase	1 2 3 4 5
24	I usually get stuck in my writing	1 2 3 4 5
25	I feel my teachers look down on my writing	1 2 3 4 5
26	I take a lot of time to start writing	1 2 3 4 5
27	I think my writing is good	1 2 3 4 5
28	I find it difficult to organize my ideas	1 2 3 4 5
29	I write a sentence, cancel it and then start all over	1 2 3 4 5
30	Each sentence must be perfect before I move on	1 2 3 4 5

WRITING BACKGROUND

1   Besides writing in school, what other kinds of writing do you do? How often do you do this. Explain briefly.
2   Have you attended any writing workshops/courses? Give details.

3   How did you learn to write in English? (Tick as many as that apply)

a) I read and imitate examples from novels/books/magazines   [ ]
b) I read and imitate model essays   [ ]
c) I listen to my teacher's lessons on writing   [ ]
d) I share and discuss my writing with my friends   [ ]
e) I write letters to people outside class   [ ]
d) I write journals/diary entries regularly   [ ]

TEACHER'S INFLUENCE

1   How does your teacher help you before any composition is due. Explain briefly.
2   Which of the following do your teachers emphasize when they mark your papers. (Tick as many as that apply)

a) vocabulary   [ ]
b) clarity of ideas   [ ]
c) correct grammar and spelling   [ ]
d) length of composition   [ ]
e) neatness and handwriting   [ ]
f) organisation of ideas   [ ]
g) using lots of examples   [ ]
h) length of composition   [ ]
i) others (please specify)   [ ]

Demonstration

What is forty three times forty four?

Ok … let's see… forty three times forty four. Ok I have to do this mentally. Uuh forty three and and forty four. Let's see, if I put forty three on top and forty four at the bottom that would .. well, that's how my Maths teacher taught me. Ok so three times four is twelve. So I write two and carry forward one. Four times four is sixteen. Now I have to add one and that aah … makes it seventeen. So that answer would be aah..aa.. One hundred and seventy two. No no… no I think I got it wrong. It should be one seven two on the first line. The next section … oh God… how do I do this now.. Can I use a calculator … ok let's see. Four times four would be sixteen …..no no this is not working … can't remember …. Is there a paper or pen around …

Warm up exercise

1. What is 87 x 46
2. What is 99 x 35

APPENDIX 6: Second warm up session

Task 1

1. What is 88 x 66
2. What is 56 divided by 12

Task 2

You are driving alone and it is raining heavily. You come to a bus stop and you see three people waiting for the bus. One of them is an old lady. The other person is your old childhood friend who once saved you from trouble. The other person is the man of your dreams. You car can take only **one** person as there are a lot of heavy things on the back seat of your car. Who would you choose?

APPENDIX 7: Sample protocols, written text and coding

Extract from Shoba's 3rd draft

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Written text	Verbal protocols	Coding of protocols
3rd draft At the end of modern technology, most people think that it is better to live in big towns and cities than living in country sides. **Final draft** Most children think that it is better to live in big towns and cities than living in countryside.	**Extract from final revision** At the end of modern technology most people think that it is better to live in big towns and cities than living in the countryside. What I mean by at the end of modern technology? Actually I find it … nobody knows when is the end of modern technology … maybe I should just cancel this line. Ok. I think it is not very good to be written like this – they won't like it. Just start with most people think … it is better to live in big towns and cities than living in countryside. Yeah, then in the children's opinion … wait … do you think … you see … you see I've been talking … here I have said most people suddenly in the second line told you in the children's opinion. Ok see I think it will be better if I say here … its children's opinion … here you know … so most children think it is better to live in big towns and cities than living in the countryside. In their opinion, it is better ok. Most children … children … no maybe most adults maybe teenagers yeah, teenagers, you see but why … teenagers opinion is needed here when I am talking about the effects on children right?	Rereading Audience Audience Audience Coherence Audience Audience Audience

First draft

During the era of modern technology, most people think that it is better to live in big towns than in country sides. In their opinion, they think big towns have better facilities and education for their children but they do not see the disadvantages of living in a big town. If I was given a chance to choose whether to stay in the countryside the or big town, I would prefer to stay in the countryside

This is because living in the countryside ensures a peaceful life. The preserved natures help us to their. In the country sides, children do not undergo stress and pressure in school or from parents. On the other hand, in big towns, teachers and parents push their children so much that they their children lose interest in studies and start to hate school. Besides that the serene scenery of the preserved nature gives us peace of mind and calmness. By living in the countryside our children will know how to appreciate and enjoy the creation of Mother Nature.

The country sides are also free from pollution due to the lack of industrial developments. The rapid progress of industrial areas in big towns release dangerous gases and contaminated remainders into the atmosphere, lakes and rivers. These remainders and gases can cause cancer and serious illness to human beings. So, living in the countryside, ensures good health

Other than that interaction between neighbours is important many people who are living live in big towns forget the importance of a neighbour. They hardly have time to acknowledge each another because they are very busy working. On he contrary, people in the country sides are very close their neighbours. They usually have gathering and organisations to build up a closer relationship. This creates a harmonious society.

