An investigation into selected factors influencing the feedback preferences of university-level ESL students on compositions

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ABSTRACT

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With the paradigm shift from a product-based to a process-based approach to ESL writing instruction came a necessary change in teachers' approaches to giving feedback on student compositions. One of the critical underpinnings of the process-based approach to ESL writing instruction is that focus on content and the organization of ideas should take precedence over a focus on more formal aspects of writing such as grammar and mechanics. Most of the studies over the last fifteen years have investigated student reactions to or preferences for various feedback techniques employed by ESL writing instructors, but have not systematically attempted to investigate which factors might be influencing the feedback preferences these students have.

This study is an investigation with two main aims: a) to determine what the feedback preferences of university-level ESL students are, and b) to determine which selected factors have an influence on these preferences. To accomplish this, 185 ESL students at two Montreal universities were surveyed using two instruments. One instrument gathered information on students' feedback preferences and the other gathered data on personality traits.

The results of the study indicated that students had a marked preference for form-focused feedback, that they preferred the use of symbols over error correction by the teacher, and that they were not convinced of the benefits of peer review. Factors such as age, gender, previous experience and personality were found to influence these preferences.

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Contents

Chapter 1

Statement of the Problem

Over the last twenty years, much research has been conducted in the area of teacher feedback in L2 composition. These studies have most often investigated two areas: 1) the effect of various feedback foci (*i.e.* grammar, mechanics, vocabulary, content, and organization) on student compositions and, 2) student preferences for different feedback foci and techniques. This research has consistently shown that students want and value feedback. Even though quite a substantial body of research on feedback in L2 writing exists, the findings in these studies have often been inconclusive and contradictory. The inconclusiveness of many of these findings was the catalyst for the investigation presented in this thesis.

As mentioned above, several studies on L2 composition feedback have concentrated on the effect of various feedback foci on subsequent revisions of ESL students' compositions (see, for example: Cardelle & Corno, 1981; Chaudron, 1984; Cheong, 1994; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Leki, 1990; Kepner, 1991; Robb et al., 1986; Sheppard, 1992; Truscott, 1996). In particular, these studies have investigated: 1) whether teacher feedback should focus on form or content and, 2) whether teachers should provide feedback on either form or content first or simultaneously. Fathman & Whalley (1990), for example, found that students improved in grammar on

a subsequent revision only if they received specific grammar-focused feedback, but that all subjects significantly improved content regardless of the feedback focus received. This led them to suggest that students may be able to manage feedback on both form and content simultaneously without being overburdened. Sheppard (1992), however, reports different results. He noted that students who negotiated meaning (i.e. focused on content-related concerns) improved more than did those whose attention was constantly drawn to surface-level errors. He also noted that the students who received feedback on surface-level features, such as grammar and mechanics, produced revisions that were syntactically less complex than those of students who received content-focused feedback. In fact, the students who received content-focused feedback produced revisions that were both syntactically more complex *and* richer in content. He concluded from this that too much overt attention to surface-level errors may result in avoidance of certain structures by students (1992, p. 107). Kepner (1991) also found that students who received meaning-related feedback benefited more than students who received form-focused feedback. The findings in these studies illustrate the need for further investigation into *why* teacher feedback focused on certain aspects (*i.e.* content or grammar) is more effective than others.

The other area of investigation in feedback research has been that of student preferences for various feedback types and foci on their compositions (see, for example: Cohen, 1987; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990;

Kumari Dheram, 1995; Enginarlar, 1993; Hedgcock &Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996; Leki 1986, 1991; Mangelsdorf, 1992; Oladejo, 1993; Saito, 1994, Sengupta, 1998). In these studies researchers have noted a "mismatch" (Cohen 1987; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Leki, 1991; Oladejo, 1993, Saito, 1994) between what students prefer in terms of feedback focus, and what they actually receive. In addition to a mismatch in terms of feedback *focus*, a mismatch in the *type* of feedback given has also been noted. Oladejo (1993) and Cohen (1987), for example, reported that students expressed misgivings about the comprehensiveness of the feedback they received. These students felt that many teacher comments were often selective and instead preferred to have *all* errors identified and commented on.

The types of studies outlined above have investigated the *what, when,* and *how* of teacher feedback: whether content-focused or grammar-focused feedback helps students improve their writing on revisions of the same essay, whether content-focused feedback should be given before, after, or at the same time as grammar-focused feedback, and which type and focus of feedback students prefer teachers to give. As noted above, the findings in both types of studies have not been uniform. What, then, could explain this lack of uniformity in L2 composition feedback research? Other feedback-related matters have also been investigated, such as factors that may influence feedback preferences of students; however, this area has not received as much attention in the literature as those mentioned above.

The only factors influencing feedback preferences that have been investigated are overall ESL proficiency and self-rating in English writing ability. Cohen (1987) found that students who rated themselves as better overall learners reported attending more to vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics than did learners of lower proficiency. Those who rated themselves as better writers reported paying significantly more attention to teacher comments on grammar than did those who rated themselves as poorer writers.

In terms of proficiency, Oladejo (1993), concluded that the differences in opinions between the two groups of subjects (secondary-school students and university undergraduates) in terms of which errors should be corrected and by whom was likely a function of overall proficiency. That is, the focus of teaching at the lower level was likely more concentrated on learning grammatical features, while at the higher level organization and meaning-related concerns (i.e. content) were focused on more. Furthermore, he found that those students at the university level favoured peer feedback less than did those students at the secondary level (1993). This finding led him to conclude that the more advanced learners may have developed "certain affective characteristics which tend to emphasize independent learning, while those at the lower levels are less influenced by such factors" (p. 83). In none of the studies mentioned above (nor any other of which I am aware) has any

empirical evidence been supplied as to what these "affective factors" might be or how they might influence or guide feedback preferences.

In a pilot study that laid the theoretical groundwork for this thesis, Proud & Gatbonton (1996) investigated some factors thought to influence feedback preference. They surveyed the preferences for feedback focus and type of 103 students in the credit ESL writing courses at a Montreal university. The results showed that the students preferred teacher feedback to focus on *grammar, organization,* and *content.* Among other findings of note was that there appeared to be a marked preference for student participation in the revision process, suggesting that students see revision as a shared responsibility – a finding also noted by Enginarlar (1993).

In investigating feedback preferences, Proud & Gatbonton (1996) examined factors such as *age, level of English,* and *faculty* to determine what influence they might have, but no significant correlations between preference and these factors were found. Students' self-rating of their overall ESL proficiency and ESL writing ability were not investigated in this study - a serious shortcoming – as these factors have been found to correlate to feedback preference in previous studies (Cohen, 1987; Oladejo, 1993). In addition to these factors, some researchers (Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Jacobs, 1987, 1989; Leki, 1991; Mangelsdorf, 1992; Oladejo 1993, and others) have posited that individual differences and previous ESL writing

experiences may play a role in determining feedback preferences; however, as with other factors described above, there is very little empirical evidence presented to support this claim.

From the above review of current research on L2 composition feedback, one can see there is a need for a more comprehensive examination of the feedback preferences of university-level ESL composition students. The role of such affective factors as those mentioned above in determining feedback preference needs to be examined. The aim of this thesis, therefore, was to investigate a selected number of individual factors that may influence feedback preference. In particular, personality type, cultural background, learning style preference (*group* or *individual*), and previous L2 writing experience (both ESL and EFL) were investigated in order to find whether they correlated with stated preferences in feedback type and focus. *Age, gender, ESL level, self-rating in L1 and L2 writing,* and *faculty* were also investigated as they were in the Proud & Gatbonton (1996) study. This was accomplished by using a questionnaire to survey the feedback preferences of university-level ESL composition students and by designing and administering a personality trait instrument that was correlated with the feedback questionnaire. Evidence gathered from such an empirical investigation could be used by both teachers and students to make the feedback process more efficient and effective.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Before looking at the research compiled on student preferences for various feedback types and foci, it is necessary to briefly explain the context within which this research has been conducted. An examination of the change in instructional methodology in second language writing will clarify the purpose of recent feedback preference research.

2.1 The Paradigm Shift from Product-based to Process-based Writing Instruction & the Impact on the Feedback Process

In the 1970's and into the early 1980's, second-language writing instruction experienced a shift from a *product-based* to a *process-based* approach. Within this process-based approach, writing was viewed as a "non-linear, exploratory, and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate reason" (Zamel in Silva, p. 15, 1990). Unlike the product-based approach, this approach focused on the writer's need for guidance and intervention throughout the writing process, rather than on controlling lexical, syntactical, and organizational patterns. The process-based approach to writing instruction attempted to avoid the perhaps premature imposition of these patterns and

instead adopted the notion that content, ideas, and the need to communicate would determine form (Silva, 1990).

One of the critical underpinnings of this approach is that the writer is central in the writing process; he or she determines the task, sociocultural setting, and discourse community (Silva, 1990). The reader's task is to focus on content, ideas, and the negotiation of meaning – not to be preoccupied with form. This critical underpinning has been incorporated into the area of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) composition, although in the EAP context of process-based writing the discourse community is clearly defined by the reader. It is within this context that process-based writing instruction has been most researched. More specifically, because the teacher's role in this approach to ESL writing instruction is to intervene and respond at several points during the writing process (Reid, 1994), most research has focused on the type and timing of teacher feedback.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, L2 writing research has consistently shown that students want and value feedback. In many of these studies, researchers have also examined how teachers and students perceive their respective roles in the L2 writing classroom. These perceptions are important because many researchers have posited that whether the teacher sees himself as a collaborator more than an evaluator (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1996; Zamel, 1985) will influence his approach to giving

feedback. Others, for example Kumari Dheram (1995), have stated that both students and teachers need to be aware of their roles in the writing classroom so that the feedback process can be more effective.

2.1.1 Definition of terms focus and type used in this thesis

Research on student preferences for feedback in L2 composition has yielded two types of findings that are of particular interest to the current study: feedback focus preferred and feedback type preferred. In this study, feedback *focus* will refer to aspects of the composition that the teacher attends to (i.e. grammar, content, organization, vocabulary, and mechanics). Feedback *type* will refer to the method or "modality" (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994) the teacher employs to give feedback (i.e. use of symbols, error correction by the teacher, conferencing, written phrases, peer revision, and revision).

2.1.2 Overview of research on student preferences for feedback focus

In the early years of the paradigm shift to process-based writing instruction, very little empirical research was conducted on student preference for or reaction to teacher feedback. Instead, research on teacher feedback practices focused mainly on which error correction techniques were

more or less helpful. Over the last fifteen years, though, there has been an increase in the number of studies conducted into student preferences for the focus of teacher feedback. The critical underpinning of this research is the widely held belief (see, for example: Cohen, 1987; Hedgcock & Lefcowitz, 1994, 1996; Leki, 1986, 1991) that in the student-centered classroom, the involvement of students in the learning process is integral. Oladejo (1993) states:

> ..one would readily admit that it is important for learners to feel that their perceived needs are being catered to, if they are to develop a positive attitude toward what they are learning. It follows that, if serious considerations are not given to the learners' needs, there will be some impediments to learning. Conversely, how quickly and effectively the goal of learning is reached will depend largely on the matching of opinions and expectations of teachers and learners (p. 73).

Schulz (1996) echoes this sentiment in stating that:

> ...to establish pedagogical credibility and increase their students' commitment to and involvement in learning, teachers [need to] make an effort to explore students' beliefs about language learning and to establish a fit between their own and students' expectations (p. 343).

The purpose of establishing this "fit" is, of course, (at least in the context of these studies) to increase the effectiveness of the feedback process. The elusiveness of this fit, though, has been noted in much of the research to date into students' preference for feedback focus. As a result, studies on

student preference for feedback focus have been inconclusive and often contradictory.

Many researchers (Cohen, 1987; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996; Leki, 1991; Oladejo, 1993) have found that students desire comprehensive feedback on meaning-related concerns *in addition to* grammar-focused feedback, perhaps recognizing the importance of understanding the cultural conventions inherent in a writing community. Cohen (1987), for example, found that the majority of teacher comments in his study focused on grammar and mechanics with much less attention given to content, organization and vocabulary. He also found that while students reported attending a lot to teacher comments on grammar and mechanics, they also reported paying considerable attention to content, organization, and vocabulary. In a later study, Cohen & Cavalcanti (1990) found similar results while investigating the feedback preferences of institute and university-level EFL students in Brazil. The findings in the 1990 study led the authors to conclude that "even in situations where it is irrelevant to the marking system being used [content was not one of the aspects formally evaluated at the end of the semester], such feedback may be expected by students and may well motivate them to write more and better compositions" (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990, p. 173).

In a questionnaire survey of 100 university ESL learners, Leki (1991) also found that students expressed a strong preference for having all errors indicated. The students were asked how important error identification was to them and on which aspects of their writing they expected teachers' comments to focus. She found that the vast majority (89%) of respondents reported looking "carefully" at marks indicating errors in grammar, but that an equal number reported attending carefully to marks indicating errors in vocabulary choice. A slightly greater, though not statistically significant, number reported attending carefully to comments on content , while 82% stated they paid careful attention to comments on organization issues (Leki 1991, p. 206-7). Similar findings were reported in Proud & Gatbonton (1996), in which students reported an almost equal preference for feedback to focus on grammar, content, and organization.

In noting this mismatch (i.e. the finding that most students in the studies referred to above desired feedback on both form and content issues) between the "information sought by the learners and that provided by the teachers" (1987, p. 67), Cohen postulated that teachers may attend more to surface-level errors because they are the easiest to detect and respond to, but that comments on content, organization, and vocabulary may "demand a higher degree of judgement and most likely take more time" (p. 67) and so are attended to less frequently or in less detail (see also Leki, 1991). Leki (1991) further suggested that surface-level errors were probably easier for

students to respond to rather than requests for clarification of ideas (p. 209). Regardless of this, the finding that students have a strong preference for comprehensive feedback (i.e. on both form and meaning-related concerns) has been noted in many of the studies investigating students' reactions to various feedback foci.

Oladejo (1993) noted that Hendrickson's (1978) comprehensive review of the literature on error correction found that most answers to his research questions on error correction (if, when, how students should be corrected, and which errors) failed to provide any empirical evidence. Furthermore, he noted these answers were largely speculative and they did not contain (to any significant degree) the opinions of learners as to what their preferences for error correction and error correction techniques were (p. 73). He therefore set out to investigate this shortcoming, using as his subjects EFL students enrolled at the University of Singapore.

Like the previously mentioned studies, he found that there was an expressed preference for teacher comments to focus on both form- and meaning-related concerns; for example, when asked whether teachers should overlook grammatical errors and focus only on errors that inhibit communication, most students (85%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. In addition, he found that students preferred to give "high attention" to organization first, then to grammar, and finally to vocabulary. He stated that

a "mismatch" similar to that found by Cohen (1987) and Cohen & Cavalcanti (1990) was also evident in his study. He suggested that current opinions held by many applied linguists and teachers that "grammatical errors should be given less attention ... while communicative errors should be of more importance in order to ensure that learners attain some level of confidence in communicating in the target language" (p. 85) cannot afford to be rigid and may need to be adapted by incorporating student preferences into the feedback process. He states that this can only be done successfully through a more thorough analysis of students' needs and expectations.

Hedgcock & Lefkowitz (1994) found that a significantly greater number of ESL students indicated a preference for teacher feedback to focus on content and organization (combined) than did those preferring feedback to focus on grammar and mechanics (combined) (p. 155). While these findings are quite similar to those in the studies referred to above, this study is also significant for another finding of note - the difference in feedback focus preference between the ESL and FL subjects. This finding was further explicated in a follow-up study conducted by the same authors (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1996), and will be referred to in greater detail in section 2.2.1 of this thesis.

Finally, one other study of note must be mentioned here. Kumari Dheram (1995), in a small-scale study of five ESL students at a British

university, also investigated whether the students preferred feedback to focus on form or content, as well as how learners respond to feedback on both form and content. Of particular interest to this thesis is her finding that student preferences for feedback focus may be malleable.

Originally, all the students in her study expressed a preference for teachers' comments to focus on both form and content on the first draft. This preference has been noted in the studies previously mentioned in this section, and in at least one study (Fathman & Whalley, 1990) was found to have no significant negative effect on subsequent revisions of the same composition. This finding led Fathman & Whalley to conclude that students may be able to process information on both form and content simultaneously, which would seem to "fit" with what students had expressed a preference for in the studies referred to above. Kumari Dheram (1995), however, found that her students reconsidered their original opinion that feedback should focus on both form and content in the first draft. This led her to the (tentative) conclusion that feedback should be prioritized across drafts, with a focus on content first. She states that it is "important to give feedback on content *before* [emphasis hers] focusing on language use to help students appreciate the communicative function of writing and avoid premature editing and making revisions to the text at a surface instead of a global level" (p. 167, 1995). This conclusion would seem to reflect the feedback approach currently employed in the majority of ESL writing classrooms in North America.

While the studies discussed so far indicate that students prefer feedback to focus on both from- *and* meaning-related concerns, not all studies report similar findings. For example, Radecki and Swales (1988) surveyed 59 ESL students at the University of Michigan using a questionnaire to gain insight into their attitudes concerning teacher comment, correction, and instruction. Their findings in part corroborate that students want substantive comments on the ideas and organization; however, they differ in that the vast majority (87%) of respondents "overwhelmingly desired to have all their linguistic errors marked" (p. 358), suggesting that this was the major responsibility of the teacher. If this preference were generalizable to ESL writing classrooms in North America, the authors pondered, instructors would be faced with a dilemma: "If they do not surface-correct but respond to a writer's meaning, their credibility among their students can be impaired" (p. 364).

This dilemma was earlier referred to by Zamel (1985). She noted in a survey of then-current research that despite having been carried out in a process-oriented context, the findings in these studies indicated that teachers were still "by and large concerned with the accuracy and correctness of surface-level features of writing" (p. 84). One of the dangers of responding to sentence-level form errors is that the teacher's field of attention becomes so narrowed that "content becomes virtually inaccessible" (Wilson 1981, in

Zamel) because the focus is almost exclusively on individual words. As support, she cites an example of a teacher in her study who misread a word and changed the surrounding context to accommodate this misread word. As a result, the text became far less coherent than the original (p. 87). In light of such findings, she contends, as does Kumari Dheram (1995), that teachers need to prioritize their comments to focus on meaning-related concerns before focusing on sentence-level language errors.

The idea that teachers should respond to content and organization before attending to grammatical errors is one that persists through much of the recent research carried out in L2 writing settings although the results of studies consistently indicate that students desire feedback on both form-and meaning-related concerns (for example Cohen 1987; Cohen & Cavalcanti 1990; Leki 1986, 1991; Radecki & Swales 1988; Saito 1994). Leki (1991), for example, states that the students in her study expressed a desire to have all errors indicated even though "both anecdotal and research evidence shows how little students profit from teachers' marking their [linguistic] errors" (p. 208). Truscott (1996), in a somewhat controversial article, in fact issues a call to completely abandon error correction focused on grammatical concerns. He states that grammar correction is ineffective for theoretical and practical reasons and may indeed have harmful effects on L2 writing development (p. 327). The claim that error correction in L2 writing can have significant negative effects on students' writing was also noted by Sheppard

(1992) who reported that students who received grammar-focused feedback produced revisions that contained less complex structures and were less rich in content than did those who received content-focused feedback.

It is evident from the research into student preference for teacher feedback focus that two significant, connected problems exist: one is a mismatch in terms of where students would like teacher feedback to focus, and the other is the resulting dilemma this may present L2 writing teachers. The finding that students displayed a marked preference for having *all* linguistic errors marked (Leki 1991; Radecki & Swales, 1988; Saito, 1994) has been interpreted by many scholars as presenting L2 compostion teachers with the dilemma first referred to by Zamel (1985) and later echoed by others (Astika 1993; Lee 1997; Saito, 1994; Truscott, 1996) – that process-oriented models of writing instruction should emphasize the non-linear, exploratory, and generative process of writing (Zamel, 1985) rather than prematurely focusing on surface-level features that many researchers have found to inhibit writing development across drafts and assignments.

2.2 Overview of research on Student Preference for the Type of Teacher Feedback

In the past fifteen years a very small number of studies have investigated student preference for the type of feedback used in the L2 writing classroom. As mentioned earlier, feedback *type* refers to the method or *modality* used by teachers to give feedback (i.e. symbols, error correction, conferencing, written phrases, peer review, and revision). A much larger number of studies has instead focused on the effect of various feedback types on subsequent revision/assignments. This section will concentrate on the studies investigating student preference for feedback types.

The feedback types most often investigated for student preference have been the *use of symbols/codes, error correction by teacher, written feedback* (in the form of short phrases or comments), *peer revision, student-teacher conferences,* and *revision.* What these studies have found reveal interesting insights into what students perceive their own role to be as well as that of the teacher in terms of error correction responsibility.

2.2.1 Use of Symbols/Codes vs. Error Correction By Teacher

As mentioned in the previous section, investigation of student preference for feedback type has consistently shown that second language and foreign language students both expect and desire teacher intervention in their writing. Oladejo (1993) states that attitude toward error correction in second language writing has changed dramatically over the last thirty years, from zero tolerance of errors with the teacher as sole judge to a focus on how to get the learner to communicate ideas effectively in the target language (p. 71). Saito (1994) notes that teacher correction of student errors is often practised by modern language teachers (ex: French, Spanish, German, etc.), but that it is less favoured by ESL teachers because "it takes hours to correct papers" (p. 46). Others, most recently Truscott (1996) and Lee (1997) and earlier Chaudron (1986) state that there is no consistent empirical evidence to support the claim that overt error correction is an effective means of improving student writing. Nonetheless, Cumming (1985) found that identifying student errors (by circling or underlining them with a cue for how to correct) may be the most widely used technique for responding to second language writers.

In her 1994 study, Saito set out to discover students' reaction to the various feedback types their teachers employed. She compared seven types of feedback given by three teachers to three different groups of learners.

Relevant to this section was student preference on *Teacher correction* (defined as the teacher crossing out all surface-level errors and providing the correct forms) and *Error identification* (defined as the teacher indicating the location of a perceived error by underlining or circling it without providing the correct form) (p. 51). She found that, of these two variables, students preferred *error identification* over *teacher correction*, suggesting that while most students felt correction was the teacher's responsibility, they did not all feel "100% dependent on a teacher but were also willing to make corrections by themselves as long as they knew where errors were corrected" (p. 58).

