

**WRITING, REVISION AND THE ROLE OF FOCUSED FEEDBACK:  
A STUDY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF WRITING SKILLS  
IN THE EFL CLASSROOM**

DISSERTATION  
zur Erlangung  
des akademischen Grades  
einer Doktorin der Philosophie (Dr. phil.)  
am Fachbereich 6:  
Kultur- und Sozialwissenschaften  
der UNIVERSITÄT KOBLENZ-LANDAU  
vorgelegt im Promotionsfach Anglistik  
Schwerpunkt Fachdidaktik Englisch  
von

**ALEXIA GIANNAKOPOULOU**

geb. am 16.12.1966 in Athen  
Erstgutachter: Prof. Dr. Detlev Gohrbandt  
Zweitgutachter: Prof. Dr. Martin Pütz

**2007**



## LEBENS LAUF

der ALEXIA GIANNAKOPOULOU des Theodoros

### Personaldaten

Name	Alexia Giannakopoulou
Anschrift	Ladonos 7,15235, Athen, Griechenland
Telefonnummer	0030 210 8048466, 0030 6942613651
E-Mail Adresse	<a href="mailto:alexyan@in.gr">alexyan@in.gr</a> , <a href="mailto:mayrojohn@yahoo.com">mayrojohn@yahoo.com</a>
Geburtsort	Athen, Griechenland
Geburtsdatum	16.12.1966
Familienstand	Verheiratet – 2 Kinder

### Studium

Schulbildung 1984	Panhellenische Prüfungen am 16. Lyzeum, Ampelokipi, Athen
Studium 1984-1988	Fachrichtung Anglistik und Gräzistik an der Philosophischen Fakultät der Universität Athen Diplom des Fachbereichs für Englische Studien, Gesamtnote: Sehr Gut (8,56)
Weiterbildung 1998-2002	Weiterbildungsprogram an der griechischen offenen Universität Weiterstudiumsdiplom zur Spezialisierung als Lehrer der Englischen Sprache, Gesamtnote: Sehr Gut (9)
2002-2003	Seminar an der griechischen offenen Universität „Leitung von pädagogischen Anstalten“ Ausbildungszeugnis, Note: Gut (8,3)

Auslandaufenthalt - Doktorandin an der Uni Koblenz-Landau  
Fortbildung Dissertationsthema: "Writing, Revision and the Role of Focused  
2002-2007 Feedback: A Study in the Development of Writing Skills in the  
EFL Classroom", Gesamtnote: magna cum laude

2004 An der Uni Köln  
Hauptseminar „Die griechische Diaspora“, Note: Sehr Gut (1)  
Proseminar „Der griechische historische Roman des 19. und 20.  
Jahrhunderts“, Note: Sehr Gut (1)

### **Didaktische Erfahrung**

1988-2000 Englischlehrerin an verschiedenen Schulen  
(Grundschule, Gymnasium, Lyzeum) in Athen, Chania, Kavala

2000-2002 Angestelltenstelle am Ministerium für Bildung und Religion

2002-2006 Auf Ausbildungsurlaub

2003-2004 Lehrveranstaltungen am Institut für fremdsprachliche  
Philologien / Fach Anglistik in Landau  
Teaching the Four Skills in a Foreign Language  
Teaching English to Young Learners  
Assessment in Language Learning

2006-2007 Englischlehrerin an der Grundschule von Avlona, Attica

2007-2008 Englischlehrerin an der Grundschule von Dyonisos, Attica

## **Fremdsprachenkenntnisse**

Deutsch                                      Zertifikat Deutsch (Note:1)  
Mittelstufendiplom des Goethe Instituts (Gesamtnote: Sehr Gut)

Französisch                                      Certificat de Langue Française (Mention: Bien)  
Diplôme d' Etudes Supérieures (Mention: Assez Bien)

**Schriftstellerisches Werk**      Verfassung des Englischbuches für die 8. Klasse des  
Gymnasiums (Fortgeschrittene) unter der Schirmherrschaft des  
Pädagogischen Instituts

Verfassung des Kinderbuches „Memories from Koblenz“  
Herausgeber: Pataki Verlag, 2006



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## ABSTRACT

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in revision and the contribution it can make to the teaching of writing. This interest has motivated the present study to address an issue of considerable importance to the development of revision skills: the role of teacher-mediated feedback.

The study involves 100 Year 7 students in two gymnasia in Koblenz, Germany. During the time of the investigation, the students wrote and revised five tasks. Three of these tasks were revised after receiving feedback which focused on rhetorical aspects of the text. The study investigates the effects of this kind of focused feedback on the students' revisions and explores the relationship between revision and text improvement.

Large quantitative and qualitative data sets were generated during the research. The quantitative data, based on the student documents (original drafts and revised drafts), highlights patterns in the development of revision skills and positive correlations of student revisions with features of the teacher feedback. The qualitative data, which emerged from student questionnaires and seven case studies, sheds light on the quality of the revisions and the students' attitudes towards the process.

The final section of the thesis discusses the findings, considers the pedagogical implications for the teaching of writing and suggests possible avenues for further work.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Detlev Gohrbandt, Professor of Cultural Studies and English Language Teaching, at the University of Koblenz-Landau in Landau, whose constant encouragement and guidance followed me throughout this journey in search of truth. His advice and comments have been invaluable in that they helped me both find the focus of my research and also keep it into perspective. Above all, I would like to thank him for his wholehearted support and faith in my ability to carry out this study.

My gratitude is also due to my second supervisor Prof. Dr. Martin Pütz, Professor of Linguistics and English Language Teaching, at the University of Koblenz-Landau in Landau, for supporting my work.

I would also like to thank Dr. Hartmut Froesch, Headmaster of the Eichendorff Gymnasium and Carl Josef Reitz, Headmaster of the Bischhöfliches-Cusanus Gymnasium for allowing me to conduct this investigation in the specific schools.

Special thanks go to the teachers, in whose classes the research was conducted, for their warm welcome and continuing support for my research: Angelica Norh-Görge, Dieter Ahrens, Rolf Dorner, Melanie Kohl and Melanie Hecht.

My gratitude is also due to the students who participated in my study, for without them this study would not have been possible.

A very special note of gratitude to my sister, Georgia Giannakopoulou, Teacher of English, who helped me establish inter-coder reliability on the type, function and size of revisions. What is more, her endless support, constructive feedback and sense of humour have been of great help.

A special mention is due to Stavros Degiannakis, who helped me carry out the statistical analysis of the results.

Last but not least, I feel the need to thank my parents, my husband, Yiannis, and my two children, George and Eleni, who have given me all their love, support and encouragement along the way. This thesis is dedicated to them!

## **CHAPTER 1            THE ROLE OF WRITING IN MODERN SOCIETY**

### **1.1 Introduction**

At the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is almost axiomatic that people need to develop a high level of competence and knowledge in a variety of subjects in order to prepare themselves for a rapidly changing environment and the increasing demands of modern technological society. In Europe, educational systems face the challenge to develop dynamic programmes, which will equip young people with the necessary skills and knowledge and provide meaningful learning experiences for all kinds of students.

In this wider social setting, English plays an ever-increasing role as a globalisation language. Moreover, English has been linked to a variety of subjects (e.g. Information and Communication Technology) and therefore constitutes a powerful tool for learning. At the same time, the explosion of immigration in Europe makes the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom the ideal setting for multicultural learning and communication.

These utilitarian concerns led Flower (1994:10) to stress the need for a literacy, which goes beyond the receptive capacities of reading to the productive capacities of writing. In fact, as Flower points out, modern technological society “calls for a written literacy that does not simply reproduce information but that transforms it”. Students need to develop “skills in reducing data, interpreting it, packaging it effectively, documenting decisions, explaining complex matter in simple terms, and persuading”. Such skills are, according to Flower, highly valued in business, education and the military and will continue to do so as the information explosion continues.

A direct consequence of this view is that teachers should build the foundations of written literacy from the early years of EFL learning in order to help students develop their competence in writing throughout their schooling and at the same time to enhance language development from multiple perspectives. To respond to this challenge, ELT (English Language Teaching) practitioners stress the need to offer varied and interesting instruction and introduce new perspectives into the teaching of writing.

There is already a strong tradition of research into the effectiveness of a wide range of teaching methods and the efficacy of various teacher and learner support mechanisms. The insights and conclusions from such research revolve around issues such as active involvement, individual exploration, social interaction, negotiation, interdisciplinary critical thinking, problem solving, autonomy, choice and attention to diverse abilities and learning styles. In the light of such insights, the core message is a focus on the learners and their holistic development. With this comes a shift of attention from ‘what aspects of language to teach’ to ‘what skills learners must develop’ in order to become competent and confident users of English. As a consequence, the relationship between the individuals as active agents and the complex social conditions that shape their development becomes an issue of considerable importance.

## **1.2 The role of writing as an important human and social skill**

In recent years, language learning theory and practice have witnessed a renewed interest in the role of writing in students’ education. In a very general sense, everybody knows why writing is an important skill, thus, it may seem a rather banal starting point to emphasise its potential as a tool for learning. However, it would be interesting to see how some scholars stress the virtues of writing.

Writing is, according to Hughey et al (1983:33), an essential lifetime skill, which serves four important purposes for learners: a) communication, b) critical thinking and problem solving, c) self-actualisation, and d) control of personal environment. First of all, writing is a means to express ideas, thoughts and information to a reader. Second, writing helps people think, define problems, rethink and discover solutions. Third, writing helps learners demonstrate their knowledge and succeed in the academic world. Finally, writing helps learners understand how the language functions and acquire its mechanisms.

Boughey (1997:126-127) argues that writing helps writers explore, clarify and examine their thoughts more thoroughly by externalising, organising and giving permanence to these thoughts. Another important asset of writing is that it develops creativity and imagination as a lifelong skill and prepares students for their educational and professional careers (Barass 1995:1; Craft 1999:135). Byrne (1988:6)



claims that writing helps students retain the new linguistic knowledge, provides them with tangible evidence that they are making progress and engages them in language work not only inside but also outside the classroom. Moreover, by addressing an audience, writing creates a greater need for attention to content and form.

Although Krashen (1989:115) has a different opinion concerning the relationship between writing and language acquisition on the grounds that writing is not comprehensible input, he claims that “writing is, however, a powerful tool for cognitive development – it can make you smarter”. His argument adds further weight to the claim that although the fundamental aim of writing is to communicate, writing is, by its very nature, a powerful instrument of thought. It is this relationship between writing, thinking and learning which has motivated research to investigate which methods enhance the development of writing skills.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that writing has been the object of so much empirical research in the field of applied linguistics or other disciplines. The effectiveness of various writing methods has been researched by many authors and much has been written about what should be taught and how it should be taught. In practice, however, the situation is rather more complex than it seems because very often teachers’ efforts to teach writing are informed by intuition as well as personal notions and biases rather than recent insights and teaching methodologies (Marius 1992:466). In situations where this happens, it is the past literacy experiences of the teachers that influence to a great extent their own stance as writing teachers. Consequently, as Hall (1990:58) puts it, teachers need to “reexamine the complete repertoire of instructional methods”, integrating those procedures which are found to support writers at work and provide them with the skills they need in order to improve.

Investigating the conscious and unconscious processes of writers, recent research has indicated that focusing on what students do as writers rather than on theory and grammar results in more effective communication. In consequence, the attention has shifted from the teaching of writing as a product to the teaching of writing as a process. The use of the ‘process’ approach has attracted a great deal of interest mainly because of the emphasis it places on empowering students to explore and learn the process of writing. A process-based methodology stresses issues such as generating

ideas, writing drafts, producing feedback and revising (Raimes 1985:230). In addition to highlighting the process, this approach draws the attention to the communicative function of discourse and the interactive relationship between the reader and the writer, and provides learners with more opportunities to write authentic tasks for authentic audiences and for more meaningful purposes.

### **1.3 Closing comment**

It is against this background that this research study was set up with the initial aim of shedding a little more light on issues concerning the use of the process approach and the ways in which young learners acquire and use their writing skills in the EFL classroom. Although the issues concerning the process approach will unfold in the next chapters, it is worth mentioning at this point that composing as a process involves several skills and subprocesses and that one of the main motivations for undertaking the present study was the desire to delve more deeply into the revising process, in particular. Prompted by the concern to provide an interpretation of student revision experiences and develop a model of instruction which would help students learn to revise to the best of their capacities, the present study focuses on teacher-initiated feedback and investigates whether, how and to what extent such a focus will have an impact upon students' writing development.

## CHAPTER 2            WRITING THEORIES: PEDAGOGICAL INSIGHTS

### 2.1 A brief history of rhetoric and composition

Seeking the historical and theoretical foundations of different writing instructional practices, many composition scholars begin their journey of discovery in Ancient Greece (5<sup>th</sup> century BC), where “rhetoric” was born (Williams 1998:4). Rhetoric was concerned with oratory, i.e. the art of composing a public speech. Aristotle, a great philosopher of the time, defined rhetoric as the art of persuasion because what rhetoric tried to achieve was the persuasion of the audience (ibid:2). Aristotle talked about three important elements of good rhetoric: “ethos” (character), “pathos” (emotion) and “logos” (rhetorical proof). This analysis meant that a speech could produce persuasion through the character of the speaker, the emotional state of the listener or the argument itself (ibid:16). Rhetoric was built around “syllogismos”, a rhetorical kind of proof, a kind of deductive argument. Aristotle described a number of “topoi” (places), that is, topics or heuristic ways of discovering ideas and arguments. “Topoi” were argumentative schemes which enabled the rhetorician to construe an argument for a given conclusion. The formulation of the arguments followed the premise-conclusion structure: some sentences were premises and one was the conclusion (ibid:17).

Surely, we can see that almost as long as 2,500 years ago, a model of instruction was devised, which has influenced writing methodologies even to the present day. According to Rapp (2002), this classical model reflected a linear process, which consisted of five stages: invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery. The first three stages, namely invention (discovering ideas), arrangement (organising ideas) and style (putting ideas into words) are still present in modern approaches of composition whereas the last two stages, memory and delivery, have received less attention. Memory was more than memorisation of an already composed speech; it was practice of storing up material for use on a given occasion. Delivery referred to the way something was said and concerned things such as vocal training and the use of gestures. For Aristotle, rhetoric was primarily invention, i.e. discovering the best available means of persuasion. “Topoi” were in fact common categories of thought used to brainstorm ideas.

Since rhetoric was a method of persuasion, it made use of different means of persuasion including non-argumentative tools, such as style or stimulating emotions. The difference between traditional methods of the time and Aristotle's rhetoric was that, for Aristotle, non-argumentative tools had to be refined in order to support the aim of an argumentative kind of rhetoric. For example, traditionally the prologue of a speech was used to appeal to the listener whereas the epilogue was used to arouse emotions like pity or anger. Aristotle argued that the prologue could be used to set out the speech contributing to its clearness whereas the epilogue could be used to sum up the conclusions reached, thus making the speech more understandable. Aristotle's model was perhaps the most influential in the history of rhetoric.

Another Greek rhetorician, Isocrates, argued that three factors make a good speaker, namely talent, instruction and practice, of which talent is the most important. This belief has dominated Western education until modern times and continues to be popular since a great number of teachers, parents and students believe that good writing, like good speaking, is a charisma rather than the result of training and effort (Williams 1998:11).

In Roman times, the classical model was still popular. The main principles of Greek rhetoric were extended in Ancient Rome by Cicero, a great Roman rhetorician, who followed Aristotle's tradition (Williams 1998:19). In the Middle Ages, the classical model was reshaped to suit the needs of the Christian church. In classical times, rhetorical discourse served three main purposes: political (to persuade about some course of action), legal (to accuse or defend) and ceremonial (to praise or blame). In the Middle Ages, rhetoric was taught in order to prepare students for oral argumentation on historical, religious and legal issues or to teach them the art of composing official letters and the art of preaching. Many medieval rhetoric texts were entirely prescriptive with lists of rules for composing effective speeches (ibid:23).

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Renaissance rhetorician Peter Ramus reexamined classical rhetoric and separated the stages of style, memory and delivery from those of invention and arrangement claiming that the latter belonged to logic rather than rhetoric. Ramus encouraged the production of logical, scientific discourse delivered in plain style. Although memory and delivery figured importantly in early Renaissance

times, they started to decline when printing began to flourish. Rhetoricians, then, began to focus on the study of language as the dress of ideas in the best possible way.

In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, rhetoric was seen as the study of the dress of thought rather than the study of thought itself, and instruction focused on style and formal correctness (Williams 1998:27). By the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century, Scottish rhetoricians such as Alexander Bain shifted the focus from plain style to correct, persuasive and elaborate style. Bain argued that persuasive discourse should be organised in a way that produces the desired emotion in the audience. From Bain's work originated the well-known classification of discourse into narrative, descriptive, expository and argumentative. The Scottish tradition influenced the study of rhetoric, which was now seen as a means of gaining prestige and helping social leaders to direct and control the masses. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the attention shifted from oral to written composition. It is worth mentioning at this point that although written language has a history of over 6,000 years, the interest in writing and literacy development can only be traced in the last two centuries.

## **2.2 Issues in L1 (First Language) writing research and instruction**

The rise of schooled literacy began in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century whereas professional literacy emerged after the Second World War (Grabe and Kaplan 1996:10). It is then that the popular concern with writing started. Over the last fifty years, this concern has generated a variety of theories regarding the nature of writing, its purposes and consequences for the individual and the society, from the perspective of different disciplines, such as education, psychology and linguistics. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, writing instruction was still very much influenced by 19<sup>th</sup> century notions. These notions, according to Williams (1998:28), "came to be referred to as the current-traditional approach to composition because they are rooted in long-standing conventions but are applied in a contemporary context. They are also referred to as the product model because they concentrate on stylistic features of finished essays".

Therefore, up to the 1960s, writing instruction was characterised by the 'current traditional' or 'product' approach, which clearly focused on correct usage, spelling, organisation and style mainly because of the conviction that these aspects of writing,

unlike the more creative aspects of the process, are teachable (Britton, 1983 in Grabe and Kaplan 1996:30). This product view of writing, based on the study of model texts, aimed at raising students' awareness of grammatical rules and textual features and engaged them in the practice of such rules and features. As a result, the evaluation of the written products centred on accuracy.

This traditional kind of instruction focusing on reading, analysing and writing was soon criticised on the grounds that it encouraged students to "see form as a mold into which content is somehow poured" (Eschholz, 1980 in Watson 1982:11). Moreover, the imitation of models was "stultifying and inhibiting writers rather than empowering them or liberating them". In effect, the pedagogy associated with the product model involved little real writing instruction, since it focused on formal correctness and neglected the communicative aspect of writing.

'New rhetoric', the term which describes modern interest in rhetoric and composition, emerged around the mid-1960s. Williams (1998:2) reports that according to many composition scholars, modern rhetoric was born in 1971 with the publication of Kinneavy's "A Theory of Discourse", a work which provided the theoretical grounding for new rhetoric by explicitly linking Aristotle's sense of rhetoric as the art of persuasion with college composition. However, other scholars trace the early developments in new rhetoric not so much to the classics as to developments in relevant fields, such as cognitive psychology (Berlin, 1990 in Williams 1998:32).

A number of researchers who took interest in what cognitive psychology and psycholinguistics had to say about the writing process put the whole composing process under study. They explored the psychological aspects of composing and found that the forms of discourse parallel the forms of cognitive processes and therefore they should be equally accessible to every student regardless of their cultural background. Soon, cognitive theories of writing appeared and practitioners looked for ways to improve college freshman writing courses. The dissatisfaction and disillusionment with the current-traditional approach for its failure to provide successful techniques for writing development paved the way for a new approach to writing instruction (Grabe and Kaplan 1996:31).

As a result, in the 1970s, a shift of focus led to the birth of the ‘process’ approach, which was primarily concerned with the cognitive processes underlying the act of writing instead of concentrating on the written product itself. As Dahl and Farnan (1996:5) point out, “this shift has occurred primarily because a singular emphasis on writing products did not serve teachers’ understandings about how to support writers in their development”. By contrast, process-based writing instruction was believed to help students identify and imitate the behaviours rather than the products of successful writers. Invention and arrangement, the initial stages of the classical process of composing, regained a lot of importance.

However, the conception of the writing process previously described as linear shifted to a conception of the writing process as recursive. Emig (1971) with “the Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders” described the process as recursive and identified its parts as planning, composing, revising and rewriting (Williams 1998:84). Emig referred to the ‘composing’ rather than the ‘writing’ process mainly because she wanted to emphasise the importance of the cognitive processes involved in writing. The research that followed Emig’s study began to explore differences between skilled and unskilled writers, functions and audiences for school writing, and aspects of composing.

In the 1980s, research into the cognitive processes of writers continued but this time the focus was on the social circumstances which affect those processes (e.g. bad writing instruction or individual cognitive abilities). By the end of 1980s, investigating writing in social and cultural contexts was the prevailing tendency in the field. In the 1990s, connections were drawn between composition and cultural studies in order to account for the greater cultural diversity of students.

Nowadays, contemporary composition scholars have redirected the interest in the social nature of writing to analyses of the ways in which audience or social context affect the interpretation of written text. The dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century witnesses a richly interdisciplinary approach into composition studies, perhaps with a little more emphasis on electronic text and its applications. The emerging theories of writing, which originated from cognitive psychology and sociolinguistics, emphasise issues such as early composing practice for children, meaningful instruction, content-

centredness, realistic tasks, revision and team collaboration. Correctness still remains a goal of writing instruction, but the focus is clearly on the communicative function of writing.

### **2.3 Parallel issues in L2 (Second Language) writing research and instruction**

It is important to note at this point that the links between ESL (English as a Second Language) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) will be taken to be more significant than their differences and for this reason the two, especially when their use is dictated by other authors, will be used interchangeably.

Research in L2 writing began in the late 1960s and was largely dependent on L1 research insights and resulting pedagogic shifts. Raimes (1991:408-412) reports that for the last forty years or so, writing instruction has been divided into four main approaches with a different focus: a) focus on Form, b) focus on the Writer, c) focus on Content and d) focus on the Reader. The ‘form-dominated approach’ in the 1970s was concerned with the product of composing and the application of grammar rules. EFL teachers gave learners a writing assignment, which they marked for linguistic errors, and then moved on to the next one.

In the 1980s, the shift on the writer drew the attention to the ‘process’, i.e. not what learners produced but how they produced it. Soon, some L2 writing classes became “less focused on language and more focused on composing, just as L1 classes were doing” (Leki 1992:77). In these classes, writing instruction encouraged the production of multiple drafts, introduced new methods of feedback and gave priority to content in early drafts leaving editing for the end of the process. In the late 1980s, the process approach was in a seminal state in relation to ELT, as most of the writing research under way then was concerned with L1. However, some ELT practitioners saw the process approach as a ‘deus ex machina’, promising to solve many of the problems associated with writing. Besides, what could be better than an approach which claimed to bring students closer to what good writers do in real life?

However, the process approach was soon criticised by EAP (English for Academic Purposes) practitioners, mainly on the grounds that academic writing was judged by



product and not by process. Horowitz (1986:141) argued that the process-oriented approach failed to prepare students for essay examination writing and therefore gave students a false impression of how university writing would be evaluated. Likewise, Swales (1987:63) viewed the total obsession with the cognitive relationship between the writer and the writer's internal world as inappropriate for academic demands. Some practitioners raised reservations about the direct adoption of this approach from L1 practices, therefore, it seemed appropriate to try out some process-oriented techniques and see if they worked for EFL classes.

In the 1990s, research on the effectiveness of different approaches to the teaching of L2 writing was still contradictory and inconclusive (Zamel 1987:697). More than a decade later, the situation had not much changed and the debate was still heated concerning the use of process-oriented instruction versus product-oriented instruction. However, as Caudery (1995:1) points out, the heat which characterised the initial debate had cooled a little and the time was ripe for fresh discussion of what researchers had found about the teaching of writing in L2. This gave rise to a 'content-based approach' which was concerned with the thematic content and the tasks which students were expected to encounter in their academic careers. At the same time, writing was seen as a social act of communication between the writer and the reader and thus a 'reader-dominated approach' attempted to shed more light on the reader and his expectations for a successful text.

#### **2.4 The evolution of process approaches**

The so called process approach is not a theory of writing; it is associated with several twentieth century theories and research findings. From the 1960s to the present, the process approach, according to Grabe and Kaplan (1996:88), can be divided into four stages: a) the expressive, b) the cognitive, c) the social and d) the discourse community.

The expressive approach originated from the writer's need for free expression and the goal of instruction was to provide opportunities for students to express their ideas in a spontaneous and creative manner. Macrorie (1970) and Elbow (1981) placed the emphasis on self-expression and the writer's authentic voice (Williams 1998:34-36).

This kind of 'romantic' rhetoric was concerned with individual feelings and thoughts and therefore instruction focused on what is called self-expressive composing. Much of the writing in schools today is self-expressive because it motivates students to write about their own experiences or something they are interested in. The critics of this approach argued that it was merely concerned with an outlet for self-expression and ignored the social context and the multiple purposes for which writing takes place in the real world (Grabe and Kaplan 1996:88-89).

Based on research in cognitive psychology and especially work by Piaget, who emphasised the role of discovery in learning, the cognitive approach attempted to fill the theoretical lacuna of the expressive approach. Throughout the 1980s, researchers developed various cognitive models and descriptions of the writing process. Flower and Hayes (1981) were the first to propose a model of writing influenced by the fields of rhetoric and cognitive psychology. Their model was followed by Bereiter and Scardamalia's model (1987), which also represented a major advance in the understanding of the composing processes of poor and expert writers. The next section reviews the two models more extensively because of the significant role they have played in research studies and recent developments in writing instruction (Grabe and Kaplan 1996:90-94).

The social approach drew on the Vygotskian theory and its applications for writing development, thus emphasising the role of the social environment and the development of writers from egocentric to sociocentric. This approach stressed the connection between language use and the social purpose it serves, hence, the teaching of writing centred on the use of genres and their functional purposes. Section 2.6 below refers more extensively to the Vygotskian views, which provided a strong foundation for current research and the design of writing models in both L1 and L2 contexts (Grabe and Kaplan 1996:94-105).

Finally, the discourse community approach focused on all four components of the process, i.e. the writer, the reader, the text and the social context. The reader as a representative of a discourse community has expectations about the text that the writer produces. These expectations are affected by the norms of the discourse community he belongs to. Therefore, the writer moves from writer-based to reader-based text

taking into consideration the reader's expectations for a successful text. This approach was used especially with regard to tertiary-level purposes in order to introduce more purposeful instruction in the academic setting (Grabe and Kaplan 1996:106-111).

## **2.5 Writing as a cognitive process**

The two cognitive models mentioned previously, those by Flower and Hayes (1981) and Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) respectively, have provided very important insights into the writing processes of novice and expert writers.

- **The Flower and Hayes model**

The main notion of the 'Flower and Hayes' model of writing is the interaction of cognition and context for the performance of a writing task. Writing in this model is treated as a cognitive activity, during which writers have to solve a "rhetorical problem". This problem has different parameters, which writers have to consider during the composing process. These are "the rhetorical situation (audience, topic, assignment), and the writer's own goals (involving the reader, the writer's persona, the construction of meaning, the production of the formal text)" (Grabe and Kaplan 1996:114).

More analytically, Flower and Hayes (1981:370) divide the writer's world into three major parts: a) long-term memory, b) the task environment and c) the writing process. Three kinds of knowledge are needed in long-term memory in order to write: "knowledge of topic, knowledge of audience and stored writing plans". The task environment consists of a "topic" and an "audience", which will influence the writing. It also consists of the "text produced so far" (i.e. the written text produced as composing proceeds).

The writing process consists of three main processes and a number of subprocesses. The Flower and Hayes model shows that good writers employ three major processes to accomplish their goals, i.e. "planning, translating and reviewing", as well as the cognitive subprocesses of these elements. These are applied recursively and interactively. Planning involves taking information from the task environment and

from long-term memory in order to set goals and establish a writing plan, which will guide the production of a text and meet those goals. Generating ideas, goal-setting and organising are subprocesses of planning.

Ideas can be generated for a particular task from knowledge already stored away or from other sources. Goal setting is the part of the planning process which involves deciding what to do with the material that has been generated. During this process, writers set the criteria by which they can judge their written products in the final stages of writing. Organising involves grouping the ideas that have been generated and deciding on the order in which they will be presented. As the writing proceeds, organisation involves decisions about sentence structure and cohesion. The writer monitors and makes decisions throughout the composing process (Dahl and Farnan 1996:8-10).

Translating refers to the act of producing language to express the information in the writer's memory and represents the drafting process. Reviewing is the process in which the writer moves backwards on what has been written with the intention of evaluating and revising his thoughts as well as his writing. Reviewing involves examining the evolving text to make the substantive changes necessary to help increase the chance that the writer's intended message will be perceived by the intended reader (Flower and Hayes 1977:458-460).

- **The Bereiter and Scardamalia model**

While Flower and Hayes assume differences in the effectiveness of cognitive processing between expert and novice writers, they do not describe a qualitatively different process for novices. For Flower and Hayes, all writers follow the same process, but good writers are better at solving the rhetorical problem than poor writers. Flower and Hayes (1981:375) argue that even children possess the necessary skills to generate ideas and revise but lack the kind of monitor which tells them to switch processes or prolong the generation of ideas.

By contrast, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) emphasise different processes for beginning and expert writers. Although they address writing as a problem-solving

activity, they present two different models of the writing process, “the knowledge-telling” and the “transformation-telling” model. Children and less-skilled writers tell the knowledge they retrieve from memory without planning whereas skilled writers transform their knowledge to solve a series of problems that arise during the composing process. Written texts are the outcomes of one of the two composing styles, depending on the processes followed by different writers.

The texts of children, even those produced by talented child-writers, adhere to the constraints of the knowledge-telling model (Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987:11). In this model, the writer constructs some representation of the assignment by identifying the topic and the genre. This process serves as a cue for memory search and automatically activates associated concepts. Thus information in memory becomes available for use in writing through a process of spreading activation. However, children “reach a limit in the amount of content they generate – a limit seemingly well short of the amount of relevant knowledge they have in memory” (ibid:62). Furthermore, “the planning children do [...] lacks the attention to the whole [...] and what they mainly do is just generate text” (ibid:70). Hence, they are not expected to be able to organise their ideas in a way that makes sense to an experienced reader. This process indicates that young or inexperienced writers tell what is available in their mind but they are unable to move from mere telling into problem solving.

The transformation-telling model, on the other hand, considers writing as a complex problem-solving process involving high order reasoning and the presentation of logical and coherent text. This model places upon the writer the requirement that in producing a coherent and accurate text, it is necessary to make notes, plan, and revise content. The information retrieved in this model meets basic topical and genre requirements as well as requirements dictated by the writer’s interpretation of the rhetorical problem. In conclusion, the main distinction between the two styles of composing lies in how knowledge is brought into the writing process and what happens to knowledge in that process.

Although the above theorists address the writing process from a slightly different theoretical position, they agree that the texts of expert writers are the result of certain

complex problem-solving procedures. In a school context, this level of knowledge represents the ultimate goal in the teaching of writing.

## **2.6 The contribution of the Piagetian and the Vygotskian perspective to L2 writing theories**

Throughout the 1980s, the effectiveness of different process approaches in L1 contexts was researched by a great number of scholars. However, whilst much was written about the effects of process approaches on L1 learners' writing, little was written about the ways in which a process approach could be efficacious with EFL learners. This is not surprising, as Caudery (1995:1) points out, since the process approach was developed in and for the L1 classroom. Soon, EFL researchers following the example of their L1 colleagues, who analysed recordings while students were writing in order to identify the elements of the "inner intellectual process of composing" (Flower and Hayes (1977:449), demonstrated with protocol research of a similar type that the same processes occurred in EFL learners' writing (Zamel 1983; Raimes 1985; Arndt 1987).

Current EFL research investigates writing mainly from the perspective of applied linguistics and draws on the work of cognitive psychologists and linguists or the work of sociolinguists (Grabe and Kaplan 1996:238-243). EFL research which draws on the work of cognitive psychologists and linguists claims that good EFL writers, like their L1 counterparts, plan before they write, revise both globally and locally, identify problems and find solutions. EFL research that draws on the work of sociolinguists emphasises, like L1 studies, the role of extensive guidance and practice, which helps students identify, internalise and thus self-regulate writing strategies.

A number of ELT practitioners saw that a cognitive approach could win a place in the EFL classroom. As mentioned earlier, a large body of work on cognitive development has its origins in the work of Piaget. Piaget believed that the social environment was important for learning but most of his work emphasised the crucial role that individuals play in their own development (Das Gupta and Richardson 1995:6). Piaget's constructivist theory maintained that in order to construct an understanding of the world, children make and test hypotheses and then build up internal knowledge

systems. They modify the existing knowledge systems or develop new cognitive structures through a series of stages. At each stage, they make use of “different internal mechanisms for organising information and, at each new stage, capacities developed at an earlier stage are reworked into a more complex structure” (Das Gupta 1994:46). According to classical Piagetian theory, children initiate their own cognitive transformation and adults can do little to push them from one stage into another (ibid:47).

Research that draws on constructivist theories reflects a view of writing as “an active task that involves children in their own learning” (Dobson 1985:30). The writing process is treated as “a personal engaging transaction”, through which the learner makes connections between what he knows and what he discovers, and builds his own meaning (Mayher, Lester and Pradl 1983:1). Writing is “the result of employing cognitive strategies to manage the composing process, which is a process of exploration and gradually developing organisation” (Hedge 1994:2). “Learning to write is largely an act of discovery” (Temple et al 1988:1). Such views echo the work of Piaget, who saw the child as an active contributor to his own learning (Das Gupta 1994:46).

Vygotsky addressed the issue of child development from a different theoretical position from that provided by Piaget and constructivists. Although Piaget himself talked about the social aspects of child development, his theory is treated as mainly cognitive. Vygotsky, on the other hand, stressed the social dimension of learning. Theories deriving from the Vygotskian tradition emphasise the importance of interaction between partners who are unequal with regard to competence on a task. The more skilled partner, often an adult, provides guidance to the less skilled partner who is therefore enabled to work in a “zone of proximal development”, i.e. beyond their individual capability. The most effective guidance comes from adults, who help children think more critically and make connections between their own experiences and the experiences of others (O’Brien 2000:12; Wood 1988:25).

Theorists with a Vygotskian perspective argue for a sociocognitive theory of writing, according to which individual and social elements come into play. As Hughes (2001:17) argues, children learn best “when they have the guidance, learning

environment, intellectual and emotional support created by an adult or mentor figure”. This mentor is able to model learning, questioning and thinking and thus help children develop their learning skills. This kind of social interaction scaffolds children’s understanding and problem-solving, and enables them to internalise the processes and then continue on their own. EFL research that draws on the work of social constructivists suggests that there is more to language development than exposure to comprehensible input and input modification, and that is collaboration and interaction with more advanced and more knowledgeable speakers of the foreign language (Lightbown and Spada 1999:44).

## **2.7 Closing comment**

Research based on a variety of sociocognitive theoretical perspectives seeks to delineate the impact of interpersonal or social activity on individual performance and progress. This body of work promotes different social situations and modes of social interaction as conducive to advancing thinking and therefore learning. Sociocognitive theoretical perspectives and issues associated with the process approach were raised a number of times in this chapter. The next chapter will illustrate how theory and method come together in a process writing classroom and how students can adopt more successful writing processes in the light of such pedagogical insights.



## **CHAPTER 3            METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF “PROCESS”**

### **3.1 Introduction**

“Because writing is process, it is not surprising that instructional strategies that emphasise process elements would contribute to young writers’ increasing proficiency. Based on current understandings, the issue is not whether process strategies enhance a writer’s ability to write effectively. Rather, the issue centers on which activities and classroom structures will best address individual writers’ needs in various task environments and with various writing demands” (Dahl and Farnan 1996:15). According to Dahl and Farnan, it is possible to argue a priori that a process approach to the teaching of writing is a pedagogically viable proposal, on the grounds that writing is by nature a process. It is almost axiomatic, in other words, that students will benefit from writing experiences which bring them closer to what good writers do in real life.

Process-oriented writing instruction is based on a simple guiding principle: for whatever we wish to teach in writing, we should link our objectives to what happens during the process of writing. The writing process involves exploring and generating ideas about a subject, getting started, making continuous decisions about what to write and how to express the intended content, constantly reviewing what has been written, reformulating and thinking about what comes next, and perhaps revising. The guiding pedagogical principle may be simple but the transition from theory to practice is more complicated. Since the process approach is in effect a teaching approach and not a teaching method, process-based writing instruction may take on different meanings. The issue, therefore, according to Dahl and Farnan’s previously mentioned point, is to define the methods and means by which students can adopt more successful writing processes. In the light of current insights informing process-oriented pedagogy, it is suggested in this thesis that writing instruction be designed around the following six overarching objectives:

### **3.2 Objective 1: Students should develop a variety of competences and skills**

It has already been noted in the previous chapter (section 2.5) that L1 writers need three kinds of knowledge in order to write: a) knowledge of topic, b) knowledge of audience and c) stored writing plans (Flower and Hayes 1981:370). This means that a) they should know enough about the topic, b) write for a given audience and c) possess formal schemata, i.e. background knowledge of the organisational structure of different types of texts. Apart from these three kinds of knowledge, L2 writers need a fourth kind of knowledge, that of the target language.

The problem for L2 learners is that, unlike their L1 counterparts, they do not come to class with an interim grammar. Interim grammar is “a temporary grammatical system used by children learning their first language at a particular stage in their language development. Children’s grammatical systems change as they develop new grammatical rules; hence they may be said to pass through a series of interim grammars” (Richards and Schmidt 2002:266). Since L2 students do not have an implicit knowledge of grammar and syntax in the English language, they cannot make the connections between spoken and written language that native speakers do. And since they cannot easily fall back on the structures they use in speech in order to encode their messages, they find it difficult to express what they have in mind.

A number of experts, therefore, claim that novice EFL writers need some minimum linguistic competence before they can apply any sophisticated understanding of what the writing process is about. Linguistic competence is concerned with grammatical accuracy, i.e. the knowledge and skills to apply the rules of morphology, grammar, lexis and syntax. This kind of competence presupposes the internalisation of language rules and the correct usage of the language. There is no doubt, as Sengupta (1998:112) points out, that a ‘good’ text must be grammatically accurate. However, there is more to ‘good’ writing than grammatical accuracy. Students should know that a reasonable degree of grammatical accuracy is necessary but there are also other criteria which constitute a good text, such as appropriateness, sufficiency and organisation of information.

Referring to the same issue, Schoonen et al (2003:170) claim that there are “three components of knowledge and skills of fundamental relevance for writing proficiency: linguistic knowledge, metacognitive knowledge, and fluent access to linguistic knowledge”. When learners are able to access their lexical and grammatical resources automatically or fluently, they have more cognitive capacity for other higher level concerns such as text organisation. By claiming that “fluent access to words and phrases or grammatical structures in memory may lower the cognitive processing load for a writer and may thus enhance the writing process and possibly the quality of written text”, Schoonen et al stress the role of linguistic competence for writing ability (ibid:169). They do admit, however, that linguistic knowledge can facilitate but not guarantee the quality of the written text.

The reason is that the successful performance of communicative writing tasks depends on the development of a variety of complex skills and subskills as well as other competences, i.e. sociocultural and strategic competences. Sociolinguistic competence is concerned with the appropriate use of language rather than the correct usage. Learners with a highly developed sociolinguistic competence are able to produce appropriate language in an appropriate context and continue the flow of production, which will result in a coherent piece of text. This ability presupposes knowledge of sociocultural rules and rules of written discourse.

Knowledge of sociocultural rules involves skills to use the language according to the social functions it performs, since “performance should be directly related to contextual factors with appropriate attitudinal tone, style and register” (Dendrinos 1986:47). Rules of written discourse concern the knowledge about how “to use appropriate cohesion and coherence devices and to produce written discourse to be defined in terms of the communicative acts it performs” (ibid:48).

Strategic competence concerns the ability to use special writing strategies that “may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence” (Canale and Swain 1980:30). In an oversimplified statement, strategic competence presupposes the ability to manoeuvre our way around something when we don’t know it, i.e. paraphrasing unknown words.

In conclusion, the successful performance of tasks requires the development of a system of competences and a large number of complex skills, some of which are specific to writing alone. A lot of training is needed to develop this system of necessary skills and competences. Students should be led into training to perform writing tasks, moving from controlled and semi-controlled activities to gradually more free production. These activities should be selected in terms of the specific writing objectives they fulfil and in terms of the systems of competences and skills to be developed.

### **3.3 Objective 2: Students should write on a variety of tasks and for different audiences**

For the past few decades or so, the academic and professional community has treated writing as “a quintessentially social activity” (Temple et al 1988:211), which should be taught as “a highly social act” in writing process classrooms (Graves 1985:193). With this in mind, the development of students’ communicative competence becomes a major curricular goal and students are expected to understand that language is socially situated and therefore people communicate in different ways and use different kinds of linguistic forms to express different purposes (Mallett 1999:126). To achieve this goal, i.e. to develop students’ communicative potential, teachers should provide them with tasks which encourage the production of texts addressed to specific audiences (Hedge 1988:8). By encouraging the production of texts to specific readers, teachers help students appreciate language for the purpose of communicating meaning, and within the context of the whole text, focus on the rhetorical aspects of language, i.e. grammar, vocabulary, spelling and features of cohesion and coherence.

Returning once again to the significance of teaching writing as communication, it is important to stress the degree to which the writer can bring the text closer to the reader’s expectations. According to Widdowson (1983:38), the text itself is the product of the discourse process, i.e. the process of transferring information from sender to receiver. A smooth transfer of information is the mark of a well-written text. And the transfer will be smooth if the writer addresses the needs of the reader. As there are many types of discourse and text types, we should try to classify them and

describe their main characteristics. The reason is that each type uses language in a slightly different way and therefore has features which distinguish it from other types.

Being aware of the features which characterise different discourse types helps us to teach them. For example, O'Brien (1996:11), based on Crystal's (1988:88) list of distinguishing features, points out that all narratives relate a series of events, usually in the sequence they happened and typically involve the use of the simple past. All stories have a chronological sequence and time words (e.g. then, now, later, finally) help make this sequence clear. The sentences are usually short to give an effect of tension. As for information packaging, the normal pattern is 'old then new'. Moreover, a story includes characters and a plot. Another important story element is the setting. The setting (a description of the place, the weather, the time) often helps to create a mood or give information about the characters. Especially in news stories, information about who, what, when, and where appears in the lead and the sequence is followed with the help of headings and sub-headings. Cohesion is ensured with the use of pronouns, names, lexical items and temporal conjunctions. As for language forms, the most common ones are past tenses and the occurrence of direct speech. Being aware of these features helps students evaluate whether their story is well-written.

### **3.4 Objective 3: Students should write for a variety of purposes**

The purposes for writing are derived from the interaction among the writer, the reader and the subject. Britton et al (1975) in Beard (1984:53) argue that children need to write in three different modes: expressive, poetic and transactional. Writing in the expressive mode is seen in very young children's writing and expresses the writer's feelings. It is the free flow of ideas and feelings whereby the writer is in the centre. Poetic writing comes from the Greek word 'poieien' (to create) and covers both narrative and poetry. Writing in the poetic mode can be expressive and playful for the writer, who wants to entertain the reader. Finally, writing in the transactional mode also addresses a need in the writer. It transacts some real-world business, e.g. to persuade, describe, explain or give directions.

Kinneavy (1971) in Williams (1998:31) suggests a similar framework based on the so-called communication triangle, which takes into account the encoder-writer, the decoder-reader, the text and the world. Kinneavy's analysis of rhetorical discourse into expressive (emphasis on the writer), persuasive (emphasis on the audience), referential (emphasis on the subject matter) and aesthetic (emphasis on the verbal medium) allows for the classification of a wide variety of texts.

It seems that expressive writing has a key role to play in both frameworks. It is the kind of writing which verbalises the world of the writer, assumes a close relationship with the reader and is fairly unstructured (Beard 1984:54). Britton advocates the use of expressive writing for young children, as they need to shape their own experiences more than communicate. As Temple et al (1988:131) argue, "most children write first, and continue to write more easily, in the expressive mode". Young children are able to write about topics that are very concrete and have immediate connection to their everyday lives, social environment and interests. As for a sense of audience, they have not developed it yet, since they are too egocentric to think of the reader and consider how much information they share with him.

Children "approach the transactional and poetic modes only as they begin to think about the things their audience [...] may need to know, and as they begin to consider the structural requirements of the different forms of written composition" (Temple et al 1988:135). What is more, the nature of the writing task clearly affects the writers' personal involvement and success. "Children need to be immersed in rich content if they are to write fluently in the transactional mode. Descriptive and expository writing require that children know and care about things to describe and explain. Argumentative writing requires that children have things they care to argue about" (ibid: 210).

Given that the expressive language function comes naturally to children, it seems more appropriate to start writing in the expressive mode and gradually promote the other two modes. Also, there is considerable evidence that young writers can perform much better at certain kinds of writing such as narrative, because they possess a well-developed structural schema from their listening and reading, which helps them understand and produce stories (Beard 1991:232). In later years, close examination of

texts can familiarise students with different kinds of discourse, help them see how skilled writers make use of rhetorical resources in different contexts and facilitate the practice of these devices in their own writing.

### **3.5 Objective 4: Students should plan, draft, revise and edit ideas and forms of expression in their writing**

EFL teachers who want to teach writing are sooner or later confronted with a dilemma: should the quality of ideas gain priority over language forms? Which aspect of writing deserves more attention? The fluency - accuracy dilemma becomes central not only to the teaching of writing but to all aspects of foreign language teaching. Zamel (1983:184) claims unequivocally that “language can best be promoted when language is used purposefully and communicatively, when language is viewed as the means for true expression, when language accuracy serves linguistic fluency and is subordinate to it. [...] The language learning process characterised in this way, as a process of making meaning, parallels exactly the process of composing”. Timm’s (1992:4) assertion that it is important to focus on “the message before the accuracy” when the goal is to develop the student’s communicative competence, also translates into a similar perspective.

Although the message is of utmost importance for the process approach, the accuracy of the final product cannot be disregarded. As Marius (1992:474) graphically puts it, “writing process makes final sense only if there is an ideal out there, a goal, an end that shapes the steps of the process. This goal requires some consensus on what the product of the freshman writing course should be. It is just this consensus that is entirely lacking in the discipline. In consequence, the writing process movement runs the risk of resembling the mad architect who thinks that construction is the all-important task but who has no idea of what the building will look like in the end”.

Indeed, a number of authors claim that fluency and accuracy should be treated as “complementary and interdependent phenomena” (Widdowson 1983:39). Wingard (1981:140) notes that writing as a channel, i.e. the practice of linguistic forms, and writing as a goal, i.e. the development of writing strategies, are really “inseparable”. Hence, any kind of writing model needs a consistent pedagogy, which accounts for

the process and the product as interdependent and complementary components of the act of writing. Current pedagogy is in fact concerned with merging process and product. Many writers talk about a ‘process/product hybrid’ (Dyer 1996:316), a ‘reconciliation’ (Hamp-Lyons 1986:793), a ‘combination’ (Grabe and Kaplan 1996:132) or a ‘synthesis’ of EFL writing methodologies (Raimes 1991:422). We must be careful, however, about how we can teach both the process and the product in tandem, otherwise we might send to our students conflicting messages about what we want them to do. One way to deal with this problem is to establish priorities.

The implication of this view, according to Mayher, Lester and Pradl (1983:4), is that the process approach should treat writing as “a developmental process, which first emphasises fluency, then clarity and finally correctness”. Fluency is associated with the prewriting and drafting stages of the process, clarity with revising, and correctness with editing and publishing (ibid:6). The writing process is roughly divided into three stages: the prewriting or rehearsing, the writing or drafting and the rewriting or revising (Murray 1980:19). The rehearsing stage prepares the students for writing, the drafting is a tentative form of writing and the revising helps the writing say what it intends to say. These stages blend and overlap but they are also distinct parts of the composing process. They involve a constant backward and forward movement and interaction, which helps the writer discover and produce meaning. Given the recursive nature of the writing process, i.e. “the constant interplay of thinking, writing and rewriting” (Zamel 1983:172), writing instruction should focus on each of the following stages:

- **Pre-writing**

Students should be provided with enough opportunities in the pre-writing stage to prepare for their work. As Wingard (1981:144) puts it, “a written exercise without oral preparation tends to be more of a test than a training exercise”. Thus, the design of the writing tasks should include pre-writing stimulating activities, which will help students generate content by activating their existing schemata and prior knowledge. Brainstorming, discussion, questions and answers, clustering, and word listing are some of the most popular instructional techniques for activating prior knowledge and providing input.



- **Responding and Revising**

Responding in the writing process is seen as reacting to the content, quality of ideas, style and language of a paper rather than merely grading, marking, or correcting it. Novice writers need specific feedback from the teacher concerning not only their language but also the reader's perspective in order to produce writing which is coherent and comprehensible. They need to develop a sense of the reader 'on the other side'. Teachers, therefore, should be trained to change their approach to responding to students' writing. By looking more closely at their students' texts and becoming more specific and assertive in their responses, they can help their students discover the power of writing as a means of shaping ideas and clarifying meanings rather than as a way of correcting errors or fulfilling a class requirement. Viewed from this perspective, revision can become more than formal correction. The next two chapters will refer extensively to revision and the ways in which students can negotiate meaning during the process.

- **Editing**

“Overloading a student with corrections serves no real purpose except to undermine her confidence as a writer” (Mayher, Lester and Pradl 1983:139). Instead, the teacher can help the learners identify their mistakes and monitor their production. Such experiences as revising and editing not only help the learners' immediate performance but also nourish the process of learning and their metacognitive awareness. The next section sheds more light on the issue of error correction.

- **Presentation**

Presentation offers a real reason for writing. Papers can be displayed on the classroom bulletin-board or wall, or read out in class or put together in a class anthology. This part of the process is extremely invaluable, as it boosts self-esteem and pride, and hence increases motivation.

### **3.6 Objective 5: Students should write in a supportive environment**

Issues of motivation and positive emotions always come to the fore when it comes to promoting effective language learning. With regard to writing, Arndt (1987) stresses that although writing itself is “an act of public commitment”, effective writing is “a matter of personal commitment”. This means that motivated learners will commit themselves to the effort of learning how to write. Arndt indicates that, like all other skills, writing is intention-driven, and that no writing, without a plausible personal intention can be expected to succeed. Motivation will initiate and sustain students’ efforts towards the specific goal. Put another way, if students regard writing as a meaningful activity, they are likely to devote their effort to the pursuit of this goal.

Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987:91) argue that “composition itself, as a process, is intrinsically meaningful to children”. Writing caters for children’s physical needs because it engages them in a physical activity, communicative needs because it helps them express their personalities, cognitive needs because it provides them with cognitive challenges and affective needs because it offers them satisfaction. Writing, Murray (1980:22) claims, satisfies Man’s primitive need “to experience experience by articulating it”. On the other hand, there are authors who are less comfortable with this concept. Mayher, Lester and Pradl (1983:7) claim that “nothing we can say to students will convince them that writing will be of value to their present and future lives”.

Although it may be difficult to convince students about the value of writing as an important skill and a tool for learning, it does not seem so difficult to convince them about its power to communicate with others. One way to ensure that writing is meaningful to EFL learners is to provide them with a variety of purposeful communicative class activities but also the sense of a reader. Students are well aware that the assumed audience is in fact their teacher. Teachers, therefore, should help young writers feel that what they have to say is important to the people around them. The sense of success and satisfaction that students experience when a caring reader, i.e. the teacher or peers, appreciates their texts is a key factor in sustaining motivation (Willis 1996:14). Moreover, the use of final publication contributes greatly to a sense of achievement as real writers (Sargeant 1995:71; Rief 1985:144).

Another parameter relating to motivation is error treatment. Writing instruction for EFL students is not only concerned with the appreciation of their creations and their growth as writers, but also with their development as language users. Students must also discover what is ungrammatical and thus incorrect in their writing. However, our aim should be to help them become creative and effective writers rather than anxious writers who constantly worry about making mistakes.

Research suggests that an overemphasis on error and correction inhibits the development of fluency in writing since learners, especially the younger ones, decide not to take risks, by writing only what they know well, thus avoiding errors to the detriment of content and ideas (Lightbown and Spada 1999:122). As Timm (1992:4) puts it, „grundsätzlich sollten Fehlerkorrekturen im Rahmen einer positiven emotionalen Beziehung zwischen Lehrer und Schüler stattfinden. Vor allem Tadel hat meist eine demotivierende Wirkung und führt leicht zur sofortigen Aufgabe jeglicher Bemühungen“.

What is more, we should not forget that ‘interlanguage’, i.e. the developing foreign language knowledge, is “dynamic, continually evolving”, for EFL learners constantly revise their hypotheses about the target language (Lightbown and Spada 1999:74). When a child acquiring his mother tongue produces forms which are incorrect or deviant, we interpret his incorrect utterances as a sign of progress, that is, his errors provide the evidence that he is in the process of acquiring the language. In the case of an EFL learner, it would seem plausible to adopt a similar attitude. Therefore, errors should not always be interpreted as signs of failure because they are often an indication of progress (Pery-Woodley 1991:70).

In the same vein, Corder (1984:25) argues that learners’ errors are evidence that they are learning a language system, and reveal their knowledge of this system to date. “We can regard the making of errors as a device the learner uses in order to learn. It is a way the learner has of testing his hypotheses about the nature of the language he is learning”. As a consequence, “errors are not to be regarded as signs of inhibition, but simply as evidence of his strategies of learning” (ibid:27).

Moreover, as Leki (1992:106) points out, errors are divided into careless errors and language-learning errors. Students are able to correct careless errors throughout the process on their own. However, as mentioned earlier, many of the errors students make are images of their interlanguage, hence students cannot identify them, simply because their interlanguage does not allow their recognition. Editing then can take place with the help of the teacher, who locates the errors, explains them and involves students in error correction. In this way, students are more likely to retain feedback, for “they are forced to approach error correction as a problem-solving activity” (Robb, Ross and Shortreed 1986:85).

### **3.7 Objective 6: Students should be exposed to a variety of stimulus materials**

There is substantial evidence that reading and writing are complementary activities and that students learn about written language by being exposed to it. (Byrne 1988:9; Chew 1985:169-173; Hemming 1985:55). Willis (1996:11) highlights the importance of exposing students to a rich but comprehensible input of real language in use. On the same line, Wells (1986:201) suggests that “writing is nurtured by the experience of other texts”. Eisterhold (1990:88) points out that reading helps the writer get the ‘feel’ for the look and texture of a reader-based text. Addressing the same issue, Scott and Ytreberg (1990:5) suggest that reading and writing are both “extremely important for the child’s growing awareness of language and for their own growth in the language”.

Since young learners imitate styles, they need to internalise models of good writing (Chilver and Gould 1982:39; Rief 1985:139). They need “models that will provide the linguistic input to the writing skill that is analogous to the natural language necessary to oral development” (Koch 1982:467). These models can come from authentic materials including literature. McConaghy (1990:42) argues that “literature in the classroom gives children a rich resource to draw from, not only for writing, but for all language and literacy learning”. Hedge (1994:9) claims, however, that models of texts should not be used as a straitjacket requiring students to transfer the language from a specific piece of discourse to their own writing. Rather, they should be used as resources in order to build an awareness of discourse organisation and patterns, which can be practised and reviewed within the context of the students’ own texts.

### **3.8 Closing comment**

Since young EFL learners are unskilled EFL writers and only moderately skilled L1 writers, it is easy to understand why writing is for them one of the most complex, demanding and difficult activities they are expected to perform, and why it takes them so long to acquire and develop it. What is more, since we are no longer interested simply in getting students to produce grammatically correct patterns and our overall aim is to get them to interact in ways that are socially appropriate and to communicate effectively in real life situations, we are now concerned with teaching them the sort of language that people really use. To succeed in this goal, we should give students sufficient time to write, an audience to read their writing, feedback, a large amount of comprehensible input from which to draw natural language and encouragement to proceed despite the difficulties. If we admit that the six criteria presented above offer the methodological basis for the teaching of writing in the EFL classroom, then we may have identified a way to promote a writing experience which can bring students closer to what they can and like to do with support and encouragement along the way.

## **CHAPTER 4 REVISION ISSUES AND THE ROLE OF FEEDBACK**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The discussion in Chapter 2 made it clear that writing is a problem-solving process, which involves a hierarchy of subprocesses, in which the writer moves from higher-order to lower-order concerns: from planning the shape of the text, through selecting ideas, to choosing forms to express these ideas, constantly evaluating the text and revising both text and goals accordingly. In consequence, learning to master the skills of writing involves “a set of abilities which include both ‘lower-order’ skills, such as the automation of handwriting and spelling, and ‘higher-order’ competencies, such as problem-solving strategies and manipulation of abstract thought” (Forrester 1996:171). Writers who focus their attention on both lower-order and higher-order concerns utilise writing as an intellectual tool. “The key to allowing this to occur is revision” (Krashen 1989:115).

Of the whole composing process, it is the act of revision which has received the most extensive research study mainly because of its potential to function as a tool for learning. A large body of research, reviewed below, has compared writers at different levels of skill or experience: experienced vs. inexperienced writers, first-year students vs. upper-level students, student vs. professional writers. This chapter reviews what these research studies have to offer in answer to the following questions: What patterns characterise skilled and unskilled writers’ revision processes? What difficulties do young learners face with revision? What are the limitations of traditional approaches to revision? What are the effects of different social situations on revision and performance? What are the implications for teaching?

### **4.2 The importance of substantive revision**

The view that revision is synonymous with correction is still quite widespread in school settings. This view is attributable mainly to instructional practices that treat revision as error hunting rather than as rethinking one’s work. One of the things teachers urge inexperienced writers to do before turning in their work is to proofread it and try to edit at least some of their errors. As a result, students see revision as

correction or an indication that they have failed to get it right the first time. Revision, however, is not just correction. Revision involves the editing of text, but more importantly, the re-seeing of content and form both during and after the actual text production.

Revision is often defined as the last stage in the process of composing (prewriting - writing - revising). It consists, according to Rau (1994:69), of three phases: a) Entdeckungsphase (discovering a dissonance between written expression and mental intentions), b) Identifizierungsphase (the identification of the dissonance) and c) Bearbeitungsphase (the change with which the dissonance is eliminated). In the same vein, Flower et al (1986) propose a cognitive model of revision, which identifies three stages of the revision procedure: 1) task definition (which allows the writer-reviser to specify his goals), 2) evaluation (which leads to problem representation) and 3) strategy selection (which can possibly lead to transformation of the text).

It is important to stress that revision is a recursive rather than linear process, with writers moving back and forth among the various activities of composing. Murray (1980:7-12) talks about two functions of revision: a) the retrospective, evaluative function of revision, which allows writers to compare what they have written with what they meant, and b) the prospective and generative function, which helps writers to discover what the text produced so far suggests about the form, content, and direction of the text about to be written. Revision, therefore, may occur at any point during the development and production of a piece of writing and can guide the design, testing, and redesign involved in that process.

It is clear that revision means making any change at any point in the writing process. However, the focus in this thesis is not on the process of making changes throughout the writing of a draft to make the draft congruent with the writer's intentions. Nor is it on rereading a draft in order to discover what comes next. Rather, the focus is on revision as rewriting in order to develop and improve a piece of writing. This focus on the post-completion mode of revision is justified on the grounds that the present thesis is concerned with teacher feedback and its role as a basic tool for improving writing quality. In most classroom situations, teacher feedback is given to the student after the completion of a draft. This means that the student rereads his draft after the passing of

a period of time and considers the option to make revisions, which might lead to more writing or to changes at the level of meaning. This kind of revision is not possible within the limits of a single lesson and can only be made at a distance.

Gaining distance from a draft means gaining distance from the mental position or stage of thinking that produced the draft. Gaining distance from this position, usually by putting the draft aside for a period of time, provides the student with a different perspective, one that helps him either to confirm the validity of what he has written or discover better alternatives. As a result, this study is intended to examine the effects of revision as the process of stepping back from a completed draft and engaging in making changes at the rhetorical and structural levels as well as at the level of spelling, grammar, and mechanics.

### **4.3 The revision processes of skilled and unskilled writers**

The last twenty years or so have witnessed the publication of a plethora of studies giving empirical evidence about the revising behaviours of successful and unsuccessful writers. These studies seem to have yielded consistent results with regard to the differences between the so called expert, experienced, skilled or advanced writers and the novice, inexperienced, unskilled or basic writers. In general, research studies converge on the following two points:

- 1) Unskilled writers typically make low-level changes, such as rewording and error-hunting, and tend to revise less effectively than skilled writers.
- 2) Skilled writers exhibit a more sophisticated repertoire of revision strategies, since they treat revision as a process whereby ideas evolve, meanings are clarified and language becomes more accurate and coherent.

As already seen in Chapter 2 (section 2.5), much of the empirical work in the differences between skilled and unskilled writers has been based on Flower and Hayes (1981) and Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987), whose studies showed that mature writers are capable of reprocessing all the elements of the writing process from editing mistakes to reformulating goals and ideas, whereas immature writers' abilities of reprocessing are limited to changing words and adding content. In their widely quoted study, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) report that children rarely revise



spontaneously and that their revisions often degrade rather than improve the quality of the final product. Bereiter and Scardamalia suggest that the reason for this behaviour is not primarily located in the difficulty of the components of the process but in the lack of “executive procedures for bringing these into play” (Gelderen 1997:363).

Bereiter and Scardamalia have shown that when children are explicitly asked to revise and are given tools for this task, e.g. prompt cards, they are actually able to identify their problems and show that they possess skills for revision. In experiments carried out with L1 students of grades four to eight, Bereiter and Scardamalia adopted a model of revision called the CDO model (compare - diagnose - operate) and employed the technique of “procedural facilitation” (Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987:57). The children were encouraged to evaluate parts of their texts, diagnose problems and change their formulations. They moved from a view of revision as merely thinking of something more to say to pinpointing specifically what could be changed in their writing and were found to use the procedure effectively during composing (ibid: 296).

Fitzgerald (1988) reported that children rarely engage in revision on their own initiative and when they do revise, they have difficulty in doing so. Fitzgerald (1988:125) argues that there are a number of reasons that account for children’s difficulty in revising effectively. Children may have trouble establishing clear goals for their own texts. Egocentricity prevents them from identifying problems in a text because they cannot write and read from a reader’s perspective. They find it hard to think simultaneously about what they want to write and how to write it. They have difficulty in pinpointing what or where changes need to be made even if they are aware of the problems. They do not know how to make changes or even if they know how to revise, they may not be able to manage the whole process.

Other studies also stress the relationship between children’s egocentricity and resistance to revision (Matsushashi and Gordon 1985:227). Tann (1991:189) reports that “children are willing to rub out and alter letter shapes or spellings, but are rarely willing to revise or edit” whereas Dahl and Farnan (1996:58) point out that some young writers “see their writing as fixed and nonnegotiable” and that “these writers like their writing the way it is”. However, as writers mature in age or ability, their

revision skills improve and their pattern of revision shifts from surface-level changes to higher-level changes.

Faigley and Witte's (1981) textual studies investigated the differences among three different groups of writers: inexperienced students, advanced students and expert adults. Faigley and Witte found that expertise was associated with the quality of revision rather than with the quantity. For example, the expert adult writers revised less frequently than the advanced writers but made a greater percentage of meaning-based changes than either of the other two groups (ibid:407). The inexperienced students made more revisions than the experts but they changed the surface of their texts rather than the meaning. Of the three groups, the advanced students made the most revisions, but compared with the experts, they made a smaller percentage of meaning-based revisions.

Faigley and Witte (1984:111) suggested that the frequency of revision is the result of inadequate planning, which makes writers write several drafts and make several changes. In addition, Faigley and Witte observed that expert and experienced writers made more revisions than inexperienced student writers during the writing of the first draft. They also found that experienced writers focused on global and meaning-related changes, leaving the surface-level changes until the final stage of the revision. Faigley and Witte concluded that the less experienced writers had more surface errors to cope with and thus could not see beneath the surface whereas the more experienced writers made fewer surface errors and thus were not concerned with surface-level revisions.

A study by Perl (1979) also showed that unskilled writers were mainly concerned with the detection and correction of errors and that the greatest percentage of their revisions was changes of form. Perl observed that students revised frequently but were preoccupied with surface correctness, which continually interrupted their drafting. "What they seem to lack as much as any rule", Perl concluded, "is a conception of editing that includes flexibility, suspended judgment, the weighing of possibilities, and the reworking of ideas" (Perl 1979:333).

Bridwell (1980:219) also reported differences in the revising behaviour of expert and novice writers and attributed them to "developmental differences" between the

writers. Like Faigley and Witte, Bridwell observed that expert writers made more changes during the writing of their first draft than inexperienced writers and that novice writers revised either very little or extensively at surface and word levels. Interestingly, Bridwell's study of twelfth-graders' revising strategies also revealed that papers revised between drafts were rated more highly than those revised extensively during the writing of the first draft (ibid:212-217). Bridwell suggested that the extensive mid-draft revisions were only superficial, as the writers were "mired in spelling and mechanical problems during drafting" whereas revising between drafts appeared to lead to higher-level revisions.

Sommers (1980:381) investigated the revision strategies of L1 college student writers and expert writers and found that student writers defined revision as editing and rewording whereas expert writers treated revision as a search for meaning and a search to communicate ideas more effectively. The greatest numbers of revisions made by student writers were at the word and phrase levels with lexical deletions and substitutions being the most frequent operation. By contrast, the revisions made by experienced adult writers were distributed at all levels (word, phrase, clause, sentence) with addition being the major operation. The experienced writers' revisions suggested that experienced writers perceived more alternatives than less experienced writers.

Sommers (1980:387) also suggested that novice college writers often cannot see any dissonance between what they mean and what they actually write. This happens, she argued, because they reread their writing at much lower levels of abstraction than experts, finding and solving problems only at the level of words and sentences. Sommers concluded that the college students in her study revised as they did because "they were simply doing what they have been taught to do in a consistently narrow way", suggesting the lack of instruction in global revising strategies and the need to inform students' revision practices.

Birnbaum (1982:253-255) also reported differences between fourth- and seventh-grade writers. Birnbaum's protocol analysis showed that the more proficient writers paused more often in order to reread and plan. These writers had a greater range of alternative strategies at their disposal and were able not only to choose among these

alternatives but also to explain what they had been thinking while writing. By contrast, the less proficient writers were “enmeshed at the surface level of the task” and had more difficulty explaining what they were doing. They were primarily concerned with writing neatly and correctly, therefore, their only purpose for revising was to check their writing for error.