Obviously, there are more advantages of living in countryside than in a big town. I would disagree with those who say that the countryside has no proper schools public amenities. The government has put in a lot of effort to fulfil the needs of people in the countryside. As a conclusion, I would say it is better to live in the countryside than in a big town.

Second draft

At the end of modern technology, most people think that it is better to live in big towns and cities than living in countryside. In their opinion, big towns have better facilities like offer better education for their children examples tuition centres, computer centres and martial art classes but they do not see the disadvantages of living in a big town. If I was given a chance to choose whether to sty in the countryside or a big town, I would prefer to stay in the countryside.

This is because living in the countryside ensures peaceful life. Children do not undergo stress and pressure in school or from their parents. On the other hand, in big towns, teachers and parents push their children so much that kids lose interest in studies and start to dislike school into my own experience. Besides that, the serene scenery of the preserved nature gives us peace of mind and calmness. By living in the countryside our children will know how to appreciate the creation of Mother Nature.

Countryside is also free from pollution due to the lack of industrial developments. The rapid progress of industrial areas in big town release dangerous gases and contaminated remainders into the atmosphere, lakes and rivers. Clean environment in the countryside ensures good health.

Other than that, interaction between neighbours is important but many people who live in big towns forget the importance of a neighbour. They hardly have time to acknowledge each other because they are busy working. On the contrary, people who live in the countryside are very close to their neighbours have closer relationship with their neighbours] are very close to their neighbours. They usually have social gatherings to build up a closer relationship. This creates a harmonious society.

Obviously, there are more advantages of living in countryside than in a big town. I would disagree with those who say that the countryside has no proper schools and public amenities. The government has put in a lot of effort to fulfil the needs of people in the countryside. As a conclusion, I would say that it is better to live in the countryside than in a big town

Final draft

Most children think that it is better to live in big towns and cities than living in country sides. In their opinion, big towns offer better facilities like tuition centres, computer centres and martial art classes but they do not see the disadvantages of living in a big town. If I was given a chance to choose whether to stay in the countryside or in a big town, I would prefer to stay in the countryside.

Living in the countryside ensures peaceful life. In big towns, teachers and parents push their children so much that kids lose interest in studies and start to dislike school. For example, during my stay in a rural area, school was fun. Teachers gave very little homework and learning was a joyful procedure. I spent most of my time playing and enjoying myself but when I moved into a big town, things were different. In school, teachers push their students so much so they will be able to perform well in school. Students were very competitive and this pressured me a lot. To keep up with the rebellious ones, I had to go for tuition classes and other classes because facilities were available.

Besides that, the serenity of nature gives us peace of mind and calmness. For example, when you take a walk in the countryside, you can hear the birds chirping, rivers flowing by and inhale the clean air. Meanwhile, the rapid progress of industrial areas in big towns release dangerous gases and dust into the atmosphere, lakes and rivers Gases and dust from these factories can cause lung diseases a serious illness. Clean environment in the countryside makes it a better and safer place to live.

Other than that, interaction between neighbours is important but many people who live in big towns forget the importance of a neighbour. The hardly have time to acknowledge each other because they are busy working. On the contrary, people who live in the countryside are very close to their neighbours. They usually have social gatherings and get together to build up a closer relationship. For example, during the festive season or a special occasion, the neighbours will lend a hand to the host. This creates a harmonious society. Children who grow up in a loving environment will definitely be more caring.

I would disagree with those who say that the countryside has no proper schools and public amenities. This is certainly proved wrong because many of Malaysia's leaders, politicians and successful businessmen are kid who studied in countryside schools. The government has also put in a lot of effort to fulfil the needs of people in the countryside. For example, many clinics and schools are built and public transportations are provided for those who live in the countryside. As a conclusion, I would say that it is better to live in the countryside than in a big town.

First draft

Born and bred in a small moderate town near the port, I always wanted to stay in a big city. But now, as time passes, I truly feel much happier living here in my lovely town. I can say that my town is like a little modernised countryside.

In the countryside, everyone knows each other. From children to old folks, everyone have friends. Children here learn to treasure their friendship and even are more cooperative and understanding at a young age. In the city, earning money is more important than making friends. Even neighbours do not have time to say hello.

Children in the countryside are more active as there are a lot of activities such as cycling, swimming and kiting. Climbing trees and eating juicy fruits in the park is much better than watching television at home. Children in the countryside have more precious childhood memories. Active children produce smarter brains. In the countryside, children are usually smart in handling things around them. In short, we can say they are independent. A child from a big town finds it difficult to repair a cycle as they always depend on a mechanic. But a countryside child can easily repair a cycle

Crime rate in the city is increasing day by day. It is sad to say that most crimes are done by youths. Young children are easily influenced. They like to experience new things and adventures which lead them into trouble. Children in the countryside have less influence as the crime rate there is not high.

It is always said that city kids are better in adapting themselves into a world of Information Technology. This is not completely true as children in the countryside also have the same facilities like the internet. They too keep themselves on par with the success of the modern world.