Enginarlar (1993) also found that students reacted favourably to the indication of (linguistic) errors with codes. He suggests that students "perceive such review work as a type of co-operative learning in which the amount of work and responsibility is shared by students and teachers" (p. 193). One important difference between this study and other studies is that the indication of errors in this study was not limited to surface-level features. This pitfall (i.e. only addressing surface-level features and not lexical errors and problems with coherence) was noted by others in earlier studies (see Radecki & Swales 1988; Zamel 1985). Like Saito (1994), Enginarlar concluded that the "problem-solving manner" (p. 203) of the feedback type employed in this study would lead to more revision and that this revision is viewed by students as a collaborative effort. Proud & Gatbonton (1996) also found that students preferred teacher feedback using symbols/cues to overt

error correction by the teacher, but only when the teacher provided sufficient information on how to go about correcting the error. This finding was also supported by Makino (1993), who observed that the more detailed the cues were, the higher the ratio of learner self-correction achieved.

Although Leki (1991) also noted that students preferred error identification with cues for how to correct over teacher correction, she issued a caveat that what students *feel* benefits them is not always the same as what *does* benefit them. She refers to "the deceptive nature of cognitive restructuring" (p. 209), meaning that though students expressed a desire to have (linguistic) errors indicated with a cue provided because it helps them learn, there is a difference between memorizing a rule and a real cognitive restructuring of the source of the error so that it is incorporated into the student's developing meta-knowledge and not repeated in future compositions (p. 209). One possible explanation for this feedback type preference will be put forth in section 2.2.1of this thesis.

In reporting that a majority of students preferred error identification plus self-correction cues over error identification with teacher-provided answers, Oledejo (1993) also acknowledges that a large percentage of students preferred the teacher to identify and correct their errors. This, he speculated, "might be a necessary step toward getting them to be confident and communicate" (p. 84). He then ponders whether teachers' assumptions

about the most effective feedback type could sometimes be wrong – that a uniform approach to error correction might not be meeting the needs of certain students.

Oladejo's (1993) finding is not an isolated one. Hedgcock & Lefkowitz (1994) also found that on both first and final drafts, students preferred teachers to identify and correct errors in vocabulary, grammar and mechanics over using a set of proof-reading symbols (see also Saito, 1994).

To summarize, the studies that have investigated student preference for the two feedback types discussed here have found that a majority of students prefer teacher feedback (especially when focused on surface-level concerns) to be in the form of error identification with symbols/cues for self-correction. This suggests that many students may see error correction as a shared responsibility (Enginarlar, 1993; Oladejo, 1993) rather than the exclusive preserve of teachers. Some researchers, though, have stated that further research on types of written feedback is needed to determine which type of feedback benefits which students before any conclusive statement can be made on this issue (see, for example; Hedgcock & Lefcowitz 1994, 1996; Kepner 1991; Leki, 1991; Oladejo 1993).

2.2.2 Student Preference for other forms of Written Teacher Feedback

While studies investigating student preference for various feedback types are few, empirical data on the type of written comment students prefer are even rarer. Research on written feedback has generally focused on how teachers respond to linguistic or surface-level concerns, but within these studies some information on what students want their teachers to write does exist.

There have been two consistent findings in studies investigating students reaction to written comments by teachers. One is that both teachers and students believe these comments can be quite helpful. Students in Enginarlar's (1993) study, for example, reported overwhelmingly (98%) to be very positively disposed to written teacher comments. Leki (1990) states:

> Writing teachers and students alike do intuit that written responses can have a great effect on student writing and attitude toward writing...[and that] teachers continue to write comments on students' papers because we sense that our comments help our students improve; because written comments *seem* more feasible and more thorough than conferences on every paper; and because, for most writing teachers, our jobs require us not only to evaluate our students' writing but to be able to justify our evaluations (p. 58).

Another finding is that in order for students to feel they benefit from teacher comments, these comments must be substantive and text-specific (Cohen 1987; Enginarlar, 1993; Radecki & Swales 1988; Zamel 1985).

Cohen (1987) found that the students desired written comments on their writing in the form of single words, short phrases, and complete sentences, although the first two forms of written feedback were mentioned most often by students as exactly the type that cause confusion. Written comments such as "confusing" or "not clear" were not explicitly anchored to the text and so were of little use to students (Cohen, 1987, p. 65). The fact that these abstract, prescriptive comments are difficult for students to understand was also mentioned by Zamel (1985). She found that the teachers in her study most often produced comments such as the following, which the students did not find very useful:

> This is a really excellent narrative but I really do not see any description here. You also have some other compositional changes to make in sentence, paragraph formation.
>
> You need to support your opinion by giving details and you need to organize your thoughts a little better.
>
> A few confusing parts
>
> Some of your statements are so general that I don't know what you mean (p. 91).

From these examples it is clear that even when teacher comments are formulated as complete sentences, they can still be so vague that they can be of little use to students.

The subjects in Radecki & Swales' study (1988), perhaps substantiating Zamel's (1985) claim, suggested that responses indicating specific comments were the most beneficial:

> They are very useful because if he only tells us to correct our mistakes, doesn't say what is our general state or what we have to develop in our writing, it will not be useful or efficient enough for the students (Radecki & Swales, p. 200, 1988).

To further underline the need for written feedback to be specific, Hedgecock & Lefkowitz (1994) report that a majority of students felt written teacher comments were most effective when used in conjunction with teacher-student conferences. In addition, they report that written teacher comments on vocabulary, content, and organization were more highly valued than the use of symbols with cues for self-correction (p. 151). Using a treatment-effect design, Kepner (1991) found that students who received message-related comments produced " a significantly greater number of higher-level propositions...than did students who received the error corrections feedback" (p. 309). On the basis of these post-treatment journal entries, she concluded:

> The consistent implementation of a message-related comments model as a primary medium of written feedback to periodic discourse-level L2 writing is effective for promoting the development of writing proficiency...in terms of both ideational quality and surface-level accuracy (p. 310).

Sheppard (1992) reached a similar conclusion.

What is clear from research into student reaction to written teacher comments in L2 writing is that students consistently feel that this type of feedback can be of great benefit. It is also evident, however, that these comments need to be specifically anchored to the text and provide a clear indication to students how to rectify the error. The subjects in Proud & Gatbonton (1996), for example, reported that teachers' written comments represent something tangible students can review at a later time, but that this feedback type was valued only if detailed enough to provide students with a clear indication how to proceed. It is crucial, therefore, that teachers' written comments have to contain text-specific strategies and guidelines on how to proceed so the writer may better understand "the confusion the reader may have experienced and make obvious how to deal with these problems" (Zamel, 1985, p. 95). Also, in noting that learners may respond to teachers' written comments in different ways, Kepner (1991) issues a call for further research on types of written feedback "to determine whether written feedback is always best for all L2 students (p. 311).

2.2.3 Student Preference for Teacher-Student Conferences

Teacher-student conferences have become increasingly popular as an effective feedback technique in L2 writing. Though they have been

described as "arduous" (Lo 1994, p. 29), "too teacher-centered and time-consuming" (Vandergrift 1986, p. 665) and so not always "feasible" (Leki 1990, p. 58), Zamel (1985) suggests that conferences can help both reader and writer make important discoveries about the developing text. She suggested this approach to feedback after discovering that ESL students often found teachers' written comments difficult to understand. The benefit of conferencing, she states, is that "dynamic interchange and negotiation is most likely to take place when writers and readers work together face-to-face" (p. 87). Sokmen (1988 in Conrad & Goldstein 1990, p. 444) concurs, stating that "responding in conferences is more effective than in writing because you, the teacher, can interact dynamically with the students to understand intent." Indeed, although Lo (1994) mentions conferencing as being somewhat arduous, she nevertheless found it to be an effective tool because "the teacher discovers the underlying intention and logic of students' texts and helps them reshape and modify the writing until the true meaning articulates itself intelligibly" (p. 29).

Studies investigating student preferences for various feedback types have generally found that students appreciate the benefits of this technique. Saito (1994) reports that it was rated positively by just over 80% of respondents and was reported to be of much greater benefit than peer revision or self-correction. Student comments such as "It helped me a lot to understand the unclear points about my writing" and "It's good for shy

students" (p. 59) reveal this preference, although no *concrete* reasons were given by students as to *why* they deemed it to be of great benefit.

Proud & Gatbonton (1996) report that verbal feedback in a teacher-student conference was mentioned positively by a significant number of respondents. Students who mentioned this type of feedback valued the personal relationship it established between the teacher and student, and the opportunity to have a dialogue with the teacher in order to defend ideas/choices – what Kumari Dheram (1995) terms the "two-bullock cart."

In contrast to these two studies, a mere 10% of subjects in Hedgcock & Lefkowitz's (1994) study rated verbal-only feedback as the most preferred type of feedback. That rating increased to 60% of respondents when verbal feedback was combined with written feedback, suggesting that students felt that written comments were the best way to deal with the surface/linguistic errors they themselves were most concerned with.

While both students and teachers seem to agree on the beneficial effects of teacher-student conferences, three important caveats have been made by researchers. One common (mis)belief mentioned by Goldstein & Conrad (1990) is that the very act of conferencing leads students to participate actively: setting the agenda, defending ideas, asking questions, and negotiating meaning. They found that this was not necessarily so, and

that a number of factors may influence how a student participates in a conference (see Section 2.2 for more details). They concluded that "while a student *may* contribute input to a conference, *may* set the agenda, and *may* negotiate meaning, these are not guaranteed – even in conferences with the same teacher" (p. 455). In addition, the issue of *what* is negotiated during teacher-student conferences may also determine its effect on subsequent, "successful" revision; for example, while the subjects in Saito's (1994) study felt that conferencing was especially helpful with regard to surface/linguistic errors, Sheppard (1992) found that students who negotiate meaning in a conference with a teacher are "unlikely to do so at the risk of diminished accuracy; indeed, they are more likely to be accurate in their use of the language than students whose attention is constantly drawn to surface-level inaccuracies and repair techniques" (p. 108). Last, in order to ensure more productive student participation in teacher-student conferences, Goldstein & Conrad (1990) state that teachers cannot expect ESL students to come to writing conferences fully aware of the respective roles of the participants and so they must "teach students the purposes conferences can serve" (p. 457). In fact, in a very recent study, Conrad & Golstein (1999) further suggest that it may be not only the nature of comments and types of problems students and teachers address in these conferences that are important. In addition, they speculated that "individual factors" (p. 147) affecting both participants preclude a "direct and uncomplicated relationship between teacher comments and student revision" (p. 172). These "contextual factors" (p. 173), they

state, must be taken into account when examining the relationship between teacher comments and student revisions.

2.2.4 Student Preference for Peer Revision

. With the paradigm shift from a product-based approach to a process-based approach in L2 writing instruction came the increasing acceptance of group activities in the writing classroom. The expansion of this learner-centered approach to writing has led to the growth of the peer group as an audience for ESL writers (Devenney, 1989). Jacobs (1987) states that the process approach to ESL writing is particularly conducive to peer review activities. Unlike in the product-based model where the development and organization of ideas was seen to take place in the writer's head, the multiple steps and drafting emphasized in the process approach means that "now the writers' thinking is not only taking place in their heads, invisible to others, but it is also there on the page for their classmates and teachers to see, comment on, and learn from" (Jacobs p. 325, 1987). In peer review groups, students share their drafts with others as the drafts are developing "to get guidance and feedback on their writing" (Leki 1993, in Nelson & Murphy, p. 135, 1993). The essence of this activity, states Nelson & Murphy (1993), is "students providing other students with feedback on their preliminary drafts

so that the student writers may acquire a wider sense of audience and work towards improving their compositions" (p. 135).

One might then reasonably assume peer review groups to be an accepted and valued component in the ESL writing classroom. This, as in many other areas of feedback preference-based research, however, is not always the case. Though L1 research findings indicate that students value peer review sessions in the writing classroom, there is strong evidence that the L2 (i.e. ESL) context is quite different. One reason cited for this difference in student preference is that L2 students traditionally have seen the teacher as the sole authority in evaluating writing (Rothschild & Klingenberg, 1990).

The majority of studies investigating student preference for peer review in the ESL writing classroom have shown that students consistently value it far less than they do other forms of feedback. Oladejo (1993), for example, found that students viewed the teacher as the person best capable of helping students improve their writing. While they expressed a strong desire to participate in the correction and revision process (through a preference for use of symbols), they apparently did not see the value of having other students respond to or evaluate their drafts. He reports that "the majority of learners feel that errors of organization of ideas, vocabulary, grammar...would be best corrected by the teacher [while problems with

mechanics could be dealt with by the students themselves]...and that a majority of my subjects feel that none of their errors should be corrected by their peers" (p. 80). This finding has been noted in other studies as well. Rothschild & Klingenberg (1990) mention that students are cautious about the value of peer feedback because of a perceived lack of expertise of student writers leading to faulty corrections (p. 54).

Indeed, evidence of this perceived lack of expertise as a reason for valuing peer feedback less highly than other forms can be found in other studies. Saito's (1994) subjects rated peer feedback as the second least-preferred form of feedback (only self-correction without error identification by teacher was rated lower). As well, it received the largest percentage (60%) of negative responses from students in the three groups (p. 56). Many of the negative comments towards peer feedback reveal the students' perception of their role in the classroom:

> All of us are students, not teachers.
>
> Reading other students'paper is good, but not correction.
>
> I can't trust other students.
>
> It depends on the partner, someone who has more knowledge than you or not (p. 58).

Leki (1991) also found that students far preferred feedback from the teacher rather than from fellow students. In fact, when asked to choose

between teacher and peer feedback, Zhang (1995) reports that students in the vast majority of L2 studies choose the teacher as the person most capable of providing beneficial feedback. One of Zhang's research questions was designed to test the current methodological assumption in the learner-centered ESL writing classroom about the affective advantage of peer feedback:

> If peer feedback is inherently more meaningful and relevant and gives more social support than teacher feedback, ESL learners who have experienced both will show a significantly stronger preference for peer feedback (p. 213).

His findings indicate a rejection of this hypothesis. An overwhelming majority (93.8%) of participants chose the traditional teacher feedback over peer feedback (p. 216). Though peer feedback was rated preferable to self-correction, Zhang concludes that, at least as is now usually constituted, the assumed affective advantage of peer feedback "is not yet a proven case" (p. 217). This conclusion is echoed in a very recent study by Sengupta (1998), in which secondary school students in Hong Kong were taught how to respond to their peers' drafts. The subjects in this study were later interviewed to determine their reaction to the peer feedback sessions and all mentioned that evaluation was the teacher's job. "But the teacher must tell me" (p. 23) was typical of student response when the interviewer suggested that even grammatical errors could be corrected by discussing them in a peer feedback session. Proud & Gatbonton (1996) encountered similar student

reaction when asked to rate the usefulness of peer feedback. Though the content analysis of student comments produced only one comment, it was anything but positive: "Peer revision is an attempt to make the teacher's life easier and not very fruitful" (p. 11).

Perhaps one of the reasons students often perceive peer feedback to be inferior to teacher feedback is that many students equate feedback aimed at improving subsequent revision with surface-level error correction. Mangelsdorf (1992) implies that part of the problem may be in the terminology teachers use when presenting this form of feedback to their students. She states that it is sometimes referred to as *peer editing* or *peer evaluation*, but that she prefers the term *peer review* because the first two terms suggest an emphasis on form over content and organization issues: "I prefer 'review' because students are doing more than simply editing and evaluating another student's essay: they are responding to *what* the essay says as well as *how* it says it" (p. 274). The subjects in her study focused most of their comments in peer review sessions on content and organization. Though not all subjects reported finding the process helpful, there were more positive comments made by students than negative ones. Most students seemed to recognize the importance of audience to the writer and the value that interacting can bring to the writing process in terms of differing points of view:

> Everyone that read my paper has a new view of point. Most of the time the comments open my eyes to see that what I mean to write isn't precisely what my friends read.
>
> Usually, I get a lot of questions from different angles. It helps me think about the subject twice and also let me know which one to focus on or explain more.
>
> When you write on a topic you might always consider the same aspects and your ideas might be like a closed circle in your head. Your classmates can input new ideas and thus open your circle (p. 278-279).

In a 1989 study, Devenney found that, unlike the teachers, the subjects did not use grammar as a basis for evaluating their peers' writing, but focused most of their comments on issues of organization and content (p. 86). Although the students and teachers in this study were evaluating final drafts, his conclusion that peer review groups can play "a valuable role" (p. 88) can be interpreted as evidence that ESL students are capable of making the type of comments (on issues of content and organization) which may benefit fellow student writers. Kumari Dheram (1995), too, observed that her subjects "considered peer feedback useful for both developing and evaluating content" (p. 165) and concluded that peer feedback reduces students' dependence on the teacher as the sole authority (and reader) and helps them become aware of the importance of creating reader-based texts.

If some studies have shown that students report understanding the value of peer review (Dheram, 1995; Mangelsdorf, 1992) and that ESL students are

capable of making insightful comments (Devenney, 1989) which may improve compositions, then the question of whether and how these comments are incorporated in revisions is important to answer. Nelson & Murphy (1993) conducted a study in which they tried to determine to what extent ESL student writers incorporate comments made by other students during peer review sessions. Of interest to this section was the finding that different types of group interaction were observed and these interaction types directly influenced the degree to which peer comments were incorporated in a subsequent revision of the composition. They identified four distinct group interaction environments: interactive, noninteractive, cooperative and defensive (p. 138). They found that the percentage of peer comments incorporated in the revision of the text was greatest in interactive, cooperative group environments. Nelson & Murphy (1993) considered this finding to be consistent with Goldstein & Conrad's (1990) finding that students were more likely to revise their compositions using teacher comments when negotiation had taken place in student-teacher conferences, though they caution that successful peer review interaction cannot solely be based on the extent to which students incorporate their peers' comments on revisions.

A review of the literature on peer feedback reveals that there is a marked preference for the teacher to comment on and evaluate student drafts. It appears the factor most influencing this negative preference is the perceived lack of expertise on the part of the students and the resulting

unwillingness to value comments made by peers. This is significant because if ESL students do not value comments made by their peers, it is unlikely they will incorporate them when revising (Jacobs, 1989; Nelson & Murphy, 1993). Worse, peer review activities themselves might be greeted with apprehension and as something forced upon them by the teacher (Leki, 1991), possibly resulting in resentment of the process in general. Zhang (1995) states that even though he is inclined to agree with Leki (1990) that peer feedback has "undeniable benefits" (in Zhang, 1995, p. 219) in and of itself to ESL writing, it would be "reasonable to expect those undeniable benefits to be weighed against the attending relative disadvantage in the affective domain" (p. 219). To this end, Section 2.2 will explore other possible influencing factors in students' preference for peer feedback.

2.2.5 Student Preference for Revision

Central to process-oriented ESL writing instruction is the belief that the multi-draft approach to composing is necessary for students to understand writing as an evolving "non-linear, exploratory" (Zamel, 1985) process. Within this model of L2 writing instruction, revision is "virtually axiomatic" (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, p. 145, 1994). Borrowed from L1 process-oriented writing instruction models, revision is seen by L2 writing teachers as the logical end to the feedback giving process. Its importance, therefore, is paramount in providing L2 writers with the opportunity to improve both their

writing technique as well as their overall L2 abilities. In recognizing the importance of revision, Chaudron (1984) writes that it "is probably while practicing revision that L2 learners begin to refine their acquired L2 knowledge, recognizing the formal distinctions, and resulting communicative, functional effects of different target forms" (p. 2).

While it is clear that L2 writing teachers understand the importance of revision, it is apparent from an overview of studies investigating student feedback preference that many students do not hold it in such high regard as a means of improving their writing. Cohen & Cavalcanti (1990) discovered that many students see revision as "artificial – an activity without any genuine purpose" (p. 158). Similarly, Cohen (1987) found that only 17% of respondents said they would revise their compositions after receiving teacher feedback. Furthermore, though revision was required in the ESL classes in his study, "relatively few students" (p. 64) reported incorporating teacher feedback in their revisions. Of those few, students who rated themselves as poorer L2 writers were more likely to revise than were those who rated themselves as better writers (p. 64). This finding led Cohen to question the quality of the revisions produced. If revision is viewed as "nothing more than a time-consuming copying task with little genuine learning going on" (p. 66) he pondered, then it is little wonder that students have a negative view of revision as a means of improving their writing ability.

The idea that students see revision as a type of punishment has been noted in other studies. Radecki & Swales (1988) found that the majority of subjects in their study were opposed to revising their compositions, some students even expressing hostility towards the idea: "Rewrite is only a way of penalty in elementary school. It only wastes our time. What do you say if somebody copies the paragraph in front of the TV set?" (p. 358). Statements like this, they concluded, reveal that students "have a mistaken notion of revision as merely the correction of surface-level errors" (p. 358). Indeed, this "mistaken notion" may derive from the type and focus of feedback students receive. Saito (1994) also notes this possibility as do Hedgcock & Lefkowitz (1996), who found that FL subjects in their study viewed the purpose of revision as a function of the feedback focus received from the teacher:

> [revising a composition] was clearly intended to raise their awareness of the linguistic weaknesses of their written texts and to teach them *language* – not necessarily to engage them in the dialogic, recursive activities that are the hallmarks of process-oriented L1 and ESL writing instruction (p. 298).

This phenomenon may be related to the differing contexts (i.e. FL vs. L2) and will be explored in greater detail in Section 2.3.1 of this thesis.

While some researchers (Cohen, 1987; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Radekci & Swales, 1988; Saito, 1994) have found that students have a generally negative view of revision, others have found that students value

revision as an effective and necessary component of the writing process. Enginarlar (1993) reports that an "overwhelming majority" (p. 200) found it to be a useful means of improving their writing. Dheram (1995) found that her subjects valued revision because it allowed them the opportunity to focus on content and organization so as to better appreciate "a global approach to writing" (p. 164). She emphasizes that revision should not only be on correcting surface-level features, but on meaning-related issues for students "to understand revision as a tool for reconsidering both ideas and how they have been conveyed in the context of the purpose and tone of the text" (p. 164). Proud & Gatbonton (1996) also report that students paid almost equal attention to content, organization and grammar when revising, suggesting that the students in their study seemed to understand that attending to meaning-related concerns was necessary to respond to the reader's needs (awareness of audience).

