Reformulation as Feedback on Students’ Writing

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Norman Williams

School of Education
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ABSTRACT
The issue of how best to provide L2 writers with feedback on their written output has been the centre of a lively debate for several years. This study, carried out in a government-funded tertiary education institution in the United Arab Emirates, attempts to evaluate the effectiveness of reformulations of learners’ written output followed by teacher-student conferences comparing learners’ original output with these reformulations. While conclusive results are not presented here, this study would seem to indicate that these combined feedback mechanisms may be more effective than metalinguistically coded feedback followed by teacher-student conferences, particularly in the areas of coherence, grammatical range and accuracy and lexical range and accuracy. Implications for classroom practice are presented, along with suggestions for future research.

DECLARATION
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Chapter 1

1.1 The Global Context

Recent decades have seen enormous upheaval in global provisions of third-level education. The 330,000 overseas students currently in Britain represent almost one third of all third level students in the country, with China alone sending over 50,000 students to British third level institutions (Cribben, 2007). The number of overseas students at third level institutions in the US is well over the half million mark (Graddol, 2006:76) and, at present, over half of all overseas students study in English (Graddol, 2006:76). However, this influx of foreign students into Britain and the US is only part of the global picture. Increasingly, universities in English-speaking countries are establishing a presence abroad, in countries such as China and in the Middle East. The number of students availing themselves of this “transnational” option to get a qualification from a British university without having to spend extended periods in the UK may soon outstrip the number of overseas students at UK universities (Graddol, 2006:79). In addition, governments of non-English-speaking countries are now devoting considerable resources to establishing national English-medium third level universities and colleges within their borders. Examples of such initiatives include both Zayed University and the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT), both of which are government-funded tertiary education institutions in the United Arab Emirates. The subjects of this study are enrolled in one of the 14 colleges which form the HCT.

In short, large and increasing numbers of people with varying levels of English language proficiency are now undertaking third-level English-medium courses. These courses take place in a variety of contexts; within and outside English-speaking countries, in
monolingual or multilingual environments. It is against this backdrop that the following study was carried out.

1.2 Genre-Based Writing Instruction

Preparing to take part in English-medium third-level education is a challenging undertaking for many non-native English speakers. One of the biggest challenges they face is the expectation that they produce texts conforming to the expectations of English speaking academics. Not only must such texts conform to high standards of grammatical, stylistic and lexical accuracy, but they must also follow accepted patterns of organisation according to the genre in question. It is no surprise, then, that in such contexts elements of the genre approach to writing instruction have gained popularity in recent years. Genre-based writing instruction “seeks to offer writers an explicit understanding of how target texts are structured and why they are written in the ways they are” (Hyland, 2004:11).

Hyland points out that this measure is necessary as “ESL teachers can rarely rely on their students having the appropriate cultural, social and linguistic background they need to write effectively in English for Anglophone audiences” (Hyland, 2004:11).

Indeed Hyland goes still further, indicating the need for transparency both in terms of the genres and pedagogy (Hyland, 2003:19). This will be explored in more detail in later sections.

Al Ain Men’s College (AAMC), where this study was carried out, is one of 14 colleges which together form the HCT. This study attempts to investigate possible alternatives to current practices in the delivery of feedback on students’ writing at AAMC.
1.3 The Local Context

Current practice at AAMC dictates that students at all levels should receive feedback using a combination of correction codes and comments. The correction code is not a new concept, but it would seem to remain a popular feedback tactic. However, its superiority as a feedback mechanism is far from proven. I will explore this area further in Chapter 2 below.

Foundations students at AAMC take part in a 9-month-long English course at the end of which they must take a four-skills examination to determine whether or not they will progress to the Higher Diploma program. Of the four skills, writing remains the area in which students have the most difficulties. Given the high-stakes nature of the writing skill on the AAMC Foundations Program, myself and colleagues regularly review our approach to this skill area. The relatively recent adoption of a genre-based approach to writing was the result of one such review, which took place in 2004. However, myself and my colleagues feel that the process of providing feedback on students' written output is now in need of review. Might there be a more effective feedback mechanism which better suits our lower-intermediate level Arab learners of English? Should we investigate forms of feedback which might better compliment our chosen genre-driven writing syllabus? With these questions and others in mind, I began some exploratory reading on the subject.