Children are like a piece of white cloth. Parents are the ones who are going to paint the cloth. The pattern and the colour fully depend on parents with the help of teachers, friends and surroundings. It is an undeniable fact that countryside produces children who are stronger physically, mentally, emotionally, socially and religious

Second draft

I was raised in countryside at the foot of Frasier's Hill. It was my mum's birthplace and we had a huge old family house on a lad of more than two hectares. I had my brother with me till he came six as he followed by parents back to the city. The house of the 60's was a colonial style brick single story bungalow.

I stayed with my uncle cousins and great grandmother who is a very active lady till today. At 88, she rears chickens, ducks, geese, turkeys, goats and a dog. I had a great fun, playing trick with this animals, until that once. I got chased by an angry goose all around the house. Not to mention, I was a little mischievous, from adding water into the dog's food to mixing the female and male goats and hiding the newly hatched chicks in the dog's kennel.

When I was six, my parents brought me back to the city as I had to start schooling. I missed all the happy times, days I spent back in the good leaving those jolly days was a great challenge for me. As I started schooling, going for tuitions, sports and many other activities I got adapted to the city lifestyle. Though I did not go back to my family home during holidays, I did not really enjoy myself as much as I did when I was young. As the clock ticked, seconds, minutes, hours and years past, I was more into a city life so much so I did not know what to do when I visited my family home. I just spend my time lazing around, watching news, reading books and magazines.

Today, at 16, I am happy to be living in a city full of excitement and challenges. Living here, I had learnt many things from art to sports, languages, music and technology. I hope to further my studies in a university.

 Friends were uncountable. I had many that sometimes I forgot their names. We played all kinds of games from hide and seek, and to 'masak-masak'. A game which interests me the most was the police games. We had paper guns, handcuffs and then started chasing other friends who acted as the bad crooks.

Seeing the changes in my siblings and I knew for once that my parents did the right choice to bring me to the city at the age of six. I am proud to say that I enjoyed my childhood days in the countryside. Those memories will never be forgotten

My time to learn and catch up things. It is better for children to stay in the countryside than a big town until it is time for them to learn more about the world. Then, it is of course a big town would be better.

Final draft

I was raised in countryside at the foot of Fraser's Hill. It was my mother's birthplace and we had a huge old family house. The house of the 60s was an old colonial style brick, single store bungalow which sat on two acres of land which seemed like a village to me as a child – and shrunk rapidly as I grew up.

I stayed with my uncle, cousins, grandmother and my very active lovely grandmother. At 88, she rears chickens, ducks, geese, turkeys, goats and a dog. I was a little mischievous. From adding water into the dog's food to mixing up the female and male goats and hiding the newly hatched chicks in the dog's kennel, I had great fun playing with all this animals. Once, I got chased by an angry goose all around the house. Friends were uncountable. I had so many that sometimes, I forgot their names. We played all kinds of games from hid and seek to 'masak-masak'. The games which interest me most were the police game. We made paper guns, handcuffs and then started chasing other friends who acted as the bad crooks.

When I was six, my parents brought me back to the city as I had to start schooling. Leaving those jolly days was a great challenge for me. As I started schooling, going for tuitions, sports and many other activities, I got adapted to the city lifestyle. Mornings, there was school; afternoon, tuitions; evening, piano, dance and endless of different classes; Sunday, shopping. Thought I did go back to my family home during holidays, I did not really enjoy myself as much as I did when I was young. As the clock ticked, seconds, hours and years past, I was more into the city life so much so I did not know what to do when I visited my family home.

Today, at 17, I am happy living in a city full of excitement and challenges. Living here, I had learnt a variety of knowledge, art, sports, languages, music and technology. I hope to further my studies in a university.

I am proud to stay that I enjoyed my childhood days in the countryside. Those are memories which will never be forgotten. Seeing the changes in my siblings and I knew for once that my parents did the right choice to bring me to the city at the age of six, as that was my time to learn and catch up things. It is better for children to stay in the countryside than a big town until it is time for them to learn more about the world. Then, a big town would be better for them.

First draft

Lush green hills, fresh water cripst air … where is this place? Well, no other than the country-side. A country side is a place situated away from the hustle and bustle of the city. It's surrounding are beautiful and filled with peace and tranquillity. The sight of yellow paddy fields and small "kampong houses enrich its beauty. Not forgetting the rooster which is a classic – all time alarm clock and the chirping of birds early in the morning. Thus, this place, called a country-side is definitely better for children to stay in.

So, what can the country-side offer for children? First and foremost, the country side provides a better environment for children to grow up in. As we all know, the air and water in the countryside is far better than in the town side. The air which one breathes in plays an important role in one's health. Thus, in the countryside it is more unlikely for a child to fall sick frequently or suffer from diseases like asthma. Water too is another important factor to one's health. Clean water is vital for living. In the town, the water which runs out from the tap is usually brown in colour or otherwise known as "mud" water. On the other hand, the countryside provides cleaner water. Indirectly, this enhances a child's health. The third element for a living is food. In the countryside, most people own their own animals such as hens or goats and they also plant their own vegetables. Thus, it is much safer to be eaten compared to the ones bought in the market. A town or on the other hand, usually either buys the raw food from the market which can be contaminated with pesticides. Thus, food in the countryside is much safer and cleaner to be eaten compared to those in the town.