Responding to the finding that not all students value revision, researchers almost unanimously agree that there is a need to educate students on the benefits of revision. Dheram (195) writes that students must be trained to appreciate revision and, in fact, advocates a three-draft approach to ESL writing instruction (for beginning writers) on the basis of three factors students reported in her study:

> Firstly, the focus laid on content and organization of the text during the course of its production seems to have drawn their

> attention to meaning. Secondly, returning to the first draft made them see their own writing with a fresh perspective. Thirdly, they were to evaluate their ideas only after giving them tangible form (p. 165).

Others (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz , 1994, 1996; Saito, 1994) also see the need for teachers to clarify for students the purpose of revision so that students may more clearly understand its benefits. Clarifying the purpose of revision in a process-orientated writing classroom will result in what Hedgcock & Lefkowtitz (1994, 1996) term effective and successful revision. They define effective revision as requiring "the engagement of the writer, as well as careful application of feedback practices that guide the writer to an awareness of the information and rhetorical, and linguistic expectations of the audience within a specific discourse community" (1996, p. 289). This may lead to resolving the problem created by the differing views of teachers and students towards revision referred to by Radecki & Swales (1988): "Whereas teachers tend to view [revision] as a generative process whereby meaning is reassessed and text is reshaped, students tend to view it as the correction of surface-level errors" (p. 364).

The preferences for and reaction to various types and foci of feedback presented in the preceding sections reveal that there is no one area in which there is total agreement. This has led many researchers to speculate that individual differences within the learners themselves may account for the

lack of uniformity in stated feedback preferences. The following sections will explore a few selected factors that may influence these preferences.

2.3 Possible Factors Influencing Feedback Preferences

There is very little empirical evidence to explain why L2 students have the preferences they have about feedback focus and feedback type although Raimes (1991) writes that practitioners of ESL writing instruction are beginning to realize that there is great diversity in their students, which probably means that not all approaches to ESL writing may work with all learners. Likewise, Kepner (1991) states that further research needs to be conducted into reasons for learner variance in feedback preference because learners respond in "different and unexpected ways to teachers' written comments" (p. 311). Furthermore, she states that factors other than students' verbal ability should be examined. To this end, this section will focus on the findings reported in studies attempting to investigate three of the factors thought to influence L2 students' feedback preference with which this thesis is most concerned: previous L2 learning experiences, learning-style preference, and personality.

2.3.1 Previous L2 Learning Experiences

One variable that may be a factor in students' feedback preferences is that of previous learning experiences. Several studies (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996; Leki, 1991; Oladejo, 1993; Porte, 1996; Saito, 1994) investigating both student preference for various feedback practices and how students process this feedback have found that students' previous learning experiences may indeed be affecting both their preference and their revision strategies. The findings in these studies suggest that previous learning experience shapes feedback preference in terms of where students perceive the instructional focus to be (i.e. form or meaning concerns), which feedback foci and types they have been exposed to in their L2 writing classes, and how ESL students perceive the roles of teacher and student in the classroom.

Leki (1991) posited that students come to (North) American institutions with different notions than their teachers here of what kind of teacher responses will most help them improve their writing:

> As these students enroll in ESL writing classes, they may encounter unfamiliar methodologies which conflict with their own sense of how to master English. ESL students' previous training in English may impede their ability, or even willingness, to share their teachers' belief that rich content is more important than grammatical perfection (p. 204).

Her finding that grammar-focused teacher feedback was the most preferred by students can be traced, she writes, to their previous (EFL) writing experience. The majority of Leki's (1991) subjects were in their first

term in a U.S. university, leading her to conclude that "their attitudes towards error correction were most likely based on language learning experiences in their home countries" (p. 205). This assertion is supported by Hedgcock & Lefkowitz (1994) who found that FL students displayed response norms that were "distinctly form-focused [in terms of feedback preference]" (p. 157). These responses, they concluded, were a function of the teachers' focus on form-related issues in the FL setting "as opposed to fluency, idea generation, and rhetorical organization [in the ESL instructional setting]" (p. 157). This, in turn, may explain why students in a number of studies (Leki, 1991; Oladejo, 1993; Proud & Gatbonton, 1996; Saito, 1994) prefer the use of symbols or codes to help them correct surface-level features in their writing: they may feel it gives them a measure of control over their learning that they need (Leki, 1991).

Previous learning experiences may, in addition, be able to partially explain the "mismatch" referred to in so much of the current literature. Hedgcock & Lefkowtiz (1994) state that the differing instructional contexts (i.e. FL and ESL) often emphasize different aspects of writing (i.e. focus on product vs. focus on process) and because of this difference ESL writing instructors have been found to display concerns "which operate at cross-purposes" (Cumming 1989, in Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994, p. 143) with those of their students. In their 1996 explication of their earlier study (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994) they conclude that the effect of students'

previous (i.e. EFL) learning experiences on their current belief system cannot be underestimated:

> L2 students – in particular those studying a FL – reportedly expect to make the greatest improvement in writing quality and to "learn the most" when their teachers highlight grammatical and mechanical mistakes. Their perception of content development, organization, and expressive qualities...are clearly secondary to their concern for visible, tangible signs of formal correction. This pattern may be directly attributable to specific characteristics of the FL environment as well as to the practices that are common among FL practitioners (p. 299).

Robb et al. (1986) corroborate this assumption in referring to Applebee's (1981) finding that 80% of EFL teachers ranked mechanics as the most important concern when attending to student writing.

Other studies that have found previous learning experience to influence ESL students' feedback preferences and practices also report that students attend to surface-level concerns much more than to other areas such as content and organization when revising. Porte (1996), for example, investigated the revision strategies of less-skilled ESL writers and found that an "overwhelming majority" (p. 110) of changes made during revision were to perceived surface-level problems. Like others (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996; Radecki & Swales, 1988) who have found that ESL students see revision as an exercise in proof-reading or editing, he concluded that it was understandable they would concentrate on surface-level grammatical features "because that was where experience had shown them most immediate gain was to be found" (p. 113). Hedgcock & Lefkowitz (1996) also see the

"logic" in this approach to revision because "apprentice writers do whatever they have been taught to do in a consistently narrow and predictable way" (Somers, 1980, in Hedgcock & Lefkowtiz, 1996, p. 295).

Another effect of previous learning experience, which may also be linked to students' perceived notion of instructional focus, is the traditional view of the roles of teachers and students in the classroom. Sengupta (1998) states that there is a "deep-rooted [idea] that the only possible interpretation of knowledge appears to be that it is transmitted from the teacher to the student, and not constructed by the classroom community" (p. 25) in the FL context. This may explain the consistent low value assigned to peer feedback in ESL writing classes. Leki (1991) states that "many new arrivals...had not the opportunity to use peer responding and, therefore, did not believe it would work" (p. 209). Jacobs (1987) also notes that "many students reported having had little prior experience working in groups in class" (p. 329) and so had little idea how to go about it effectively. As mentioned earlier, it is clear there exists the need to train students to appreciate the full benefits of peer review and revision in the ESL writing classroom.

The findings reported in this section, then, indicate that previous experience should factor into students' stated preference for feedback foci and type in this thesis.

2.3.2 The Influence of Culturally-based Learning Style on Feedback Preference

Learning style has been defined by Ehrman & Oxford (1990), among many others, as "preferred or habitual patterns of mental functioning and dealing with new information" (p. 311). Implicit within this notion of learning styles is that there are differences in the way *individuals* prefer to process information in educational settings. Can it be, then, that there exists a learning style that can be perceived to be *culturally-based*, that is shared by individual members of a cultural group? According to some, (Carson & Nelson, 1994; Ehrman & Oxford, 1990; Oxford, 1992; 1993; Nelson, 1995; Reid, 1987) the answer appears to be, "Yes." What is key to understanding and recognizing culturally-based learning styles is that while *culture* refers to the characteristics shared by a group, Nelson (1995) states that culture must also be *learned*. Individuals are not likely born genetically predisposed to visual or kinesthetic learning styles Nelson suggests, but rather "they learn to learn through the socialization processes that occur in families and friendship groups" (p. 6). As support, she cites Singleton (1991, in Nelson, 1995, p. 6):

> There are, in every society, unstated assumptions about people and how they learn, which act as a set of self-fulfilling prophecies that invisibly guide whatever educational processes may occur there. They act as a kind of unintentional hidden curriculum, or what an anthropologist might call a cultural theory of learning.

While evidence has been found for culturally-based preferences for learning styles such as visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile (Reid, 1987), this section will concern itself with how culturally-based or influenced learning styles may affect student preference for feedback in L2 writing classes. In particular, this section will focus on how *group* or *individual* learning style may correlate to stated preference for peer feedback. In addition, the possibility of how *culture* as a variable (defined in this study as "ethnic group") may influence stated preference for feedback focus will be examined.

One finding consistent in most of the literature on ESL writing students' feedback preferences is that peer feedback is among the least valued practices (Oladejo, 1993; Reid, 1987; Stebbins, 1995). What is interesting in these studies is that most of the students come from cultures thought to be *collectivist* (Stebbins, 1995); that is, cultures in which the whole or the group takes precedence over the individual. While this may seem, on the surface, to represent a contradiction, a closer examination of a sampling of the cultures in these studies and how *the group* is operationalized in educational settings in these cultures reveals that students' expressed feedback preferences are consistent with the culturally-influenced practices they were familiar with in their native countries.

The Confucian tradition has greatly influenced the processes of learning in many East and Southeast Asian countries, especially China and Japan. Nelson (1995) states that within Confucianism "de-emphasis of self and concern for the group or the whole... [results in]... students learning through cooperation, by working for the common good, by supporting each other, and by not elevating themselves above others" (pp. 9-10). This does not necessarily mean, though, that students in these cultures experience group work often in the classroom. Instead, cooperation "operationalized as student interaction, frequently occurs *outside* (emphasis hers) the classroom, in study groups, or in other after-school groups... [and in the classroom]... students seldom form small groups or pairs" (Nelson, 1995, p. 14), but rather usually only speak when called upon by the teacher to repeat or recite. This, in turn, may explain Carson & Nelson's (1994) discovery that even students from collectivist cultures such as China and Japan, where group work is common in schools both as a means of knowledge acquisition and reinforcing the group ethic, can have difficulty with the type of peer feedback sessions commonly practiced in North American university classrooms.

The Confucian notion of "not elevating oneself above others" in the classroom is also represented in a Japanese proverb: "The nail that sticks up gets hammered down" (Nelson, 1995, p. 15). This cultural belief often manifests itself, as many teachers can attest, in ESL students being reticent to speak in class. Stebbins (1995) noted that Japanese and Chinese students'

unwillingness to express their opinions may be a direct consequence of living within this belief system. In addition to the reported unwillingness to express opinions, certain cultures may see the peer feedback process as constituted in most North American writing classrooms as an exercise in pointing out the mistakes of others. Oladejo (1993) states that it "is well-known in the predominantly Chinese culture of Singapore peer correction is often seen negatively, as a sign of losing face" (p. 83).

The notion that a low or negative preference for peer feedback as an effective means of improving ESL students' writing is only relevant to Asian cultures has been challenged by some. Zhang (1995) concluded that even though 86.4% of his participants were from Asia, culture could not be considered to be a confounding variable because his results were "virtually identical" (p. 219) with Leki's (1991) study in which 43% of participants were from Asian cultures. In both studies, peer feedback was rated among the least preferred feedback practices. The findings in these two studies led Zhang to conclude that this (and other) preferences were not "peculiar to Asian cultures" (p. 219).

The role culturally-based learning styles has in influencing students' preferences for feedback in the ESL writing classroom is an area in which there have been calls for much future research (Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Nelson, 1995; Stebbins, 1995; Zhang, 1995, for example). Cohen &

Cavalcanti (1990) conclude that preference for feedback categories depends on the cultural background of both the teacher and the student. Indeed, both teachers and students bring assumptions about how learning best occurs to the classroom, but when "these two sets of assumptions are different, both students and teachers become frustrated" (Nelson,1995, p. 15). These assumptions, she states "are a result of our cultural programming... [and as]...ESL/EFL teachers, we need to attend to this cultural variation in learning" (p. 15). Silva (1992), too, recognizes the necessity of incorporating this information into the ESL writing classroom:

> ...teachers need to be aware of and sensitive to their students' perceptions about writing and expectations regarding instruction so that they can make informed decisions...and teach courses that support and encourage, rather than alienate their students (p. 44).

2.3.3 The Influence of Personality Type on Feedback Preferences

Another variable which may influence students' preference for feedback practices in ESL writing instruction is *personality type.* This construct has its base first in Carl. G. Jung's theory of psychological type first published in 1921, and later in work pioneered by Katherine Briggs and her daughter Isabel Myers.

Jung developed his theory of psychological type to "explain some of the apparently random differences in people's behavior" (Myers, 1993, p. 2) and based it on years of empirical observations. His theory postulates that there are predicatable differences in individuals and that these differences are caused by how people use their minds to engage in two key mental processes: *perceiving* and *judging*. (Progoff, 1973). Myers (1993) explains:

> The core idea is that, when your mind is active, you are involved in one of two mental activities: taking in information, *Perceiving*; or organizing that information and coming to conclusions, *Judging* (p. 2).

Myers & McCaulley (1985) further detail these two mental activities:

> Perception includes the many ways of becoming aware of things, people, events, or ideas. It includes information gathering, the seeking of sensation or inspiration, and the selection of the stimulus to be attended to.
>
> Judgment includes all the ways of coming to conclusions about what has been perceived. It includes decision making, evaluation, choice, and the selection of the response after perceiving the stimulus (p. 12).

Jung observed that there are two opposite ways people engage in perceiving and judging. *Sensing* and *Intuition* are the labels he assigned to the two types of perceiving. *Thinking* and *Feeling* are the labels he assigned to the two types of judging. Jung's theory postulates that these four

processes or functions form the core of how people understand information and make decisions based on what has been taken in.

Sensing perception refers to information observed through use of the senses. Because the senses can give us information only about what we are currently experiencing, "persons oriented toward sensing perception tend to focus on the immediate experience and often develop characteristics associated with this awareness...[including]... realism, acute powers of observation, memory for details, and practicality" (Myers & McCaulley, 1985, p. 12). On the other hand, those oriented toward *intuitive* perception take in information in terms of possibilities, relationships and insight. This may take the form of "hunches" (Jensen & DiTiberio, 1989, p. 11) and often is not based on concrete observations like the individual who prefers sensing perception. Myers & McCaulley (1985) illustrate the differences between these two kinds of perceiving with an example of an apple:

> ...when the sensing function is used to perceive an apple, a person will use terms to describe it like "juicy," "crisp," "red," or "white with black seeds." When the intuitive function is used to perceive the same apple, a person may report "William Tell," "How to keep the doctor away," "Roast Pig," or "My grandmother's famous pie" (p. 12).

Thinking is one of the two types of judgement theorized by Jung in which an individual attempts to bring harmony or reason to the information that has been perceived. The individual preferring this mode of judging tries

to link ideas together by using logic. Often information is analysed using a cause and effect type of reasoning and so tends to be impersonal (Myers & McCaulley, 1985). Characteristics of this type of judging are: "analytical ability, objectivity, concern with principles of justice and fairness, [and] criticality" (1985, p. 12). Those displaying a preference for *feeling* judgment are more likely to make decisions based on understanding the values of oneself and of the larger group and so tend to be more subjective (Myers & McCaulley, 1985). Characteristics of this type of judging are: "[having] an understanding of people, a concern with the human as opposed to the technical aspects of problems, a need for affiliation, and ... a desire for harmony" (1985, p. 13).

In addition to these four core mental processes or functions, Jung theorized that they are used in both the external world (*extraverted*) and the internal world (*introverted*). Jung labeled extraversion and introversion as *attitudes* or orientations toward life (Progoff, 1973). Myers & McCaulley (1985) state that those possessing an extraverted attitude direct energy from the outer environment. This attitude may manifest itself in some or all of the characteristics habitually associated with extraversion, including: "an action-oriented, sometimes impulsive way of meeting life; frankness; ease of communication; or sociability" (1985, p. 13). In the introverted attitude, however, energy is drawn from the environment and directed inward to focus on concepts and ideas (Myers & McCaulley, 1985). Those displaying a

preference for an introverted attitude may develop some or all of the characteristics usually associated with introversion, including: "interest in the clarity of concepts and ideas; a thoughtful, contemplative detachment; and enjoyment of solitude and privacy" (1985, p. 13).

The preceding three paragraphs briefly detail Jung's theory of psychological type. What Isabel Myers and Katherine Briggs brought to the development of type theory was to elaborate on the importance of judgment and perception implicit in Jung's work. They developed a fourth dimension – *Judging-Perceiving* – which referred to which of the two core mental functions was preferred in the outer or extraverted world (Jensen & DiTiberio, 1989). This was helpful in identifying characteristics of individuals who employed thinking or feeling in their outer life, and who preferred sensing or intuition in their outer life. Briggs and Myers hypothesized that since "extraverted activities are by definition more apparent in behavior than introverted activities, the JP attitude (Judging or Perceiving) is often one of the earliest recognized" (Myers & McCaulley, 1985, p. 14).

Research into personality type has found that it influences "the characteristic ways in which people respond to the world and the ways they prefer to learn" (Moody, 1988, p. 299). Carrell et al. (1996), Oxford & Ehrman (1993), Ehrman & Oxford (1995), Skehan (1989) among others have

conducted research into the role personality type may play in ESL/EFL learning, but this thesis will focus on research conducted on how personality type influences writing. First language composition research, for example, has found that individual students' personality types influence how they approach writing tasks (Jensen & DiTiberio, 1989). In L2 writing research there is a relative paucity of literature, though some interesting findings have emerged.

Carrell & Monroe (1993) investigated the role of personality type in the composing processes of students in ESL compositions and found that personality type influenced what kind of compositions students produced. Using an adapted version of the MBTI (the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*, 1962, 1987) they were able to identify the personality type preferences of their subjects and discovered that certain types focused on different areas when composing (this instrument will be discussed in greater detail in Section 3.2.3 of this thesis). For example, on the *Thinking-Feeling* dimension, writers scoring high on the *Thinking* scale produced compositions that were longer and more syntactically complex than did *Feeling* types. Another significant finding was that *Thinking* types were found to rely more on the organization, structure, and logic of their compositions than *Feeling* types.

While research (both in L1 and L2 composition) has suggested that personality type can explain why "different students engage in different writing process*es*, not one uniform writing process" (Carrell& Monroe, 1993, p. 148), there has been no investigation (to this author's knowledge) into how type may influence ESL students' preference for feedback on their compositions. To this end, the next section will outline how personality type is hypothesized to influence preference for both feedback focus and feedback type.

2.4 Main Hypothesis

Carrell and Monroe (1993) state that "it is now broadly acknowledged that individual differences within the learners themselves influence the effectiveness of different instructional methods" (p. 148). It naturally follows, then, that these individual differences must play an active role in influencing/guiding/determining choices made by students during the learning process. This thesis will attempt to determine students' preferences for feedback type and feedback focus. It will also attempt to measure how and to what degree certain factors influence ESL students' feedback preference. Previous L2 writing experience, culturally-influenced preference for individual or group learning, and personality type will be the three factors examined most closely. In addition, factors such as *age, gender, level, self-*

rating (both as overall language learners and as writers in their L1 and English), will be investigated.

The influence of biographical factors such as age, gender, level of student, self-rating, and field of specialization on feedback preferences will be measured using an updated version of the feedback preference questionnaire employed by Proud & Gatbonton (1996). Specific items inquiring about the frequency and nature of group work in ESL and non-ESL classes in subjects' native country will measure the effects of culturally-influenced preference for group or individual learning. The role of personality type will be investigated with the use of an instrument partly patterned after the Myers and Briggs instrument referred to above and explained in greater detail in Section 3.2.3.

2.4.1 Research Questions

- Will there be a significant difference in the preference of students on both feedback focus and feedback type?
- Will *Age* and *Gender* influence the students' preference for feedback?
- Will *Personality type* influence whether students prefer form- or content-focused feedback, oral or written teacher feedback, use of symbols vs. teacher correction, and whether or not they have a positive or negative preference for peer feedback?
- Will *the students' Self-Rating of their proficiency level* (as a writer in their L1 and English, in addition to as a language learner overall) influence whether they have a preference for form-focused or content-focused feedback?
- Will *Previous L2 writing experience* influence whether students prefer form-focused or content-focused feedback? Also, will it influence whether students have a negative or positive preference for peer feedback?
- Will *the actual ESL placement of the students* influence whether they prefer form-focused or content-focused feedback?
- Will *Group or Individual Learning Style preference* influence whether students have a positive or negative preference for peer feedback?

Chapter 3

Methods

3.1 Introduction

There are two main aims to this thesis: to determine the feedback preferences of university-level ESL students on their written work and to examine factors believed to influence these preferences. Two instruments were designed to carry out this investigation - one explores feedback preferences, the other determines personality type. This chapter will first describe the subjects, then detail the design of each of the two instruments used in the study, and finally how the data were analysed.

3.2 Subjects

The main participants in this study (n = 185) were students enrolled in credit-ESL programs at two Montreal universities. The students were selected to represent a broad cross-section of native cultures and personality types, reflective of the heterogeneity of L2 composition classes in North American university-level credit ESL programs. The students ranged in age from 18 to 54, represented 13 faculties and 34 native countries, including 25 ethnic groups and 22 different first languages. In terms of language proficiency,

students from all six levels (from Beginner to Advanced) of one university's program participated in the study and students from corresponding levels of the ESL credit program at the other university participated. The students enrolled in both programs at the time of this study had all finished secondary school (either in Canada or their native country) and were either already studying at university, or were preparing to enter their first semester at university. Though the students were in ESL programs at two different universities, the methodology across levels at both institutions was similar in that a process-based model of writing instruction was used with an emphasis on revision.