Similar patterns have been reported in research with EFL learners. A number of researchers found that skilled and unskilled EFL writers have similar composing and revising skills to their L1 counterparts. Zamel (1983) observed that, overall, skilled EFL writers made substantial content changes on first drafts and addressed surface level features towards the end of the process whereas unskilled writers made fewer revisions and spent less time on task than the skilled writers. Phooi (1986) reported that the Chinese university students in his study mainly concentrated on surface changes, cognitively easier operations (additions, deletions, substitutions) and lower level changes mainly at word level. Hall (1990) found that advanced EFL writers made primarily meaning-preserving changes (i.e. changes that do not alter the meaning of the sentence) and surface changes at the word and phrase level. Moon’s study (2000) with EFL learners aged between ten and twelve showed that the most common revision operation carried out was addition at sentence and phrase level. However, the addition of new sentences did not entail the insertion of new material into the existing text.

Other research has looked at the ways in which context influences student writing and revision practices. Yagelski (1995) explored potential connections between the context of the writing classroom and the frequency and types of revisions of high school student writers. The findings were consistent with those of previous L1 studies in that students focused their revisions on surface and stylistic concerns and paid less attention to the organisation and content of their texts. Yagelski attributed the students’ concerns with form rather than content to specific features of the classroom context such as the interaction between students and teachers and the nature of teacher feedback (ibid:223). The role of teacher response has been stressed by other researchers. For example, Beach (1979) in Yagelski (1995:217) found that the high school students in his study were influenced in their revisions by their teacher’s evaluative comments.

Butler-Nalin's (1984) study of the revision practices of high school students showed different revision patterns according to the implied sense of audience. Texts written as a "teacher - learner dialogue" tended to have more revisions reflecting the working out of ideas, while those written to "the teacher - as - examiner" had more revisions concerned with the proper presentation of the material (ibid:132-133).

A few studies have observed the relationship between revision and language competence with contrasting results. Raimes (1985) found that despite their limited language proficiency, skilled EFL writers attended to content in much the same way as more proficient writers. Raimes also found that even though writers focused on word or sentence level changes, they were concerned with meaning at this level rather than correctness (ibid:246). Raimes used these findings to make the point that "with context, preparation, feedback, and opportunities for revision, students at any level of proficiency can be engaged in the discovery of meaning" (ibid: 250).

Unlike Raimes, Sengupta (1998:110) suggested that learners may need to reach a threshold level of L2 language competence or L1 writing expertise before they can fully benefit from revision. Lack of familiarity with the target language makes revision a difficult task especially for young students. Segupta suggested that if students have limited language proficiency, they might try to reduce the demands of the task by creating a new text or they might create new errors (ibid:128).

Other studies have investigated the ability of students to evaluate a written text. Samway (1993) investigated L2 children's evaluation criteria of a written text and found that the students were "critical evaluators" and "engaged readers" of the text. The older the students were (4<sup>th</sup>- 6<sup>th</sup> grade), the more comments on meaning they made. Samway suggested that the children's evaluation criteria were influenced by the instructional focus in their class. The classroom environment and the influence of the teacher played an important role in the development of these criteria. Likewise, Gelderen's study (1997) showed that EFL elementary students were able to evaluate parts of a text, diagnose problems and suggest effective changes under facilitating conditions.

Giannakopoulou's study (2002), which concerned four case studies of EFL children between six and ten, showed that the specific children were able to make revisions that related to language as well as content. Although these revisions were prompted by the teacher in one-to-one conferences, some children were able to free their own voice and show a remarkable growth in modified drafts. Overall, the results of that study suggested that it was possible to take those young learners through all the stages of the writing process with support along the way. The elements of the process which proved to be more difficult for them were planning and writing a reader-based text. The specific study also sought evidence that claimed signs of improvement between drafts. The findings led to the conclusion that, with the teacher's guidance, all the children were able to produce 'better' drafts in terms of fluency, accuracy and organisation.

#### **4.4 Pedagogical implications: Purposeful and dynamic involvement in student writing**

An overarching pedagogical recommendation in all the above studies is that student writers need to learn how to revise their writing and that instruction has an important role to play in this direction. Teachers cannot simply expect their students to train in writing by giving them a writing task and leaving them on their own. Moreover, they cannot simply suggest that their students revise without providing opportunities for further revision or requiring it (Zamel 1985:82). Even more importantly, they cannot expect their students to produce improved writing merely by requiring them to revise or spend more time redrafting. With regard to this issue, Faigley and Witte (1984:107) write: "The point for teachers is not to require [...] students to revise more, since unguided or misguided revision may actually be detrimental to the final product".

Taken together, the above studies also suggest that although some students do not understand the process of revision initially, the concept develops gradually with systematic exposure and the support of an experienced writer. Bruner (1960:33) argues that "any idea can be represented honestly and usefully in the thought forms of children of school age, and that these first representations can later be made more powerful and precise the more easily by virtue of this early learning". Children of late primary or early high school age are by nature endowed with the capacity to

undertake the process of discovery through language (Brewster, Ellis and Girard 1992:31). They are, according to Piaget in Miller (1989:56-68), at the concrete operational stage, i.e. a stage in which they construct an understanding of the world based on internalised, organised operations.

Operations are ways of collecting knowledge about the world and transforming it in the mind so it can be organised and used selectively in the solution of problems (Bruner 1960:35). An operation becomes internalised when “the child does not have to go about his problem-solving any longer by overt trial and error, but can actually carry out trial and error in his head” (ibid:36). This is not an easy undertaking given the nature of writing tasks. The problem with teaching problem-solving strategies arises from the fact that writing itself is an “ill-defined problem-solving activity” and as such it gives rise to “ill-defined solutions” (Spiro et al, 1987 in Grabe and Kaplan 1996:131).

Young learners, however, are able, according to Bruner’s previously mentioned views, to internalise processes and aspects of writing which are more easily translated into the language of their minds. Teachers, therefore, should assume the responsibility of intervening in order to make those abstract processes concrete enough to fit the students’ existing logical systems. They should intervene while the work is still in progress rather than judge the finished product. There is a real and effective role for them: to increase the opportunities for meaningful and purposeful revision.

Temple et al (1988:215) claim that meaningful revision is largely dependent on meaningful tasks: “Generally, when we write about things that matter to us and that we know about, we welcome the rehearsing and drafting stages for the chance to better express how we feel and say what we know. [...] On the other hand, if we are forced to write about issues that inspire no images or ones that strike no emotion, revision is pointless: we have nothing in mind that we’re trying to capture”. Revision from this perspective is the search for meaning. And meaning, as Elbow (1972:15) points out, “is not what you start out with but what you end up with”. In order to discover more meaning, students “must be made to understand that texts evolve, that revision is to be taken literally as a process of re-seeing one’s text, and that this re-seeing is an integral and recursive aspect of writing” (Zamel 1985:95).

Inexperienced writers, however, are “locked in by the myopia” of their own “low level goals” (Flower and Hayes 1981:379). In other words, many students look at their writing but cannot see beyond the surface. Since they cannot see what is missing from their paper, they need help from another person. To put it another way, they need to look at their writing with another person’s eyes. To those who might question this process, claiming that it intervenes with children’s spontaneity and personal thinking, Newkirk and Atwell (undated) say: “In teaching students to revise, [...], we are not denying them their childhood; we are giving them power to control their language and by extension their world”.

If revision in this sense is to progress, teachers themselves need to “re-view revision as a creative discovery procedure”, which allows student writers to discover both content and form (Taylor 1981:16). Piolat (1997:189) stresses the need for teachers to teach revision as a cognitive problem-solving process, which involves “the detection of mismatches between intended and instantiated texts, decisions about how to make desired changes, and the process of making these changes”. In a similar vein, Phooi (1986:71) suggests that teachers treat revision in its etymological sense, i.e. re-vision, thus expecting a revised work to bring in a new perspective and a restructuring of ideas.

A series of methodological issues emerge from the above views. Fitzgerald (1988) argues that the beneficial effect of revision should be seen in a larger programme of writing instruction where revision will be treated as an integral part of many types of writing. Zamel (1982:205-206) suggests multiple drafting as a way of discovering meaning. Multiple drafting places revision in the centre of the process and students realise “that several drafts may be needed before intention and expression become one”. Similarly, Chenoweth (1987) suggests that involving students in rewriting a topic more than once is more beneficial than giving them new assignments.

A number of researchers point to the problem of the ‘switched off monitors’ of novice writers and propose different forms of monitoring as the key to overcoming this problem. With respect to the monitoring of language, Wingard (1981:145) proposes the use of direct teacher intervention and “immediate checking of individuals’ work, and the possibility of reminding the whole class at a suitable point to check for a



particular type of error which is found to be occurring”. With regard to social interaction, some researchers argue that peer feedback can help learners monitor their writing (Keh 1990:295-298). A greater number of experts, however, recommend teacher-initiated feedback as a method for focusing students’ attention on their own texts in a more objective, reader-oriented way (Faigley and Witte 1981:411, Zamel 1982:206, Arndt 1993:91).

Bruffee (1984) supports the idea that writing can be facilitated with conversation among writers and that student writers should be given opportunities for this kind of constructive conversation. Graves (1983:153) proposes the use of teacher-student conferences, which can help learners make revisions at a much higher level than those made when they are working alone. Conferences work as scaffolds for revision, since the teacher provides students with appropriate content and formal schemata and offers them opportunities to discover ways of improving their production. Moreover, they help students overcome problems which are at the forefront of their minds while writing (Frankenberg-Garcia 1999:105). Calkins (1986) also suggests that students discuss their writing in class and especially the positive rather than negative aspects of their texts.

Publishing student writing has also been proposed as a powerful means of motivating revision. As already mentioned in Chapter 3 (section 3.5) publication instils pride and provides an incentive to produce good work. The acknowledgement of good writing helps build an awareness of the importance of writing. Giving students the opportunity to share their writing through paperback books, newspapers, newsletters, or presentations to other students reinforces the idea that quality matters and that quality is achieved through revision.

#### **4.5 The role of feedback in the revising process**

Surely, we take it for granted that feedback is a good thing for students. But what kind of feedback? In the school context, feedback should be seen as an operation through which the teacher or another knowledgeable speaker regulates the learning process by pointing out to the students a problematic area or a gap in their knowledge and helping them to discover new facts or new properties of reality in order to adapt better

to it. In the EFL writing class, in particular, feedback should be seen as one of the ways of helping students to produce writing which is precise, accurate and coherent. Feedback can take any form from an oral comment to a written response to a conference and is primarily provided by the teacher, who is still the main evaluator and respondent to students' writing.

- **Teacher-initiated feedback**

The beneficial effect of teacher-initiated feedback has been the object of research in a number of studies. In a study with seventh and eighth graders, Hillocks (1982) examined the effects of prewriting instruction, teacher comments and revision, and concluded that instruction which focused on specific goals and skills, coupled with specific teacher comments related to these skills, improved the quality of writing produced by the students. In another study, Robinson (1985) found that children in grades two to six produced better stories when they revised in response to teacher questions directed at specific content.

Research on L2 students' response to feedback shows that students appreciate the teacher's help when this is offered as a solution to a need (Harris 1978:89). Ferris (1995:47) asserts that students in general take their teacher's comments seriously and see them as an aid for their improvement. As Straub (1997:111-112) concludes after an exploratory study of students' reactions to teacher feedback, students prefer comments in the form of open questions, which help them find how they can improve their work, and criticise imperative comments which control their writing.

Other studies, however, have questioned the positive effects of teacher feedback. Sommers (1982) investigated the nature of teacher comments on college students' writing and found that the comments often took the students' attention away from their own purposes and focused on those of the teacher. Sommers suggested that teachers should design writing activities that allow students to establish purpose in their papers and that they should change the way they respond to students' writing.

- **Peer-initiated feedback**

Recent research has also investigated the effectiveness of peer response, particularly in the early stages of draft development. Different studies report mixed attitudes to peer feedback. Strong support for peer response groups in writing has come from theories which emphasise the social nature of learning, language and writing. Urzua (1987), working with EFL children, argues that peer conferences can be a very effective method of revision. Urzua claims that children's writing develops after participating in peer response sessions mainly because they learn to take a sense of audience into account. In these sessions, students should focus their attention on effective written communication and not only on grammatical correctness. Chaudron (1984), Jacobs (1987) and Keh (1990) suggest that peer response can improve writing quality and that improvement may happen in various ways, one of which is reading each other's drafts critically.

Graves (1983:282) proposes that the revision process be carried out in peer response groups where learners read their writing to the others, the group gives comments on specific areas and then the writer revises his text following these comments. Zhu (1995:493) succinctly describes the benefits of this kind of feedback: "Peer review sessions develop students' interpersonal skills and help students improve their writing by providing a stronger motivation for revision and by encouraging students to develop an audience awareness sensitized by feedback from multiple perspectives".

Other studies which have explored the effects of peer feedback stress that the students' attitudes to writing can be enhanced by the socially supportive peer group (Hughey et al 1983; Chaudron 1984; Davies and Omberg 1987; Stanley 1992). Furthermore, besides the effects of feedback on the recipient, research has suggested benefits to the respondent. Gelderen (1997) reported that improving someone else's text can help students become aware of problems that exist in their own texts. Evaluating the texts of others sharpens critical skills, and thus students become better at evaluating and revising their own writing.

The positive impact of peer responses on revision was, however, brought into question by other research. Connor and Asenavage (1994) investigated the types of

revision made by L2 university freshman students and the interrelationship of influences from peer comments and teacher comments. Although peer response was modelled and practised, the results were not positive. Connor and Asenavage pointed out that teachers should not assume that groups are working smoothly on their own. Rather, they should keep them on task and provide extensive and specific peer response training.

In a study by Linden-Martin (1997), it was found that most students preferred comments from their teacher to comments from other students. Students referred to mistrust of peer feedback and the fear of being ridiculed due to their limited language proficiency. Nelson and Carson's study (1998) explored Chinese and Spanish students' perceptions of the effectiveness of their peers' comments in peer response groups. The analysis indicated that students preferred negative comments, which identified problems in their drafts. They also preferred the teacher's comments to comments by other students, just like the students in Linden-Martin's study.

From the findings of the studies above, it is obvious that there are variations in the effectiveness of peer response in EFL writing classes. Nelson and Carson (1998:129) offer two possible explanations. The most obvious explanation is that EFL learners are developing both language and writing ability and may have difficulty in balancing both. Another explanation concerns the communication concept of power distance. Power distance is a measure of interpersonal power or influence between two persons. In countries with large power distance, teachers are viewed as the holders of truth and knowledge. Therefore, it is assumed that students from countries with a large power distance are less likely to appreciate their peers' comments than students from countries with a lower power distance.

#### **4.6 Critiques of traditional teacher response**

Engaging in giving feedback is not an easy task. Often teachers' previous experiences as language learners may have left them with limited feedback techniques, such as grades, vague comments and correction of surface errors. Developing his argument that such feedback techniques betray the influence of traditional instruction where the focus of feedback is on form and writing is evaluated as a final product, Murray

(1972:14) writes: “Naturally we try to use our training. It’s an investment and so we teach writing as a product, focusing our critical attentions on what our students have done, as if they had passed literature in to us. [...] Our students knew it wasn’t literature when they passed it in, and our attack usually does little more than confirm their lack of self-respect for their work and for themselves; [...] The product doesn’t improve, and so, blaming the student – who else? – we pass him along to the next teacher, who is trained, too often, the same way we were”.

Zamel (1985:79), who investigated teacher responses to student writing, reported that the teachers in her study read their students’ writing uncritically and offered comments which were unfocused, arbitrary or idiosyncratic, notwithstanding the fact that they (the teachers) rarely expected students to revise the text beyond the surface level (ibid:88). Zamel concluded that teachers responded to writing in this way because they viewed themselves as language teachers and not as writing teachers.

Another perspective on teacher comments was gained from the fact that teachers responded in an absolute rather than flexible way and as a result, they prompted students to revise according to the changes they imposed on their texts. Zamel (1985:80-81) criticised this kind of responding: “Students are thus given to understand that what they wanted to say is not as important as what their teachers wanted them to say. [...] When teachers appropriate writing in this way, they are obviously viewing texts as products to be judged and evaluated”.

Brannon and Knoblauch (1982:158) also commented on teachers’ tendency to “appropriate” students’ texts by taking “primary control of the choices that writers make,” an attitude which gives students the impression that what they wanted to say is less important than the teacher’s expectations about how they should have said it. Having explicitly rejected this kind of responding on the grounds that it “reflects the notion that composing is a matter of writing texts that conform to the models and paradigms imposed by the teacher or textbook”, Zamel (1985:95) noted that “students are less likely to take the kind of risks necessary for their development as writers” as a result of such responses.

Addressing the issue of teacher response, Koch (1982:469) is critical of the concept of hyper-correctness: “Paranoia about correctness continues to haunt us. [...] The teacher sits quietly (intentions hidden behind smiles and exercises), waiting with finger on the trigger for that culprit (the student paper) to raise his ugly head so that it can be blasted from here to kingdom come”. Temple et al (1988:216) also criticised another aspect of teacher response and their comment could not be more emphatic. “Writers, like target shooters, improve their aim as they see where their efforts go, which depends in large part on the nature of the response. Unfortunately, in many classrooms response is limited to bright stickers and stamped smiling faces. If we see our task as encouraging writing development, this type of response must yield to a more sensitive and knowledgeable commentary from the teacher”.

#### **4.7 The need for a reformed approach to feedback**

Zamel (1985:96) claims that revision will go beyond correction only if teachers emphasise the whole text over its parts. She also claims that “we need to establish priorities in our responses to drafts and subsequent revisions and encourage students to address certain concerns before others”. “Careful structuring” is the key to successful evaluation of writing. For example, teachers should begin their evaluations with specific suggestions which will help the writer improve the content and organisation of the text. It has already been noted that teachers should be active while writing is in progress and that they should facilitate revision by providing assistance before the paper is finished.

Krashen argues that feedback is useful only if given between drafts during the process (Davies and Omberg 1987:317). In this way, teachers can develop in the writers the awareness that “continual clarification and exploration may be necessary before one’s meaning becomes articulated” (Zamel 1985:95). Teachers can draw the students’ attention to certain aspects of writing through the use of questions or by modelling the evaluation criteria. They can monitor the relationship between the emerging draft, the writer’s purpose and the audience’s likely reaction. They can promote in this sense a kind of rhetorical revision.

#### **4.8 A change of roles for teachers and learners**

Many researchers who have investigated revision processes and feedback techniques have reported instances of role conflict. For example, Keh (1990) reported that it is difficult to separate the roles of interested reader, writing teacher and grammarian when responding to a learner's text. Leki (1990) commented on the schizophrenic role of the writing teacher, who has to play the part of reader in addition to that of coach and evaluator of student writing.

Supporters of the process approach have recommended a change of roles. For example, Zamel (1985) suggests that the role of teachers should change from the role of authority, judge and evaluator to that of consultant, assistant and facilitator. Blanton (1987:113) also proposes the roles of the teacher as a "fellow writer, responder and assistant editor" and those of the learner as the writer, editor and audience. Czerniewska (1992:111) suggests that the teacher give up the role of "the sole arbiter of the text quality" and take up the role of the reader and the counselor. Czerniewska also suggests that the teacher discuss all the strengths and weaknesses of the next draft along with the other learners who act as peer respondents. In this sense, teachers and learners become "co-inquirers in an intellectual enterprise" (Zamel 1987:710).

Classroom atmosphere plays an important role in the effective adoption of these roles. An atmosphere of "a writing workshop" (Hedge 1988:11) and "an atmosphere of trust" (Zamel 1985) is created when writing is treated as a social activity and not as an isolated task (Czerniewska 1992:111). Learners should know that they need not be isolated in their struggle with the writing task and that they can share experiences and feelings. The stance taken by the teacher is highly important in helping to develop "a cooperative, learner-centred environment in the writing classroom, which should function as a community of writers and readers" (Tribble 1996:125).

#### **4.9 Closing comment**

The intention of this chapter was two-fold: a) to present the differences in revising behaviours between experienced and inexperienced writers in both L1 and L2 contexts and the various ways these differences have been justified and b) to highlight a number of issues which have been identified as contributing to effective revision. Included amongst these are active involvement, a focus on both lower-order and higher-order concerns and the transition from traditional feedback to a reformed kind of focused response. Particular attention was paid to the role that teacher feedback has to play as a means of promoting substantive student revision with an instructional emphasis on fluency, organisation and mechanics. This shift of attention presupposes a change of teachers from judges to coached evaluators who help inexperienced writers focus on issues they are less likely to notice on their own. The next chapter uncovers the social relations which might influence students' revision processes and the ways in which teacher feedback might scaffold learning and help students in changing from 'correctors' to 'revisers'.



## **CHAPTER 5            AN INTERACTIVE MODEL OF REVISION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Nearly every study in chapter 4 delivered similar results concerning the abilities and skills of inexperienced writers. Generally, beginning writers do not make substantial revisions when they reread their texts but they do engage in a greater number of revisions when another person points out what could be revised. The role of feedback, that is the information a reader (teacher) provides to the writer for revision, is critical in the process. This indicates that the development of writing ability is linked not only to matters of individual cognition but also to social factors.

Returning once again to the relationship between individual performance and social interaction, one needs to be reminded of the role of social interaction and its effects on the minds of the learners. This chapter attempts to highlight the connection between a sociocognitive theory of writing and the purposes of this study by presenting a model of revision, which focuses on interpersonal and intrapersonal interaction, negotiation and metacognition. (For practical reasons, the student writer will be referred to as ‘he’ and the teacher reader as ‘she’).

### **5.2 A sociocognitive approach to the teaching of writing**

As noted in the previous chapters, recent years have seen a great interest in the role that activity and social interaction play in cognitive development and learning. Given that there are a variety of schools of thought associated with the social constructivist tradition, each with its own distinctive philosophical viewpoints, it is necessary to clarify the particular perspective from which writing instruction will be approached in this thesis. As noted in Chapter 2 (section 2.6), both Piaget and Vygotsky claimed that children construct meaning through active experiences. Vygotsky went a step further to emphasise the efficacy of social interaction in bringing about cognitive progress.

In fact, Vygotsky placed a far greater emphasis on the aspect of social interaction with adults, which scaffolds children’s understanding and problem-solving. He claimed that children are capable of solving problems jointly (i.e. with the help of others)

before they can solve them alone. Vygotsky, therefore, viewed the interaction between a more skilled partner and a less skilled partner, often an adult and a child, as capable of supporting cooperative working and advancing thinking.

On balance, the constructivist (Piagetian) and social constructivist (Vygotskian) views provide the theoretical framework for the revision model adopted in this thesis. More specifically, the model revolves around a sociocognitive theory of learning, which synthesises cognitive, social and linguistic components. The model, therefore, has a strong theoretical justification. It is based on the premise that the driving force behind children's learning is their own active participation, but also that their thinking is challenged by the intervention of the teacher. This premise has serious pedagogical implications for teaching: awareness-raising and intervention.

The messages from research suggest that these two elements are the two most crucial elements of process writing pedagogy (Susser 1994:31). Discussing the immediate connection between social constructivism and process writing, Pollard (1997:126) writes: "[...] children develop their work through successive drafts, sharing them and eliciting comments from the teacher and other children at each stage, until they reach the point of 'publication'. The comments along the way provide a supportive challenge to the writer and scaffold his or her thinking so that the quality of the work is refined". Whilst the writing ability can develop when the individual as an active agent constructs meaning through a process of discovery (awareness), instruction serves to assist the students in this process of discovery (intervention). The teacher intervenes in the process in order to help students identify and then emulate the behaviours of successful writers.

It appears, therefore, that both awareness-raising and intervention are of great importance in the writing process. As O'Brien (2000:15) puts it, "both teacher and learner have crucial roles to play and they must cooperate to fulfil them". The role of the teacher is essential in helping students develop strategies that will enable them to respond to the demands and constraints of different task environments as well as identify the mental processes that occur while writing and develop them by practice. In fact, as Flower and Hayes suggest, recognising and exploring the rhetorical problem is a "teachable process" and the student can acquire problem-solving

strategies from social interaction with the teacher (Grabe and Kaplan 1996:116). Therefore, intervention or, what might be a better description of this joint working, interaction is instrumental in the awareness-raising of the process.

The kind of learning-through-guidance experience that is proposed in this model is close to what Flower (1994:119) calls “cognitive apprenticeship”, which depends on three main methods of instruction: “The first is to *model* expert performance, demonstrating / expressing the thinking process, which learners may never see in traditional expository instruction. The second is to *coach*, working directly with the learner’s own performance to diagnose problems and shape it in action. The third is to *offer a scaffold* for the learner’s performance (providing the prompts and support at key points that allow the learner to succeed in the task) and then to *fade* out of the performance, relinquishing control, withdrawing structure and intervention as the learner takes over the process him or herself”.

### **5.3 An interactive model of revision: Negotiated meaning and process**

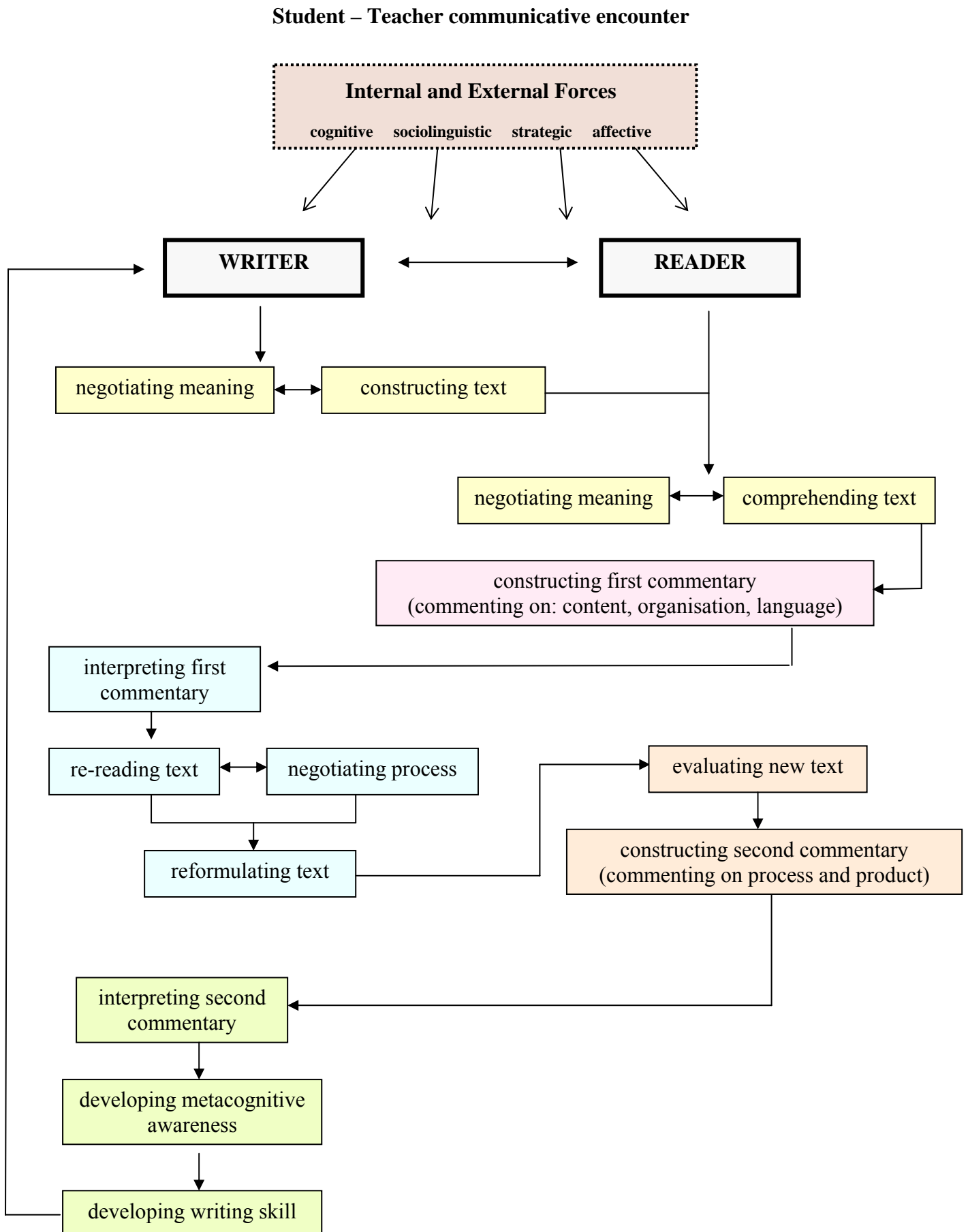
Where exactly does the social constructivist theory fit in this study and how do we teach the sociocognitive process that writing is? The answer lies in an interactive model of revision. This model entails a great deal of close contact among students and teachers, and it is both individualised and collaborative. The model mirrors an integrated vision of revision as an individual cognitive process, in which the writer thinks his way through writing but also as a social cognitive process, which supports and actively engages the writer and the reader in critical thinking about the writing. More specifically, the model envisions a communicative exchange between two partners, the student-writer and the teacher-reader, collaborating in order to develop awareness of revision strategies and establish criteria for effective writing.

The tool for stimulating this kind of process is the teacher feedback. The feedback functions as a scaffold, i.e. a supportive structure, which helps the student perform the act of revision. The revision process, in other words, is scaffolded by a set of strategic and rhetorical prompts, through which the knowledgeable reader explicitly teaches strategies for writing and revising, and raises in this way the writer’s strategic and rhetorical awareness.

The model is interactive because, although the communication between the teacher and the student is written, it involves a kind of interaction that arises between individuals in a goal-directed activity. As Zaki and Ellis (1999:151) argue, with reference to current theories of reading, the input from a written text can be viewed as “interactionally derived, although reading involves intrapersonal rather than interpersonal interaction”. Zaki and Ellis make the point that although a written text looks more like a monologue, it is also a potential dialogue between reader and writer, suggesting that the contact of the reader with the text is a form of interaction. Unlike the interaction between participants in a conversation, the interaction of the teacher-student dyad is non-reciprocal. Reader and writer interact in writing to achieve understanding. Both partners write and read each other’s writing in order to understand the intentions and the expectations of one another. A kind of metaphorical dialogue, therefore, takes place, in which the novice writer shares knowledge, skills and strategies with an experienced reader and learns from this experience.

The conceptual framework of the process (Fig.1, p.57) depicts the whole communicative encounter. The rectangles with the bold outline indicate that the model focuses on the relationship between the writer and the reader. The diagram illustrates a causal chain indicated by the arrows. Some arrows show one-way influence, others two-way. The two-way arrows illustrate the interrelationships between the subprocesses. The labels in the bins show a series of communicative events, into which the student and the teacher enter during the communicative encounter: the student constructs a text, the teacher responds to this text with a written commentary, the student revises the text taking this commentary into consideration and then the teacher reads the revised text and responds to the product and the process of revision with a second commentary. The student reflects on the second commentary and develops his metacognitive awareness and, by implication, his writing skill. There are two kinds of feedback in this process: one is in the middle of the process (first commentary) and looks at how the writing is progressing, and the other at the end (second commentary) and checks whether the writing has achieved the desired effect and what can be learned for next time.

**Fig. 1: An Interactive Model of Revision: Negotiated Meaning and Process**



Only the first commentary becomes the object of research in this thesis because it is the feedback which directly affects the writer's revisions. By receiving this kind of feedback from the teacher, the writer can fill in the gaps in his understanding, correct misconceptions, make connections between new information and previous learning, and develop new problem-solving skills and knowledge. Consequently, the role of this commentary is catalytic in the process of revision.

Another function of the first commentary is that it initiates cooperation and negotiation between reader and writer. The issue of negotiation plays a critical role in the interaction. Negotiation is a process by which writers construct, reconstruct, transform or reformulate meaning. There are different instances of negotiation in the process described in this chapter. Negotiation happens when the writer is directing his text at a reader and is consciously or not considering the reader's presumed knowledge and expectations. Negotiation happens when the teacher comments on the writing and tries to find a common ground of language and world knowledge with the writer. Finally, negotiation becomes more explicit when the writer considers possible revisions and makes the final decisions. As Riley (1985:61) points out, interactive discourse is "a dynamic process for establishing common ground and intersubjective meaning, for coming to terms". This is the kind of negotiation that takes place between the writer and the reader. The decisions which inform the revision process are open to negotiation and therefore this decision-making process can be seen as a dynamic process for coming to terms about a proposed course of action. The teacher proposes and the learner decides.

In conclusion, the communication between teacher and student is accepted as a contract according to which the teacher undertakes to respond to the student's writing in such a way that it enables rewriting, the student undertakes to accept the teacher's revisions as the basis for a second writing, and both agree that this rewriting reflect the original and the revision to some extent. It assumes a kind of business relation in which both partners can legitimately gain a profit if they invest the requisite capital. The aim of the contract is to produce a piece of writing which is an improvement on the original, but is still recognisably the student's own product.

### **5.3.1 The first event of communication: the reader interacts with the writer's text**

The first event of interaction involves the writer, the reader and the text. The teacher interacts with the text already produced by the student. Both reader and writer are operating within a framework demarcated between a) external forces (e.g. discourse conventions, sociocultural contexts, audience expectations) and b) internal forces (e.g. personal goals, needs and intentions, language constraints), activated by reader and writer during their mental efforts. The writer, in particular, lives in a world which imposes different constraints, attitudes, options and expectations on him. He constructs his text guided by his prior knowledge of strategies and literate practices, his prior knowledge of rhetorical situations and social conventions, his motivation, feelings and attitudes towards writing, the task and language learning, his linguistic and sociolinguistic competence.

The writer, therefore, hears “voices” in his mind, which tell him how to begin or finish his text, which language to use, what usually works in the specific type of discourse he is writing, which characteristics make it good (Flower 1994:67). At the same time, he listens to his personal goals and feelings. Flower argues that the writer follows a negotiated path between these external and internal forces: “As these forces open doors, promote options, and suggest action, they may come in conflict. Writers who choose [...] to entertain and attend to this conflict (at some level of awareness) enter into the construction of negotiated meaning”. The writer, therefore, negotiates meaning as he writes.

The reader also negotiates meaning from the text as he reads and tries to achieve comprehension. As Widdowson (1985:15-18) argues, language comprehension occurs not only because we understand the symbols, i.e. the conventional meaning of the linguistic signs or linguistic expressions someone uses, but also because we make connections between our linguistic knowledge and our schematic knowledge. The symbols function as indices, i.e. they indicate where we must look in our knowledge of the world in order to discover meaning. Comprehension in this sense “can be regarded as essentially a matter of the negotiation of meaning” (ibid:18).

Widdowson goes on to explain that if the schematic content on a particular occasion is less familiar, we need to rely more on our linguistic knowledge as a means of compensating for the deficiency, and “if we are thereby able to convert symbol to index, then the act of comprehension itself has the effect of extending or altering the schematic knowledge we started with. This is the process we call learning” (ibid:19). Of course, schematic convergence is not always possible and in that case, communication fails.

In reciprocal communication, such as face-to-face conversation, the interlocutors can always work towards a shared understanding. However, in non-reciprocal communication, such as reading and writing, things are less simple. While the writer constructs his text, he has to make decisions concerning which points he shares with the reader and therefore does not need to mention, and which points he needs to mention in a clear and organised way. Moreover, the writer tries to use the language that he knows well in order to express what he has in his mind.

The teacher-reader, on the other hand, has more language knowledge but because she may know less of the writer’s world than the writer himself has assumed, she will have to rely on her own cognitive and sociolinguistic strategies in order to make meaning. It is most likely that the teacher will be able to understand what the writer means and that the text will be negotiable. As Widdowson (1985:21) puts it, “comprehension is always only approximate”. There is no perfect match between the writer’s intention and the reader’s interpretation.

### **5.3.2 The second event of communication: the reader constructs the first commentary**

Negotiation of meaning also takes place when the process is reversed. Both the teacher and the student must find a common ground of language and world knowledge for learning to take place. The teacher-writer of the feedback must consider how much linguistic and schematic knowledge she shares with the student-reader in order to make herself understood. The teacher’s questions should induce the writer to focus his attention on certain aspects of the writing, to organise the text better, to integrate new information with his existing knowledge and to motivate personal elaborations of the content and style of the text.



The role of the first commentary is manifold: to motivate, to evaluate, to suggest criteria of success and failure and to help students think about ways of dealing with their problems. In the specific model, the feedback is structured around three main axes: a) content, b) organisation and c) language. More specifically, the teacher diagnoses problems concerning a) communication of ideas, clarity, and purpose b) textual structure, sequence and coherence and c) correctness. The specific criteria are arranged in order of importance (the most important coming first) with a view to making the writer aware of these degrees of importance. In this way, surface features, with which novice writers are usually preoccupied, become subordinate to the more global issues of content and organisation.

- **Introduction**

Before pointing out the problems that stand in the way of success, the teacher tries to find and stress the good points of the written work. The written commentary begins with a holistic evaluation of the piece. The teacher addresses the student personally (e.g. Dear ...) and praises the student's overall ability to communicate and achieve the purpose of the task. The feedback should be positive rather than judgemental, yet honest. Every speaker possesses strengths of one kind or another, and it is the duty of the partner in interaction to recognise the particular strengths and show that she has recognised them.

- **Content**

After the introduction, the feedback can focus on the points that make the writing problematic. The teacher uses clear, helpful and individualised response strategies to help each student deal with his own problems. As a result, the commentary entails questions that provoke each student's thought and offers suggestions which help the student find ways of expanding, changing or clarifying the problematic areas. For example, the teacher intervenes with questions (e.g. What do you mean by that? Can you give me an example?) or prompts about content (e.g. I would like to know more about this person; Can you give examples of how this person acts in different situations? This part is not very clear). This effective strategy (specific questions and prompts) is confirmed by and might historically even be traced back to the "original" situation of oral narrative, where there is a reciprocal relation between teller and audience (Benjamin, 1961 and Berger, 1993 cited in Gohrbandt 2007:125-126).

- **Organisation**

The feedback goes on with comments on the organisation and coherence of the text. The teacher encourages students to link and order their thoughts (e.g. Put all the ideas about physical appearance together; Use paragraphs).

- **Language**

Finally, the commentary encourages editing with prompts for correction of grammar, lexis, syntax, spelling and punctuation. The teacher attempts to make such text features explicit and understandable by referring to specific paragraphs and lines and inviting students to edit their work with the help of a correction code (e.g. The verb form in line 2 is not correct; You have a spelling or punctuation problem here). For the correction code used in this thesis, see App. I (p.227).

- **Closing**

The teacher ends the commentary by prompting the student to reflect on his writing and improve it (see examples of teacher comments in App. V, pp. 244-298).

### **5.3.3 The third event of communication: the writer interacts with the feedback and reformulates the text**

The third event of interaction takes place when the student-writer interacts with the teacher's feedback and reconstructs the text. He must reread what he has written and make appropriate revisions. To ensure that his text improves, he must look at it again not only from his own perspective but also from the reader's perspective. For this reason, the writer engages in an inner dialogue involving question and answer in order to interpret the feedback (e.g. What does the teacher mean by that? How can I order my thoughts?). In other words, the writer, stimulated by the teacher's prompts, 'talks' to himself. Ellis (1999) calls this kind of 'conversation' going on inside the writer's head "intrapersonal interaction".

Discussing the role of interaction in learning, Ellis (ibid:238) poses the following question: "Is interaction really necessary for learning?" He provides an interesting answer: "If it is defined as 'social interaction' the answer is probably no; it is facilitative in a number of ways but it is not necessary. [...] However, if interaction is held to include the intrapersonal, mental activity that occurs when learners 'talk' to

themselves, then the answer is less clear-cut. Sociocultural theorists would maintain that all learning is mediated and that one form of mediation is private speech”.

Ellis (1999:235) draws a distinction between interpersonal and intrapersonal interaction. Interpersonal interaction is typically an oral event whereas intrapersonal interaction is often stimulated by written input. With guidance, for example, students can interact within themselves by posing and answering questions about a written text. Ellis (ibid:236) claims that instruction should not be restricted to a single type of social interaction, i.e. group interaction, but should also provide opportunities for intrapersonal interaction, i.e. interaction with self. Freedman (1985) addresses the issue from a different angle but makes in fact a similar point: since experienced writers make revisions according to an “inner voice”, inexperienced writers need to hear and internalise other voices before they develop their own inner voice that will successfully prompt revisions.

Moreover, Ellis (1999:252) claims that the private speech mentioned previously “is especially likely to arise when learners are confronted with a task that is cognitively challenging”. The task of revision is cognitively challenging for the novice writer, who must negotiate meaning based on his mental and sociolinguistic schemata. Perhaps there are parts in his text where his personal goals or strategies come into conflict with the expectations of a reader, the practice of a discourse, or the social and cultural conventions. The student relies on the teacher’s expertise and knowledge in order to resolve the cognitive conflict. Resolving cognitive conflict may entail a series of negotiations, in which the writer must consider his personal goals and the teacher’s options, negotiate all these conflicting forces and make strategic choices about which path to select among the alternative options. Out of this reconstructive problem-solving process in which the writer rethinks, reflects, negotiates and decides, emerges a new text. The reformulation of the text is based on a new personal experience with the text. This new synthesis is the product of the student-teacher interaction.

#### **5.3.4 The fourth event of communication: the reader interacts with the new text and constructs the second commentary**

The fourth event of interaction takes place when the teacher reads the student’s second draft to see how the writer’s text has evolved. The teacher reads the revised

text and comments on the effective revision strategies that the writer has employed. The teacher also edits the grammatical, syntactical or lexical mistakes that the writer has not been able to edit, or new errors that emerged during the revision. The goal of the second commentary is to help the writer develop an awareness of effective revision strategies and the social, cognitive and linguistic moves by which he can improve his discourse.

During this second reading, the teacher can also see how much of the feedback has been understood and put into practice. Of course, understanding is distinguished from the actual act of revision. The feedback is what is available for 'going in' but we do not know what actually 'goes in'. Perhaps the student understood the teacher's options but was not willing to make a compromise between his own objectives and those of the teacher. As Widdowson (1985:21) points out, "the negotiation of meaning is also a negotiation of social relations. [...] Comprehension as negotiation of meaning also carries implications about the negotiation of the social role in the interaction".

References to imposed changes and negotiation of the social role in the interaction recall the discussion of the importance of equal relations between partners for the transformation of thinking. Piaget (1965:164) describes cooperation as any interaction in which there is no element of authority or prestige and maintains that only cooperation constitutes a process in which new cognitions can be produced. Moreover, Piaget argues that equilibration, his favourite mechanism for cognitive development, is limited when the point of view of another person is adopted on account of their authority or prestige: « Ou bien, enfin, il adopte le point de vue de  $\alpha$  sous l'effet de son autorité ou de son prestige, et c'est là le cas de la contrainte intellectuelle. Mais deux circonstances limitent alors l'équilibre. En premier lieu, le rapport n'est pas réciproque [...] en second lieu l'accord de  $\alpha$  et de  $\alpha'$  dure tant que le second est soumis au premier mais cessera dès que  $\alpha'$  pensera par lui-même ».

On the other hand, the prototypical Vygotskian relationship, i.e. between adult and child, is one of unequal status. This relationship, though asymmetrical, has been found to be one of the factors significantly related to the development of writing skills and problem-solving strategies. If collaboration from a Vygotskian perspective is to progress, it is important to know what each person brings to the interaction (Tudge

and Hogan 1997:3). Given that the relationship between teacher and student is by definition asymmetrical, it is important to consider aspects like dominance. This determines the dynamic which emerges between them, which, in turn, impacts on the nature of the interaction.

Keh (1990:301) uses the term “preconceived ideal agenda” to describe the teacher’s expectations of a student’s writing performance. However, the teacher should not expect to see all her goals met and therefore should allow the writer to keep ownership of his own writing. The teacher, in other words, should respect the student’s decisions, for there is a clear difference between appropriating students’ texts and broadening their learning experiences.

In the specific model, the decision-making structure is not unilateral (i.e. where the teacher takes responsibility for the choice of the changes) but reciprocal (i.e. where the student also has the possibility of active participation in the improvement of the text). The student, therefore, should know that he is free to consider the teacher’s comments and decide which advice to take and which to ignore. One way to achieve this goal would be to encourage an interaction style which maintains both an orientation to the self and an orientation to others. Teacher and student have shared responsibility or shared participation in the process. The journey of revision, therefore, is not only social but also individual, which means that much of the change is taking place through the student’s personal agency.

Furthermore, the student becomes emotionally involved. Emotional involvement means that he will develop an attitude towards the process. This attitude might affect his active or passive reaction. The student should know that he does not have to revise in order to please the teacher. The final decisions are his. This means that the student should pay attention to the teacher’s point of view, while pursuing his own intentions. In this way, the student can find out that certain things are negotiable and function as suggestions for improvement rather than imposed changes. He needs to know that he is trying to agree with the teacher on an outcome but he should not accept everything uncritically. To put it differently, it should be made clear that the teacher’s mediated revisions are not imposed on the student or that the student should not do them out of complaisance. This awareness helps the student in the process of making decisions and thus, teaching becomes more learner-centred.

### **5.3.5 The fifth event of communication: the writer interacts with the feedback and reflects on the process and the product**

The fifth and final event of communication constitutes the last stage of the process. This stage opens the door to metacognitive awareness. In Flower's (1994:225) words, "metacognition is knowing that you know something and [...] being able to talk about what you know [...] and secondly, about how your thinking operates". Current research stresses the contribution of metacognitive awareness to successful performance. In this model, the writer reads the second commentary and sees which of his efforts to revise have been successful and which have not. This kind of reflection about the negotiations that took place during the revision develops his self-regulation procedures. The writer recognises effective text transformation and assessment strategies. By using them across different contexts and discourse types, the writer will take ownership of these strategies. It is this awareness that forms the basis for learning and becomes the motivating force for growth. This might be a time-consuming process. However, as Bacon (1999:110) puts it, "in all negotiations of difficulty, a man may not look to sow and reap at once; but must prepare business, and so ripen it by degrees".

### **5.4 Closing comment**

This study presents a model of revision, whereby the student based on his knowledge of the language and knowledge of the world, and on the teacher's support and assistance, improves the written text through a process of negotiation. The long-term aim of this process is to create the conditions whereby this negotiation will be taken on as the initiative of the student, and that the student will discover and develop his own strategies.

In the light of the above, the study will research whether the kind of feedback proposed in this model is indeed a helpful tool for revision and whether the kind of negotiated revision that occurs is a vehicle for learning. The thesis will also investigate whether the kind of supportive social scaffolding suggested in this chapter will create more options than put constraints on written communication.

## **CHAPTER 6            THE RESEARCH METHODS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter has two principal aims. The first is to describe the paradigm which shaped the research and the second is to present a set of research questions and hypotheses, which guided the investigation. In the beginning, the interpretation of the questions generated research methods which were to a great extent quantitative. As the research progressed, aspects of the methodology were challenged and reformulated. This process was dynamic and continued throughout the research, resulting in significant changes in the analysis and interpretation of the data. The extended period of the study emphasised the need for more elaborate quantitative analyses to examine correlations of the variables and for deeper qualitative analyses to unmask the powerful idiosyncracies of the data.

### **6.2 Locating the research**

Whilst a wide range of categorisations and paradigm descriptions is available in social science research today (Cohen and Manion 1994), this thesis is concerned with two main schools of philosophy, namely positivism (the quantitative approach) and interpretivism (the qualitative approach). Briefly stated, the positivist tradition assumes an objective world, which scientific instruments can more or less measure, and seeks to explain causal relations among key variables (Gephart 1999:1). With the help of mathematics and statistics, positivism takes a hypothesis or theory and assesses its empirical adequacy, i.e. it investigates whether the hypothesis can be confirmed by the relevant data (Haig 1995:6). This kind of reasoning is deductive and leads from the more general to the more specific. Positivism, in other words, moves from general hypotheses, through specific observations, patterns and regularities, to conclusions.

Critics of the positivist approach argue that in its effort to develop quantified measures of phenomena, positivism deprives contexts of meanings (Guba and Lincoln 1994:106). Interpretivism, by contrast, is primarily interested to gain insights into phenomena through discovering meanings. It is concerned with meanings as acts of

interpretation, i.e. how individuals understand and make sense of (interpret) social events and settings. There is no objective or single reality for interpretive research. Instead, reality is relative to the meaning people ascribe to it. To understand people's subjective reality, interpretive researchers use qualitative data, which is data in the form of words or extended text (Miles and Huberman 1994:9). In the qualitative methodology, researchers move towards inductive methods of study, getting gradually to the analytic categories rather than starting with them. The data, which is gathered from a variety of sources including interviews and observations, is analysed and then a theory is generated with the help of interpretative procedures.

Whilst it is true that there are fundamental differences between the two paradigms, these lie in the level of philosophical viewpoints rather than the level of the data itself. For example, the quantitative approach is concerned with generally applicable laws whereas the qualitative approach concerns itself with the description of specific contexts. In qualitative research, generalisations are seen as legitimate but it is also acknowledged that making generalisations is a situated act. Moreover, the quantitative approach emphasises reliability whereas the qualitative approach emphasises validity possibly at some cost of reliability.

However, at some points, the line between quantitative and qualitative approaches might be less distinct than we think. For example, although the data from open-ended questionnaires is considered qualitative, the responses are classified into categories and assigned meaningful numerical values. This act of categorising can be viewed as quantitative as well. Furthermore, although qualitative data tends to be exploratory and inductive in nature, it can also be used to confirm specific deductive hypotheses. Post - positivism, a recent evolution of positivism which maintains the focus on quantitative methods, is also interested in using qualitative methods to gather broader information outside of readily measured variables (Gephart 1999:4). These qualitative methods are used to confirm and validate hypotheses with a more inductive kind of logic.

Nowadays, positivism is still the dominant paradigm in social research but interpretivism is gaining ground. In fact, there is a trend towards combining and blending aspects of the two paradigms. Dey (1993:28) claims that "we can learn as



much from how meanings and numbers relate as we can from distinguishing them”. Commenting on the qualitative / quantitative dichotomy, Holsti (1968: 598) writes: “To state that attribute A became more important in X’s messages with the passing of time is a qualitative assertion, but it is not without a quantitative aspect” and concludes: “Qualitativeness and quantitiveness are not dichotomous attributes but fall along a continuum”. In the same vein, Miles and Huberman (1994:56) stress that “focusing solely on numbers shifts attention from substance to arithmetic, throwing out the whole notion of ‘qualities’ or essential characteristics”. Words, on the other hand, “have a concrete, vivid, meaningful flavor that often proves far more convincing to a reader [...] than pages of summarised numbers” (ibid:1). Miles and Huberman (ibid:40) conclude: “At the bottom, we have to face the fact that numbers and words are *both* needed if we are to understand the world”. All the above views clearly suggest that number and meaning are mutually dependent and that the quantitative and qualitative methods should collaborate rather than compete.

### **6.3 The aims of the research**

As already mentioned in the previous chapters, the present research study was motivated by the concern to come to terms with the problem of writing development in the early years of learning. More specifically, the study was motivated by the desire to draw more attention to revision than is the case in current writing instruction. For this reason, it was intended to investigate the role of a specific feedback method and its effect on writing development. Action research was considered the most appropriate research strategy for this investigation.

According to Atweh, Kemmis and Weeks (1998:258), three conditions are necessary for action research: “First, the subject matter must be a social practice susceptible to improvement; second, the project must proceed through a spiral of cycles of planning, action, observing and reflecting; and third, the project should involve the practitioners and widen its audience so others may benefit from their experience”. The present study satisfies all these conditions. First, it has an educational function: it involves an intervention in the teaching of writing and aims at improvement. Second, it proceeds through a spiral of the above phases: aim identification, data collection and analysis, evaluation of the findings, and implications for classroom pedagogy. Third, it deals

with individuals as members of social groups and hopes to lead to the discovery of insights that would be useful to those responsible for teaching students how to write. As Charles (1988:141) points out, “this type of research originates with a strongly felt need and is intended to solve a particular problem in a particular locale”. Personal teaching experiences and observations of teaching practices as well as the evaluation of several teaching materials used for the development of writing confirmed the idea that the teaching of writing as a process is largely ignored in EFL classrooms. Writing activities for young learners usually move from forms through structures to paragraphs, first single and later combined. They aim at an increased awareness of a variety of possible structures through imitation of models, which help students develop unified paragraphs of their own. As a result, texts are often written with focus on form rather than content or communicative purpose. This is what Emig (1971) in Dahl and Farnan (1996:7) calls “extensive” writing, that is, “school writing with little attention to prewriting or to rethinking or contemplation of the written text”. As a result, students are not made aware of the importance of planning and revision.

As noted in Chapter 4, a number of studies have investigated the abilities and skills of inexperienced writers and nearly every study has delivered similar results. Summarised, the studies show that revision rarely occurs spontaneously without guidance and support, and when it occurs, it is primarily on conventional matters such as grammar and spelling and seldom on the level of communicative content. Matsuhashi and Gordon (1985:229) comment on such findings: “These remarkably stable research results may tell us more about the nature of the research task than about the tacit or hidden abilities of our students: What we really have learned is how students respond to the directive: “Revise!”. Isn’t it possible that students have an ability to revise that remains untapped by the research designs described earlier?”

A large body of current research is now concerned with the relationship between instruction and individual performance. It is believed that the development of students’ revision strategies can be facilitated with writing experiences which successfully prompt revisions, such as teacher or peer feedback. Unfortunately, few longitudinal studies into the revision processes of young students have found evidence of substantial development as a result of such experiences. Consequently, this is an

area that needs more systematic research in the hope that the insights will lead to more informed decisions about writing instruction in the classroom. On this background, the present study wishes to generate insights that would be helpful to teachers who want to intervene and support the way student writers compose.

#### **6.4 The research questions and the hypotheses**

In an endeavour to deal with the problem of revision, the present study depends on a theory (a sociocognitive theory of development) and forms a proposal (an interactive model of revision). Implicit in this stance is the acceptance that the ability to revise is a desirable educational goal. Irrespective of its inherent viability, however, this theory-driven proposal has to be tested in actual teaching (Ellis 1997:102). The research, therefore, begins with a clear goal: to test a model of revision based on teacher-mediated feedback. The test is intended to

- assess the overall value of the model
- judge student acceptance and other reactions
- identify any problem areas that need to be worked out

In general, the study aims to answer a two-fold question:

- a) Is anything really gained by this experience?
- b) What is it that happens in students' writing and behaviour that can account for this gain?

More specifically and on the basis of the aforementioned aims, the present study seeks answers to the following questions:

#### **Question 1: What is the level of students' ability to revise at the beginning of the study and how does it develop during the study?**

Research question 1 concerns the level of students' ability to revise at the beginning of the study and the development of that ability during the period of the research. The issue of the development of revision ability is crucial because it will provide useful insights into the processes associated with that development. It was noted in the previous chapters that young learners have low levels of revision ability and anecdotal

evidence from the piloting stage of this study suggested that this was also the case in the context where the research took place.

It is also clear from the literature review that revision is less efficacious with young learners because they do not have the linguistic or cognitive resources to notice the problematic areas in their texts and that the teacher feedback can scaffold their thinking and enable them to respond to the demands and constraints of different tasks. One of the aims of this study is to prove that the basic components of revision skill are within the young students' zone of proximal development provided that students are explicitly shown how to negotiate and reformulate meaning, and that the model of revision presented in this thesis can aim with confidence at growth in this area.

**Question 2: What is the relationship between properties of the feedback and the development of revision?**

It is also clear from the literature review that young, unskilled writers are more likely to make surface revisions when they engage in the process of revision. It is one of the aims of this study to prove that, by focusing on content as well as form, the teacher feedback will shift the students' attention away from a struggle with the conventions of writing towards an ability to communicate effectively. This question, therefore, concerns the extent to which this shift of attention will affect students' revisions. In particular, the study will investigate which features of the feedback have influenced students' revisions and in what ways those features have changed patterns in the students' revising behaviour.

**Question 3: Is there significant variation in individual students' behaviours toward micro and macro problems?**

One hypothesis of particular interest that emerges from the literature (Chapter 5) is that the feedback can only acquire meaning through a process of interpretation and negotiation that occurs in the course of the activity. Consequently, individual students are likely to construct negotiated meanings as they deal with conflicting goals (e.g. the teacher's expectations, personal needs, language constraints etc.) and therefore, vary

in their ability or in their preparedness to negotiate meaning. The observed outcomes will shed more light on the effects of the intervention and reveal patterns in students' behaviours toward micro and macro problems.

#### **Question 4: What is the correlation between revision and text improvement?**

The literature contains reports of studies into the link between revision and text improvement. While some authors have concluded that there is a tenuous relationship between revision and improvement, as regards the revisions of unskilled writers (Sengupta 1998:127), the messages from this literature are, in places, mixed; therefore, it is one of the intentions of this study to investigate whether and which revisions contribute to better writing. The issue of improvement has several dimensions. One concerns appropriacy and sufficiency of information, another grammatical accuracy, whereas other dimensions concern the processes associated with style, organisation and coherence. Most of these dimensions are associated with text-base features of the text; hence, it is assumed that revisions in these categories will result in improved drafts. Overall, the higher rate of revision in text-base categories points in the direction of an increasing awareness of revision at global level.

#### **Question 5: What attitudes do students have to their own writing ability, to the role of feedback and to the process in general?**

In Chapter 3 (section 3.6), it was argued that the more students feel that an activity or a process is beneficial to them, the more involved they become into it. If students are positive about the revision activity in terms of interest, ease and effectiveness, they will, by implication, be more effective in their revisions. Consequently, they are more likely to succeed in the learning process. With this in mind, a decision to track the development of student attitudes towards the specific kind of feedback was made. It is assumed that students' attitude toward the process will be generally positive.

**Question 6: To what extent do students succeed in learning to revise?**

It is hoped in this study that one effect of the teacher feedback will be to heighten the students' awareness of what they are doing and produce a spill-over effect, i.e. the students will consider texts not commented on as if the teacher's comments applied there as well. This will probably result in a greater reflectiveness on the part of the student, which could be a pedagogical gain, even if it did not directly affect the writing. With this in mind, the aim of question 6 is to examine whether revision based on feedback (feedback-triggered revision) can function as a heuristic and thus facilitate independent revision. It is hypothesised that students will not be able to assimilate the whole spectrum of suggested directives. However, by the end of the study, they will be able to accommodate some of the knowledge from the previous tasks into their internal logical systems and make self-regulatory revisions.

**6.5 Moving from paradigm to method**

At a time when it is fashionable to espouse both quantitative and qualitative methods in educational research, I had to decide what kind of approach would be most likely to give the best answers to the research questions. Action research may use techniques from both methods. As mentioned earlier, in the quantitative methodology, researchers begin with a theory in mind and a set of questions or hypotheses which they want to test whereas in the qualitative methodology, the theory emerges inductively from the data (Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991:12). The hypothetic-deductive (quantitative) method appeared to be most appropriate for the purposes of the research since one of its defining characteristics is that it starts with a theory and a set of hypotheses which have to be tested. The hypotheses would be tested with data coming from the students' documents. An understanding of the students' revision processes would be sought through the recording of quantified variables, e.g. number, type, size, function and effect of revisions.

Content analysis was used to describe the texts of the students. Berelson (1959:58) defines content analysis as a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content (surface meaning of the content) of communication. Berelson (1959:17) stresses that quantification is an important

characteristic of content analysis and explains that some definitions equate the term 'quantitative' with numerical whereas other definitions are less restrictive and report findings in such terms as 'more, less or increasing'.

In the same vein, Holsti (1968:601) describes content analysis as "any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics of messages". Objectivity, system, and generality are important characteristics of content analysis. Holsti (ibid:598) explains: "To have *objectivity*, the analysis must be carried out on the basis of explicitly formulated rules which will enable two or more persons to obtain the same results from the same documents. In a *systematic* analysis the inclusion and exclusion of content or categories is done according to consistently applied criteria of selection; this requirement eliminates analyses in which only materials supporting the investigator's hypotheses are examined. By *generality* we mean that the findings must have theoretical relevance; purely descriptive information about content, unrelated to other attributes of content or to the characteristics of the sender or recipient of the message, is of little scientific value".

The research was shaped, therefore, by the initial positivist expectation that the conclusions would be reached with deductive logic applied to quantitatively coded documents. However, as the research progressed, there was a need to reveal more meaningful relationships among the variables. It became apparent that although the quantitative data was conveying some important messages, it was the holistic nature of qualitative analysis which was going to provide meaningful answers to some of the research questions. The question, for example, "What kind of revisions did the students make?" would be answered with the statistical analysis. The question "How has the feedback worked?" had to be answered with another method. This method was going to be the case study. In this research, the case is the individual writer and his writings. According to Yin (2003:12), the essence of a case study is that "it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result". In each case study, I described the revision process as a sequence of decisions and analysed the characteristics of such decisions. The coding of the decisions into numerical form made the data conducive to statistical

analysis. Then, a more descriptive approach helped demonstrate the causal links which were analysed quantitatively.

Moreover, the students' attitude was regarded as playing a significant role in the process of revision, thus, it was considered imperative to explore the individual experience further. The issue of attitudes and motivation was raised in Chapter 3 (see section 3.6). The literature contains many reports of studies into the connection between attitudes and performance. It has been suggested in such studies that students' attitudes do have an impact on how they learn and what they actually do in the classroom. With regard to this issue, Dahl and Farnan (1996:20) argue that "it is important to inquire into young writers' own insights about their writing and their perspectives about writing in school". In the same vein, Strauss and Corbin (1994:274) claim that "interpretation must include the perspectives and voices whom we study" indicating that the voices of the participants and their perspectives will illuminate the learning experience further. Consequently, each individual's attitude towards the specific feedback and towards their own ability to revise had to be measured.

A questionnaire was designed to record the students' opinions about the feedback and to measure the extent to which students were conscious of their involvement in the act of revision. This process of retrospection required the participants to go back to the experience and record their own mental processes and feelings. Listening to the students' voices and analysing what they said about their experience also helped triangulate the data from the written products and thus check the validity of the findings obtained from that data.

## **6.6 Closing comment**

Although at the beginning of the study the research methods were largely quantitative, the framework was refined and the methods were revised. The perspective changed with greater emphasis being placed on inductive strategies, which are more closely associated with qualitative research. The new perspective was closer to that of the



interpretive research paradigm, which proposes the use of various research techniques in order to enlighten different angles of the investigated question.

In consequence, the statistical analysis in this study will enumerate ‘what’ happened whereas the case study will provide answers to ‘how’ it happened. Hence, the quantitative data will provide the raw material for the main analytic endeavour with the qualitative data playing a significant role in validating and triangulating the findings. All things considered, the research method adopted in this thesis is a ‘mixed methods’ approach, which will combine quantitative reporting and qualitative analysis of the data, that is, it will blend the two traditions attempting to get the advantages from each.

## **CHAPTER 7 THE RESEARCH PROCEDURES**

### **7.1 Introduction**

After describing the aims, the intentions and the questions of the research, it is time to tell the story of the research. Comparing the account of context, process and analysis to story-telling, Dey (1993:39) suggests that we “construct an illuminating narrative” about the data and the range of techniques used for data collection and analysis. In this narrative, like in a good story, there are three main ingredients: the setting, the characters and the plot (the social action in which they were involved) (ibid:238).

### **7.2 The context of the study**

The project began in October 2003 and was completed in July 2004. The ten-month classroom-based study was conducted in Germany, in five English classrooms of Grade Seven, and focused on a sample of high-school students (children aged 12-13 years old), who were making their first steps in communicative writing. During that period, the students were asked to write and revise their papers for five writing tasks completed over the school year. In three of these tasks, the students were guided to revise with the help of feedback provided by the researcher. The students’ original and revised texts were analysed for revision changes. After all the writing and revising sessions had been completed, the students were questioned about their experiences. The methods used to test the model of revision and the issues of participant selection, data collection and data analysis are extensively elaborated below.

- **The participants**

142 EFL students took part in the study. The participants were drawn from five Grade 7 English classrooms in two urban secondary schools (Gymnasias) in Koblenz, Germany. Before the study began, I observed several classes in order to decide which Year students were more suitable for the purposes of my research. The Year 7 students were selected for three reasons: first, seventh graders had satisfactory

knowledge of the English language. Second, apart from a threshold level of linguistic knowledge, they had the cognitive maturity required for the purposes of the study. Having a threshold level of linguistic and cognitive maturity meant that they would be able to grapple with complex information and that they had the initial abilities necessary to write and improve their texts. Third, they were still considered beginning writers, which meant that their writing behaviour would be less interfered or confounded by factors such as familiarity and fossilisation. They were in a sense 'starting from scratch'. All of these elements together seemed to hold the best promise for a good experimental outcome.

More specifically, the students were drawn from three parallel Year 7 classes at Eichendorff Gymnasium and two parallel Year 7 classes at Bishhöfliches-Cusanus Gymnasium. Each group was composed of approximately 27 students. The schools are located in Koblenz's inner city. Their intake is socially mixed and students come from different cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds. The targeted population consisted, therefore, of students of different socioeconomic levels and without any doubt distinctive features, abilities, interests, aptitude and intelligences. However, the prime focus of the study was the impact of a specific teaching practice on students' writing. Consequently, the study was not interested to examine whether any existing variations in the students' performance would be the result of personal, social, cultural or other characteristics but whether different children would show to a greater or lesser degree similar patterns of writing behaviour as a result of the same type of approach to the teaching of revision.

Despite the students' different background and personalities, both schools had uniformity in all other factors that concerned the research. In Germany, secondary schools are divided into three categories: the Gymnasium, the Realschule and the Hauptschule. Both schools were Gymnasias, thus following the same curriculum and having teachers with the same university degree. The participants were considered to be rather homogeneous for the following reasons: they were all aged between 12 and 13 years during the study; they had all received two years of previous formal language instruction in the school setting; they belonged to classes of equal overall academic ability; they received the same number of English lessons each week (4 lessons); they

used the same textbook during the study (English G 2000 A3, für das 7. Schuljahr an Gymnasien, Cornelsen).

The EFL teachers who had taught the participants the previous year were interviewed informally at the beginning of the study about their teaching practices in writing. It was not possible to interview L1 teachers about the participants' writing experiences in order to trace which strategies were transferred from L1 to L2 writing processes. From the interviews with the EFL teachers, however, it was assumed that there was a satisfactory level of homogeneity in terms of linguistic competence and familiarity with basic forms of written discourse. None of the teachers had exposed students to a process-based writing environment. In fact, the approach to the teaching of writing was largely product-oriented and students were pre-disposed to an accuracy orientation. In the opposite case, familiarity with the process might invalidate the findings, which would be undesirable for the purposes of the study.