Everyday, we hear and read of stories of children getting raped, abducted. Where does this all usually take place in? The town. In the country-side, people are friendlier and everyone has a strong religious background. Thus, crimes even small ones like robbery hardly take place. The town, on the other hand is infested with crime. People, who live in the town, do live in fear. Their children can be left freely to do all kinds of outdoor activities with no fear of their safety. Thus, children who live in the country-side are more independent and brave compared to that town.

Money! Money! Money! These are the only word which runs through the heads of parents who live in town. Parents who live in town tend to work for longer hours and put their jobs before their family. They are more materialistic and always wanting more. Their children are usually sent to day car centres or left alone with the maids all day. This scenario hardly takes place in the country-side. Parents who bring up their children in the country-side have more time to spend with them. Their jobs usually are not an 8.00 to 4.00 pm type and this gives them more time with their children. As a result of this, the parent-child bond will grow stronger. It is undeniable that a child who comes from a family where he or she has a good relationship with their parents will be a better individual in life. Thus, it can be said that bringing up a child in the country-side will foster better relationship between parents and children.

Mass media has taken the world by storm in the recent years. Magazines, advertisements, and movies play an important role in the process of raising a child. In the town-side, children are likely to be more expose to all these forms of mass media. It is quite easy for a 10 year old to obtain magazines or posters which can be very un-educational. Besides that, children in the town do not have adult supervision all the while. Thus, they can get influenced easily and tend to stray off. In the country-side, un-educational material such as magazines is hard to obtain. So children who live there usually spend their free time by reading books or laying outdoors. So it is definitely easier for a parent to build up a good character in his or her children without many distractions from the surroundings

Exams are a part of life where everyone goes through, be it if you are in the country-side or even in the town-side. Exams have a great impact on children and how one handles it depends on the way and the surroundings one is brought up in. Children who live in the country-side usually find exams as something normal. They do not get stressed or overworked up before an exam. Children in the town often go through a tremendous amount of stress and often get nervous breakdowns once the exams are approaching. Why is that so? In the town, children face a lot of pressure from parents and also friends. Parents in town are more competitive and each wants their children to excel. Peer pressure on the other is caused due to friends. In the countryside, parents and friends do not put much pressure on an individual. Parents usually just advice their kids and they do not demand for good results. Thus, the children who live in the country side face less stress which can be good for a healthy living.

Growing up in the country-side or the town side is very individual. Everyone may have their own opinions. Both the places have its pros and cons. Nevertheless, children should be brought up in the countryside because, the country side has a lot to offer and can actually provide better people in the physical and emotional aspect. So, it is an undeniable fact that children should stay in the countryside.

Second draft

"Lush green hills, fresh water, cripst air … where is this place? Well, no other than the countryside. Countryside is a place situated away from the hustle and bustle of the city. It is a beautiful place, with scenic views and filled with peace and tranquillity. Clear streams, golden-yellow paddy fields and cute little "kampong" houses are one of the very many interesting things one can see in the country-side. Not forgetting the rooster which is a classic all time alarm clock and the chirping of the birds early in the morning. This amazing place is definitely better for children to stay in.

Why is the countryside better for children compared to the town? First and fore most, the countryside provides a better environment for children to grow up. As we all know, the important element which are vital for life such as the air and water are far better compared to in town. In the countryside, it is more unlikely for a child to fall sick frequently or to suffer from diseases such as asthma because the air and water is much cleaner here. Indirectly, this enhances a child's health. As a result of this, he or she will be very much healthier and stronger compared to children who live in town. This is because they are frequently exposed to polluted air and "mud" water. Another element which is important to life is food. In the countryside, most people rare their own animals or plants. Thus, these foods are free from antibiotics and pesticides which make it safer to be eaten by young children. On the other hand, people who live in town usually eat outside food or buy raw food from the market which could be contaminated. Children in towns also love fast food and this can affect their health. So it can be said that food in the countryside is safer to eaten by young children be healthier.

Everyday, we hear and read of stories of children getting raped kidnapped and abused. Where does all this take place in? The town. In the countryside, people are more god fearing and religious studies are very important. Thus, small crimes even like robbery hardly take place. The town on the other hand is infested with crimes and bad hats. Walking your dog in the evening too can be very dangerous. Because of all these crimes, parents in the town tend to be more protective over their children and this can create rebellious children. Parents confine their children to their homes and detest them from going out. In the countryside, none of these things take place. Children and parents live a life free from fear. Thus young children can go out and play all day long without their parents worrying about them. In the long run, children who are given more freedom and who have explored life will prevail and be more independent.

