

Submitted to the Daily Star (Bangladesh), May 18)

I have two comments on “On Grammar in Writing” (The Daily Star, May 18).

Contrary to what Prof. Shamsuzzan states, I am not opposed to teaching and using the rules of grammar. I have argued, on the basis of empirical research, that grammar teaching is limited. Many of the rules of grammar are very complex, hard to consciously learn and difficult to apply. Most of our ability to write “correctly” is subconsciously acquired through reading.

The only grammatical rules that writers are able to use are the simpler straight-forward rules, and it is a good idea to appeal to these rules when editing our writing.

About revision: In addition to the functions of revision mentioned by Prof Shamsuzzaman, revision helps us solve problems and makes us smarter: revision stimulates cognitive development.

As Peter Elbow has noted, it is difficult to hold more than one thought in mind at a time. When we write our ideas down, and reread what we have written, it is easier to see the relationship between our ideas, improve our thinking, and come up with better ideas.

Thanks to revision, in writing “Meaning is what you end up with, not what you start out with.” (Peter Elbow)

Original article: “On grammar in writing,”
<https://www.thedailystar.net/literature/news/grammar-writing-1744966>