1.4 Why Reformulation?

When one reads relatively recent studies into feedback on L2 writers’ output the overwhelming impression is one of mild confusion. This is hardly surprising given the sheer number of variables in play. Guenette (2007:47) lists six different types of indirect feedback (see Fig. 1) some of which resemble the
metalinguistically coded feedback currently provided at AAMC. Added to these, writing instructors also have the option of direct feedback, which entails an indication by the instructor of the “correct” form.

Varying approaches to the investigation of feedback and its effectiveness also make it extremely difficult to compare results across studies. Factors such as the duration of the correction treatment and the criteria for gauging success differ (Guenette, 2007:44). However, these considerations pale into insignificance when considering Truscott’s claims that a significant amount of the research conducted into feedback on linguistic forms is flawed and, as a result, invalid (Truscott, 1996; Truscott, 2004).

The study detailed below does not attempt to add directly to this debate. It aims, instead, to investigate an alternative which was mooted 25 years ago by Cohen; reformulation (Cohen, 1982). Cohen defines reformulation as a two-stage process. Firstly, a student’s text is “reconstructed” by removing surface errors of form (Cohen, 1982:3). The second step involves improving “the style and clarity of thought” (Cohen, 1982:3). Cohen describes this second step as being comparable to “corrections of the kind often provided by teachers of native-language composition” (Cohen, 1982:3). Such corrections might include “lexical inadequacy, syntactic blend, conceptual confusion, rhetorical deviance” (Cohen, 1982:3). This last category is, perhaps, the most interesting. Cohen’s initial work on reformulation predates the genre approach to writing instruction, but comes after work by writers such as Kaplan on contrastive rhetoric (Kaplan, 1967).

For the purposes of this study, I should point out here that where reformulation is mentioned it refers to a process which I suspect is virtually identical to that described by Cohen (1982:5) but which aims, as part of its “second step” to ensure that the reformulated
text conforms to all the expectations which a native-speaker might have of texts within the genre. For the purposes of this study, then, texts produced by subjects were reformulated to match the narrative structure which had been presented to students through model narrative texts and an analysis of these texts. Where students’ texts diverged from this narrative structure, they were re-organised and deletions or insertions were made as part of the reformulation process. This narrative structure is discussed further in Chapter 3.

My initial interest in reformulation as a feedback mechanism stems from my reading of an article by Thornbury. He enlists proponents of task-based language instruction and draws on skill-acquisition theory to support his argument that reformulation may be a useful both as a tool to promote language acquisition and as a tactic to help learners improve their writing (Thornbury, 1997:328). He also argues that reformulations of learners’ written output may provide an ideal opportunity for learners to “notice the gap” between their interlanguage and the target language (Thornbury, 1997:326).

Research on the concept of noticing the gap, and the output theory led me to various studies by Swain and collaborators. Here, reformulations of learners’ output surfaced again (Tocalli-Beller & Swain, 2005:23; Lapkin, Swain & Smith, 2002:298; Swain & Lapkin, 2002:285). In later studies, considerable attention is paid to the effect of reformulations as feedback in conjunction with conferences, which may serve to improve the quality of noticing (Swain & Lapkin, 2002:299; Qi & Lapkin, 2001:296). Swain enlists socio-cultural learning theory to justify both peer conferences (Swain & Lapkin, 2002:286) and student teacher conferences (Swain & Lapkin, 2002:299) around reformulated feedback.

Socio-cultural learning theory also plays a relatively central role in genre-based writing pedagogies (Hyland, 2004:121-124). Hyland envisages a paradigm where both teachers and model texts provide
initial support, which is slowly withdrawn as learners gain proficiency in the genre in question (Hyland, 2004;128) and indeed this reflects current practice in writing instruction on the Foundations program at AAMC. However, much of the research by Swain and others investigating the output theory turn this approach on its head. Learners are encouraged to produce meaningful language, which is then reformulated. Scaffolding takes place when learners attempt to compare their output with the reformulated version (Swain & Lapkin, 2002:299).