It was decided to use intact groups (the class as a whole) instead of a random sample of students. First of all, it is important for the validity of a research that the data be collected in a natural setting. The fact that the study took place in the participants' own classrooms during the ordinary English lesson meant that all the students participated in the research and worked in conditions that were not artificial. Moreover, all the groups who belonged to the same grade were used in the study in order to avoid discrimination among students or a selection of groups that would not be representative of a larger population.

Another issue that contributed to validity was student anonymity. Collecting anonymous drafts and questionnaires guaranteed to a great extent that the students would feel free to write and revise the way they wanted and not do it out of complaisance. Furthermore, they would feel free to offer unbiased answers. Of course, there was a negative aspect to this decision. Having to hand in an anonymous paper could demotivate some students who might feel that they did not have to try hard enough to produce a good essay and get a good grade or encourage others who might feel that this was their chance to violate some rules that kept them disciplined.

- **The curriculum and the coursebook**

In the last thirty years or so, the teaching of writing in Germany has witnessed a shift of attention from subjective to objective writing and from the written product to the social nature of writing. According to Glindemann (2001:50), the teaching of Creative Writing in Germany begins in the 70s with the Communicative approach. Until then, the focus was on the writing subject ignoring the social conditions which influence the writer. The reformers of that time wanted to change ‘Zwecksprache’, which was based only on facts, into free expression. In the 80s, the movement became more intense, and personal writing (I-person) dominated. As a result, writing became more subjective and intuitive (ibid:55). In the 90s, we have a revival of Rhetoric and a return to literary mechanisms. Scholars emphasised literary techniques and style in order to make literary creative writing possible. Writing was not only for self but also for an audience and students became aware of the social conditions in which writing occurs (ibid:65). Today, the teaching of writing in the EFL curriculum for lower secondary school students is concerned with effective communication but also places emphasis on a conscious study of rules and attention to form. Commenting on this issue, Macht (1998:354) interestingly remarks on the tendency of German teachers to set up standards of hyper-correctness in situations where English teachers would be more tolerant or not even identify mistakes.

The textbook used with the participants of the study (English G 2000 A3) combines elements of product- and process-based instruction. Writing features prominently in the book in a variety of forms and tasks. Most of the writing is product-oriented and consists of guided activities aimed mainly at grammar and vocabulary consolidation. Writing tasks involve paragraph writing imitating the models of the textbook. For example, some writing lessons provide a model text with a view to presenting layout, language and vocabulary. This text is analysed and then probably imitated by students as they do their own writing. Of course, the book itself does not explicitly encourage imitation (e.g. write a similar text) but there is always the possibility of students basing their writing on the reading text presented earlier.

The book also offers opportunities for focusing on the process. Some units contain notes and questions which provide supporting information mostly for the planning stage. These questions help generate ideas for content but also discuss the language, register and layout of the discourse. The book encourages students to make notes about the task before doing the actual writing. Some questions are provided to help students focus more effectively on the revising stage but there is no indication they should write multiple drafts. The book at times encourages students to correct but draws their attention exclusively to grammar, spelling and vocabulary. Occasionally it invites students to revise their peers' work but does not provide any help, such as a checklist of questions, which students can use while assessing their peers' work or their own.

The following table, adapted from Johnston (1996:355), illustrates an evaluation of the specific coursebook in relation to the teaching of writing.

**Table 1: Evaluation of 'Writing' in English G 2000 A3**

	English G 2000 A3
Teacher guidance	**
Discussion of the writing process	***
Reading and analysis of models	***
Discussion to generate ideas	****
Drafting	*
Opportunities for revision	*
Checklist for evaluation	*

Key: \* poor \*\*\*\*\* excellent

### **7.3 The procedure of the study**

Six months before the period of data collection, I visited the schools and had meetings with the school headmasters and the English teachers in order to explain to them the nature, purposes and procedure of my study. I was lucky to obtain a sincere commitment to the project from the teachers and the administrators involved.

### **7.3.1 Piloting**

Once it had been decided which year grade would be involved in the study, piloting work was conducted, which examined the potential of the draft-redraft assignment in the specific grade and the effectiveness of the coding scheme intended to analyse the revision changes. The specific procedure was followed with one Year 7 group from Eichendorff Gymnasium, who were given a class assignment and after a few days were asked to revise their writing based on the feedback provided.

Piloting helped me obtain a fresh view of the data and the methods of the study. First of all, during the piloting review of the students' writing, it was noted that in many cases, the participants did not respond to the feedback as anticipated. For example, many students simply rewrote the text with few or no changes. Under the circumstances, it was considered necessary to draw the students' attention to the methodology of the process with a number of teaching sessions on text evaluation. Moreover, it was pointed out by the teacher involved in the preliminary stage of the study that students encountered problems with the verbalisation of the comments. As a result, the format of the feedback was revised. The wording of the comments was simplified to help students understand their meaning. More importantly, the piloting stage helped identify problems in coding and deficiencies in data analysis.

### **7.3.2 Data collection procedures**

- **The writing tasks**

For the purposes of the study, I designed a set of writing tasks with reference to the specifications of the syllabus and the teaching material. Then I had a meeting with all the teachers involved in the study and asked them to suggest which of these tasks were most suitable for their students. We reached an agreement on the use of five tasks, which required that students wrote in two main genres (e.g. description and narration). The original list of tasks appears in App. I (pp.224-226).

My intention in designing the tasks was to create the means whereby an image of the whole spectrum of the students' writing ability would be provided. Of course, it was assumed that there might be differences in revisions across writing tasks. Perhaps the performance of individual learners would vary according to the type of task they were assigned. This was possible, considering the fact that different tasks present students with a different degree of difficulty. Task difficulty, Skehan and Foster (2001:196) argue, "has to do with the amount of attention the task demands from the participants". The decision to collect a sample representing different discourse types (e.g. story, letter, autobiography) might provoke some criticisms since the difficulty of some tasks had the potential to affect the way students revised and, in consequence, the findings. However, in designing the tasks, I had to take into consideration two important aspects. First, if different types of discourse yielded different results, then comparisons between tasks would be facilitated. Second, there was an ethical issue to be addressed in the study. The participants would benefit more from a plurality of writing experiences and revision practices which would extend rather than restrict their capabilities. All things considered, the students who participated in the study were asked to perform the following five tasks:

Task 1 (narrative: personal story)

Your school has organised a story competition: "Focus on a moment in your life that is very significant (funny, embarrassing, adventure, discovery, important learning experience etc.)". Write your story for the competition.

Task 2 (descriptive: stative description of people)

You have decided to enter a creative writing competition. The title of the composition is the following: "Describe an interesting person you know or a person who makes you happy". Write your competition entry.

Task 3 (narrative: factual news story)

Write a news story about something that happened this week in your school, your home or your town. Your story will be included in the school newspaper.



Task 4 (descriptive: stative description of places)

Write a letter to an English-speaking friend about the city where you live. Try to include as many interesting details as possible about the following: description of the place, sights, facilities, entertainment etc.

Task 5 (narrative: personal story)

You have decided to enter a creative writing competition. The title of the composition is the following: “My autobiography”. Write your competition entry. The first paragraph should tell about your birth and early life; the second about your school life. In the third paragraph, tell something that shows what sort of person you are. In the last paragraph, tell about your hopes and dreams for the future.

- **The writing sessions**

When the groups who would participate in the study had been selected, I visited the classes and explained the objective of my visit to them. My personal impressions as well as the teacher reports were encouraging since the students took pride in participating in a research project and had a positive attitude to it. The students devoted in total ten sessions to the writing tasks (five on the writing situations and five on the revising situations) and attended two teaching sessions on aspects of revision. Each session lasted 45 minutes. Table 2 (pp.88-89) shows a summary of all the data collection activities which were carried out during the study.

Session 1 (1<sup>st</sup> writing situation)

During the first week of October, before any instruction on revision began, the groups were asked to write Task 1. Students performed the task in the presence of their own teacher. The students were assured that their anonymity would be guaranteed by using numbers instead of names on their paper.

Session 2 (1<sup>st</sup> revising situation)

The papers which had been collected at the end of the first session were returned unmarked after one week. During the second 45-minute session, the groups were asked to look back on the first draft and rewrite an improved version of it. No

particular instructions were given as to what type of changes they could make. They were simply asked to write a better text. Since 'better' was not defined, each individual student had to figure out for themselves what this meant. It was also made clear that they could not make any changes on the first draft itself. The purpose of the first task was to identify the level of the students' revision ability and verify the assumption that at the beginning of the study, the students would produce the same sort of limited revisions produced in previously cited studies.

#### Sessions 3 and 4 (two teaching sessions)

As noted earlier, the piloting phase suggested that students should be initiated into the model of revision with direct instruction, as this would help them attend to the various aspects of the feedback. Therefore, at the beginning of the study, two teaching sessions were devoted to training the students in the process. During these sessions, I had personal contact with them and illustrated the focal points of the feedback and the revision process with samples from other students. The students were asked to identify the problematic areas in those texts and seek ways to overcome them. I emphasised aspects such as the point of view of the reader, text coherence, given-new information, global concerns and mechanical concerns. I explained the correction code and asked them to identify errors and correct them. I left those sessions with the feeling that the students had worked out the significant characteristics of revision.

#### Session 5 (2<sup>nd</sup> writing situation)

In Session 5, which took place after two weeks, students were presented with Writing Task 2. The second writing task was carried out after the relevant material in the textbook had been completed. Teachers tried to establish similar classroom conditions by carrying out the tasks on the same dates and times when that was feasible. After the students' samples had been written, they were collected and read for feedback.

#### Session 6 (2<sup>nd</sup> revising situation)

In Session 6, students received the first drafts together with the feedback forms and were asked to revise their texts in response to the feedback provided. I was present during the process, so the participants had the chance to ask questions concerning the feedback and I had the chance to observe what went on in the classrooms while the

participants revised. I drew their attention to the different aspects highlighted in the feedback form and told them that they were also free to make self-initiated changes. The second drafts were collected and given to me. I evaluated them and wrote the second commentary.

#### Sessions 7 to 10

The writing and revising sessions for Tasks 3 and 4 were patterned in the same way as the previous sessions.

#### Sessions 11 and 12

Students were asked to carry out Task 5. As already mentioned in the research questions, the main purpose of the research was to see if the regulation of the problem solution (revision based on feedback) led to advanced performance but it was also important to check if this form of social regulation provided students with the tools necessary to master problems individually. The purpose of the final task was to investigate if, at the end of the study, the students were able to make self-regulatory revisions and what kind of revisions. For this reason, students revised their papers without any guidance and second drafts were collected and kept for the purpose of the analysis.

- **The questionnaire**

The questionnaire centred on one content area: teacher feedback. Its primary focus was to obtain a measure of the students' attitudes towards the specific model of revision (i.e. what they can report learning after a period of exposure to the specific kind of feedback). The students' reactions were explored through their feelings, opinions, likes and actions. A decision had to be made as to whether the questionnaire would include open or closed questions. With closed questions, the respondent has to choose from the options specified by the researcher. With open questions, respondents are free to respond as they like.

Initially, the questionnaire was constructed with closed questions but it was felt that balance was difficult to attain between items leaning towards a positive view and

items leading towards a negative view. As a result, the questionnaire was revised and questions became open. The piloting of the revised questionnaire revealed more authentic responses but also several problems with the given answers. It seemed that the analysis of the answers would require more time and effort than a closed-questionnaire, however, it was considered more important to avoid suggesting any answers or guiding the students towards a specific path. In consequence, it was decided to use the open-ended questions with a view to eliciting more of what went on in the students' minds.

The participants were presented with an open-ended questionnaire, consisting of a set of 5 questions. The open questions were intended to elicit verbal reports about the processes in which the students were engaged. More precisely, the questions were designed to disclose the students' opinion about the specific methodology, the problems they faced during the process and what they claim to have learnt (App. III, p.232). The questionnaire was administered two weeks after the completion of the five tasks.

In the construction of the questionnaire, the following matters were considered important: clarity and ease of response. Given that the questions did not present any difficult items which might inhibit understanding, the questionnaire was worded in the English language but the students were given the option to answer in German. Anonymity was also guaranteed in the questionnaires. The students were asked to be accurate and frank in their answers and express their true opinion. The "I must write what they want me to write" syndrome was still a possibility but it was assumed that anonymity would eliminate the risk of receiving answers that the participants did not really embrace.

**Table 2: Summary of the data collection timetable**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of activity</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
April – June 2003	Pilot study conducted which led to the construction of the instruments in their final form.	Check instrumentation procedures
Oct. 2003	Task 1: Development of Draft 1 Revision initiated by Ss and submission of Draft 2	Verify Ss weaknesses

Nov. 2003	Two teaching sessions on text evaluation: Focus on global and mechanical aspects of the text	Enhance understanding of the model
Dec. 2003 – Jan. 2004	Task 2: Development of Draft 1 Revision initiated by T and submission of Draft 2	Facilitate writing skill improvement
Feb. 2004	Task 3: Development of Draft 1 Revision initiated by T and submission of Draft 2	Facilitate writing skill improvement
March – April 2004	Task 4: Development of Draft 1 Revision initiated by T and submission of Draft 2	Facilitate writing skill improvement
May 2004	Task 5: Development of Draft 1 Revision initiated by Ss and submission of Draft 2	Check if model has been retained
June 2004	Completion of the questionnaire by Ss	Investigate Ss attitudes and reactions

#### **7.4 Closing comment**

During the research, three types of data were collected. The first one, labelled “Student Documents”, investigated the written products and the revisions made by the students during the study. The second one, labelled “Teacher Feedback”, analysed the comments written by the teacher in order to investigate their correspondence to the student revisions. The third one, labelled “Student Questionnaire” investigated students’ attitudes, self-awareness and constraints from the implementation of the model.

## CHAPTER 8 ANALYSES OF THE DATA

### 8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents descriptions of the analyses which were carried out to the three types of data collected. More specifically, it describes the initial and final coding of the revisions traced in the student documents. Then it focuses on the type of qualitative analysis employed in seven case studies in order to investigate the relationship between revision and text improvement. The final section of the chapter describes the questionnaire analysis carried out to determine how the students felt about the teacher feedback and the specific process of revision.

### 8.2 Analysis of the student documents

Many researchers have examined writers' revising behaviours through some kind of taxonomy. A taxonomic analysis is a method of categorising the data. It helps classify how information in the original text can be re-visualised. The taxonomies used to classify revisions usually contain information about the *type* of revision (e.g. addition, deletion), the *size* of revision (e.g. word, sentence), the *function* of revision (e.g. grammatical, cosmetic) and the *effect* of revision (e.g. micro level vs. macro level). This kind of classification takes place by affixing codes to a set of revisions that bear similar characteristics. As Holsti (1968:644) explains, "coding is the process whereby raw data are systematically transformed and aggregated into units which permit precise description of relevant content characteristics".

There have been a number of taxonomies developed by researchers to classify revisions. Sommers (1980) analysed revisions in terms of *length* and *operation*. For the latter, she used the categories of addition, deletion, substitution and rearrangement, the same categories which Chomsky used to group transformations (Faigley and Witte 1981:401). Some researchers have analysed revisions according to their *effect* on the meaning of the text and therefore distinguished between local and global revisions. Faigley and Witte (1981) centred their analysis on the distinction

between surface changes and text-base changes, i.e. changes editing and changes altering the meaning of a text. Falvey (1993) in Sengupta (1998:118) distinguished between different *functions* of revisions using the following categories: grammatical, cosmetic, texture, unnecessary expression, and explicature. The American ‘National Assessment of Educational Progress’ (NAEP) in its 1977 survey also categorised revisions according to their function and classified them as organisational, stylistic, continuational and holistic.

These classifications examine revision from different perspectives but they all have one thing in common: they count the frequency of different types of revisions. Holsti (1968:650) points out that “the most commonly used method of measuring characteristics of content is that of frequency, in which *every* occurrence of a given attribute is tallied”. The analyst using a measure of frequency to test his hypotheses incorporates two related assumptions into his research design. First, he assumes that the frequency with which an attribute appears in messages is a valid indicator of some variable (e.g. expansion) and second he assumes that each unit of content (e.g. word or sentence) should be given equal weight with every other unit, permitting aggregation or direct comparison.

After looking at a number of studies with similar concerns, I decided that some kind of textual analysis with a quantitative categorisation of the revisions would provide essential information regarding the between-draft changes made by the participants of the study and that this categorisation would lay the foundations upon which interpretation of the findings would be based. The question arose: what kind of analysis? I was interested primarily in meaning-based revisions, therefore, I needed a discourse-specific taxonomy. I found a scheme that worked well for this purpose. It was a 24-item taxonomy which accommodated in detail the kind of revisions students make. The basic distinction in this taxonomy is between text-base and surface revisions, that is, revisions that affect the meaning of the text and those that do not. The taxonomy is represented in schematic form as follows:

**Table 3: Faigley and Witte's taxonomy of revision changes**

<b>Revision changes</b>			
<b>Surface changes</b>		<b>Text-base changes</b>	
Formal changes	Meaning-preserving changes	Microstructure changes	Macrostructure changes
Spelling	Additions	Additions	Additions
Tense, number, and modality	Deletions	Deletions	Deletions
Abbreviation	Substitutions	Substitutions	Substitutions
Punctuation	Permutations	Permutations	Permutations
Format	Distributions	Distributions	Distributions
	Consolidations	Consolidations	Consolidations

### 8.2.1 The initial coding process

The taxonomy developed by Faigley and Witte (1981:403) to categorise between-draft revisions was used by other researchers in the analysis of EFL compositions and seemed to work well for the purposes of this research. Faigley and Witte's taxonomy was particularly interesting because it moved beyond other analytic methods which focused on the linguistic level (e.g word, clause, sentence) or the operation (e.g. addition, deletion) to a scheme which identified meaning-based revisions. Take the following example, for instance. One writer makes one spelling correction and that counts as one revision. Another writes a new beginning, which is a complex change, and this change also counts as one revision. We all know, however, that the qualitative value of each revision is not equal.

More specifically, Faigley and Witte's scheme is based on the distinction between "surface changes" and "text-base changes". Surface changes are represented on the left branch of Table 3 and concern the changes which do not bring new information to the text or do not remove old information from the text. In other words, they do not alter the meaning of the text. Text-base changes are represented on the right branch of



Table 3 and involve the adding of new content or the deletion and alteration of existing content.

Surface changes are subdivided into “formal changes” and “meaning-preserving changes”. Formal changes include changes in spelling, tense number and modality, abbreviations, punctuation, and format. In other words, they include most conventional editing operations. Meaning-preserving changes include changes that “paraphrase” the concepts in the text but do not change them. The meaning-preserving changes are categorised in terms of six operations, i.e. addition, deletion, substitution, permutation, distribution and consolidation.

Text-base changes constitute the second important class in the taxonomy and are subdivided into “microstructure changes” and “macrostructure changes”. They are also categorised in terms of six operations, i.e. addition, deletion, substitution, permutation, distribution and consolidation. Microstructure changes are “simple adjustments or elaborations of existing text” and macrostructure changes are changes that “make more sweeping alterations” and can change the summary of the text (Faigley and Witte 1981:404). This means that many text-base changes might be of small consequence for the whole text whereas others might have greater impact on it, at times giving the text a new direction. It follows that a microstructure change is a minor change whereas a macrostructure change is a major change. Van der Wurff (1985:34) illustrates with an example what a macrostructure is: “A macrostructure of a text is a kind of formal rendering of what that text is about. Macrostructures may have a hierarchical order. Thus a story about visiting a restaurant (top macrostructure: ‘x visits restaurant’) may have the following more detailed macro-structures:

- x visits restaurant
- x meets an old friend when entering the restaurant
  - they drink something and exchange recollections of time past
  - they say goodbye to each other
- x takes his meal
  - x orders a tourist menu
  - x eats his meal
  - x pays and leaves



## Examples of microstructure changes

### **Addition:**

Then we went for a walk in the center of London. When we finished the walk, we returned to the hotel.

→ Then we went for a walk in the center of London. We saw a lot of markets, one park and restaurants. The roads didn't have Christmas decorations. When we finished the walk, we returned to the hotel.

### **Deletion:**

I closed the window, because the cold rain came into my room. My grandma was in the garden. My mum went outside and spoke to my grandma. The rain was stronger and my mum and grandma went back to our house. Before they went in the house I saw a car. The car ran very fast ....

→ I closed the window, because the cold rain came into my room. I looked out of the window and I saw a car. The car ran very fast ....

Faigley and Witte (1984) also recorded the length of the text unit involved in a change. There are six units of analysis:

Grapheme (G)	Word (W)	Phrase (P)
Clause (C)	Sentence (S)	Multi-sentence (MS)

Grapheme changes involve changes to punctuation and letters such as capitalisation of a letter or the replacement of a comma by a full stop. Word-level revisions include changes of single lexical items with or without articles. Phrasal changes refer to changes in constructions larger than a single lexical item, without a finite subject and verb. A clause is defined as a construction with both a finite subject and a verb. A sentence is considered to be a sentence if it is punctuated as such whether or not it meets the necessary accepted syntactical criteria. A multi-sentence is a group of sentences which are coded separately.

To sum up, revision changes in Faigley and Witte's scheme are categorised in three ways:

- by operation (addition, deletion, substitution, permutation, distribution, consolidation)
- by effect (formal, meaning-preserving, microstructural, macrostructural),
- by unit length (grapheme, word, phrase, clause, sentence, multi-sentence).

**Table 4: Faigley and Witte's coding scheme**

**Revision changes**

<b>1. Surface changes</b>		<b>2. Text-base changes</b>	
<b>1.1 Formal changes</b>	<b>1.2 Meaning-preserving changes</b>	<b>2.1 Microstructure changes</b>	<b>2.2 Macrostructure changes</b>
1.1g Spelling	1.2a Additions	2.1a Additions	2.2a Additions
1.1h Tense, Grammar and Modality	1.2b Deletions	2.1b Deletions	2.2b Deletions
	1.2c Substitutions	2.1c Substitutions	2.2c Substitutions
1.1i Abbreviation	1.2d Permutations	2.1d Permutations	2.2d Permutations
1.1j Punctuation	1.2e Distributions	2.1e Distributions	2.2e Distributions
1.1k Format	1.2f Consolidations	2.1f Consolidations	2.2f Consolidations

In coding, full category names are replaced with brief symbols (see Table 4). In this scheme, the code consists of a combination of letter and numbers. The coding begins with a Capital letter for the classification of unit length, a master code (a number) to indicate the basic distinction between surface changes and text-base changes and some subcodes (small letters) to mark off segments of data in each class of variables. All changes are prefixed with G for Grapheme, W for Word, P for Phrase, C for Clause, S for Sentence and M for Multi-sentence. All surface changes are coded with 1 and text-base changes are coded with 2. Surface changes are sub-coded with 1.1 for formal changes and 1.2 for meaning-preserving changes. Text-base changes are sub-coded with 2.1 for microstructure changes and 2.2 for macrostructure changes.

This list of codes was applied to the set of texts collected in the piloting phase and was examined for its effectiveness. As a result, the classification of surface changes was revised and one category (abbreviation) was abolished whereas the category of Tense, number and modality was replaced with three separate categories: Grammar,

Lexis and Syntax. With regard to text-base changes, the piloting analysis showed that there were very few if any instances of macrostructure changes that really affected the summary, the gist or the topic of a text or part of a text. This finding was not surprising considering the age, cognitive maturity and writing expertise of the specific learners. Moreover, the distinction between meaning-preserving and microstructure operations was not always clear-cut. In categorising the changes, I decided to modify or refine some of the original categories and ignore those that did not apply to the specific context. I came up with the following coding scheme:

**Table 5: The coding scheme used for types of revisions**

<b>Text-base changes</b>	<b>Letter code</b>	<b>Surface changes</b>	<b>Letter code</b>
Addition	a	Spelling	g
Deletion	b	Grammar	h
Substitution	c	Lexis	i
Permutation	d	Syntax	j
Distribution	e	Punctuation	k
Consolidation	f	Format	l

The coding of changes was going to distinguish only between surface and text-base changes. The six formal changes would be classified as surface changes whereas the other six operations, whether preserving meaning or changing the microstructure of a text would be classified as text-base changes. In other words, any operations that concerned meaning would be classified as text-base regardless of the extent to which they affected the meaning of a text. On the other hand, any additions, deletions, substitutions or distributions which aimed at correcting language errors would be classified as grammar, lexis or syntax. The coding system that emerged was a set of two codes, one which described the size of revision (e.g. word, sentence) and the other which indicated the type of change (e.g. spelling, addition). The type of change would be indicative of the effect of the revision.

### 8.2.2 The final coding process

When the findings from the piloting phase were interpreted with a view to answering the research questions, it became obvious that something was missing. The Faigley and Witte taxonomy provided information about type, size and effect of revisions but did not shed light on another important aspect of revision which concerned this study. The research question “What is the relationship between teacher comments and student revisions?” still remained unanswered.

It was necessary to focus more on the intentions of the writer when he was making revisions because in this way it would be possible to trace connections with features of the teacher feedback. The basic logic behind this investigation would be: if the content has such-and-such characteristics, the writer has such-and-such intentions, hence such-and-such goals for text improvement. This kind of analysis would help identify a writer’s purpose in making a specific change. At the same time, the same kind of analysis could be used for the teacher comments in order to reveal the teacher’s goals for improvement. The correlation between teacher comments and student revisions would provide a link of students’ revisions with specific features of the teacher feedback and allow us to check the hypothesis that students would move beyond a concern with surface structure to increase the percentage of text-base revisions when guided to do so by relevant feedback.

It became clear that for the purposes of this study, it was not only revision itself but the function of revision that mattered. In other words, a specific revision (e.g. the substitution of a word or phrase for another one) is important because it was a choice being made in a given context (the meaning of that substitution, why the writer did it). That choice excluded other choices that could have been made to substitute for that word or phrase, therefore, the revision was embedded in a particular logic. One of the purposes of the study was to become aware of whether and to what extent this logic was dictated by the teacher’s prompts and whether it led to successful outcomes.

I looked through some other taxonomies in order to construct a more thorough system of analysis. I found a taxonomy which seemed to fit the purpose. The scheme was

used by Fix (2000) in a research study analysing and evaluating revisions of students from eight German classes. His description and analysis of the revisions included four main categories: a) position of the change in the text (e.g. introduction, main body, closing paragraph), b) type of operation (e.g. addition, deletion, variation), c) assumed intention (e.g. expansion, reduction, grammar) and d) evaluation of revision (e.g. successful, unsuccessful, neutral). Fix's scheme included categories that had already been used in my analysis (e.g. type of operation) and others that did not apply to the purposes of my research (e.g. position of the change in the text). However, it was useful because it examined the writer's intentions but most importantly, because it included one aspect that I had not until then considered: the evaluation of the revisions. Last but not least, Fix carried out a qualitative analysis of specific essays and described case studies in great detail explaining how individual changes affected the text. I felt this kind of qualitative analysis would bear real fruit for my research.

**Table 6: Fix's taxonomy of revisions**

Gliederungselement	Handlungstyp, Anzahl			Vermutete Intention					Evaluation (hinsichtlich vermuteter Intention)		
	A	D	P	E	R	T	L	?	geglückt	missglückt	neutral, nicht einschätzbar
z.B.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Ü</u>berschrift</li> <li>▪ <u>E</u>inleitung</li> <li>▪ gröbere <u>H</u>auptteil-episode</li> <li>▪ <u>S</u>chluss</li> <li>▪ <u>S</u>Tellungnahme</li> <li>▪ <u>S</u>TROphe</li> </ul>	A = Addition	D = Deletion	P = Permutation	E = Ergänzung (genauere Ausführung des Inhalts, Explikation eines Gedankens, Präzisierung)	R = Reduktion (semantische Verdichtung, Auf-den-Punkt-bringen, zusammenfassender Ausdruck, Verallgemeinerung)	T = Orientierung an einer Textsortennorm	L = Weitere Revisionen mit der Intention einer besseren Leserorientierung	? = Ungeklärte und sonstige Intentionen			
	X					x			x		
	X					x					x

I needed to conduct comparisons between the functions of student revisions and the functions of teacher comments in order to examine the correlation between feedback

and revision. Inspired by Fix's scheme, I decided to condense the data in a correlation matrix which would permit a more systematic viewing of data. This display would help summarise and compare findings within a case. The columns of the matrix would include the teacher's comments and the student's revisions. Both comments and revisions would be sorted into the familiar dyad (text-base and surface) and then the rows of the matrix would show the full range of functions of revisions (Table 9, p.108).

The first six criteria outlined on the upper rows of the table (text-base) indicate some important qualities in judging students' writing and are defined as follows:

- Expansion (E): intention to add details, to explain better, to provide sufficiency of information
- Reduction (R): intention to delete, to condense, to take out the unnecessary, also reduction motivated by inability to deal with a problem
- Organisation (O): intention to sequence the content by using chronological or logical order
- Coherence/Cohesion (C): intention to make the transition between sentences or paragraphs smoother
- Genre/audience (Au): intention to apply the rules or the characteristics that make each genre successful; intention to produce more reader-friendly text, to tailor text production to the specific setting and audience, to address the text directly to the reader
- Style (ST): intention to make the text look better, to make the style plainer or more elaborate for the occasion.

Expansion concerns the development, clarification and expansion of ideas; reduction concerns the deletion of unnecessary or irrelevant ideas; organisation concerns the logical arrangement of ideas; coherence/cohesion concerns the relevance of main points to the controlling idea as well as paragraph and textual structure; audience/genre concerns discourse conventions, purpose and reader-friendliness; style concerns the replacement of ideas with more relevant, appropriate or elaborate points.



Some of these criteria, of course, overlap and interact. For example, reader-friendliness can be defined in terms of aspects such as expansion and organisation of information. Coherence also overlaps with reader-friendliness. As O'Brien (1996:18) puts it, coherence is like a thread, a thread of meaning: "The thread has been placed there by the writer and if it has been well placed it can be followed by the reader". However, in the specific scheme, the notion of reader-friendliness applies to those instances in which the writer makes revisions in order to adjust his text to the specific setting and audience. The other six categories (surface) were used exactly as in Faigley and Witte's coding scheme and concerned the treatment of errors in spelling, grammar, vocabulary, syntax, punctuation and format.

Regarding the evaluation of revisions, three criteria of success were used in order to designate the extent to which a change contributed to the writer's chances of achieving a goal. For example, a reduction was treated as successful when it took out an unnecessary, superfluous or peripheral piece of information and not when it took out a relevant or interesting one. Any change that occurred in a student's paper was classified as successful, unsuccessful or neutral.

The final coding scheme comprised a classification of revisions into four broad categories: size, type, function and effectiveness (Table 7, App. II, p.228). There were three different levels of analysis ranging from the descriptive to the inferential. The first and the second codes were descriptive and attributed objective characteristics to a segment of text. The second code was interpretive because it entailed interpretation of the student's motives when he was making the specific revisions. The third code was even more inferential because it indicated the inferred success or not of a specific revision. To sum up, each change was coded with four different kinds of codes. The code [Sa E S] indicated a change involving addition at sentence level; the writer's intention was to expand his text; the revision was regarded as successful. When a revision change spanned more than one sentence, each sentence was recorded separately. For example, a long addition comprising five sentences (a multi-sentence) was recorded five times.

### 8.3 The relationship between revision and text improvement

One of the hypotheses in this study is that improvement in writing will occur when the students revise their texts. To test this hypothesis, it is not enough to count revisions; we need to interpret them. Counting revisions provides answers about the variety of revisions, the writer's motives and possible connections with the teacher's feedback. However, that is all we can determine simply by counting, and whether these revisions contribute to better writing is still an unproven hypothesis.

Matsubishi and Gordon (1985:242) bring this aspect to light: "The final assessment of any revision [...] depends on whether or not the change improved the essay". Although the statistical data can show to what extent students succeed in making revisions, they do not inform about the quality of the revisions themselves. The critical aspect of revision with regard to quality is not *how many* revisions are made but *which* revisions are made. For Mitsubishi and Gordon, "the very fact that student writers [...] were able to produce more text-base material suggests that their essay have improved". Making more text-base changes is indicative of improvement, thus, it was decided to prove the effectiveness of revision on the basis of this argument.

However, the interrelation between revision and text improvement is a very complex issue and the proportions of text-base over surface changes as well as the proportions of successful over unsuccessful changes are only indices of text improvement. Indeed, the analysis of the writings has shown that not all text-base changes should be seen as marking improvement. Nor are revised versions with a high number of successful revisions always improvements of the original. Hence, reporting text-base or successful revisions is no guarantee that writing quality has improved.

Since the high number of revisions, though text-base, is not synonymous with improvement, we need to determine what constitutes improvement. Text improvement is very much a controversial issue. It is extremely difficult to judge in an objective sense whether a revised text is an improvement of the original. Dheram (1996:26) claims that it is not possible to achieve total objectivity while analysing

revision. “The analyst, as a reader, can only make inferences with reference to the intentions of the writer. This may involve [...] the possibility of the analyst imposing her intentions on the writer”.

However, the description made of the students’ revision efforts by the researcher is not necessarily subjective. To evaluate the effectiveness of revisions on the text, a set of criteria related to successful writing and hence to text improvement must be established. Grammatical accuracy is one of them but by no means the only one. Even in EFL writing, research has shown that language proficiency facilitates and enhances writing ability but does not determine it. Appropriateness, sufficiency and organisation of information are, among others, important discourse-related factors which characterise a ‘good’ text. Another important factor is the understanding of the reader’s needs since such an understanding can help the writer identify which points need to be further elaborated.

The following criteria, therefore, were considered appropriate for judging if the second draft was an improved version of the first: (a) appropriacy of information: the extent to which the ideas of the text became more mature, clear, specific or thorough (b) sufficiency of information: the extent to which the ideas of the paper were enriched or supported by appropriate and relevant details; (c) organisation: the extent to which the text was developed in an orderly and logical way; (d) coherence: the extent to which sentence was linked to sentence and paragraph to paragraph through effective transitional devices; (e) style: the extent to which variety, syntactical maturity, and effectiveness of sentence structure was achieved; and (f) usage: the extent to which language became more accurate.

It is obvious that many factors contribute to judgments of quality and it seems unlikely that revision in any one of these factors alone will produce dramatic effects on quality. However, for the purposes of the present study, revision was considered effective when the students fulfilled at least some of the above criteria. Hence, apart from a numerical interpretation of the changes, a holistic evaluation of the kind ‘The student’s work is now better’ took place. For this reason, revision evaluation was

broken down into three categories: a) no change, b) revised version slightly better, and c) revised version better. The descriptor 'no change' indicated stability whereas the descriptors 'revised version better' or 'slightly better' revealed the scale of change. A short description of the change was entered for each of the five tasks, from early through later writing in order to delineate how the student's writing was transformed over time.

#### **8.4 The case study**

“Case studies offer illuminative portrayals in the sense that they provide an in-depth analysis of the composing process in general and the composing processes of individuals in particular” (Dheram 1996:13). Seven case studies of individuals were selected in order to investigate if revised texts were better texts and determine whether improvement occurred for these individuals over a period of time. More specifically, the aim of constructing case studies in order to examine in greater detail how individual students went about revising their texts was two-fold: a) to examine the relationship between revision and improvement and b) to investigate how well the teacher's feedback worked for helping students understand what constitutes improvement.

There is no straightforward answer to the question how many cases a multiple-case study should have. Miles and Huberman (1994:30) suggest using as many cases as we consider necessary in order to gain confidence in our analytic generalisations, and stress that with high complexity a study with more than 15 cases or so can become unwieldy. For the purposes of this study, a sub-sample of seven cases was analysed. In other words, 7% of the coded texts were graded for improvement. This means that of the 1000 drafts collected for the study, 70 were selected for qualitative analysis. The sample was taken from the same group of students and the selection of the cases represents a continuum from skilled to less skilled writers. The construction of these case studies will help illustrate how these students negotiated the revisions and reveal more about the relationship between feedback, revision and text improvement.

Yin (2003:1) points out that using case studies for research purposes “remains one of the most challenging of all social endeavors”. The profile of each individual student is multifaceted and cannot be rendered down to a simple set of writing and revising skills. The explanations for individuals’ differential success can depend on a wide range of variables, the most important of which are: age, language aptitude, social-psychological factors, personality, cognitive style, hemisphere specialisation, learning strategies and a few others e.g. memory, awareness, will, language disability, interest, sex, birth order, prior experience (Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991:153-206). Many of these factors overlap and interact and thus it is very difficult to isolate one factor from the others and obtain a true measure of it.

However, in this study it has been hypothesised that most of the variation in the phenomenon being studied will take place as the result of teacher intervention. If the observed outcomes in each case study are connected with teacher intervention, then we will have strong evidence for this hypothesis. Yin (2003:47) explains that this happens when we consider multiple-case studies as we would consider multiple experiments, following replication logic. We replicate the finding by conducting a second, third, and even more experiments. If all the cases, therefore, turn out as predicted, they will provide compelling support for the hypotheses.

The case studies in this study were based on a mix of quantitative and qualitative evidence. The texts were analysed and conclusions were drawn. Each case study report contains the student’s first drafts, the teacher commentaries and the student’s subsequent revisions (App. V, pp.244-298). For tasks 2, 3 and 4, there is a table illustrating the correlation between comments and revisions. Another table presents an overview of the student’s revisions across tasks and there is a progress report for each case. The samples are accompanied by analytic comments and inferences about what happened and how as well as comparisons and conclusions about the effectiveness of revisions. To the extent that analyses converge across the seven-case sample and across the whole sample, strong claims for the viability of the findings can be made.

### 8.5 Integrating quantitative and qualitative analysis: An example

The coding process will be illustrated with a sample from Student 018. Below you can see the student's drafts on Task 2 as well as the teacher's commentaries. You can also see how the revisions were coded. The codes appear in the left-hand margin beside the chunk of analysis. Normally all the revisions are coded on the second draft. However, here the deletions have been noted on the first draft to facilitate the process of understanding what has been taken out from the text.

#### Student's drafts: "Describe an interesting person"

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>I want to introduce you a very good schoolfriend. Her name is Meret. She's new at this school – like me. Before the first lesson at that school she sat next to me in the secretary office. Our class teacher collected us and we went together to our new class. I was very excited. And I felt, she was it, too. She's very tall and she's got blond hair. She's got green eyes, a big nose and a nice mouth. She's often laughing. In maths, she's very good – not like me.</p> <p>Before she came at this school, she lived in "Weinheim" – it's between "Mannheim" and "Heidelberg". Her parents are very nice and kindly. Her brother is called Louis and he's like my own brother! I like her very much. She's like me.</p> <p>[131 words]</p>	<p>I want to introduce you to a very good schoolfriend. Her name is Meret. She's got blond hair, green eyes and a big nose. Her parents are very nice and kind. Her brother is called Louis.</p> <p>She's new at this school like me. Before she lived in Koblenz, she lived in Weinheim.</p> <p>Before the first lesson at that school she sat next to me in the secretary office. Then our class teacher came and collected us. We were very excited when we went to our new classroom and the new class.</p> <p>Meret is very tall and often she laughs. We laugh together. In the lessons sometimes one of us doesn't know anything and then the other one helps. I think we're a very good team.</p> <p>Some boys in the class gave her the name "plum" but it's not so nice.</p> <p>[140 words]</p>

#### Teacher's comments

After 1st Draft	After 2nd Draft
<p>18. Dear student, <u>Content</u> I find your description interesting. You wrote about what your friend looks like, some of her character traits and about her family. Perhaps you can add more details about her personality and how she acts in certain situations. Remember: Details are important in character descriptions. They make a description more interesting. Last line: 'she's like me': can you explain in more detail what you have in</p>	<p>18. Dear student, Your writing is much better this time because you <i>added</i> interesting ideas about this person, <i>organised</i> your text in a better way, <i>made paragraphs</i>, and used <i>more correct</i> language.</p>

<p>common?</p> <p><u>Organisation</u> Organise your ideas better. Make all the sentences in a paragraph talk about the main idea so that your paragraph is clear.</p> <p><u>Language</u> Check the following points: L1: missing pr, L5: S, L6: expression, L8: T/ pr, L12 :G Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>Now look at the following language corrections: L5: before she moved to Koblenz, L11: she often laughs.</p>
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**Table 8: The coding of the revisions**

	1 <sup>st</sup> Draft
<p>P b St N S b R U</p> <p>C b R U</p> <p>C b R U, MS b R U (2x)</p>	<p>I want to introduce you a very good schoolfriend. Her name is Meret. She's new at this school – like me. Before the first lesson at that school she sat next to me in the secretary office. Our class teacher collected us and we went together to our new class. I was very excited. And I felt, she was it, too. She's very tall and she's got blond hair. She's got green eyes, a big nose and a nice mouth. She's often laughing. In maths, she's very good – not like me.</p> <p>Before she came at this school, she lived in "Weinheim" – it's between "Mannheim" and "Heidelberg". Her parents are very nice and kindly. Her brother is called Louis and he's like my own brother! I like her very much. She's like me.</p>
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>W h G S S d O S, S f O S S d O S, W i G S, S d O S</p> <p>W k G N, C c E S</p> <p>W a C S, W a E N S c C S, G g G S P a E U, S f C S</p> <p>S f O U, C h G S MS a E S (3x)</p> <p>S a E U</p>	<p>I want to introduce you to a very good schoolfriend. Her name is Meret. She's got blond hair, green eyes and a big nose. Her parents are very nice and kind. Her brother is called Louis.</p> <p>She's new at this school like me. Before she lived in Koblenz, she lived in Weinheim.</p> <p>Before the first lesson at that school she sat next to me in the secretary office. Then our class teacher came and collected us. We were very excited when we went to our new classroom and the new class.</p> <p>Meret is very tall and often she laughs. We laugh together. In the lessons sometimes one of us doesn't know anything and then the other one helps. I think we're a very good team.</p> <p>Some boys in the class gave her the name "plum" but it's not so nice.</p>

Briefly stated, the coding scheme helps show that this writer made 27 revisions, of which 21 were text-base and 6 were surface changes. Most of the changes were made at sentence level. The writer was concerned with adding, deleting and shifting details around her text and to a lesser extent with improving grammatical accuracy. The analysis also shows that of the 27 changes, 15 were considered successful.

**Table 9: Summary of teacher comments and student revisions in Task (2)**

Function of revisions	Teacher's comments	Student's revisions
<b>Text-base</b>		
Expansion	3	7
Reduction		5
Organisation	1	5
Coherence		3
Genre/Audience		
Style		1
<b>Surface</b>		
Spelling	1	1
Grammar	4	2
Lexis	1	1
Syntax		
Punctuation		1
Format	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>27</b>

Regarding the correlation between the teacher feedback and the writer's revisions, we can see that many of the writer's changes were consciously controlled as a response to the teacher's comments. For example, the writer's decision to support the description with more details and organise her text better was clearly influenced by the teacher comments. 4 of the teacher's comments concerned the expansion of content and support for description as well as the need for better organisation. The remaining 7 comments concerned surface features such as spelling, grammar, vocabulary and paragraphing. There is no doubt that the writer was motivated by the teacher's prompts to look at the text more critically and improve it in areas such as sufficiency, organisation and accuracy of information. In Table 10 (App. II, pp.229-230) you can see the process of evaluation more analytically.

Of course, it is not always possible to determine whether a specific change was influenced by the teacher's comments about what goals are desirable or by the student's own background of experience and practice. In this case study, the teacher prompted the student to expand and rearrange the text but did not give specific instructions about what needs to be done. The writer made successful text-base revisions but there were also times when the teacher feedback did not affect the writing positively. For example, the writer decided in two instances to sacrifice the content on the altar of form because she did not know how to make the suggested



grammatical corrections. However, the writer was given credit for improving the text in terms of sufficiency and organisation of information as well as usage and thus her revised text was classified as a 'better version'. All these findings, insights and conclusions as well as their implications for teaching will be presented and discussed in detail in Chapter 10.

### **8.6 Problems encountered during the analytical process**

The new coding scheme seemed to fit and account well for the purposes of the study. However, there were limitations in terms of reliability because some changes were hard to classify. It was difficult, for example, to decide whether a span of text including several changes constituted, say, a deletion and addition or a substitution, since substitutions combine an addition and a deletion. Sometimes one span of text was found to represent more than one operation, e.g. a permutation and a consolidation, thus, it was difficult to allocate it to a category on a one-to-one basis. To deal with such problems, Faigley and Witte (1984:103) recommend that researchers using their taxonomy "keep examples of particular kinds of changes and from these examples develop their own guidelines for scoring problematic areas".

I decided, in the circumstances, to conduct multiple codings of the units of discourse revisiting them in order to decide whether the initial categorisation was valid. In the beginning, the changes in students' texts were coded and then second-coded. The first stages of initial categorisation were rather slow and tentative, but as I progressed with categorising, I became more confident and consistent because categories were clarified, ambiguities were resolved and fewer surprises and anomalies were encountered. This improved the speed and efficiency of the process. However, it was necessary that I checked coding with another coder. The second rater, a colleague who had experience of coding from a previous research project, was asked to classify a random selection of 5% of the sample (50 texts), and her coding was compared with my coding so that any discrepancies were noted and resolved. From the 300 changes which were second coded, it turned out that agreement on types of operations was not so hard to reach.

Of course, objectivity can be achieved more easily when we record only what appears in the message. In other words, the analysis is more reliable when it avoids 'reading between the lines' and remains limited to the manifest attributes of the text. By contrast, when it comes to units of discourse and function, it is debatable whether there can be a single mapping between them because text evaluation is so complex and context-sensitive. In Table 11 (App. II, pp.230-231) there is an example illustrating the case. The analysis shows that there are areas, though limited, where the comments of the two readers are differentiated. In qualitative analysis we must accept the fact that the codification of the changes is open to multiple interpretations and that it is impossible to escape the subjective perspective. However, in this study, inter-rater reliability is high, which means that the analysis has yielded an accurate picture of the students' goals and intentions.

### **8.7 The questionnaire analysis**

Once the data from the questionnaire had been harvested, an analysis was carried out for the open-ended questions. As Holsti (1968:609) points out, "the coding of open-ended questionnaires falls under the rubric of content analysis". This means that the received responses had to be assigned to categories. The analysis scheme which was used entailed a rating scale. To decide on the descriptors of the scale, the following procedure was adopted. The analysis sorted and sifted through the answers to identify similar phrases, relationships or patterns. Once the common textual patterns in the students' answers had been identified, the data was reduced into four or five scales for each question and the results were displayed through graphs and pies.

More specifically, the answers to two of the questions (Q2 and Q5) resembled the Likert-type continuum. The Likert scale asks participants to respond to a series of statements indicating whether they agree or disagree and to what extent with each statement. For example, it was found that the students' responses to Q2 ("How many of the comments did you use?") could be analysed by describing their degree of involvement with the following adverbial labels: all of them, most of them, some of them, not many of them, none of them. For the purposes of the statistical analysis,

each answer was given a weight of 1-5, with five being “all”, 1 “none” and “some” the middle point. Similarly, it was found that the students’ answers to Q5 (“Do you think your text improved significantly after the revisions?”) exemplified a similar pattern. Therefore, a similar format was followed for Q5 to indicate with a scale of 1-5 the extent to which the text had improved, based on the participants’ own judgment. In this way, the answers to the questions became closed.

The instrument was also tested for intra-rater reliability. First a sample of answers were decoded and classified and then after a month they were reassessed. The decoding and classification of the answers was found to be similar to the analysis made the first time. The decoding and classification process will be described in Chapter 11.

## **8.8 Summary of the methods**

For the quantitative analysis of the data, the student documents were coded according to a scheme adapted from Faigley and Witte and a scheme adapted from Fix. The adaptation was guided by two concerns: first, to make fine distinctions between categories which would make sense in the specific context and second, to allow for an analysis combining reliability and validity. A seven-case study was nested in the larger sample of cases from which the data was collected in order to investigate further the correlation between feedback and revision and the relationship between revision and text improvement.

The large scale study (100 students) concentrated on all the students’ type, size, effect and function of revisions as well as the analysis of teacher comments and correlations with student revisions. This means that for each of the 100 cases, there are measures of all these variables. This kind of analysis permits us to read across a row, looking at the scores for each particular case. These are the quantitative measures. To do a real case analysis, however, I looked at the full story of some of the students. This data is displayed in matrix form and associated analytic text in App. V. In this way, it is hoped that we will be able to trace the flow and correlation of events to see how the

specific students came to revise their writing and by looking at these cases, we might begin to see recurrent patterns that occur as young students are learning how to revise their texts.

Cases with similar or different outcomes will be compared in order to form more general explanations. This kind of analysis will allow us, as Miles and Huberman (1994:172) point out, “to see processes and outcomes across many cases, to understand how they are qualified by local conditions, and thus to develop more sophisticated descriptions and more powerful explanations”. The purpose, therefore, is to build a descriptive and explanatory map of each case and by examining multiple individual cases to increase generalisability since the events and processes are not wholly idiosyncratic.

Finally, in a society where ‘motivation and positive attitudes’ is an important educational objective, the present study cannot depend solely upon the analysis of the students’ linguistic products in order to yield insight into what is actually a psycholinguistic process. How the students felt about the teacher feedback and the specific process of revision constitutes a motivational factor that might affect their performance. Therefore, the data from an open-ended questionnaire will allow us to discuss the pedagogical implications.

## **8.9 Closing comment**

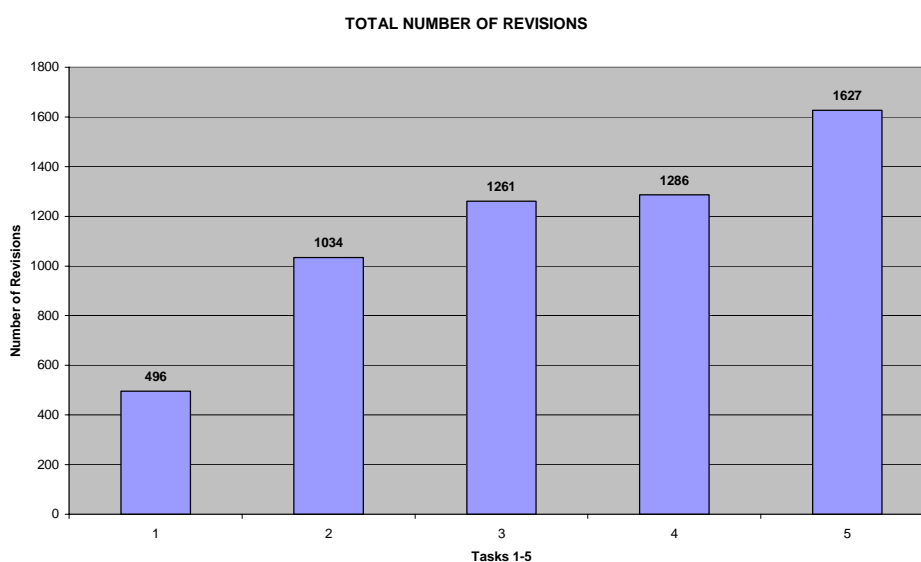
The last three chapters have investigated the epistemological basis of the research and indicated how that basis shifted as the research progressed. Testing a model of revision was the goal of the research and that generated an analysis of the findings that was both quantitative and qualitative. Chapter 9 will examine the statistical results of the coding, Chapter 10 will look at the descriptive data from the case studies of individual student writers and Chapter 11 will explore the results from the analysis of the questionnaires.

## CHAPTER 9 RESULTS FROM THE ANALYSIS OF THE REVISIONS

### 9.1 Introduction

Two main analyses were carried out to explore the students' revisions and possible relationships between the revisions and features of feedback. The first part of the analysis examined the types, size and effect of revisions. The second part of the analysis examined the functions of revisions and compared their correlation to the teacher comments. One of the aims of this study was to investigate whether the greatest degree of correlation was found between text-base or surface features of the text and the corresponding properties of teacher comments.

Revisions were analysed for 100 of 142 students since full data, i.e. ten drafts per student, was not available for the whole sample. The size of the written corpus was very large. 1000 drafts of student essays (totalling approximately 1,500 pages) were analysed and the revision changes between the drafts were coded according to the taxonomies described in Chapter 8 and totalled for each student and for the whole sample. Fig. 1 shows the total number of changes included in the sample as a whole.



**Fig. 1** The total number of revisions across tasks

## PART I

### 9.2 Comparing revisions across tasks

Table 1 (App. IV, p.233) gives a quantitative overview of the revision activity of the students in this study and contains the average rate of revision operations for the whole sample. The distribution of revisions across the tasks clearly illustrates the scale of the change that occurred after the teacher intervention in Task 2. Looking at the scores, it is worth considering what they mean in practice.

- **Task 1 (without teacher feedback between drafts)**

In Task 1, students made 496 revisions altogether. The figures in the first row of Table 1 show that each student made 1.41 additions and 1.23 grammar revisions per draft whereas the scores for the other variables were very low. The scores clearly illustrate that students entered the study with low levels of revision capability or willingness to revise.

- **Task 2 (with teacher feedback between drafts)**

In Task 2, students made more revisions in nearly all the variables (1034 revisions in total). It is noteworthy that the variables with the most significant increase in scores were text-base whereas the surface variables remained at low levels. This might indicate that the teacher comments have had some significant influence on the frequency and types of revisions right from the start of the intervention.

- **Task 3 (with teacher feedback between drafts)**

The third row in Table 1 shows that the variables of addition and substitution rose to a score of 4.05 and 2.74 respectively whereas deletion remained rather stable compared to Task 2 but still higher than Task 1. On the other side of the pendulum, the scores of grammar and vocabulary rose considerably. The mean rate of revisions in categories such as consolidations, spelling, syntax, punctuation and format was still very limited. In fact, compared to Task 2, the scores in these categories slightly decreased. The score of permutations, in particular, fell dramatically. This discrepancy is understandable when it is remembered that Task 3 is a story. Students have a learned

schema for stories and therefore they did not face any problems concerning textual organisation. Taken together, the scores for Task 3 show that students continued to make more revisions (1261 changes altogether) and they were increasingly concerned with high level aspects of their writing.

- **Task 4 (with teacher feedback between the drafts)**

The upward trend in the first three categories of text-base revisions continued whereas the change was relatively small for most of the other variables. The fact that, on average, the mean number of changes is comparatively large (1286 changes) indicates that in Task 4 students were still rather active revisers.

- **Task 5 (without teacher feedback between the drafts)**

The figures in the last row of Table 1 show that all the scores in Task 5 were considerably higher than the scores in Task 1. The higher rate of revision in text-base categories points in the direction of an increasing awareness of revision at global level. In summary, the figures suggest that although at the beginning of the study the students were inert revisers, they were gradually metamorphosed into more active revisers. We do not know if they were also metamorphosed from unskilled to skilled revisers. This cannot be seen or fully understood simply by reference to the statistical analysis of student revisions. This issue will be returned to in Chapter 10, in which the qualitative analysis of the data will cast light on such aspects and highlight some significant findings in the development of revision skills.

### **9.2.1 Hypothesis-testing methodology: the Null and the Alternative Hypothesis**

The hypothesis-testing procedure was used to provide statistical evidence that the average rates between the tasks were really different, which would, in turn, mean that the teacher intervention had some impact on student revisions. Berenson, Levine and Krehbiel (2002:308-309) explain what hypothesis testing is all about. “Hypothesis testing begins with some theory or claim about a particular parameter of a population. A null hypothesis is formed, which is always one of status-quo or no difference and is identified by the symbol  $H_0$  [...]. If the null hypothesis is considered false, something else must be true. To anticipate this possibility, whenever a null hypothesis is

specified, an alternative hypothesis must also be specified, one that must be true if the null hypothesis is found to be false. The alternative hypothesis  $H_1$  is the opposite of the null hypothesis  $H_0$  [...] Hypothesis-testing methodology is designed so that the rejection of the null hypothesis is based on evidence from the sample that the alternative hypothesis is far more likely to be true”.

In this study, the null hypothesis is that the average score of revisions in Task 1 (before intervention) is equal to the average score of revisions in later tasks (after intervention). To put it differently, the null hypothesis is that the distribution of scores in Task 1 and the distribution of scores in subsequent tasks are almost identical. The alternative hypothesis is that any later task (after intervention) has a higher score than Task 1 (before intervention).

In recent years, the concept of the  $p$ -value as an approach to hypothesis testing has increasingly gained acceptance in social sciences. “The  $p$ -value is the probability of obtaining a test statistic equal to or more extreme than the result obtained from the sample data, given that the null hypothesis  $H_0$  is true” (Berenson, Levine and Krehbiel 2002:316). The  $p$ -value is often referred to as the *observed level of significance*, which is the smallest level of significance that would lead to rejection of the null hypothesis  $H_0$  (Berenson, Levine and Krehbiel 2002:316; Montgomery 2001:98).

The decision rules for rejecting  $H_0$  in the  $p$ -value approach are:

- If the  $p$ -value is greater than or equal to  $\alpha$ , the null hypothesis is not rejected.
- If the  $p$ -value is less than  $\alpha$ , the null hypothesis is rejected.

When the  $p$ -value (the smallest level  $\alpha$  at which the data is significant) is specified and computed, we can determine whether  $H_0$  is rejected for a given set of data. It is customary to call the test statistic (and the data) significant when the null hypothesis  $H_0$  is rejected (Montgomery 2001:98). For the purpose of our statistical analysis,  $\alpha$ , the specified level of significance, is 0.05. This means that if the  $p$ -value is greater than or equal to 5%, the null hypothesis is not rejected. If the  $p$ -value is less than 5%, the null hypothesis is rejected.

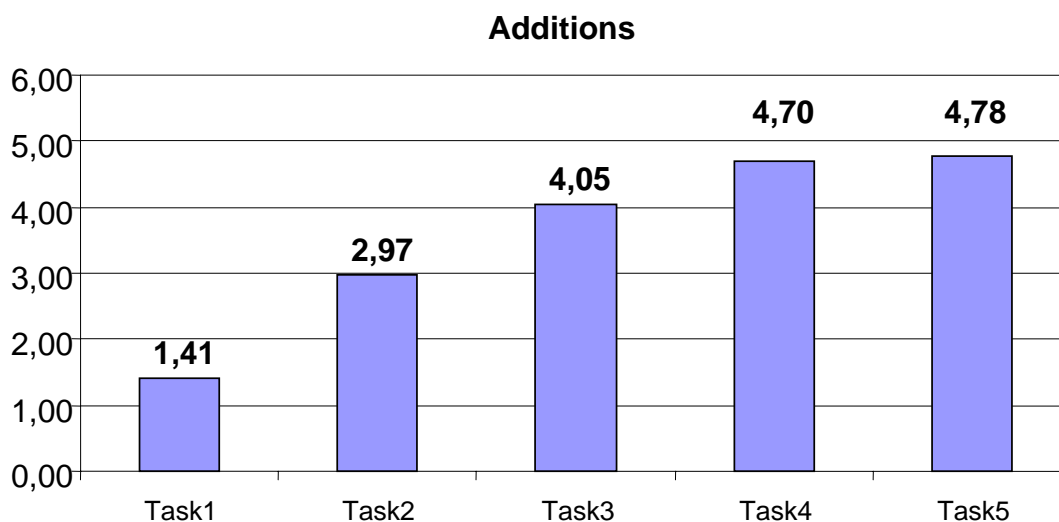


A series of *t* tests for the mean difference was conducted to confirm the statistical significance of the results. Table 2 (App. IV, p.233) shows the significance levels obtained from *t* tests. The numbers in bold show the variables, for which the p-value is less than 5%. As can be seen,  $\alpha$  is 0% for the first three variables (additions, deletions and substitutions) across all tasks. This means that for these variables, the null hypothesis is rejected. Moreover,  $\alpha$  is found to be less than 5% in most of the other variables. The exception is the variable of punctuation where  $\alpha$  was found to be more than 5% in all tasks. The comparison of the means indicates that in most text-base variables, p-values are less than 5%, hence the null hypothesis is rejected for these variables. P-values are less than 5% for nearly half of the surface variables, hence, the null hypothesis for these variables is also rejected.

Overall, the results from the *t* tests indicate that there is a real increase in most of the mean scores from Task 1 to the other four tasks. In conclusion, there is sufficient evidence to decide that the null hypothesis is unlikely to be true. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis that the average score of revisions increased across tasks. This means that the results of the hypothesis-testing analysis agree with the results returned from the previous analysis, which also showed that the average score of revisions, particularly text-base revisions, increased and so we can retain confidence in the results.

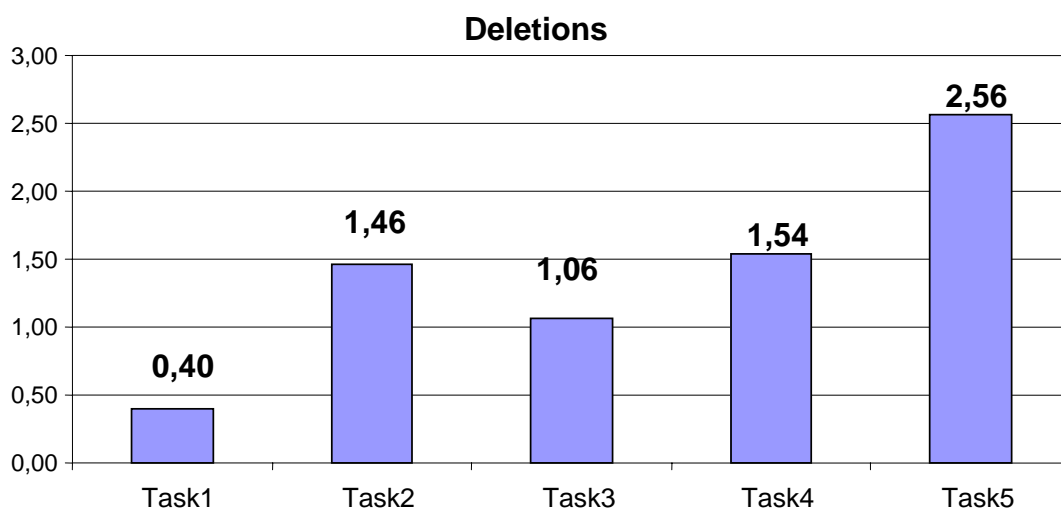
### **9.2.2 Types of revisions**

The numbers in Fig.1.1 (p.118) mean that there was a considerable increase in the average rate of additions in the last three tasks. On average, students made 4.78 additions in Task 5. The difference in number between additions in Task 1 and additions in Task 5 is striking; the number has more than tripled. In the next chapter we will examine whether the additions concerned lower-level or higher-level aspects of writing.



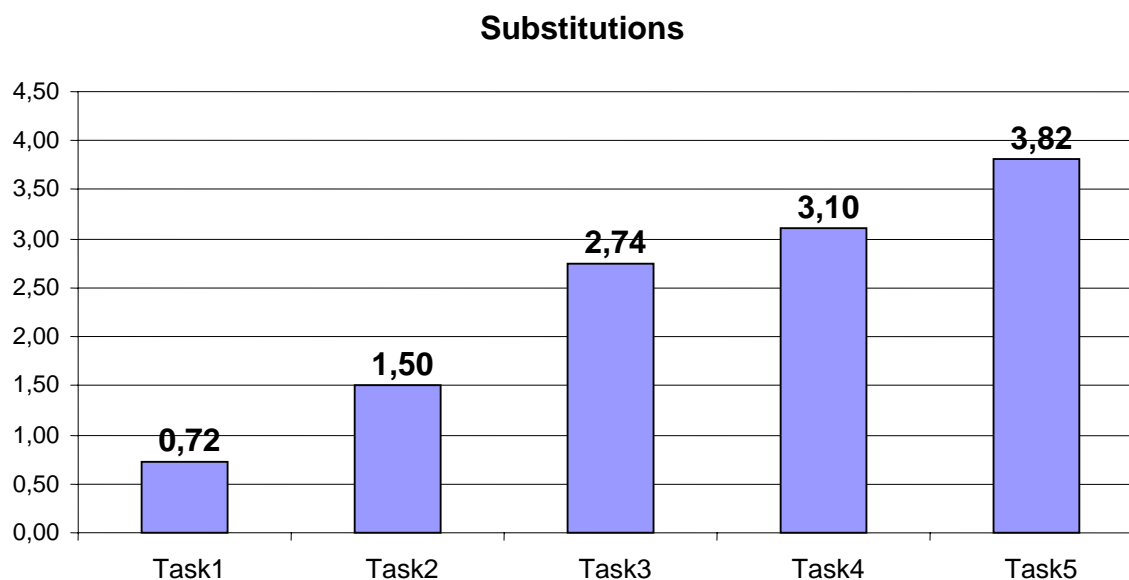
**Fig. 1.1 Additions across tasks**

As far as deletions are concerned, we also notice a significant increase in number with considerably more deletions in the last task. Again in the next chapter we will examine the writers' intentions when they were making these deletions. It should be remembered that deletions are rarely initiated by the teacher and it is the writer who decides that a specific part of his text should be omitted. This decision works in the direction of negotiation. For example, it is often considered preferable by many writers to delete a sentence containing a problem than identify what is wrong with it and improve it.



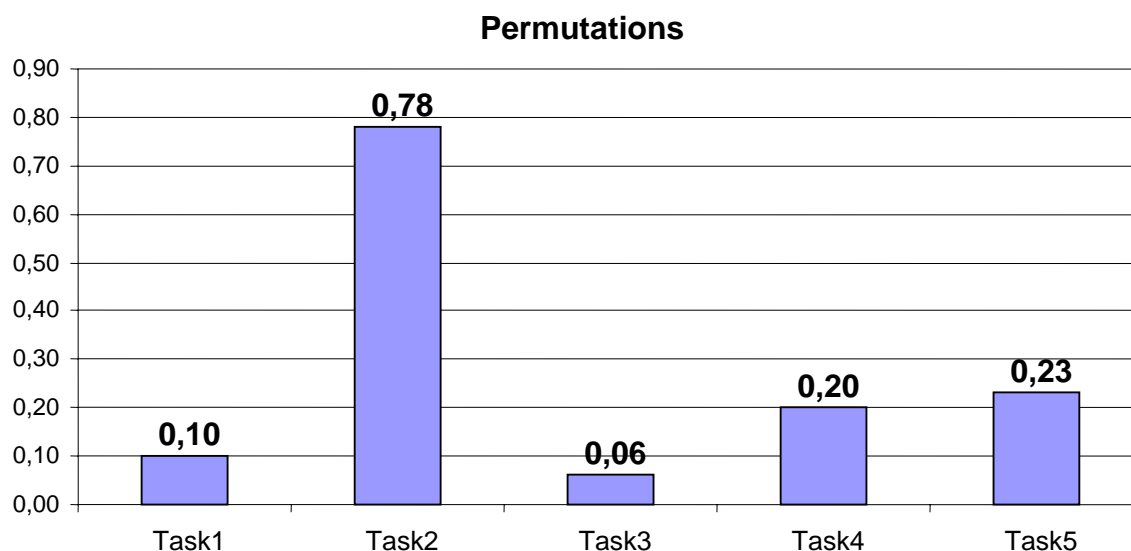
**Fig. 1.2 Deletions across tasks**

As Fig.1.3 shows, the number of substitutions has dramatically increased. In Task 5, students made 5 times more substitutions than in Task 1. Substitutions are made for two main purposes: grammatical and stylistic. If we consider the purpose of substitutions, it would be interesting to see in the next chapter why students were making them.