In addition to the groups of students described above, two other groups participated in the piloting of the personality instrument used in the present study. First, 30 adult students in an intensive ESL program were given the instrument twice over a two-and-a-half week period. These students were selected because they represented both the language proficiency levels and the educational level (i.e. the vast majority had completed at least some post-secondary education) of the subjects in the actual study. An improved version of this instrument was then tested on a second group of 8 university-level ESL students. This group had completed the ESL writing program at one of the universities in the present study and so were also representative of the population surveyed in the present study.

3.3 Materials

Two instruments were designed to gather data in this study: one explored student preferences for feedback on ESL compositions, and the other determined personality type. This section will first describe the feedback preference questionnaire and then explain the personality type instrument.

3.3.1 The Feedback Preference Questionnaire

The Feedback Preference Questionnaire (see Appendix I) was a revised version of the instrument designed for the Proud & Gatbonton (1996) study reported earlier. That instrument, in turn, was based on one used in Cohen's (1987) investigation of student feedback preferences. The feedback preference questionnaire consisted of two sections: biographical data, and the feedback preference section.

Biographical Data

This part of the questionnaire contained twelve items designed to gather biographical information about each subject. Items 1 to 4 sought information on *age, gender, faculty, native country, ethnic group,* and *first*

language of the students. Items 6 to 9 were designed to find out where instructors in previous courses had focused their feedback, how often students had engaged in group work, and how frequent group work was in *non-ESL* courses in their native countries. Two of these items (items 8 and 9) were included to determine both previous experience (item 8) *and* group or individual learning style (item 9) preference that could be interpreted as being culturally-based. The final three items in this section (items 10-12) asked students to rate their ability as language learners (item 10), as readers and writers in their L1 (item 11), and to indicate their skill level in writing, speaking, reading, and listening, in English (item 12). The items in this section which explored *previous experience,* prevalence of *group learning,* and students' *self-rating* of their abilities were designed on a Likert-type 5-point scale ("poor" = 1 to "excellent" = 5 or "never" = 1 to "almost always" = 5).

Feedback type and focus

The second part of the questionnaire contained fifteen items seeking information about the students' feedback preferences. This section was divided, in turn, into two sub-sections. The first sub-section consisted of four items that explored which areas (*mechanics, vocabulary, grammar, content,* and *organization*) students attend to when composing (item 4), which they attend to when revising (item 3), which areas students feel teacher feedback

should focus on (item 2). It also explored where teacher feedback was focused on in the last essay students had returned to them (item 1). The items in this section were randomized to avoid a possible "cascade effect" of students identifying a pattern in the items and responding accordingly (e.g. by having items ordered so that they "mirrored" the order of the writing process). Items 1 and 3 in this sub-section were designed using a Likert-type 5-point scale ("not at all" = 1 to "a lot" = 5 or "least important" = 1 to "most important" = 5). In items 2 and 4 the students were asked to rank the factors in terms of their importance (1 = "not important at all" to 5 = "the most important").

The second sub-section of this part of the questionnaire contained eleven items to which the students were asked to respond in order to identify their preferences for various feedback focus areas (i.e. *mechanics, vocabulary, grammar, content*, and *organization*) and types (*teacher-student conferencing, using symbols to identify errors, teacher correction, revision, peer feedback*, and *written feedback*). As in the previous section, the items in this section were scrambled to discourage students from responding in a "patterned" manner (i.e. items eliciting opinions on feedback focus were followed by items eliciting opinions on feedback type). By scrambling the items in this section, it was hoped that students would respond to each item as a separate entity in itself, and not as a step in a sequence of other items (either on *focus* or *type*). The items in this sub-section were also designed using a

Likert-type 5-point scale in which students were asked to rate the usefulness of various feedback practices (1 = "useless" to 5 = "very useful"). A complete set of the items described in this section is presented in Appendix I.

3.3.2 Personality Type Questionnaire

This instrument (see Appendix II) forms the other key component of this study. It draws on the research conducted by Briggs & Myers in the development of the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* (MBTI) (1962, 1987) to investigate how personality type, as defined by Jung (Progoff, 1973), influences feedback preferences. It is true, however, that the MBTI is not the only inventory of Jung's Personality typology; two others – the Jungian Type Survey created by Wheelwright and his associates (1964, in Jensen & DiTiberio, 1989), and The Singer Loomis Inventory of Personality (SLIP) (1982, in Jensen & DiTiberio, 1989) are also used. Both instruments, though, only produce scores for the three dimensions of Jung's original typology (Extraversion-Introversion, Sensing-Intuition, Thinking-Feeling) without incorporating the major contribution of Myers and Briggs (i.e. the Judging-Perceiving dimension), and thus are less comprehensive than the MBTI (Jensen & DiTiberio, 1989). In addition, the MBTI was chosen as a model because it has a solid history of over 100 construct-validity studies conducted on it (Jensen & DiTiberio, 1989). It is also generally regarded to be "more conceptually sophisticated and complex than most learning style

assessments" (p. 30, 1989) in that it can identify sixteen types or approaches to learning as opposed to a few learning styles. It is not, however, comprehensive – no published instrument is. Jensen & DiTiberio claim that its most striking feature is that it assesses personality type rather than learning style and so better allows one (a teacher, for example) to make predictions about "how a student might perform best, which may or may not be consistent with his present behavior" (Jensen & DiTiberio, p. 31, 1989). Furthermore, in earlier research, Jensen & DiTiberio state that they found this instrument quite useful in understanding the dilemma many students face between writing how one prefers to write and writing how one was taught to write (1983, in Jensen & DiTiberio, 1989). This section will first describe the original instrument, and then detail how it was revised for the purposes of the present study.

The version of the MBTI (Form G, self-scorable) on which the present instrument was based contained 94 items; 49 of these were presented in a phrase-question format. These items present the student with a choice of two responses, of which they must choose only one. Myers & Briggs selected this forced-choice format for their instrument because type theory postulates dichotomies (i.e. choices between poles of the same preference scale such as *Extraverted-Introverted, Sensing-Intuitive, Thinking-Feeling,* and *Judging-Perceiving*); that is, a person displays a preference for only *one* end of each scale in any one situation (Myers & MacCaulley, 1985). The

items were worded to present choices of comparative attractiveness to students so as to balance questions between equally legitimate alternatives. The seemingly simple surface behaviors the questions relate to were designed to tap into the deeper, more complex patterns of behavior postulated by Jung (Myers & MacCaulley, 1985). An example of a phrase question from the MBTI (Form G) is item 21:

Would you rather be considered
___ a practical person,
or
___ an ingenious person?

In addition to the forty-nine phrase questions contained in the original MBTI (Form G), forty-five word pairs were also presented. In their developmental research of the MBTI, Briggs & Myers (1962) found that many subjects focused on what they believed to be "key" words in the phrase-question items such as *spontaneous, scheduled, unconventional* and based their responses to these items on these words. In order to give everyone the same advantage, Briggs & Myers decided to present only these words in subsequent forms of the MBTI (Myers & MacCaulley, 1985). The advantage of word-pair items was that they took less time to read and were less distracting as well as being "less subject to varied interpretation, personal reticence, and conscious or unconscious censorship" (1985, p. 143).

For the purposes of this study, the number of items in the MBTI (Form G) was reduced from 94 to 36. Two sections of ten items each were

presented in phrase-question format, and two sections of eight items each were presented as word pairs. These changes were made to suit the instrument better to the needs of the students (i.e. university-level ESL composition students). In adapting the original, efforts were made to ensure the construct validity of the adapted instrument. These changes to the original and the efforts made to ensure construct validity are described in the following paragraphs.

The first change made in adapting the MBTI (Form G) was to reduce the number of items in the phrase-questions sections from forty-nine to twenty. This was done to make the instrument more manageable for teachers and students who had limited class time in administering and completing the instrument. In addition, many items were rephrased to make them more meaningful and comprehensible for the respondents whose ESL proficiency ranged from Beginners to Advanced in the present study. An example of modifying a phrase question to make it more suitable to the students in the present study is item 2 in the original (Form G). This item initially read:

If you were a teacher would you rather teach
__ fact courses,
or
___ courses involving theory?

This was modified to read:

As a student, do you usually prefer courses that are
___ more theoretical
or
___ more factual?

The number of word-pair items was also reduced from forty-five to sixteen in the adapted instrument for the same reason the number of phrase questions was reduced. The selection of the word pairs from the original version of the MBTI (Form G) was based on the anticipated degree of comprehensibility and familiarity of vocabulary for university-level ESL students. For example, word-pair items such as item 38 in Form G – *spire or foundation* and item 87 – *determined or devoted?* were left out of the adapted version due to an anticipated confusion over the meanings of the vocabulary. An example of an item that was selected, but adapted to suit the vocabulary range of the students in this study is item 34 on Form G which read *talkative or reserved.* This was modified to read *talkative or quiet.* These modifications were largely based on feedback received from the small group of students who participated in the piloting of the adapted instrument described in the next section.

To summarize, in the adapted version of the instrument used in the present study, a total of thirty-six items were presented to the students. Of these 36 items, an equal number (n = 9) were designed to measure each of the four personality trait scales focused on in this study (e.g. *Extraverted-Introverted, Sensing-Intuition, Thinking-Feeling,* and *Judging-Perceiving).* Of these nine items per personality trait scale, 5 were in the phrase-question format and 4 were in word-pair format. An odd number of total items was

decided on for each scale to force students to prefer one end of each trait scale over another (i.e. *Thinking* judgment over *Feeling* judgment). The twenty phrase-question items (five for each of the scales) were then randomized and distributed evenly over two sections as were the word-pair items.

For each item in the phrase-question sections, students were instructed to select the answer that described the way they *most often* felt or acted. This instruction was given because Jung's theory postulates that there are no absolutes in type theory – one can use both preferences on each scale at different times, "but not at once and not, in most cases, with equal confidence" (Myers, 1993, p. 3). For each item in the word-pair sections, students were asked which word was more attractive to them. They were also asked to make their selection based on the *meaning* of each word. Briggs & Myers research on early forms of the MBTI had indicated that some subjects responded to word pairs based on the appearance or sound of the words (Myers & MacCaulley, 1985).

The responses selected by students on both types of items yielded data on personality type preference. These data were then compared with the quantitative data obtained from the feedback questionnaire and checked for correlations with stated feedback preferences.

3.3.3 Piloting

As previously mentioned, the personality trait instrument was first piloted on thirty adult ESL students. This early version was administered twice with a two-and-a-half week time lapse between first and second administrations. The responses of these students indicated a test-retest reliability of .85. An improved version was then piloted on a smaller group (N = 8) of university-ESL students. After this second group of students had completed the questionnaire an oral interview was conducted with each to get feedback on vocabulary-choice and phrasing concerns. During this interview, the questionnaires were scored and interpreted for them. They were then asked to indicate how accurate the interpretations were in describing their personalities. All eight students reported that the results accurately reflected their behavior or ways of thinking most of the time.

The feedback obtained from this second group of students, as mentioned earlier, proved invaluable in improving the clarity of several items. This feedback was incorporated in designing the final (thesis) version of the instrument. For example, item 21 in the original (Form G) instrument which read:

Would you rather be considered
___ *a practical person*
or
___ *an ingenious person?*

was changed to

Is it a bigger compliment to say a person is
___ *down-to-earth*
or
___ *creative?*

in the adapted instrument. The change was made on the basis of feedback received from two students in the second group of pilot-test students. It was motivated by the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of *ingenious* (i.e. confusing the meaning on the "in- prefix" to mean "not").

3.3.4 Scoring of the Instruments

To score the Likert-scale questions on the feedback questionnaire, each space was assigned a value from one to five in ascending order. The value corresponding to the space checked on each scale was recorded for each student. These values were later used to calculate each student's average mean scores for both feedback type and feedback focus preferences.

On the Personality Type instrument, the forced-pair format resulted in a choice either being assigned the numerical value 1 or 2. For each personality trait scale (i.e. *Extraverted-Introverted, Sensing-Intuition,*

Thinking-Feeling, and *Judging-Perceiving*), "1" represented the first pole and "2" the second. For example, for items inquiring about preferences on the *Extraverted-Introverted* scale, a score of "1" represented a preference for Extraversion and "2" represented a preference for Introversion. As mentioned earlier, the items on this instrument were scrambled both in terms of order of presentation of the items themselves *as well as* in the order of presentation of the choices. That is, the two choices presented for each item – "a" or "b" – were also randomized in order to help prevent students detecting a perceived pattern of response. The average of a student's responses to all nine items on each personality scale was calculated. If the average score on any scale was closer to "1" (i.e. between 1.0 and 1.49), the student was designated as having a preference for the first pole on that scale. For example, if a student's average of all nine items on the *Sensing-Intuition* scale was 1.2, that student was counted as having a preference for *Sensing*. If the average score on any scale was closer to "2" (i.e. between 1.50 and 2.0), the student was designated as having a preference for the second pole on that scale. To illustrate, if a student's average score for all nine items on the *Sensing-Intuition* scale was 1.8, that student was considered to have a preference for *Intuition*.

3.4 Data Analysis

The main goal of the analysis was two-fold. The first was to determine the preferences students had for feedback type and feedback focus. The other was to look for a relationship between feedback preference and the following factors: age, gender, level, self-rating, previous learning experience, stated learning style preference (*i.e.* group or individual), and personality type. Three types of analyses were conducted on the data obtained from the two instruments to determine differences in feedback preferences among the different groups of respondents: Analyses of Variance (ANOVAS), Pearson correlation tests, and Spearman rank correlation tests.

3.4.1 Anova's

Several four-way analyses of variance (ANOVAS) - crossed-factor, repeated-measures design - were conducted on the mean scores obtained from the subjects' responses. In these ANOVAS, the subject factors included AGE, GENDER, PERSONALITY, and/or NATIVE COUNTRY. Whenever AGE was a factor, it was comprised of three sub-categories (<20, 20-25, >25), while GENDER always had two sub-categories (male and female). When focused upon, the variable NATIVE COUNTRY subsumed six larger geographical regions (Asia, Africa, Canada, Europe, the Middle East, and

Latin America). PERSONALITY sub-categories were the two opposing poles of each Personality Type scale described in section 3.3.2 above (i.e. Extravert-Introvert, Sensing-Intuition, Thinking-Feeling, and Judging-Perceiving).

In these ANOVAS, the dependent variables were feedback FOCUS areas (i.e. Mechanics, Vocabulary, Grammar, Content, and Organization) and feedback TYPE (i.e. Error Correction, Symbols, Peer Review, Conferencing, Written Feedback, and Revision). The purpose of these ANOVAS was to determine whether the students' feedback preferences (both FOCUS and TYPE) were affected by a selected set of biographical variables (i.e. AGE, GENDER, PERSONALITY, and NATIVE COUNTRY.

3.4.2 Friedman Analyses

For two items on the Feedback Questionnaire (items 2 & 4 on the feedback preference section), Friedman two-way analyses of variance were chosen. The decision to use this type of ANOVA was taken here because the data from these two items were ranked data. As mentioned earlier, on these two items students were asked to rank, in order of importance the five FOCUS variables (Mechanics, Grammar, Vocabulary, Content, and Organization). The subject factors in these ANOVAS were AGE, GENDER,

and PERSONALITY. The purpose of these ANOVAS was to determine whether the students' ranking of the relative importance of the five variables subsumed within FOCUS were affected by selected biographical variables (i.e. AGE, GENDER, and PERSONALITY.

3.4.3 Spearman Rank Correlations

A series of correlation tests were also conducted to determine if there were relationships between the students' previous experiences with teacher feedback practices and the students' current feedback preferences. This type of correlation test was chosen because the data for items 2 & 4 on the Feedback Questionnaire were ranked. For example, students' responses to item 2 on the feedback questionnaire (the relative importance of teacher feedback on Mechanics, Grammar, Vocabulary, Content, and Organization) were submitted to a rank correlation test with item 7 in the Biographical section (whether instructors focused most of their feedback on Mechanics, Grammar, Vocabulary, Content, and Organization in ESL courses taken prior to attending the two universities in the present study). Other correlation tests were conducted on items 8-12 in the biographical section and items 2 & 4 on the feedback questionnaire.

3.4.4 Pearson Correlations

In addition to the correlation tests described above, Pearson correlation tests were conducted to find out if there were significant relationships between items 1 & 3 on the Feedback Questionnaire and between these two items and the items from the Biographical section mentioned in the preceding paragraph. Specifically, was there a relationship between students' responses to item 1 (focus of feedback on last essay handed back) and item 3 (amount of attention students gave to the feedback focus areas when revising)? Bonferroni-adjusted p-values were used in determining significant results in these tests.

3.5 Summary of Research Questions and Analyses

The table below presents the main research questions asked and the analyses performed on the data collected for each question.

Research Question	Source of Data	Type of Analysis
Will there be a significant difference in students' preferences for feedback focus & type?	Feedback Questionnaire (1-15)	ANOVA (crossed-factor, repeated measures design)
Will age & gender influence students' feedback preferences?	Feedback Questionnaire (1-15); Biographical Section (1)	ANOVA (crossed-factor, repeated measures design)
Will personality influence students' feedback preferences?	Feedback Questionnaire (1-15); Personality Type Instrument (1-36)	ANOVA (crossed-factor, repeated measures design)
Will self-rating of proficiency influence feedback preferences?	Feedback Questionnaire (1-15); Biographical Section (10-12)	Spearman Rank Correlation Tests; Pearson Correlation Tests
Will previous L2 writing experiences influence feedback preferences?	Feedback Questionnaire (1-15); Biographical Section (3, 7-9)	Friedman 2-way ANOVAs; Spearman Rank Correlation Tests; Pearson Correlation Tests
Will actual ESL placement level influence feedback preferences?	Feedback Questionnaire (1-15); Biographical section (5)	ANOVA (crossed-factor, repeated measures design)
Will group or individual learning style preference influence feedback preferences?	Feedback Questionnaire (1-15); Biographical Section (8-9)	ANOVA (crossed-factor, repeated measures design)

Chapter 4

Results

This chapter will present the results of the different analyses performed on the data collected in this study. The focus will be to find what the students' preferences are in terms of the type and focus of the feedback they receive on their compositions. First, the general findings regarding what preferences the students had for feedback type and feedback focus will be presented. Then, the significant findings on the interaction between variables such as *age, gender, personality, level, previous experience,* and *self-rating*, which were hypothesized to affect preference on feedback type and focus will be reported.

4.1 Feedback Preferences

4.1.1 Student Preference for feedback type

The first hypothesis in this thesis was that there would be a significant difference among students in their preferences for the following feedback type variables: *error correction, conferencing, symbols, revision, peer review*, and *written feedback.* To test this hypothesis, a three-way analysis of variance (crossed-factor, repeated measures design) was conducted. The

factors were AGE (<20, 20-25, >25), GENDER (male and female), and the six variables subsumed within FEEDBACK TYPE mentioned above. Table 1 shows the results of the ANOVA performed on the students' responses to items concerning their feedback type preferences.

TABLE 1 ANOVA Summary Table for *Age, Gender, & Feedback Type*

Source	df	SS	MS	F
Age (A)	2	2.28	1.14	.76
Gender (G)	1	3.62	3.62	.89
A x G	2	17.34	8.67	2.14
Within	170	690.01	4.06	
Feedback Type (F)	5	105.91	21.18	24.61***
A x F	10	35.10	3.51	4.08***
G x F	5	6.83	.63	1.59
A x G x F	10	6.32	.63	.73
Within	850	731.52	.86	

*** $p < .001$

The results obtained in this ANOVA reveal no significant main effect for either AGE (F = .28, n.s.) or GENDER (F = .89, n.s.). There was, though, a significant TYPE effect (F = 24.61, $p < .001$). Table 1a below presents the students' mean responses.

Table 1a Table of Means from ANOVA Summary Table 1

Feedback Type	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	P
Written Feedback	4.27	.81	a
Revision	4.11	.83	a
Use of Symbols	4.05	.98	a
Conferencing	3.96	.96	b
Error Correction	3.67	1.23	b
Peer Review	3.29	1.14	c

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

The post hoc Tukey test conducted on this set of data revealed that PEER REVIEW (3.29) was rated significantly lower than all other feedback types ($p < .01$ in each case), indicating that among all six feedback types PEER REVIEW was the least preferred. Also of interest here was the finding that SYMBOLS (4.05) was rated significantly higher than ERROR CORRECTION (3.67) as an effective means of receiving feedback ($p < .01$). In fact, ERROR CORRECTION was rated along with PEER REVIEW as the two least desirable forms of feedback types. The students' preferences on feedback type can be summarized as follows:

Written Feedback, Revision, Symbols, Conferencing

V

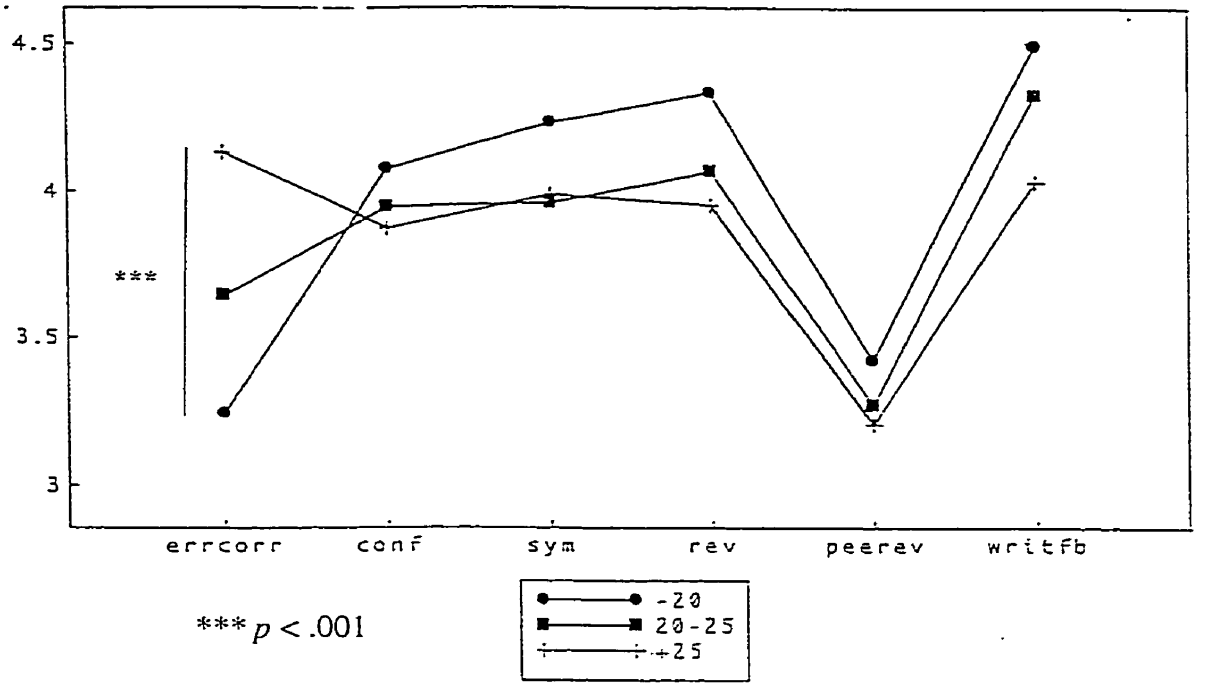
Error Correction

V

Peer Revision

Table 1 also shows a significant interaction between AGE and FEEDBACK TYPE ($F = 4.08$, $p < .001$). A post hoc Tukey test on these interaction data showed a significant difference between the oldest group of students (>25) and the youngest group (<20) on ERROR CORRECTION. Figure 1 below represents the students' responses. Note that of all three age categories, these youngest students recorded the highest preference rating on all other five variables, while the oldest students rated all other FEEDBACK TYPE variables lower than ERROR CORRECTION. No significant differences were observed, however, on any of the other feedback types.