My enthusiasm for the possibilities offered by reformulated feedback and student-teacher conferences was tempered by some cautionary notes which appear throughout the literature on the subject. For example, Cohen (1983:19) reports somewhat disappointing results and theorises that reformulation feedback may be more suitable for some learners than others. He speculates, for example, that “monitor users” (Cohen, 1983:19) may find this feedback mechanism particularly useful.

Students on the Foundations program at AAMC generally start the program at lower intermediate level. As mentioned above, the skill of writing is a particular problem for many of them and inevitably causes some of these students to fail their final Foundations English examination at the end of each academic year. Could reformulated feedback, coupled with feedback conferences help these students to achieve advances which current practices do not?

This paper will detail my attempts at an initial exploration of this topic. Chapter 2 will examine literature relevant to this area and present my research question. Chapter 3 will describe the research methodology used. Chapter 4 will report results. Chapter 5 contains a discussion of these results and will also list the limitations of this study. Finally, Chapter 6 will offer tentative conclusions and implications.
Chapter 2 

This chapter will look, first of all, at the major movements in writing instruction which have influenced classroom practice over the last three decades. I will then briefly explore the importance of the local teaching and learning context when it comes to choosing the most suitable approach to implement in the writing classroom. I will discuss the issue of power balances and imbalances between teachers and students involved in writing instruction with particular reference to Vygotskian principles, which have influenced the research described in the following chapters.

Subsequent sections of this chapter will focus on the area of feedback on learners’ written output. I will first of all explore the lively debate which has surrounded best practice in feedback on writing over the past two decades and the possible role of conferences in the delivery of feedback. The final sections of this chapter will examine reformulation of learners’ written output as a feedback mechanism and present my research question.

2.1 Approaches to Writing Instruction

The history of ESL Writing Pedagogy might be seen as one where different approaches “achieve dominance and then fade, but never really disappear” (Silva, 1990:11). However, it might also be seen as a series of shifts in focus in writing instruction (Raimes, 1991). These foci might broadly be categorised into a focus on forms (both grammatical and rhetorical), a focus on the writer’s behaviours, strategies and difficulties and, finally, a focus on the reader and his or her expectations.
2.1.1 Focus on Forms

Early pedagogies could be said to focus largely, if not exclusively on form (Silva 1990; Raimes, 1991). Much of the attention on writing in the early 1960's aimed to develop “formal [grammatical] accuracy and correctness” (Silva 1990:12) through controlled or guided composition. This approach saw writing as a lesser skill, subservient both to other skills and to grammatical accuracy (Silva 1990:13; Raimes, 1991:408). The “controlled composition” approach was characterised by highly mechanical, behaviour-forming exercises, designed to encourage the correct production of previously learned grammatical structures (Silva 1990:13; Raimes, 1991:408; Badger and White, 2000:153). While this approach is seen as completely outmoded by many, and rarely makes an appearance in publications on writing pedagogy, my personal experience supports Silva’s assertion that this approach still thrives in some classrooms (Silva 1990:13). The “Keep Writing” series, written by Richard Harrison for the Arabic L1 market is a prime example of the guided composition approach and is still widely used in the Middle East.

The mid-1960s brought a change of focus. Teachers started to feel the need for a focus not only on grammatical form but also on the rhetorical form or forms which English texts might assume. The idea of focusing on acceptable rhetorical patterns in L1 writing classrooms through the analysis of model texts was not a new one (Matsuda, 2003:70). This tradition was imported into the ESL classroom in part thanks to Kaplan’s studies into contrastive rhetoric and his theory that rhetoric is a “culturally coded phenomenon” (Kaplan, 1967:15). Kaplan put forward the theory that ESL writers’ first language interference extended far beyond the sentence level and into the way writers naturally organised text (Silva, 1990:13; Raimes, 1991:409). Because of this interference, ESL writers often build their compositions in a way unfamiliar to a native reader (Silva,
and thus need activities aimed at familiarising them with acceptable patterns of text organisation in English. Such activities frequently involve analysis, imitation, reorganisation or completion of a model text (Silva, 1990:14; Raimes, 1991:409; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004:4). This current-traditional paradigm of writing instruction became better known as the product approach, due to its focus on what is produced by learners and its almost complete neglect of the “strategies and other cognitive operations involved in putting pen to paper” (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004:5). Although the main focus of writing pedagogy may have shifted, interest in the field of contrastive rhetoric persists (Leki, 1991; Liebman, 1992; Matsuda, 1997; Connor, 2003). Given the increased participation of non-native speakers in English-medium third level education, this interest would seem justified. The following quotation from Kaplan also seems as relevant to today’s world as it was in 1967;