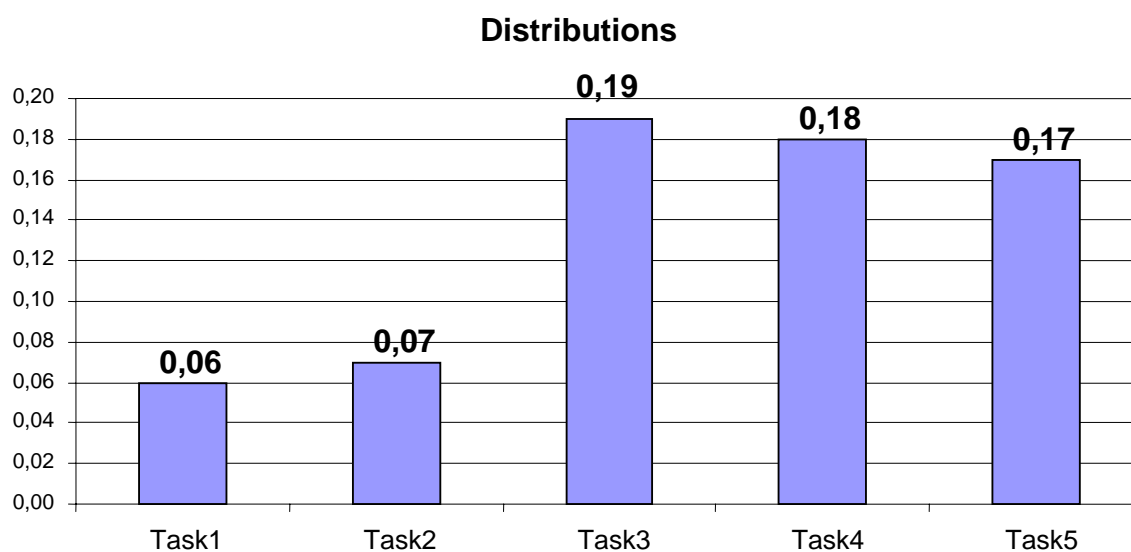
**Fig. 1.3 Substitutions across tasks**

It can be seen in Fig.1.4 (p.120) that the mean for permutations is rather low throughout the study. The scores suggest that the students were less concerned with the organisation and coherence of their texts. The exception to the overall pattern was Task 2 where the average rate of permutations was significantly higher than the other tasks. There is a good explanation for this discrepancy. Task 2 was a descriptive text which required more sophisticated organisation of ideas. It seems that because students do not possess a well formed schema for description, the teacher diagnosed a lot of organisational problems in this task. Conversely, in the other tasks, three of which were narrative, organisation was based on chronological criteria and therefore did not present any problems.



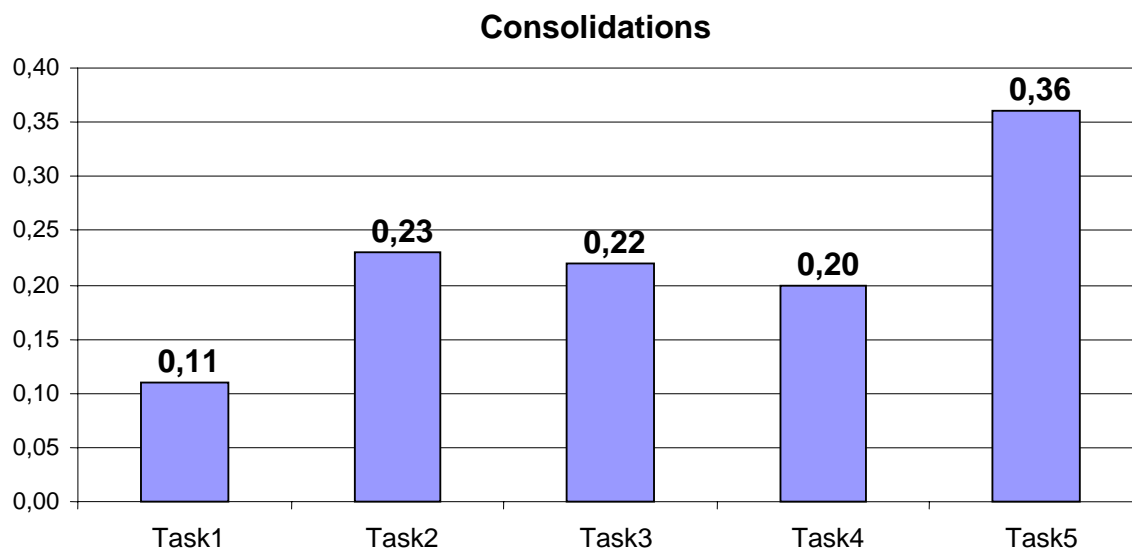
**Fig. 1.4 Permutations across tasks**

In Fig.1.5, we observe that after Task 2, distributions slightly increased. However, in effect, distributions were found to vary significantly across tasks. According to Table 2 (App. IV, p.233), the average rate of distributions is significantly higher across tasks 3 to 5. It should also be remembered that distributions as well as consolidations (Fig.1.6) are largely initiated by the writers themselves and usually aim at improving the coherence and texture of a text. This finding suggests that students began to carry out more complex operations in spite of the fact that these posed high demands on them.



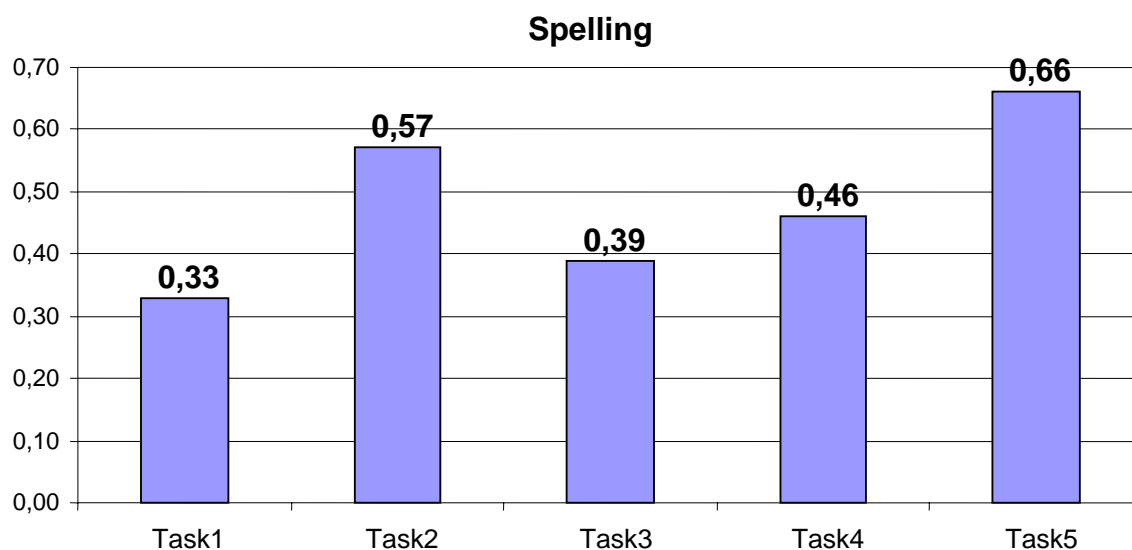
**Fig. 1.5 Distributions across tasks**

It can be seen from Fig.1.6 that for the most part of the study, the means for consolidations were located close to 20%. The p-values, however, indicate that the average score of consolidations actually increased in tasks 2, 3 and 5.



**Fig. 1.6 Consolidations across tasks**

Both the figures in this graph and the p-values agree that the average score of spelling revisions varied noticeably in tasks 2 and 5.



**Fig. 1.7 Spelling across tasks**

The p-values suggest that the average score of grammar revisions increased in all tasks except Task 4. This discrepancy may be associated with the type of discourse.

Task 3 (a story) necessitated more comments on grammar and as a result incited more grammar revisions. Task 4 (a letter combining descriptive and narrative discourse) did not present many grammatical problems. Possibly, students were already familiar with the specific task environment and possessed the linguistic resources necessary for effective writing.

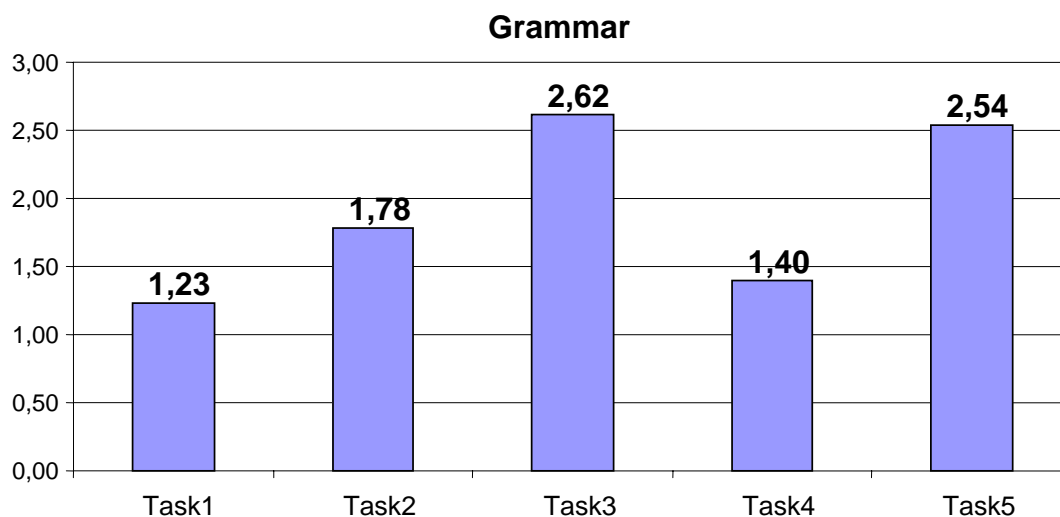


Fig. 1.8 Grammar across tasks

Although Fig.1.9 shows that there was an increase in vocabulary revisions almost in every task, the p-values reveal that only in Task 3 there was a higher rate of lexical revisions.

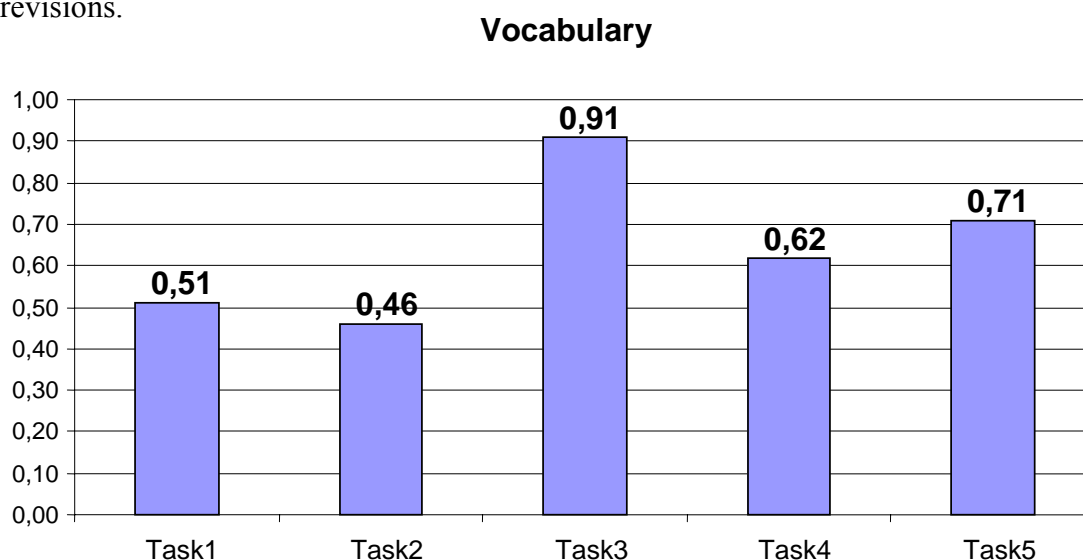


Fig. 1.9 Vocabulary across tasks

The average rate of syntax revisions increased in all tasks.

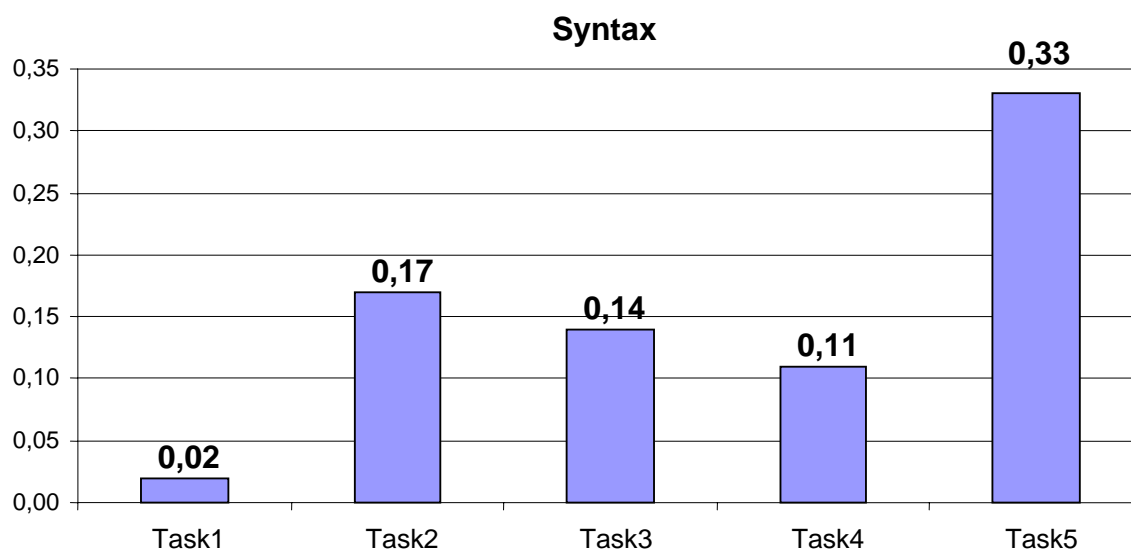


Fig. 1.10 Syntax across tasks

The bar graphs in Fig.1.11 also illustrate an upward movement in punctuation revisions. However, the p-values show that the average rate of punctuation revisions was not higher across tasks.

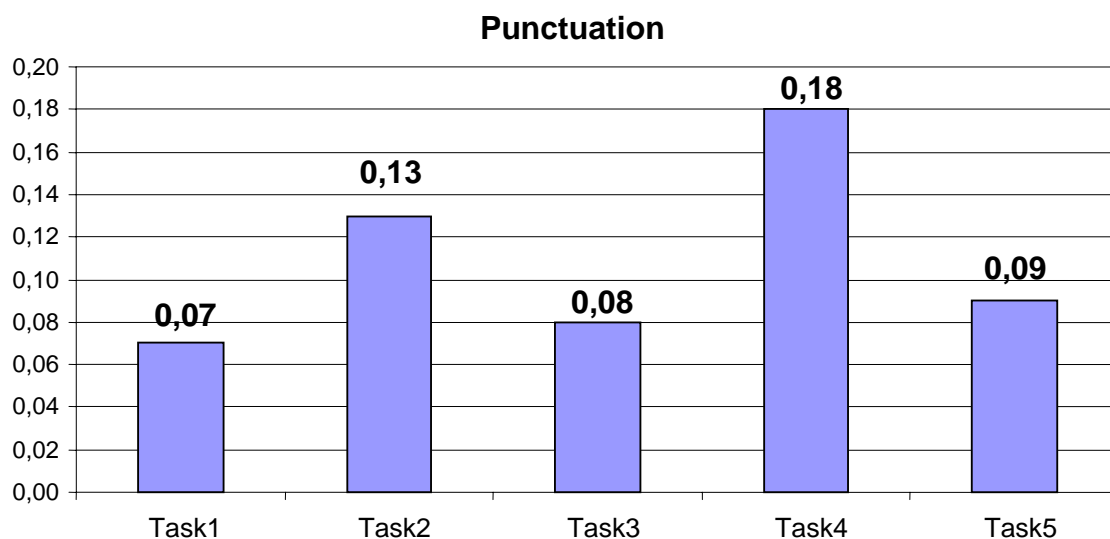
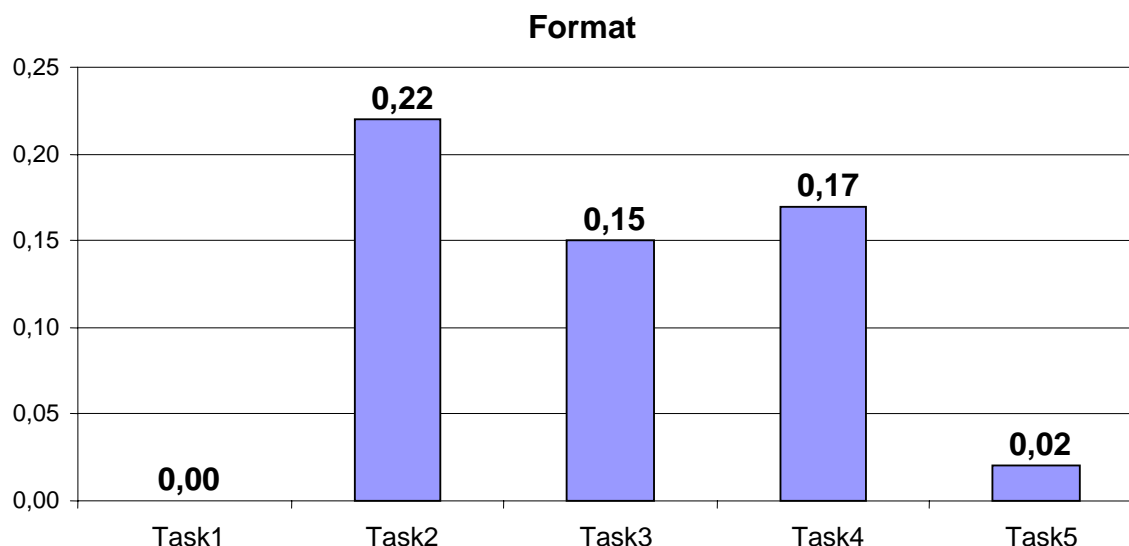


Fig. 1.11 Punctuation across tasks

It should be remembered that format includes paragraphing and discourse format. The bars in the middle are higher because the students were stimulated by the teacher comments to look at these aspects with a more critical eye. The very low mean score

in Task 5, however, indicates that format and paragraphing were not among the writers' concerns and that the teacher's influence did not have a lasting value in this area. It seems that this aspect requires more regular and systematic teacher intervention.



**Fig. 1.12 Format across tasks**

The graphs in Fig.2, (App. IV, pp.234-238) also illustrate the scale of change in students' revision skills in relation to their initial revision skills by showing the percentage of increase in all types of revisions from Task 1 to the other four tasks. With the exception of vocabulary, all the variables increased significantly after the teacher intervention.

### **9.2.3 Size of revisions**

The size of revision refers to the linguistic unit of change. Fig.3 (App. IV, pp.239-241) shows revisions ranging from grapheme to multi-sentence across the tasks. The most common size of revision was at the level of the word, with the sentence coming second. This means that on average the students most frequently made changes at the lexical level, closely followed by the sentence level. More specifically, in Task 1, the highest percentage of revisions (49%) was performed at the level of word. Revisions at word level were also more common in Tasks 2, 3 and 5. However, it is noteworthy that there was a significant increase in the proportion of changes at sentence and

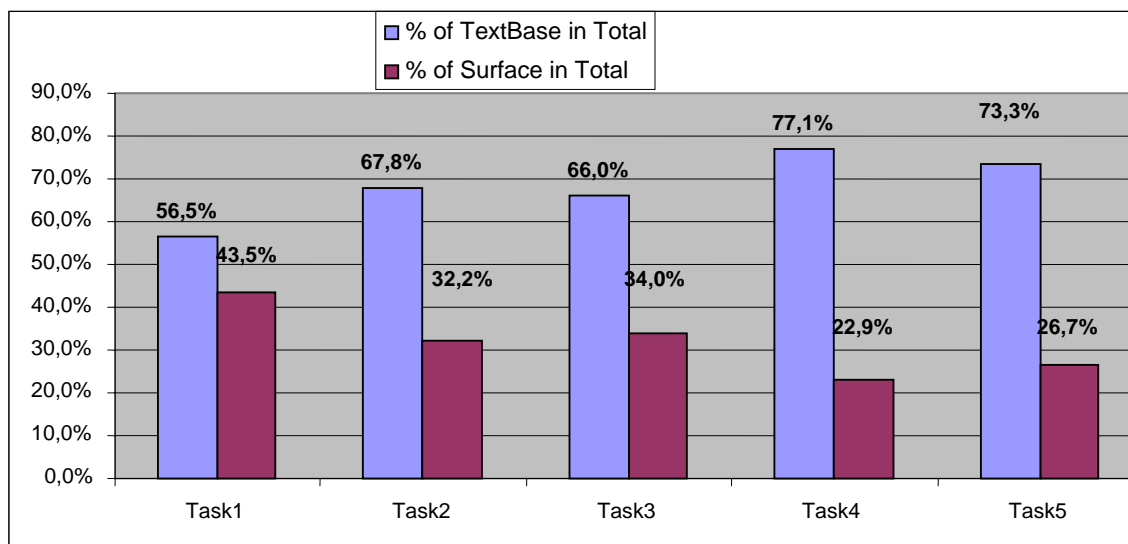


multi-sentence level. In fact, in Task 3, the proportion of changes at multi-sentence level (23%) slightly outnumbered that of revisions at sentence level (21%). Interestingly, in Task 4, the proportion of changes at sentence (28%) and multi-sentence (25%) level outnumbered the proportion of changes at word level (23%). The reasons for sentence and multi-sentence being the predominant size in this task may have arisen from the feedback focus on expansion and reader awareness.

In summary, it seems that although students tended to revise at lower syntactic levels throughout the study, in later tasks there was a shift from lower to higher syntactic levels. Although the word was the most prevalent unit of change, the number of changes carried out at sentence and multi-sentence level considerably increased. This is a significant finding, since changes made at sentence level are considered to be more substantial and more complex than changes made at the word level. The reason is that such changes affect the text at the macro level.

#### **9.2.4 Effect of revisions**

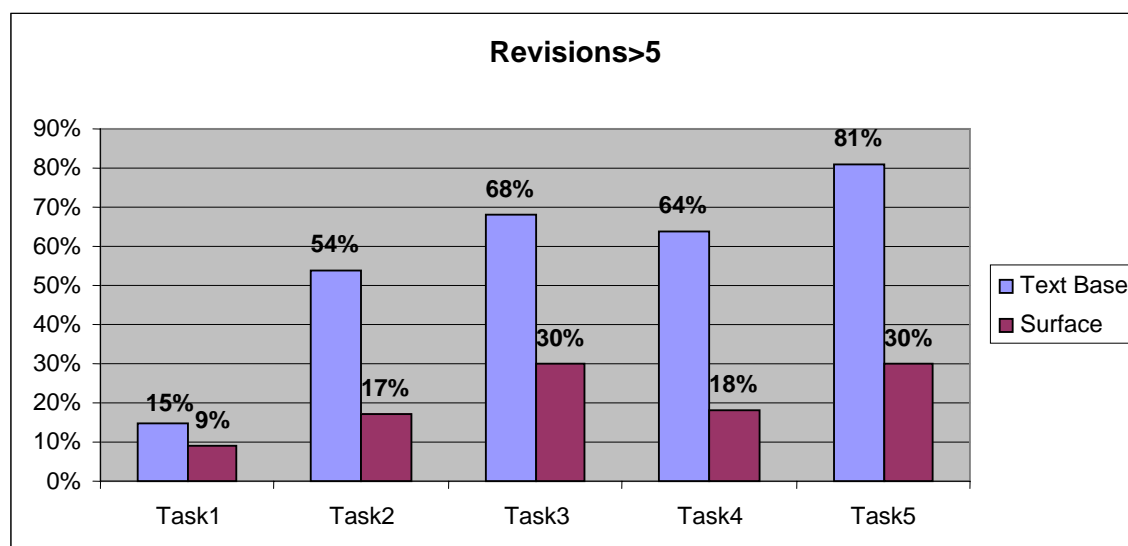
Identifying the operations and the unit length entailed in the revisions provides interesting findings but is not illuminative enough for this study. As already stressed in the previous chapter, one reason for adapting the Faigley and Witte taxonomy to analyse revisions was that it applied a simple system for analysing the effect of revisions on meaning by making a very important distinction between revisions that affect the reading of a text (text-base changes) and those that do not (surface changes). From the analysis of the effect of revisions, a noteworthy difference in the proportion of text-base and surface changes emerged.



**Fig.4 Mean proportion of text-base and surface revisions across tasks**

Fig.4 shows the distributions of text-base and surface revisions across the five tasks. The bar graphs indicate that there was an increase in text-base revisions and a decrease in surface changes over the period of the investigation. In Task 1, text-base changes accounted for 56.5% of the total number of changes whereas surface changes accounted for 43.5%. The changes were rather evenly distributed with the text-base changes slightly outnumbering the surface changes. After the teacher intervention, the percentage of text-base revisions was significantly higher than that of surface revisions. At the end of the study, students' text-base changes accounted for 73.3% and surface changes only for 26.7%. This suggests that students became more interested in higher level revisions and were preoccupied to a lesser extent with lower level revisions. The focus on global aspects of writing means that the students have come to realise their importance for the communicative quality of a text.

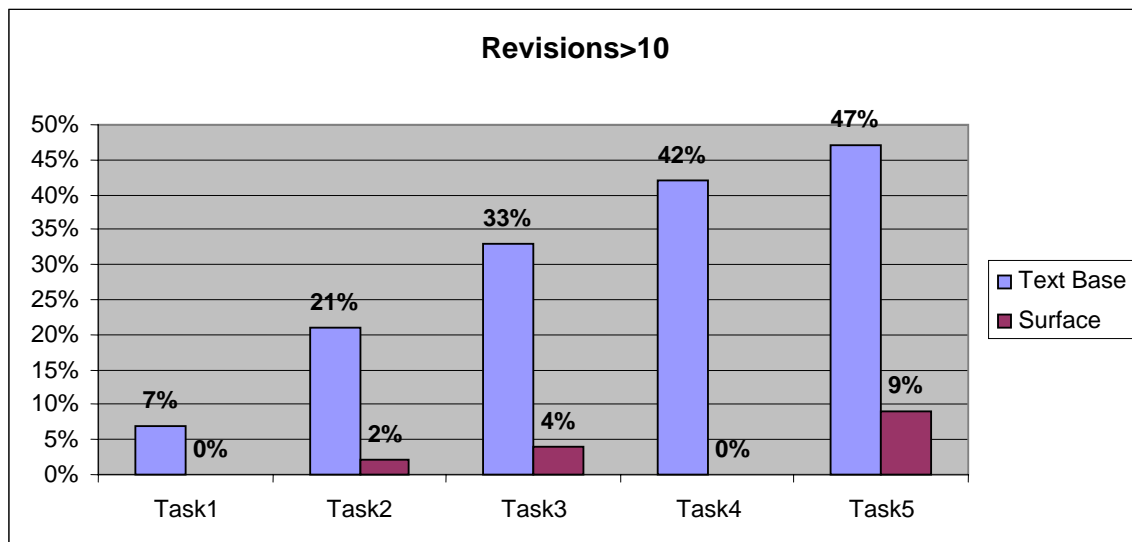
The statistical data in Fig.1 (p.113) shows that revision skills rose quite sharply for the sample as a whole during the study. The most striking feature of the graph is that this pattern was repeated for each task. Moreover, the data regarding text-base revisions (Fig.4) shows there was a considerable increase across tasks. An immediate question presents itself: does the smooth upward trend illustrated by the graphs in Figures 1 and 4 apply equally to all students? The statistical evidence below shows that the answer to this question is 'Yes, to the majority of them'.



**Fig.5 Mean percentage of students with more than 5 revisions**

It would be interesting to see if the number of students who actually made revisions increased. Fig.5 illustrates the increasing percentage of students who made more than 5 revisions (text-base and surface) across the tasks. The scores illustrated by the graph show that the mean percentage of students with more than 5 text-base revisions increased from 15% in Task 1 to 54% in Task 2 to 81% in Task 5. In Task 1 only 15% of the students made more than 5 text-base revisions. An almost equally low number of students (9%) made surface revisions. The figures reveal that in Task 1, out of 100 students, only 24 scored more than 5 changes. In practice, this means that at the beginning of the study more than two thirds of the students lacked sufficient revision skills even to proofread an essay.

A considerably greater number of students carried out revisions after the teacher intervention in Task 2. As Fig.5 clearly illustrates, the number of students with more than 5 revisions increased as the study progressed. In Task 5, the percentage of students with more than 5 text-base revisions rose to 81% whereas 30% of the students made more than 5 surface revisions. These figures also triangulate the findings that at the beginning of the study there was a balance between the percentage of surface and text-base changes whereas at the end of the study students concentrated more on global and less on local concerns.



**Fig.6 Mean percentage of students with more than 10 revisions**

The tendency to focus on global rather than local features of the text is more obvious in Fig.6. The percentage of students with more than 10 text-base revisions steadily increased from 7% in Task 1 to 21% in Task 2 to 47% in task 5. A substantial part of the students (almost half) made more than 10 text-base revisions at the end of the study. Interestingly, only a small percentage of students made more than 10 surface revisions. In fact, in Tasks 1 and 4, no students with more than 10 surface revisions were found. This finding can be interpreted in various ways. Perhaps the students did not make many surface revisions because they were more preoccupied with the rhetorical aspects of their text or perhaps their texts did not necessitate many grammatical corrections. Again the next chapter will shed more light on this finding.

### **9.3 Summary of the findings**

Looking at the total number of changes, it is obvious that there was a considerable increase in the number of revisions from Task 1 to Task 5. The fact that, on average, the mean number of changes is comparatively larger from one task to the next indicates that students have become, to say the least, more active revisers. Of all the revisions across tasks, the mean proportion of text-base revisions suggests that the students were more concerned with text-base than surface revisions. In Task 1, text base changes were nearly as many as surface changes. In Task 5, text-base changes clearly outnumbered the surface changes.

Of all the revision changes performed on the five tasks, the most common revision operation was addition. The second most common operation was substitution, with grammar coming third. There was a small increase in the number of permutations, distributions and consolidations. Throughout the study, the students concentrated largely on text-base operations which were less complex or cognitively demanding e.g. additions, deletions and substitutions. It is also interesting to note that the same types of text-base and surface revisions were dominant across all five tasks. In the case of surface revisions, the most frequent changes were made in grammar, vocabulary and spelling. In conclusion, the students concentrated on cognitively easier operations (additions, deletions, substitutions) and surface changes (grammar, vocabulary) which were carried out mostly at a lower syntactic level (word).

## **PART II**

### **9.4 Comparing revisions and teacher comments**

As already stated in Chapter 8, in this study multiple aspects of the revisions were coded so as to explore the relationships between the different features. In this part, the study explores a number of correlations in order to compare student revisions and teacher comments in terms of function. The purpose of the comparison was to discover how strong the relationship between these two variables was.

### 9.4.1 The correlation between teacher comments and student revisions

Table 3 (p.131) shows which functions of revisions and which features of the feedback were associated. Positive numbers indicate positive relationships whereas negative numbers indicate negative relationships between feedback and revision. As can be seen from the table, there were significant levels of interaction between the teacher comments and the student revisions across tasks 2, 3 and 4 (revision based on feedback). The grey and pink rows show the areas where the correlation between feedback and revision was positive. The grey rows show the variables - expansion, genre/audience and punctuation - where the levels of correlation increased across tasks whereas the pink rows show the areas - spelling, grammar, vocabulary and syntax - where the levels of correlation conformed to a positive pattern but the trend was not upward. In fact, in the pink categories, the correlation decreased across tasks. Examining the correlations in the remaining categories (in white) we find that they were not altered in any significant sense or that they were negatively correlated with the teacher feedback.

We should not be too surprised, however, by the negative correlations in such categories since most of the revisions made in these areas were not initiated by the teacher but by the students themselves. In fact, the teacher suggested reduction only in four cases in the whole sample whereas teacher comments related to style or coherence were also limited. In Task 3, there is zero correlation because there were no comments made regarding organisation. The story as a narrative genre with a very clear chronological sequence did not require any prompts and consequently any revisions for organisation. If the figure in Task 3 is set aside for the reasons already mentioned, it is also clear that organisation was positively correlated with the teacher feedback.

Further, the correlation between teacher comments and student revisions can be illustrated by scatter diagrams. Montgomery (2001:183) claims that “the scatter diagram is a useful plot for identifying a potential relationship between two variables. Data are collected in pairs on the two variables – say,  $(y_i, x_i)$  – for  $i = 1, 2, \dots, n$ . Then  $y_i$  is plotted against the corresponding  $x_i$ . The shape of the scatter diagram often indicates what type of relationship may exist between the two variables”.

**Table 3: Correlations across tasks (with teacher feedback)**

**Table of Correlations**

Expansion	Task2	10%
	Task3	45%
	Task4	32%
Reduction	Task2	5%
	Task3	-7%
	Task4	3%
Organisation	Task2	37%
	Task3	-
	Task4	39%
Coherence	Task2	3%
	Task3	-5%
	Task4	0%
Genre/audience	Task2	25%
	Task3	42%
	Task4	50%
Style	Task2	-1%
	Task3	15%
	Task4	-5%
Spelling	Task2	61%
	Task3	39%
	Task4	42%
Grammar	Task2	67%
	Task3	66%
	Task4	40%
Vocabulary	Task2	64%
	Task3	41%
	Task4	40%
Syntax	Task2	52%
	Task3	24%
	Task4	32%
Punctuation	Task2	18%
	Task3	18%
	Task4	37%
Format/clarity	Task2	0%
	Task3	20%
	Task4	10%

As Berenson, Levine and Krehbiel (2002:126-127) point out, “the strength of a relationship, or the association, between two variables in a sample is typically measured by the coefficient of correlation,  $\rho$ , whose values range from -1 for a perfect

negative correlation up to +1 for a perfect positive correlation [...] When dealing with sample data, it is highly unlikely to ever get a correlation value of exactly +1, or -1". Berenson, Levine and Krehbiel (ibid:129) conclude: "In summary, the coefficient of correlation indicates the linear relationship, or association between two variables. When the coefficient of correlation gets closer to +1/-1, the stronger is the linear relationship between two variables. When the coefficient of correlation is near 0, little or no relationship exists. The sign of the coefficient of correlation indicates whether the data are positively correlated (i.e., the larger values of X are typically paired with the larger values of Y) or negatively correlated (i.e., the larger values of X are typically paired with the smaller values of Y)". Berenson, Levine and Krehbiel (ibid:126) also argue that a perfect positive or negative relationship means that if all the points were plotted in a scatter diagram, all the points could be connected with a straight line".

The scatter diagrams in Fig.7 (App. IV, pp.242-243) show that when Y (the number of teacher comments) increases in the areas of grammar and expansion, X (the number of student revisions) increases too. The specific diagrams depict data sets that have positive coefficients of correlation because large values of Y tend to be paired with large values of X. Given that the data does not all fall on a straight line, the association cannot be described as perfect.

In the discussion of Table 3, the relationships simply indicate the tendencies present in the sample. The existence of a strong correlation does not imply a causation effect. As Berenson, Levine and Krehbiel (2002:128) put it, "correlation alone cannot prove that there is a causation effect, i.e., that the change in the value of one variable *caused* the change in the other variable. A strong correlation can be produced simply by chance, by the effect of a third variable not considered in the calculation of the correlation, or by a cause-and-effect relationship. Additional analysis is required to determine which of these three situations actually produced the correlation. Thus, one can say that causation implies correlation, but correlation alone does not imply causation".



Of course, there is little in these results to indicate that they are associated with anything but the teacher's intervention and the emphasis placed on both rhetorical and mechanical aspects of the text. Overall, the data reveals that the nature of the correlation between feedback and revision was largely positive. Higher levels of revision emerged in situations where the teacher diagnosed specific problems and the students tried to deal with them. We should be cautious over interpreting the result, however, since the scores of student revisions do not always correspond to the scores of teacher comments. When the teacher makes, for example, one comment on expansion and the student makes one addition for the same purpose (expansion), we can talk about a perfect positive correlation between the comment and the revision although the expansion might not necessarily have been the same expansion suggested by the teacher. For this reason, the correlations between the different measures will also be examined qualitatively in the next chapter.

#### **9.4.2 The students' response to the feedback**

Apart from the correlations, it would be interesting to look again at the numbers of students who responded to the teacher feedback. It was found that the percentage of the students who responded to the teacher's feedback was also significantly high. According to Table 4 (p.134), the students produced revisions higher than or equal to the comments suggested by the teacher in nearly all the variables. In categories such as grammar and vocabulary, students were not able to detect all the problems that the teacher had diagnosed. Once again, we should be cautious about interpreting the figures. For example, scores such as 100% in categories such as style do not mean that the students responded to all of the teacher's comments. The truth is that there were no comments, therefore no revisions were made, and as a result the correlation was perfectly positive.

**Table 4: Mean percentage of students with more or less revisions than the comments**

	Students' revisions are more than (or equal with) the teacher's comments	Students' revisions are <b>less</b> than the teacher's comments
Expansion 2	50%	50%
Expansion 3	50%	50%
Expansion 4	<b>53%</b>	47%
Reduction2	<b>99%</b>	1%
Reduction3	<b>98%</b>	2%
Reduction4	<b>100%</b>	0%
Organisation2	<b>72%</b>	28%
Organisation3	<b>96%</b>	4%
Organisation4	<b>96%</b>	4%
Coherence2	<b>90%</b>	10%
Coherence3	<b>93%</b>	7%
Coherence4	<b>89%</b>	11%
Genre/audience2	<b>76%</b>	24%
Genre/audience3	<b>53%</b>	47%
Genre/audience4	<b>76%</b>	24%
Style2	<b>100%</b>	0%
Style3	<b>100%</b>	0%
Style4	<b>90%</b>	10%
Spelling2	<b>58%</b>	42%
Spelling3	<b>60%</b>	40%
Spelling4	<b>57%</b>	43%
Grammar2	41%	59%
Grammar3	23%	77%
Grammar4	14%	86%
Vocabulary2	<b>56%</b>	44%
Vocabulary3	33%	67%
Vocabulary4	47%	53%
Syntax2	<b>84%</b>	16%
Syntax3	<b>85%</b>	15%
Syntax4	<b>93%</b>	7%
Punctuation2	<b>90%</b>	10%
Punctuation3	<b>74%</b>	26%
Punctuation4	<b>65%</b>	35%
Format/clarity2	28%	72%
Format/clarity3	<b>57%</b>	43%
Format/clarity4	<b>88%</b>	12%

### **9.5 Summary of the findings**

Overall, across the three tasks (based on feedback), both text-base and surface features were significantly correlated with features of the teacher feedback, positively in the case of expansion, organisation, genre/audience, spelling, grammar, vocabulary, syntax and punctuation and negatively in the remaining categories. This means that the levels of correlation between feedback and revision were higher in relation to aspects such as appropriacy and sufficiency of information as well as accuracy. Of course, for most variables the positive correlation was not very strong. With correlations of 60% and above, one can safely conclude that the highest levels of association appeared in areas such as spelling, grammar and vocabulary. Disparities were greater for the variables where the teacher could not easily make comments. Moreover, it is noteworthy that in some text-base variables (expansion and genre/audience), the correlation was higher as the students progressed from one task to the next whereas for most of the surface measures, the interaction was still positive but fell to lower levels as the students progressed from one task to the next.

Taken as a whole, the results for the functions of revisions and their comparison with the teacher comments provide strong evidence that there was a positive interaction between teacher and student. The teacher was able to shift the students' attention away from a struggle with the conventions of writing towards an ability to communicate effectively. It seems that the feedback helped them become better critics of their own writing and develop a sense of audience. Once again, more findings about the relationship between feedback and revision will be discussed in the next chapter.

### **9.6 Integrating the results: A general pattern of revision**

According to the results yielded by the statistical analysis of the drafts and the comments, the general trend for this sample was as follows:

- There was an increase in total revisions (496 changes in Task 1 vs. 1627 changes in Task 5);

- There was an increase in text-base revisions (the percentage of text-base changes increased from 56.5% of total revisions in Task 1 to 73.3% in Task 5);
- Addition was the most common revision operation (average rate 3.58), closely followed by substitution (2.31) and grammar (1.91);
- Revisions were most commonly performed at the word level closely followed by sentence level revisions.
- A largely positive correlation between teacher comments and student revisions was found.

### **9.7 Closing comment**

This chapter explored the revisions made by the students across tasks and the relationships between the features of the teacher feedback and these revisions. Looking at the results of the analysis of revisions, we can draw the following conclusion: there was a shift of attention towards text-base concerns, higher syntactic levels and cognitively harder operations. Positive relationships, though not significantly strong, were found between the functions of revisions and aspects of the feedback. To put it succinctly, higher levels of revisions were associated with text-base features and positive interactions emerged between the teacher feedback and the revisions.

Whilst the tables and figures in this study suggest that the overall upward trend captured the majority of the students (even those with the lowest number of revisions), the aggregation of data may mask individual paths of development that differed widely from the general pattern implied by the graph. The issue of individual paths of development will be discussed in the next chapter where a descriptive evaluation of some students' revision processes is reported in an effort to examine in greater detail how individual students went about revising specific texts. The construction of case studies of individual students will help illustrate how these students negotiated the revisions and will also reveal more about the relationship between feedback, revision and text improvement.

## **CHAPTER 10 FROM TEXT REVISION TO TEXT IMPROVEMENT: SEVEN CASE STUDIES**

### **10.1 Introduction**

The statistical results in Chapter 9, which highlighted nominal variables such as type, size, function and effect of revisions, have partially illuminated the research questions raised in this thesis. If we want to learn how effective revision was and in what ways the feedback contributed to this change, we need to look at the students' revision processes in a more qualitative way. Understanding those processes will shed more light than the statistical results alone on the quality of students' revisions and the features of student-teacher interactions which enhanced those revisions.

The following questions, which have not been answered by the quantitative analysis, will pave the path for the qualitative analysis of the data.

- To what extent do the students succeed in improving the original text?
- What difficulties still remain of importance in the interaction between feedback and revision?
- Is there significant variation in students' behaviours toward micro and macro problems?
- What are the features of independent revision?

The path of any particular individual can be traced through his or her study case display in App. V with the student's drafts, the teacher commentaries as well as evaluation and progress reports. The cases are arranged at random order and the students are referred to with names instead of numbers. To facilitate understanding of the students' revisions, all deletions from the first draft have been marked in red colour whereas additions, substitutions and other variations in the second draft have been marked in blue. In the descriptive analysis that follows, we will see some typical revision stories with a few examples of each.

## 10.2 Students' behaviours toward micro and macro level problems

As a first step towards an answer to the question of text improvement, it is necessary to examine some of the writing samples in order to see how the students wrote initially and how they improved. The cases in this section are arrayed on a continuum from Task 1 to Task 5.

- **Task 1: “A childhood memory”**

The majority of the students demonstrated limited revision skills in the first task. Many students left their texts unchanged. Those who revised their drafts made additions (usually at the end of the text) or grammatical corrections. Below are the samples by three skilled writers, who, unlike what one might expect, also made limited revisions.

Elena's writing was almost a perfect production for this level. Elena did not make any revisions, except for replacing a German word with its English equivalent.

### Elena's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>At Trevi fountain Last autumn holidays I went to Rome with my parents. One day we visited Trevi fountain. The big fountain was so beautiful with its great white figures and the blue water. There were many people and a lot of them threw some money into the water. They say it brings luck. Most people took photos that they could look at this wonderful building again when they're at home. It was very noisy there, because everybody was talking about the fountain's beauty. But they all spoke in different languages. I heard English, French, Italian, Spain, German and some others I didn't know. But I understood that everyone loves the fountain. Then I took a Münze and threw it into the clean water. "Bring me luck", I thought. After that I took a photo of my parents in front of Trevi fountain. We stayed until it got dark and the lights went on. With them the fountain looked even more beautiful. I was sad when we went back to our hotel. Trevi fountain is the greatest fountain I've ever seen.</p> <p><b>[181 words]</b></p>	<p>At Trevi fountain Last autumn holidays I went to Rome with my parents. One day we visited Trevi fountain. The big fountain was so beautiful with its great white figures and the blue water. There were many people and a lot of them threw some money into the water. They say it brings luck. Most people took photos that they could look at this wonderful building again when they're at home. It was very noisy there, because everybody was talking about the fountain's beauty. But they all spoke in different languages. I heard English, French, Italian, Spain, German and some others I didn't know. But I understood that everyone loves the fountain. Then I took a coin and threw it into the clean water. "Bring me luck", I thought. After that I took a photo of my parents in front of Trevi fountain. We stayed until it got dark and the lights went on. With them the fountain looked even more beautiful. I was sad when we went back to our hotel. Trevi fountain is the greatest fountain I've ever seen.</p> <p><b>[181 words]</b></p>

Victoria's limited revisions were primarily cosmetic.

### Victoria's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>I was nine years old, a few days before my communion. My cat was pregnant. In the bathroom, there stood a carton with an old blanked. Our cat was tired and went to the carton. Suddenly we saw that she was bleeding. She was crying and crying. I sat in front of the carton on the bathroom-floor. The cat didn't look very happy. She was pushing. A few minutes ago we saw the head of a small cat. It was bleedy and looked like a dog. The cat licked the little baby. Then she began to push again. Another baby was there. It took three hours until the fifth and last cat was born. They were so cute and we were proud of our cat. We kept two of the babys, Nele and Bifi. The other cats we gave to friends. It was a great moment and experience to see how they were born. I'll never forget it!!</p> <p><b>[158 words]</b></p>	<p>I was nine years old. <b>It was</b> a few days before my communion. My cat was pregnant. In the bathroom, there stood a carton with an old blanked. Our cat was tired and went to the carton. Suddenly we saw that she was bleeding. She was crying and crying. I sat in front of the carton on the bathroom-floor. The cat didn't look very happy. She was pushing. A few minutes ago we saw the head of a small cat. It was bleedy and looked <b>a bit</b> like a dog. The cat licked the little baby. Then she began to push again. Another baby was <b>born</b>. It took three hours until the fifth and last cat was born. They were so cute and we were <b>very</b> proud of our cat. We kept two of the babys, "Nele" and "Bifi". The other cats we gave to friends. It was a great moment and experience to see how they were born. I'll never forget it!!</p> <p><b>[163 words]</b></p>

Only one student out of seven, Carolin, covered a wider span of revisions. This student made a variety of adaptations in order to improve her text but only at micro level. She worked in two directions: polishing her style with additions and reformulations at word or phrase level and correcting grammatical mistakes. Her surface changes indicate that Carolin possessed the necessary linguistic resources for effective reformulation. However, although the grammatical quality of the revised version improved to some extent, her second draft was only slightly better. In fact, none of the revised versions in Task 1 were improvements of the original. It seems that at least part of the unsuccessful efforts of the students can be explained by the fact that they did not pay enough attention to the informational value of their writing.

### Carolin's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>It was on the 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday of my uncle. He had a great and a big party in his big garden. We all had lots of fun at the beginning, because there were lots of children and we all played with my uncles dog. The food there was very good, because my uncle does the best barbecue. As we played with the dog in the under garden, a boy came to us. "There's a old man on the terasse. He fell down and now they going to phone the paramedics" he said. "Which old</p>	<p>It was on the 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday of my uncle. <b>On this day he organized</b> a great and big party in his big garden. <b>At the beginning</b> we all had lots of fun, because there were lots of children and we all played with <b>the</b> dog. The food there was very good, because my uncle does the best barbecue <b>in town</b>. As we played with the dog in the under <b>part of the</b> garden, a boy came to us. "There's a old man on the <b>terrace</b>. He fell down and now they going to phone the</p>

<p>man?", we all asked at the same time. Then we all ran up to the terrace, because we all wanted to know who it is. As we arrived, we can't believe. It was our grandpa. In this moments I remember all moments in my hole life that I had with my grandpa. I can't understand, because he was so fit and active all the time. "Why? Why he? Why know?", I asked myself. I realized that's really him that lied on the floor. A minute later my two uncles and my father drove with him to the hospital. We all waited on the street and we all cried. The time has gone by so slowly. I think in this time we all thought the same: "Is he going to die?" I'm very glad that he don't. But this day was the most terrible day in my life.</p> <p>[239 words]</p>	<p>paramedics" he said. "Which old man?", we all asked at the same time. Then we all ran up the terrace, because we all wanted to know which old man he ment. As we arrived, we couldn't believe it. It was our grandpa. In this moment I remembered all moments in my hole life that I had with my grandpa. I couldn't understand, because he was so fit all the time. "Why? Why? Why?", I asked myself. I realized that it was really my grandpa who laid on the floor. A minute later my two uncels and my father drove with him to the hospital. We all waited and we all cried. The time has gone by so slowly. I think in this time we all thought the same: "Would he die?" I'm very glad that he don't. But this day was the most terrible day in my life.</p> <p>[243 words]</p>
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- **Task 2: "An interesting person"**

In Task 2, a substantial part of the students (almost half) made revisions, though limited and only at micro level. It seems that the feedback as a stimulus for text improvement began to have an effect. Of course, what was a stimulus for one student seemed to have no effect on another. To take two examples from student texts based on feedback with similar content, one student was able to remove some macro problems from her text whereas the other student failed to detect any and was concerned only with her grammatical mistakes. The latter, Stefanie, completely ignored the teacher's comments about supporting the description with more details and organising it better.

### Stefanie's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>My person is my cousin Johannes, but I called him Jojo. He's 15 years old and lives in Kaarst. He goes to a Gymnasium, but I don't know it's name. His dad is called Volker and his mum is called Alwine. His hair is blond and his eyes are blue. He's very tall, but I don't know how tall. Perhaps one and a half head taller than me. His hobbies are table tennis and computer games. He makes me happy, because he very often makes really funny jokes. He's very nice and friendly, too. His pet was a rabbit, but it was die two years ago. It's name was Klopfer. He hasn't got any sister or brother.</p> <p>[117 words]</p>	<p>My person is my cousin Johannes, but I call him Jojo. He's 15 years old and lives in Kaarst. There he goes to a Gymnasium, but I don't know the name. His dad is called Volker and his mum is called Alwine. His hair is blond and his eyes are blue. He's very tall, but I don't know how tall. Perhaps one and a half head taller than me. His hobbies are table tennis and computer games. He makes me happy, because he very often makes really funny jokes. He's very nice and friendly, too. His pet was a rabbit, but it has die two years ago. The name was Klopfer. Jojo hasn't got a sister or a brother.</p> <p>[118 words]</p>



### Teacher's comments

After 1st Draft	After 2nd Draft
<p>Dear student,  <u>Content</u>            I find your description interesting. You wrote what your cousin looks like, some of his character traits and his hobbies. Perhaps you can add more about his personality and how he acts in certain situations. Remember: Details are important in character descriptions. They make a description more interesting.</p> <p><u>Organisation</u>            Make paragraphs. Make all the sentences in a paragraph talk about the main idea so that your paragraph is clear. For example, put the last line after the line about parents.</p> <p><u>Language</u>            Check the following points:            L2:T, L4,15:P, L14:VF, L16:G.            Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>Dear student,            To revise does not mean only to correct mistakes. It means to add ideas, to take out ideas, to change the order of ideas etc. So, look at the content too. L15:it died.</p>

Carolyn, like Stefanie, received comments which concerned the expansion of the description as well as the need for better coherence and more concise phrasing. Based on the prompts, Carolyn focused her attention primarily on the higher level concerns and to a lesser extent on spelling and grammar.

### Carolyn's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>A person who makes me happy? <b>Or an interesting person?</b> I know so much and I don't know who I'm going to choose. <b>There are my friends, sisters and my family. Oh, I know!</b> I chosed my mum now, because she was the first interesting person in my life!</p> <p>Ok, my mum is called Martina. She has brown eyes, <b>black hairs and isn't bigger than I.</b> But that's only what she looks like! She's very intelligent and strong. <b>That's why I believe in her.</b> Sometimes you have to support her <b>but then she does it on her own way.</b></p> <p>She's there for me every time, <b>and I mean always.</b> If I'm sad, <b>she's there to help me up and to hold my hand. Oh, I forget! She loves Italy!</b></p> <p>And she talks the Italy language very well, I think. <b>She went to Italy this year, but I phoned her everyday. She's always there, if I got problems. And I can tell her everything. She can keep secrets for ever. And she knows me longer than all others. But be carefull! Sometimes you're</b></p>	<p>A person who makes me happy? I know so much and I don't know who I'm going to choose. I <b>choose</b> my mum now, because she <b>is the person I've known longest.</b></p> <p>My mothers name is Martina. She's <b>got</b> brown eyes and hairs, <b>which are as long as my hairs.</b> But that's only what she looks like <b>and there are more important things! Most important for me is her character and how she acts in certain situations.</b> If I'm sad, she would make me happy and help me. And if I'm too happy, she won't make me sad. But only sometimes I have to support her. Maybe when she don't know what to do you should help her and say her what to do. I think my mum is very strong and intelligent. In her free time she likes it to learn the Italy language or travel to Italy. She speaks it very well. She's always there for me, too! If she travel to Italy, you could phone her everyday. But sometimes she can make you angry! For example, when she doesn't do what I want!</p> <p><b>Finally I hope later I'll be a great mum like her!</b></p>

<p>mum can make you sad, thoughtful and angry for a time.</p> <p>[192 words]</p>	<p>[197 words]</p>
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### Teacher's comments

After 1st Draft	After 2nd Draft
<p>Dear student,</p> <p><u>Content</u></p> <p>I find your description interesting. You wrote what your mother looks like, some of her character traits and about your relationship. Perhaps you can add more details about her personality and how she acts in certain situations. <i>Remember:</i> Details are important in character descriptions. They make a description more interesting. Lines 11-12 and last line: explain or give an example.</p> <p><u>Organisation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Make paragraphs. Make all the sentences in a paragraph talk about the main idea so that your paragraph is clear.</li> <li>- Line 19: you have repeated the same idea before.</li> <li>- You need an ending.</li> </ul> <p><u>Language</u></p> <p>Check the following points: L4: VF, L8: G, L10: S, L16:V, L19: T, L22: S</p> <p>Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>Dear student,</p> <p>Your writing is a little better this time because you added some interesting ideas about your mum, wrote a good ending and corrected a few mistakes. L5:no comma before 'because', L6:mother's, L7:hair/is, L12: she will make, L14:and if I'm happy, L16:doesn't know, L18:tell her, L20:likes to learn/Italian, L22:when she is in Italy, we talk on the phone every day.</p>

That Carolin attended to the macro level aspects of her writing is clear from the changes she made in her revised draft. She followed a more logical sequence in her description by explaining how her mother acts in different situations, delineating some traits of her character and supporting her description with examples. She also provided a closing proposition to the text based on the teacher's prompt. Moreover, she tried to make stylistic changes perhaps with a view to making her writing more attractive to the reader. There is no doubt that Carolin was motivated by the teacher's comments to look at her text with a more critical eye and make it more organised and more coherent than the original.

However, the relationship between revision and improvement is not causal. Carolin's revisions were not always effective. For instance, her stylistic change "If I'm sad, she would make me happy and help me" seems to be less effective and accurate than the initial "If I'm sad, she's there to help me up and to hold my hand". In addition, the

reduction of ideas which concerned the person's character (i.e. "And I can tell her everything. She can keep secrets for ever") deprived the reader of some interesting and relevant information. Moreover, it might be argued that cutting down on the reflective content of her writing ('Oh, I know!; Oh, I forget!') made her text less vivid, spontaneous or original. However, Carolin did succeed in removing some of the macro problems detected by the teacher and she was given credit for that.

The next two samples demonstrate another kind of revision activity. The first sample serves as another example to show that a high number of revisions, even if text-base, is not always synonymous with improvement. Victoria made a wide range of additions, deletions and substitutions. Her second draft, however, is not exactly what might be called a better version because it seems to have lost the vividness and the richness of information of the first draft. Perhaps the explanation for this lies in Victoria's last line ("But there's no time left").

### Victoria's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>I want to describe a very, very, very good friend of mine. Her name is Nadine. She is as old as I am and in my form. We're the same size. She has brown hair, brown eyes and wears glasses. I can tell her everything because I know that she doesn't tell anyone one of my very secret secrets. We do many things together. We listen to the same music. Our favourite bands are Die Artzte, Nirvana and die Toten Hosen. We are "Punk Sisters". It's very funny to see, what we do. We laugh almost all the time. But I can talk to her also in a serious way. Her parents don't come from Germany but I don't see, that there are any problems. I don't care if she's german or whatever. What counts is that we understand eachother. I don't know what to write anymore. She's great!</p> <p>[149 words]</p>	<p>I want to describe a very, very, very good friend of mine. Her name is Nadine. She is as old as I am and she's in my form. We're the same size. She has brown hair, brown eyes and wears glasses. She's a friendly person, sometimes she is a bit shy. But I'm, too ....! We can talk to eachother in a funny and silly way but we're also serious.</p> <p>She's not from Germany but I don't care because there is no difference between us. When she's sad I see that she needs help so I always help her.</p> <p>I could write so much more about us, our friendship and things like that! ... But there's no time left!</p> <p>[119 words]</p>

### Teacher's comments

After 1st Draft	After 2nd Draft
<p>Dear student,  <u>Content</u>            I find your description very interesting. You</p>	<p>Dear student,            A combination of ideas from the first and the second draft would be better.</p>

<p>wrote about what your friend looks like, some of her character traits and about your relationship. Perhaps you can add more details about her appearance, her personality and how she acts in certain situations. <i>Remember:</i> When you describe a person, choose details that make that person special. This makes a description more interesting.</p> <p><u>Organisation</u> Make paragraphs. Make all the sentences in a paragraph talk about the main idea so that your paragraph is clear.</p> <p><u>Language</u> Check the following points: Lines 8,10: no commas before that/what etc.</p>	
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The second sample has been marked by the addition of a long multi-sentence. The content of this addition, which can be treated as one major change at macro level, shows that Elena responded to the teacher's request to write more details with an expansion, which substantially supported the character's description. It seems that this student was able to perceive the need for this change and did not mechanically add superfluous material to please the teacher.

### Elena's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>My cousin My little cousin's name is Lukas Schmidt. Today, on the 8<sup>th</sup> December he becomes six years old. For his age he is very tall, he's the tallest boy in his kindergarten. He has blond hair, like his dad Bernd, and brown eyes, like his mother Anja, my father's sister. He has got a friendly face and usually he laughs often, but now he has lost some Milchzähne and he schämt sich to laugh. Lukas often plays with my other little cousin, Jana. Their favourite game is to play they were a cat family. Lukas likes cars and I think today we'll visit him at home.</p> <p>[107 words]</p>	<p>My cousin My little cousin's name is Lukas Schmidt. On the 8<sup>th</sup> December he became six years old. For his age he is very tall, he's the tallest boy in his kindergarten. He has blond hair, like his dad Bernd, and brown eyes, like his mother Anja, my father's sister. He has got a friendly face and usually he laughs often, but now he has lost some milk teeth and he feels embarrassed when he laughs. Lukas often plays with my other cousin, Jana. Their favourite game is to play they were a cat family. At Christmas they played school together. Lukas is looking forward to come to school and he's even able to read a bit. Very slow but he learns fast. Lukas likes cars. For Christmas his parents bought a car racing track. We gave him a sit-sac. Jana liked it too, so they quarreled about it. Lukas often breaks his things and I think the sit-sac will soon be broken too. Maybe it would stay intact if he obeyed his parents, but usually he doesn't. At least not, if they not get angry. But I really like Lukas. Also if it's sometimes hard with him.</p> <p>[199 words]</p>

### Teacher's comments

After 1st Draft	After 2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>Dear student, <u>Content</u> I find your description very interesting. You wrote about your cousin's appearance, family and likes. Perhaps you can add more things about his personality and how he acts in certain situations. <i>Remember</i>: Details make a description more interesting.</p> <p><u>Organisation</u> Make paragraphs. Make all the sentences in a paragraph talk about the main idea so that your paragraph is clear.</p> <p><u>Language</u> L6: milk teeth, he feels embarrassed when he laughs. Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>Dear student, You made a very good attempt to revise. Your writing is better because you added many interesting ideas that show what kind of person your cousin is. Paragraphs? L9: looks forward to going to school/slowly, L14:if they don't get, L15: even if it's sometimes hard to cope with him.</p>

Many problems on the macro level remain unaffected, especially in the revisions of poorer writers. It appears that a substantial group of students, like Daniel, are unable to remove meaning-related macro problems, even when they are aware of them.

### Daniel's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>I want to tell you about my father. He's <b>very</b> great and he work in a forest office. He is the second chief, but he write down the holiday times from his colleges. In his midday brake he walks around the forest. He works from 7 am to 5 pm. In his spare time he works around our house by the garden. His favourite sport is jogging. After work he watch TV. My dad is 1,94 m tall and very strong. He has black hair and is 41 years old. His birthday is on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November and he was born 1962 in Malborn by Hermeskeil (Trier). I like him very much. He has 3 brothers and a sister.</p> <p>[120 words]</p>	<p>I want to tell you about my father. He's great and he works in a forest office. He is the second chief, but he writes down the holiday times from his colleges. In his midday <b>break</b> he walks around the forest. He works from 7 am to 5 pm. In his spare time he works around our house <b>and at the</b> garden. His favourite sport is jogging. After work he watch TV (<b>in the evening</b>). My dad is 1,94 m tall and very strong. He has black hair and is 41 years old. His birthday is on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November and he was born 1962 in Malborn by Hermeskeil (Trier). He has 3 brothers and a sister. I like him very much.</p> <p>[112 words]</p>

### Teacher's comments

After 1st Draft	After 2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>Dear student, <u>Content</u> I find your description interesting. You wrote about what your father looks like and some of his character traits. Perhaps you can add more about his appearance and how he acts in certain situations. For</p>	<p>Dear student, You corrected many of your mistakes. But to revise does not mean only to correct. It means to rewrite. It means to add ideas, to leave out ideas, to change the order of ideas, to improve. Next time try to do more about the content. L3:of his</p>

<p>example, explain why you think he is great and what makes him special. Remember: Details are important in character descriptions.</p> <p><u>Organisation</u></p> <p>- You need to reorganise your text. Put description of physical appearance before personality. Make all the sentences in a paragraph talk about the main idea so that your paragraph is clear.</p> <p>- You need an ending.</p> <p><u>Language</u></p> <p>Check the following points:  L1: omit 'very' / VF, L2: VF/ also rewrite sentence to make meaning more clear, L3: S (2x), L5:pr/ VF.  Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>colleagues, L6:he watches, L8:born in 1962.</p>
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- **Task 3: “A news story”**

In Task 3, the teacher was able to focus the students' attention on the possibilities of the task as well as on a sense of audience. It turns out from the analysis of the correlation between comments and revisions that the students' response to the teacher's feedback was massive. There is a possible explanation for this shift of attention. In Task 3, the teacher used more text-specific, explicit and substantive comments, which supported students in making more effective revisions.

Apparently, students have a schema for narration but under the pressure of time, linguistic constraints or lack of ideas, they find it hard to fill in all the details. As Temple et al (1988:147) point out, students are familiar with the important constituents of stories: setting and characters, conventional story language, repetition, details which are sequenced. They even have a story grammar: a setting, an initiating event, an internal response, a goal, an attempt, an outcome, a consequence, and a reaction. The feedback gave them the opportunity to recapture the schema and fill in the gaps. It reminded them that, if their story lacked the problem or the solution, it was not a developed story. In the example that follows, the teacher pointed out to Stefanie that there were some gaps in her story. As a result, Stefanie was able to recapture the schema of her story and fill out the missing points. Here is the way she did it.

## Stefanie's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p><u>The thief</u> It was last week on tuesday. It was about 3 o'clock and I was on way to the train as suddenly a men ran out of a clothes shop. He carried a bag and a handbag. A woman and a sales assistend came out of the shop and the woman shouted: "Stop the thief, he has stold my handbag!" We had luck because there was a police office and he catched the thief. <b>So the woman got her handbag bag.</b> And would give the police officer money for his help. But he doesn't taken it.</p> <p>[97 words]</p>	<p><u>The thief</u> It <b>happened</b> last week on tuesday. It was about 3 o'clock <b>pm as</b> I was on <b>the</b> way to the train, as suddenly a <b>man</b> ran out of a clothes shop in <b>Loehr Strasse</b>. He carried a bag and a handbag. A woman and a sales <b>assistent</b> came out of the shop and the woman shouted: "Stop the thief, he has <b>stolen</b> my handbag!" <b>The passers around were very frightened and went quickly on.</b> <b>The woman</b> had luck because there was a police officer in front of the shop and he followed the thief until he catched him, and he throw at his jacket, so the thief was fallen down and the police officer took handcuffs on his hands. <b>The woman was very happy and she wanted to give the police officer money for his help, but he didn't take it.</b> <b>Than he drove with the thief to the police station.</b></p> <p>[153 words]</p>

## Teacher's comments

After 1st Draft	After 2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>Dear student, <u>Content</u> I think your story would be more interesting if you wrote more details about what happened. For example: Where was the police officer? How did he catch the thief? What happened after that? Did he take him to the police station? Did more policemen come? How did the passers-by react? Also, you can add adverbs to your writing to give specific information about <i>how</i>, <i>when</i> or <i>where</i>. For example: the woman came out of the shop? How? So think more about the reader and what he needs to know.</p> <p><u>Organisation</u> Good. Paragraphs?</p> <p><u>Language</u> After you look at the content and organisation of your writing, check the following points: L1:P, L2:on the way/when, L3:T, L5:S, L6:VF, L10:S/she wanted to, L12:T. Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>Dear student, Your second draft is much better because you added a lot of interesting information and you also corrected many of your grammatical mistakes.</p>

Similarly, the teacher's remarks stimulated David into structuring his text more effectively.