FIGURE 1 The mean responses of the three age groups on Feedback Type Preferences



4.1.2 Student Preference for feedback focus

Another hypothesis of this thesis was that there would be a significant difference among students in their preferences for feedback focus. For example, it was hypothesized that there would be significant differences in students' preferences on the following variables: *grammar, mechanics, vocabulary, organization*, and *content.* As was done with feedback type, a three-way analysis of variance (repeated measures, crossed-factor design) was conducted to test this hypothesis. The factors were AGE (<20, 20-25, >25), GENDER (male and female), and the variables comprising FEEDBACK FOCUS mentioned above (e.g. grammar, mechanics,

vocabulary, organization, and content). TABLE 2 below presents the significant findings found here.

TABLE 2 ANOVA Summary Table for Age, Gender & Feedback Focus

Source	df	SS	MS	F
Age (A)	2	6.15	3.08	.90
Gender (G)	1	2.27	2.27	.67
A x G	2	19.13	9.56	2.81
Within	170	578.54	3.40	
Feedback Focus (F)	4	30.27	7.57	13.20***
A x F	8	9.72	1.21	2.12*
G x F	4	.81	.20	.35
A x G x F	8	3.73	.47	.81
Within	680	389.96	.57	

* $p < .05$ *** $p < .001$

As with the ANOVA results presented in the previous section, no significant main effects for AGE (F = .41, n.s.) or GENDER (F = .41, n.s.) was observed. There was, however, a significant main effect from feedback focus (F = 13.20, $p < .001$). Table 2a below presents the students' mean responses. A post hoc Tukey test conducted on this set of data revealed that grammar (4.28) was significantly more preferred than content (3.78), organization (3.74) and vocabulary (3.99) ($p < .01$ in each comparison). There was also a significant difference between vocabulary and organization, as well as between mechanics (4.02) and both content and organization ($p < .05$). These results indicate that there is a preference among the students in this study for feedback focusing more on linguistic concerns than other areas of their writing.

TABLE 2a Table of Means for Feedback Focus preferences

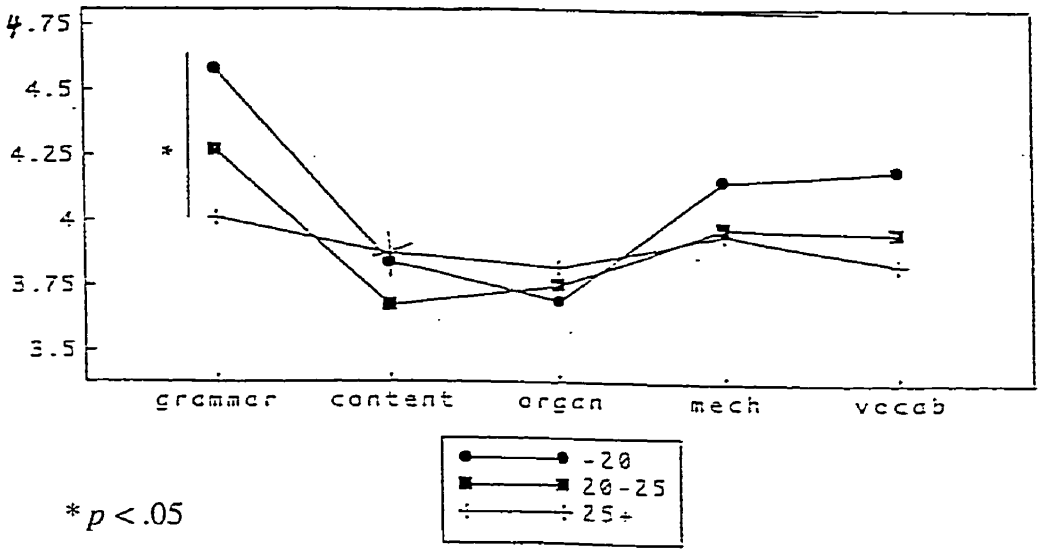
Feedback Focus	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	p
Grammar	4.28	.70	a
Mechanics	4.02	.88	b
Vocabulary	3.99	.79	b
Content	3.78	.95	c
Organization	3.74	.89	c

** ***

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

While this ANOVA revealed no significant interaction between GENDER and FEEDBACK FOCUS preference (F = .84, n.s.), there was a significant interaction between AGE and FEEDBACK FOCUS (F = 2.12, $p <$ .05). Figure 2 below represents the students' responses. A subsequent Simple Effects test showed that there was a significant difference in the preference ratings of the youngest group of students (<20) and the oldest group (>25) on GRAMMAR. It is interesting to note here, that of the three age groups, it was the youngest students who gave GRAMMAR the highest preference (4.56) as indicated in the graph below, while the oldest students gave it the lowest preference rating (4.00) ($p < .05$). There were no significant differences among the groups in their stated preferences for the other feedback focus areas.

FIGURE 2 The mean responses of the three age groups on Feedback Focus Preferences



$*p < .05$

Another issue investigated was the consistency of students' responses on items on the questionnaire concerning feedback type and focus. First, did students respond in similar ways to items inquiring about the general usefulness of certain feedback foci and the amount of attention they gave these same focus aspects when drafting and revising? In other words, when drafting or revising their written work, did the students direct their attention on the feedback focus areas that they ranked highest in importance? Second, was there a correlation between the feedback focus areas they ranked important and the feedback focus areas on which they reported receiving feedback in their last essay? Alternatively put, did the feedback focus areas on which they reported receiving a lot of feedback in their last essay coincide with the actual feedback focus areas that they considered important?

In order to determine the answers to these questions, Spearman rank correlation tests were conducted. Three comparisons, in particular, revealed significant correlations: (1) between what feedback focus areas the students considered important and what they focused on when *drafting,* (2) between what feedback areas the students considered important and what they focused on when revising, and (3) between what the feedback focus areas the students reported receiving feedback on in their last essay and what they focused on when drafting. For ease of interpretation, the results of these three separate comparisons are summarized in Table 3 below.

TABLE 3 Summary of the significant Spearman Rank correlation tests performed on the students' responses to items 1-4 on the feedback questionnaire.

		Attention to Feedback Focus when Drafting					Attention to Feedback Focus when Revising				
		M	G	V	0	C	M	G	V	O	C
General Importance of Feedback Focus Areas	M	**					*				
	G										
	V			*							
	O				**						
	C										
Feedback Received on Last Essay	M										
	G							***			
	V								**		
	O									**	
	C										***

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

This table shows that in three out of five cases the amount of importance students attached to a focus area correlated significantly with the feedback area they focused on when drafting. Evidence for this includes the following: (1) the importance they placed on vocabulary-focused feedback was significantly correlated with the attention they gave to vocabulary when drafting ($r = .41$, $p < .05$); (2) the importance they placed on mechanics-focused feedback was significantly correlated with the attention they gave to mechanics when drafting ($r = .46$, $p < .01$); and, (3) the importance they placed on organization-focused feedback was significantly correlated with the amount of attention they gave to organization when drafting ($r = .51$, $p < .01$). These results suggest that there may be an important relationship between what students considered important for teachers to focus on and what they themselves focus upon when they draft their compositions. It is interesting to note that no positive correlations were obtained between the importance the students placed on grammar- and content-focused feedback and what they focused on when drafting. In particular, this is intriguing for grammar-focused feedback given that this feedback focus area seemed to be the area that produced the significant difference between the different age groups of students in many of the ANOVAS conducted.

In terms of revising, only one significant correlation was obtained. The importance the students placed on mechanics-focused feedback was significantly correlated with the amount of attention they gave to mechanics when revising ($r = .37$, $p < .05$). This result suggests that there may be a

difference between what the students desire from their teachers in terms of feedback focus and what they actually receive given that there was a significant correlation on only one of the feedback focus areas.

Finally, there is one other finding of significance to report from the correlation tests conducted. The Pearson correlation test conducted on the focus areas students reported receiving feedback on in their last essay and the amount of attention they gave to the focus areas when revising revealed the following: (1) the amount of grammar-focused feedback received in their last essay was significantly correlated with the amount of attention they gave to grammar when revising ($r = .37$, $p < .001$), (2) the amount of vocabulary-focused feedback received in their last essay was significantly correlated with the amount of attention they gave to vocabulary when revising ($r = .31$, $p < .01$), (3) the amount of organization-focused feedback received on their last essay was significantly correlated with the amount of attention they gave to organization when revising ($r = .31$, $p < .01$), and (4) the amount of content-focused feedback received in their last essay was significantly correlated with the amount of attention they gave to content when revising ($r = .36$, $p < .001$). These results suggest that there is a strong correlation between what the teacher focuses on when giving feedback and what students attend to when they revise their compositions. The implication here may be that teachers must take care in terms of what and how they focus on the feedback areas because students revise their compositions based on these comments.

4.2 Factors Affecting Preferences for Feedback Type and Feedback Focus

In addition to investigating the differences between preferences in feedback type and feedback focus areas, this thesis investigated some factors which might affect these preferences. Specifically, this thesis examined whether the following variables influenced preference for feedback type: *age, gender, level, previous experience with feedback practices, self-rating* (in both L1 and English), *learning styles*, and *personality*.

Two of these factors, age and gender, were addressed in section 4.1. Age was found to interact significantly with feedback type and feedback focus preference. Other ANOVAS investigating the effect of level did not show any significant effects on preference for feedback type or feedback focus. There was, though, a significant main effect for previous experience on feedback focus. The results of this ANOVA are presented below.

4.2.1 The Influence of Past Experiences with Feedback Practices on Feedback Focus Preference

To investigate the effect of previous experiences, a two-way analysis of variance (crossed-factor, repeated measures design) was conducted on the students' responses to questions about their past experiences with teacher feedback on their written work. The factors in this ANOVA were

FEEDBACK FOCUS (mechanics, grammar, vocabulary, content, and organization) and REGION (Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, Latin America, and Canada). It must be pointed out that there was a large number of native countries represented in this study (n = 34), but because some countries were only represented by one or two students, several countries were collapsed to form larger geographical regions. Collapsing the countries in this way created the six geographical regions listed as the components of the factor REGION listed above. The results of this ANOVA are presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4 ANOVA Summary Table for Region & Feedback Focus Preferences

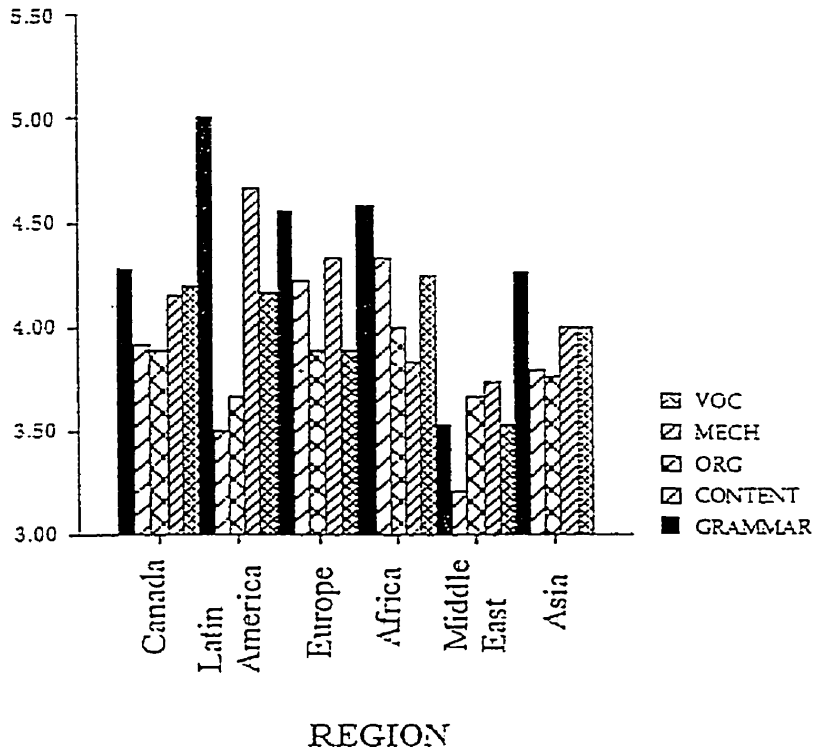
Source	df	SS	MS	F
Region (R)	5	21.19	4.24	1.85
Within	171	393.14	2.29	
Feedback Focus (F)	4	17.60	4.40	7.59***
R x F	20	18.82	.94	1.62*
Within	684	396.35	.58	

* $p < .05$ *** $p < .001$

Table 4 clearly indicates that no significant main effect was obtained for the variable REGION (F = 1.85, n.s.). There was, however, a significant interaction between REGION and FEEDBACK FOCUS (F = 1.62, $p < .05$). A Simple Effects test conducted on these data revealed that there was a significant main effect for REGION and FEEDBACK FOCUS. These differences were observed on grammar (F = 3.36, $p < .01$) and content (F =

2.38, $p < .05$). Furthermore, this table revealed that students from Canada ($F = 7.43$, $p < .001$), Latin America ($F = 4.23$, $p < .01$), and Asia ($F = 3.27$, $p < .01$) preferred grammar-focused feedback significantly over content-focused feedback. The data from the Table of Means presented below indicated that for students from these regions, feedback focused on grammar (Canada, 4.43; Latin America, 5.00; Asia, 4.26) was significantly more preferred than was feedback focused on content (Canada, 3.91; Latin America, 3.50; Asia, 3.78).

FIGURE 3 The mean responses of students from the six regions on Feedback Focus Preferences



While the findings for both Asia and Latin America seem to be consistent with many scholars' observation (Hegecock & Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996; Porte, 1996) that many students in EFL learning contexts are products

of form-focused curricula, the finding in this study for students here in Canada is intriguing. A possible explanation for this will be presented in the next chapter. Other correlation tests conducted to examine the possible relationship between self-rating, learning styles, and level and feedback preferences yielded no significant results.

4.3 The Influence of Personality Type On Feedback Preferences

It was also hypothesized in this thesis that personality would affect preference for feedback type and feedback focus. As mentioned in section 2.2.3 of this thesis, personality type, as developed by Jung (Progoff, 1973) and Myers and Briggs (1962, 1987) includes four scales, each of which is comprised of two poles. The poles represent opposite ends of the same dimension. *Extraversion-Introversion* represent attitudes or orientations towards life. *Sensing-Intuition* represent the two kinds of perceiving or gathering of information people prefer. *Thinking-Feeling* represents the two kinds of judging processes people employ to reach conclusions about what has been perceived. *Judging-Perceiving* represents which of the two core mental processes – Judging or Perceiving – is preferred in the outer or extraverted world (Jensen & DiTiberio, 1989). On the basis of this, it was hypothesized that different personality types would exhibit different preferences for both feedback type and feedback focus. In addition, based on previous findings in first and second language composition research on the

role of personality, it was hypothesized that age and gender might interact with personality to affect preference for feedback type and focus.

4.3.1 Personality and Feedback Type

This section will present the significant findings according to the four scales comprising *PERSONALITY* type explained in greater detail in Section 3.3.2 of this thesis.

EXTRAVERTED-INTROVERTED (E/I):

Based on the characteristics associated with this personality trait scale discussed in detail in Section 2.2.3 of this thesis, it was hypothesized that *extraversion* and *introversion* would affect students' preferences for some of the feedback types discussed above. Specifically, it was hypothesized that an orientation towards *extraversion* or *introversion* would influence students' attitudes towards conferencing, peer review, and written feedback. These three feedback types were selected because they most closely correspond to characteristics exhibited by individuals at either end of this personality trait scale and, therefore, might best represent the interactions in which these traits would likely be exhibited. To test this hypothesis, a four-way analysis of variance (crossed-factor, repeated-measures design) was conducted on the students' responses on the scales measuring *extraversion* and *introversion*. The factors were AGE, GENDER, PERSONALITY (*E/I*) and FEEDBACK

TYPE (conferencing, peer review, and written feedback). The results are presented in Table 5 below.

TABLE 5 ANOVA Summary Table for *Age, Gender, Personality & Feedback Type*

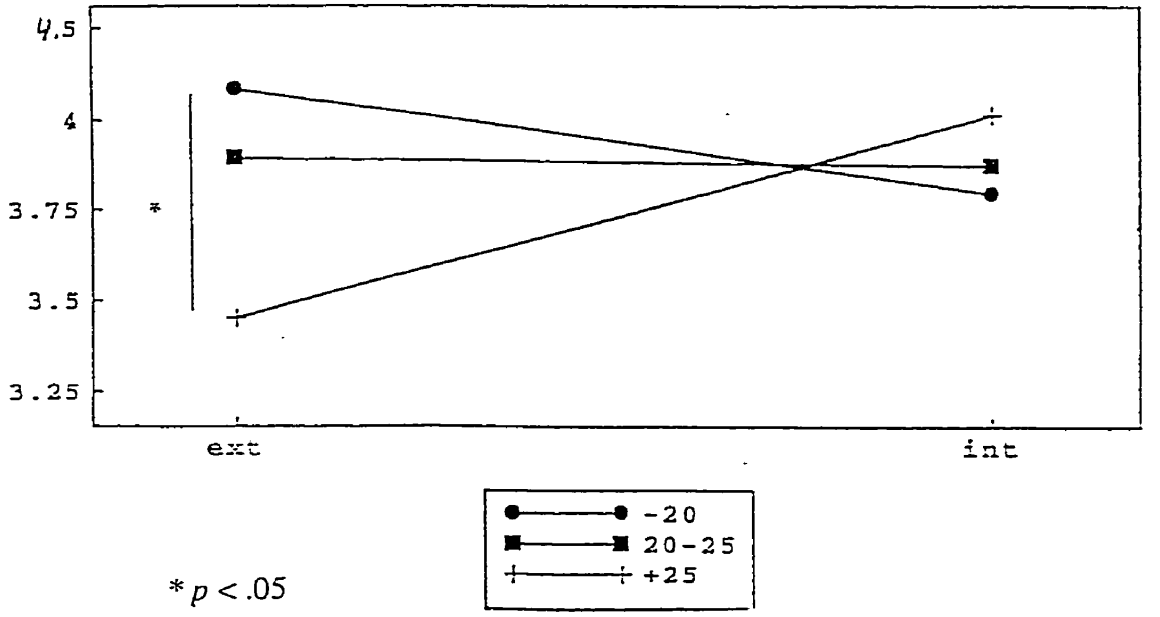
Source	df	SS	MS	F
Age (A)	2	2.74	1.37	.79
Gender(G)	1	3.37	3.37	1.96
A x G	2	3.85	1.92	1.12
Personality (P)	1	.65	.65	.38
A x P	2	11.30	5.65	3.28*
G x P	1	.55	.55	.32
A x G x P	2	.88	.44	.25
Within	156	268.78	1.72	
Feedback Type (F)	2	72.36	36.18	29.51***
A x F	4	.67	.17	.14
G x F	2	1.75	.87	.71
A x G x F	4	.36	.09	.07
P x F	2	5.08	2.54	2.07
A x P x F	4	.11	.03	.02
G x P x F	2	5.10	2.55	2.08
A x G x P x F	4	4.18	1.04	.85
Within	312	382.58	1.23	

* $p < .05$ *** $p < .001$

The table shows no significant main effect with either AGE (F = .45, n.s.) or GENDER (F = .16, n.s.). There was also no significant interaction between PERSONALITY and the selected FEEDBACK TYPE variables - conferencing, peer review, and written feedback – (F = .13, n.s.). There was, however, a significant interaction between AGE and PERSONALITY (F = 3.28, $p < .05$). A post hoc Tukey test revealed that the significant difference occurred in the oldest group of subjects (>25) in terms of how *extraverted*

and *introverted* subjects responded ($F = 5.45$, $p < .05$). Figure 4 indicates that extraverted students (3.44) responded quite differently to these feedback types than did introverted students (4.01) in the oldest (>25) age group. A possible explanation for this will be presented in the next chapter.

FIGURE 4 The mean responses of the three age groups on the *Extraverted-Introverted* Personality Scale on Feedback Type Preferences



$*p < .05$

SENSING-INTUITION (S/N):

This scale was postulated by Jung (Progoff, 1973) to be one of the two core mental processes in psychological type theory. Those who more frequently exhibit a tendency to utilize *Intuition* perception often take in

information in terms of possibilities and relationships between pieces of information rather than focussing on the concrete or details of a situation. Based on these differences, it was hypothesized that *Sensing (S)* and *Intuition (N)* would influence preference for feedback type. To test this hypothesis, a four-way analysis of variance (crossed-factor, repeated measures design) was performed on AGE, GENDER, PERSONALITY (*S/N*) and FEEDBACK TYPE. The results of this ANOVA are presented in TABLE 6 below.