Any language has to be learned as an entity whose only logic is internal. The student needs to be taught the “logic” which is reflected in the rhetoric……..But remember, please, at this stage you are not merely teaching a student to manipulate language – you are actually teaching him to see the world through English coloured glasses. In doing so you run the very serious risk of being legitimately accused of brainwashing.

Kaplan, 1967:16

2.1.2 Focus on the Writer

These twin foci on linguistic and textual forms started to give way in the late 1970s to a very different paradigm. The process approach, in reality a group of closely related approaches, based itself on various studies into how writers write (Zamel, 1987:698). These
investigations concentrated on the behaviours, strategies and difficulties of writers as they composed (Zamel, 1987:698) and discovered that writing was a complex, non-linear process (Silva: 1990:15; Zamel, 1987:698). This new focus on writers and their internal processes led, where the process approach was adopted, to a very different set of classroom practices. Process adherents such as Zamel believed that learners should not be made aware of target rhetorical patterns (Raimes, 1991:409) and indeed that classroom practitioners who continued to follow a current-traditional methodology were in many cases making the writing process more difficult and stressful for their learners (Zamel, 1987:698-699). The process approach downplayed the importance of linguistic knowledge (of grammatical or textual structure) and instead emphasised the development of linguistic skills. Thus the stages involved in producing a text might include “prewriting; composing/drafting; revising; and editing” (Badger and White, 2000:154) although learners would not necessarily move through these stages in a linear fashion. Form would emerge as a result of this process, and of the writers’ need to communicate (Silva, 1990:15). Attention to grammatical accuracy was often deferred until the latter editing stages (Raimes, 1991:411).

Although the process movement has achieved widespread acceptance, it has been attacked for a number of reasons. Leki points out that if no models of text organisation are provided to learners for analysis and as examples, they will ultimately be forced to transfer schemata they have acquired from their L1 or their previous education; schemata which in many cases will not match the expectations of an English-speaking reader (Leki, 1991:124). Process approaches can also limit the role of the teacher to that of a facilitator (Badger and White, 2000:154) or even “well meaning bystander” (Hyland, 2003:19). As Zamel, a proponent of process-oriented teaching of writing, puts it;
“process-oriented teaching calls on teachers to assume a less controlling role, to give up the notion that they "own" knowledge, and to work toward goals that cannot be easily predetermined”

Zamel, 1987:701

This withdrawal of two possible elements of support for the inexperienced L2 writer; the teacher and a model text, is designed to foster an “inductive, discovery-based” approach to learning how to write (Hyland, 2003:19). Hyland points out that this approach may advantage “middle class L1 students who, immersed in the values of the cultural mainstream, share the teacher’s familiarity with key genres” (Hyland, 2003:19). Those, on the other hand, whose backgrounds and cultures “revere textual authority or which elevate teachers as the sources of educational knowledge” may find that the approach discriminates against them (Kalantzis and Cope in Atkinson, 2003:9). They may be unfamiliar and uncomfortable with the balance of power between teacher and student, uncomfortable with the lack of clear class objectives or a clear model of how a proficient English speaker would typically approach certain text types, unused to certain classroom practices inherent in a process model (e.g. peer correction and feedback, redrafting without explicit linguistic feedback from the teacher) and unconvinced as to the pedagogical validity of these practices (Atkinson, 2003:7-10).

