

# Japanese ESL students' revising processes in academic writing

## Abstract

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This study investigates Japanese ESL students' revision processes of academic writing tasks. According to much previous research, revision improves writing by helping writers discover meaning which leads them to reformulate their texts (Sommers 1980; Faigley and Witte 1981; Zamel 1982; Fitzgerald 1989; Hall 1990; Whalen and Menard 1995; Clachar 1999). In other words, revision is a tool by which ideas are developed and refined, and meaning is constructed (Leffa 1995; Lehr 1995). Revision plays an integral part of the text construction, and thus learning to revise is a crucial component for the improvement of writing.

As yet, however, little research has focused on the revision processes of ESL students in natural settings or sought to enquire into the possible intentions for their revisions. Most of the previous studies on revision has been conducted in experimental-like settings where student-writers were required to write and revise on consecutive days at specified times in classroom settings. Such a context influenced not only what the students wrote but also the types and frequencies of revisions they made. What we need are, therefore, more in-depth studies of student-writers' revision processes in naturally occurring situations.

The present study uses elements of interactionist theories of writing devised by Nystrand (1989, 1990), which assumes that meaning is constructed by reciprocity between writers and their readers, in order to examine how students' revisions function in terms of the interactional contexts of writing and reading as sense-making social practices. From pedagogical and sociocultural points of view, as has been suggested by Wiemelt (1994), the focus here will be placed not simply on making sense of what students are doing when they revise but, more importantly, on making sense of how students are making sense of what they are doing during the act of revision.

This study aims to discover how students' accounts of the interactional contexts of their revision characterize both the levels of message structure and linguistic structure simultaneously, and how these two levels are related (Wiemelt 1994).

## References

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