TABLE 6 ANOVA Summary Table for *Age, Gender, Personality (S/N) & Feedback Type*

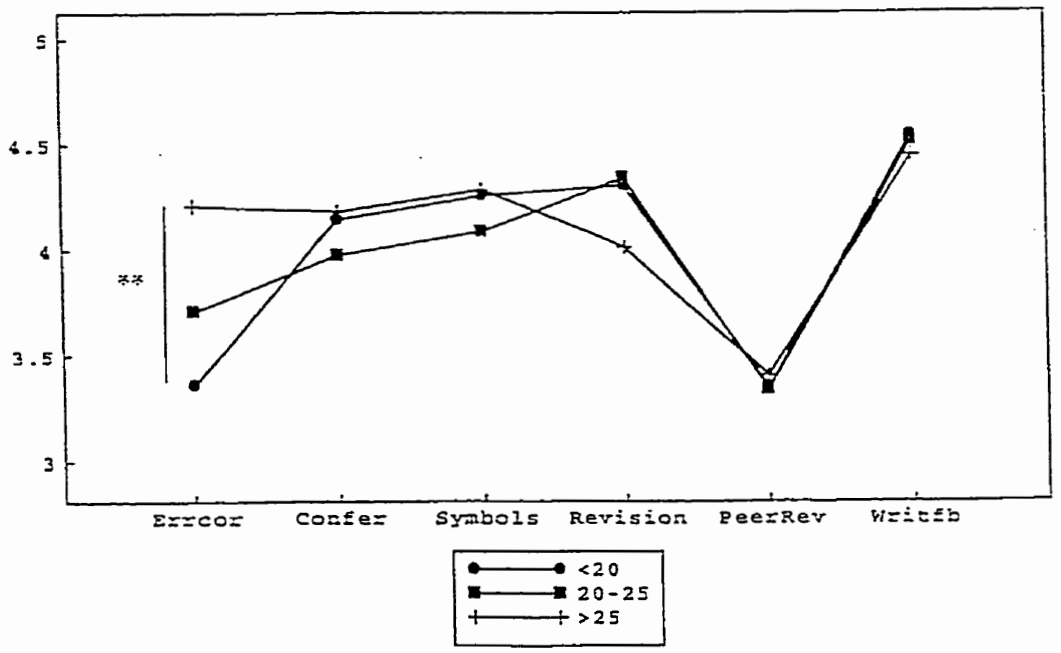
Source	df	SS	MS	F
Age (A)	2	1.46	.73	.38
Gender (G)	1	.001	.001	.001
A x G	2	2.36	1.18	.61
Personality (P)	1	3.28	3.28	1.71
A x P	2	1.35	.68	.35
G x P	1	5.19	5.19	2.70
A x G x P	2	.83	.41	.21
Within	144	276.79	1.92	
Feedback Type (F)	5	92.89	18.58	20.92***
A x F	10	17.16	1.71	1.93*
G x F	5	4.39	.88	.99
P x F	5	2.07	.41	.47
A x P x F	10	5.06	.51	.57
G x P x F	5	5.90	1.18	1.33
A x G x P x F	10	6.76	.68	.76
Within	720	639.32	.89	

* $p < .05$ *** $p < .001$

Once again, neither AGE (F = .68, n.s.) nor GENDER (F = .98, n.s.) revealed any significant main effects in the way students responded to items inquiring about preferences for feedback type. Also, there was no significant

main effect for PERSONALITY alone (F = .19, n.s). There was, however, a significant main effect for AGE and FEEDBACK TYPE (F = 1.93, $p < .05$. A post hoc Tukey test showed there was a significant difference between the two groups of personality traits on ERROR CORRECTION only (F = 6.61, $p < .01$). Figure 5 below illustrates the difference between the youngest group of students (3.35) and the oldest group (4.20) ($p < .01$). This suggests that the older students were more open to the teacher correcting their errors for them than were the youngest group of students. There was again no significant difference among the other age groups on the other feedback types.

Figure 5 The mean responses of the three age groups of *Sensing-Intuition* types on Feedback Type Preferences



** $p < .01$

THINKING-FEELING (T/F):

Along with *Perceiving*, this scale – *Judging* – was postulated by Jung (Progoff, 1973) to form the other core mental process. Those who exhibit a tendency to utulize *Thinking* judgment are often characterized by using logic to try linking ideas and by employing a cause and effect method of reasoning (Myers & McCaulley, 1985). Individuals who exhibit a tendency to utilize *Feeling* judgement are often more subjective in decision-making and more concerned with the human as opposed to the technical aspects of a problem (Myers & McCaulley, 1985). Because of these differences in processing information, it was hypothesized that students with a preference for *Thinking* judgement would have different feedback type preferences than those students with a preference for *Feeling* judgement. To test this hypothesis, a four-way analysis of variance (crossed-factor, repeated measures design) was conducted on the students' responses on the *Thinking-Feeling* scales and the feedback type scales. The factors were AGE, GENDER, PERSONALITY (*T/F*) and FEEDBACK TYPE. Table 7 below presents the results of this ANOVA.

TABLE 7 ANOVA Summary Table for *Age, Gender, Personality (T/F) & Feedback Type*

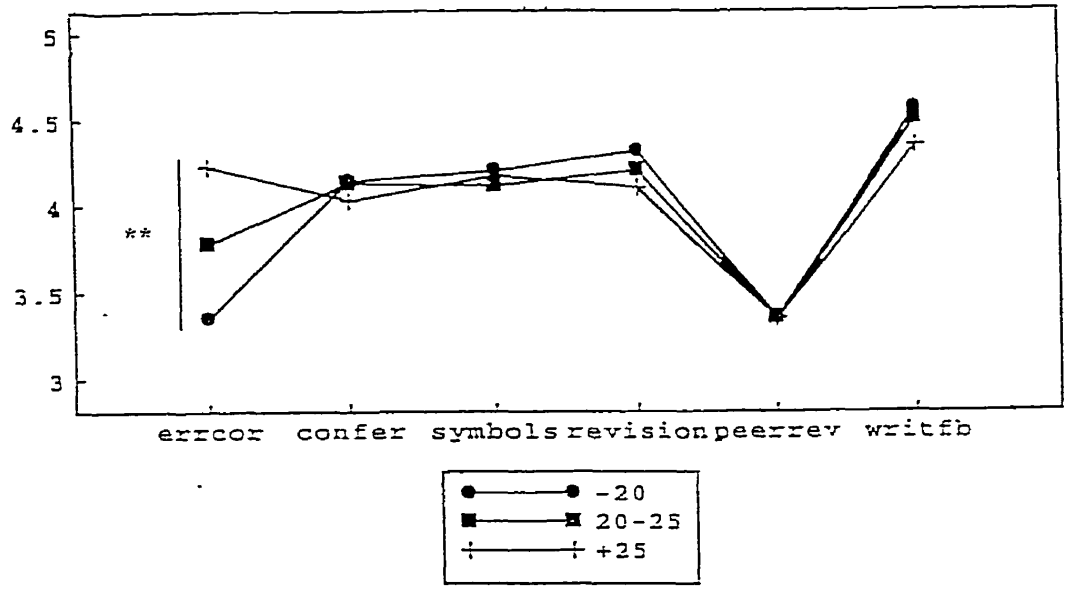
Source	df	SS	MS	F
Age (A)	2	.40	.20	.10
Gender (G)	1	.47	.47	.24
A x G	2	.72	.36	.18
Personality (P)	1	.49	.49	.25
A x P	2	8.94	4.47	2.27
G x P	1	1.61	1.61	.82
A x G x P	2	1.07	.54	.27
Within	144	284.10	1.97	
Feedback Type (F)	5	107.15	21.43	24.46***
A x F	10	20.58	2.06	2.35**
G x F	5	6.73	1.34	1.53
A x G x F	10	7.04	.70	.80
P x F	5	6.85	1.37	1.56
A x P x F	10	2.08	.21	.24
G x P x F	5	5.62	1.12	1.28
A x G x P x F	10	4.66	.466	.53
Within	720	630.79	.876	

** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Table 7 indicates that there was again no significant main effect for AGE (F = .10, n.s.), GENDER (F = .24, n.s.), or PERSONALITY (F = .25, n.s.). There was a significant interaction, though, between AGE and FEEDBACK TYPE (F = 2.35, $p < .01$). A post hoc Tukey test conducted on these data indicated that the significant interaction was on ERROR CORRECTION and once again the difference was between the youngest group of students (3.33) and the oldest group (4.21) ($p < .01$). This difference is illustrated in figure 6 below. This finding is consistent with the

finding reported in the previous section. As with the other ANOVAs presented in this section, there was no significant difference among the age groups on the other feedback types.

Figure 6 The mean responses of the three age groups of *Thinking-Feeling* types on Feedback Type Preferences



** $p < .01$

JUDGING-PERCEIVING (J/P):

Myers and Briggs' contribution to the development of psychological type theory was to develop a fourth dimension – *Judging Perceiving* – referring to which of the two core mental processes individuals preferred to

employ in the outer or extraverted world (Jensen & DiTiberio, 1989). It was hypothesized, therefore, that students with an orientation towards a tendency to utilize either *Judging* or *Perceiving* in the outer or extraverted world would have different preferences for feedback type. To test this hypothesis, a four-way analysis of variance (crossed-factor, repeated measures design) was conducted on subjects' responses on the *Judging-Perceiving* scales and the feedback type scales. The factors were AGE, GENDER, PERSONALITY (*Judging-Perceiving*) and FEEDBACK TYPE. The results are presented in the ANOVA summary table below.

TABLE 8 ANOVA Summary Table for *Age, Gender, Personality (J/P) & Feedback Type*

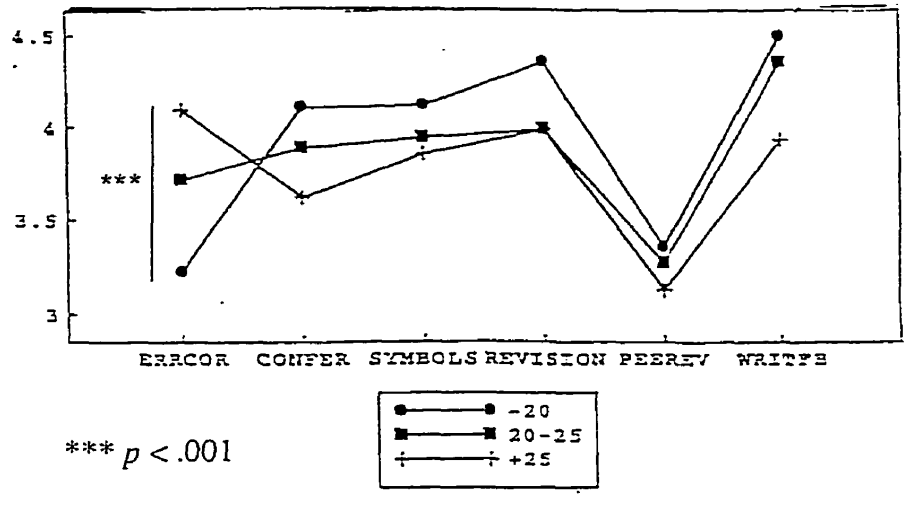
Source	df	SS	MS	F
Age (A)	2	3.76	1.88	.437
Gender (G)	1	11.61	11.61	2.70
A x G	2	17.37	8.68	2.02
Personality (P)	1	9.13	9.13	2.12
A x P	2	2.97	1.48	.34
G x P	1	1.12	1.12	.26
A x G x P	2	9.12	4.56	1.06
Within	138	593.81	4.30	
Feedback Type (F)	5	81.38	16.28	18.93***
A x F	10	31.04	3.10	3.61***
G x F	5	2.77	.55	.64
A x G x F	10	12.82	1.28	1.49
P x F	5	3.64	.73	.85
A x P x F	10	8.62	.86	1.00
G x P x F	5	12.03	2.41	2.80*
A x G x P x F	10	13.08	1.31	1.52
Within	690	593.17	.86	

*$p < .05$ ***$p < .001$

As with the other ANOVA findings presented in this section, there was no significant main effect for AGE (F = .44, n.s.), GENDER (F = 2.70, n.s.) or PERSONALITY (F = 2.12, n.s.) on feedback type preference. The ANOVA results presented above, however, indicate significant interactions in two areas: AGE and FEEDBACK TYPE (F = 3.61, $p < .001$), and a three-way interaction between GENDER, PERSONALITY and FEEDBACK TYPE (F = 2.80, $p < .05$).

A post hoc Tukey test conducted on the significant AGE by FEEDBACK TYPE data revealed that the oldest group of students (>25) reported a significant difference in preference for ERROR CORRECTION over the youngest group (<20). No other significant difference was observed among the age groups on the other feedback types although there was a clear trend for the youngest group of students to give higher preference ratings to all other feedback types. The results are presented in the graph below.

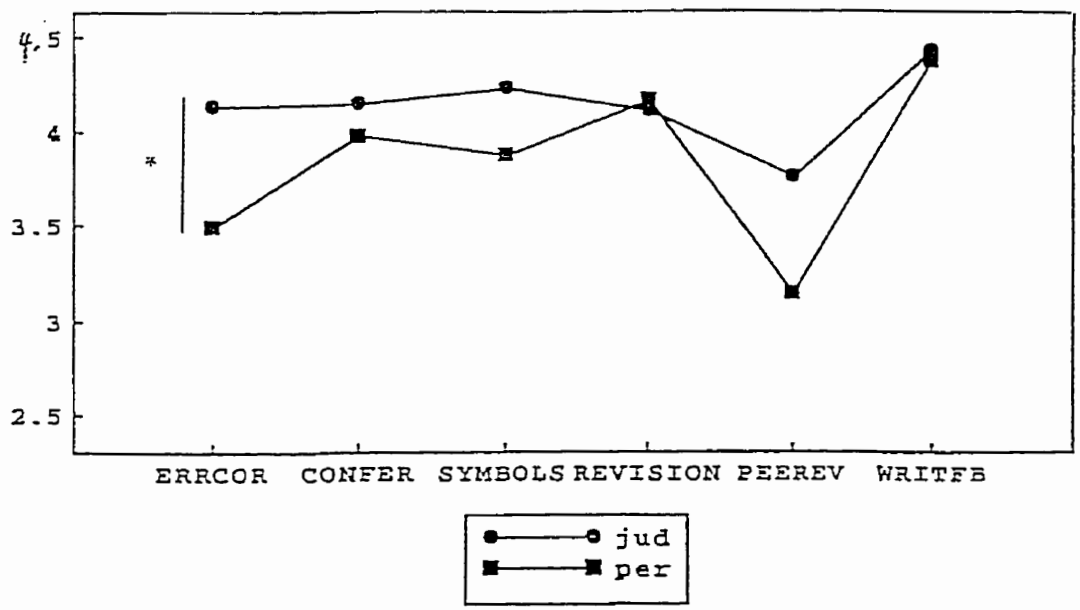
FIGURE 7 The mean responses of the three age groups of *Judging-Perceiving* types on Feedback Type Preferences



*** $p < .001$

A post hoc Tukey test conducted on the interaction between GENDER, PERSONALITY and FEEDBACK TYPE indicated that significant differences were found between male and female students on ERROR CORRECTION. The results are presented in the graph below. Here, male *JUDGING* types reported a significantly higher preference for this feedback type (4.12) than the male *PERCEIVING* types (3.48) ($p < .05$). A possible explanation for this difference will be offered in the Chapter 5 of this thesis. No other significant difference was observed between students with *judging* or *perceiving* personality types on the other feedback types.

FIGURE 8 The mean responses of male *Judging-Perceiving* types on Feedback Type Preferences



* $p < .05$

4.4 Personality and Feedback Focus Preference

As was referred to in section 4.2 of this thesis, previous composition research findings have presented evidence that personality, as defined by Jung (Progoff, 1973), may influence how students compose and therefore may also partially explain why students engage in different writing processes rather than one uniform process. On the basis of these previous findings, it was hypothesized that personality would influence feedback focus preference. To test this hypothesis, four separate four-way analyses of variance (crossed-factor, repeated measures design) were conducted on the students' scores, one on each of the personality trait scales: *extraversion-introversion, sensing-intuition, thinking-feeling*, and *judging-perceiving*. In each of these ANOVAS, the factors were AGE, GENDER, PERSONALITY, and FEEDBACK FOCUS. The results of these ANOVAS are discussed below.

EXTRAVERTED/INTROVERTED (E/I):

On the ANOVA performed on the students' responses on this personality scale, no significant main effect was observed for AGE ($F = .27$, n.s.), GENDER ($F = 1.24$, n.s.), or PERSONALITY ($F = .34$, n.s.). There also was no main effect observed for any interaction between these factors.

SENSING/INTUITIVE (S/N):

It was hypothesized that characteristics associated with the two traits on this scale would be observed to influence feedback focus preference because some previous research has found that *Sensing* types focus on details and are most concerned with being concrete (Jensen & DiTiberio, 1989). This could mean that *Sensing* types might value feedback on meaning-related concerns such as content and organization over grammar and mechanics because they attend to these latter features more when drafting. *Intuitive* types have been found to sometimes have the impression they are quite good writers because they are able to write abstractly better than *Sensing* types (Jensen & DiTiberio, 1989). This may translate into a desire for feedback to focus not on content or organization, but on surface-level features of their writing. To test this hypothesis, a four-way analysis of variance (crossed-factor, repeated measures design) was performed on the students' responses on the *Sensing-Intuition* scale and the five variables comprising feedback focus (mechanics, grammar, vocabulary, content, and organization). The factors were AGE, GENDER, PERSONALITY (S/N) and FEEDBACK FOCUS and the results are presented in the ANOVA summary table below.

TABLE 9 ANOVA Summary Table for *Age, Gender, Personality (S/N) & Feedback Focus*

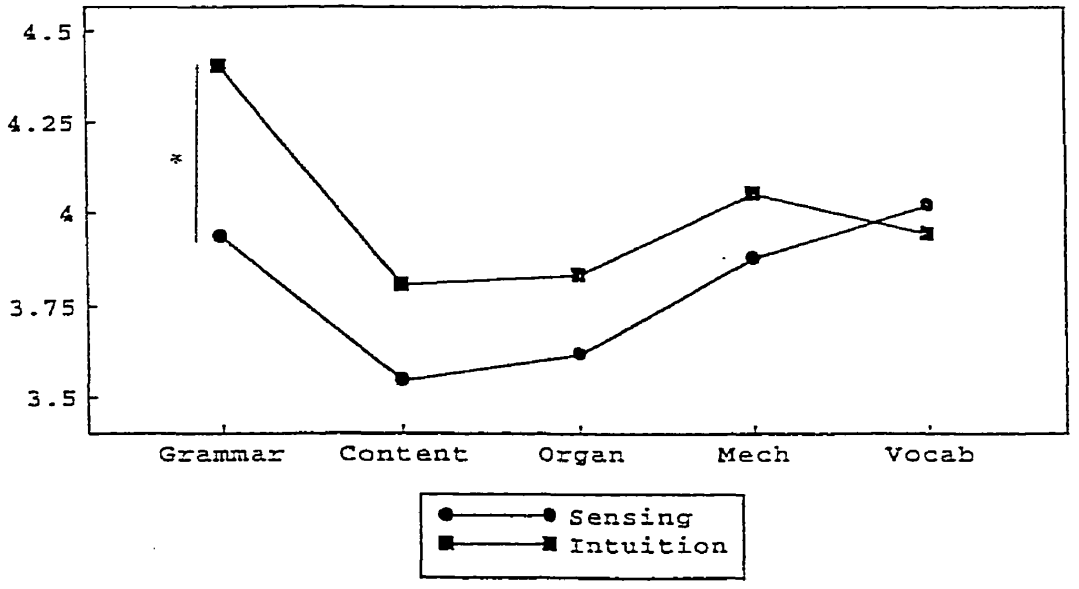
Source	df	SS	MS	F
Age (A)	2	21.57	10.78	3.01
Gender (G)	1	.01	.01	.002
A x G	2	25.63	12.82	3.58*
Personality (P)	1	6.72	6.72	1.88
A x P	2	11.60	5.80	1.62
G x P	1	.58	.58	.16
A x G x P	2	5.24	2.62	.73
Within	149	532.99	3.58	
Feedback Focus (F)	4	20.35	5.09	9.13***
A x F	8	6.95	.87	1.56
G x F	4	1.52	.38	.68
A x G x F	8	6.94	.87	1.56
P x F	4	4.64	1.16	2.08
A x P x F	8	8.81	1.10	1.98*
G x P x F	4	1.69	.42	.76
A x G x P x F	8	10.07	1.26	2.26*
Within	596	332.04	.56	

*$p < .05$ ***$p < .001$

As in the ANOVAS conducted on feedback type, there were no significant main effects for AGE (F = 3.01, n.s.), GENDER (F = .002, n.s.), or PERSONALITY (F = 1.88, n.s.). The most interesting finding in this ANOVA was that a four-way interaction was observed between AGE, GENDER, PERSONALITY and FEEDBACK FOCUS (F = 2.26, $p < .05$). A Tukey post hoc test performed on these data revealed that *Intuition* types (4.39) expressed a preference for grammar-focused feedback that was significantly different from *Sensing* types (3.93) ($p < .05$). In Tukey post hoc tests conducted on each subgroup of AGE and PERSONALITY, there was

also a clear trend for *Intuitive* types to favour feedback focus on surface-level concerns (i.e. grammar and mechanics) over focus on meaning-related concerns (i.e. content and organization). The converse was true for *Sensing* types. The graphs presented below may then be interpreted as supporting the hypothesis that *Sensing* types would prefer feedback to focus more on meaning-related concerns while *Intuitive* types would prefer feedback to focus on surface-level concerns.