2.1.3 Focus on the Reader

Atkinson uses the term “post-process” to describe a move beyond the concept of writing “as a highly cognitive, individualist, largely asocial process” (Atkinson, 2003:10). One of the most significant
movements to emerge, perhaps partly as a reaction to the process movement, is the genre movement, which views writing as a highly social activity. “Writing varies within the social context in which it is produced” (Badger and White, 2000:157) and L2 writers must be aware of the varied expectations of audiences in different social contexts if they are to be accepted into professional or academic communities (Hyland, 2003:24).

Genres are defined by their communicative purpose which, in turn, shapes the “‘schematic’, or ‘beginning-middle-end’ structure of the discourse,” as well as “choices of content and style” (Kay and Dudley-Evans, 1999:309). In order to gain acceptance into their target discourse communities, be they professional, social or academic, L2 writers need to understand how the typical genres used in these communities are realized. This necessitates explicit presentation and analysis of these genres;

By making the genres of power visible and attainable through explicit instruction, genre pedagogies seek to demystify the kinds of writing that will enhance learners’ career opportunities and provide access to a greater range of life choices.

Hyland 2003:24

Hyland’s use of the word “power” above is significant. As mentioned above, completely process-oriented approaches to the teaching of writing have been accused of maintaining the power balance by discriminating against those whose social or linguistic background has not given them access to the key genres. However, Kaplan’s point, also mentioned earlier, that the imposition on L2 writers of rhetorical patterns from English could be seen as brainwashing also seems to suggest an uncomfortable power relationship between teacher and learner. Since genre approaches to the teaching of writing use model texts as their starting point, they
must also be open to the same criticism. Indeed proponents admit that, where genre-based approaches are misapplied, the writing class can become highly prescriptive, discouraging creativity or individuality and demanding conformity (Kay and Dudley-Evans, 1999:311; Hyland, 2003:26).

2.2 Focus on the Local Teaching and Learning Context

The preceding descriptions of major movements in the teaching of writing are intended as a brief overview and, as such, may be guilty of considerable oversimplification. It is not my intention here to “caricature” certain approaches in order to present others in a more favourable light, although, as Matsuda points out, this strategy is not uncommon when comparing new approaches to L2 writing pedagogy against those which preceded them (Matsuda, 2003:74-75).

An examination of the needs of L2 writers would seem to indicate that it is vital to incorporate more than one approach to the teaching of writing. Silva’s ambitious meta-analysis of studies comparing L1 and L2 writers in English concludes that L2 writers need additional guidance and support in strategic, rhetorical and linguistic areas (Silva, 1993:670). Silva insists that L2 English writers need help in developing more effective planning and revising strategies and that they also need to be familiarized with L1 audience expectations and unfamiliar textual patterns (Silva, 1993:671). The clear implication here is that there may be a need for both “process” approaches and “product” based approaches in the L2 writing classroom. Kay and Dudley-Evans’s (1998:312) poll of classroom practitioners signalled clearly that teachers in the L2 writing classroom are aware of the importance of tempering the genre approach with other methods, specifically process oriented instruction. Badger and White (2000) have attempted to design an approach to the teaching of writing
which formally fuses genre and process considerations. However, it may be that, instead of attempting to design approaches and procedures which can be applied universally, teachers should try to discover what works locally. Raimes (1991:421) points out that the considerable complexity of the writing skill makes it unlikely that a single theory will adequately describe it or that a single approach to teaching and learning will prove universally suitable. Silva (1997:360) highlights the fact that ESL writers may be very different from each other and these differences must be taken into consideration when considering suitable ESL writing instruction. It may be that classroom practitioners need to conduct their own classroom-based research in order to decrease their dependence on theorists, avoid the blind (mis)application of popular but unsuitable approaches and, most importantly, to start discovering what works best in their particular teaching and learning contexts (Raimes, 1991:421).

2.3 Pedagogy and Politics

Raimes (1991:422-423) reminds classroom practitioners and researchers alike that pedagogies carry with them implications for the allocation of power within the classroom. The potential for power imbalances which might hamper effective teaching and learning is considerable and some of these have been mentioned above; When using models of target textual forms or genres, how can teachers avoid an overly prescriptive approach which leaves little room for input or invention on the part of the learner? How can the teacher take a well-defined and active role in the writing classroom? Hyland seems to claim that Vygotskian principles may hold the answer to a number of these questions. He sees a clear “scaffolding” role for the teacher both in helping the learners analyze
model texts and supporting the learners through the drafting process (Hyland, 2003:26).