### David's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>It was <b>the</b> tuesday, the 9<sup>th</sup> December, I came from my judo training. It was 19.00 p.m. I waited of the bus and there waited an old woman, too! Suddenly, there came a young woman and caught the handbag (purse?) from the old woman. She ran very fast away. But I ran behind her. Suddenly I didn't saw her again. On the next day, I went to the police. The police officer said "The old woman where, too!". Can you describe the young woman?" he asked. I said: "Yes, but it was dark and she weared dark clothes, too!".</p> <p><b>But I cut help them. The police caught the pigpocket and the old woman became all her things again.</b></p> <p><b>She was very lucky. And I became an wonderful new Handy from the police.</b></p> <p><b>[132 words]</b></p>	<p>It was tuesday, the 9<sup>th</sup> December, I came from my judo training. It was 7.00 p.m.</p> <p>I waited of the bus and there waited an old woman, too! Suddenly, there came a young woman and <b>grabbed</b> the handbag from the old woman.</p> <p>She ran very fast away. But I ran behind her. Suddenly I <b>lost</b> her again.</p> <p>On the next day, I went to the police. The police officer said: "Yesterday evening the old woman came to us, too! She was very nervous and sad. Can you describe the young woman?" he asked.</p> <p>I said: "A little, because it was dark and she wear dark clothes, too! But I saw, she had red, brown hair and a nose piercing".</p> <p>Three days later, the police said, I must go to them, because the police caught four people who look as the young woman. The old woman was there, too! The old woman and I recognized the pigpocket immediatly. The old woman was so lucky, because she became all her things back.</p> <p>And the police was very happy, too so I became a wonderful new handy.</p> <p><b>[184 words]</b></p>

### Teacher's comments

After 1st Draft	After 2nd Draft
<p>Dear student,</p> <p><u>Content</u></p> <p>Your story was good. Perhaps it would be more interesting if you wrote more details about what happened. For example: what did the young woman look like? Some description is necessary. What did the old woman do when she lost her bag? If you didn't give the police many details about the woman, how did you help them?</p> <p><u>Organisation</u></p> <p>Good. Can you make more paragraphs?</p> <p><u>Language</u></p> <p>After you look at the content and organisation of your writing, check the following points: L1:P, L2:T, L3:T/pr, L5:grabbed the handbag,L8:I lost her, L11:this line is not clear, L14:T, L15: I was able to help, L17:V, L19:a.</p> <p>Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>Dear student,</p> <p>Your story looks more interesting after the details you added.</p> <p>L1:I was coming home, L4: I was waiting, L16:nervous, L20:she was wearing, L25:asked me to go to the police station, L26:had caught, L26:looked like, L29:pickpocket, L31:took (become does not mean 'bekommen').</p>



It turns out that the cue to ‘write more’, commonly used by teachers to replicate the kind of interaction which keeps a conversation going and therefore encourages more production, elicits limited revisions whereas specific questions and prompts which cue the writer to add specific elements or consider what else the reader would like to know lead to more substantial, meaning-based additions and therefore improvement.

Take the case of Carolin, for instance. She is a writer whose abilities unfold across tasks. However, in Task 3 she was not concerned with the content of her story, only with the form. We don’t know why Carolin avoided text-base revisions. We can only speculate that the reason was the teacher’s focus on formal features. This focus was reflected in Carolin’s revisions. The teacher’s feedback began with a general evaluative comment and did not include specific suggestions for expansion or clarification. As a result, the message of substantive revision was not conveyed to the writer.

### Carolin’s drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>Where is the boy?!</p> <p>It happend when I was six years old. I think it was on a Saturday in summer and I went out to buy something on a farm just 5 minutes away from our house. Just some metres away from this farm is a crossroad but it’s a very safe crossroad so if you drive a car, you will see everything. Then I saw a black boy with his bike and he just rode some rounds with it on a street near the crossroad. I knew him, because he lived in our town. But then I went to the farm. About 10 minutes later I went back to home, but I stopped at the crossroad because there was a big bus and behind him was the boy’s bike. It lays on the ground. I just asked. “Where is the boy?”, because his bike was there but the boy? Meanwhile the police and paramedics arrived. I was speakless and I had to realize that the boy crashed into the bus and died. I couldn’t see him because he lays on the other side of the bus. I didn’t know how it happened but I knew it was the boy I saw 10 minutes ago. It was very hard for me to see it so I went home, but the newspaper on the days after that accident remembered me on the boy I saw before he died.</p> <p>[238 words]</p>	<p>Where is the boy?!</p> <p>It happened when I was six years old. I think it was on a Saturday in summer and I went out to buy something on a farm just 5 minutes away from our house. Just some metres away from this farm is a crossroads but it’s a very safe crossroads so if you drive a car, you will see everything. Then I saw a black boy with his bike on a street near the crossroads. I knew him because he lived in our town. But then I went to the farm. About 10 minutes later I went back home but I stopped at the crossroads because there was a big bus and behind it was the boy’s bike. It lay on the ground. I just asked. “Where is the boy?”, because his bike was there but the boy? Meanwhile the police and paramedics arrived. I was speechless and I had to realized that the boy had been hit from the bus and died. I couldn’t see him because he lay on the other side of the bus. I didn’t know how it happened but I knew it was the boy I saw 10 minutes before he died.</p> <p>[201 words]</p>

### Teacher's comments

After 1st Draft	After 2nd Draft
<p>Dear student,</p> <p><u>Content</u> I hope this is not a real story. If it is, it's really sad that you had to see that happen. The story was well-written and interesting because you made the reader want to read on to find out what happened.</p> <p><u>Organisation</u> Good. Can you make paragraphs?</p> <p><u>Language</u> After you look at the content and organisation of your writing, check the following points: L1:S, L6:crossroads, L9:T, L10:no comma before 'and, that, but, because', L13:no 'to', L14:G, L15:T, L18:speechless, L19:realised that ....had been hit, L22:T, L25:V, L26:pr. Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>Dear student,</p> <p>You revised very little this time. Perhaps it would have been a good idea to write more about your feelings or other people's reactions. L11: I was coming back home when ...L14: He was lying, L18:I realised, L18: hit by the bus.</p>

It would be particularly interesting to look at a revision, which was not initiated by the teacher feedback. This revision shows that there are students who can be critical evaluators of their own writing. In Task 3, Elena, a competent writer, wrote a very good story. Her story grammar seemed to be complete because she had established time and setting and covered the basic events in the story. Since the writing was good and necessitated little change, the teacher did not write any comments about what could be improved. Yet, when Elena re-read her draft, she realised that something was missing. She added a proposition to express the reaction to what had happened and conclude the story. The concluding sentence worked as an epilogue to her story.

### Elena's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>The pony It was on the 8<sup>th</sup> March in our street in Kobern-Gondorf. Our neighbours Mr. and Mrs. Kuster had a pony in their big garden. The black-white horse was the sensation of the neighbourhood. It was really sweet, ran around and sometimes you even heard it. Mr. and Mrs. Kuster love pets and so they've also got a dog. Normally it's loud and not very friendly and with its short black hair it looks dangerous. On that 8<sup>th</sup> March a car came to Mr. And Mrs. Kusters' garden gate. They carried the pony into it. It was dead! When they drove away, even the dog barked sadly. All of our other neighbours wanted to know more about it. As the family came back they told us everything. Since a</p>	<p>The pony It was on the 8<sup>th</sup> March in our street in Kobern-Gondorf. Our neighbours Mr. and Mrs. Kuster had a pony in their big garden. The black-white horse was the sensation of the neighbourhood. It was really sweet, ran around and sometimes you even heard it. Mr. and Mrs. Kuster love pets and so they've also got a dog. Normally it's loud and not very friendly and with its short black hair it looks dangerous. On that 8<sup>th</sup> March a car came to Mr. And Mrs. Kusters' garden gate. They carried the pony into it. It was dead! When they drove away, even the dog barked sadly. All of our other neighbours wanted to know more about it.</p>

<p>long time the horse was very ill. It was hard for it to live with its aches. So a doctor came and gave some medicine to the pony. Quickly it slept and soon it died in peace.</p> <p>After a few days we heard a strange noise out of the Kusters' garden. Our neighbours had a goat in their garden now. This goat is very loud and the other neighbours hate it.</p> <p><b>[201 words]</b></p>	<p>As the family came back they told us everything. For a long time the horse was very ill. It was hard for it to live with its aches. So a doctor came and gave some medicine to the pony. Quickly it slept and soon it died in peace.</p> <p>After a few days we heard a strange noise out of the Kusters' garden. Our neighbours had a goat in their garden now. This goat is very loud and the other neighbours hate it. We all miss the sweet little pony.</p> <p><b>[208 words]</b></p>
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### Teacher's comments

After 1st Draft	After 2nd Draft
<p>Dear student,</p> <p><u>Content</u> I liked your story very much. It was interesting and well-written. I think you have a very good style in writing.</p> <p><u>Organisation</u> Good. Paragraphs?</p> <p><u>Language</u> After you look at the content and organisation of your writing, check the following points: L11:pr, L12: write differently. Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>Dear student,</p> <p>You revised very little this time but you made an important revision: you added an ending line. That helped complete your story. L12: to live in such pain.</p>

- **Task 4: “A letter about my town”**

### Melina's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>Koblenz, 05/28/04</p> <p>Dear Kathy!</p> <p>How are you? I'm fine!</p> <p>I want to tell you a bit about Koblenz. It's a great town! Here in Koblenz at the German Corner are all around the year festivals etc. In the swimming-pool Oberwerth you can jump into the water or swim in the Rhein. Or you can go to FKK! In the stadium Oberwerth we're going to make our sports activities. It makes fun. In Koblenz you can go to great museums, there are pictures, figures etc. At Ehrenbreitstein the castle of Koblenz is every year the "Rhein in Flamm"! (Do you know what I mean with this?)</p> <p>When you come to Germany next year I can see you some sights of Koblenz! We will have a lot</p>	<p>Koblenz, 05/28/04</p> <p>Dear Kathy!</p> <p>How are you? I'm fine!</p> <p>I want to tell you a bit about Koblenz! It's a great town! Here in Koblenz at the 'German Corner' we've festivals the whole year.</p> <p>In the swimming-pool 'Oberwerth' you can jump into the water or you can swim in the 'Rhein'!</p> <p>In the Stadium of 'Oberwerth' we'll have our sports activities. That's funny!</p> <p>In Koblenz you can go to great museums. There you'll see pictures of famous people etc!</p> <p>At 'Ehrenbreitstein' the castle of Koblenz the 'RHEIN IN FLAMES' is every year! It's a</p>

<p>of fun <b>in this time!</b></p> <p>Of course you can go by ship on the <b>Rivers</b> Rhein or (and) Mosel! And you can go to the cinema(s) <b>Odeon, Apollo, Kinopolis!</b> That's funny!</p> <p><b>The films in the cinemas are cool.</b> At the moment there is 'Troja' in the cinema's! This is a great film!</p> <p>Oh, you must come very quickly! I'll be happy when you come!</p> <p>By the way, my telephone number is 026.....! You can phone me if you like!</p> <p>Yours ...</p> <p>P.S. Write me too! A long, long letter! OK?</p> <p><b>[215 words]</b></p>	<p>firework! You can see it if you stand at the 'German Corner'!</p> <p>Next year when you visit Germany, I can show you some sights of Koblenz! We'll have a lot of fun!</p> <p>Of course you can go by ship on the 'Rhein' or (and) Mosel! And you can go to the cinema! That's funny!</p> <p>At the moment there is 'Troja' in the cinema's! This is a great film!</p> <p>Oh you must come very quickly! I'll be happy when you come!</p> <p>By the way, my telephone number is 026.....! You can phone me if you like!</p> <p>Yours ...</p> <p>P.S. Write me <b>back!</b> A long, long letter! <b>Okay?</b></p> <p><b>[200 words]</b></p>
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### Teacher's comments

After 1st Draft	After 2nd Draft
<p>Dear student, <u>Content</u> You wrote interesting information about your town but it is rather unconnected. I'm sure you can write more about the sights or the entertainment in Koblenz. Perhaps you can add some ideas in the introduction. It would be a good idea to explain why you inform your friend about your town (eg. he asked you to do it or s/he wants to visit your place etc.).</p> <p><u>Organisation/Layout</u> Your ideas are jumbled. Try to organise and join them better. Don't write separate sentences. Put them into paragraphs.</p> <p><u>Language</u> After you look at the content and organisation of your writing, check the following points: Ls 4-5:rewrite differently, L9:V, L10:V, L12: rewrite differently, L14:WO, L18:V, L20:then. Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>Dear student, Your second draft looks better than the first. You made some successful changes and organized your ideas into paragraphs. L5:we've got festivals throughout the year, L10: that's a lot of fun, L14:takes place every year, L15: a firework show.</p>

Melina's subsequent revisions closely matched the teacher's comments. Most of the teacher's comments reflected broader concerns, such as expansion and logical arrangement of ideas, coherence, discourse conventions, stylistic changes and

substitution of ideas for less effective or elaborate points. Melina made changes which corresponded to the specific prompts given by the teacher. For example, she gave the reader some background information about 'Rhein in flames'. She made a few deletions possibly in order to reduce content which might be less relevant or interesting for the reader. She also took more interest in paragraphing. Although we cannot be certain about her real intentions when she was making the specific changes, we can conclude that she made her text more reader-friendly.

What is more, Melina seems to have responded to those comments which were clearer. As noted earlier, the qualitative analysis of the correlation between comments and revisions revealed that students made no changes when they were not able to figure out what the comment meant or what it was intended to improve. It seems that Melina could not figure out which part of her text the comments "the information about your town is rather unconnected" or "your ideas are jumbled" were addressed to. This finding also points in the direction of making more text-specific comments. An alternative way to stress the problem would be to point out the need for the use of cohesive features of language. It would make more sense to suggest using specific conjunctions in order to mark temporal, causal or other relations between sentences. Cohesion and coherence seem particularly important in the teaching of writing but we have to help students understand how they can be expressed.

Below is another example of a student who, like Melina, revised in ways that the teacher valued and encouraged. The student's revisions reflect the teacher's concern with the expansion and the successful linking of the ideas. Stefanie added a few details but most importantly, reformulated large chunks of her letter, joining them differently and trying to achieve better results in terms of style and coherence. Although she did not remove all of the problems, she achieved her goals to a large extent and that is why her second draft was regarded as an improved version of the first. The fact that she was able to detect some but not all of the problems in her writing is not a bad result considering her youth and inexperience. Improving the text does not mean detecting a 100% of problems and treating them effectively. This is highly unrealistic.

## Stefanie's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>Dear Sally!</p> <p>How are you? I'm fine. I would ask you if you want visit me in next holiday. Because here in Koblenz it's very nice and here are very many sights for exemble "Das Deutsche Eck" it means "German Corner" it's the place where the Rhein and the Mosel come together. There is a big statue of Kaiser Willhelm on top of his horse. It's very nice. And here is a castle. It's very big and in the past there lived kings and queens but today there are only offices.</p> <p>In Koblenz are many shops and here are 3 cinemas. The Loehr Center is a big house where are many shops, cafés and restaurants.</p> <p>In Koblenz are many museums and old buildings. Here are many churches and many nice places where you can sit and have a break.</p> <p>So I gave you a lot of informations. I hope you come and visit me.</p> <p>Yours, ...</p> <p>[158 words]</p>	<p>Dear Sally!</p> <p>Thank you for your last letter, it was very nice. I would ask you if you want to visit me. When you will come I can show you many sights here in Koblenz and you will see Koblenz is very nice. Here is for examble "Das Deutsche Eck" it means "German Corner". That's the place where the Rhein and the Mosel come together. And there's a big, nice statue of Kaiser Willhelm on top of his horse. In Koblenz you can see a castle, too. It's very big. In the past there have lived kings and queens, but today there are only offices.</p> <p>Of curse in Koblenz aren't only sights. Here are 3 cinemas and many shops. And there's a big house it's called Loehr Center. There are many many shops and you can eat ice-cream there or you can sit at a nice place and relax.</p> <p>In Koblenz you also can spend your time in museums or old buildings or churches. Which are very nice.</p> <p>You also can make a picknick on the "Rhein-Anlagen" or in front of the castle or at a other place. So, I think I have gave you a lot of informations about Koblenz and I hope you will come and visit me. See you in Koblenz.</p> <p>Yours, ...</p> <p>[216 words]</p>

## Teacher's comments

After 1st Draft	After 2nd Draft
<p>Dear student,</p> <p><u>Content</u></p> <p>You wrote some information about your town but I'm sure you can write more about the sights or the entertainment in Koblenz. Perhaps you can add some ideas in the introduction and ending.</p> <p><u>Organisation/Layout</u></p> <p>Try to join the ideas in the second half of your letter better.</p> <p><u>Language</u></p> <p>After you look at the content and organisation of your writing, check the following points:L1:missing words, L2:unnecessary pr., L3:there are/S, L4:P, L10:there are/unnecessary words, L11:V, L16:G.</p> <p>Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>Dear student,</p> <p>Your second draft looks better than the first because you added a few interesting ideas and made better connections between sentences.</p> <p>L2: I would like to ask you if ..., L3: When you come, L4:example, L10: there lived, L12:of course, there aren't ..., , L14: there's a big house called, L18: churches, which, L20: you can also have, L22: I gave you a lot of information.</p>

The next revision effort reveals the student's attention above the level of isolated sentences. The teacher suggested expansion of ideas and drew the student's attention

to the absence of appropriate discourse conventions. The remaining comments concerned grammar, vocabulary, syntax and rephrasing. Significantly, Carolin incorporated all of the teacher's suggestions for correction by adopting the following strategy: she corrected as many mistakes as she could on the original draft and then, freed from this concern, she looked at the macro level problems in her text. Many of these corrections were not included in the second draft, which hardly resembles the original. This serves as an example to show that sometimes the density of the problems in the text is too high for the students and so they find it hard to deal with them simultaneously. Similar behaviour was observed in this study in the revision efforts of other writers, who first modified their output by making it more grammatical and then went on to write a draft which would be more communicatively effective.

### Carolin's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>If you will ever travel to Koblenz, you have to visit some important.</p> <p>At first you should visit the German Corner which is called "Deutsches Eck" in German. It's where the Mosel flows into the Rhein. You'll find it very easily, because it's a real big memorial for ...</p> <p>You can see him and his horse on it. If you are there, you should go up all those stages to the third floor and then you will see the pretty surrounding. But if you want to go shopping, don't go in the old street. Just go to the Lohr Center and surrounding Lohrstreets. There you get everything.</p> <p>Another interesting place is the fortress Ehrenbreitstein. You can park in town and go up the hills by a chair lift. That's cool because you can see the hole city of Koblenz. When you arrive the fortress you can go in the museum, in the café or just look the hills down and watch the city. Maybe you can see an interesting place from the fortress looking at the city. Maybe you see one place, which you travel to later, because they are many different seights left.</p> <p>[194 words]</p>	<p>Dear Amanda,</p> <p>How are you? I'm fine!</p> <p>In this letter I'm going to tell you about some seights here in Koblenz because I heard you're going to travel to Koblenz next summer. Let's start! A very important seight is the German Corner. It's a landmark of Koblenz. In German it's called "Deutsches Eck" and it's a big memorial standing there where the Mosel flows into the Rhein. There are three floors and you can go up those stairs and watch down. There's a street along the river to the German Corner and on this street are celebrations like fleamarket or ....</p> <p>But if you want to go shopping, you should go to the "Lohr Center" and the "Lohrstreets" in its surroundings. Another interesting place is the fortress Ehrenbreitstein. You can go there by a chair lift, too. That's really cool because you drive up the hills and see Koblenz and its pretty surroundings. When you're at the fortress you should also go to the museum and the café. In the museum are shown interesting exhibitions. There are so many seights in Koblenz and if you want, I could show you some when you're already here. Hope to see you as soon as possible!</p> <p>Love,</p> <p>...</p> <p>[205 words]</p>

### Teacher's comments

After 1st Draft	After 2nd Draft
<p>Dear student,</p> <p><u>Content</u> You wrote interesting information about your town but I'm sure you can write more about the sights in Koblenz or the entertainment. It would be a good idea to write a small introduction to explain why you inform your friend about your town (eg. he asked you to do it or s/he wants to visit your place or .....). Write an ending.</p> <p><u>Organisation/Layout</u> Your text doesn't look like a letter. Remember: most friendly letters have a standard form. Write a heading for the letter (use your home address and today's date). Begin your letter with a greeting like "Dear ....". End your letter with a closing like "Your friend/ With love" and your name.</p> <p><u>Language</u> After you look at the content and organisation of your writing, check the following points: L1:T, L2:missing word, L6:P/really, L7:for whom?, L9:V, L11:surroundings, L18:S/missing pr, L19:pr, L20:WO, Ls21-22:rewrite more clearly, L23:when you ..., L24:S. Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>Dear student,</p> <p>This time your text looks like a real letter. Also you wrote an appropriate introductory and closing paragraph and made some successful changes throughout. Your second draft is much better than the first.</p> <p>L4:sights, L7: it is a landmark, not like, L14: fleamarkets or funfairs, L20: go up, L23: in the museum there are some interesting exhibitions.</p>

Below is an example of a student who directed most attention to the micro level and therefore detected no macro level problems.

### Daniel's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>Dear Florian,</p> <p>You ask me to tell you about Koblenz. Koblenz is a great town with ca. 100,000 people. My favourite street is the Loerstrasse, because there are many shops and the Loehr-Center. The Loehr-Center is a building, where are many shops in. Electro shops or restaurants, clothes shops and other stores. Then you ask me about rivers and places and other things. There are two rivers at the (Rand) of Koblenz. Mosel and Rhein. And places are on some places in Koblenz. For example the Plan. It's a place where are every week a week-market. There you can buy potatos, marmalade and other good thinks. An other great place is the train-station. There are some shops who sells bread and other thinks and a McDonalds. So, I must stop now because my mother ask me to come eat.</p> <p>Bye. Your friend ...</p> <p>[143 words]</p>	<p>Dear Florian,</p> <p>You asked me to tell you about Koblenz. It's a great town with about 100,000 people. My favourite street is the Loerstrasse because there are many shops and the Loehr-Center. The Loehr-Center is a building where are many shops in. There are electro shops or restaurants, clothes shops and other stores. Then you ask me about rivers and places and other things. There are crossing two rivers Koblenz. Mosel and Rhein. And places are on some places in Koblenz. For example the Plan. It's a place where are every week a open market. There you can buy potatos, marmalade and other good things. An other great place is the train-station. There are some shops who sells bread and other things and a McDonalds. So, I must stop now because my mother ask me to come and eat.</p> <p>Bye. Your friend ...</p> <p>[143 words]</p>



### Teacher's comments

After 1st Draft	After 2nd Draft
<p>Dear student,  <u>Content</u>            You wrote interesting information about your town but I'm sure you can write more about the sights in Koblenz or the entertainment.  <u>Organisation/Layout</u>            Good. Paragraphs?  <u>Language</u>            After you look at the content and organisation of your writing, check the following points: L1:T, L3:P, L4:there are ... or Lohr Center is a shopping centre, L6:crossing Koblenz, L7:rewrite more clearly, L8:an open market/S, L9:S, L10:G, L11:V/T/missing word.            Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>Dear student,            I'd like to tell you one more time that revision does not mean only correcting mistakes.</p>

The teacher commentary contained one comment calling for expansion, one for paragraphing and ten for grammatical corrections. As a result, the presence of numerous grammatical comments might have interfered with the writer's attempt to focus on higher-level concerns. Again this case illustrates how difficult it is to draw conclusions about a writer's intentions. Perhaps Daniel focused on grammatical and mechanical concerns because in this area the teacher's comments were more concrete. Perhaps he considered these aspects to be more important or he was just a reluctant writer who was more resistant to change.

- **Task 5: "My autobiography"**

The students' revisions in Task 5 are particularly illuminative because they reveal interesting findings about how much the students have acquired. The meaning-based context established by the teacher had a profound influence on the revision done by students in Task 5. It seems that students worked out the significant characteristics of revision during the study and for many of them this process had a lasting value.

Most of the students covered a wide span of revisions. The formal features of writing (spelling, correct forms) were still considered to be important but students also perceived the importance of focusing on content. However, the majority of them appeared to restrict attention to the sentence level. This means that each sentence was

evaluated in isolation. The qualitative analysis shows that it was still difficult for them to see the text as a whole.

Here is the way David, a less skilled writer, revised his draft. He corrected a few mistakes and made a few additions. This additional material is peripheral, unrelated and does not really affect the reading of the text in any significant way. David's effort suggests that unskilled writers may equate good writing with more writing and struggle so hard to increase the content that they attain the opposite effect.

### David's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>My life I'm ... I'm 13 years old. I was born on the 19<sup>th</sup> March 1991 in Koblenz. I live in street "Sudallee ..." in Koblenz, too! I have been living there since I was one year old.</p> <p>My parents names are R. and M. ...But I live by my mother. My grandma's name is L. My grandpa is death. I haven't no sister and no brother. When I was seven years old I went to "Schenkendorf elementary school". It is in Koblenz, too! Now, I go to the Eichendorff-Gym. It the best school I think. I have there many friends. I'm in year 7. Some teachers are nice and another aren't it!</p> <p>My hobbies are Judo and Viola. I doing judo since I'm 8 years old. I think I good. I playing Viola for three moth. I go for my Viola-class to a music school in Raental-Koblenz.</p> <p>If I have my A-level I would going to go to another country for 2 or 3 years. I going to search a job for sea biology because I love the sea and the animals. It's so mysteriously <b>I think.</b></p> <p>[190 words]</p>	<p>My life I'm ... I'm 13 years old. I was born on the 19<sup>th</sup> March 1991 in Koblenz. I live in street "Sudallee ..." in Koblenz, too! I have been living there since I was one year old.</p> <p>My parents names are R. and M. ... But I live by my mother. My grandma's name is L. My grandpa is death. I haven't <b>got any</b> sister and brother.</p> <p>When I was seven years old I went to "Schenkendorf elementary school". It is in Koblenz, too! Now, I go to <b>school which called "Eichendorff-high school"</b>. It's the best school I think. I have there many friends. I'm in year 7. Some teachers are nice and another <b>teachers are sometimes unfriendly!</b></p> <p>My hobbies are Judo and Viola. I doing judo since I <b>was</b> 8 years old. I think <b>I'm</b> good. I playing Viola for three moth. I go for my Viola-class to a music school in Raental-Koblenz.</p> <p>If I have my A-level I would going to go to another country for 2 or 3 years. I going to search a job for sea biology because I love the sea and the animals. It's so mysteriously.</p> <p><b>At home I have a dog witch name is Hexe. She is my best friend. I can't live without her. She is black and a little orange and grey.</b></p> <p><b>My aunt has got two big rabbits. They are black and very big. My grandma has a dog, too! And she has three bird. My familie love animal as me. My favourite animal is a dolphin.</b></p> <p>[259 words]</p>

In this case and in others, which can be seen in App. V, the lack of success of the revisions on the macro level cannot be generally attributed to a lack of attention by the

students. The problems of these writers seem to be more of an operational nature. Even with the teacher's guidance, the linguistic or discourse problems still seemed too complex and the cognitive demands of successful revision too high for some of the students.

Improvement often relies on the forming of mental representations of the resulting text. Only two students out of the seven succeeded in doing that. Beyond the general inclination to add or substitute, these students saw the need to bring other components into play, e.g. organisation, coherence and style. In the samples that follow, the students made a number of text-base changes, which mainly included adding, changing and shifting details.

### Stefanie's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p><u>My life</u>            My name is .... And I was born on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1991 in hospital <b>which is</b> calls "Marienhof".            My mothers name is Silvia, she's 41 years old and work's as a nurse. My dad calls Dietmar. He's 40 years old and he's a doctor.            I've got a pet. It's name is Momo and she's a hamster. She's one year old.            When I was 3 years old I went to kindergarden. There Julia <b>and Jenna</b> were my best friend, <b>but today they aren't</b>.            With 6 years I went to "Grundschule-Güls". There Carina was my best friend.            When I was 10 years old I went to "Eichendorf Gymnasium" in Koblenz.            At this time my favourite dog Melli died. She wasn't my dog but I often go withe her outside. I was on a class trip as it happened. A Husky killed her. I was very sad about that.            But now I've got a other favourite dog his name is Bassi and now he's 2 years old.            At the Eichendorf Gymnasium I met Laura she's a very good friend of me now. And ofcourse Isa. She's my naighbour and now she's my best friend, too.            I wish me a own dog and that all my friends and I have a good live without war.</p>	<p><u>My life</u>            My name is .... And I was born on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1991. <b>The</b> hospital calls "Marienhof".            My mother's name is Silvia, she's 41 years old and works as a nurse <b>in a hospital wich calls "Bruederkrankenhaus"</b>.            My dad calls Dietmar. He's 40 years old and he's a doctor.  <b>When I was 2 years old my grandfather died (He was my mum's dad).</b>  <b>And in year 200 my grandmother died (she was the mum of my mother).</b>            With 3 years I went to kindergarden. There Julia was my best friend, <b>but when we were six years old Julia moved to "Moselweiss"</b>.            When I was 6 I went to "Grundschule-Güls". <b>There I found a new best friend her name was Carina.</b>            When I was 10 years old I went to "Eichendorf Gymnasium" in Koblenz. And Carina to "Bischhofliche-Realschule".  <b>At the Eichendorf Gymnasium I met Laura. Now we are very good friends. And ofcourse my best friend now is Isa. She's my naighbour and in the same form.</b>            When I went to "Eichendorf Gymansium" my favourite dog Melli died. She wasn't my dog but I often go <b>out with</b> her. I was on a class trip as it happened. A Husky killed her. I was very sad about that.  <b>But now Melli's owner bought a new dog. His name is Bassi. Now he's 2 years old and he's my favourite dog.</b>  <b>With 12 years I moved to Elfmorgen. It's in Guls. Than I get a hamster. Her name is Momo and now</b></p>

[213 words]	<p>she's 1 year. In the future I wish me a dog and that there is no war at the world.</p> <p>[271 words]</p>
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Stefanie covered a wide span of revisions: she made additions (she reported significant events in her life such as the death of her grandparents); she demonstrated good organisational skills (she put all the information about her schooling together and then referred to the different pets in her life); she refined parts of her text (When I was 6 I went to Grundschule-Güls. There I found a new best friend her name was Carina). Stylistically, this chunk was better than the corresponding one in the first draft. Her revisions were effective. The same holds for the revision process of Melina, who concentrated on the informational quality of the text.

### Melina's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>My name is ... I was born in 1991 in Koblenz. My birthday is the 12.02.04. <b>In the kindergarden it was great! We had got a lot of fun! When I was ill in this kindergarden time I had the windpocks! It was a bad bad time! I couldn't play with my friends! After one week and a half I could go back to the kindergarden!</b></p> <p>Today my parents, my brothers and I live in Wolken near Koblenz. My brothers Tobias and Andreas are older than me! Tobias is 17 years old and Andreas is 19 years old. Andreas is going to get a Studium at an bank in Stuttgart. Tobias works at the Sparkasse in Koblenz. I'm a pupil! I go to the Eichendorff-Gymnasium in Koblenz. When I startet school I were in Kobern-Gondorf.</p> <p>At school it's sometimes boring. But when I'm ill, I'll go to school and meet my best friends Nina etc.</p> <p>My important experienz was that I was allowed to ride the horse of my friend Sofia. It's called Bonny. He is a little crazy horse. But my most important experienz was when we flied to Greece. There I met Tessie again.</p> <p>[196 words]</p>	<p>My name is ... I was born in 1991 in Koblenz. My birthday is <b>the 12<sup>th</sup> of February</b>.</p> <p>My parents, my brothers and I live in Wolken near Koblenz. My brothers Tobias and Andreas are older than me. Tobias is 17 years old and Andreas is 19 years old. Andreas is going to get a Studium at a bank in Stuttgart. Tobias works at the Sparkasse in Koblenz.</p> <p><b>My kindergarden time was great, but not when I was ill. When I started school I was in Kobern-Gondorf. Now I'm in Koblenz in Eichendorff-Gymnasium. It's great here, but some teachers are stupid.</b></p> <p>It's sometimes boring at school, <b>but</b> when I'm ill I <b>want to</b> go to school and meet my best friends Nina and Andrea.</p> <p>My important experienz was, that I was allowed to ride the horse of my friend Sofia. <b>He's</b> called Bonny. He is a <b>very</b> crazy pony! But my most important experienz was when I flied with my parents to Greece. There I met Tessie again. <b>She was a dog. She died last month. It was so stupid!</b></p> <p>[180 words]</p>

Melina rearranged the text in logical order beginning with references to her family and then moving on to her schooling career. She also made the text more coherent by connecting relevant ideas. She even decided to delete a large chunk which referred to the period of her illness when she was at kindergarten, perhaps because she found it less significant for her autobiography. Melina's increasing concern with macro level revisions is clearly illustrated in the way she revised her draft. She was predominantly interested in the relations between parts of the text. Her paper exemplified the revision processes and the strategies she devised in order to improve her draft. She circled chunks of language and changed their position in the text; she crossed out unnecessary information; she made corrections; she added phrases and sentences.

It makes sense at this point to say that not only the removal or the treatment of the existing problems but also the avoidance of new problems is important for text improvement. Did Melina succeed in changing the text in a way which prevented new problems from arising? The answer is 'No'. In the expansions she made, some new problems emerged (e.g. the use of the word 'stupid', which was repeated twice, was inappropriate). Despite the new problems, however, the fact that she adopted a high level mental representation of her text, seeing it more as a whole in order to add to it or re-order it makes her revision effective. As noted previously, the evaluation of the students' texts should concentrate largely on their achievements rather than their deficiencies. This is what they should take credit for.

### **10.3 Differences in students' behaviours towards error treatment**

With regard to accuracy, it seems that asking students to correct their output had five outcomes. Students

- a) failed to identify the problem and repeated the same form
- b) identified the problem but failed to use the correct form
- c) failed to identify the problem and substituted an incorrect form for a correct one
- d) identified the problem and replaced the initial incorrect form with the correct one
- e) eliminated the problematic area from the text.

Below you will see how three of the students dealt with the errors diagnosed by the teacher.

In Task 2, Melina made three grammatical changes initiated by the teacher's prompts. The three changes were the revising of "is wearing" into "wears", "we're jumping" into "we jumps" and "we will help us" into "we will help each other". The first and the third ones were successful (fourth outcome) whereas the second one was unsuccessfully treated (second outcome). Although the teacher had also pointed to the revision of "a nicly face", Melina failed to identify the problem and so she joined two words with the conjunction 'and' ("blue and green") instead of writing 'a nice face' (first outcome).

### Melina's drafts (Task 2)

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>I'm going to describe my best friend Anne M... She lives in Koblenz-Guls in a small flat with out a garden. She is tall and has got long brown hairs. Her eyes are blue-green and she has got a nicly face. She is wearing normal clothes every day. Her mother Roswitha is 45 years old. They've got a horse. It's called Florett. Her mother works at Debeka. Anne has got another horse, but it's not her horse. It's called Bolo and belongs to Anne's friend Claudia. If we're in trouble we will help us. We're both the best friends of the earth. Her best friends are am I and Sofia. We're both jumping with our horses at the ridingplace. Anne's hobbies are riding, eating, playing with Laika, Sofia's dog and writing letters to me.</p>	<p>I'm going to describe my best friend Anne M... She lives in Koblenz-Guls in a small flat with out a garden. She is tall and has got long brown hairs. Her eyes are blue and green and she has a nicly face. She wears normal clothes every day. Her mother Roswitha is 45 years old. They've got a horse. It's called Florett. Her mother works at Debeka. Anne has got another horse, but it's not her horse. It's called Bolo (Diavolo) and belongs to Anne's friend Claudia. If we're in trouble we will help each other. We're both the best friends of the earth. Her best friends are am I and Sofia. We're both jumps with our horses at the ridingplace. Anne's hobbies are riding, eating, playing with Laika, Sofia's dog and writing letters to me.</p>

In Carolin's sample, we can see the fifth outcome described above. The teacher's comment "rewrite more clearly" referred to the sentence "Maybe you can see an interesting place from the fortress looking at the city". The teacher judged that the meaning of this sentence was not clear to the reader. After some kind of negotiation, Carolin decided to delete the problematic sentence (not a desirable change). There are two explanations for this decision: either the text seemed clear to her or she was not able to figure out what was wrong with it in order to rewrite it more clearly. This observation stresses the need for better structured and more precise feedback.

### Carolyn's drafts (Task 4)

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>If you will ever travel to Koblenz, you have to visit some important.</p> <p>At first you should visit the German Corner which is called "Deutsches Eck" in German. It's where the Mosel flows into the Rhein. You'll find it very easily, because it's a real big memorial for ....</p> <p>You can see him and his horse on it. If you are there, you should go up all those stages to the third floor and then you will see the pretty surrounding. But if you want to go shopping, don't go in the old street. Just go to the Lohr Center and surrounding Lohrstreets. There you get everything.</p> <p>Another interesting place is the fortress Ehrenbreitstein. You can park in town and go up the hills by a chair lift. That's cool because you can see the hole city of Koblenz. When you arrive the fortress you can go in the museum, in the café or just look the hills down and watch the city. <b>Maybe you can see an interesting place from the fortress looking at the city.</b> Maybe you see one place, which you travel to later, because they are many different seights left.</p>	<p>If you ever travel to Koblenz, you <b>will</b> have to visit some important <b>seights</b>.</p> <p>At first you should visit the German Corner which is called "Deutsches Eck" in German. It's where the Mosel flows into the Rhein. You'll find it very easily, because it's a really big memorial for <b>?</b>.</p> <p>You can see him and his horse on it. If you are there, you should go up all those <b>stairs</b> to the third floor and then you will see the pretty surroundings. But if you want to go shopping, don't go in the old street. Just go to the Lohr Center and surrounding Lohrstreets. There you get everything.</p> <p>Another interesting place is the fortress Ehrenbreitstein. You can park in town and go up the hills by a chair lift. That's cool because you can see the <b>whole</b> city of Koblenz. When you arrive the fortress you can go <b>to</b> the museum, <b>to</b> the café or just look the hills down and watch the city. Maybe you can see an interesting place from the fortress looking at the city. Maybe you see one place, <b>when</b> you travel to later, because they are many different seights left.</p>

The following sample shows the third and fourth outcomes. Victoria was not able to identify the grammatical problem in line 2 ("her family sat") and so changed a correct verb into an incorrect one ("a girl played" instead of "a girl was playing"). However, she was able to correct the vocabulary mistakes (e.g. slipped, pierced).

### Victoria's drafts (Task 3)

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p><u>Dangerous fence</u></p> <p>It was in Bavaria in 1991 in a village called Garrkirchen. A girl was playing in the garden of a house. Her family sat on the balcony. The girl was climbing on a fence. The fence had big and dangerous spikes. Suddenly the girl slitt and fell. One spike drilled into the girls neck. The girl started screaming. Her dad jumped off the balcony and put his daughter off the fence. He called an ambulance. The girl had to go to a hospital. She had luck and survived.</p>	<p><u>Dangerous fence</u></p> <p>It was in Bavaria in 1991 in a village called Garrkirchen. A girl <b>played</b> in the garden of a house. Her family sat on the balcony. The girl was climbing on a fence. The fence had big and dangerous spikes. Suddenly the girl <b>slipped</b> and fell. <b>One of the spikes pierced</b> into the girl's neck. The girl started screaming. Her dad <b>noticed that and</b> jumped off the balcony. <b>The girl was bleeding very bad. As her father put her off the fence, he called an ambulance. The ambulance arrived very quickly. The doctor took the girl to the hospital. She got operated and a few days later everything was okay.</b></p>

It is self-evident that only the fourth outcome can benefit the students, for it helps them produce grammatical forms which have already entered their interlanguage but

which they have not yet mastered. However, the second outcome might also, in some cases, be seen as a beneficial process. Sometimes the form used by the student is ungrammatical but represents a more appropriate form (e.g. changing a present tense into a past tense but using a regular instead of an irregular form). When the teacher corrects the forms that have not been acquired, this may result in the acquisition of new forms. What is more important, in both the second and the fourth patterns, the identification of the problem helps students reflect on how to deal with it and come up with possible solutions. This kind of negotiation treats writing as a problem-solving process and may result in greater control of these forms.

#### **10.4 Summary of the students' revision efforts**

The individual case synopses aim to disclose what kind of understandings of revision each person developed. The revision behaviour of the students did not vary significantly nor was there any discernible pattern such as skilled writers who made a lot of text-base revisions and poorer writers who made only surface revisions. If we want to find a pattern, we might say that the students' response to the feedback ranged from the inhibited through the modest to the more ambitious. At the ambitious end are Elena and Carolin, who demonstrated their revision skills from the beginning of the study. Elena is a student whose writings were almost perfect productions. Her revision efforts were also effective but it should be remarked that this student experimented less with revision than Carolin. Perhaps Elena was well aware that her writing carried interesting messages and that her language was fluent and accurate, therefore, her writing did not actually require rewriting.

Carolin initially had a tendency to make micro level revisions such as additions of chunks of information, which did not affect the reading of the text, or stylistic substitutions, which improved the texture of her writing. Indeed, her revisions led to further refinement, a process which continued throughout the five tasks. As she gained more experience, her experiments with revision developed, slowly moving closer to a global view of revision. It is also highly significant that Carolin is a writer open to negotiation and that her revisions closely mirrored the teacher's concerns.



Stefanie, like the previous student, was progressively metamorphosed from a writer with limited revision ability into a writer who made a wide range of revisions, particularly content and organisation, even when not prompted to do so. At the end of the study, Stefanie demonstrated a considerable grasp of what revision entails.

In the category of modest revisers belong writers such as Melina, who reached a high point in revision ability at the end of the study. In common with other students, her attitude towards revision remained unchanged during the first three tasks. Moreover, in the beginning, her general attitude towards improvement tended to focus on surface features of writing. As often mentioned in this thesis, this behaviour agrees with a general attitude that treats revision as correction of mistakes. Towards the end of the study, Melina was encouraged by the teacher feedback to change her attitude and consider more global aspects in her writing.

Like most of the students in this study, Victoria began the study with very limited revision skills. As she gained more experience, her revision skills developed and she tried to improve the correctness and texture of her writing. It is particularly interesting to note that despite the high number of revisions, her second drafts were only small improvements of the first. Her revisions however, should not be devalued. Victoria had already developed a good knowledge of how writing works and she was making good use of her editorial skills (correcting spelling, punctuation, grammar). It is also highly significant that Victoria's revisions matched the teacher's concerns.

Daniel seemed to be rather unwilling or inhibited to make more global revisions. The formal features of writing (spelling and correct forms) were considered by him to be most important throughout the five tasks. His revision ability developed in part but only in terms of such features. That's why Daniel's second drafts were not regarded as improvements of the first. His choices and decisions indicate that he could not deal with all the problems simultaneously, so he was selective in his responses to the teacher's comments. However, grammatical accuracy is one of the criteria that lead to successful writing and hence his revisions should not be underestimated.

At the beginning of the study, David was also inhibited to make revisions and left his text unchanged. However the student overcame his initial hesitations and reservations and towards the end of the study, he was able to take a more global view of his writing while revising it.

Taken together, the writers' stories seem to be typical stories of students who made huge strides in the development of their revision skills especially towards the end of the study and who then went through a period of consolidation.

### **10.5 Discussion of the findings**

Overall, the qualitative data highlighted some significant patterns in the development of revision skills. These patterns could not have been seen or fully understood simply by reference to the statistical analysis of student revisions. The descriptive analysis of the drafts and the comments yielded the following interesting findings:

#### **10.5.1. The role of feedback on students' writing performance**

The qualitative analysis in this study clearly indicates that there was a match in the students' interpretation of revision with that of the teacher. The interaction between teacher and student had a positive effect because it helped students view their writing with detachment and develop audience awareness. At the beginning of the study, the students fell short in revising techniques. Those who revised focused on low-level surface and meaning-preserving changes, ignoring the organisational and rhetorical aspects of the text. The end of the study found the students with significantly higher revision skills. All of them were able to focus their attention on low-level changes and correct certain kinds of errors but most importantly, the feedback enabled the majority of them to uncap their ability not only to revise but also do so more substantively.

### **10.5.2 The relationship between revision and improvement**

As we have already seen in the writers' profiles, their writing grew and developed during the study. How it developed in each individual is not of primary importance for this study. The writers' progression was obviously at an individual pace. What is important, however, is that the feedback as a stimulus for text improvement had some effect on nearly every student. From the analysis of the case studies, it turns out that most of the rewritings were effective in the sense that at least one of the problems in the original text was removed. The study showed that improvement was achieved through adding new ideas, correcting the grammar or using more mature style. We saw students who were metamorphosed, as was often emphasised, not only from inert into active participants in learning, but also from unskilled to more skilled revisers, gaining control of the process of revision through interaction with the teacher and through the experience itself.

Of course, not all of the rewritings were without problems. Sometimes the inclusion of new ideas made the writing weaker because the information which was added was incidental or superfluous and for this reason it seemed meaningless or irrelevant. Moreover, when additions, substitutions and permutations did not lead to macro-level changes, no major improvement was apparent. In fact, the descriptive analysis showed that revision was carried out mostly at the micro level (e.g. within the paragraph), primarily in terms of changes such as adding sentences, phrases, temporal or causal clauses, and changing sentence structures. In summary, although students made many changes in the text - even on a level exceeding the boundaries of sentences - and these changes often resulted in the removal of problems, nevertheless, problems often remained and new problems emerged.

### **10.5.3. Differences in students' behaviours toward micro and macro problems**

The majority of the students clearly understood what writing entails. While each of these students had individual strategies for dealing with different aspects of the writing process, their strategies reflected a shared understanding about the process. At

the beginning of the study, many of the students did not know how to make revisions and left their text unchanged. Towards the end of the study, many of the same students made significant developments in their understanding of the different aspects of revision and were able to take a global view of their text while revising it. Both the statistical and the descriptive analyses show that the feedback had a significant effect on the frequency of revision for text-base measures. Although it is misleading to attribute a cause and effect relationship between the frequency of text-base revision and the quality of revision, this finding reveals that the students' revisions were not limited to surface level corrections or embellishments. In fact, instances of expanding the content and reordering clearly indicate that the students developed an increasing awareness of revision at global level.

### **10.6 Closing comment**

With these factors in mind, two clear messages can be drawn from the findings presented in this section. Firstly, the feedback appeared to affect the levels of revision. Whilst this is exactly what one might expect, it is also worth noting that the results give credit to specific kind of focused feedback and hence to the messages derived from it. The focused feedback, which provided comments on meaning-based features before commenting on language use, helped students realise the need for writing reader-based texts and appreciate various aspects of the text such as content, organisation, coherence, style and language.

By giving this kind of feedback, the teacher hoped to replicate the kind of interaction that engages students in negotiation concerning problem-solving activities. There is significant evidence that the teacher communicated these shifting priorities to the students. The data showed that all the students gradually became aware that a reader (the teacher) can draw their attention to points that escaped their notice. Their awareness of the relationship between feedback and revision seems to have grown sharper as the study progressed. The writers' revisions, especially towards the end of the study, reflect the value placed by the teacher on particular features of writing.

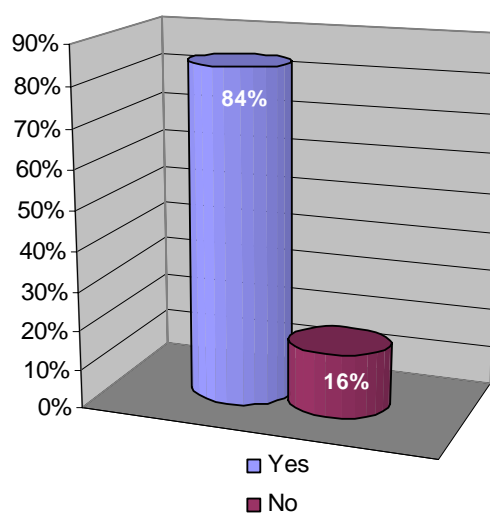
The second message drawn from the findings of this chapter is that, whilst there is a strong positive relationship between feedback and revision, the relationship between revision and text improvement is not so strong. Although there were many students who made substantial revisions, particularly expansive, stylistic or cohesive, no major improvement was apparent in most of the writings. The reasons for this will be sought in Chapter 12.

## CHAPTER 11 RESULTS FROM THE STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRES

### 11.1 Introduction

The questionnaires generated a large quantity of data relating to the students' attitudes towards the feedback. The students' answers were retrospective in nature since the questions required them to go back to the experiences and reflect on them. This chapter contains the analysis of the students' answers, which provide illuminative information about the feedback-related attitudes.

### 11.2 The students' feelings about the feedback

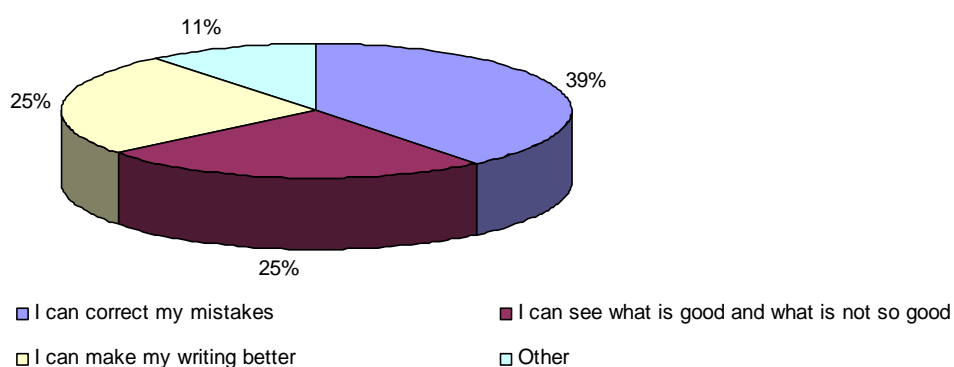


**Fig.1 “Did you like receiving comments on your writing?”**

Fig.1 shows that the vast majority of the students (84%) expressed a positive attitude towards the feedback while a minority (16 %) did not. This finding suggests that the feedback was seen as meaningful by a significant number of students. The reasons with which students justified their positive answer were grouped into four categories: a) I can correct my mistakes, b) I can see what is good and what is not, c) I can make my writing better and d) other. Answers which involved identifying mistakes, correcting them and learning from them (key word: mistakes) were included under category (a). Category (b) involved answers which revealed a sense of awareness of strengths and weaknesses (keywords: right vs. wrong, good vs. bad) and category (c)

involved answers with a sense of developing writing skills or becoming a better writer (keyword: better).

The scores suggest that of those students who expressed a positive attitude (Fig.2), the majority (39%) think that the feedback helped them see and correct their mistakes, 25% state that the feedback helped them see what is successful and what is less successful in their writing and another 25% believe that feedback helped them become better writers. 11% state other reasons for their positive feelings.



**Fig.2 “Why did you like receiving comments on your writing?”**

Here is what some of the students actually said about correcting and learning from their mistakes:

- It’s good to see your mistakes. You can learn from them.
- You show me where my mistakes are and I can realize them and correct them.
- I knew my mistakes and I think I learned from my faults
- It was very interesting to see how many mistakes I make
- I can see the mistakes and in the future I can do it the right way.
- I wouldn’t make the mistakes I did, because I had to find them alone and I would remember if I do the same mistake
- I’m sure that I don’t make some many mistakes now
- I get certain in writing English and correcting myself (with some help from the feedback)
- I saw my mistakes and so I could correct my first version
- The feedback is very practically for checking mistakes I wouldn’t see
- I could spot my mistakes
- It’s important to know the mistakes

Although the idea of using feedback for correction seems to prevail in most students' opinions, some answers reveal another dimension, that of becoming aware of one's strengths and weaknesses.

- I can look what's wrong and what's right.
- It was good that you wrote something about our fluency and accuracy. So I knew what was good and not so good.
- I found it very good because then you know what is wrong and then you can learn it.
- Yes, because I know then what I did wrong
- It's good, you should know how good or bad you wrote
- I see what I wrote wrong or right
- I found it interesting to see what I made wrong and what I didn't see before

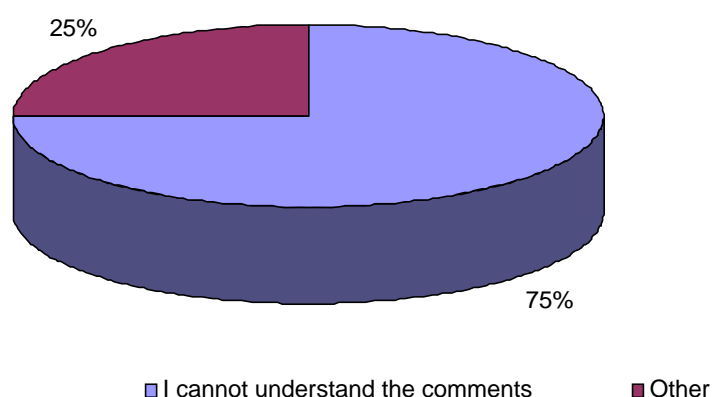
Whilst with these answers students were referring to a process of self-awareness, the next group of answers adds the dimension of improving or transforming, not only knowing.

- Yes, I want to become better.
- Yes I liked that because I learned how to write special things. I became a better English-writer, I think.
- Yes because I could look at my problems of writing in English and I could look how I could write better without any problems.
- Yes because this feedback you can use to make your second version better.
- It was a lot better and there were a lot of differences, that showed me how important it is to rewrite a story after a first idea
- It's good to see how I improved me, to see if it got better
- It helped me write a better version
- It helped me improve myself
- Someone checked my writing and so I had the possibility to get better
- I could make things better
- To get a better writer in English
- It helped me to improve my version
- I could make the essay better
- It's important to know, I can try to improve it, it's good



Other reasons the students gave for their positive feelings were:

- She wrote many positive things, that was good.
- I enjoyed the positive reactions.
- It was interesting to come to know what someone else thinks about my writing.
- I can misjudge myself
- After giving such effort into the writing task I liked to hear what it was like and what I had to change
- I can control me better



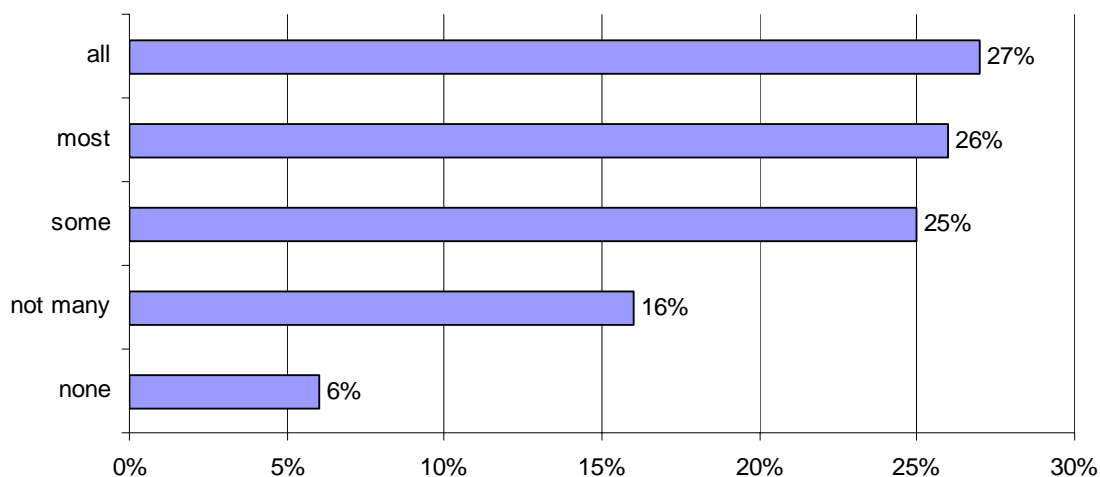
**Fig.3 “Why didn’t you like receiving comments on your writing?”**

Fig.3 portrays the students’ negative reactions to the feedback. Of the 16 students who expressed a negative attitude, the majority had problems with the language of the specific feedback. The rest of the students with a negative opinion justified this attitude by stating different reasons. Here is what they commented:

- ...because we had to write the whole story again and it wasn’t good when it was long. It would be better if we only have to write the right sentences again.
- Not really because we had to write a second draft after that
- I didn’t need the feedback, I corrected the mistakes by myself
- It isn’t so good because it don’t show me the correct mistake, just where he is.

### 11.3 The students' involvement after the feedback

The second question was designed to measure the students' involvement after the feedback. The results of this question appear in Fig.4. As mentioned in Chapter 8 (section 8.7), a scale was developed for the analysis of the results, consisting of five categories ranging from 1 to 5.



**Fig.4 “When you revised your writing, how many of the comments did you use?”**

Since there are not any substantial differences for the interpretation of results, the scales ‘all’ and ‘most’ could be merged into an agreement statement (a positive degree of favourability towards the comments) while ‘not many’ or ‘none’ items could be merged into a disagreement statement (a negative degree). This suggests that more than half of the students were willing to revise their texts based on the comments and that the majority took them into consideration to a lesser or greater extent. This finding is in agreement with the results from the students’ documents, which show that the teacher comments affected the student revisions.

### 11.4 The students' attributions of usefulness to the comments

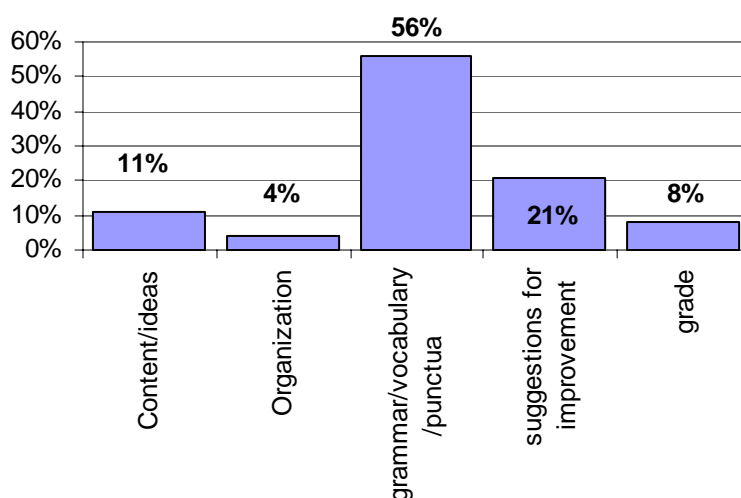


Fig.5 “Which part of the comments did you find most useful?”

Rather interesting findings appeared when students were asked to state which part of the feedback they found most useful. This question aimed at indicating the most useful features of the comments, from the point of view of the students. The figures in the graph show that for the students, the priority was given to ‘grammar, vocabulary and spelling’ (56%), with ‘suggestions for improvement’ coming second. The third factor was ‘content’ (11%) whereas only 4% of the students reported that they found ‘organisation’ most useful. The category ‘grammar, vocabulary and spelling’ involved answers which included these three nominal variables as well as answers which referred to the correction of mistakes. The category ‘suggestions for improvement’ involved answers such as the following:

- What I can do better
- If the writing was good or bad
- To learn new habits and strategies

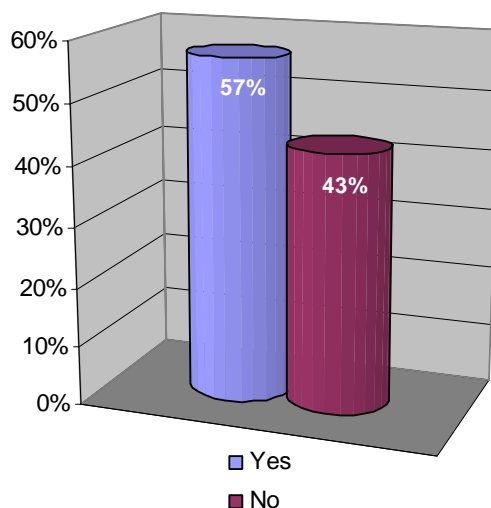
Also, quite surprising is the fact that 8% of the students regarded marking or grading as the most useful element of the feedback. It seems that what these students were referring to is that in the specific feedback there was often an evaluative comment used to assess their organisation skills, sufficiency or accuracy of information with general descriptors such as the ones used in their L1 (e.g. very good, good,

satisfactory). Although this was not considered a crucial element of the feedback and was certainly not intended to be used as a grade, it turned out that it was important for some students.

At first sight, the scores indicate that the students' criteria of the usefulness of the feedback did not agree with those of the teacher and that the priorities for students and teacher were not the same. More than half of the students perceived the comments on grammar as the most useful. On the other hand, only a very small percentage saw some value in comments related to content whereas the comments on organisation had even fewer advocates. Interestingly, although the results from the questionnaire show that the students appeared to be more interested in comments on grammar and less interested in comments on content or organisation, the data obtained from the drafts shows that students made more text-base than surface revisions. If this finding were analysed in a different way, it could be interpreted as a positive point under the perspective that the three categories of 'content', 'organisation' and 'suggestions for improvement' can be merged into one more general category being 'improvement of meaning'. In this way, the percentage of students who regard comments on content as the most useful feature of the feedback will rise sharply to 46%. Explanations for the students' answers to this question are further discussed in Chapter 12 (section 12.2.5).

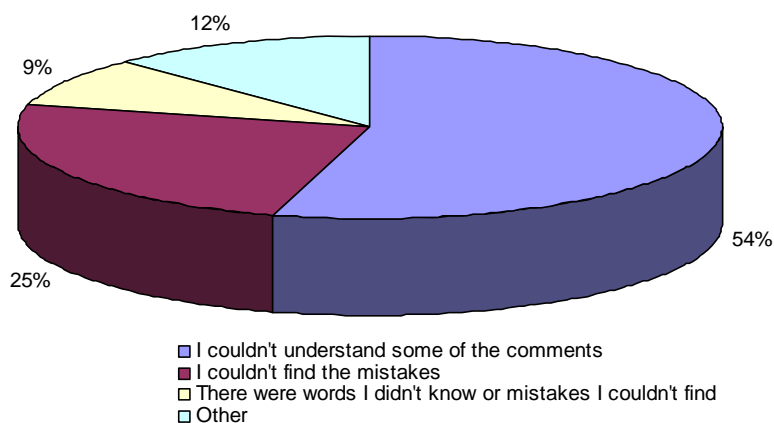
### **11.5 The constraints of the feedback**

The fourth question deals with the constraints of the feedback. The answers to this question seem to have divided the students. 57% state they had problems whereas 43% state they did not. This is presented graphically in the figure that follows.



**Fig.6 “Did you face any problems with the comments?”**

Most of the students with a negative opinion claimed that they had difficulty in understanding words or phrases contained in the feedback or the symbols used in the feedback (e.g. abbreviations). It is worth mentioning that these students mentioned they ‘sometimes’ had difficulties or that they were intimidated by ‘some’ of the unknown words or phrases in the feedback. In other words, those students seemed to maintain a ‘yes, but’ attitude to the question.



**Fig.7 “What problems did you face?”**

More than half of the students (54%) who faced problems with the feedback stated that they had difficulty in understanding the comments while a smaller percentage

(25%) found it hard to locate the mistakes and a minority (12%) had problems with both the phrasing of the comments and the location of the mistakes. A slightly smaller percentage (9%) reported problems such as the following:

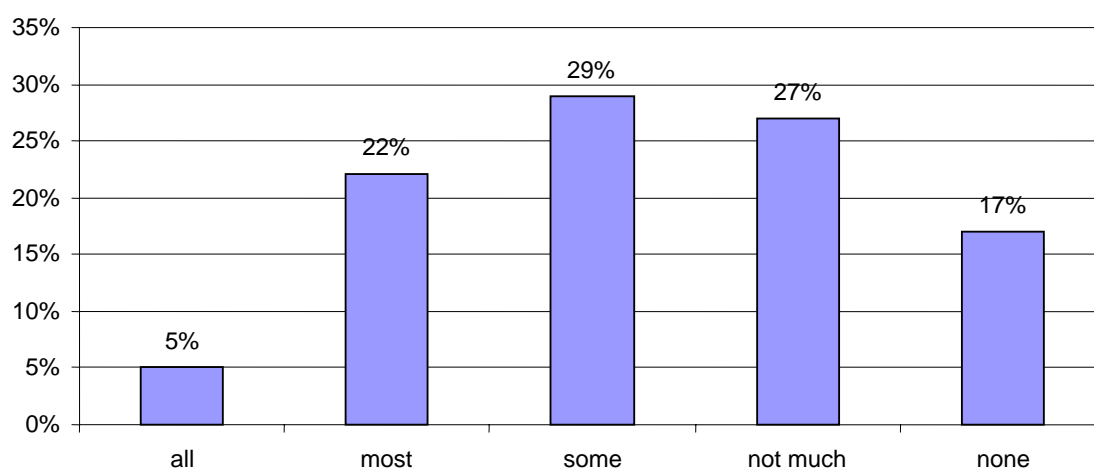
- I hadn't so many ideas
- I needed much time to find the mistakes
- aber bei den Zeilenangaben habe ich den Fehler manchmal ziemlich spät entdeckt,
- yes, I had a lot of problems, but maybe it's because I aren't so good ...

It is interesting that some of the students rejected the feedback due to the language difficulties it involved. To highlight the difficulties they confronted with the feedback, some students commented:

- some things weren't clear
- often I didn't know for what stands the letter
- I didn't know the mistakes and Abkürzungen
- Questions that I don't understand
- Sometimes there were expressions I didn't know
- Sometimes I understood not everything but the most of the reading I understood
- I don't understand some words (vocabulary) but then I ask the English teacher
- I didn't understand always everything, and because we wrote it at school, I wasn't able to look in a dictionary for help

These students expressed frustration at not being able to understand what the teacher was trying to tell them. It is reasonable then to expect that these students' negative feelings discouraged them from trying to figure out how to effect changes to structure, ideas, etc. This is clearly a limitation of the specific feedback. Although effort had been made to cater for issues like wording or to explain the symbols during two teaching sessions (Chapter 7, section 7.3.2), it was not always possible to avoid the problems. The implications of this finding will be discussed in the next chapter.

## 11.6 The students' assessment of text improvement



**Fig. 8 “Do you think your text improved significantly after the revisions?”**

Rather interesting findings appeared when students were asked to judge if their text improved after the revisions they made. The question aimed at investigating the degree of the students' awareness regarding this aspect. Most of the students did not simply give a yes / no answer but commented on how much of their text improved. The analysis of the results showed that 29% of the students believed that only part of their text had improved. 27% believed that their second draft was not much better. There were a significant number of students (22%) who believed that most of their text was better whereas only a low number (5%) claimed that the whole text had improved.

In slight contrast with the positive response to the feedback, the results from this question suggest that students became a little negative about their own skills and the effectiveness of their revisions. We could assume that students, in their vast majority, were not confident of the effectiveness of their revisions or were aware that their texts had not significantly improved.