Money! Money! Money! The only word which runs through the mind of all parent in town side. Parents who live in the town tend to work for longer hours. They are very materialistic and always never satisfied with life. They have absolutely no time for their kids and leave them all the day in day care centres or with their maids. This is not a very conducive way to bring up a child. This scenario hardly takes place in the countryside. Parents in the country side spend more time with their children. They do a lot of fun things together and appreciate one another. As a result, of this, the parent-child bond grows stronger and it is a fact that a child with a better relationship with his or her own parents will be more successful individuals in life.

Mass media has taken the world by storm in the recent years. Magazines, movies, poster and all the other stuff play an important role in raising a child. In the countryside, it is quite hard for one to obtain magazines posters. This reduces the chances for a child to get influence by these forms of mass media. So, it is easier for a parent to mould their child to their liking without much disturbance from the outside world. In the town, even 10 year old can posses his or her own pornographic picture and this makes it very difficult for parents to control their children.

Exams are a part of life where each and every individual goes through, be it if you live in the town or in the countryside. The only difference is how you handle the pressure of examinations. Children who live in the country-side, tend to be more relaxed and more at ease when exams are approaching whereas town children usually go through a serious of nervous breakdown. Why is this so? In the town, children face a lot of pressure especially from their parents. Parents in towns are extremely competitive and each one wants to do better than the other. Peer pressure is also on the rise in the towns. More and more children are falling victims to peer pressure. In the countryside, parents are more understanding and the competitive feeling is less. It goes the same for peer pressure. It is very much less in the countryside. So a child can live a life free from stress and pressure in the countryside.

Growing up is a wonderful experience and childhood is an amazing part in life which one will never get back. So it is best for one to bring up their children in a place where they feel it is best for them. Both the countryside, and the town has its pros and cons, but is an undeniable fact that a better place for children to live in is the countryside as one will have more to gain than loose.

Third draft

Dad, look at that. Is that paddy-fields?" I asked enthusiastically. I was so taken back to see bright, golden-yellow paddy fields, stretched for miles and children, like me, running freely through it with their kites. The whole scene was just scenic. I am in a village which is situated around 300 kilometres from Kuala Lumpur, the town I live in. This weekend, my father decided to take us to his hometown and to show us what life is in the countryside.

"Cukooco koo …!Cukoocukoo…! The sound of the rooster corcking awakened me. When I jumped out of bed, I realized that I never be awakened by a rooster, it is always by an alarm clock. Well, what can I say the rooster is the classic all-time alarm clock right? As I got ready to go for breakfast, I could not help notice the clean, cool water, running smoothly down the tape. It was so clean; you could see your reflection looking right back at you. Water here is definitely much safer for children. I remembered the time when I think drinking water directly from the tape here is not going to harm me. That was not all. The best of the countryside was yet to come.

As I walked out of the "kampong" style house, the aroma of the fresh cut grass lingered in the air. The air was better than in the town. "Well, if the air and water here are so clean and fresh, is it not more unlikely for the children here to fall sick frequently or suffer from diseases such as asthma?" I asked my father. "Well, yes it is true. Children here do not fall sick easily and are very much healthier and stronger compared to you, town kids," replied my dad with a huge grin on his face. I thought that is great to reduce your chances of falling sick because, who likes to be sick anyway and I usually catch a flu and fever on an average of two months once. It is a hazard.

After taking a stroll with my father, he then took me to a playing field. While he was playing football with my younger brother, I talked with some of the other kids who were at the playground. I asked them if their parents were with them in the playing field and they told me that they just came out by themselves. That shocked me. Back home, without an adult, I talked to them a little bit more and I understood that it is perfectly safe for a child to run free and explore the world out there without much hesitation. I told them that in the town it was very different. Because of the crime rate shooting up everyday, parents tend to confine their children to their homes and detest them from going out. This will eventually create rebellious children. "Oh, I am so sad for you." One of them told me that and I began to feel this tinge of sadness coming over me. I felt that my brother and I would be the happiest if we could switch places with any of the kids here.

That night, my grandmother cooked for us a splendid dinner. Dinner was so good and about eighteen of us, including all my cousins sat down an ate together. "Dad, there is a Liverpool Manchester match on the television now. Can I have dinner later or can I take my food to the hall," my little brother asked my father. Even before my dad could say anything my uncles, aunts, cousins and grandparents were very upset. They thought it was rude to ask such a question when everyone is suppose to have dinner together. My grandfather then explained over dinner that over here in the country sides, everyone has at least dinner together. It

strengthens the bond between parents and children. He too said that in the countryside, parents spend a lot of time with their children and make sure that they get very emotional need that they deserve. Parents here do not shower their children with too many materialistic things and show their children the true meaning of life. My grandmother then chipped in about how my grandfather would take all his eight children fishing before the school every year and how all the children looked forward to it. She too said, she noticed that parents in the town are more job-orientated. Their main priority was their job and spends very little time with their children. I could see my mother and father blushing all over … Oh well!!

After dinner, my mother was nagging me to go and study as I will be sitting for SPM. Without making much fuss I excused myself and retrieved to the room. As I was studying, three of my cousins, who were of the same age as me, called me out to join them to catch fire flies. When I declined them, they asked me why I was studying so hard.