FIGURE 9 The mean responses of the three age groups of *Sensing-Intuition* types on Feedback Focus Preferences



* $p < .05$

FIGURE 10 The mean responses of *Sensing-Intuition* types in the 20-25 age group on Feedback Focus Preferences

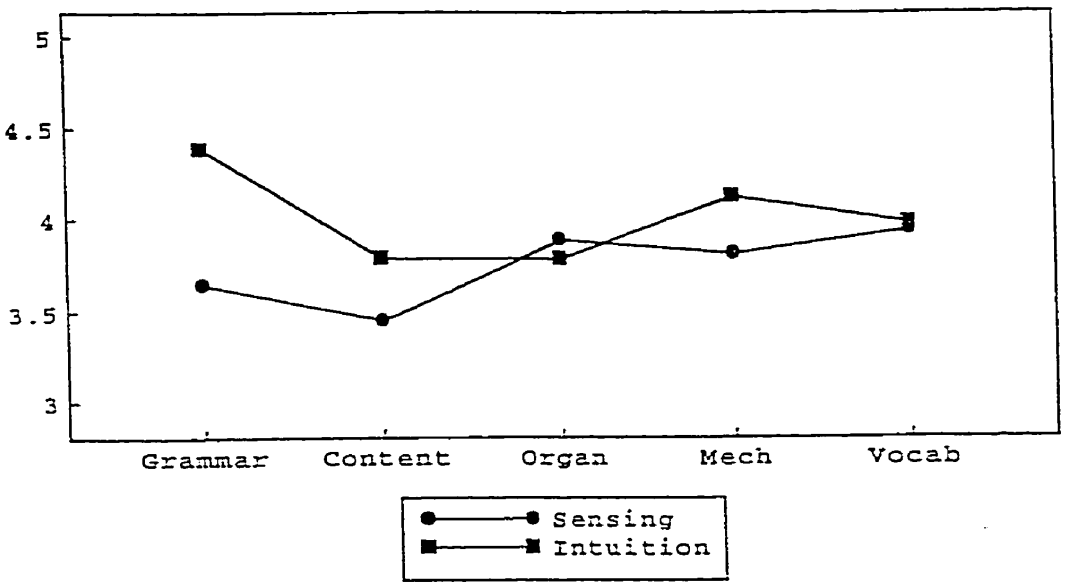


FIGURE 11 The mean responses of male *Sensing-Intuition* types in the 20-25 age group on Feedback Focus Preferences

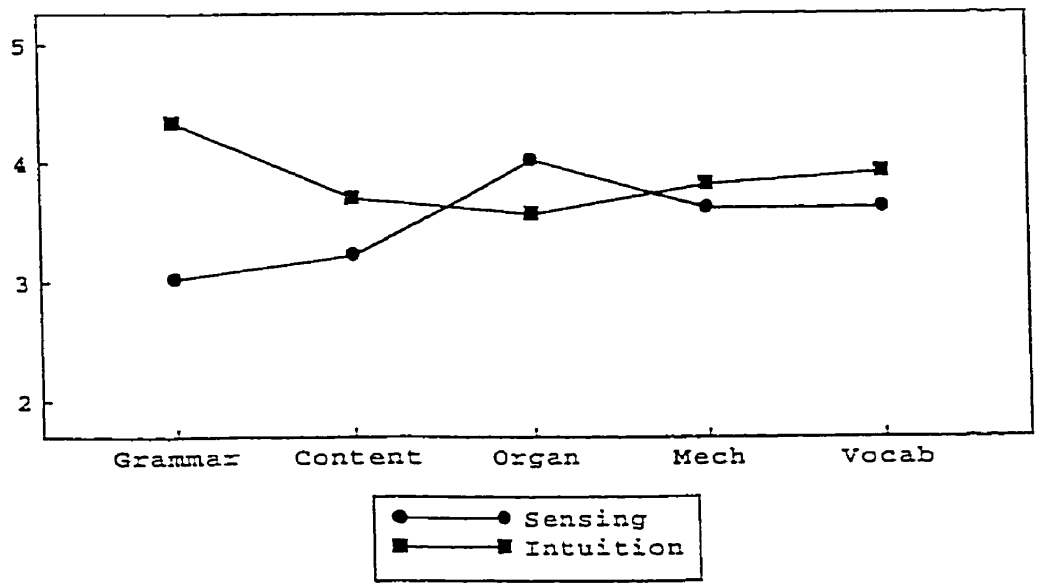
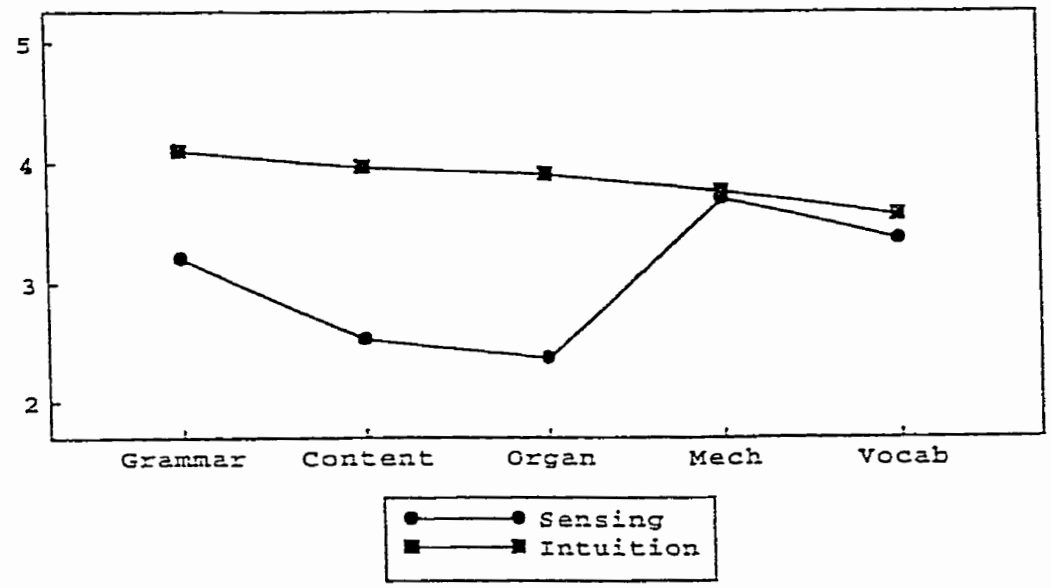


FIGURE 12 The mean responses of female Sensing-Intuition types in the >25 age group on Feedback Focus Preferences



THINKING-FEELING (T/F):

On the ANOVA performed on the students' responses on this personality scale, no significant main effect was observed for AGE (F = 2.20, n.s.), GENDER (F = .19, n.s.), PERSONALITY (F = 1.83, n.s.). There was also no significant interaction between any of these factors.

JUDGING-PERCEIVING (J/P):

On the ANOVA performed on the students' responses on this personality scale, no significant main effect was observed for AGE (F = 1.58, n.s.),

GENDER (F = .002, n.s.), or PERSONALITY (F = .77, n.s.). There was also no significant interaction between any of these factors.

In addition to the ANOVAS presented above, another type of analysis was conducted to determine whether personality affected the students' views about the importance of the feedback focus areas. To test this hypothesis, several Friedman two-way analyses of variance tests were also conducted on item 2 (the relative importance of the five feedback focus areas) and item 4 (the amount of attention students gave to each feedback focus area when drafting). This type of ANOVA was performed on these two items because, as mentioned earlier, the data obtained on these two items were ranked data. In each of the Friedman ANOVAS the factors were AGE, PERSONALITY and either IMPORTANCE of feedback focus areas (item 2) or attention given to feedback focus areas when DRAFTING (item 4). No significant interaction was found on the Friedman ANOVAS performed on the personality trait scales and items 2 and 4 on the Feedback Questionnaire.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The first aim of this thesis was to investigate student preference for both feedback type and feedback focus. The other aim was to investigate whether *age, gender, personality, level, previous experience, self-rating,* and *learning style* had any effect on the students' feedback preferences. In this chapter, a summary of the main findings of the study will be presented and discussed. Suggestions for future research will also be offered. Finally, pedagogical implications of the findings for university-level ESL writing instructors will be considered.

5.1 Summary of main findings

The main findings in this study indicate that there are differences in students' preferences for both feedback type and feedback focus. It was also found that four variables in particular influence these preferences: age, gender, students' previous experience with feedback practices, and personality. This section will first discuss the findings on feedback focus and then the findings on feedback type preferences.

5.2 Significant findings on feedback focus

5.2.1 Findings for grammar-focused feedback

Perhaps the most notable finding for student preference on feedback focus was that grammar was the aspect on which students most preferred instructors' feedback to focus. This finding has also been commonly reported in previous research conducted on student feedback preference (see, for example; Radecki & Swales, 1988; Saito, 1994). In their earlier study, Proud & Gatbonton (1996) also found that grammar was one of the three focus aspects most preferred by students. One noteworthy difference between the results in that study and this study is that the students in the present study preferred grammar significantly over feedback on both content and organization ($p < .01$). In the 1996 study, students expressed a preference for feedback to focus on grammar, content and organization almost equally.

The question that immediately arises when looking at these data is *why* students in this study reported a greater preference for form-focused (i.e. grammar and mechanics) feedback than on meaning-related concerns (i.e. content, organization). Two variables that seemed to interact the most with feedback focus preference were *age* and *region*. The finding that age had a main effect on feedback focus preference was surprising in terms of *which* age group seemed to be making the difference and *where* they preferred teacher feedback to focus. In the present study, it was the youngest group of students (<20) who preferred grammar-focused feedback the most. In fact,

there was a significant difference between this group and the oldest group of students (> 25), who gave grammar the lowest preference rating of all three age groups. What is surprising about this finding is that it was hypothesized that the younger students would give higher preference ratings to meaning-related concerns than would older students. This was based on the assumption that younger students would have presumably had more exposure to the increasingly-popular process-based method of L2 writing instruction in which the emphasis lies more on developing rich content than on grammatical perfection. That the majority of this youngest group of students in this study were Quebec francophones and were recent graduates of Quebec C.E.G.E.P.'s, where process-based writing instruction is widely used, is even more striking.

Current methodology in ESL writing instruction de-emphasizes the importance of grammatical perfection. In fact, much recent literature on feedback focus questions the effectiveness of teacher feedback on grammar. As mentioned in Chapter 2, some researchers like Truscott (1996) and Sheppard (1992) question whether specific focus on grammar when giving feedback can contribute to its development. Truscott, for example, cites L2 acquisition studies carried out that have found evidence of sequences of acquisition, and suggests that if teachers supply comprehensive feedback on grammar or mark all linguistic errors (as students requested in Radecki & Swales, 1988), they are ignoring how the interlanguage process develops. Sheppard (1992) in turn speculated that overt attention to surface-level

features may reduce the complexity of students' writing by giving rise to avoidance of certain structures. Truscott (1996), in fact, goes so far as to state that if teachers are to give feedback on grammar, they need to be selective and base that feedback on the basis of each student's current stage of development (p. 347). If students are overwhelmed with grammar feedback, Truscott (1996) claims that there will likely be a negative effect in the form of increased anxiety toward the writing process. Lee (1997) also questions the validity of focussing on *all* linguistic errors in students' writing, but writes that calls like Truscott's (i.e. to abandon grammar correction) "will probably be largely ignored by teachers" (p. 465) until the debate produces clearer empirical findings on the value of grammar-focused feedback.

In contrast to the finding discussed above is the finding that content and organization were the two least-preferred focus areas for teacher feedback. This finding was consistent across all three age groups. This lower preference for meaning-focused feedback has also been reported in previous studies. One explanation offered is that students see the teacher as a *language* expert rather than as a *writing* expert. Reid (1994) mentions that students feel quite strongly about retaining ownership of their writing and interpret teacher feedback on content especially as "appropriation" of their text. This view students have of the teacher corresponds with what Zamel (1985) earlier had referred to – that teachers "see themselves overwhelmingly as language teachers rather than writing teachers" (p. 86).

The findings reported above appear to contradict those in many previous studies. Leki (1991), for example, reported that students wanted feedback to be comprehensive – focussing on both form- and meaning-related concerns. Cohen & Cavalcanti (1990) also found that students expressed a desire for teachers to focus more on content and organization than they were. Hedgcock & Lefkowitz (1994) found respondents preferred teacher feedback to focus on content and organization by a two-to-one margin over feedback on grammar and mechanics. The preference reported in the present study for teacher feedback to focus more on grammar and mechanics than on content and organization can also be explained in light of the other variable found to interact significantly with feedback focus preference – region.

5.2.2 Previous experience and feedback focus preference

It was also hypothesized in this thesis that *previous experience* would influence preference for feedback focus. When the data for feedback focus were analyzed in the present study, it was found that students from three regions in particular made a significant difference in expressing their feedback preference for grammar over content: Canada, Latin America, and Asia. That students from Latin America and Asia preferred feedback to focus on grammar more than any other focus area is no surprise. As has been

reported in earlier studies (for example: Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996), it is predictable that students coming from EFL learning contexts such as these would prefer teacher feedback to focus on form over meaning. This predictability comes from the "heavy emphasis in FL curriculum design and classroom methods on formal accuracy in speech and written production, as well as on grammatical form over content" (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994, p. 150). Other researchers (Lee, 1997; Lo, 1994; Sengupta, 1998) have noted that students in Asian countries are often products of writing programs where emphasis is on form rather than content. What is surprising in this study is not so much that students from FL learning contexts have a greater preference for feedback to focus on form, but that students from Canada did as well. As mentioned earlier in this section, the majority of students under 20 years of age were Quebec francophones and were recent graduates of the Quebec C.E.G.E.P. system in which process-based models of ESL writing instruction are widely in use. Why, then, would these students also report preferring teacher feedback to focus on grammar rather than on content? Future research needs to investigate in more detail the ESL learning experiences of these students to determine more precisely how this variable influences their feedback focus preferences.

5.2.3 Personality and Feedback Focus Preference

It was also hypothesized that personality would influence students' preferences for feedback foci. There was, though, only one significant interaction found on all the ANOVAS conducted on personality and feedback focus – on the *Sensing-Intuition* scale. There was a clear trend for *Intuitive* types to prefer feedback to be focused on surface-level concerns such as grammar and mechanics and for *Sensing* types to prefer feedback to be focused more on meaning-related concerns such as content and organization. This may be interpreted as support for the hypothesis in this thesis that because *Intuitive* types have been found to concentrate more on meaning-related concerns when drafting, they would prefer teacher feedback to focus on linguistic concerns. The converse situation may also be interpreted as true for *Sensing* types. That the ANOVAS conducted on personality and feedback focus yielded a significant interaction on only one personality scale, though, suggests that any conclusions about the influence of this variable on feedback preference must be made cautiously. Further research needs to investigate if other significant interactions occur between these two variables before any concrete conclusions can be made.

The findings on feedback focus preferences discussed in this section reveal that student preferences may indeed be a product of their previous (ESL/EFL) learning experiences. If, as Zamel (1985) writes, teachers "respond to most writing as if it were a final draft [i.e. focussing on form

rather than on developing content/meaning], thus reinforcing an extremely constricted notion of composing" (p. 79), then it is little wonder that students' preferences are reflections of this practice. The finding presented in the section above that it was the youngest learners who preferred grammar-focused feedback the most may be attributable to another of the main findings of this study that will be discussed in the next section: student preference for use of symbols over error correction.

5.3 Significant findings on feedback type

Previous research on feedback type preference has indicated that there are no uniform findings in terms of which feedback type students prefer. Some studies have found that students prefer teachers to use symbols (Enginarlar, 1993; Leki, 1991; Saito, 1994), while some have shown that students prefer the teacher to both identify and correct errors (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996; Oladejo, 1993). In addition, many studies report that peer review is among the least preferred types of feedback in ESL composition classrooms (Leki, 1991; Oladejo, 1993; Rothschild & Klingenberg, 1990; Saito, 1993; Sengupta, 1998; Zhang, 1995) while others report that students do see the benefit of this feedback type (Devenney, 1989; Kumari Dheram; 1995; Mangelsdorf, 1992). Based on these findings, it was hypothesized that significant differences would be observed between these

feedback type variables. This section will present the main findings on feedback type in the context of the existing body of feedback preference research and comment on the variables found to affect these preferences.

5.3.1 Student feedback preference for symbols vs. error correction

As mentioned in section 4.1, one of the significant differences observed was between use of symbols and error correction by the teacher as a useful means of improving student writing. The finding that use of symbols was rated significantly higher than error correction is one commonly reported in previous feedback preference studies. Proud & Gatbonton (1996), for example, found that students preferred this type of feedback, but only when the teacher provided sufficient information how to go about correcting the error. A similar finding is also supported by Makino (1993), who observed that the more detailed the cues were, the higher the ratio of successful learner self-correction was achieved. Others (Enginarlar, 1993; Leki, 1991) also report that students react favourably to use of symbols as an effective means of revising.

The fact that the significant difference in preference was again between the youngest (<20) and oldest students (>25) is noteworthy. The finding reported earlier that the youngest students preferred grammar-focused

feedback the most is relevant to the finding that this same group preferred the use of symbols over teacher correction. Other researchers have noted that students perceive this feedback type as allowing them to participate actively in the revision process (Enginarlar, 1993). Further evidence that students in the present study see use of symbols as a means for them to actively participate in the revision process is the high preference rating given revision as an effective way to improve their writing. Again the youngest learners rated revision the highest among the three age groups which may be due to their exposure to experience with a process-based method of writing instruction. Across all age groups, revision was rated the second most-preferred (after written feedback), perhaps indicating that students do see the value in writing as a "non-linear, exploratory, and generative process" (Zamel in Silva, 1990, p. 15).

What, though, can be said for the oldest group of students (> 25) who rated error correction by the teacher as their most-preferred form of teacher feedback? Once again, it could be that previous experience is shaping this preference. It is quite possible that these older students experienced L2 (either ESL or EFL) writing instruction contexts as described above (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994) in which emphasis is given to form over content. It is also quite possible that this type of instruction (i.e. form-focused) was also employed in L1 writing instruction. Sengupta (1998) also mentions there exists the idea in many cultures that it is the teacher's role to

point out and correct students' (linguistic) errors and that this is the way in which students learn best.

Future studies need to investigate the differences noted in this study between older and younger students to determine just how previous experiences and beliefs about the roles of teachers and students influence their opinions about effective feedback types. Investigations of this nature could shed more light on common differences in feedback type preference older and younger students have in order to make their ESL writing experiences in Canadian post-secondary institutions more meaningful and productive.

5.3.2 Personality and Feedback Type Preference

Another variable investigated in the present study for possible effect on feedback preference was personality. Three of the scales described in Chapter 4 (and in greater detail in Chapter 2) were found to interact significantly with feedback type preference. On the *Sensing-Intuition* scale, there was a significant interaction between age and feedback type. As was mentioned above, this difference in preference occurred on error correction and again was between the youngest and oldest group of students. Is this difference in preference attributable to personality or to age differences? A definite conclusion is not possible as no significant main effect was observed

for personality itself. It might be that older students have a more developed preference for either *Sensing* or *Intuition* as a means of gathering information than younger students and that this more developed preference is manifested in stronger preferences for certain feedback types. It has been noted, for example, in L2 composition research that *Sensing* types are observant and accurate with facts and details and want teachers to give clear and concise directions (Jensen & DiTiberio, 1989). Could it be that because these learner feel they pay considerable attention to detail (i.e. grammar and mechanics) while composing, that they are less interested in receiving feedback in these focus areas and are thus equally less concerned with having to correct these surface-level errors themselves?

Also interesting is that this same difference in feedback type preference was observed on the *Thinking-Feeling* dimension of the personality scale. This dimension – along with *Sensing-Intuition* - is one of the two core mental processes that shape Jung's theory of psychological type. The type of judgment preferred by learners has been observed to manifest itself in different areas of strength in L2 composition research. For example, Carrell & Monroe (1995) report that writers scoring high on the *Thinking* scale tended to write more syntactically complex compositions than did those writers scoring higher on the *Feeling* scale. This latter group of writers, though, tended to take more risks with lexical choice when composing. Does this mean that *Feeling* types have different feedback type preferences than

Thinking types? The data in the present study do not support this claim, but future investigations may reveal that it is so.

The only personality scale to indicate a significant interaction between personality and feedback type preference was the *Judging-Perceiving* scale. Here, a three-way interaction was observed between gender, personality, and feedback type. Once again, the significance lies on error correction, and once again there is a difference in preference between the oldest (<25) and youngest students (>25). The interesting addition here is that there was a significant difference between male *Judging* types and male *Perceiving* types, with *Judging* types expressing a greater preference for this type of feedback. L2 composition research investigating the role of personality has found that *Judging* types work best in a structured, formal setting and "drive toward closure and getting things settled," while *Perceiving* types are more open-minded and curious and prefer less-structured learning environments (Carrell et al., 1996, p. 82-83). These characteristics could be manifesting themselves in the present study in *Judging* types' preference for error correction – how much more structured and closure-oriented can feedback get?

The findings in the present study concerning the role of personality are inconclusive, but future investigations into feedback preference should continue to investigate the role of personality as it was found to interact in

some manner with age and gender to affect feedback type preference in the present study.

5.3.3 Student preference for peer review

The finding in the present study that peer review received the lowest overall preference mean is hardly surprising. In fact, peer review was rated significantly lower than all other feedback types ($p < .01$) regardless of students' age, gender, or personality. Previous research on feedback preferences abounds with reports that students often value it the least among the feedback types commonly used in L2 writing classrooms. What then, could explain this? Evidence suggests that it is the students' perception of the role of the teacher and student in the classroom as well as how this feedback type is presented and conducted in classrooms.

As mentioned earlier in Chapter 2, students often perceive the role of the teacher in the L2 writing classroom to be that of sole arbiter of what is correct (Oladejo, 1993; Rothschild & Klingenberg, 1990; Sengupta, 1998). Students do not often express willingness to accept feedback from other students because they believe fellow students lack the necessary expertise to make this feedback practice effective. While this may be due, in part, to cultural beliefs (Sengupta, 1998), it is more probable that this lack of willingness is a product of the learning context itself. Sengupta states:

> the traditional roles of the teacher and the learner in the school curriculum seem so deep-rooted that the only possible interpretation of knowledge appears to be that it is transmitted from the teacher to the student, and not constructed by the classroom community (p. 25).

If this belief (rooted in cultural notions of the role of the teacher and student) were the only reason for low preference ratings given peer review in previous studies, then it could be assumed that students from learning contexts in which they are encouraged to be active participants would value peer review more highly. For example, it could be assumed that students coming from instructional contexts in which process-based models of ESL writing are currently in place (such as the Quebec C.E.G.E.P system) might express a more positive attitude towards peer review as an effective means of improving writing. This is not the case. Irrespective of country of origin, students rated peer feedback, along with error correction, as the two least-preferred types of feedback. There must, therefore, be another factor to help explain this situation.