Some students expanded on the issue, trying to give reasons. These students appear to have clear views on why their texts improved. Some typical comments are:

- I did many faults which I didn't in the second version
- I improved my mistake, the grammar tempus and the word order
- The text was more fluently written
- I look at the opinion of my essay and use it in the next essay
- I made it more interesting and the organisation was better
- There weren't any mistakes after the correction

Giving reasons why their texts did not improve, here is what some students said:

- I've mostly corrected only the mistakes in the sentences, I didn't have time to give my best
- I don't think it has become better, I only think there are less grammar mistakes
- I just improved the mistakes and didn't change the content so I used the correction of my mistakes at most
- I improved only some sentences and words which were wrong
- I just improved the spelling or grammar mistakes
- Just the vocabulary and some easy corrections
- I changed the order and corrected my mistakes, but I didn't change the content

It is interesting that some students are well aware that it is not enough to correct mistakes in order to improve a draft or that a draft may be better even if there are still mistakes in it. One student actually said:

- I think my text improved significantly even though I still have my mistakes

The fact that some students appreciated qualities of good writing without actually achieving them can not be devalued. Many students are aware of problems on the macro level and direct their attention to such problems in their revision efforts but they do not always succeed in solving them. There is without any doubt a pedagogical gain in this process even if the revisions do not affect the writing. A remark made by one of the students illustrates the point:

- My text did not improve but the revisions were helpful nevertheless



### **11.7 Summary of the findings**

There are a number of striking features in this data. Firstly, it is important to stress that although a substantial number of students still consider the role of feedback in a more traditional way (i.e. correcting mistakes), the number of students who believe that the feedback can offer opportunities for self-awareness and improvement is equally important.

Secondly, the findings from the questionnaire show that the participants are generally positive about the feedback and less about their revision ability. Again this finding can be interpreted in various ways. For example, their responses might simply indicate that the majority of them, had not, in their own eyes, well developed the ability to revise. It is also possible that some students were already performing well in writing, and so their text did not actually improve; it was good right from the start.

A few significant links were detected between the data from the documents and the data from the questionnaire. The data from the attitude questionnaire is consistent with the data from the textual analyses, since a relatively high proportion of students made references to how the comments helped 'see' things in their text, which they could not before receiving the comments. The attitudes towards the specific kind of feedback also correlate highly with the results from the qualitative analysis which show that students' second drafts were not always improvements of the first. Overall, it seems that the message to be drawn from this data is that the expressed attitudes of the students as a whole were positive and that this positive stance was reflected in the rise in students' revision skills.

### **11.8 Closing comment**

In conclusion, the questionnaire recorded the students' attitudes to and opinions about the feedback but also revealed a picture of their concerns, intentions and evaluations of writing instruction. At the same time, the questionnaire worked as an opportunity for students to explore their own thinking about the process. The most important

indication of the questionnaire is that students do have opinions about their learning. Exploiting these opinions is essential in planning writing instruction. By gaining insight into the students' ideas of strong and weak areas as well as likes and dislikes, we can design a more effective writing programme and provide more helpful feedback. However, it must be remembered that these attitude scores reflect the situation in which these students found themselves and it is not the case that those attitudes will play a leading role in shaping the future development of their revision skills.

## **CHAPTER 12      DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS**

### **12.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to review the main findings of the study before considering how the insights that have been generated might be taken forward to improve educational action. The findings will be discussed in terms of the research hypotheses which were developed in Chapter 6 and conclusions will be drawn as to whether the findings validate the hypotheses. Moreover, the pedagogical implications of these findings will be discussed and the chapter will end with some remarks which reflect on what has been achieved.

### **12.2 Integrating quantitative and qualitative results: Answering the research questions**

The present study began with the stated aim of illuminating the ways in which students perceive, acquire and use revision skills for writing. This aim was linked to a desire to generate an understanding which would help teachers to support their students more effectively. Six research questions and hypotheses guided the development of this study. From the quantitative and qualitative analysis that followed, it became clear that five of the six hypotheses of the research were actually tenable.

#### **12.2.1 The evolution of students' revision skills during the study**

Research question 1 concerns the level of students' ability to revise at the beginning of the study and the development of that ability during the period of the research. As noted in Chapter 6 (section 6.4), investigating this aspect was viewed as critical to the development of the study because it would provide useful insights into the effects of the intervention. One of the aims of this study was to challenge the view that revision is less efficacious with young learners because they do not have the cognitive resources to notice the problems in their texts, by proving that focused instruction can

empower young students to solve problems in their writing and acquire successful revision skills. The results from the revision scores have illuminated the first research question. The students entered the study with limited revision skills but the frequency of their revisions increased throughout the study.

The participants were able to respond to the cognitive demands of the revising process and make changes which affected not only the surface but also the rhetorical level of their texts. They were able to notice many of the problems and make revisions for removing these problems. By the end of the study, they had developed an ability to make self-regulatory revisions. Therefore, the results have confirmed the hypothesis: the basic components of revision skill appear to be within young students' zone of proximal development provided that the students are explicitly shown how to cope with problems in their writing.

### **12.2.2 The effects of focused feedback on students' revisions**

The second tenable assumption is that there is a positive interaction between students' revisions and feedback. A feature that emerged from the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 is that young students are more likely to make surface revisions than communicative improvements when they engage in the process of revision. It was one of the aims of this study to prove that, by emphasising content as well as form, the teacher feedback would shift the students' attention away from a struggle with the conventions of writing towards an ability to communicate effectively. Research question 2, one of the major questions addressed in the study, concerns the extent to which this shift of attention actually affected students' revisions.

The analysis attempted to distinguish types of revisions which would index a relationship between revision and certain aspects of the feedback. Comparisons were conducted between the functions of student revisions and the functions of teacher comments so that the correlation between feedback and revision could be examined. All the findings showed that the feedback has been the catalyst for revision. The teacher comments increased the frequency of revisions but most importantly, they increased the proportion of text-base revisions over surface revisions. The analysis

showed that the variables with the most significant increase in scores were text-base whereas the surface variables remained at low levels. This suggests that students became more interested in high level revisions and were preoccupied to a lesser extent with low level revisions.

Although in the beginning, students' revision efforts were restricted to changing spelling and grammar, soon the feedback raised the importance of other aspects of writing in their eyes. Spelling and correct forms were still considered important but the focus of the feedback on the reader and the global features of the text made students realise their importance for the communicative quality of a text. The upward trend in certain categories of text-base revisions continued throughout the study whereas the change was relatively small for most of the surface variables. No grounds were found, therefore, in this study for the anxiety that surface revisions would dominate to the detriment of content revisions.

Furthermore, the effects of teacher comments on students' revisions were traced primarily in micro level aspects such as generating more content and correcting mistakes, but also in macro level aspects such as organisation and coherence. Although students tended to revise at lower syntactic levels throughout the study, in later tasks there was a shift from lower to higher syntactic levels. The number of changes carried out at sentence and multi-sentence level considerably increased towards the end of the study. Taken together, these results suggest that the development of revision ability was critically conditioned by the use of the specific kind of feedback and that the nominal variables of the feedback (content, organisation and language) and the focus on these aspects provide some explanation for the students' revision behaviour.

### **12.2.3 The negotiation-of-meaning stance**

One hypothesis of particular interest that emerged from the literature in Chapter 5 is that the feedback can only acquire meaning through a process of interpretation and negotiation that occurs in the course of the activity. Consequently, it was hypothesised that the specific teacher feedback would make students adopt a more negotiation-of-

meaning stance towards revision, since they were going to negotiate their own knowledge and the prescriptive qualities of the feedback (suggesting what is required by a broader community) in order to achieve the anticipated results. The messages obtained from the data confirm the hypothesis.

There is clear evidence from the qualitative analysis that, despite the uniformity in the teacher's comments, there was diversity in the students' revisions. The research methods illuminated aspects of the writers' experience and provided an insight into what different individuals did. It seems that many different ways of negotiating meaning emerged. Some of the students made almost no revisions, others made solely surface revisions; some of them limited their revisions to additions, others converted their 'stream-of-consciousness' drafts into more organised texts; some of them changed their text completely, others deleted the problematic parts.

The analyses of the drafts showed that the students' progression was at an individual pace. While the same type of feedback stimulated some students to respond, it did not have any effect on others. The vast majority of the students constructed negotiated meanings as they dealt with conflicting goals (e.g. the teacher's expectations, personal needs, language constraints etc). Many students found it hard to deal simultaneously with all the writing constraints at the linguistic, cognitive and discourse level and thus they eventually took only what they could or wanted from the teacher comments. It seems, therefore, that individual students varied in the extent to which they were able to benefit from the teacher comments. They varied in their ability or in their preparedness to negotiate meaning, with some doing so extensively, some occasionally and others not at all.

#### **12.2.4 The relationship between revision and text improvement**

The purpose of revision is to improve. As a result, a question of considerable importance for this study is whether the students' revised drafts were improved drafts. As noted in Chapter 6 (section 6.4), the issue of improvement has several dimensions. One concerns appropriacy and sufficiency of information, another grammatical accuracy, whereas other dimensions concern the processes associated with style,

organisation and coherence. Most of these dimensions are associated with text-base features of the text; hence, it was assumed that an increase in these categories would result in improved drafts. However, the findings showed that revised texts, even when they entailed a significant number of text-base revisions, were not always better. In fact, a tenuous relationship was found between revision and the quality of the revised draft. The analysis indicated that on average the students wrote revised drafts of slightly better quality.

The extent of the increase and the specific types of revisions permit some intriguing speculations about the relationship between revision and quality. Overall, the higher rate of revision in text-base categories indicates an increasing awareness of revision at global level. Indeed, those students who recognised that there are other factors beyond linguistic accuracy that determine good writing, wrote improved drafts. They added phrases or sentences as their thoughts were developed and expanded or deleted parts as their ideas became more concrete. They rewrote words, phrases or sentences until they expressed their ideas more accurately. They also shifted sentences or paragraphs around when they realised that they related to some ideas presented elsewhere in their texts. The data from the qualitative analysis of the student documents showed - unsurprisingly - that such drafts were better because they were strongly linked with higher revision skills.

However, the teacher comments did not always lead to more sophisticated reformulations of the student drafts. The feedback helped the students identify mismatches between intended and produced text suggesting changes to cater for such problems. Nevertheless, the changes made by the students did not always lead to improved versions of the first drafts mainly because they were carried out on the micro level. Some students limited their attention to the more easily 'digestible' comments and made changes possibly just for the sake of making changes. For example, they substituted one element of the text for another without disrupting the text sequence. They often paraphrased or added bits and pieces of information and they rarely shifted information. The qualitative analysis revealed that in such drafts, many problems still remained (especially on the macro level) and sometimes new

problems emerged. These findings suggest that the hypothesis that more text-base revisions lead to text improvement is not always tenable.

The results are not surprising since they fit the pattern found in other studies where positive relationships between revision and quality were found for older or skilled writers but not for young or less skilled writers. There are different explanations for the students' behaviour. Some authors justify the tenuous connection between revision and text improvement by saying that students lack a threshold level of linguistic maturity, which impedes them in finding alternative ways to make meaning. Zamel (1984:184) talks about "a readiness stage for revision", in which having a minimal of language competence enables students to view writing as a process of discovery meaning. Sengupta (1998:128), writing about the same issue, argues forcibly that "a threshold level of linguistic and lexical competence is needed before learners can begin to display awareness of the ways in which to make the information in their texts relevant and sufficient and before teachers see revised texts as *better*."

With regard to this point, the findings in this study show that greater linguistic proficiency may have facilitated but not necessarily entailed qualitative changes in the thinking processes leading to more substantive revision. There were students who possessed the necessary prerequisite linguistic resources but who did not make the necessary decisions for better organisation, style or tone of the text. This finding also adds further weight to the previously mentioned point that feedback, although seemingly helpful, may not necessarily assist all students in reconsidering their writing and improving it. How they deal with the feedback and the opportunities to reshape their text is likely to differ considerably in accordance with a variety of factors such as language competence, learning style, motivation and personality. These findings indicate that it is important to consider our students' developmental and learning styles in order to intervene individually in ways that will allow them to learn (Reid 1994:288).



### **12.2.5 The students' attitude to the teacher feedback**

In Chapter 6, it was assumed that students' attitude towards the process would be generally positive. The hypothesis concerning the participants' positive attitudes towards the feedback and its utility as a tool for revision has been confirmed. The findings show that the teacher comments contributed greatly to stimulating the students' interest in revision. The students themselves stated that they took most of the teacher comments into consideration, which means that the comments were influential.

The analysis of the questionnaire data also showed that the most useful feature of the feedback for the students was error correction. If we attempt to give an explanation for this opinion, we may seek one in the equation of writing with correctness, which has a long history in schools. This legacy of the behaviourist approach to writing still makes it difficult for students to realise that communicative writing is not error-centred and that they should pay attention to matters beyond those of language. Therefore, the comparison between the teacher's and the students' opinions of the role of the feedback might reveal a gap, which is characteristic of situations in which an innovation is introduced to classroom practices.

On the other hand, the participants' preoccupation (in the questionnaire) with formal text features may simply reflect their interest in the language per se. This interest is usually present only in FLL (Foreign Language Learning) contexts. It is possible that what these students actually mean is that through the feedback they can become aware of their errors, and thus improve their interlanguage. Their answers might therefore indicate interest in learning better, not only writing, but also the language itself. Seen this way, this finding does not necessarily contradict the teacher's objective to treat revision as something more than error correction.

The findings from the questionnaires also reported negative reactions, which stemmed from the communication between the researcher and the students. Some students mentioned that they experienced difficulties in understanding the comments or the symbols used. Inability to locate the mistakes on the one hand and disappointment at

not understanding everything in English indicated that there were some constraints with the specific type of feedback. The implications of these problems will be discussed in section 12.3.1.

### **12.2.6 The students' ability to make self-regulatory revisions**

It is one thing to say that teacher feedback resulted in increased revisions and another to say that these revisions led to long-term gains in the development of revision skills. The aim of raising question 6 was to examine whether feedback-triggered revision would function as a heuristic and thus facilitate independent revision. This question was seen as critical for the conclusions of this study because it would provide an answer to the skeptic, who might say that the students accommodated the teacher's suggestions because they were acting like 'good children' and so they revised the way they did out of complaisance. Since the "I must write what they want me to write" syndrome was still a possibility, it was assumed that Task 5 would offer students the opportunity to free themselves from the dependency on the teacher and look at their writing with their own critical eye.

In fact, as mentioned in Chapter 6 (section 6.4) it was hypothesised that heightening the students' awareness of what they were doing would produce a spill-over effect, i.e. the students would consider texts not commented on as if the teacher's comments applied there as well. The hypothesis is tenable since it was found that a significant number of students were able to use some of the suggested directives from the previous tasks for the solution of problems in the last task. The figures indicate that, although at the beginning of the study the students were inert revisers, they were gradually metamorphosed into more active revisers, even when they were left on their own.

Their revision efforts in the final task reveal that they were able to internalise some of the revision strategies proposed by the teacher but they did not always succeed in removing the problems. However, as mentioned in the previous chapter (section 11.6), even if some students are not successful in solving the problems or their revisions do not directly affect the writing, this is still seen as a pedagogical gain, since it indicates

that some significant learning has been happening somewhere and that students probably need more time and systematic exposure to this process. As a result, it can be concluded that for the students in this study, this process of revision based on feedback had a lasting value but they need further training in order to achieve long-term continuous development.

### **12.3 Implications for theory and practice**

In this thesis, revision has assumed a position of central importance as the basic tool for improving writing quality by facilitating, organising and elaborating the expression of ideas. If revision is central to the process of writing, the question that arises is how the teacher can best help students to revise their texts. Chapters 2 to 5 included a review of perspectives on revision, which were prevalent during the period of this study, and these will now be revisited in the light of the findings as there are some important implications for practice.

#### **12.3.1 The role of focused feedback in raising awareness about the writing process**

One of the overwhelming messages that emerge from the analysis of the data is that teacher feedback plays a big role in shaping the development of individual revision skills and therefore it has to be an integral component of any attempt to teach writing and revision. Moreover, a core message from this study is that the focus of the feedback should shift towards a sociocognitive perspective. This implies a focus on interaction with more experienced writers (e.g. the teacher) and the experience of a range of writing forms and functions. From this perspective:

- It is necessary to pay particular attention to the way in which feedback is given and received in the classroom, recognising the significance of teacher-student interaction. Ideally, the teacher and the student should meet on a one-to-one basis and discuss aspects of the written text. In such an interactive situation, a dialogue over the text takes place and through this dialogue the two partners solve the problems that arise. Zamel (1985:97) recommends the establishment of this type

of ideal feedback by setting up “collaborative sessions and conferences during which important discoveries can be made by both reader and writer”. The problem is that there is just not enough time for this kind of interactive situation. Moreover, oral feedback is likely to slip away from students even if they fully understand it at the time it is given. Since a dialogue over the text is not always possible and since students cannot read and reread the oral feedback, the written commentary is the alternative for this kind of reciprocal, dialectical process.

- This thesis supports the use of focused feedback in classroom situations where the goal of instruction is effective communication. To communicate effectively in writing, students need to put themselves in the reader’s place. Experienced writers can do that; they imagine a reader into being in order to monitor their writing. Unskilled or novice writers cannot do that; they do not have such awareness. Therefore, a basic rule for providing feedback is to externalise the processes that skilled writers use in order to handle a variety of tasks and solve rhetorical problems in a variety of contexts.

This kind of process places a special demand on the teacher. The teacher should intervene during the writing process in order to offer informative feedback, which can make students aware of how their text works at discourse level or how their communicative intention can be best expressed in order to write more effective texts. In other words, the teacher should become the voice of the addressed reader and explain to the students how their text functions in their community. The role of the feedback, therefore, is to be fundamentally supportive of the students by opening the door to metacognitive and social awareness. Students need this kind of metacognitive knowledge in order to build task schemata, which can be an important knowledge source for later tasks.

- Viewed from this perspective, the written feedback has important advantages but also the disadvantage of being a long and arduous process. Why then use focused feedback for each individual student and not use, say, class discussion or writing tips for all the students? Indeed, class discussion can help students develop some kind of metacognitive knowledge of what constitutes a good text and show them

which strategies are likely to be successful. It can also draw the students' attention to the social conventions which seem to dictate the text. What class discussion cannot do, however, is help students deal with the constraints their own text poses. This suggests an important difference between the kind of negotiation that occurs when the teacher discusses problems with the whole class and that found in interaction with the teacher's feedback.

Moreover, writing tips might force students in advance to proceed in a certain direction whereas feedback has the potential to offer help as a solution to need. Consequently, the former may be less effective in solving problems. In fact, as Flower (1980:63) in Zamel (1983:167) puts it, early decisions to proceed in a certain direction may "lock writers into a premature solution before they have entered the problem" and as such they do not assist understanding. Moreover, the same author points out that there are tasks for which students cannot simply rely on the automatic pilot of imitation or familiarity with social conventions but rather, and perhaps most importantly, on individual problem solving (Flower 1994:23).

- The issue of writing as a problem-solving process is explicitly made significant in this study. Problem-solving strategies are intellectual moves (i.e. organising, selecting, connecting, drawing inferences, drawing on past experience, imagining options, carrying out intentions), which allow students to construct meaning and which students acquire from social interaction with teachers, peers, readers and texts (Flower 1994:24). In Chapter 2, experts concerned with revision speak extensively about the need to view writing as a problem-solving process. From the perspective of this study, this concept plays a critical role in the teaching of writing.

In order to help students to see writing as a problem-solving process, teachers must themselves become problem solvers. They need to be explicit about the problems in a text and the solution to the problems. The findings showed that the correlation between the teacher comments and the student revisions was

particularly high in those areas where comments were more concrete in the minds of the writers. To put it differently, in situations where the teacher response was informative, there was a strong positive relationship between the teacher's concerns and those of the writer.

By contrast, when the comments were general, vague or unclear to the writer, there was a mismatch between the teacher's intentions and those of the writer because the latter could not understand what the former was asking him to do. The implication of this is that comments should be more explicit for students to know what action to take. In other words, teachers need to replace vague and abstract responses with text-specific, explicit and substantive comments, which support students in making more effective revisions.

- However, it is not enough to write specific and substantive comments about the problems. Teachers also need to be explicit about how and why these problems are seen as significant. They need, as Zamel (1983:96) puts it, to “establish priorities” in their responses and thus urge students to address certain concerns before others. In this thesis, it has been suggested that the teacher feedback be centred upon three main axes: content-organisation-language. By adopting a specific discourse-oriented type of commentary, which gives priority to meaning rather than form, we may help students understand that global issues need to be addressed before local features.
- Furthermore, the commentary should have a clear focus but also a flexible structure which helps both teacher and student deal with the constraints of the task. Perhaps the teacher is faced with a problem in the student's paper to which there is no clear-cut solution. Or perhaps it is not easy to suggest alternative organisational patterns or solutions for weak spots which the student is able to understand. If this is the case, it is worth trying to make explicit the exploratory strategies that can be used to find a solution and encourage the writer to apply these strategies to his text. Students, therefore, should be given every opportunity to use strategies of exploration and reflection as they seek to solve the problems.

- Earlier in this chapter, it was pointed out that it is not only a matter of what is said in the feedback but also of how it is said. The findings support the view that the language of the feedback should not be particularly difficult for the students. It seems that students need to understand every word in order to be able to respond to the comments. Therefore, teachers should investigate whether or not students understand their feedback in order to change the parts that they do not understand. It might also be a good idea to respond, at least in the beginning, in the students' first language.
- It must always be remembered that the purpose of the feedback is the development of writing ability and that it is not a process whose purpose is to generate conformity. Revision based on teacher-initiated feedback occurs in a setting which is dominated by an asymmetrical relationship (teacher - student). Teachers should try to ensure that their contribution will move in a direction that reduces the asymmetry between themselves and the students. The implication of this is that comments should be supportive and encouraging rather than critical and authoritative. Students should be actively encouraged to work in collaboration with the teacher and teachers should create opportunities for students to play at least some part in the processes associated with revision rather than impose their ideas on them.

It must also be remembered that there is always in writing a coming together of the conventional and the idiosyncratic. The enlightened teacher will always be encouraging the idiosyncratic while systematically fostering the conventional. One of the aims of the feedback is to focus the writers' attention on the inherent characteristics of different kinds of discourse, yet allowing enough freedom to provide for variations among individual people. In other words, the feedback should have uniformity, yet vary enough to allow different skills and cognitive styles in writing. Besides, by whose authority can the teacher dictate the level of the detail satisfactory for a description or the level of interest in a descriptive account?

On the other hand, if quality is to be dramatically affected, aspects such as audience anticipation and a certain degree of alignment with the social and academic community perspectives need to be stressed in instruction. At times it is important for writer and social community to be closely aligned (e.g. layout in letters, structuring in reports) but in other situations it may be less so (e.g. structuring in a story). It is, however, important that strict alignment should not be seen as an end in itself, for that is a path to domination and non-negotiability. This means that the teacher should be tolerant of alternative perspectives, thus allowing students to negotiate meaning from their own perspective, up to the point perhaps where this alternative perspective does not conflict with the expectations of the community.

In conclusion, revision should be seen more as a negotiation of meaning between the reader and the writer rather than a prescription of content and form (Reid 1994:274; Newell 1994:339). In other words, the teacher should foster an interaction with the students, in which the teacher negotiates with them about what they intend to say instead of imposing on them her own image of what an ideal text looks like.

- Another significant finding of the investigation is the evolving nature of revision. According to the statistical analysis, the mean levels of the numbers of revisions observed at later tasks were higher than those observed during early tasks. These results suggest that there is a natural evolution of the revision ability over time. Therefore, students need time and training to overcome their anxieties and initial hesitations before they can explore what they have observed or learned about revision. Moreover, they need a great deal of experience, consistently and over time, in order to develop sufficient metacognitive knowledge resources in long-term memory.

Extensive training can help writers keep such information in their working memory and therefore gradually internalise the processes. A key objective, therefore, should be to ensure that students experience a variety of situations in which they identify and resolve a series of rhetorical problems. Students need



experience of revision in different ways and for different tasks. The more they write and revise in a variety of contexts, the more proficient they become at meeting the needs of their readers. Through this experience, certain components of the writing process will become automatic. The implication of this is that students need constant support and collaboration in order to achieve the anticipated results.

### **12.3.2 Suggestions for more effective feedback**

The above considerations clearly stress the need to outline some pedagogical implications for providing focused feedback in order to take students beyond ‘canned’ responses with grades or one-word comments (e.g. good) to responses which have meaning for the students and offer them opportunities for improvement and success. In practical terms, this view translates into the following:

- The feedback should be structured so that the teacher has a clear idea of what she should be looking for in trying to judge if the writing is good. It would be a good idea to address the student by his first name as this stresses the interactive relationship between them and signals sincere interest in the writer as a person.
- The feedback should begin with praise or a comment pointing out something positive about the student’s work. This positive comment can be general or specific, giving the reason why (e.g. I liked this point because [...]; you wrote a very interesting story [...]; I enjoyed reading your paper because [...]; [...] was the best part in your paper). Such evaluative comments show respect for the writer and appreciation of his effort. They also make novice writers understand that some parts of the paper can be more successful than others. When students believe that they can succeed in a task, they may persist longer and thus improve their performance. Their sense of achievement increases and achievement, in turn, enhances motivation. It should also be remembered that with praise and encouragement, the students’ self-confidence may be increased even in cases where they feel they have not succeeded completely.

- The next step would be to comment on higher order aspects of the text, pointing out what should be expanded, changed or left out. The teacher can achieve this goal through a series of questions (e.g. What happened after the accident? Who else was there? Can you describe [...]?). Another very useful comment the teacher can make is to point out to the writer what exactly the reader would like to know from his paper. Such questions and comments help the writer see a reader beyond himself and are fairly easy to internalise as guides for the next paper. As the time progresses, the teacher's comments can change focus and incorporate new concerns that are being discussed in class, e.g. introductions and conclusions, effective use of cohesive devices. By questioning, critiquing, suggesting, etc. consistently and over time, the teacher scaffolds the writer's understanding and helps him move towards an awareness of the specific criteria.
- The role of feedback is not only to help students discover information about the effectiveness of their writing but also refine their interlanguage (Chaudron 1984:2). Particular attention, therefore, needs to be paid to the way in which errors are treated. When the writers have a well-defined sense of what rhetorical problems they are trying to solve, the teacher should encourage them to correct their errors. They can try to improve the grammatical quality of their work by identifying and correcting the mistakes on their own or by receiving sufficient guidance from the teacher. In the model tested in this thesis, students were urged to discover their errors with the help of a grammar code, which revealed that in a specific part of the text, the student had misunderstood or violated a grammar rule or that some of his interlanguage structures were incorrect.

This approach had several disadvantages. The findings showed that the specific code was confusing for the students and that the level of their language development was not sufficiently advanced for them to receive and process this kind of information. Moreover, it was found that the students had too many cognitive demands to deal with at one time, especially when the number of errors was large, and therefore the task of correcting all errors seemed daunting. The results of the study, therefore, did not support the specific practice of student discovery of error.

Although the questionnaire analysis highlighted the significance of error correction for the students, the teacher's focus should not be on an error free text. The teacher should give priority over more global features, such as content and organisation and then determine which errors the students can correct on their own. Instead of providing highly detailed feedback on language errors, fewer errors could be addressed, particularly, errors which are likely to recur in the student's next paper. As Shaughnessy (1977) in Marius (1992:469) points out, "the best way to correct students' grammar is to classify their errors so that, for example, we do not assume that every mistake in the use of a past participle is a different one. Instead, we are seeing one error that appears in different guises. Our most useful approach is to work on one of those errors at a time by asking students to revise it away".

Furthermore, students should be asked to correct only the mistakes which are part of a rule-governed system whereas errors based on their own interlanguage sense of how English works should be corrected by the teacher. The wrong forms should be clearly shown on the text (e.g. underlined) so that they cause less frustration and take less time to locate. Moreover, the teacher should make some limited corrections on the first draft instead of having students recopy incorrect words, phrases or structures. This kind of intervention is supported by Leki (1992:129) who writes: "If students are misusing words, phrases, or structures that will clearly recur in or be essential to a particular piece of writing, there is no point in having them recopy incorrect versions of these features of English; it makes more sense to make limited interventions of these kinds earlier. In this way, students can incorporate these limited numbers of correct words or forms into subsequent revisions".

- In conclusion, the feedback will be more useful if it contains specific suggestions about how content and organisation can be improved. Equally important, the feedback will be more useful if it identifies which language areas are problematic or makes limited corrections. When the draft has been returned with the writer's revisions, a summative commentary can point out the more successful and the less successful strategies or revisions and perhaps a suggested goal for the next paper.

Another recommendation would be to grade the revised paper as this may help students evaluate their work.

Collectively, these suggestions can be summarised as follows: Teacher feedback should

- praise good points, explaining why
- ask questions with the information that the reader would like to know
- identify specific problems and strategies for revision
- note important mistakes
- include comments on strengths and weaknesses
- entail a summative comment with successful and unsuccessful revisions
- use clear and accessible language

#### **12.4 Limitations of the present study and suggestions for further research**

The results of this study should be considered in light of at least four limitations. First, although the study was grounded on a large sample of 100 students, it is not possible to know the generalisability of the results across various contexts. If the specific model were applied in a different setting, the results might well be different. Many authors caution that research findings should be limited to the setting where the research was done and claim that we cannot legitimately generalise beyond the subjects (Charles 1988:143; Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991:12). It should be understood, however, that although the descriptions of the students' experiences, products and attitudes were particular, they can also have a generic dimension in that their behaviours can be linked to the behaviours of countless other students in similar contexts. To put it differently, although the conclusions drawn about writing and revision must be limited to the specific context, it makes sense to say that the realities constructed by the students in this situation can be of pedagogical importance for educational action in other contexts, and that this is an area that awaits further study.

Second, the conclusions about the writers' intentions during the revision were based on the researcher's speculations about how the revisions could be interpreted and classified. The specific procedure was used because it was considered a good way of

exploiting students' thinking about text improvement. However, drawing conclusions about the students' intentions is open to interpretation even when inter-rater reliability is high. Since it is impossible to escape the subjective perspective, perhaps some kind of protocol analysis might have yielded a more accurate picture of the students' goals and intentions. One future alternative could be to interview the students directly after the revisions, though one should be reminded of the practical constraints of such a procedure.

Third, in this thesis, the bulk of the results about the students' revision behaviours was based on the scores from the statistical analysis and also on the correlations with teacher comments and judgments of quality. For fear of conducting an unwieldy study, the qualitative analysis of the data was rather limited (seven case studies). Possibly, a more extensive or even richer qualitative analysis would be more illuminative of the correlations of revisions and quality. Since the relationship between teacher feedback and writing quality has been less easy to establish, it would be intriguing to analyse qualitatively a larger sample (e.g. one whole class) and shed more light on individual stories with more elaborate methods of qualitative analysis. Moreover, the role of the questionnaire in this thesis was not viewed as critical to the development of the study, hence, the questions were limited (five open-ended questions). Perhaps it would be interesting to delve more deeply into the students' attitudes with a more detailed questionnaire or with interviews.

Fourth, it would be worth investigating the social factors which may lead to feedback being qualitatively different across contexts. Issues associated with the phrasing of the feedback have arisen several times in the course of the study. It is now clear that the teacher commentary included elaborate forms of corrective feedback which some students found difficult to process. Moreover, the feedback was based on the teacher's own personal and professional experiences. Although it was based on a set of prescribed criteria, it was at the same time the result of the reader's personal interpretation of the text. Apart from that, the specific teacher comments reflected a specific school of thought as to what constitutes good writing. They seem to be in line with the American Writing Framework as this is specified in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and popular writing textbooks.

Furthermore, if the comments had been written in the students' first language (German), they would probably have been more influential. Last but not least, if the feedback had been initiated by another teacher (e.g. the class teacher), the findings may have been differentiated. It is likely that different individuals encountering the same text will respond to it with different comments even if they focus on prescribed criteria, since they might give priority to different rhetorical elements in the text or be influenced by their attitude towards the writer or their momentary mood. For all the above reasons, it would be worth investigating the effects of feedback provided by different teachers.

### **12.5 Concluding remarks**

One of the key motivations for undertaking this study was a desire to generate a better understanding of the processes by which students gain their revision skills, which could then be used to inform the practice of teachers. More specifically, the study assessed the empirical adequacy of a revision model with a sociocognitive philosophical orientation. The model shifts the emphasis of writing instruction from "what grade is this paper worth?" to "how can it be improved?" This shift of emphasis indicates a change of focus from the development of students' linguistic competence to the development of their communicative competence. In consequence, writing instruction draws attention to matters beyond those of language and helps students develop a holistic view of writing as a problem-solving activity. While the model echoes what has widely been seen as 'good practice' in writing instruction, it also makes a distinction in the teaching of writing by shifting the emphasis from mass teaching to individualised instruction.

The proposal to use individualised feedback was supported on the grounds of the following two reasons: the first is that we should consider the writer's needs as well as his experiences and knowledge. In this way, we can help each student learn something not only about the writing process in general but also about the specific problems addressed in his writing. By focusing our attention on each student's performance, we might better help them understand and negotiate the constraints and possibilities they face. The second is that we should help them develop greater metacognitive

awareness of different discourse practices. This kind of metacognition allows them to reflect on their own choices and think more about the tools they can use and the options they can take. In this way, each student receives the attention he deserves as a unique individual.

The focus of this study remained faithful to these broad aims and attempted to investigate what the specific students actually learned from the process. The results were supportive of this revision model in that (1) it helped students overcome the inertia which they showed at the beginning of the study and become more active revisers, (2) it helped them adopt a higher-level representation of the text, (3) it motivated them to modify and enhance their output, (4) it helped them attain a 'negotiation of meaning' perspective and (5) it encouraged them to revise on their own initiative, which means that even if they were not yet in control of the revision process, they set in motion mechanisms which sooner or later would help them revise in a more mature way.

Collectively, the findings of this study indicate that the development of revision ability was critically conditioned by the specific revision model. This experience helped students draw their limited revision skills to some crucial aspects of writing in ways that they could not before receiving the specific kind of feedback. Coupled with the results from other studies, these findings substantiate the possibility that young writers' knowledge about revision and their actual revision efforts can be enhanced with the help of focused feedback.

The major pedagogical implication of this study is that students must learn to re-read their texts and make use of the opportunity revision offers to look back and build upon what has already been written. Another message from this research is that students need autonomy to consider different options and make decisions. It is, therefore, important to stress that the feedback should be carefully written to facilitate negotiation of meaning and thus become an effective stimulus for the kind of mental work that promotes problem solving. Moreover, it should be shaped in ways that help the writers accommodate its suggestions without compromising their own perspectives. The feedback is only part of the process and should not be seen as an

end in itself. Its purpose is not to generate a degree of alignment between the student and the teacher, for that would equate the process with domination and ultimately abolish its negotiable identity.

Seen in this way, focused feedback appears to hold promise as a means of facilitating negotiation and problem solving, enhancing revision efforts and potentially affecting the quality of writing. The specific feedback model adopted in this thesis should be seen as a starting point for helping the student think about a text holistically and find ways to improve it. Instruction could go on to develop other more specific, more discourse-related ways of helping the student negotiate meaning and learn how to solve problems in writing. Thus, it must be acknowledged that there is a need for teachers to establish, test and evaluate their own feedback model, which will improve the quality of their responses and in turn, their students' revisions.

In conclusion, the model proposed in this thesis promotes a pedagogy that views message and accuracy as complementary and interdependent components of the writing process. It is also concerned with what students know and what they can do in order to offer what is developmentally and linguistically appropriate and useful for them with special attention to the uniqueness of each student. This is the stance to the role of early EFL writing instruction adopted in this thesis, that is, the use of a sociocognitive approach which a) creates a positive learning environment in which young learners discover what happens during the writing act and acquire successful thinking and writing skills, and b) empowers them with support and guidance to become good writers, good thinkers, good evaluators and good users of the foreign language.

## **12.6 Final Reflections**

After an extended period of time, this thesis has finally reached its destination. For me, the writing of this thesis was like a journey, in which I travelled over the paths of literature exploration, data gathering and data analysis to arrive at a conclusion. The paths that led to the conclusion were far from straight.



The Greek poet, K. Kavafis, in his famous poem, “Ithaca”, writes:

When you set out for Ithaca  
pray that your road's a long one,  
full of adventure, full of discovery. [...]  
Keep Ithaca always in mind.  
Arriving there is what you're destined for.  
But don't hurry the journey at all.  
Better if it goes on for years  
so you're old by the time you reach the island,  
wealthy with all you've gained on the way,  
not expecting Ithaca to make you rich [...]  
And if you find her poor, Ithaca won't have fooled you.  
Wise as you'll have become, and so experienced,  
You'll have understood by then what an Ithaca means.

In many respects, as Kavafis' (1911) poem suggests, it was the journey that counted more than the final destination. It was an experience that was worthwhile in its own right. For me, this experience created two particularly significant opportunities. Firstly, it enabled me to read and analyse, over a period of two and a half years, writings from individuals as they moved from one draft to the next and it was this more than anything else that led to the realisation that revision is an area characterised by complexity and subtlety. The second opportunity that the study created was a long period of reflection on the messages that were emerging from the data analysis. The whole experience has led to an even more powerful illumination of the relationship between theoretical perspective and activity in a way that was not possible before the study.

The end of the journey, however, is also valuable for its illuminative potential. The conclusion that was reached is that the pursuit of revision skills is not a chimera-hunt. To put it differently, young students can ‘learn’ how to revise their writing and focused feedback is a viable pedagogic option for teaching revision. The role of the teacher is crucial in structuring the revision procedure in ways that lower the cognitive or linguistic processing imposed on the writers and draw their attention to aspects of the negotiations, which are a necessary feature of the revision. Effects can occur

within a relatively short time frame but the procedure followed in this thesis should be seen within the prism of an ongoing effort to support student revisions within actual classroom situations.

I will end this thesis with a metaphorical image. Writing develops like a seed. It grows and develops daily with the young writers as they are growing into adults. This development does not happen in a linear fashion. Writing seems to grow in a spiral way, with the writers visiting and revisiting different areas and improving their performance each time. Exactly how it develops in each individual depends on a plethora of factors. The challenge for the teacher is to provide the writer with a rich and stimulating ground and with actions and interactions that promote the cultivation of certain forms of thinking. This model of development lays emphasis on the fact that the writer's abilities will unfold, affected by the surrounding soil but more importantly by the interactive nature of the process. Therefore, the key objective for the teacher is to share her knowledge with the writer, to put as many clues as possible in the writer's way and allow him to follow his own path. By bringing crucial aspects of writing to the fore and by encouraging not only personal discovery but also sharing and negotiating, the teacher can help the young writer move from *knowing that* revision is necessary to improve a text to *knowing how* to revise it.

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## Appendix I

### WRITING TASKS

#### NARRATIVE

- **Writing a news story**

Write a news story about something that happened this week in your school, your home or your town or neighbourhood. Write your story in sequence and answer the questions who, when, where and what.

or

Write a news story based on one of the headlines below. Use a good, factual lead paragraph that answers who, when, where and what.

*New Museum to Open*

*Invention Changes People's Lives*

- **Writing a story**

Think of some ideas for a true story you could write. Think of something that happened to you or to someone you know that would make a good story. What was it? Write your story in sequence and answer the questions who, when, where and what.

or

Focus on a moment in your life that is very significant (funny, embarrassing, adventure, discovery, important learning experience etc). Write your story in sequence and answer the questions who, when, where and what.

- **Writing about your life**

Write a four paragraph autobiography. The first paragraph should tell about your birth and early life; the second about your school life. In the third paragraph, tell something

that shows what of person you are. In the last paragraph, tell about your hopes and dreams for the future.

or

Select an important period from your past and describe it in detail.

or

Write the life-story (biography) of an important German person to be published in an international magazine for young students.

### **DESCRIPTIVE**

- **Describing with your senses**

Imagine you are walking through a county fair. Think of all the details you see, hear, touch, smell, taste.

or

Write a description of your favourite shop. What items can you see there? What special sounds and smells do you find in it? What things do you touch and how do they feel?

or

Write a description of the place where you love to be. Think of all the details you see, hear, touch, smell, taste.

or

Imagine that you are alone in the basement of an old house. The batteries of your torch have just gone dead. It is so dark that you cannot even see your own hand in front of your face. As you are trying to get out of the house, describe in detail the things that you feel, the sounds that you hear, the smells in the house, perhaps something you ate and how it tasted.

- **Describing characters**

Describe an interesting person you know or a person who makes you happy / angry. A description of a character can include details about physical appearance and personality. When you describe characters, tell what they look like, their character traits and how they act in certain situations. Write about face, hair, size, clothes, gestures and movements. Also you can use dialogue to reveal more about the character.

or

Your class has decided to vote for “The Best Friend” of the year. Write about a friend of yours and explain why you think he / she should get this title.

## **LETTERS**

Write a letter to a friend. Inform your friend about something you have learned or done and then persuade him/her to do something.

or

Write a letter to an English-speaking friend about the city where you live. Try to include as many interesting details as possible about the following: description of the place, sights, facilities, entertainment etc.

or

Think of a pollution problem in your neighbourhood. Write a letter of complaint to your local newspaper. Explain the problem and make suggestions.

### CORRECTION CODE

<b>Symbol</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Example</b>
<b>T</b>	<b>TENSE</b>	(the tense is wrong: now I go)
<b>VF</b>	<b>VERB FORM</b>	(the form of the verb is wrong: they taked, they making)
<b>G</b>	<b>GRAMMAR</b>	(a grammatical structure is wrong: this are, my hairs)
<b>WO</b>	<b>WORD ORDER</b>	(they go often to the park)
<b>P</b>	<b>PUNCTUATION</b>	(wrong comma, capital letter etc: I hope, that ..)
<b>S</b>	<b>SPELLING</b>	(beutifull)
<b>V</b>	<b>VOCABULARY</b>	(the word is wrong: We became a letter)
<b>PR</b>	<b>PREPOSITION</b>	(the preposition is wrong: I go at the park)



## APPENDIX II

**Table 7: Coding of revisions**

SIZE		TYPE		FUNCTION		EFFECTIVENESS	
description	symbol	description	symbol	description	symbol	description	symbol
Grapheme	G	Addition	a	Expansion	E	Successful	S
Word	W	Deletion	b	Reduction	R	Unsuccessful	U
Phrase	P	Substitution	c	Organisation	O	Neutral	N
Clause	C	Permutation	d	Coherence /	C		
Sentence	S	Distribution	e	cohesion			
Multi-sentence	MS	Consolidation	f	Genre /	Au		
		Spelling	g	audience			
		Grammar	h	Style	ST		
		Lexis	i				
		Syntax	j				
		Punctuation	k				
		Format	l				

**Table 10: Analytical evaluation of revisions**

<b>1<sup>st</sup> draft</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> draft</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
...introduce you a...	...introduce you to a...	The writer added the correct preposition. The grammatical revision is successful.
She's very tall and she's got blond hair. She's got green eyes, a big nose and a nice mouth.	She's got blond hair, green eyes and a big nose.	The writer rearranged the text. She put her friend's physical description right after her name. The change is considered successful. The writer also changed the description slightly and deleted the part about the mouth. The change is evaluated as neutral. The part of the description referring to height was inappropriately put in the third paragraph. The specific change is considered unsuccessful.
Her parents are very nice and kindly. Her brother is called Louis and he's like my own brother!	Her parents are very nice and kind. Her brother is called Louis.	The writer changed the position of these sentences in the text and moved them from the last to the first paragraph. This change does not affect the quality of the text in any significant way but it is treated as successful because the effort to rearrange the text works and the information about the family stays together. The deletion of the clause concerning the brother is unsuccessful. The writer also corrected the wrong form of the adjective successfully.
Before she came at this school, she lived in "Weinheim" – it's between "Mannheim" and "Heidelberg".	Before she lived in Koblenz, she lived in Weinheim.	The writer changed the position of the sentence and made a separate paragraph about her friend moving to a new town and changing school. The text now looks more coherent. Therefore the change is successful. She also substituted 'before she lived in Koblenz' for 'before she came at this school' probably in order to be more explicit. This change is successful because it is also more accurate. However, the deletion of the exact location of the old hometown is classified as unsuccessful because it deletes a piece of information which makes the text more reader-friendly.
Our class teacher collected us and we went together to our new class. I was very excited. And I felt, she was it, too.	Then our class teacher came and collected us. We were very excited when we went to our new classroom and the new class.	It seems that the intention of the writer was to produce more coherent text, that's why she used a linking word and condensed the text by producing more complex sentences. If we judge this change holistically, we see that it does not improve the text.
	We laugh together. In the lessons sometimes one of us doesn't know anything and then the other one helps. I think we're a very good team.	Apparently, the writer responded to the teacher's comment to expand the text by adding more details. She made three additions which are seen as successful for the purpose of expansion since they reveal some important information about the writer's friend and their relationship.
I like her very much. She's like me.	Some boys in the class gave her the name "plum" but it's not so nice.	This is a difficult segment to classify and evaluate. It is possible that the writer, after reflecting on the teacher's comment to explain why she and her friend are alike, decided to delete the item which prompted the relevant comment rather than explain it further. It is also possible that the writer wanted to add another piece of information and then write another ending but did not have enough time to do so. If the utterance under study is seen as an expansion, it is considered successful. If it is classified as a deletion or substitution, it is unsuccessful because it requires

		further explanation and cannot function as the closing line. All things considered, it was decided not to give the writer credit for this change.
She's often laughing.	...often she laughs.	The use of Present Simple to talk about routines is a successful grammatical revision despite the position of the adverb of frequency.
In maths, she's very good – not like me.		The intention of the writer for this deletion is not clear. Once again the writer may have decided to delete the language area where the teacher had identified a problem instead of dealing with it, which seems a pity.
Exited	Excited	Successful spelling correction.

**Table 11: Evaluation of revisions by two readers**

**Student No 26, Task 2: Describe an interesting person**

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>I want to tell you about my sister. I think you'll laugh because in Writing Task one I have written about my sister, too. So, let's start.</p> <p>My sister is 1.30 metres tall. She's beautiful. She have got many curls and brown eyes. Sometimes she has allergies. That's very sad. She can't eat any milk products. She has got brown hair. Sometimes she's terrible. She kicks, bites or beats me. She's six years old. Next year she'll go to school. Her character is half to half. She likes Barbie and Lego. She has a hobby, too. Her hobby is Diddle. Do you know them? She's very intelligent. Sometimes she know things that I don't know. I play very often with her. She's born on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1997. I think later (in 20 years) she'll be very popular.</p> <p>[137 W]</p>	<p>I want to tell you about my sister. So go on...</p> <p>My sister is six years old and 1.30 tall. She's one of the tallest in her age class, and was born on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1997.</p> <p>She has got many hair in her face. Her hair is full of curls. Her brown eyes are beautiful. In her face she has got a little nose and her laugh is very smart.</p> <p>It's very sad that she can't eat milk products because she has got an allergie, but she's lucky.</p> <p>Sometimes, just sometimes, she is a really monster.</p> <p>Then she kicks, bites or beats me. On the other side she has very sweet hobbies. She collects Diddl and plays piano, how I. But she doesn't play very long.</p> <p>And she's intelligent, too. Sometimes she know things that I don't know.</p> <p>So, this informations must be enough for your project.</p> <p>[147 W]</p>

The red parts concern the areas where the comments of the second reader were in conflict with the comments of the researcher.

1 <sup>st</sup> draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> draft	Evaluation
I think you'll laugh because in Writing Task one I have written about my sister, too.		Deletion – Reduction – Successful (but there is a loss of self-reflection, and the direct address of the reader has disappeared, which seems a pity)
So, let's start.	So go on...	Substitution – unclear – unsuccessful
My sister is 1.30 metres tall.	My sister is six years old and 1.30 tall.	Permutation – organisation – successful (the utterance referring to the sister's age was misplaced in the text and the writer successfully changed its position)
	She's one of the	Addition – expansion – successful

	tallest in her age class, ...	
	and was born on 11 <sup>th</sup> July 1997.	Permutation – organisation – successful Correction of the verb form – grammar -successful
	She has got many hair in her face.	Although the sentence itself is inaccurate, it is assessed as a successful addition for the purpose of expansion.
She have got many curls	Her hair is full of curls.	Substitution – unclear (perhaps the writer made a stylistic change or was prompted by the teacher’s comment that there is a mistake on this line) – Successful
She’s beautiful. ....and brown eyes.	Her brown eyes are beautiful.	Substitution- stylistic- successful
	In her face she has got a little nose and her laugh is very smart.	Although this sentence is also partly inaccurate, it is assessed as a successful addition for the purpose of expansion.
Sometimes she has allergies. That’s very sad. She can’t eat any milk products.	It’s very sad that she can’t eat milk products because she has got an allergie, but she’s lucky.	Consolidation – cohesion – successful <b>The original version is simple and accurate; the attempt to form complex sentences is not successful</b>  Addition - expansion – neutral <b>Addition – Expansion – unsuccessful (does not seem to make sense)</b>
She has got brown hair.		Deletion – organisation – successful
Sometimes she’s terrible.	Sometimes, just sometimes, she is a really monster.	Substitution – stylistic – successful in spite of the grammar mistake
Her character is half to half. She likes Barbie and Lego.		Deletion of the first sentence– reduction obviously prompted by the teacher’s comment that there was a problem with the specific expression - successful <b>(surely there is a loss of information as a result of trying to avoid mistakes)</b> Deletion of the second sentence- reduction – neutral
She has a hobby, too.	On the other side she has very sweet hobbies.	Substitution – stylistic or cohesive – successful (convincing use of antithesis)
Her hobby is Diddle.	She collects Diddl	Substitution – stylistic (lexically more advanced) – successful
	and plays piano, how I. But she doesn’t play very long.	Addition – expansion – successful (2x)
Do you know them?		Deletion – genre – successful <b>Unsuccessful (again the attempt to communicate explicitly with the reader has been sacrificed, which seems a pity).</b>
She’s very intelligent.	And she’s intelligent, too.	Addition – cohesion - successful
I play very often with her.		Deletion – reduction – unsuccessful
I think later (in 20 years) she’ll be very popular.	So, this informations must be enough for your project.	Deletion – (the purpose is not clear) – unsuccessful Addition – (the purpose is not clear) – unsuccessful
	paragraphs	Format – successful

### APPENDIX III

#### QUESTIONNAIRE

CLASS : .....

DATE: .....

This questionnaire will help me find out how you felt about revision and feedback during this project. Please answer the following questions carefully.

- There are no right or wrong answers, just express what you think.
- Try to answer the questions in English. If you can't, use German.

1) Did you like receiving comments on your writing? Why? / Why not?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

2) When you revised your writing, how many of the comments did you use?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

3) Which part of the comments did you find most useful?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

4) Did you face any problems with the comments? If yes, what problems did you face?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

5) Do you think your text improved significantly after the revisions?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

**THANK YOU FOR ANSWERING ALL THE QUESTIONS**

## **APPENDIX IV**

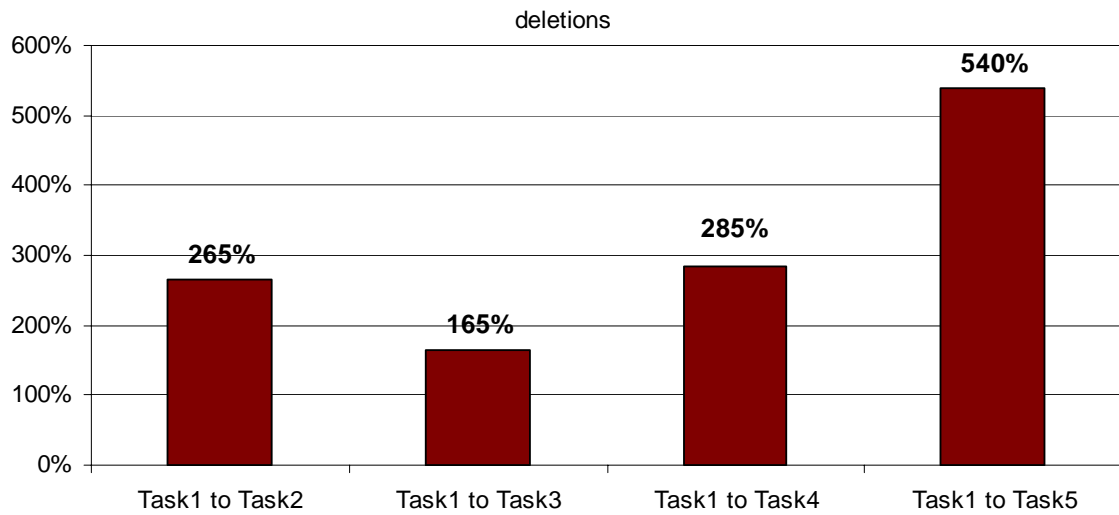
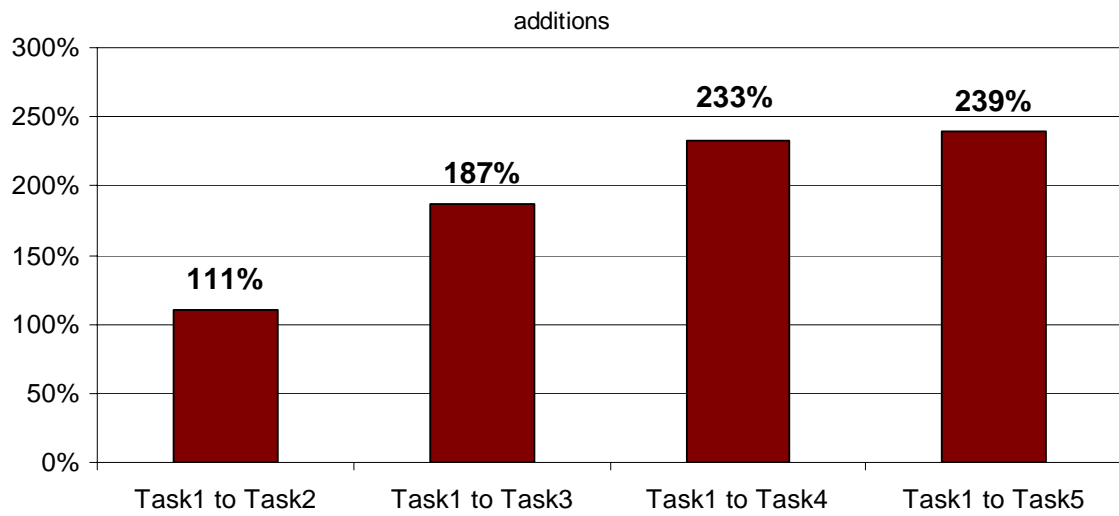
**Table 1: Revision operations across tasks: Whole sample**

<b>Average Rate of Revisions per Task</b>													
	additions	deletions	substitutions	permutations	distributions	consolidations	spelling	grammar	vocabulary	syntax	punctuation	format	
Task1	1,41	0,40	0,72	0,10	0,06	0,11	0,33	1,23	0,51	0,02	0,07	0,00	
Task2	2,97	1,46	1,50	0,78	0,07	0,23	0,57	1,78	0,46	0,17	0,13	0,22	
Task3	4,05	1,06	2,74	0,06	0,19	0,22	0,39	2,62	0,91	0,14	0,08	0,15	
Task4	4,70	1,54	3,10	0,20	0,18	0,20	0,46	1,40	0,62	0,11	0,18	0,17	
Task5	4,78	2,56	3,82	0,23	0,17	0,36	0,66	2,54	0,71	0,33	0,09	0,02	

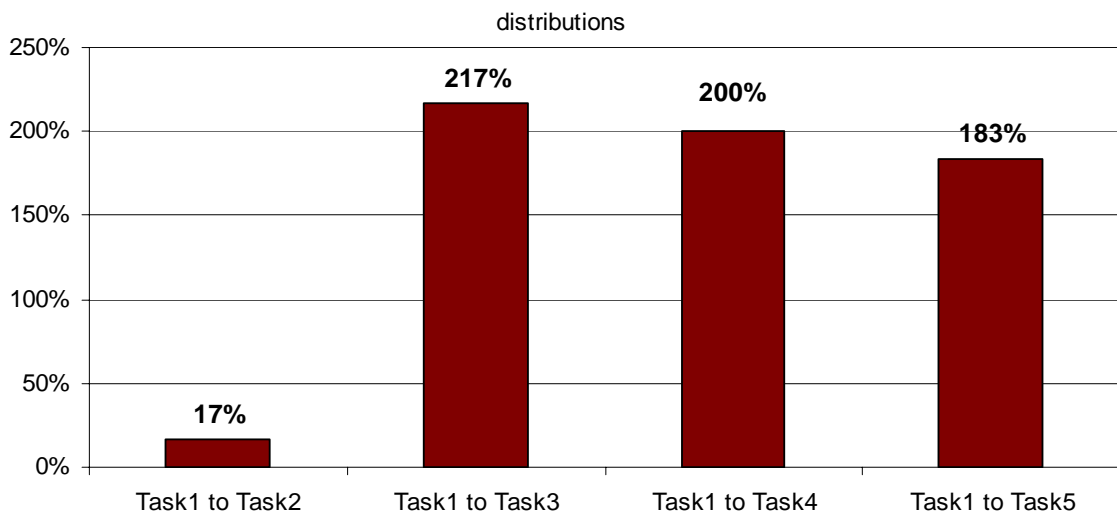
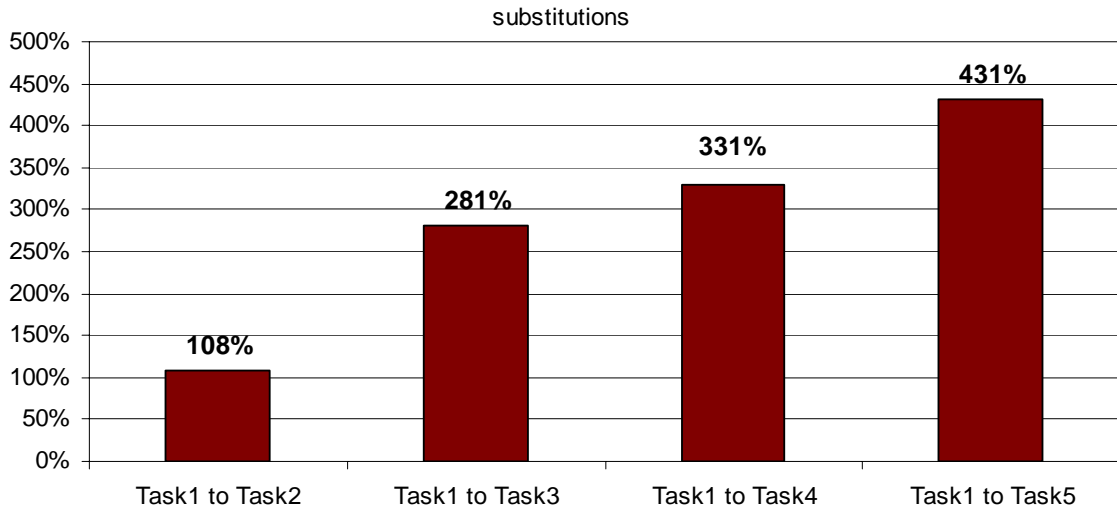
**Table 2: P-values of Null Hypothesis and Alternative Hypothesis**

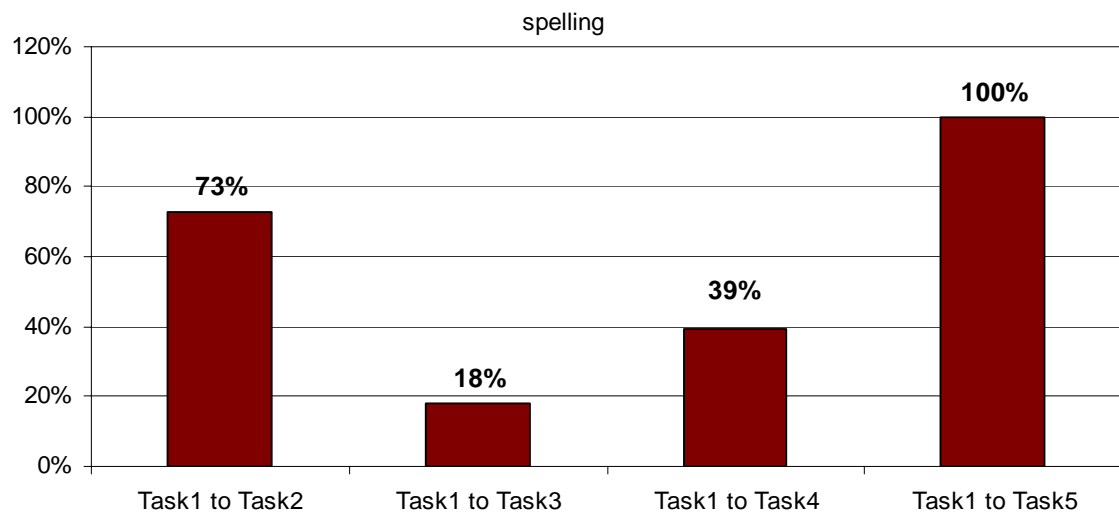
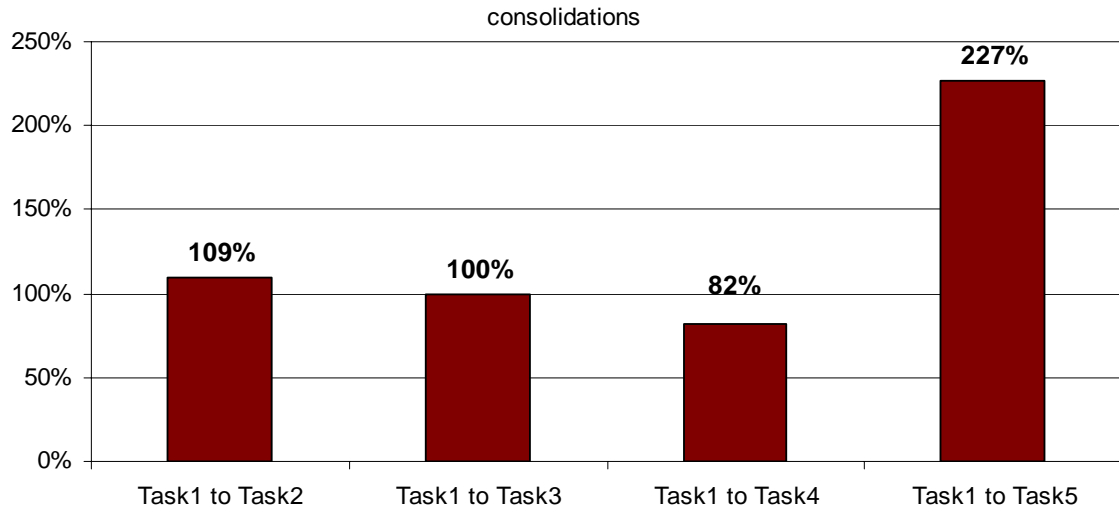
<b>P-Values of Null Hypothesis that the average score between tasks is equal against the alternative that the later task has higher average score</b>													
	additions	deletions	substitutions	permutations	distributions	consolidations	spelling	grammar	vocabulary	syntax	punctuation	format	
Task2-Task1	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	39,2%	<b>2,2%</b>	<b>1,5%</b>	<b>0,3%</b>	65,5%	<b>0,0%</b>	12,9%	<b>0,0%</b>	
Task3-Task1	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	79,2%	<b>1,4%</b>	<b>2,4%</b>	27,1%	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>0,3%</b>	<b>0,1%</b>	39,2%	<b>0,0%</b>	
Task4-Task1	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	9,5%	<b>0,7%</b>	7,0%	11,6%	21,8%	20,7%	<b>1,0%</b>	5,1%	<b>0,0%</b>	
Task5-Task1	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>3,1%</b>	<b>1,4%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>0,4%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	10,7%	<b>0,0%</b>	29,8%	7,9%	

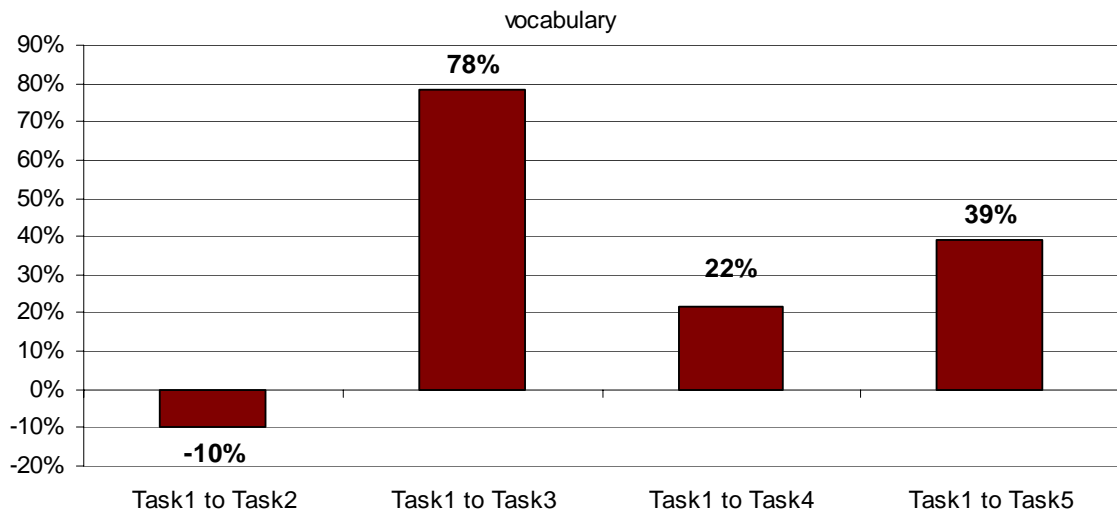
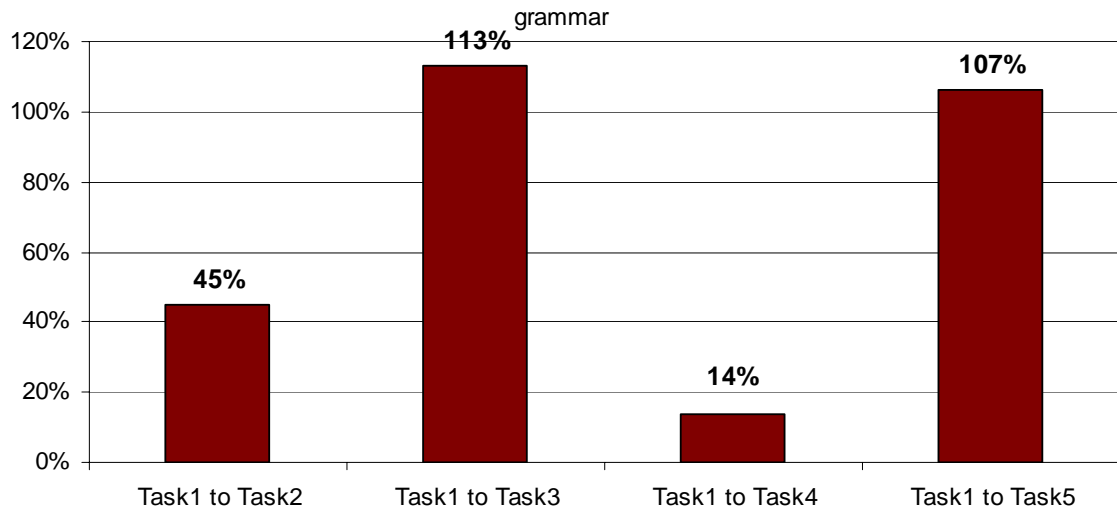
For p-values less than 5% we reject the null hypothesis. Hence the average score of revisions is higher in the later task than in Task1