At that moment, I thought to myself, "What a good question. Why was I studying so hard?" I then explained that I have to do well and if I am not able to get all A's it would be a disgrace. I talked to my cousins about peer pressure and asked them if they faced it. To my surprise none of them did. Their parents have a less competitive attitude and this reduces a lot of stress in a child who is going to sit for an examination. Children here too are not bombarded with tuition classes, ballet classes, music classes and much more. They are more relaxed and are very much better than leading a life full of stress.

As I packed my bags and sat in the car to leave for home, I could not help but wonder how life would be for me if I moved here, to the country side. But, I am very sure that it would be a better life and I personally think that all children would be better off if they are brought up in the country side.

Final draft

"Dad, look at that. Is that paddy fields? "I asked excitedly. I was so amused to see the striking, golden-yellow paddy fields, stretched for miles and children, just like me, running freely with their colourful kites. The whole scenario was just scenic. I am in a village which is about three hundred kilometres from Kuala Lumpur, the town I live in. This weekend my father decided to take use to his hometown to show us what life is like in the country side?

"Cukoocokoo! … cukoocokoo! "The sound of the rooster corcking awakened me. I realized that I had never been awakened by the corcking of the roaster; it is always by an alarm clock. Well, what can I say; the rooster is definitely the classic all-time alarm clock, right? As I got ready to go for breakfast, I could not help but notice the clean, cool water running smoothly from the tap. It was so clean, that you could even see your reflection staring right back at you. This is what I call crystal clear. Water in the countryside is definitely much safer to be drunk. There was a time when I was six years old and I drank some water directly from the tap without boiling it first and I ended up in the hospital for two weeks. Well, I think drinking water directly from the tap is not going to harm me. The water was not just it. The best of the countryside was yet to come.

The sun was shinning gloriously and the weather was perfect. The aroma of the fresh cut grass lingered in the air. The quality of the air here was definitely better than in the town. The air was so cripst and fresh. "Dad, if the water and air here is so clean, then children here are more unlikely to fall sick right?" I asked my father. "Well, yes, children here are healthier and stronger compared to you, town children," my father replied with a huge grin plastered on his broad face. Well, that was certainly an advantage to be living in the countryside. Back home, I usually fall sick on an average of two months once. Nowadays, when I catch the flu, it has become such a common part in my life that it does not bother me at all.

After taking a stroll with my father, he then took me to the playing field where he uses to play as a little boy. While he played football with my younger brother, I had a chance to mingle with some of the village children. I asked them if their parents were with them in the playground and they told me that there is no need for an adult to accompany a child to the playground. That shocked me. Back home, I am not even allowed to step out of the house without an adult accompanying me. What more to the playing field alone. I talked to them a little bit more and I understood that it is perfectly safe for a child to be outdoors without their parents worrying about their safety. I explained to them how it was in the town. Because of the crime rate increasing rapidly everyday, parents tend to confine their children to their home and detest them from going out. This eventually creates rebellious children in our society. "Oh, how sad? I sympathise on you" one of them told me that and soon I began to feel a tinge of sadness overshadowing me. I think my brother and I would most certainly love to switch places with any of these village kids.

That night, my grandmother cooked us a splendid dinner. About eighteen of us, including all my cousins sat down and ate together. As we were about to eat, my brother got up and asked my dad if he could be excused. "Dad, there is a Liverpool versus Manchester match on television now. Can I have dinner later?" Even before my dad could reply, my uncles, aunts, grandparents and cousins were upset. They thought it was rude to ask such a question when everyone is suppose to have dinner together. Later, my grandfather explained why it important

to at least sit down and have a meal together. He said parents nowadays especially in the town side do not do that. Well, I think it is true. We hardly sit together and have a meal. He too stressed on building a strong bond between parents and children. My grandmother then chipped in a story on how my grandfather use to take all his eight children fishing and camping every school holidays and they kids use to look forward to it very much. She too said she noticed parents in the town are more job orientated. Their priorities in life are wrong and they spend very little time with their children. By this time, I could see my parents blushing all over …. Oh well!

After dinner, my mother was nagging me to go and study as I will be sitting for my SPM examinations soon. Without much fuss, I excused myself and retrieved to the room. As I was studying, three of my cousins who were of the same age as me invited me to catch fire flies with them. When I declined, they asked me why I was studying so hard. I explained to them how important it is to get all A's and to be the best. They did not seem to understand why I found getting all A's so important. I talked to them about peer pressure and to my surprise none of them have faced it. Their parents had a less competitive attitude compared to the parents who live in town. I too found that the children in the countryside are not bombarded with piano lessons, tuition classes, art classes and much more. They live a relaxed live and this allows them to have a life free from all forms of stress.

As I packed my bags to leave for home, I felt very sad as I would never be able to enjoy this country side life which I loved so much. I had to go back to the town where I thought life was meaningless. The country side has so much to offer to a child and there could be no better place to bring up a child than in a beautiful and serene countryside.