Once again, the role of previous experience may be the largest influencing factor. It has been hypothesized by some researchers that the way peer review is conceived of and presented by the teacher affects students' perception of its value. Mangelsdorf (1992) states that because teachers often refer to this feedback type as *peer editing* or *peer evaluation*, students perceive the emphasis to be on form rather than content. If this is so, then it is hardly surprising that students often state that they lack the necessary (i.e. linguistic) expertise to provide useful feedback to their peers.

This in turn could possibly explain students' reluctance to accept the comments of their peers. Future studies into student feedback preferences should investigate what students' perceptions of the peer review process are. This knowledge would be of great use to ESL writing instructors at the university level in helping them address students' misapprehensions and guide them more constructively toward the goal of understanding the importance of audience in writing.

The findings discussed in the above sections have dealt with the main findings in the present study. In terms of feedback focus, grammar and mechanics were the most preferred. These preferences were found to be influenced by age, previous experience (region), and personality. In terms of feedback type, use of symbols was significantly more preferred than error correction by the teacher and peer review was the least preferred of all six feedback types. The next section will address some of the limitations of this study.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

While the significant results mentioned in this study in terms of feedback focus and feedback type preferences can be compared to those found in previous research, this study also attempted to investigate some of

the factors thought to influence these preferences such as personality and previous experience. In this respect, it is different from most other studies. It has, however, only begun to explore some of the many factors that no doubt contribute to guiding students' feedback preferences. It has been widely noted (see, for example, most recently; Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Cumming, 1998; Cumming & Riazi, [in press]) that multi-dimensional models of writing behaviour necessitate multi-dimensional approaches to writing instruction. Specifically, it has been hypothesized that there appear to be "complex configurations of background and process variables that interrelate students' previous educational experiences and present practices learning to write in a second language" (Cumming & Riazi, p. 19, [in press]; Mohan & Lo, 1985). In order to better understand the factors which influence these different approaches to (ESL) writing, future research should take into account the following: the type of data collected, the context in which the data arecollected, and the design of the instruments used.

The present study relied solely on self-reported data, rather than on observed data. The problem with relying on students' self-assessment is that it depends on how they interpret the items. There is speculation that this interpretation, in turn, varies a great deal both from one student to another as well as from one context to another (Oller et al., 1977). It could be that data collected from observed behaviour might yield different results given that inter-rater reliability is reasonably established.

Relying on observed behaviour rather than self-assessment would also mean that the context in which the data collection occurs also changes. Collection of such data not separated from actual classroom contexts might also change or improve the clarity of some of the findings reported in this study. Although both institutions in the present study employ a process-based approach to ESL writing instruction, no investigation of actual classroom practice was conducted. The significance of this could be that teachers in these programs could have varying degrees of commitment to the process approach to ESL writing instruction as observed by Pennington et al. (1997). Collecting data in an observed classroom setting, therefore, might not only provide a *contextualized* collection of data (i.e. within the context of regular classroom activities), but also better ensure uniformity of context. As a result of the context(s) in which the data were gathered in this study, no claims can be made as to the external validity of this research.

Finally, the instruments used in this study could be improved in future studies. On the feedback preference questionnaire, several items should be modified. Specifically, items presented in the *Biographical* section of this instrument designed to elicit information about self-rating of L1 and ESL writing ability, previous experiences with teachers' feedback practices (i.e. form and prevalence of peer revision) and culturally-based learning styles (i.e. individual or group) could be reformulated so as to provide more useful

data. For example, the item inquiring about culturally-based learning styles could have included a second component in which students were asked to indicate their attitude toward group work. This would have given a clearer indication of how common this practice is in addition to their feeling toward it and, therefore, may have interacted more directly (i.e. significantly) with their stated feedback preferences. The fact that neither this item nor any of the others mentioned above were found to influence present feedback preferences in the present study, but have in others, can be construed as support for redesigning these items to be more sensitive.

The Personality instrument used in this study, a modified version of the MBTI (Version G), has an impressive history of reliability and validity as documented in Chapter 3 of this thesis. While the adapted version used in this study yielded significant interactions with feedback preferences in some instances, it might also be improved in future research. Specifically, the number of items (n = 9) presented in the adapted version used in this study could be expanded. The reason for this is that a larger number of items per personality-trait scale might better distinguish students' preferences between the poles of each scale. For example, there were few instances in which students revealed a clear (i.e. 7 items out of 9 or higher) preference on any scale. Having a larger number of items to measure preferences on each scale might result in students revealing a stronger preference for either pole on each scale (i.e. Extraversion-Introversion, Sensing-Intuition, Thinking-

Feeling, Judging-Perceiving). These stronger preferences might then manifest themselves in stronger interactions with feedback preferences. Future studies using such an adapted instrument should incorporate this factor during the pilot-testing stage in order to determine an appropriate number of items for each scale.

5.5 Pedagogical Implications of the feedback preference findings

The findings in this study have many implications for post-secondary ESL writing instructors. Foremost among these is the implication of students' preference for teacher feedback to focus on grammar. As mentioned in the previous section, this finding is not surprising. Many studies have found that students desire teacher feedback to focus on grammar. The question that must be raised, though, is how effective is it for teachers to focus on this aspect? Will focussing feedback on grammar improve students' writing in any measurable, sustained way? Most current research seems to suggest that the impact is not readily evident. Sheppard's (1992) finding that students receiving meaning-related feedback produced longer and more syntactically-complex revisions than did those students receiving grammar-specific feedback is one example. There are many others.

Simply suggesting, however, that students should focus on meaning-related concerns rather than surface-level errors would be to oversimplify the situation. It must be known why the students have these preferences. Is it a function of the L2 learning context with which they are familiar? The answer appears to be that this is so. How, then, can ESL writing instructors make their students aware of the benefits of feedback on content and organization? There is evidence that these beliefs are not static, but that they do become less malleable with increasing age. Instructors must question their students as to their beliefs about effective feedback practices before assuming students understand their feedback practice methodology. Investigating the basis for student feedback preferences will help both teachers and students better understand their respective roles in the ESL writing classroom. Then, as Kumari Dheram (1995) suggests, students can be trained to appreciate writing as an evolving process if feedback priority is given to content and organization before focussing on form-related concerns. She stresses that a multi-draft approach to writing will emphasize meaning over form and help students to see that ideas can be reshaped and improved upon. Zamel, too, cautioned that the teacher's role in sensitizing students to the benefits of the process approach to ESL writing instruction is paramount: "by reading primarily for error, instead of responding to the substance of students' writing, we create a situation in which genuine change even at the more superficial level is unlikely" (1985, p. 96) and that by doing so, teachers are in danger of teaching their students what is important in writing – that form

takes priority over content. It is important to note that Zamel's article was written fifteen years ago, begging the question as to the "success" ESL writing instructors have had in sensitizing students to the purpose of process-based writing instruction.

Does the finding that students prefer use of symbols in order to self-correct over error correction by the teacher mitigate this first finding? On the surface, the answer might appear to be "Yes." Student preference for use of symbols over error correction by the teacher is often interpreted as a willingness to participate in the revision process. This implies as well that students see the need for writing to incorporate a multi-draft approach such as that outlined by Kumari Dheram (1995) and others. The problem with relying on this finding as evidence that students understand and appreciate the necessity of revising their compositions is that often these symbols pertain to surface-level features of writing.

Lee (1997) found that students were able to attend with more success to symbols marking surface-level problems than they were to meaning-related problems in their writing. While she found this feedback type preferable to error correction by the teacher, which assumes lack of student knowledge, she concluded that teachers use a wider range of meta-linguistic terms than students. This resulted in students not being able to correct all linguistic errors marked and coded by the teacher. On the basis of this

finding she concluded that some errors should take priority over others (p. 471). This echoes in part the recommendations made by Truscott (1996) about the effectiveness of grammar-focused feedback in light of sequence of acquisition studies in L2 research. In fact, future investigations into feedback preference should find out exactly what students believe the purpose of the revision process to be. It could be that the high preference ratings given in the present study to grammar, use of symbols, and revision are all based on the assumption that the purpose of writing is to achieve the highest degree of linguistic accuracy possible before moving on to the next assignment and beginning again. Leki (1991), in fact, speculates that because errors in grammar and mechanics are more concrete than meaning-related problems, they are relatively easier to correct. For this reason "students who correct these errors may feel also that their corrections move them that much farther along the path to complete mastery of English" (p.209).

The finding for peer review in the present study appears to be consistent with the findings discussed above. If peer review is seen as an exercise in editing linguistic or surface-level features, then it is no surprise students see it as having little use. How, then, can teachers make students aware of the benefits of this feedback type? Several researchers have addressed this issue. It appears that it is quite closely connected to the issue discussed above that students' perceive feedback focussing on grammar is the best way to improve their writing.

As was noted above, Kumari Dheram (1995) contends that students can be trained to appreciate revision and understand it as a necessary component of process-based writing instruction. She states that this can be done by prioritizing comments across drafts to focus on content and organization before dealing with surface-level (i.e. linguistic/grammatical) concerns. This must be done to avoid what seems to be a common tendency to edit prematurely at a surface level and instead focus on the "communicative function of writing" (p. 167). One technique that she states is useful in promoting reader-based texts is peer review. She cites three benefits of peer review: it can reduce students' dependency on the teacher, encourage them to accept someone other than the teacher as their reader, and allow them to develop and evaluate content (p. 165).

Does this mean that peer review will automatically redress students' tendency to focus on grammar rather than meaning-related concerns in their writing? By itself, probably not. Some researchers have recognized the need to train students to interact appropriately in peer review groups so that the effectiveness of these interactions is improved. Goldstein & Conrad (1990) believe that teachers need to instruct students in the "importance of conversational input and the negotiation of meaning" (p. 458) to make peer review groups more effective in promoting the methodology inherent in process-writing instruction. Mangelsdorf (1992) also sees the need for

teacher modeling of appropriate peer interactions. This modeling could begin with an example of a piece of writing that the entire class could discuss. The teacher should provide a task sheet with items encouraging students to give comments on the strengths of the piece in terms of content and organization. The teacher may or may not need to supply the first comment so students more readily understand what to do. A mini-lesson on using modals to make polite suggestions could also be incorporated so that students better understand how to make their suggestions. Students would also have to be reminded as they begin to comment on actual peer drafts, that their peers' comments should be considered *suggestions* rather than *commands*.

Another suggestion for improving the effectiveness made by Mangelsdorf is grouping students according to ability or topic. This is because stronger writers often feel they do not receive as many valuable comments from weaker writers (Mangelsdorf, 1992; Nelson & Murphy, 1993). Perhaps another suggestion could be to form peer review groups carefully (i.e. on the basis of ability, interest, gender, and classroom personality) and then keep those groups together for the entire term/semester. This might provide students with a more complete understanding of audience and reduce the tendency to look upon the teacher as sole reader.

Only after students are sensitized to the focus on meaning should any attempt be made to focus on form. One might ask why there should be a

focus on grammar at all. Most researchers agree that incorporating student preferences into classroom practices can be of great benefit. Oladejo (1993), among many others, firmly believes that "it is important for learners to feel that their perceived needs are being catered to, if they are to develop a positive attitude toward what they are learning" (p. 73). This may be especially true for older learners, whose learning style preferences may have been strongly shaped by years of formal study in their native countries. After all, it is the *premature* focus on surface-level errors that most researchers agree needs to be modified – not complete abandonment of focussing on grammatical concerns during the editing stage. As an example that even students in traditional, product-based models of writing instruction can "change their spots", Lo (1994) describes the transformation in both herself and her students in terms of their approach to the writing process. After receiving training in process-based writing instruction, this veteran teacher applied these techniques (including focus on meaning rather than form and implementation of peer review groups) in her previously traditional Hong Kong classroom. Students, who prior to Lo's training, had approached writing as another headache to endure were soon "proud of being a critical but supportive reader for their peers...[and also observed that]...sharing ideas with one another in peer discussion was conducive to better creation and self-direction on the part of the students" (p.30).

As for the influence of personality type on feedback preference, it would appear the results from the present study are inconclusive. No

definitive conclusions can be made about how this variable might influence feedback preferences. No significant main effect was observed for personality alone in any of the analyses of variance conducted on the data. This does not mean that these differences are not there – only that the instrument used in this study was not sophisticated/sensitive enough to identify significant interactions between personality preferences and preferences for feedback type and focus. There were, however, interactions between age, gender, and personality for both feedback focus and feedback type found in this study. That L2 composition research has found personality to influence the type of compositions students produce in itself suggests that personality should play a role in determining feedback preferences. Future research should continue to investigate the role of this variable in student feedback preferences as it has been observed to affect other aspects of language learning as well.

Moody (1988) declares that understanding the role of personality is vital for language teachers because:

> ...this means that different students perceive the world and interpret it in basically different ways. As a result, different students given the same presentation may respond very differently, and these ways of responding may be fundamentally unchangeable. For this reason, one cannot expect a student to adapt to the instructor. Rather, the instructor must design approaches that will take advantage of the student's unique talents (p. 389).

This statement does not necessarily mean that it is impossible for students to adapt to different instructional techniques and methodology.

Personality is only one variable hypothesized in this study to influence feedback preference. This study is significant in that it is the first (to the author's knowledge) to investigate personality along with other variables thought to influence feedback preferences. Future investigations into its interaction with other variables such as age, gender, and previous experience might yield more valuable data ESL writing instructors can use to improve the quality of ESL student compositions.

5.6 Conclusion

This study illustrates that there are differences in students' preferences for both feedback focus and feedback type. In addition, it shows that several factors can influence these preferences. Age, previous experience, personality, and gender were all found to influence feedback preference in some way. Clear trends emerged in terms of which feedback focus students preferred the most (grammar) and the least (content and organization). These trends are troubling in that they seem to contradict current ESL writing methodology which emphasizes the exploratory, non-linear aspect of writing referred to by Zamel fifteen years ago. Findings on preferences for feedback type yielded mixed results. On the one hand, student preference for use of symbols over error correction by the teacher along with high preference means for revision and written feedback may be evidence of student understanding of and willingness to participate in the

revision process. On the other hand, the low preference mean for peer review may suggest that students perceive this feedback type as an exercise in correcting surface-level features – something they believe their peers cannot help them with as much as the teacher. Teachers need to be aware of these preferences and the variables that shape them to improve the effectiveness of their classroom feedback practices. Dialoguing with students to discover their opinions on effective feedback practices and the reasons behind these opinions seems to be a good place for teachers to begin.

Appendix 1

Biographical Information:

1. Age: _____ Sex: M ___ F ___

2. Faculty: _____ Date Entered: _____

3. Native Country: _____ Ethnic Group: _____

4. First Language: _____ Other(s): _____

5. ESL Course Currently Registered In: 207 ___ 208 ___ 209 ___

6. Did you take 207 at Concordia? Yes ___ No ___
   Did you take 208 at Concordia? Yes ___ No ___

7. ***In the ESL writing courses you took before you came to Concordia***, did the instructors focus their comments mostly on:

	not at all 1	2	3	4	a lot 5
mechanics (spelling, punct.)	___	___	___	___	___
grammar	___	___	___	___	___
vocabulary	___	___	___	___	___
content (quality of ideas)	___	___	___	___	___
organization (flow of ideas)	___	___	___	___	___

8. ***In the ESL writing courses you took before you came to Concordia***, how often did the instructors have students work in pairs or groups responding to and evaluating each others' work?

never	rarely	sometimes	often	almost always
____	____	____	____	____

9. How often do students work in pairs or groups in non-ESL courses ***in your native country?***

never	rarely	sometimes	often	almost always
____	____	____	____	____

10. How would you rate yourself as a language learner?

poor	fair	average	good	excellent
____	____	____	____	____

11. How would you rate yourself in the following skills ***in your first language?***

	poor	fair	average	good	excellent
writing	____	____	____	____	____
reading	____	____	____	____	____

12. How would you rate yourself in the following skills ***in English?***

	poor	fair	average	good	excellent
writing	____	____	____	____	____
speaking	____	____	____	____	____
reading	____	____	____	____	____
listening	____	____	____	____	____

Feedback Questionnaire

Think of the last few essays your teacher has returned to you. Respond to the following statements and questions concerning the type of feedback the teacher gave and your reactions to it. Please answer as honestly as possible.

1. The feedback I received on my last essay focused on mistakes in:

	not at all 1	2	3	4	a lot 5
mechanics (spelling, punct.)	___	___	___	___	___
grammar	___	___	___	___	___
vocabulary	___	___	___	___	___
organization (flow of ideas)	___	___	___	___	___
content (quality of ideas)	___	___	___	___	___

2. How important do you think feedback on the following points is?
(please rank your choices in order of importance - 1 2 3 4 5 -
1 = least important, 5 = most important)
Use each number only once.

mechanics (spelling, punct.)	___
grammar	___
vocabulary	___
organization (flow of ideas)	___
content (quality of ideas)	___

3. When revising your composition, indicate the amount of attention you gave to the feedback concerning:

	none 1	2	3	4	a lot 5
mechanics (spelling, punct.)	___	___	___	___	___
grammar	___	___	___	___	___
vocabulary	___	___	___	___	___
organization (flow of ideas)	___	___	___	___	___

4. When you write a first draft, how much attention do you put on the following areas? (please rank your choices in order of importance -
1 2 3 4 5 - 1 = least important, 5 = most important)
Use each number only once.

mechanics (spelling, punct.)	___
grammar	___
vocabulary	___
organization (flow of ideas)	___
content (quality of ideas)	___

II. General Statements About Feedback on Student Writing

5. I find teacher feedback on content (quality of ideas):

useless	of little use	somewhat useful	useful	very useful
———	———	———	———	———

6. If the teacher identifies my errors ***and*** corrects them, it is:

useless	of little use	somewhat useful	useful	very useful
———	———	———	———	———

7. I find verbal teacher feedback in a personal conference:

useless	of little use	somewhat useful	useful	very useful
———	———	———	———	———

8. If the teacher identifies my errors and uses a symbol or code to help me know how to correct them, it is:

useless	of little use	somewhat useful	useful	very useful
———	———	———	———	———

9. I find teacher feedback on organization (flow of ideas):

useless	of little use	somewhat useful	useful	very useful
———	———	———	———	———

10. Revising the same essay more than once is:

useless	of little use	somewhat useful	useful	very useful
———	———	———	———	———

11. I find teacher feedback on mechanics (spelling, punctuation):

useless	of little use	somewhat useful	useful	very useful
———	———	———	———	———

12. I find working in pairs or in groups evaluating and responding to other students' drafts is:

useless	of little use	somewhat useful	useful	very useful
———	———	———	———	———

13. I find teacher feedback on vocabulary choice:

useless	of little use	somewhat useful	useful	very useful
———	———	———	———	———

14. Overall, I find written teacher feedback on my essay:

useless	of little use	somewhat useful	useful	very useful
———	———	———	———	———

15. I find teacher feedback on grammar:

useless	of little use	somewhat useful	useful	very useful
———	———	———	———	———

Appendix 2
Personality Trait Inventory

This is the unscrambled version of the instrument. The items are arranged according to the four bi-polar scales discussed in section 2.2.3. A scrambled version of this instrument has been piloted on two independent groups of students to identify and correct vocabulary/wording problems, and will be administered to subjects in the study.

SECTION I: *(Extraverted/Introverted)*

1. ***Do you prefer to work or study***
   a. alone?
      or
   b. with others?

2. ***Are you a person who***
   a. likes meeting new people?
      or
   b. is rather quiet and shy?

3. ***Do you have***
   a. many friends and acquaintances?
      or
   b. a small circle of close friends?

4. ***Do you usually***
   a. show your feelings freely?
      or
   b. keep your feelings to yourself?

5. ***At a party, do you usually enjoy***
   a. having conversations with a group of people?
      or
   b. having a conversation with one or two people at a time?

WORD PAIRS:

talkative	speak	sociable	individual
quiet	write	private	group

SECTION II: *(SENSING/INTUITIVE)*

1. ***Are you usually more attracted to***
   a. people who are practical?
      or
   b. people who are unconventional?

2. ***Do you more often prefer***
   a. to have information presented in a step-by-step way?
      or
   b. to discover how to do something on your own?

3. ***Is it a bigger compliment to say a person is***
   a. down-to-earth?
      or
   b. creative?

4. ***Do you***
   a. enjoy thinking about future events?
      or
   b. believe there is little point thinking about future events?

5. ***As a student, do you usually prefer courses that are***
   a. more factual?
      or
   b. more theoretical?

WORD PAIRS:

concrete	present	build	fact
abstract	future	invent	idea

Section III: *(THINKING/FEELING)*

1. ***Are you usually more concerned with***
   a. people's rights?
      or
   b. people's feelings?

2. ***When you write in English, do you focus more on***
   a. how correct your grammar is?
      or
   b. how clearly the ideas are stated?

3. ***Do you think it is more important to be***
   a. a sensitive/caring person?
      or
   b. a reasonable person?

4. ***Do you usually make decisions***
   a. based on the facts of a situation?
      or
   b. based on how you feel about a situation?

5. ***When you analyze a problem that affects society, are you usually more interested in***
   a. examining the cause of the problem?
      or
   b. examining the impact the problem may have on people?

WORD PAIRS:

diplomatic	thinking	kind	truth
frank	feeling	fair	harmony

SECTION IV: *(JUDGING/PERCEIVING)*

1. ***When deciding how to spend your weekends, do you usually prefer***
   a. to make a list of things to do?
   or
   b. to be spontaneous?

2. ***Do you believe deadlines***
   a. are necessary and help you organize your work better?
   or
   b are artificial and can be changed if necessary?

3. ***When you arrange to meet someone in a public place, do you***
   a. get upset if the person does not show up on time?
   or
   b. expect the person to be late?

4. ***Do you usually prefer to***
   a. make decisions rather quickly?
   or
   b. wait until the last minute to make decisions?

5. ***When you have an assignment to do, do you usually prefer***
   a. starting early, so that you finish well in advance of the deadline?
   or
   b. starting later and developing the extra speed that comes with working under the pressure of an approaching deadline?

WORD PAIRS:

scheduled	ordered	decision	formal
unplanned	flexible	impulse	informal

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