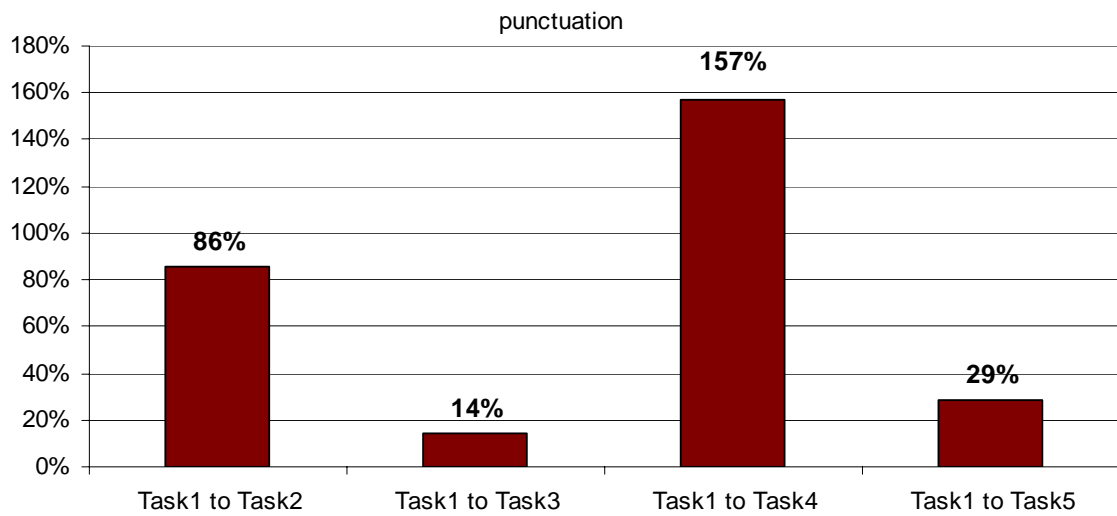
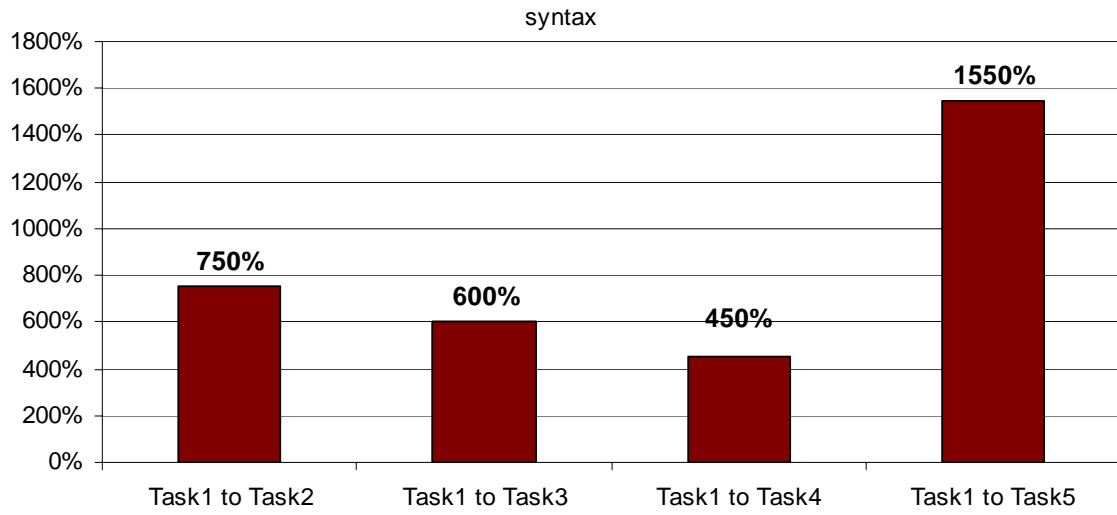
**Fig.2 Percentage of revision increase from Task 1 to the other Tasks**

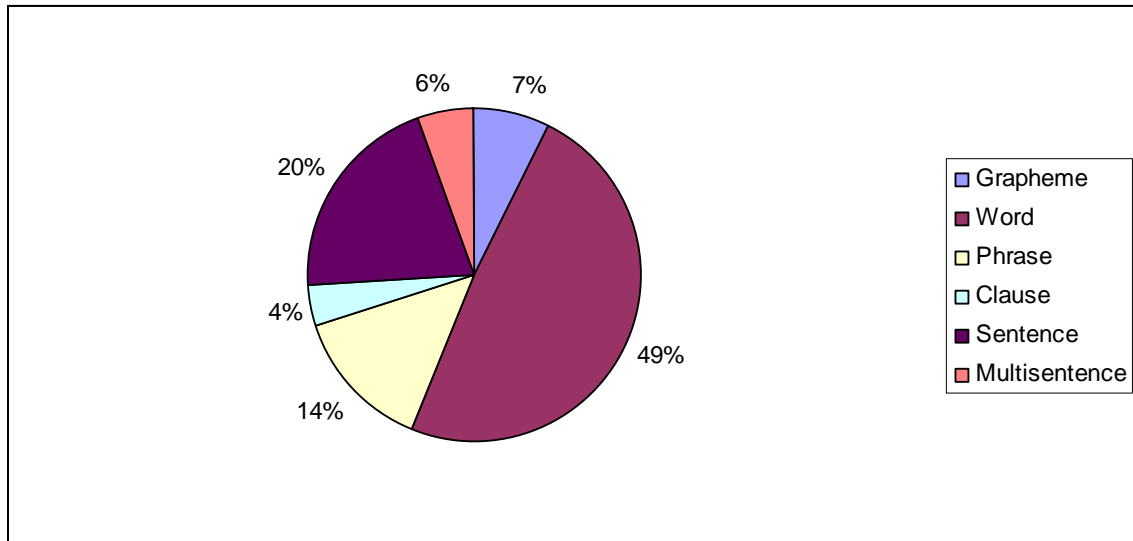
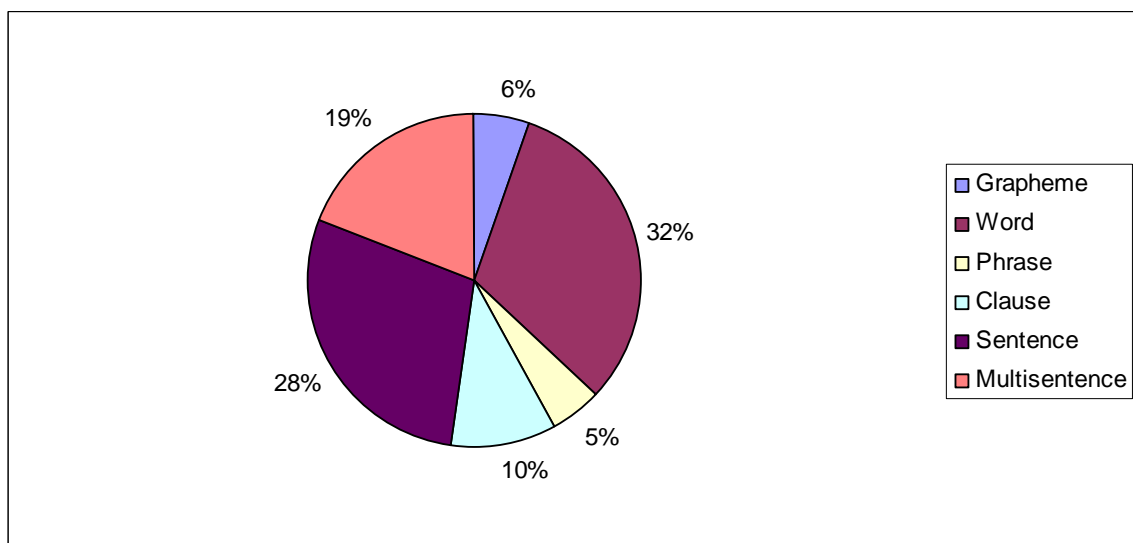


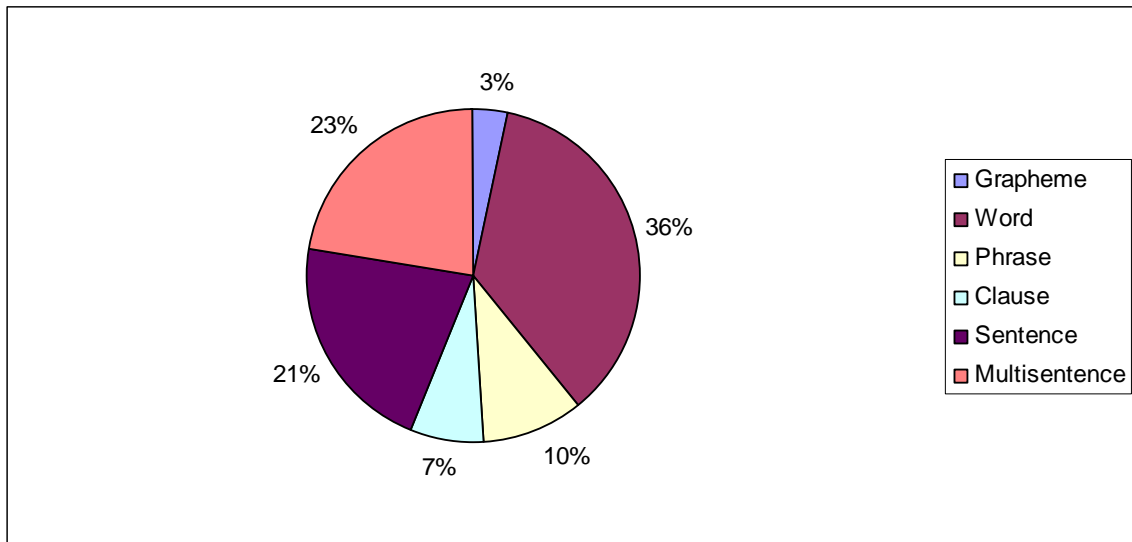
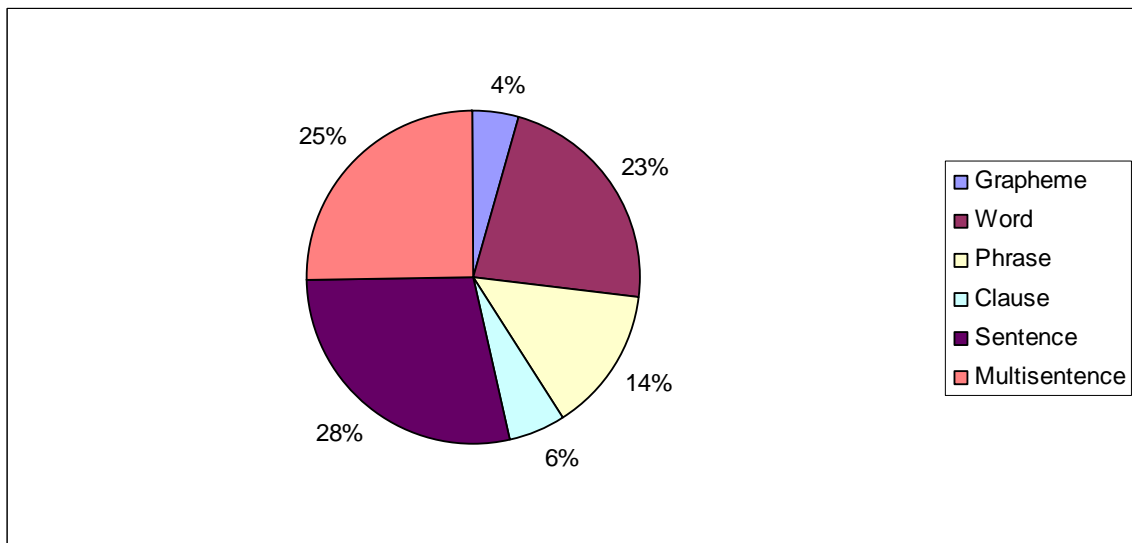


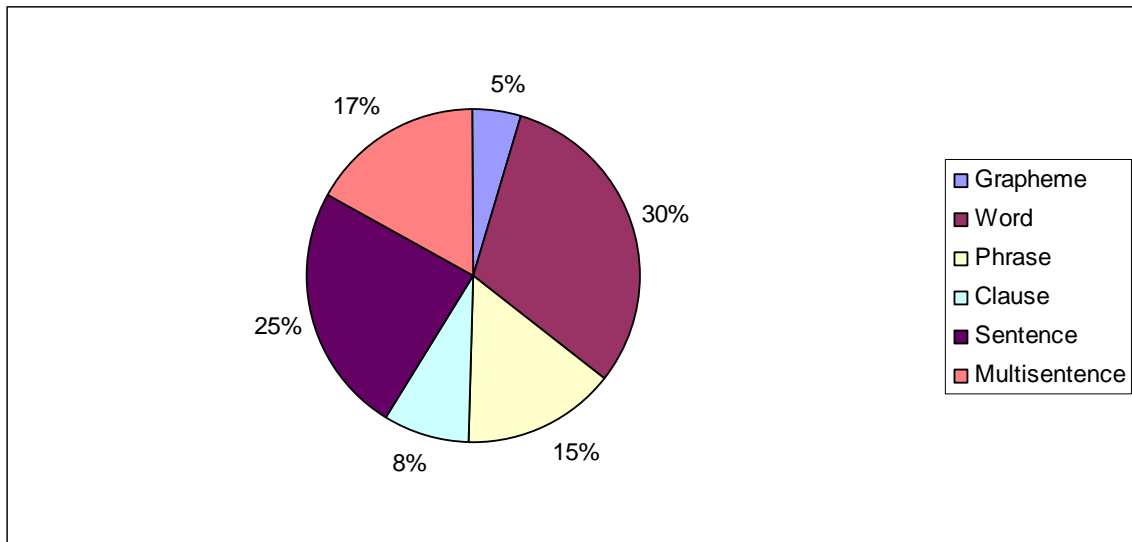






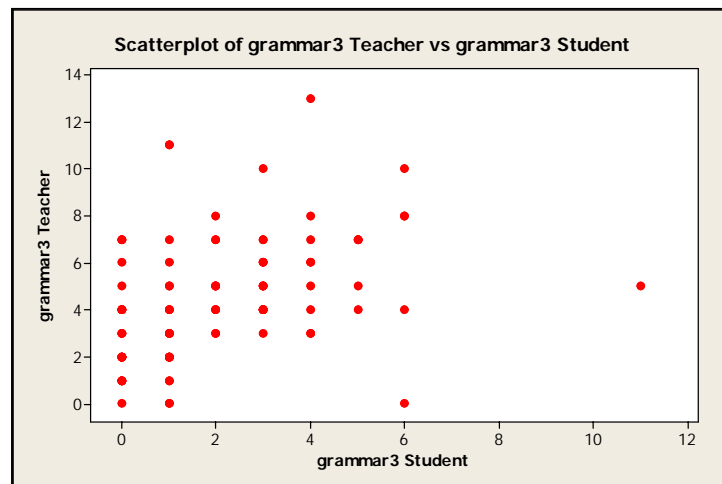
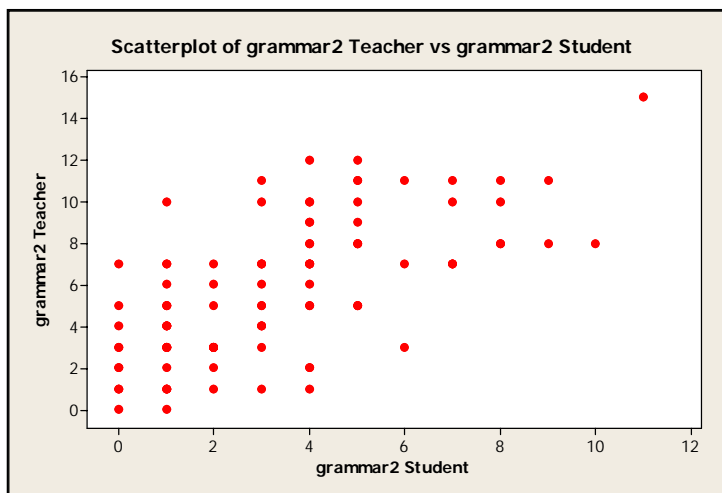
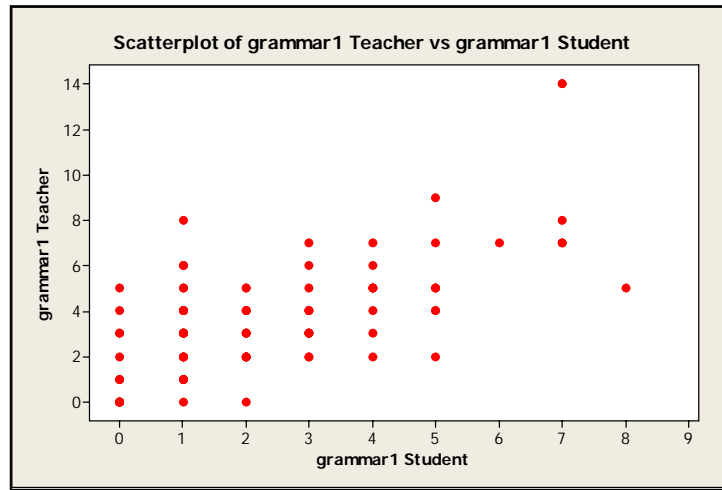
**Fig.3 Level of revisions across Tasks: Whole sample****Task 1****Task 2**

**Task 3****Task 4**

**Task 5**

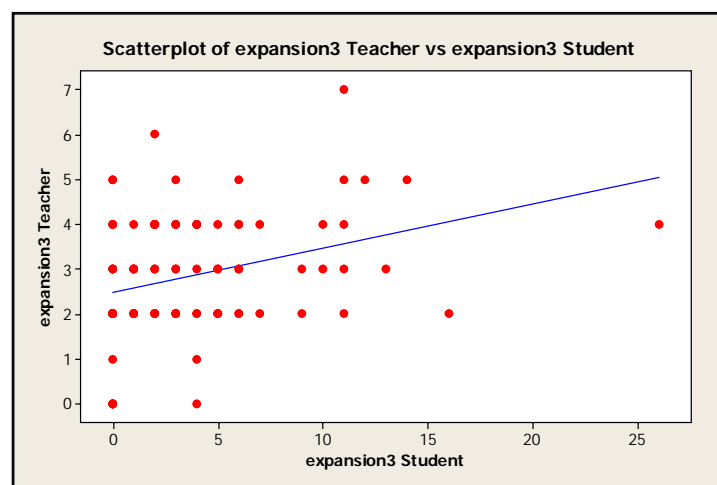
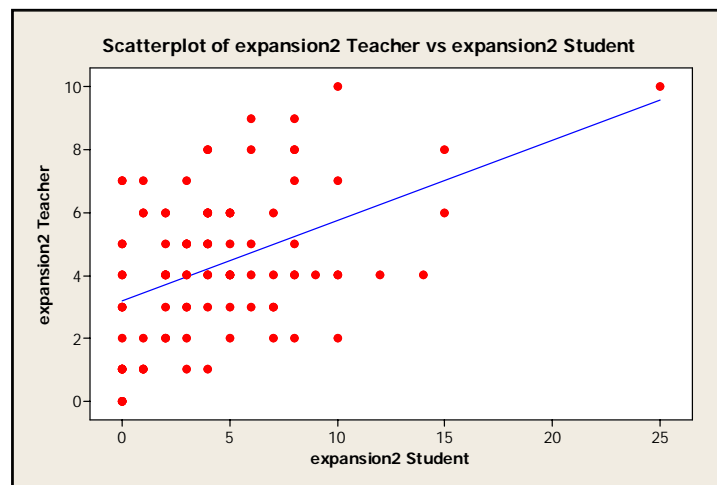
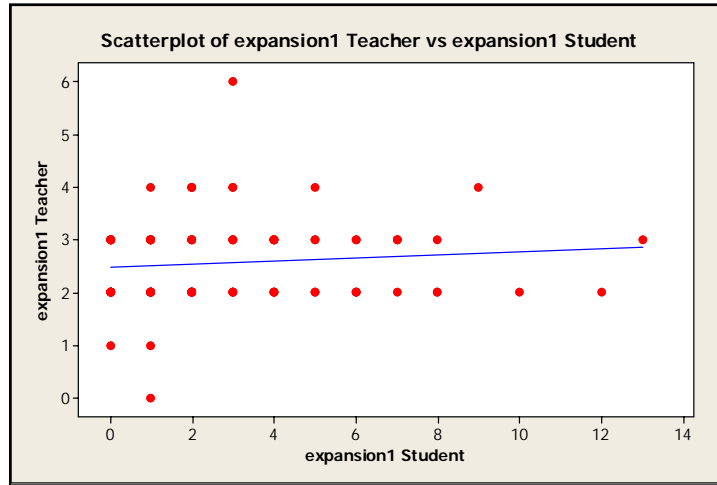
**Fig.7 Scatter diagrams of grammar and expansion**

**Scatter diagram of grammar**





### Scatter diagram of expansion



## APPENDIX V

### Case study 1: Melina

The first case study concerns a student who will be referred to as Melina.

#### Task 1: “A childhood memory”

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>It was in the autumn holidays at the Beach at Cala Llenya on the Ireland Ibiza. My brother Tobias and our friends Sina and Max were sitting in front of a kiosk. New were reading about us and our hobbies. The wather of the see was worm and there were big waves. We all were smelling the salt of the see. We were playing baseball and football. The beach was big and we all were feeling good. Some little kids were screaming and they were playing in the sand. The house were we live was great and there were two bedrooms, a kitchen, a big livingroom and the garden was more then big. The Clubs Cala Llenya and Cala Azul were closed when we came, yet. The water of the swimming-pool there were green and you can't swim in them. We flew home with Air Berlin and came home at Sunday. At Monday we went to school. That were really nice autumn holidays.</p> <p><b>[163 words]</b></p>	<p>It was in the autumn holidays at the Beach at Cala Llenya on the Ireland Ibiza. My brother Tobias and our friends Sina and Max were sitting in front of a kiosk. New were reading about us and our hobbies. The <b>water</b> of the see was worm and there were big waves. We all were smelling the salt of the sea, <b>and</b> we were playing baseball and football. The beach was big and we all were feeling good. Some little kids were screaming and they were playing in the sand. The house <b>where</b> we live was great and there were two bedrooms, a kitchen, a big livingroom and the garden was more then big. The Clubs Cala Llenya and Cala Azul were closed when we came, yet. The water of the swimming-pool there were green and you can't swim in them. We flew home with Air Berlin and came home at Sunday. At Monday we went to school. That were really nice autumn holidays.</p> <p><b>[164 words]</b></p>

During the first revision, Melina made 4 changes: she corrected three spelling mistakes (successfully) and joined two sentences together (unsuccessfully). It is possible that she wanted with this kind of ‘consolidation’ to improve the coherence of her text and give it better rhythm.

After the second draft, Melina received the following commentary from the teacher.

Dear student,

- I think you are a good writer.
- You revised very little. I would like to tell you that revision means more than correcting or writing neatly. For example, in your second draft, it would have been interesting to write a few things about the place and what you liked about it. We will talk more about this process in our next contact.

The purpose of this commentary was to trigger a different reaction to the process of revision by pointing out that revision means more than correcting.

## Task 2: “Describe an interesting person”

### Melina’s drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>I’m going to describe my best friend Anne M... She lives in Koblenz-Guls in a small flat with out a garden. She is tall and has got long brown hairs. Her eyes are blue-green and she has got a nicly face. She is wearing normal clothes every day. Her mother Roswitha is 45 years old. They’ve got a horse. It’s called Florett. Her mother works at Debeka. Anne has got another horse, but it’s not her horse. It’s called Bolo and belongs to Anne’s friend Claudia. If we’re in trouble we will help us. We’re both the best friends of the earth. Her best friends are am I and Sofia. We’re both jumping with our horses at the ridingplace. Anne’s hobbies are riding, eating, playing with Laika, Sofia’s dog and writing letters to me.</p> <p>[134 words]</p>	<p>I’m going to describe my best friend Anne M.... She lives in Koblenz-Guls in a small flat with out a garden. She is tall and has got long brown hairs. Her eyes are blue and green and she has a nicly face. She wears normal clothes every day. Her mother Roswitha is 45 years old. They’ve got a horse. It’s called Florett. Her mother works at Debeka. Anne has got another horse, but it’s not her horse. It’s called Bolo (Diavolo) and belongs to Anne’s friend Claudia. If we’re in trouble we will help each other. We’re both the best friends of the earth. Her best friends are am I and Sofia. We’re both jumps with our horses at the ridingplace. Anne’s hobbies are riding, eating, playing with Laika, Sofia’s dog and writing letters to me.</p> <p>[136 words]</p>

### Teacher’s comments

After 1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	After 2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>Dear student,  <u>Content</u>            I find your description interesting. You wrote about what your friend looks like, her hobbies and your relationship. I think you should add more about her personality and how she acts in certain situations. Remember: Details are important in character descriptions. They make a description more interesting. You need an ending, too.</p> <p><u>Organisation</u>            Make paragraphs. Make all the sentences in a paragraph talk about the main idea so that your paragraph is clear.</p> <p><u>Language</u>            Check the following points:            L5:G, L6:G, L7:T, Ls13-14:it’s not clear what you mean, L17:T.            Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>Dear student,            To revise means to look at your text again and rewrite it so as to improve it. When you revise, keep the good ideas, add interesting ideas, leave out unnecessary ideas, change the order of ideas etc. You should also try to correct mistakes and use better language. So, look more at the content and the organisation of your ideas.</p> <p>Paragraphs?            L5:hair, L6:nice, L16:are Sofia and me, L17:we both jump.</p>

**Table 1: Summary of teacher comments and Melina's revisions in Task 2**

Function of revisions	Teacher's comments	Melina's revisions
<b>Text-base</b>		
Expansion	2	1
Reduction		
Organisation		
Coherence		
Genre/Audience	1	
Style		1
<b>Surface</b>		
Spelling		
Grammar	4	3
Lexis		
Syntax		
Punctuation		
Format/ Clarity of phrases	2	
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>

The teacher made 9 comments. 3 of these comments concerned global features and suggested ideas for developing the content and supporting the description (e.g. I think you should add more about your friend's personality and how she acts in certain situations). The remaining 6 comments concerned linguistic features, such as paragraph structure, grammatical forms and the rephrasing of unclear sentences.

In total, Melina made 5 revisions. She responded only to 3 of the teacher's comments by making the corresponding grammatical corrections. The three surface changes are: *is wearing* into *wears*, *we're jumping* into *we jumps* and *we'll help us* into *we'll help each other*. The other 2 changes were minor additions initiated by Melina herself. Four of Melina's revisions were successful whereas one grammar revision (e.g. *We're both jumps*) was unsuccessful.

### Task 3: "A news story"

#### Melina's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
It was Tuesday, 4 <sup>th</sup> October 2003 in London Parkstreet (USA). The Moterbiker Simon Graham crashed into an inliner-skater. That girl was Maria Mc Cannon. A few minutes later Simon Graham stood in front of Maria. He called the hospital and the ambulance came. They took Maria to the children-hospital and Dr. Corner operated her leg.	It was Tuesday, 4 <sup>th</sup> October 2003 in London Parkstreet (USA). The Moterbiker Simon Graham crashed into an inliner-skater. That girl was Maria Mc Cannon. A few <b>seconds</b> later Simon Graham stood in front of Maria. He called the hospital and the ambulance came. They took Maria to the children-hospital and Doctor Corner operated her

<p>Two days later Simon Graham visited her and brought a lot of flowers. Then she asked him what happend. And he told her that he crashed into her, and that she has got a broken leg. After that Maria's Mother came into the room and shouted at Simon Graham. He ran out of the hospital and cried. Then he drove home and cut off his Pulsardern. So he killed himself.</p> <p>[125 words]</p>	<p>leg. Two days later Simon Graham visited her and brought <b>her</b> a lot of flowers. Then she asked him what <b>happened</b>. And he told her that he crashed into her, and that she has got a broken leg. After that Maria's <b>mother</b> came into the room and shouted at Simon Graham. He ran out of the hospital and cried. Then he drove home and <b>slashed his wrists</b>. So he killed himself.</p> <p>[125 words]</p>
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### Teacher's comments

After 1st Draft	After 2nd Draft
<p>Dear student,</p> <p><u>Content</u> Why did you write such a sad story? The beginning is very good for a news story. Think about what else the reader wants to know. For example: How did the accident happen? Where was the girl hurt? Was she bleeding? Did she cry? How did Simon feel? etc.</p> <p><u>Organisation</u> Good</p> <p><u>Language</u> After you look at the content and organisation of your writing, check the following points: L5:seconds, L6:T, L11 :brought her, L13 :T, L21:slashed his wrists. Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>Dear student,</p> <p>I think you can become a good writer but you need to give some more information to the reader. This is a very important aspect of writing because it helps the reader understand exactly what you have in mind. For example, you could have given more information about the accident and the people involved in it or explain the boy's reaction. Make paragraphs. L5:was standing, L13:had happened</p>

**Table 2: Summary of teacher comments and Melina's revisions in Task 3**

Function of revisions	Teacher's comments	Melina's revisions
<b>Text-base</b>		
Expansion	5	
Reduction		
Organisation		
Coherence		
Genre/Audience	1	
Style		
<b>Surface</b>		
Spelling		1
Grammar	3	1
Lexis	2	2
Syntax		
Punctuation		1
Format/ Clarity of phrases		
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>

The teacher made 11 comments in total. 6 of these comments concerned the development of ideas and taking the audience into account (e.g. How did the accident happen? Think about what else the reader would like to know) whereas 5 comments concerned surface features, such as vocabulary and grammar. Melina was successful in making the corrections suggested by the feedback but ignored the teacher's suggestions for expansion of content.

#### Task 4: "A letter about my town"

##### Melina's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>Koblenz, 05/28/04</p> <p>Dear Kathy!</p> <p>How are you? I'm fine! I want to tell you a bit about Koblenz. It's a great town! Here in Koblenz at the German Corner are all around the year festivals etc. In the swimming-pool Oberwerth you can jump into the water or swim in the Rhein. <b>Or you can go to FKK!</b> In the stadium Oberwerth we're going to make our sports activities. It makes fun. In Koblenz you can go to great museums, there are pictures, figures etc. At Ehrenbreitstein the castle of Koblenz is every year the "Rhein in Flamm"! <b>(Do you know what I mean with this?)</b></p> <p>When you come to Germany next year I can see you some sights of Koblenz! We will have a lot of fun <b>in this time!</b></p> <p>Of course you can go by ship on the <b>Rivers</b> Rhein or (and) Mosel! And you can go to the cinema(s) <b>Odeon, Apollo, Kinopolis!</b> That's funny!</p> <p><b>The films in the cinemas are cool.</b> At the moment there is 'Troja' in the cinema's! This is a great film!</p> <p>Oh, you must come very quickly! I'll be happy when you come!</p> <p>By the way, my telephone number is 026.....! You can phone me if you like!</p> <p>Yours ...</p> <p>P.S. Write me too!</p>	<p>Koblenz, 05/28/04</p> <p>Dear Kathy!</p> <p>How are you? I'm fine! I want to tell you a bit about Koblenz! It's a great town! Here in Koblenz at the 'German Corner' <b>we've festivals the whole year.</b></p> <p>In the swimming-pool 'Oberwerth' you can jump into the water or <b>you can</b> swim in the 'Rhein'! In the Stadium of 'Oberwerth' <b>we'll have our sports activities. That's funny!</b></p> <p>In Koblenz you can go to great museums. <b>There you'll see pictures of famous people etc!</b></p> <p>At 'Ehrenbreitstein' the castle of Koblenz <b>the 'RHEIN IN FLAMES' is every year! It's a firework!</b> You can see it if you stand at the 'German Corner'!</p> <p><b>Next year when you visit Germany, I can show you some sights of Koblenz!</b> We'll have a lot of fun!</p> <p>Of course you can go by ship on the 'Rhein' or (and) Mosel! And you can go to the cinema! That's funny!</p> <p>At the moment there is 'Troja' in the cinema's! This is a great film!</p> <p>Oh you must come very quickly! I'll be happy when you come!</p> <p>By the way, my telephone number is 026.....! You can phone me if you like!</p> <p>Yours ...</p>

<p>A long, long letter! OK?</p> <p>[215 words]</p>	<p>P.S. Write me <b>back!</b> A long, long letter! <b>Okay?</b></p> <p>[200 words]</p>
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### Teacher's comments

After 1st Draft	After 2nd Draft
<p>Dear student,</p> <p><u>Content</u> You wrote interesting information about your town but it is rather unconnected. I'm sure you can write more about the sights or the entertainment in Koblenz. Perhaps you can add some ideas in the introduction. It would be a good idea to explain why you inform your friend about your town (eg. he asked you to do it or s/he wants to visit your place etc).</p> <p><u>Organisation/Layout</u> Your ideas are jumbled. Try to organise and join them better. Don't write separate sentences. Put them into paragraphs.</p> <p><u>Language</u> After you look at the content and organisation of your writing, check the following points: Ls 4-5: rewrite differently, L9:V, L10:V, L12: rewrite differently, L14:WO, L18:V, L20:then. Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>Dear student,</p> <p>Your second draft looks better than the first. You made some successful changes and organized your ideas into paragraphs. L5:we've got festivals throughout the year, L10: that's a lot of fun, L14:takes place every year, L15: a firework show.</p>

**Table 3: Summary of teacher comments and Melina's revisions in Task 4**

Function of revisions	Teacher's comments	Melina's revisions
<b>Text-base</b>		
Expansion	3	2
Reduction		4
Organisation	1	
Coherence	1	
Genre/Audience	1	
Style	2	3
<b>Surface</b>		
Spelling		
Grammar		6
Lexis	4	1
Syntax	1	1
Punctuation		1
Format/ Clarity of phrases	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>19</b>

The teacher made 14 comments, 8 of which suggested text-base revisions. More specifically, the comments concerned expansion and logical arrangement of ideas, coherence and discourse conventions. They also reflected broader concerns, such as stylistic changes or substitution of ideas for less effective or elaborate points (e.g. the comment ‘rewrite differently’ means ‘you need to present your ideas more effectively’). The remaining comments concerned vocabulary, syntax and format (paragraph structure).

As Table 3 indicates, this time Melina’s revisions closely matched the teacher’s comments. In short, Melina made 19 changes, which correspond to the specific prompts given by the teacher. She gave the reader some background information about “Rhein in flames”. She made a few deletions possibly in order to reduce content which might be less relevant or interesting for the reader. She also took more interest in paragraphing. Although one cannot be certain about her real intentions when she was making the specific changes, one can conclude that she made her text more reader-friendly. In effect, Melina revised in ways that the teacher valued and encouraged. Overall, the second draft was an improved version of the first.

### Task 5: “My autobiography”

#### Melina’s drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>My name is ... I was born in 1991 in Koblenz. My birthday is the 12.02.04. <b>In the kindergarden it was great! We had got a lot of fun! When I was ill in this kindergarden time I had the windpocks! It was a bad bad time! I couldn’t play with my friends! After one week and a half I could go back to the kindergarden!</b></p> <p>Today my parents, my brothers and I live in Wolken near Koblenz. My brothers Tobias and Andreas are older than me! Tobias is 17 years old and Andreas is 19 years old. Andreas is going to get a Studium at an bank in Stuttgart. Tobias works at the Sparkasse in Koblenz. I’m a pupil! I go to the Eichendorff-Gymnasium in Koblenz. When I startet school I were in Kobern-Gondorf.</p> <p>At school it’s sometimes boring. But when I’m ill, I’ll go to school and meet my best friends Nina etc.</p>	<p>My name is ... I was born in 1991 in Koblenz. My birthday is <b>the 12<sup>th</sup> of February</b>.</p> <p>My parents, my brothers and I live in Wolken near Koblenz. My brothers Tobias and Andreas are older than me. Tobias is 17 years old and Andreas is 19 years old. Andreas is going to get a Studium at a bank in Stuttgart. Tobias works at the Sparkasse in Koblenz.</p> <p><b>My kindergarden time was great, but not when I was ill. When I started school I was in Kobern-Gondorf. Now I’m in Koblenz in Eichendorff-Gymnasium. It’s great here, but some teachers are stupid.</b></p> <p>It’s sometimes boring at school, <b>but</b> when I’m ill I <b>want to</b> go to school and meet my best friends Nina and Andrea.</p>



<p>My important experienz was that I was allowed to ride the horse of my friend Sofia. It's called Bonny. He is a little crazy horse. But my most important experienz was when we flied to Greece. There I met Tessie again.</p> <p><b>[196 words]</b></p>	<p>My important experienz was, that I was allowed to ride the horse of my friend Sofia. He's called Bonny. He is a <b>very</b> crazy pony! But my most important experienz was when I flied with my parents to Greece. There I met Tessie again. <b>She was a dog. She died last month. It was so stupid!</b></p> <p><b>[180 words]</b></p>
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Melina made a series of effective revisions. She rearranged the text in logical order beginning with references to her family and then moving on to her schooling career. She made the text more coherent by connecting relevant ideas. She added information that made her text more reader-friendly (e.g. she explained who Tessie was). Moreover, she corrected many of her grammatical mistakes. She even decided to delete a large chunk, which referred to the period of her illness when she was at kindergarten, perhaps because she found it less significant for her autobiography. She also attempted a few stylistic changes by substituting some words for others (e.g. *very* for *a little*). These changes were rather unimportant.

In the expansions she made, she used the word 'stupid' inappropriately. Although the incorrect use of the lexis marred the effect of these additions, the content that emerged was considered more important. Melina failed to provide a closing paragraph in her second draft. All things considered, however, her second draft was an improved version of the first.

Melina's increasing concern with high-level revisions is clearly illustrated in the way she revised Task 5. She made a number of text-base changes, which include adding and shifting details. She circled chunks of language and changed their position in the text; she crossed out unnecessary information; she made corrections; she added phrases and sentences. It seems that Melina adopted a high-level mental representation of her text, seeing it more as a whole, in order to add content to it or re-order it.

**Table 4: Summary of Melina's revisions in all Tasks**

Function of revisions	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4	Task 5
<b>Text-base</b>					
Expansion		2	1		6
Reduction				6	4
Organisation		1		9	3
Coherence					1
Genre/Audience					
Style	1				2
<b>Surface</b>					
Spelling	3		1		1
Grammar		2			2
Lexis			2	1	1
Syntax				1	
Punctuation			1	1	
Format/ Clarity of phrases				1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>

Table 4 shows Melina's revisions throughout the study. Over the first three tasks, Melina made a limited number of revisions, most of which were surface revisions. In fact, the number of changes remained almost the same (between 4 and 5 changes) between the first and the third task. Melina did not seem to be ready or willing to make more revisions until after she had received feedback on Task 4. Indeed, in this task one can observe a shift of attention from grammatical correctness to more global features, such as expansion of content and organisation of ideas. What is more, the number of revisions increased significantly.

Perhaps the most striking feature of Table 4 is that Melina reached a very high point in revision ability in the last two tasks and especially Task 5 where she revised without any guidance. In common with other students, her attitude towards revision remained unchanged during the first three tasks. Moreover, in the beginning, her general attitude towards improvement tended to focus on surface features of writing. As often mentioned in this thesis, this behaviour agrees with a general attitude that treats revision as correction of mistakes. The table does suggest, however, that towards the end of the study, Melina was encouraged by the teacher feedback to change her attitude and consider more global aspects in her writing. Table 5 shows that her revisions in the last two tasks resulted in 'better' drafts.

**Table 5: The correlation between revision and improvement**

	Revision 1 (no change)	Revision 2 (no change)	Revision 3 (no change)	Revision 4 (revised version <i>better</i> )	Revision 5 (revised version <i>better</i> )
Successful	3	4	5	13	17
Unsuccessful	1	1		4	1
Neutral				2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>

Overall, the story seems to be one of a student who made a huge stride in the development of her revision skills towards the end of the study and who then went through a period of consolidation.

### Case study 2: Stefanie

The second case study concerns a student who will be referred to as Stefanie.

#### Task 1: “A childhood memory”

##### Stefanie’s drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
At this moment I’m in Greece under the water. I can see many fish, shells and a few sea-stars. At my left side is Nico and at the other is Marco. This are my cousins. I can hear many noises of the sea. I feel very free and a bit like a bird, because it is as you fly. I think ..., no I hope that there is no shark. I can taste salt and a bit fish.	At this moment I’m in Greece under the water. I can see many fish, shells and a few sea-stars. At my left side is Nico and at the other is Marco. This are my cousins. I can hear many noises of the sea. I feel very free and a bit like a bird, because it is as you fly. I think ..., no I hope that there is no shark. I can taste salt and a bit fish.
[78 words]	[78 words]

Stefanie did not make any revisions in Task 1. After the second draft, she received the following commentary from the teacher.

Dear student,

- I think you can become a good writer.
- You don’t seem to have many problems with correctness.
- You didn’t make any attempt to revise. I would like to tell you that revision means more than correcting or writing neatly. For example, in your second draft, you could have written what happened in the end or explained why that day was more special than others. We will talk more about this process in our next contact.

**Task 2: “Describe an interesting person”****Stefanie’s drafts**

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>My person is my cousin Johannes, but I called him Jojo. He’s 15 years old and lives in Kaarst. He goes to a Gymnasium, but I don’t know it’s name. His dad is called Volker and his mum is called Alwine. His hair is blond and his eyes are blue. He’s very tall, but I don’t know how tall. Perhaps one and a half head taller than me. His hobbies are table tennis and computer games. He makes me happy, because he very often makes really funny jokes. He’s very nice and friendly, too. His pet was a rabbit, but it was die two years ago. It’s name was Klopfer. He hasn’t got any sister or brother.</p> <p>[117 words]</p>	<p>My person is my cousin Johannes, but I call him Jojo. He’s 15 years old and lives in Kaarst.</p> <p>There he goes to a Gymnasium, but I don’t know the name. His dad is called Volker and his mum is called Alwine.</p> <p>His hair is blond and his eyes are blue. He’s very tall, but I don’t know how tall. Perhaps one and a half head taller than me.</p> <p>His hobbies are table tennis and computer games.</p> <p>He makes me happy, because he very often makes really funny jokes. He’s very nice and friendly, too.</p> <p>His pet was a rabbit, but it has die two years ago. The name was Klopfer.</p> <p>Jojo hasn’t got a sister or a brother.</p> <p>[118 words]</p>

**Teacher’s comments**

After 1st Draft	After 2nd Draft
<p>Dear student,</p> <p><u>Content</u> I find your description interesting. You wrote about what your cousin looks like, some of his character traits and his hobbies. Perhaps you can add more about his personality and how he acts in certain situations. Remember: Details are important in character descriptions. They make a description more interesting.</p> <p><u>Organisation</u> Make paragraphs. Make all the sentences in a paragraph tell about the main idea so that your paragraph is clear. For example, put the last line after the line about parents.</p> <p><u>Language</u> Check the following points: L2:T, L4,15:P, L14:VF, L16:G. Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>Dear student,</p> <p>To revise does not mean only to correct mistakes. It means to add ideas, to take out ideas, to change the order of ideas etc. So, look at the content too. L15:it died.</p>

**Table 6: Summary of teacher comments and Stefanie's revisions in Task 2**

Function of revisions	Teacher's comments	Stefanie's revisions
<b>Text-base</b>		
Expansion	2	
Reduction		
Organisation	1	
Coherence		
Genre/Audience		
Style		
<b>Surface</b>		
Spelling		
Grammar	3	3
Lexis		
Syntax		
Punctuation	1	1
Format/ Clarity of phrases	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>

Table 6 clearly illustrates Stefanie's concern with her grammatical mistakes, which she was able to identify but not successfully correct in all cases. Stefanie completely ignored the teacher's comments about the expansion of content and support of the description with more details as well as the need for better organisation. She only responded to the suggestion for making paragraphs.

### Task 3: "A news story"

#### Stefanie's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p><u>The thief</u> It was last week on tuesday. It was about 3 o'clock and I was on way to the train as suddenly a men ran out of a clothes shop. He carried a bag and a handbag. A woman and a sales assistend came out of the shop and the woman shouted: "Stop the thief, he has stold my handbag!" We had luck because there was a police office and he caught the thief. <b>So the woman got her handbag bag.</b> And would give the police officer money for his help. But he doesn't taken it.</p>	<p><u>The thief</u> It <b>happened</b> last week on tuesday. It was about 3 o'clock <b>pm as</b> I was on <b>the</b> way to the train, as suddenly a <b>man</b> ran out of a clothes shop in <b>Loehr Strasse</b>. He carried a bag and a handbag. A woman and a sales <b>assistent</b> came out of the shop and the woman shouted: "Stop the thief, he has <b>stolen</b> my handbag!" <b>The passers around were very frightened and went quickly on.</b> <b>The woman</b> had luck because there was a police officer in front of the shop and he followed the thief until he caught him, and he throw at his jacket, so the thief was fallen down and the police officer took handcuffs on his hands. <b>The woman was very happy and she wanted to give the police officer money for his help, but he didn't</b></p>

[97 words]	<p>take it.          Than he drove with the thief to the police station.</p> <p>[153 words]</p>
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### Teacher's comments

After 1st Draft	After 2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>Dear student,</p> <p><u>Content</u>            I think your story would be more interesting if you wrote more details about what happened. For example: Where was the police officer? How did he catch the thief? What happened after that? Did he take him to the police station? Did more policemen come? How did the passers-by react? Also, you can add adverbs to your writing to give specific information about <i>how</i>, <i>when</i> or <i>where</i>. For example: the woman came out of the shop? How? So think more about the reader and what he needs to know.</p> <p><u>Organisation</u>            Good. Paragraphs?</p> <p><u>Language</u>            After you look at the content and organisation of your writing, check the following points: L1:P, L2:on the way/when, L3:T, L5:S, L6:VF, L10:S/she wanted to, L12:T.            Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>Dear student,</p> <p>Your second draft is much better because you added a lot of interesting information and you also corrected many of your grammatical mistakes.</p>

**Table 7: Summary of teacher comments and Stefanie's revisions in Task 3**

Function of revisions	Teacher's comments	Stefanie's revisions
<b>Text-base</b>		
Expansion	7	5
Reduction		
Organisation		
Coherence		
Genre/Audience	1	1
Style		
<b>Surface</b>		
Spelling	2	2
Grammar	4	2
Lexis	2	2
Syntax		
Punctuation	1	1
Format/ Clarity of phrases	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>14</b>

One important observation is that, in Task 3, Stefanie, in common with many students, paid a lot of attention to the teacher's suggestions for expansion. It turns out from the data analysis that the students' response to the teacher comments in Task 3 was massive. There is a possible explanation for this shift of attention. In situations where the teacher used specific questions in order to elicit more information about the text, the students responded by expanding the content. In Stefanie's case, the teacher's questions helped her see that there were some gaps in her story. As a result, Stefanie was able to recapture the schema of her story and fill out the gaps.

#### Task 4: "A letter about my town"

##### Stefanie's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>Dear Sally!</p> <p>How are you? I'm fine. I would ask you if you want visit me in next holiday. Because here in Koblenz it's very nice and here are very many sights for exemble "Das Deutsche Eck" it means "German Corner" it's the place where the Rhein and the Mosel come together. There is a big statue of Kaiser Willhelm on top of his horse. It's very nice. And here is a castle. It's very big and in the past there lived kings and queens but today there are only offices.</p> <p>In Koblenz are many shops and here are 3 cinemas. The Loehr Center is a big house where are many shops, cafés and restaurants.</p> <p>In Koblenz are many museums and old buildings. Here are many churches and many nice places where you can sit and have a break.</p> <p>So I gave you a lot of informations. I hope you come and visit me.</p> <p>Yours, ...</p> <p>[158 words]</p>	<p>Dear Sally!</p> <p>Thank you for your last letter, it was very nice. I would ask you if you want to visit me. When you will come I can show you many sights here in Koblenz and you will see Koblenz is very nice. Here is for examble "Das Deutsche Eck" it means "German Corner". That's the place where the Rhein and the Mosel come together. And there's a big, nice statue of Kaiser Willhelm on top of his horse. In Koblenz you can see a castle, too. It's very big. In the past there have lived kings and queens, but today there are only offices.</p> <p>Of curse in Koblenz aren't only sights. Here are 3 cinemas and many shops. And there's a big house it's called Loehr Center. There are many many shops and you can eat ice-cream there or you can sit at a nice place and relax.</p> <p>In Koblenz you also can spend your time in museums or old buildings or churches. Which are very nice.</p> <p>You also can make a picknick on the "Rhein-Anlagen" or in front of the castle or at a other place.</p> <p>So, I think I have gave you a lot of informations about Koblenz and I hope you will come and visit me. See you in Koblenz.</p> <p>Yours, ...</p> <p>[216 words]</p>

### Teacher's comments

After 1st Draft	After 2nd Draft
<p>Dear student,</p> <p><u>Content</u> You wrote some information about your town but I'm sure you can write more about the sights or the entertainment in Koblenz. Perhaps you can add some ideas in the introduction and ending.</p> <p><u>Organisation/Layout</u> Try to join better the ideas in the second half of your letter.</p> <p><u>Language</u> After you look at the content and organisation of your writing, check the following points:L1:missing words, L2:unnecessary pr., L3:there are/S, L4:P, L10:there are/unnecessary words, L11:V, L16:G. Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>Dear student,</p> <p>Your second draft looks better than the first because you added a few interesting ideas and made better connections between sentences. L2: I would like to ask you if ..., L3: When you come, L4:example, L10: there lived, L12:of course, there aren't ..., , L14: there's a big house called, L18: churches, which, L20: you can also have, L22: I gave you a lot of information.</p>

**Table 8: Summary of teacher comments and Stefanie's revisions in Task 4**

Function of revisions	Teacher's comments	Stefanie's revisions
<b>Text-base</b>		
Expansion	4	4
Reduction		2
Organisation		
Coherence	1	5
Genre/Audience		1
Style		5
<b>Surface</b>		
Spelling	1	1
Grammar	5	1
Lexis	1	
Syntax		
Punctuation	1	
Format/ Clarity of phrases		
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>19</b>

In Task 4, Stefanie continued to take the teacher's comments on content and organization seriously. Her revisions reflect the teacher's concern with the expansion of ideas and the successful linking of these ideas. Stefanie responded to the comments by adding a few details but mainly by reformulating large chunks of his letter, joining them differently and trying to achieve better results in terms of style and coherence. To a large extent, Stefanie achieved her goals. Her second draft is clearly an improved version of the first.



## Task 5: “My autobiography”

### Stefanie’s drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p><u>My life</u>            My name is .... And I was born on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1991 in hospital <b>which is</b> calls “Marienhof”.            My mothers name is Silvia, she’s 41 years old and work’s as a nurse. My dad calls Dietmar. He’s 40 years old and he’s a doctor.            I’ve got a pet. It’s name is Momo and she’s a hamster. She’s one year old.            When I was 3 years old I went o kindergarden. There Julia <b>and Jenna</b> were my best friend, <b>but today they aren’t</b>.            With 6 years I went to “Grundschule-Guls”. There Carina was my best friend.            When I was 10 years old I went to “Eichendorf Gymnasium” in Koblenz.            At this time my favourite dog Melli died. She wasn’t my dog but I often go withe her outside. I was on a class trip as it happened. A Husky killed her. I was very sad about that.            But now I’ve got a other favourite dog his name is Bassi and now he’s 2 years old.            At the Eichendorf Gymnasium I met Laura she’s a very good friend of me now. And ofcourse Isa. She’s my naighbour and now she’s my best friend, too.            I wish me a own dog and that all my friends and I have a good live without war.</p> <p><b>[213 words]</b></p>	<p><u>My life</u>            My name is .... And I was born on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1991. <b>The</b> hospital calls “Marienhof”.            My mother’s name is Silvia, she’s 41 years old and works as a nurse <b>in a hospital wich calls “Bruederkrankenhaus”</b>.            My dad calls Dietmar. He’s 40 years old and he’s a doctor.  <b>When I was 2 years old my grandfather died (He was my mum’s dad).</b>  <b>And in year 200 my grandmother died (she was the mum of my mother).</b>            With 3 years I went to kindergarden. There Julia <b>was my best friend, but when we were six years old Julia moved to “Moselweiss”</b>.            When I was 6 I went to “Grundschule-Guls”. <b>There I found a new best friend her name was Carina.</b>            When I was 10 years old I went to “Eichendorf Gymnasium” in Koblenz. And Carina to “Bischhofliche-Realschule”.  <b>At the Eichendorf Gymnasium I met Laura. Now we are very good friends. And ofcourse my best friend now is Isa. She’s my naighbour and in the same form.</b>            When I went to “Eichendorf Gymnasium” my favourite dog Melli died. She wasn’t my dog but I often go <b>out with</b> her. I was on a class trip as it happened. A Husky killed her. I was very sad about that.  <b>But now Melli’s owner bought a new dog. His name is Bassi. Now he’s 2 years old and he’s my favourite dog.</b>  <b>With 12 years I moved to Elfmorgen. It’s in Guls. Than I get a hamster. Her name is Momo and now she’s 1 year.</b>            In the future I wish me a dog and that there is no war at the world.</p> <p><b>[271 words]</b></p>

In Task 5, Stefanie made a wide range of revisions: she made additions (she reported significant events in her life such as the death of her grandparents); she demonstrated good organisational skills (she put all the information about her schooling together and then she referred to the different pets in her life); she refined parts of her text (‘When I was 6 I went

to “Grundschule-Guls. There I found a new best friend her name was Carina”). Stylistically, this chunk was better than the corresponding one in the first draft. Her revisions were considered effective.

**Table 9: Summary of Stefanie’s revisions in all Tasks**

Function of revisions	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4	Task 5
<b>Text-base</b>					
Expansion			5	4	9
Reduction				2	1
Organisation					9
Coherence				5	1
Genre/Audience			1	1	1
Style				5	
<b>Surface</b>					
Spelling			2	1	
Grammar		3	2	1	
Lexis			2		
Syntax					
Punctuation		1	1		1
Format/ Clarity of phrases		1	1		
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>22</b>

**Table 10: The correlation between revision and improvement**

	Revision 1 (no change)	Revision 2 (no change)	Revision 3 (revised version <i>better</i> )	Revision 4 (revised version <i>better</i> )	Revision 5 (revised version <i>better</i> )
Successful		4	11	14	17
Unsuccessful		1	2	3	2
Neutral			1	2	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>22</b>

Overall, Stefanie, like the previous student, was progressively metamorphosed from a writer with limited revision ability into a writer who made a wide range of revisions, particularly content and organisation, even when not prompted to do so. At the end of the study, Stefanie demonstrated a considerable grasp of what revision entails.

### Case study 3: Victoria

The third case study concerns a student who will be referred to as Victoria.

#### Task 1: “A childhood memory”

#### Victoria’s drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>I was nine years old, a few days before my communion. My cat was pregnant. In the bathroom, there stood a carton with an old blanked. Our cat was tired and went to the carton. Suddenly we saw that she was bleeding. She was crying and crying. I sat in front of the carton on the bathroom-floor. The cat didn’t look very happy. She was pushing. A few minutes ago we saw the head of a small cat. It was bleedy and looked like a dog. The cat licked the little baby. Then she began to push again. Another baby was there. It took three hours until the fifth and last cat was born. They were so cute and we were proud of our cat. We kept two of the babys, Nele and Bifi. The other cats we gave to friends. It was a great moment and experience to see how they were born. I’ll never forget it!!</p> <p>[158 words]</p>	<p>I was nine years old. It was a few days before my communion. My cat was pregnant. In the bathroom, there stood a carton with an old blanked. Our cat was tired and went to the carton. Suddenly we saw that she was bleeding. She was crying and crying. I sat in front of the carton on the bathroom-floor. The cat didn’t look very happy. She was pushing. A few minutes ago we saw the head of a small cat. It was bleedy and looked a bit like a dog. The cat licked the little baby. Then she began to push again. Another baby was born. It took three hours until the fifth and last cat was born. They were so cute and we were very proud of our cat. We kept two of the babys, “Nele” and “Bifi”. The other cats we gave to friends. It was a great moment and experience to see how they were born. I’ll never forget it!!</p> <p>[163 words]</p>

Victoria is a competent writer. Like the previous students, she demonstrated limited revision skills in the first task.

After the second draft, Victoria received the following commentary from the teacher.

Dear student,

- I think you are a very good writer. In this task, you described the delivery of the kittens in such detail that I could actually “see” what happened. This is a very important aspect of writing.
- You don’t seem to have any problems with correctness.
- You revised very little. Perhaps it would have been interesting to write about the others and how they reacted or what happened

## Task 2: “Describe an interesting person”

### Victoria’s drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>I want to describe a very, very, very good friend of mine. Her name is Nadine. She is as old as I am and in my form. We’re the same size. She has brown hair, brown eyes and wears glasses. <b>I can tell her everything because I know that she doesn’t tell anyone one of my very secret secrets. We do many things together. We listen to the same music. Our favourite bands are Die Artzte, Nirvana and die Toten Hosen. We are “Punk Sisters”. It’s very funny to see, what we do. We laugh almost all the time.</b> But I can talk to her also in a serious way. Her parents don’t come form Germany but I don’t see, that there are any problems. I don’t care if she’s german or whatever. What counts is that we understand eachother. I don’t know what to write anymore. She’s great!</p> <p>[149 words]</p>	<p>I want to describe a very, very, very good friend of mine. Her name is Nadine. She is as old as I am and <b>she’s</b> in my form. We’re the same size. She has brown hair, brown eyes and wears glasses. <b>She’s a friendly person, sometimes she is a bit shy. But I’m, too ....! We can talk to eachother in a funny and silly way but we’re also serious.</b> She’s not from Germany but I don’t care because there is no difference between us. When she’s sad I see that she needs help so I always help her. <b>I could write so much more about us, our friendship and things like that! ... But there’s no time left!</b></p> <p>[119 words]</p>

### Teacher’s comments

After 1st Draft	After 2nd Draft
<p>Dear student,  <u>Content</u>            I find your description very interesting. You wrote about what your friend looks like, some of her character traits and about your relationship. Perhaps you can add more details about her appearance, her personality and how she acts in certain situations.  <i>Remember:</i> When you describe a person, choose details that make that person special. This makes a description more interesting.</p> <p><u>Organisation</u>            Make paragraphs. Make all the sentences in a paragraph talk about the main idea so that your paragraph is clear.</p> <p><u>Language</u>            Check the following points: Lines 8,10: no commas before that/what etc.</p>	<p>Dear student,            A combination of ideas from the first and the second draft would be better.</p>

**Table 11: Summary of teacher comments and Victoria's revisions in Task 2**

Function of revisions	Teacher's comments	Victoria's revisions
<b>Text-base</b>		
Expansion	3	3
Reduction		8
Organisation		
Coherence		
Genre/Audience		
Style		4
<b>Surface</b>		
Spelling		
Grammar		
Lexis		
Syntax		
Punctuation	2	
Format/ Clarity of phrases	1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>15</b>

Victoria's revisions in this task serve as a good example to show that the high number of revisions, even if text-base, is not synonymous with improvement. The second draft is not exactly what one might call an improved version of the first because it seems to be less vivid and informative. Perhaps Victoria's last sentence ('there's no time left') is the explanation for the way she revised.

### Task 3: "A news story"

#### Victoria's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p><u>Dangerous fence</u> It was in Bavaria in 1991 in a village called Garrkirchen. A girl was playing in the garden of a house. Her family sat on the balcony. The girl was climbing on a fence. The fence had big and dangerous spikes. Suddenly the girl slitt and fell. One spike drilled into the girls neck. The girl started screaming. Her dad jumped off the balcony and put his daughter off the fence. He called an ambulance. The girl had to go to a hospital. She had luck and survived.</p> <p><b>[90 words]</b></p>	<p><u>Dangerous fence</u> It was in Bavaria in 1991 in a village called Garrkirchen. A girl <b>played</b> in the garden of a house. Her family sat on the balcony. The girl was climbing on a fence. The fence had big and dangerous spikes. Suddenly the girl <b>slipped</b> and fell. <b>One of the spikes pierced</b> into the girl's neck. The girl started screaming. Her dad <b>noticed that and</b> jumped off the balcony. <b>The girl was bleeding very bad. As her father put her off the fence, he called an ambulance. The ambulance arrived very quickly. The doctor took the girl to the hospital. She got operated and a few days later everything was okay.</b></p> <p><b>[112 words]</b></p>

### Teacher's comments

After 1st Draft	After 2nd Draft
<p>Dear student,</p> <p><u>Content</u> Your story was interesting and well-written. You can make it more interesting if you write some more details. For example: Was the girl bleeding? Was she crying or was she in shock? What happened in hospital? Was she operated on? Write any other details that might interest the reader.</p> <p><u>Organisation</u> Good. Paragraphs?</p> <p><u>Language</u> After you look at the content and organisation of your writing, check the following points: L2:T, L4:S, L5:V, L6:V. Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>Dear student,</p> <p>Don't just answer the questions. Try to think what else might be worth writing so as to make your text more interesting for the reader. L2:was playing/was sitting, L3:climbed, L5:pierced the girls' neck, L7:badly.</p>

**Table 12: Summary of teacher comments and Victoria's revisions in Task 3**

Function of revisions	Teacher's comments	Victoria's revisions
<b>Text-base</b>		
Expansion	5	5
Reduction		
Organisation		
Coherence		1
Genre/Audience		
Style		
<b>Surface</b>		
Spelling	1	
Grammar	1	1
Lexis	3	2
Syntax		
Punctuation		
Format/ Clarity of phrases		
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>

In Task 3, Victoria answered the teacher's questions and substituted some words for the wrong ones. She was not able to locate the grammatical problem in line 2 ('her family sat') and so changed a correct verb into an incorrect form ('a girl played' instead of 'a girl was playing'). Victoria's revisions in this task reveal her attempt to respond to the teacher feedback but also her unwillingness or inability to go beyond that and look at her draft with a more critical eye.

### Task 4: “A letter about my town”

#### Victoria’s drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>Hello!</p> <p>Let me tell you about a city in Rheinland-Pfalz: Koblenz! Two rivers flow together in Koblenz: Rhine and Mosel. At the place where they flow together, the German Corner (“<b>Deutsches Eck</b>”), there is a big statue of Kaiser Wilhelm II. <b>There are many big stairs and at the top of them Wilhelm II</b> sits on a horse. At this place there are many festivals <b>and things like that</b>. I love to be there and <b>to</b> sit on the stairs and to let the sunshine into my face.</p> <p>Another great sight is the castle in Koblenz. I think it was built by Kaiser Wilhelm. I don’t know what’s in it. But you can’t go inside. It’s closed for tourists. In the summer there are many concerts and festivals. It’s very beautiful!</p> <p>When you are at the German Corner you can see the castle Ehrenbreitstein up on a hill. It’s a big castle which was built by Kaiser Wilhelm III. There are also concerts, festivals and sometimes there is a theatre. <b>It’s nice to be there!</b></p> <p>Oh, I almost forgot an important festival! It’s called Rhine in flames (<b>Rhein in Flammen</b>). The biggest party is at the German Corner. There are fireworks which explode above the Rhein. It looks amazing! At the stairs in front of the statue there is a stage where play bands or entertainers and later that night they all watch the fireworks.</p> <p>Now, these were the most important things you have to know about Koblenz.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Love, ...</p> <p>[251 words]</p>	<p>Dear David!</p> <p><b>You asked some question about my town Koblenz. Now I want to tell you about it.</b> Two rivers flow together in Koblenz, <b>the</b> Rhine and <b>the</b> Mosel. At the place where they flow together, the German Corner, there is a big statue of Kaiser Wilhelm. He sits on a horse. At this place there are many festivals and things like that. I love to be there and sit on the <b>steps</b> and just let the sunshine <b>on me</b>.</p> <p>Another great sight is the castle in Koblenz. I think it was built by Kaiser Wilhelm. I don’t know what’s in it. But you can’t go inside. It’s closed for tourists. In the summer there are <b>often some festivals or concerts</b>. It’s very beautiful!</p> <p>When you are at the German Corner you can see the castle Ehrenbreitstein up on a hill. It’s a big castle which was built by Kaiser Wilhelm III. There are also concerts and festivals. <b>Sometimes there is a play on it</b>.</p> <p>Oh, I almost forgot an important festival! It’s called Rhine in flames. The biggest party is at the German Corner. There are fireworks which explode above the Rhein. It looks amazing! At the <b>steps</b> in front of the statue there is a stage where play bands or entertainers and later that night they all watch the fireworks.</p> <p><b>Now, I hope you know a bit more about my town. Write about yours!</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Love, ...</p> <p>[238 words]</p>

#### Teacher’s comments

After 1st Draft	After 2nd Draft
<p>Dear student,</p> <p><u>Content</u></p> <p>You wrote some interesting information about your town. I’m sure you can write more about the sights or the entertainment in Koblenz. It would be a good idea to explain in the introduction why you inform your friend about your town (eg. he asked you to do it or s/he wants to visit your place etc). Add some ideas in the ending.</p> <p><u>Organisation/Layout</u></p> <p>Good. Remember: most friendly letters have a standard form. Write a heading for the letter (use</p>	<p>Dear student,</p> <p>The introduction and the ending are much better now. Very good work on the whole.</p> <p>L1:questions.</p>

<p>your home address and today's date). Begin your letter with a greeting like "Dear ....". End your letter with a closing like "Your friend/ With love" and your name.</p> <p><u>Language</u></p> <p>After you look at the content and organisation of your writing, check the following points:L3:steps, L4:many festivals ...take place, L6:pr, L12:there's a play on.</p> <p>Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	
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**Table 13: Summary of teacher comments and Victoria's revisions in Task 4**

Function of revisions	Teacher's comments	Victoria's revisions
<b>Text-base</b>		
Expansion	3	
Reduction		2
Organisation		
Coherence		
Genre/Audience	4	5
Style		4
<b>Surface</b>		
Spelling		
Grammar	1	1
Lexis	3	
Syntax		
Punctuation		
Format/ Clarity of phrases		
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>

Victoria is a fluent writer. Her letter was well written from the start. The teacher suggested expansion of ideas as well as a more appropriate introduction and ending, and drew the student's attention to appropriate discourse conventions. The remaining comments concerned grammar, vocabulary and rephrasing. Victoria considered the comments and made revisions, most of which were meaning-preserving revisions. This means that Victoria made revisions at the micro-level aiming primarily to refine her writing within the sentence or the paragraph.