First draft

The air is crisp and moist. The chirping of birds and the crow of the rooster is the classic all-time alarm clock. The green grass is lush and inviting. The colourful flowers radiate happiness and warmth. A sense of peace and tranquillity is felt. Where is this place? It sounds dream-like, perfect in every way. Well, this is none other than the description of the atmosphere at a country-side

There are always two sides of a coin. The world can't exist like this. We also have another atmosphere. A crowded place. There are so crowded bazaars, filled with noise, and chaos. Streets lit up with colourful lights. Night is when the fun starts with discotheques, pubs, dinners and concerts. Everything is within reach. Everything is progressive and fast moving. This is town-life. These are two exactly opposite places, so is it better for children to stay in the country-side a big town? Let's take a look and see for ourselves.

In a country side, the air, the food, the environment unpolluted. The poses less health problems and keeps our human body in good shape. This is extremely essential for children as their growing years should be encouraged and not affected. Whereas in the town, more from the exhaust pipe of the vehicles and factory, sewage from the factories that goes into the rivers, pollute the air and food. This environment definitely, is not conducive to raise healthy children.

In the countryside, there is no traffic, no rush and no hustle bustle. The life is actually less stressful. This allows children to pursue their studies as well as their activities as their own pace. There are also lesser distractions available like discos and so this encourages children to develop a bond with their family. In the town, each person in the family is busy with the own agenda. Everyone's trying to beat the jam – rush home from one end to another until the lack of time spent with children is so evident. This is what causes them to stay and pick up bad habits.

As a child, I grew up in a country-side, as my father was a manager of a palm-oil factory. The atmosphere was unpolluted and being an only child, I developed a bond with my parents since they were the only two people I saw every day other than the gardener who doesn't speak a word of English. My parents became my playmates and best friends; they were the people I would share my happiness and my sorrows with. Like I said, there are always two sides of coin. Even though the atmosphere was healthy, I was a sickly child. I became lonely and tired of a monotonous life. I wanted excitement, fun, and progress.

At age six I moved to the town, a big town which is Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia. How did I find town life?

The town especially KL is filled with noise, and laughter. The people never sleep. The day-life is as active as the night-life. The cinema, shopping malls, tennis courts, swimming, dance studios and bowling alleys are all within reach. It's very convenient for children to enjoy. Its like, you name it, they have it.

Second draft

The air is crisp and moist. The chirping of birds and the crow of the rooster is the classic all time alarm clock. The green grass is lush and inviting. The colourful flowers radiate happiness and warmth. An overflowing sense of peace and tranquillity is felt. Where is this place? It sounds like a fantasy-like paradise. It is none other than the perfect picture of countryside

On the other hand, town-life is very much different. It is filled with crowded bazaars, which are incomplete without noise and chaos. City-streets are lit up with colourful lights. Night is when discotheques and pubs exist. People flock to dinners and concerts dressed extravagantly. A dash to the right and you're at the mall, a turn to the left and you're at the cinema, everything is within reach. Where is the better place for a child to grow, happily and comfortable, a country-side or a big town?

In a country-side the air the food and the environment is unpolluted. This poses lesser health problems and keeps the human body in good shape. This is essential for children, especially during their growing years. In the town, smoke from the exhaust pipe of vehicles, and factories, sewage running into the rivers not only pollutes the environment but also damages our health. To a lot of people, this may not be the ideal place to bring up a healthy child.

In the countryside, there is no traffic, no rush and no hustle-bustle unlike in the town. Country-side life is stress-free and allows children the space and time to discover themselves at their own pace. It also encourages a reading habit amongst children as the can't really depend on entertainment in the country-side. They have to learn how to entertain themselves and this is very useful in the long-run. There is also a strong bond that is developed among family members because very few outsiders are seen in this region.

In the town, the chances of picking up bad habits are greater because there, the circle of friends is wider. The social gatherings are more. Children are very innocent beings, very naïve and easily influenced. The more people they meet, the more they get influenced.

Is town life really that bad or is it just how people make it out to be? Living in a town is very progressive and fast moving. It provides avenues for children to enjoy their various activities and interests. This is important too for a child's mental and emotional development, to pursue their passions. Town-life is also very convenient, as everything is at a short distance and this way, a lot of time and energy is saved.

Now I am going to tell you a short story which is absolutely true in every way.