## Task 5: “My autobiography”

### Victoria’s drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>My name is ... I was born in Metternich on 28<sup>th</sup> November 1990. My parents are married for a long time. When I was three years old, I went into the kindergarten. Then we moved to Koblenz-Goldgrube next to my grandma and grandpa. We visited them every day. That was funny. My sister went to school and I wanted to go there, too but I was too young. Two years later we moved again but this time we only moved some streets near our old street. All years before I lived in flats but then we’ve lived in our own house. <b>I loved it. I did not like kindergarten but there I found many friends.</b> That was very nice. When I was in the first class I learned riding my bike. Then I always rode my bike on the street. At school I found many new friends and in the third class my class and I did a bike test. My friend Stefanie was very small so the bikes were too tall for her but all people liked it. With 10 years I went to the Gymnasium and I’m at the same school, now. Here it’s a bit harder <b>than the old one</b> but here are more people. <b>For the future I’ll do the Abitur get a good job to be rich and I’ll live a nice life.</b> In the fifth class we did a tour to our school-country-house. My school always do a sportsfestival and a week later a ‘Schulhoffruestueck’. All classes have to make special food or drinks. This year some people did a exchange to Trowbridge in England. My partner in England is my penfriend now but we want to visit each other this summer.</p> <p><b>[287 words]</b></p>	<p>My name is ... I was born in Metternich on 28<sup>th</sup> November 1990. My parents are married for a long time. When I was three years old, I went <b>to kindergarten. First I didn’t like kindergarten but later I found many friends so I loved it.</b> Then we moved to Koblenz-Goldgrube next to my grandma and grandpa. We visited them every day. That was funny. My sister went to school and I wanted to go there, too but I was too young. Two years later we moved again but this time we only moved some streets near our old <b>one.</b> All years before I lived <b>in a flat</b> but then we’ve lived in our own house. I loved it. I did not like kindergarten but there I found many friends. That was very nice. When I was in the first class I learned riding my bike. Then I always rode my bike on the street. At school I found many new friends and in the third class my class and I did a bike test. My friend Stefanie was very small so the bikes were too tall for her but <b>all had fun.</b> With 10 years I went to the Gymnasium and I’m at the same school, now. Here it’s a bit harder but here are more people. In the fifth class we did a tour to our school-country-house. My school always do a sportsfestival and a week later a ‘Schulhoffruestueck’. All classes have to make special food or drinks. This year some people did a exchange to Trowbridge in England. My partner in England is my penfriend now but we want to visit each other this summer. <b>For the future I’ll do the Abitur get a good job to be rich and I’ll live a nice life.</b></p> <p><b>[297 words]</b></p>

In Task 5, Victoria made limited revisions, which improved the coherence and style of her draft.

**Table 14: Summary of Victoria's revisions in all Tasks**

Function of revisions	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4	Task 5
<b>Text-base</b>					
Expansion	2	3	3	2	
Reduction		8		3	1
Organisation	1	4	2	6	1
Coherence					2
Genre/Audience	1				
Style			1		3
<b>Surface</b>					
Spelling					
Grammar			1	1	1
Lexis			2		
Syntax					
Punctuation					
Format/ Clarity of phrases					
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>

**Table 15: The correlation between revision and improvement**

	Revision 1 (no change)	Revision 2 (revised version <i>not better</i> )	Revision 3 (revised version <i>slightly better</i> )	Revision 4 (revised version <i>slightly better</i> )	Revision 5 (revised version <i>slightly better</i> )
Successful	4	5	6	9	4
Unsuccessful		10	1	1	1
Neutral			2	2	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>

Like most students in this study, Victoria began the study with limited revision skills. As she gained more experience, she tried to improve the correctness and texture of her writing. It is particularly interesting to note that despite the high number of revisions, her second drafts were only small improvements of the first. Her revisions, however, should not be devalued. Victoria was well aware that her writing carried interesting messages and that her language was fluent and accurate. Although her revisions led to slightly improved writing, the final products were very good. Victoria had already developed a good knowledge of how writing works and she was making good use of her editorial skills (correcting spelling, punctuation, grammar). It is also highly significant that Victoria's revisions matched the teacher's concerns.

## Case study 4: Carolin

The fourth case study concerns a student who will be referred to as Carolin.

### Task 1: “A childhood memory”

#### Carolin’s drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>It was on the 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday of my uncle. He had a great and a big party in his big garden. We all had lots of fun at the beginning, because there were lots of children and we all played with my uncles dog. The food there was very good, because my uncle does the best barbecue. As we played with the dog in the under garden, a boy came to us. “There’s a old man on the terasse. He fell down and now they going to phone the paramedics” he said. “Which old man?”, we all asked at the same time. Then we all ran up to the terasse, because we all wanted to know who it is. As we arrived, we can’t believe. It was our grandpa. In this moments I remember all moments in my hole life that I had with my grandpa. I can’t understand, because he was so fit and active all the time. “Why? Why he? Why know?”, I asked myself. I realized that’s really him that lied on the floor. A minute later my two uncles and my father drove with him to the hospital. We all waited on the street and we all cried. The time has gone by so slowly. I think in this time we all thought the same: “Is he going to die?” I’m very glad that he don’t. But this day was the most terrible day in my life.</p> <p>[239 words]</p>	<p>It was on the 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday of my uncle. On this day he organized a great and big party in his big garden. At the beginning we all had lots of fun, because there were lots of children and we all played with the dog. The food there was very good, because my uncle does the best barbecue in town. As we played with the dog in the under part of the garden, a boy came to us. “There’s a old man on the terrace. He fell down and now they going to phone the paramedics” he said. “Which old man?”, we all asked at the same time. Then we all ran up the terrace, because we all wanted to know which old man he ment. As we arrived, we couldn’t believe it. It was our grandpa. In this moment I remembered all moments in my hole life that I had with my grandpa. I couldn’t understand, because he was so fit all the time. “Why? Why? Why?”, I asked myself. I realized that it was really my grandpa who laid on the floor. A minute later my two uncles and my father drove with him to the hospital. We all waited and we all cried. The time has gone by so slowly. I think in this time we all thought the same: “Would he die?” I’m very glad that he don’t. But this day was the most terrible day in my life.</p> <p>[243 words]</p>

Carolin is a competent writer, who demonstrated from the first task an awareness of the process of revision. She was concerned with text improvement and made a variety of adaptations to suit the purpose. Indeed, in Task 1 she worked in two directions: polishing her style with additions and reformulations at word or phrase level, and correcting grammatical mistakes. Her changes were successful because she possessed the necessary linguistic resources for effective reformulation. Her form-focused changes improved the grammatical quality of the revised version to some extent.

After the second draft, Carolin received the following commentary from the teacher.

<p>Dear student,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I think you are a good and fluent writer. You used a lot of important details to inform the reader about what happened that day. You used dialogue and you talked about your thoughts and feelings.</li> <li>• You don't seem to have any serious problems with correctness.</li> <li>• You made some very successful revisions. We will talk more about this process in our next contact.</li> </ul>
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## Task 2: “Describe an interesting person”

### Carolin’s drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>A person who makes me happy? Or an interesting person? I know so much and I don't know who I'm going to choose. There are my friends, sisters and my family. Oh, I know! I chosed my mum now, because she was the first interesting person in my life!</p> <p>Ok, my mum is called Martina. She has brown eyes, black hairs and isn't bigger than I. But that's only what she looks like! She's very intelligent and strong. That's why I believe in her. Sometimes you have to support her but then she does it on her own way.</p> <p>She's there for me every time, and I mean always. If I'm sad, she's there to help me up and to hold my hand. Oh, I forget! She loves Italy! And she talks the Italy language very well, I think. She went to Italy this year, but I phoned her everyday. She's always there, if I got problems. And I can tell her everything. She can keep secrets for ever. And she knows me longer than all others. But be carefull! Sometimes you're mum can make you sad, thoughtful and angry for a time.</p> <p>[192 words]</p>	<p>A person who makes me happy? I know so much and I don't know who I'm going to choose. I choose my mum now, because she is the person I've known longest.</p> <p>My mothers name is Martina. She's got brown eyes and hairs, which are as long as my hairs. But that's only what she looks like and there are more important things! Most important for me is her character and how she acts in certain situations. If I'm sad, she would make me happy and help me. And if I'm too happy, she won't make me sad. But only sometimes I have to support her. Maybe when she don't know what to do you should help her and say her what to do. I think my mum is very strong and intelligent. In her free time she likes it to learn the Italy language or travel to Italy. She speaks it very well. She's always there for me, too! If she travel to Italy, you could phone her everyday. But sometimes she can make you angry! For example, when she doesn't do what I want!</p> <p>Finally I hope later I'll be a great mum like her!</p> <p>[197 words]</p>

### Teacher’s comments

After 1st Draft	After 2nd Draft
<p>Dear student,</p> <p><u>Content</u></p> <p>I find your description interesting. You wrote what your mother looks like, some of her character traits and about your relationship. Perhaps you can add more details about her personality and how she acts</p>	<p>Dear student,</p> <p>Your writing is a little better this time because you added some interesting ideas about your mum, wrote a good ending and corrected a few mistakes. L5:no comma before 'because', L6:mother's,</p>

<p>in certain situations. <i>Remember:</i> Details are important in character descriptions. They make a description more interesting. Lines 11-12 and last line: explain or give an example.</p> <p><u>Organisation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Make paragraphs. Make all the sentences in a paragraph talk about the main idea so that your paragraph is clear.</li> <li>- Line 19: you have repeated the same idea before.</li> <li>- You need an ending.</li> </ul> <p><u>Language</u></p> <p>Check the following points: L4: VF, L8: G, L10: S, L16:V, L19: T, L22: S Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>L7:hair/is, L12: she will make, L14:and if I'm happy, L16:doesn't know, L18:tell her, L20:likes to learn/Italian, L22:when she is in Italy, we talk on the phone every day.</p>
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**Table 16: Summary of teacher comments and Carolin's revisions in Task 2**

Function of revisions	Teacher's comments	Carolin's revisions
<b>Text-base</b>		
Expansion	5	6
Reduction		6
Organisation		
Coherence	1	6
Genre/Audience		
Style		6
<b>Surface</b>		
Spelling	2	1
Grammar	3	1
Lexis	1	1
Syntax		
Punctuation		
Format/ Clarity of phrases	1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>27</b>

Carolin received 6 comments, which concerned the expansion of content and support for description as well as the need for more coherent, more concise and less repetitive phrasing. The remaining comments concerned surface features, such as spelling and verb tense forms. That Carolin attended to the feedback is clear from the changes she made in her revised draft. She followed a more logical sequence in her description by explaining how her mother acts in different situations, delineating some traits of her character, and supporting her description with examples. She also provided an ending to the text based on the teacher's comment. She also tried to change the style of parts of the text, perhaps with a view to making it more attractive to the reader. For example, she cut down on the reflective content of her introduction or replaced certain sentences with others. There is no doubt that

Carolyn was motivated by the teacher's prompts to make her second draft more complete, more organised and more coherent than the first.

Based on the prompts, she focused her attention primarily on the global concerns and to a lesser extent on spelling and grammar. The majority of Carolyn's revisions were treated as successful, especially those revisions which concerned addition of ideas and their position in the text. Her stylistic changes were not always effective (e.g. 'If I'm sad, she would make me happy and help me' is less powerful and less accurate than the initial 'If I'm sad, she's there to help me up and to hold my hand'). In addition, the reduction of ideas that concerned her mum's character (e.g. 'And I can tell her everything. She can keep secrets for ever') was regarded as unsuccessful because it deprived the reader of some interesting and relevant information.

### Task 3: "A news story"

#### Carolyn's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>Where is the boy?!</p> <p>It happend when I was six years old. I think it was on a Saturday in summer and I went out to buy something on a farm just 5 minutes away from our house. Just some metres away from this farm is a crossroad but it's a very safe crossroad so if you drive a car, you will see everything. Then I saw a black boy with his bike and he just rode some rounds with it on a street near the crossroad. I knew him, because he lived in our town. But then I went to the farm. About 10 minutes later I went back to home, but I stopped at the crossroad because there was a big bus and behind him was the boy's bike. It lays on the ground. I just asked. "Where is the boy?", because his bike was there but the boy? Meanwhile the police and paramedics arrived. I was speakless and I had to realize that the boy crashed into the bus and died. I couldn't see him because he lays on the other side of the bus. I didn't know how it happened but I knew it was the boy I saw 10 minutes ago. It was very hard for me to see it so I went home, but the newspaper on the days after that accident remembered me on the boy I saw before he died.</p> <p>[238 words]</p>	<p>Where is the boy?!</p> <p>It happened when I was six years old. I think it was on a Saturday in summer and I went out to buy something on a farm just 5 minutes away from our house. Just some metres away from this farm is a crossroads but it's a very safe crossroads so if you drive a car, you will see everything. Then I saw a black boy with his bike on a street near the crossroads. I knew him because he lived in our town. But then I went to the farm. About 10 minutes later I went back home but I stopped at the crossroads because there was a big bus and behind it was the boy's bike. It lay on the ground. I just asked. "Where is the boy?", because his bike was there but the boy? Meanwhile the police and paramedics arrived. I was speechless and I had to realized that the boy had been hit from the bus and died. I couldn't see him because he lay on the other side of the bus. I didn't know how it happened but I knew it was the boy I saw 10 minutes before he died.</p> <p>[201 words]</p>

### Teacher's comments

After 1st Draft	After 2nd Draft
<p>Dear student,</p> <p><u>Content</u> I hope this is not a real story. If it is, it's really sad that you had to see that happen. The story was well-written and interesting because you made the reader want to read on to find out what happened.</p> <p><u>Organisation</u> Good. Can you make paragraphs?</p> <p><u>Language</u> After you look at the content and organisation of your writing, check the following points: L1:S, L6:crossroads, L9:T, L10:no comma before 'and, that, but, because', L13:no 'to', L14:G, L15:T, L18:speechless, L19:realised that ....had been hit, L22:T, L25:V, L26:pr. Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>Dear student,</p> <p>You revised very little this time. Perhaps it would have been a good idea to write more about your feelings or other people's reactions. L11: I was coming back home when ...L14: He was lying, L18:I realised, L18: hit by the bus.</p>

**Table 17: Summary of teacher comments and Carolin's revisions in Task 3**

Function of revisions	Teacher's comments	Carolin's revisions
<b>Text-base</b>		
Expansion		
Reduction		1
Organisation		
Coherence		1
Genre/Audience	1	
Style		
<b>Surface</b>		
Spelling	1	1
Grammar	6	7
Lexis	4	2
Syntax		
Punctuation	1	1
Format/ Clarity of phrases	1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>13</b>

There are a number of things to note with respect to the changes recorded in Table 17. The teacher's comments began with a general evaluative comment but did not include any suggestions for expansion or clarification. The feedback, therefore, was rather weak in this area, which is probably the reason why Carolin was concerned with the form of the text rather than the content. The teacher's focus on correctness is reflected in Carolin's revisions. In short, Carolin made 13 formal changes, which corresponded to the specific prompts given by the teacher.

## Task 4: “A letter about my town”

### Carolyn’s drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>If you will ever travel to Koblenz, you have to visit some important.</p> <p>At first you should visit the German Corner which is called “Deutsches Eck” in German. It’s where the Mosel flows into the Rhein. You’ll find it very easily, because it’s a real big memorial for ...</p> <p>You can see him and his horse on it. If you are there, you should go up all those stages to the third floor and then you will see the pretty surrounding. But if you want to go shopping, don’t go in the old street. Just go to the Lohr Center and surrounding Lohrstreets. There you get everything.</p> <p>Another interesting place is the fortress Ehrenbreitstein. You can park in town and go up the hills by a chair lift. That’s cool because you can see the hole city of Koblenz. When you arrive the fortress you can go in the museum, in the café or just look the hills down and watch the city. Maybe you can see an interesting place from the fortress looking at the city. Maybe you see one place, which you travel to later, because they are many different seights left.</p> <p>[194 words]</p>	<p>If you ever travel to Koblenz, you will have to visit some important seights.</p> <p>At first you should visit the German Corner which is called “Deutsches Eck” in German. It’s where the Mosel flows into the Rhein. You’ll find it very easily, because it’s a really big memorial for ?.</p> <p>You can see him and his horse on it. If you are there, you should go up all those stairs to the third floor and then you will see the pretty surroundings. But if you want to go shopping, don’t go in the old street. Just go to the Lohr Center and surrounding Lohrstreets. There you get everything.</p> <p>Another interesting place is the fortress Ehrenbreitstein. You can park in town and go up the hills by a chair lift. That’s cool because you can see the whole city of Koblenz. When you arrive the fortress you can go to the museum, to the café or just look the hills down and watch the city. Maybe you can see an interesting place from the fortress looking at the city. Maybe you see one place, when you travel to later, because they are many different seights left.</p> <p>Dear Amanda, How are you? I’m fine! In this letter I’m going to tell you about some seights here in Koblenz because I heard you’re going to travel to Koblenz next summer. Let’s start! A very important seight is the German Corner. It’s a landmark of Koblenz. In German it’s called “Deutsches Eck” and it’s a big memorial standing there where the Mosel flows into the Rhein. There are three floors and you can go up those stairs and watch down. There’s a street along the river to the German Corner and on this street are celebrations like fleamarket or ....</p> <p>But if you want to go shopping, you should go to the “Lohr Center” and the “Lohrstreets” in its surroundings. Another interesting place is the fortress Ehrenbreitstein. You can go there by a chair lift, too. That’s really cool because you drive up the hills and see Koblenz and its pretty surroundings. When you’re at the fortress you should also go to the museum and the café. In the museum are shown interesting exhibitions. There are so many seights in Koblenz and if you want, I could show you some when you’re already here. Hope to see you as soon as possible! Love, ...</p> <p>[205 words]</p>



### Teacher's comments

After 1st Draft	After 2nd Draft
<p>Dear student,</p> <p><u>Content</u> You wrote interesting information about your town but I'm sure you can write more about the sights in Koblenz or the entertainment. It would be a good idea to write a small introduction to explain why you inform your friend about your town (eg. he asked you to do it or s/he wants to visit your place or .....). Write an ending.</p> <p><u>Organisation/Layout</u> Your text doesn't look like a letter. Remember: most friendly letters have a standard form. Write a heading for the letter (use your home address and today's date). Begin your letter with a greeting like "Dear ....". End your letter with a closing like "Your friend/ With love" and your name.</p> <p><u>Language</u> After you look at the content and organisation of your writing, check the following points: L1:T, L2:missing word, L6:P/really, L7:for whom?, L9:V, L11:surroundings, L18:S/missing pr, L19:pr, L20:WO, Ls21-22:rewrite more clearly, L23:when you .., L24:S. Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>Dear student,</p> <p>This time your text looks like a real letter. Also you wrote an appropriate introductory and closing paragraph and made some successful changes throughout. Your second draft is much better than the first.</p> <p>L4:sights, L7: it is a landmark, not like, L14: fleamarkets or funfairs, L20: go up, L23: in the museum there are some interesting exhibitions.</p>

**Table 18: Summary of teacher comments and Carolin's revisions in Task 4**

Function of revisions	Teacher's comments	Carolin's revisions
<b>Text-base</b>		
Expansion	5	6
Reduction		4
Organisation		
Coherence		2
Genre/Audience	1	4
Style		6
<b>Surface</b>		
Spelling	2	1
Grammar	5	4
Lexis	3	3
Syntax	1	
Punctuation	1	
Format/ Clarity of phrases	1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>30</b>

In the first commentary, the teacher suggested expansion of ideas and drew the student's attention to the absence of appropriate discourse conventions. The remaining comments

concerned grammar, vocabulary, syntax and rephrasing. Significantly, Carolin incorporated all of the teacher's suggestions into her revised draft by adopting the following strategy: she corrected as many mistakes as she was able to identify on the first draft and then freed from this concern, she wrote a better, fresher and richer version of the text, which complied with the typical discourse conventions for informal letter writing.

The comment 'rewrite more clearly' referred to the sentence "Maybe you can see an interesting place from the fortress looking at the city". The request for clarification made no sense to Carolin perhaps because the text already seemed clear to her. Perhaps she was not able to figure out what was wrong with this statement in order to rewrite it and therefore decided to delete it (not a desirable change). This stresses the need for more precise and explicit comments. As Table 18 indicates, Carolin's revisions covered a wide span of revisions. The second draft was clearly an improved version of the first.

### Task 5: "My autobiography"

#### Carolin's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>I was born on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January in Koblenz in the hospital Marienhof. My cousin and me were like brother and sister. We went together to the kindergarden and had a lot of fun. My cousin Johannes was and is a disaster child. He jumped on the couch and suddenly he fell down and injurjed himself at the mouth. We had to drive to hospital quick and had to wait long, but the doctor helped him. When I was 2 years and I burned of the kitchen. Some tubbawave stood on the cooker and I turned of the button and minutes later the hole kitchen burned! My mum carried me in my room and tried to kill the fire, my dad helped her. We were all not injured.</p>	<p>I was born on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January in Koblenz in the hospital Marienhof. My cousin and me were like brother and sister. We went together to the kindergarden and had a lot of fun. My cousin Johannes was and is a disaster child. He jumped on the couch and suddenly he fell down and <b>injured</b> himself at the mouth. We had to drive to hospital quick and had to wait long, but the doctor helped him. When I was 2 years and I burned of the kitchen. Some tubbawave stood on the cooker and I turned of the button. <b>Minutes</b> later the hole kitchen burned! My mum carried me in <b>the living room</b> and tried to kill the fire, my dad helped her. We were all not injured.</p> <p><b>When I was three my mum told me, that I had to put my dummy under my bed and in the night the 'dummy witch' will come to take the dummy, but for this there will lay a little or big present. Well, so I put my dummy under my bed and wished myself a beautiful princess dress for carnival. The next day my dummy was away, but at my cupboard hanged the beautiful princess dress. My mum came in my room and smiled at me. My brother and me are and was the best team. We</b></p>

[129 words]	<p>got everything we wanted when we worked together, well, not everything!          Now he has got two children Mary and Julia. They entertain the hole family and I have a lot of fun with my two nices.          Well, when I was 10 I told my best friend because of another girl. But now I have got my three best friends Anne, Lisa and Sandra and I'm sure: I will never lose them!</p>
	[297 words]

In her second draft, Carolin added a long multisentence. It seems that her first draft was not finished, and that she would have written more if she had had more time.

**Table 19: Summary of Carolin's revisions in all Tasks**

Function of revisions	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4	Task 5
<b>Text-base</b>					
Expansion	4	6		11	11
Reduction	1	8	3	4	
Organisation	3	6	2	6	
Coherence	1	4			1
Genre/Audience					
Style			1	1	
<b>Surface</b>					
Spelling	2	1	1	1	
Grammar	4	1	5	4	1
Lexis		1		3	
Syntax					
Punctuation			1		
Format/ Clarity of phrases					
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>13</b>

Table 19 shows Carolin's revisions throughout the study. It is interesting to note that the number of revisions fluctuates over the five tasks. Carolin's drafts serve as another example showing that the number of revisions is not synonymous with better quality.

**Table 20: The correlation between revision and improvement**

	Revision 1 (revised version <i>slightly better</i> )	Revision 2 (revised version <i>better</i> )	Revision 3 (no change)	Revision 4 (revised version <i>better</i> )	Revision 5 (revised version <i>better</i> )
Successful	11	17	10	29	13
Unsuccessful		8	3		
Neutral	4	2		1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>13</b>

Overall, Carolin experimented with a variety of revisions. She demonstrated her revision skills from the beginning of the study. She had a tendency to make microstructural revisions (e.g. additions of chunks of information), which did not affect the reading of the text. On the other hand, her stylistic substitutions improved the texture of her writing. Indeed, her revisions led to further refinement, a process that continued throughout the five tasks. As she gained more experience, her experiments with revision developed, slowly moving closer to a view of revision as a means of reaching new understanding or gaining new knowledge (see Task 4). It is also highly significant that Carolin’s revisions closely mirrored the teacher’s concerns and that when her revisions were text-base, they led to improved writing.

### Case study 5: Daniel

The fifth case study concerns a student who will be referred to as Daniel.

#### Task 1: “A childhood memory”

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>Two years ago I and my father went to Roma in Italy. We lived in an sistershome, but a hotelgroup bought it. The price for the room and the meals was the same. We was in Roma for a week. On the first day we looked with our group for the bus timetable into the town. On the middays in the week we must bought our midday meal ourself. On the third day we went to the Spanish stairs in the night. There was very much peoples. They made some music with there instruments. The funniest thing in Roma was the undergroundtrain. Wednesdays we have an visitation by the papst. The dom at the Peters place is very big. On Saturday we went home.</p> <p>[125 words]</p>	<p>Two years ago I and my father went to Roma in Italy. We lived in an sistershome, but a hotelgroup bought it. The price for the room and the meals was the before. We went to Roma for a week. On the first day we looked with our group for the bus timetable into the town. On the middays in the week we must bought our midday meal ourself. On the third day we went to the Spanish stairs in the night. There was very much pupils. They made some music with there instruments. The best thing in Roma was the undergroundtrain. Wednesdays we have an visitation by the papst. The dom at the Peters place is very big. On Saturday we went home with the train.</p> <p>[128 words]</p>

It is clear that Daniel’s writing presents a lot of problems with regard to grammatical accuracy. In Task 1, Daniel made limited revisions.

## Task 2: “Describe an interesting person”

### Daniel’s drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>I want to tell you about my father. He’s <b>very</b> great and he work in a forest office. He is the second chief, but he write down the holiday times from his colleges. In his midday brake he walks around the forest. He works from 7 am to 5 pm. In his spare time he works around our house by the garden. His favourite sport is jogging. After work he watch TV. My dad is 1,94 m tall and very strong. He has black hair and is 41 years old. His birthday is on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November and he was born 1962 in Malborn by Hermeskeil (Trier). I like him very much. He has 3 brothers and a sister.</p> <p>[120 words]</p>	<p>I want to tell you about my father. He’s great and he works in a forest office. He is the second chief, but he writes down the holiday times from his colleges. In his midday <b>break</b> he walks around the forest. He works from 7 am to 5 pm. In his spare time he works around our house <b>and at the</b> garden. His favourite sport is jogging. After work he watch TV (<b>in the evening</b>). My dad is 1,94 m tall and very strong. He has black hair and is 41 years old. His birthday is on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November and he was born 1962 in Malborn by Hermeskeil (Trier). He has 3 brothers and a sister. I like him very much.</p> <p>[112 words]</p>

### Teacher’s comments

After 1st Draft	After 2nd Draft
<p>Dear student,  <u>Content</u>            I find your description interesting. You wrote about what your father looks like and some of his character traits. Perhaps you can add more about his appearance and how he acts in certain situations. For example, explain why you think he is great and what makes him special. Remember: Details are important in character descriptions.</p> <p><u>Organisation</u>            - You need to reorganise your text. Put description of physical appearance before personality. Make all the sentences in a paragraph talk about the main idea so that your paragraph is clear.            - You need an ending.</p> <p><u>Language</u>            Check the following points:            L1: omit ‘very’/ VF, L2: VF/ also rewrite sentence to make meaning more clear, L3: S (2x), L5:pr/ VF.            Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>Dear student,            You corrected many of your mistakes. But to revise does not mean only to correct. It means to rewrite. It means to add ideas, to leave out ideas, to change the order of ideas, to improve. Next time try to do more about the content. L3:of his colleagues, L6:he watches, L8:born in 1962.</p>

Daniel did not respond to the teacher’s text-base comments, only the surface.

**Table 21: Summary of teacher comments and Daniel's revisions in Task 2**

Function of revisions	Teacher's comments	Daniel's revisions
<b>Text-base</b>		
Expansion	4	1
Reduction		
Organisation	1	
Coherence		1
Genre/Audience		
Style		
<b>Surface</b>		
Spelling	2	1
Grammar	5	4
Lexis		
Syntax		
Punctuation		
Format/ Clarity of phrases	2	
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>

**Task 3: "A news story"****Daniel's drafts**

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p><u>Trick-tradition in our village</u>            In my village we've got a tradition on carnaval. We play tricks on other persons. This year we go to family Balbier. They was not at home. We went to the garden house. There my friend Stefan opened it and we put all things in it out. We put the things on the garden. After that we look for a ladder. We found one and put it on the house wall. When we finished that we went quietly to the garage. Near it was a pile wood. We carry it in front of the garage door. The Balbiers came three days later home. The next day it was already Ok.</p> <p>[115 words]</p>	<p><u>Trick-tradition in our village</u>            In my village near Koblenz, we've – we that are my friends and I – got a tradition at carnaval. We play tricks on other people. This year we went to family Balbier. They wasn't at home. We went to the garden house. There my friend Stefan opened it and we put all things in it out and took them on the garden. After that we looked for a ladder. I found one and my friends helped me to put the ladder on to the wall of the Balbier-house. When we finished that, we went to the garage-door. Quietly we look for wood. Domminik saw a pile wood near the garage wall. We carried it in front of the garage-door. Three days later the Balbiers came home. They was a little bit angry, but the next day it was already Ok.</p> <p>[144 words]</p>

**Teacher's comments**

After 1st Draft	After 2nd Draft
<p>Dear student,  <u>Content</u>            Your story was good but you can make it more interesting if you write some more details. For</p>	<p>Dear student,            You made a better effort to revise this time. You have included a few details into your story. That was good.</p>

<p>example: Where is your village? Who is 'we'? When did you go to the house? At night? What happened when the Balbiers saw the mess? Did they get angry or did they think it was funny? Write any other details that might interest the reader.</p> <p><u>Organisation</u> Good. Paragraphs?</p> <p><u>Language</u> After you look at the content and organisation of your writing, check the following points: L1:pr, L2:people/T/VF, L4:took, L5:T, L6:missing word, L7:missing pr/T, L8:WO, L9:what do you mean by the last sentence? Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>L1: that is, my friends and I, L4: they were, L10: looked, L13: everything was back to normal.</p>
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**Table 22: Summary of teacher comments and Daniel's revisions in Task 3**

Function of revisions	Teacher's comments	Daniel's revisions
<b>Text-base</b>		
Expansion	6	5
Reduction		
Organisation		
Coherence		1
Genre/Audience		
Style		2
<b>Surface</b>		
Spelling		
Grammar	7	4
Lexis	1	1
Syntax	1	1
Punctuation		1
Format/ Clarity of phrases	1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>15</b>

In Task 3, Daniel began to respond to more global concerns. He read the teacher's questions and expanded the content based on them (e.g. he explained 'we', where the village is, how the people reacted). He was also able to correct most of his grammatical mistakes with the exception of they was (subject-verb agreement).

### Task 4: “A letter about my town”

#### Daniel’s drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>Dear Florian,</p> <p>You ask me to tell you about Koblenz. Koblenz is a great town with ca. 100,000 people. My favourite street is the Loerstrasse, because there are many shops and the Loehr-Center. The Loehr-Center is a building, where are many shops in. Electro shops or restaurants, clothes shops and other stores. Then you ask me about rivers and places and other things. There are two rivers at the (Rand) of Koblenz. Mosel and Rhein. And places are on some places in Koblenz. For example the Plan. It’s a place where are every week a week-market. There you can buy potatos, marmalade and other good thinks. An other great place is the train-station. There are some shops who sells bread and other thinks and a McDonalds. So, I must stop now because my mother ask me to come eat.</p> <p>Bye. Your friend</p> <p>...</p> <p>[143 words]</p>	<p>Dear Florian,</p> <p>You asked me to tell you about Koblenz. It’s a great town with about 100,000 people. My favourite street is the Loerstrasse because there are many shops and the Loehr-Center. The Loehr-Center is a building where are many shops in. There are electro shops or restaurants, clothes shops and other stores. Then you ask me about rivers and places and other things. There are crossing two rivers Koblenz. Mosel and Rhein. And places are on some places in Koblenz. For example the Plan. It’s a place where are every week a open market. There you can buy potatos, marmalade and other good things. An other great place is the train-station. There are some shops who sells bread and other things and a McDonalds. So, I must stop now because my mother ask me to come and eat.</p> <p>Bye. Your friend</p> <p>...</p> <p>[143 words]</p>

#### Teacher’s comments

After 1st Draft	After 2nd Draft
<p>Dear student,</p> <p><u>Content</u> You wrote interesting information about your town but I’m sure you can write more about the sights in Koblenz or the entertainment.</p> <p><u>Organisation/Layout</u> Good. Paragraphs?</p> <p><u>Language</u> After you look at the content and organisation of your writing, check the following points: L1:T, L3:P, L4:there are ... or Lohr Center is a shopping centre, L6:crossing Koblenz, L7:rewrite more clearly, L8:an open market/S, L9:S, L10:G, L11:V/T/missing word. Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>Dear student,</p> <p>I’d like to tell you one more time that revision does not mean only correcting mistakes.</p>



**Table 23: Summary of teacher comments and Daniel's revisions in Task 4**

Function of revisions	Teacher's comments	Daniel's revisions
<b>Text-base</b>		
Expansion	2	
Reduction		
Organisation		
Coherence		1
Genre/Audience		
Style		
<b>Surface</b>		
Spelling	1	1
Grammar	5	3
Lexis	3	2
Syntax		
Punctuation	1	2
Format/ Clarity of phrases	2	
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>9</b>

Daniel concentrated largely on surface revisions and managed to identify many of his linguistic problems.

### Task 5: "My autobiography"

#### Daniel's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>My life I, ... was borned in Koblenz on the 7<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1990. Now I'm 13 years old and I live in Winningen. I've got a lot of friends in Winningen. I drive with the train to school. I'm in the ..... Gymnasium in Koblenz. I don't like English and france, but I like math and sport. I play tennis since I was 7 and now I play tennis too. I also play tennis and sucker in my village. I wish for my future that I'm going to a interviewer and I wish I'm married with 25 years. Perhaps I go on an university. In my freetime I look TV, play computer, meet friends, play tennis or football or go in the openair swimming pool. <b>First of all I like school, but now it is very hard and some teachers are strong and strict, too.</b></p> <p>[125 words]</p>	<p>My life I, ... was borned in Koblenz on the 7<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1990. Now I'm 13 years old and I live in Winningen. I've got a lot of friends in Winningen. I drive with the train to school. I'm in the ..... Gymnasium in Koblenz. I don't like English and french, but I like math and sport. <b>First of all I like school, but now it is very hard and sometimes are teacher very strict.</b> I play tennis since I was 7 years old and now I play tennis too. I also play tennis and sucker in my village. I wish for my future that I'm going to a <b>reporter</b> and I wish I'm married <b>and I want to have children.</b> Perhaps I go <b>at</b> an university. In my freetime I look TV, play computer, meet friends, play tennis or <b>sucker</b> or go <b>at</b> the openair swimming pool.</p> <p>[148 words]</p>

**Table 24: Summary of Daniel's revisions in all Tasks**

Function of revisions	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4	Task 5
<b>Text-base</b>					
Expansion	1	1	4	2	1
Reduction		1			1
Organisation	1	1	2	1	1
Coherence		1	1		
Genre/Audience					
Style			1		
<b>Surface</b>					
Spelling		1		1	
Grammar		2	4	1	3
Lexis	3		1	2	2
Syntax			1		
Punctuation			1	2	
Format/ Clarity of phrases					
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>

**Table 25: The correlation between revision and improvement**

	Revision 1 (no change)	Revision 2 (no change)	Revision 3 (revised version <i>slightly better</i> )	Revision 4 (no change)	Revision 5 (no change)
Successful	4	6	14	8	4
Unsuccessful	1		1	1	2
Neutral		1			2
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>

The formal features of writing (spelling and correct forms) were considered to be most important for Daniel throughout the five tasks. His revision ability developed in part but only in terms of such features. That's why Daniel's second drafts were not regarded as improvements of the first. Daniel seemed to be rather unwilling or inhibited to make more global revisions. His choices and decisions also indicate that his understanding of revision was limited.

In Daniel's case, the second drafts resemble the original. A part of the unsuccessful efforts of this student could be explained by the fact that he does not pay enough attention to the informational value of communication. However, his revisions are not to be devalued. Perhaps his decision to be selective in his responses to the teacher's comments was a wise

decision. Daniel is well aware that his language is at points problematic and that he cannot deal with all the problems simultaneously. He needs more direction, guidance and more explicit comments to attend to more global features. The fact that he made the highest number of revision in Task 3 proves that when the feedback was more structured, he was able to fill in the gaps in his text.

### Case study 6: David

The sixth case study concerns a student who will be referred to as David.

#### Task 1: “A childhood memory”

##### David’s drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>Mum disappeared I was with my mum in the supermarket. There were many people. It was very full. I saw lot of tins, meat and so on. Lot of people speak. “It was a wonderful day”, said a people. A family said “That’s to expensiv”. It was very loud. Suddenly my mum was disappeared. I searched she everywhere in the supermarket. The supermarket was very big. When 15 minutes were ago, I went to the information, and said them. I miss my mother. The man said in the microphone. Here is a child, that here mum ..... missed. Please come”. Then came my mother and said, I was by the tins. I have said it to you”. I said “Sorry mum I didn’t hearded you. It was to loud”.</p> <p>[130 words]</p>	<p>Mum disappeared I was with my mum in the supermarket. There were many people. It was very full. I saw lot of tins, meat and so on. Lot of people speak. “It was a wonderful day”, said a people. A family said “That’s to expensiv”. It was very loud. Suddenly my mum was disappeared. I searched she everywhere in the supermarket. The supermarket was very big. When 15 minutes were ago, I went to the information, and said them. I miss my mother. The man said in the microphone. Here is a child, that here mum ..... missed. Please come”. Then came my mother and said, I was by the tins. I have said it to you”. I said “Sorry mum I didn’t hearded you. It was to loud”.</p> <p>[130 words]</p>

David made no revisions in Task 1.

#### Task 2: “Describe an interesting person”

##### David’s drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>The person I’m going to describe is Jan. He is 16 years old. He goes to the Eichendorff- Gymnasium. He has a oval face. His hair is black. His eyes are brown. He has closely packed eyebrows. His nose is small. His mouth is big. He is tall. He wears a very cool jacket. It’s black and white. Everyday he wears a jeans. He has many shoes in all colors. He has got a little brother. His brother is 4 years old. My friend Jele and I known him for three years. His</p>	<p>The person I’m going to describe is Jan. He is 16 years old. He goes to the Eichendorff- Gymnasium. He has an oval face. His hair is black. His eyes are brown. He has closely packed eyebrows. His nose is small. His mouth is big. He is tall. He wears a very cool jacket. It’s black and white. Everyday he wear a jeans. He has many shoes in all colors.</p>

<p>character isn't friendly. It's stupid and silly, because he think he is super and cool, but he isn't. He lived in the same street as my friend Jele. The street's name is St. Joesfstrasse. He heard everytime music with his discman. He has got two friends.</p> <p>[139 words]</p>	<p>He has got a little brother. His brother is 4 years old. <b>His parent name's are Linda and Marcel.</b> My friend Jele and I known him <b>since 2000.</b> His character isn't friendly. It's stupid and silly, because he <b>thinks</b> he is super and cool, but he isn't. <b>He lives in the St. Josefstr. 21. The same street as my friend.</b> He heard everytime music with his discman. He has got two friends.</p> <p>[142 words]</p>
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### Teacher's comments

After 1st Draft	After 2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>Dear student,</p> <p><u>Content</u> I find your description interesting. You wrote about this person's appearance and character. Perhaps you can add more details about his personality and how he acts in certain situations. <i>Remember:</i> Details make a description more interesting. You need an ending.</p> <p><u>Organisation</u> Make paragraphs. Make all the sentences in a paragraph talk about the main idea so that your paragraph is clear. Combine short sentences into a longer sentence to make your paragraphs smoother.</p> <p><u>Language</u> Check the following points: L4:G, L5:S, L6:S, L9:G, L13:VF, L15:VF, L17: doesn't he live there anymore?. Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>Dear student,</p> <p>Your writing is slightly better this time because you made paragraphs and corrected a couple of mistakes. But to revise does not mean only to correct or add a sentence. It means to rewrite. It means to add ideas, to take out ideas, to change the order of ideas etc. It also means to use better language. Next time try to do more about the content.</p> <p>Look at the following mistakes: L7:eyebrows, L9:he wears jeans, L13:I have known him for three years, L19:he listens to music all the time.</p>

**Table 26: Summary of teacher comments and David's revisions in Task 2**

Function of revisions	Teacher's comments	David's revisions
<b>Text-base</b>		
Expansion	2	1
Reduction		
Organisation		
Coherence	1	
Genre/Audience	1	
Style		3
<b>Surface</b>		
Spelling	2	
Grammar	5	4
Lexis		
Syntax		
Punctuation		
Format/ Clarity of phrases	1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>

Based on the grammatical feedback, David was able to correct a few grammar mistakes successfully. The teacher pointed to a grammar mistake (he wears *a* jeans) but David was not able to locate it and changed a correct form instead (he *wear* a jeans). This shows one of the disadvantages of using a correction code. Moreover, it seems that Daniel was motivated by the teacher's prompts to make the text look smoother and more coherent than the first, and made limited stylistic changes. However, the text has not changed in any significant way.

### Task 3: "A news story"

#### David's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>It was <b>the</b> tuesday, the 9<sup>th</sup> December, I came from my judo training. It was 19.00 p.m. I waited of the bus and there waited an old woman, too! Suddenly, there came a young woman and caught the handbag (purse?) from the old woman. She ran very fast away. But I ran behind her. Suddenly I didn't saw her again. On the next day, I went to the police. The police officer said "The old woman where, too!". Can you describe the young woman?" he asked. I said: "Yes, but it was dark and she weared dark clothes, too!".</p> <p><b>But I cut help them. The police caught the pigpocket and the old woman became all her things again. She was very lucky. And I became an wonderful new Handy from the police.</b></p> <p>[132 words]</p>	<p>It was tuesday, the 9<sup>th</sup> December, I came from my judo training. It was <b>7.00</b> p.m.</p> <p>I waited of the bus and there waited an old woman, too! Suddenly, there came a young woman and <b>grabbed</b> the handbag from the old woman.</p> <p>She ran very fast away. But I ran behind her. Suddenly I <b>lost</b> her again.</p> <p>On the next day, I went to the police. The police officer said: "<b>Yesterday evening the old woman came to us, too! She was very nervoused and sad.</b>" Can you describe the young woman?" he asked.</p> <p>I said: "<b>A little, because</b> it was dark and she <b>wear</b> dark clothes, too! <b>But I saw, she had red, brown hair and a nose piercing</b>".</p> <p><b>Three days later, the police said, I must go to them, because the police caught four people who look as the young woman. The old woman was there, too! The old woman and I recognized the pigpocket immediatly. The old woman was so lucky, because she became all her things back.</b></p> <p><b>And the police was very happy, too so I became a wonderful new handy.</b></p> <p>[184 words]</p>

#### Teacher's comments

After 1st Draft	After 2nd Draft
<p>Dear student,</p> <p><u>Content</u></p> <p>Your story was good. Perhaps it would be more interesting if you wrote more details about what happened. For example: what did the young woman look like? Some description is necessary. What did the old woman do when she lost her bag? If you</p>	<p>Dear student,</p> <p>Your story looks more interesting after the details you added.</p> <p>L1:I was coming home, L4: I was waiting, L16:nervous, L20:she was wearing, L25:asked me to go to the police station, L26:had caught, L26:looked like, L29:pickpocket, L31:took (become</p>

<p>didn't give the police many details about the woman, how did you help them?</p> <p><u>Organisation</u> Good. Can you make more paragraphs?</p> <p><u>Language</u> After you look at the content and organisation of your writing, check the following points: L1:P, L2:T, L3:T/pr, L5:grabbed the handbag,L8:I lost her, L11:this line is not clear, L14:T, L15: I was able to help, L17:V, L19:a. Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>does not mean 'bekommen').</p>
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**Table 27: Summary of teacher comments and David's revisions in Task 3**

Function of revisions	Teacher's comments	David's revisions
<b>Text-base</b>		
Expansion	4	7
Reduction		
Organisation		
Coherence		
Genre/Audience		
Style		
<b>Surface</b>		
Spelling		
Grammar	5	2
Lexis	4	2
Syntax		
Punctuation	1	
Format/ Clarity of phrases	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>

The teacher's comments stimulated David into looking at his work with a more critical eye. He dealt with the problems in his text and structured the text more effectively.

#### Task 4: "A letter about my town"

##### David's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>Dear Daniel, How are you? I want to tell you something about Koblenz and <b>it's</b> sights. My favourite sight is the German Corner (Deutsches Eck). It's a great and big building. On top of the building is a men who is on a horse. It's stand on a big tower, too! In front of the statue are many stairs, because you can go into the tower and you see something about</p>	<p>17<sup>th</sup> June 04 Sudalle ... ... Koblenz</p> <p>Dear Daniel, How are you? I want to tell you something about Koblenz and its sights <b>for your visit</b>. My favourite sight is the German Corner (Deutsches Eck). It's a great and big <b>monument</b>. On top of the <b>monument</b> is <b>the statue of a man</b> and a horse. It's stand on a big tower, too!</p>

<p>Koblenz. There are the two rivers called Rhine and Mosel. Those rivers are very popular, because they will be, by the German Corner, on big river.</p> <p>Another good sight is the Loehrstrasse. There are many shops and two or more good buildings. One of them is a ship wich is called "Arche Noha". The second building is on 4 walls. It's a old building, too! Now, I must say bye, bye.</p> <p>In love ...</p> <p>[145 words]</p>	<p>In front of the <b>monument</b> are many stairs, because you can go into the tower and you see something about Koblenz. There are the two rivers called Rhine and Mosel. <b>The two</b> rivers are very popular, because they will be, by the German Corner, on big river.</p> <p>Another good sight is the Loehrstrasse. There are many shops and two or more good <b>sights, too</b>. One of them is a ship wich is called "Arche Noha". The second <b>sight</b> is on 4 walls. It's <b>an</b> old building. <b>Something are in Koblenz very good streetpartys. I write about it in my next letter.</b> Now, I must say <b>goodbye</b>.</p> <p><b>Your friend</b> ...</p> <p>[172 words]</p>
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### Teacher's comments

After 1st Draft	After 2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>Dear student, <u>Content</u> You wrote some interesting information about your town but I'm sure you can write more about the sights or the entertainment in Koblenz. You can also add some ideas in the introduction and ending to make them seem more natural. For example, you could explain why you inform your friend about your town (eg. he asked you to do it or s/he wants to visit your place etc).</p> <p><u>Organisation/Layout</u> Good. Remember: most friendly letters have a standard form. Write a heading for the letter (use your home address and today's date). Begin your letter with a greeting like "Dear ....". End your letter with a closing like "Your friend/ With love" and your name.</p> <p><u>Language</u> After you look at the content and organisation of your writing, check the following points: L3:no apostrophe, L6:is Deutsches Eck a building?, L7:the statue of a man, L8:T, L10:wrong linking word, L16:rewrite differently, L21:S, L23:an, L26:pr. Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>Dear student, Your changes were good but I think you could have written some more details about what to do and see in Koblenz. L9:stands, L16:one, L20which, L23:sometimes there are some very good street parties in Koblenz.</p>

**Table 28: Summary of teacher comments and David's revisions in Task 4**

Function of revisions	Teacher's comments	David's revisions
<b>Text-base</b>		
Expansion	4	3
Reduction		1
Organisation		
Coherence		
Genre/Audience	3	2
Style	1	1
<b>Surface</b>		
Spelling	1	
Grammar	3	1
Lexis	3	2
Syntax		
Punctuation	1	1
Format/ Clarity of phrases		
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>11</b>

David made a few changes prompted by the teacher's comments, which did not really affect his writing.

### Task 5: "My autobiography"

#### David's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>My life I'm ... I'm 13 years old. I was born on the 19<sup>th</sup> March 1991 in Koblenz. I live in street "Sudallee ..." in Koblenz, too! I have been living there since I was one year old.</p> <p>My parents names are R. and M. ...But I live by my mother. My grandma's name is L. My grandpa is death. I haven't no sister and no brother. When I was seven years old I went to "Schenkendorf elementary school". It is in Koblenz, too! Now, I go to the Eichendorff-Gym. It the best school I think. I have there many friends. I'm in year 7. Some teachers are nice and another aren't it!</p> <p>My hobbies are Judo and Viola. I doing judo since I'm 8 years old. I think I good. I playing Viola for three moth. I go for my Viola-class to a music school in Raental-Koblenz.</p> <p>If I have my A-level I would going to go to another country for 2 or 3 years. I going to search a job for sea biology because I love the sea and the animals. It's so mysteriously <b>I think.</b></p>	<p>My life I'm ... I'm 13 years old. I was born on the 19<sup>th</sup> March 1991 in Koblenz. I live in street "Sudallee ..." in Koblenz, too! I have been living there since I was one year old.</p> <p>My parents names are R. and M. ... But I live by my mother. My grandma's name is L. My grandpa is death. I haven't <b>got any</b> sister and brother.</p> <p>When I was seven years old I went to "Schenkendorf elementary school". It is in Koblenz, too! Now, I go to <b>school which called "Eichendorff-high school"</b>. It's the best school I think. I have there many friends. I'm in year 7. Some teachers are nice and another <b>teachers are sometimes unfriendly!</b></p> <p>My hobbies are Judo and Viola. I doing judo since I <b>was</b> 8 years old. I think <b>I'm</b> good. I playing Viola for three moth. I go for my Viola-class to a music school in Raental-Koblenz.</p> <p>If I have my A-level I would going to go to another country for 2 or 3 years. I going to search a job for sea biology because I love the sea and</p>



[190 words]	<p>the animals. It's so mysteriously.          At home I have a dog witch name is Hexe. She is my best friend. I can't live without her. She is black and a little orange and grey.          My aunt has got two big rabbits. They are black and very big. My grandma has a dog, too! And she has three bird. My familie love animal as me.          My favourite animal is a dolphin.</p>
	[259 words]

David corrected a few mistakes and made some additions. The information that was added was incidental and therefore peripheral or irrelevant. Since the extra information was not bridging any gaps, it did not really affect the reading of the autobiography.

**Table 29: Summary of David's revisions in all Tasks**

Function of revisions	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4	Task 5
<b>Text-base</b>					
Expansion		1	2	5	9
Reduction				1	
Organisation		3	8	2	3
Coherence					
Genre/Audience					
Style					
<b>Surface</b>					
Spelling					
Grammar		4	2	1	3
Lexis			1	2	
Syntax					
Punctuation					
Format/ Clarity of phrases					
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>15</b>

**Table 30: The correlation between revision and improvement**

	Revision 1 (no revision)	Revision 2 (no change)	Revision 3 (revised version <i>better</i> )	Revision 4 (revised version <i>slightly better</i> )	Revision 5 (revised version <i>slightly better</i> )
Successful		4	12	10	13
Unsuccessful		1	1		
Neutral		3		1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>15</b>

From the evaluation, it seems that this student envisaged revision as restricted to the level of the sentence.

## Case study 7: Elena

The seventh case study concerns a student who will be referred to as Elena.

### Task 1: “A childhood memory”

#### Elenie’s drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>At Trevi fountain Last autumn holidays I went to Rome with my parents. One day we visited Trevi fountain. The big fountain was so beautiful with its great white figures and the blue water. There were many people and a lot of them threw some money into the water. They say it brings luck. Most people took photos that they could look at this wonderful building again when they’re at home. It was very noisy there, because everybody was talking about the fountain’s beauty. But they all spoke in different languages. I heard English, French, Italian, Spain, German and some others I didn’t know. But I understood that everyone loves the fountain. Then I took a Munze and threw it into the clean water. “Bring me luck”, I thought. After that I took a photo of my parents in front of Trevi fountain. We stayed until it got dark and the lights went on. With them the fountain looked even more beautiful. I was sad when we went back to our hotel. Trevi fountain is the greatest fountain I’ve ever seen.</p> <p>[181 words]</p>	<p>At Trevi fountain Last autumn holidays I went to Rome with my parents. One day we visited Trevi fountain. The big fountain was so beautiful with its great white figures and the blue water. There were many people and a lot of them threw some money into the water. They say it brings luck. Most people took photos that they could look at this wonderful building again when they’re at home. It was very noisy there, because everybody was talking about the fountain’s beauty. But they all spoke in different languages. I heard English, French, Italian, Spain, German and some others I didn’t know. But I understood that everyone loves the fountain. Then I took a coin and threw it into the clean water. “Bring me luck”, I thought. After that I took a photo of my parents in front of Trevi fountain. We stayed until it got dark and the lights went on. With them the fountain looked even more beautiful. I was sad when we went back to our hotel. Trevi fountain is the greatest fountain I’ve ever seen.</p> <p>[181 words]</p>

Elena is a skilled and talented writer. Most of her writings were almost perfect productions. It is particularly interesting to see how this writer revised her writing. In the first task, she did not make any revisions except for writing one word she didn’t know.

### Task 2: “Describe an interesting person”

#### Elena’s drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>My cousin My little cousin’s name is Lukas Schmidt. Today, on the 8<sup>th</sup> December he becomes six years old. For his age he is very tall, he’s the tallest boy in his kindergarten. He has blond hair, like his dad Bernd, and brown eyes, like his mother Anja, my father’s sister. He has got a friendly face and usually he laughs often, but now he has lost some Milchzahne</p>	<p>My cousin My little cousin’s name is Lukas Schmidt. On the 8<sup>th</sup> December he became six years old. For his age he is very tall, he’s the tallest boy in his kindergarten. He has blond hair, like his dad Bernd, and brown eyes, like his mother Anja, my father’s sister. He has got a friendly face and usually he laughs often, but now he has lost some milk teeth and he feels embarrassed</p>

and he schamt sich to laugh. Lukas often plays with my other little cousin, Jana. Their favourite game is to play they were a cat family. Lukas likes cars and I think today we'll visit him at home.	when he laughs. Lukas often plays with my other cousin, Jana. Their favourite game is to play they were a cat family. At Christmas they played school together. Lukas is looking forward to come to school and he's even able to read a bit. Very slow but he learns fast. Lukas likes cars. For Christmas his parents bought a car racing track. We gave him a sit-sac. Jana liked it too, so they quarreled about it. Lukas often breaks his things and I think the sit-sac will soon be broken too. Maybe it would stay intact if he obeyed his parents, but usually he doesn't. At least not, if they not get angry. But I really like Lukas. Also if it's sometimes hard with him.
[107 words]	[199 words]

### Teacher's comments

After 1st Draft	After 2nd Draft
<p>Dear student,</p> <p><u>Content</u> I find your description very interesting. You wrote about your cousin's appearance, family and likes. Perhaps you can add more things about his personality and how he acts in certain situations. <i>Remember:</i> Details make a description more interesting.</p> <p><u>Organisation</u> Make paragraphs. Make all the sentences in a paragraph talk about the main idea so that your paragraph is clear.</p> <p><u>Language</u> L6: milk teeth, he feels embarrassed when he laughs. Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>Dear student,</p> <p>You made a very good attempt to revise. Your writing is better because you added many interesting ideas that show what kind of person your cousin is. Paragraphs? L9: looks forward to going to school/slowly, L14:if they don't get, L15 even if it's sometimes hard to cope with him.</p>

**Table 31: Summary of teacher comments and Elena's revisions in Task 2**

Function of revisions	Teacher's comments	Elena's revisions
<b>Text-base</b>		
Expansion	2	10
Reduction		1
Organisation	1	
Coherence		
Genre/Audience	1	
Style		
<b>Surface</b>		
Spelling		
Grammar		1
Lexis	2	2
Syntax		
Punctuation		
Format/ Clarity of phrases	1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>

The revised version of this draft is marked by the addition of a long multisentence. The content of this addition suggests that Elena responded to the teacher's request to write more detail. Unlike other writers, she substantially supported the character's description with this expansion and did not simply add superfluous material to please the teacher.

### Task 3: "A news story"

#### Elena's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>The pony It was on the 8<sup>th</sup> March in our street in Kobern-Gondorf. Our neighbours Mr. and Mrs. Kuster had a pony in their big garden. The black-white horse was the sensation of the neighbourhood. It was really sweet, ran around and sometimes you even heard it. Mr. and Mrs. Kuster love pets and so they've also got a dog. Normally it's loud and not very friendly and with its short black hair it looks dangerous. On that 8<sup>th</sup> March a car came to Mr. And Mrs. Kusters' garden gate. They carried the pony into it. It was dead! When they drove away, even the dog barked sadly. All of our <b>other</b> neighbours wanted to know more about it. As the family came back they told us everything. Since a long time the horse was very ill. It was hard for it to live with its aches. So a doctor came and gave some medicine to the pony. Quickly it slept and soon it died in peace. After a few days we heard a strange noise out of the Kusters' garden. Our neighbours had a goat in their garden now. This goat is very loud and the other neighbours hate it.</p> <p>[201 words]</p>	<p>The pony It was on the 8<sup>th</sup> March in our street in Kobern-Gondorf. Our neighbours Mr. and Mrs. Kuster had a pony in their big garden. The black-white horse was the sensation of the neighbourhood. It was really sweet, ran around and sometimes you even heard it. Mr. and Mrs. Kuster love pets and so they've also got a dog. Normally it's loud and not very friendly and with its short black hair it looks dangerous. On that 8<sup>th</sup> March a car came to Mr. And Mrs. Kusters' garden gate. They carried the pony into it. It was dead! When they drove away, even the dog barked sadly. All of our neighbours wanted to know more about it. As the family came back they told us everything. <b>For</b> a long time the horse was very ill. It was hard for it to live with its aches. So a doctor came and gave some medicine to the pony. Quickly it slept and soon it died in peace. After a few days we heard a strange noise out of the Kusters' garden. Our neighbours had a goat in their garden now. This goat is very loud and the other neighbours hate it. <b>We all miss the sweet little pony.</b></p> <p>[208 words]</p>

#### Teacher's comments

After 1st Draft	After 2nd Draft
<p>Dear student, <u>Content</u> I liked your story very much. It was interesting and well-written. I think you have a very good style in writing. <u>Organisation</u> Good. Paragraphs? <u>Language</u> After you look at the content and organisation of your writing, check the following points: L11:pr, L12: write differently. Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>Dear student, You revised very little this time but you made an important revision: you added an ending line. That helped complete your story. L12: to live in such pain.</p>

**Table 32: Summary of teacher comments and Elena's revisions in Task 3**

Function of revisions	Teacher's comments	Elena's revisions
<b>Text-base</b>		
Expansion		
Reduction		
Organisation		
Coherence		
Genre/Audience		1
Style		
<b>Surface</b>		
Spelling		
Grammar	1	2
Lexis	1	
Syntax		
Punctuation		
Format/ Clarity of phrases	1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>

It is particularly interesting to look at a revision, which had not been initiated by the teacher feedback. When Elena re-read her draft, she realized that something was missing and came up with one concluding sentence, which worked as an epilogue to her story.

#### Task 4: "A letter about my town"

##### Elena's drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>Dear Denis, I hope you're fine. I heard you are going to come to Koblenz so I'll tell you something about this city. I know you've already been there but I think you don't know many sights. Maybe you've forgot everything too.</p> <p>The most famous sight in Koblenz is the confluence of Rhine and Mosel, so called "German Corner". On top of the building at the German Corner there's a statue of Emperor Wilhelm I. In World War two it was destroyed by the American just like "Liebfrauenkirche" and "Herz-Jesu-Kirche", two churches, and "Loehrstrasse", today a big shopping street. In the district "Ehrenbreitstein" there's a fortress you could visit. Today it's a museum and you can also find a restaurant there. For getting on top of the fortress-mountain you can take a chairlift.</p> <p>If you like shopping more you should go to "Loehr-Center". There are lots of different shops and many possibilities to eat and drink something.</p> <p>For relaxing you have to take a walk in the "Rheinanlagen"]. Under green trees (at least in the summer) you go along the water.</p>	<p>Dear Denis, I hope you're fine. I heard you are going to come to Koblenz so I'll tell you something about this city. I know you've already been there but I think you don't know many sights. Maybe you've <b>forgotten</b> everything too.</p> <p>The most famous sight in Koblenz is the confluence of Rhine and Mosel, <b>the</b> so called "German Corner". On top of the building at the German Corner there's a statue of Emperor Wilhelm I. In World War two it was destroyed by the <b>Americans</b> just like "Liebfrauenkirche" and "Herz-Jesu-Kirche", two churches, and "Loehrstrasse", today a big shopping street. In the district "Ehrenbreitstein" there's a fortress you could visit. Today it's a museum and you can also find a restaurant there. <b>To get</b> on top of the fortress-mountain you can take a chairlift.</p> <p>If you like shopping more you should go to "Loehr-Center". There are lots of different shops and many possibilities to eat and drink something.</p> <p><b>To relax</b> you should take a walk in the "Rheinanlagen"]. Under green trees (at least in the summer) you go along the water.</p>

<p>If you're in Koblenz in August you should watch "Rhine in flames", a great firework. There's always a crowd of people then.</p> <p>I hope this is enough information to have some nice days. Please phone me when you're in Koblenz. I'd like to see you again.</p> <p>Say hello to your family!</p> <p>Love, your friend ...</p> <p>[236 words]</p>	<p>If you're in Koblenz in August you should watch "Rhine in flames", a great firework <b>show</b>. There's always a crowd of people then.</p> <p><b>I hope the information I gave you is useful</b> to have some nice days. Please phone me when you're in Koblenz. I'd like to see you again.</p> <p>Say hello to your family!</p> <p>Love, your friend ...</p> <p>[240 words]</p>
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### Teacher's comments

After 1st Draft	After 2nd Draft
<p>Dear student,</p> <p><u>Content</u> You wrote a very good letter in which you gave interesting information about your town. You wrote an appropriate introduction and an appropriate ending. Well done!</p> <p><u>Organisation/Layout</u> Good.</p> <p><u>Language</u> After you look at the content and organisation of your writing, check the following points:L5:VF, L7:<i>the</i> so called, L9:Americans, L14:VF, L19:VF/should, L24:firework show, L25:write differently. Now rewrite to improve your writing.</p>	<p>Dear student,</p> <p>You corrected all your mistakes. It would be better if you said "I hope the information I gave you is useful and that you'll have a great time here".</p>

**Table 33: Summary of teacher comments and Elena's revisions in Task 4**

Function of revisions	Teacher's comments	Elena's revisions
<b>Text-base</b>		
Expansion		
Reduction		
Organisation		
Coherence		
Genre/Audience		
Style		
<b>Surface</b>		
Spelling		
Grammar	7	7
Lexis	1	1
Syntax		
Punctuation		
Format/ Clarity of phrases		
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>

In Task 4, Elena made only mechanical corrections.

## Task 5: “My autobiography”

### Elena’s drafts

1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
<p>My name is ... and I’m thirteen years old. I was born in Koblenz on 29<sup>th</sup> August 1990. My mum was twenty-three when I was born. Her name is ... and she is the best mum in the world. We are good friends <u>and</u> she is my mum.</p> <p>When I was seven years old, I went to school. It was a new capital of my life. I was very excited to meet new friends and teachers. That changed my life.</p> <p>I met many new friends and the teachers were nice. I didn’t have any problems. When I was eleven years old, I went to the Gymnasium. Another new capital of my life. I found many new friends there too. In class seven I had an exchange to England. It was great. My English-exchange partner was Naomi. She was very nice. She came to Germany in September and in April and I went to England, to her home. I liked England. We went to London, Bath by the Roman Baths, Bournemouth and Cardiff, the capital of Wales. My dreams for the future is that there will be no wars and there will be peace in the whole world. I want to become a famous actress and an English, French and German teacher. When I <b>will</b> become a rich lady I will help people all around the world.</p> <p>[219 words]</p>	<p>My name is ... and I’m thirteen years old. I was born in Koblenz in 1990. My mum was twenty-three when I was born. Her name is ... and she is the best mum in the world. We are good friends <u>and</u> she is my mum.</p> <p>When I was seven years old, I went to school. It was a new capital of my life. I was very excited to meet new friends and teachers. That changed my life.</p> <p>When I was eleven years old, I went to the Gymnasium. Another new capital of my life. I found many new friends there too. In class seven I had an exchange to England. It was great. My English-exchange partner was Naomi. She was very nice. She came to Germany in September and in April and I went to England, to her home. I liked England. We went to London, Bath by the Roman Baths, Bournemouth and Cardiff, the capital of Wales.</p> <p>I went to a gymnastic AG for five years. I’m best at running so it was my favourite. Now I go dancing. Yesterday evening I went dancing with my friend Nina and we practiced our new dance.</p> <p>My dreams for the future is that there will be no wars and there will be peace in the whole world. I want to become a famous actress and an English, French and German teacher. When I become a rich lady I will help people all around the world.</p> <p>[235 words]</p>

**Table 34: Summary of Elena’s revisions in all Tasks**

Function of revisions	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4	Task 5
<b>Text-base</b>					
Expansion		10			4
Reduction		1			2
Organisation					
Coherence					
Genre/Audience			1		
Style					

<b>Surface</b>					
Spelling					
Grammar		1	2	7	1
Lexis	1	2		1	
Syntax					
Punctuation					
Format/ Clarity of phrases					
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>

**Table 35: The correlation between revision and improvement**

	Revision 1 (no revision)	Revision 2 (revised version <i>better</i> )	Revision 3 (revised version <i>slightly better</i> )	Revision 4 (revised version <i>slightly better</i> )	Revision 5 (revised version <i>slightly better</i> )
Successful	1	14	3	7	7
Unsuccessful				1	
Neutral					
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>

As mentioned earlier, Elena is a fluent writer with a wide vocabulary and an easy, flowing style. Overall, her second drafts are only small improvements of the first simply because her first drafts were almost perfect. She looks at her writing with a critical eye but she is also aware that there are instances when further revision is not necessary. It is also worth noting that Elena did not simply respond to the teacher's comments but initiated her own revisions, which were very effective.