There was this little child who lived in the country-side ever since she was a baby. Even though the atmosphere was unpolluted, she was very sickly and constantly had to be admitted to the hospital. Nevertheless, as she was an only child, she developed a strong bond with her parents. (She was the only child and) They were her only playmates, and soon they became her best friends. Until the age of ten, she was quite happy in her comfort zone. Then, she began to feel lonely. She couldn't do the things she wanted to do. For instance, she loved ballet and dreamt of being a ballerina one day but she couldn't pursue it. There was no classes nearby a nearest was a forty minute drive. It was too far and too tiring so she gave up her dream. At ten, she

moved to the town. Sure, she felt like a fish out of water but she got used to it. She pursued her interests like learning rhythmic gymnastics, taekwondo (a form of martial arts), swimming and Indian dancing. The best part was it was all a stone's throw away and enjoys her interests at leisure. Strangely, she became healthier and no longer was she admitted to the hospital. She was healthier because she was happier. She wanted and longed to taste excitement and fun. She detested monotony and routine life. She didn't like quietness, silence scared her. She preferred noise and laughter. She developed a wider circle of friends and got rid of her shyness. She leaned how to interact and communicate better. Was she spoilt by the distractions in the town? No, because of her upbringing at home. Her parents had inculcated strong moral values and gave her the freedom to always make her own decisions. Her nature that was more extroverted couldn't be caged into an introverted life. She wouldn't change anything about her life nor would she trade living in a town for anything.

I am not trying to say that town-life will do wonders for everybody. I'm merely stating that every child should be treated as an individual and living in a specific place, be it in a country side or a town depends on the temperate of the particular child. Children who love to go at a slower pace and like a mundane life would prefer living at a country-side whereas an energetic, robust and outgoing child would prefer the town-life.

In the end, the place which can suitable for one's physical, mental and emotional growth is the best place to live.

Final draft

Should I follow the ancient route, 'country-road takes me home to the place where I belong' or would I prefer to be an 'uptown girl who's been living in an uptown world?

I was feeling confused as to which life was better for a child, the country-side or the town. The, I remembered a story, meaningful and true in every way.

There was once a little girl who was brought up in the country-side until the age of ten. Even though there was no pollution, she was a very sickly child. The food was not chemicalized but she wouldn't eat. The environment was clean but she still got her monthly flues and fevers. Hospitals became her second home and the diagnosis was that her immune system was low.

She wasn't physically fit for outdoor activities so she spent a lot of time indoor. Her day was filled with painting, reading, playing board games like scrabble, monopoly and watching movies with her parents. Not only did these activities strengthen her mentally and emotionally but also a strong bond between her and her parents were developed. There weren't any clubs and societies nearby for adults to be active in, so most of her parent's time was spent at home with her. Through this, they understood each other's moods, temperaments and characteristics better. A loving healthy, close-knit child-parent relationship was fostered.

Even though she was happy in this cosy and comfortable nest, being cooped up at home wasn't enough. She longed to pursue her talents and desires. For instance, she enrolled herself in ballet and piano lessons. She enjoyed and vowed never to give it up, but she did. Why? Because of one disturbing factor which affected her ….. distance. It took easily 45 minutes to reach a class and this tired her. When school started, it was even more exhausting as reaching school was just as far, and she had no energy to pursue other activities.

Then boredom started to set in. She was an only child and her parents were her only playmates. She longed to mix with children of her own age too, this caused loneliness ad sadness.

Then, at the age of ten, everything changed. She moved to town. Here the most surprising thing happened. Amidst all the uncleanliness and the pollution, her health improved tremendously. No longer was she a regular visitor at the hospitals.

She could pursue her interests without disturbance as everything was just a stone's throw away. She took up rhythmic gymnastics and taekwondo, a form of martial arts. Tennis courts, the library, swimming pool were available just next door. The bowling alley and ice-skating rink were just five minutes away. She enjoyed herself immensely and also excelled better in her studies as school was just a fifteen minute drive. Her friends stayed just a few blocks away from her, so a good relationship between her and her friends was fostered.

Apart from that, she enjoyed the hustle-bustle, noise, lit-up streets during festivals and just the life that was bubbling in town all day and all night long. How is this possible? Despite knowing that a healthy environment is good for a child, if the child isn't happy, she will not be healthy. She never regretted moving to town.

How would I know? Is it true or is this a mere figment of my imagination? I can only tell you one thing, every single bit is true and I know it from the bottom of my heart because … I am that girl.

As I went down memory lane, I couldn't help feeling a tinge of resentment at how I was deprived of certain activities which I wanted to pursue and didn't get the opportunity to. For example, I dreamt of being a ballerina but I didn't pick up where I left of. When I had the time, the problem was the distance. When I moved to town and distance was no longer the problem, I picked up other activities which were offered in the school, and now the problem was the time factor. If I had been brought to the town, maybe I would be better of.

Then I think again. I am so ungrateful. When I was living in the countryside, my bond with my parents was strengthened. So when I came to town, I had my head on my shoulders and I wasn't easily influenced by bad habits. I also knew how to occupy myself by reading and writing. So I wouldn't be a burden to others.

At the age of ten, I still picked up other activities and excelled in it.

I think I lived and left two places at the right time. Both places which are completely opposite were good for me at the different times in my life. There is no better or bitter place for a child to live in.

APPENDIX 12: Minimum written exercises in school

SEKOLAH MENENGAH (Name of school)……..
Minimum Exercise Requirement for
Upper Secondary

Exercise	Frequency
1. Essay	1 per two weeks
2. Comprehension	1 per two weeks
3. Grammar	2 per week
4. Text types	2 per week
5. Literature component	1 per week
6. Summary	1 per two weeks
7. Structured Question	2 per two weeks