Vygotskian theory claims that knowledge is not delivered or transmitted but constructed first through interpersonal activity, largely mediated by language (Nassaji and Swain, 2000:35) before it can be internalized or appropriated into the intrapersonal sphere (Aljaafreh and Lantolf, 1994:467). One of the key concepts in the Vygotskian framework is the zone of proximal development or ZPD. This describes the area between a learner’s current level of expertise or proficiency and the level at which the same learner is capable of functioning with the support of a more expert partner (Nassaji and Swain, 2000:35-36). The importance of identifying and learning to work within this area cannot be overstated since “learning principally takes place within the learner’s ZPD” (Nassaji and Swain, 2000:36). Aljaafreh and Lantolf identify three key characteristics of successful intervention within a learner’s ZPD. Firstly, all work within a learner’s ZPD must be collaborative and dialogic. Indeed, dialogue is necessary to gauge the learner’s level of development and thus to identify his/her ZPD (Aljaafreh and Lantolf, 1994:468). Secondly, help and support offered within the learner’s ZPD must be contingent on the learner’s need and should be withdrawn as soon as the learner shows signs of functioning independently (Aljaafreh and Lantolf, 1994:467). Finally, intervention can be graduated so as to both identify the learner’s ZPD and to provide the minimum level of guidance required for success (Aljaafreh and Lantolf, 1994:467).

Hyland points out that a Vygotskian approach is a “visible pedagogy” which gives a clear, unambiguous, central role to teachers and at the same time makes it clear to students what is to be learned and assessed (Hyland, 2003:26). This transparency means that no group or groups of students is discriminated against because of their cultural or educational background and their
unfamiliarity with more student-centred classroom dynamics (Hyland, 2003:26).

Hyland’s model suggests heavily “scaffolded” analysis of models of the target genre followed by a process of drafting and possibly redrafting where teacher support is withdrawn as learners become more independent.

2.4 Feedback on Writing

This section will explore the long-running debate around the issue of feedback on learners’ written output. Considerations integral to this debate include the validity of feedback on language forms, other facets of writing on which feedback might usefully focus (such as the content of the learner’s writing) and the mechanisms by which feedback can be delivered. Finally, I will examine the area of feedback conferences.

2.4.1 The Feedback Debate

The subject of feedback on L2 writers’ texts is one which has generated enormous interest and heated debate, particularly over the past decade. Numerous studies in the area have thrown up interesting data but have ultimately delivered few clear conclusions. Unsurprisingly, much of the debate and disagreement has centred around the validity of delivering feedback on errors in language forms contained in L2 writers’ output. The reasons for this apparent lack of clear direction may be due in large part to the variety of approaches and research designs used by researchers in this area and the resultant difficulty in drawing any clear comparisons between one study and another (Ferris and Hedgcock, 2004:51).
Perhaps the most significant difference in approach is whether to examine cross-sectional or longitudinal samples. Guenette (2007:44) lists three cross-sectional studies which find that feedback on form can improve accuracy in the short term. However, all three of these studies look at the effect that feedback on form can have on redrafted, corrected or rewritten student texts and, while they seem to indicate that “pedagogical intervention that pushes learners to pay attention to language is useful” there is no guarantee whatsoever that these beneficial effects will translate into improved accuracy or proficiency in writing in the long term (Guenette, 2007:44). Some longitudinal studies in the area include Chandler (2003), Bitchener et al (2005), Semke (1984), Sheppard, (1992) and Goring-Kepner (1991), who all implemented their chosen feedback treatments repeatedly over periods of 10 weeks or more before assessing in post-test the effects on various facets of their subjects' written production. Both Chandler and Bitchener et al would initially seem to support the role of feedback on form in improving accuracy over time. Chandler found that L2 writers who were asked to attempt to correct underlined errors of form in each of their submissions produced more accurate writing in post test than writers from the control group, who were not asked to respond to the underlined errors in their first drafts (Chandler, 2003:284,285). However, as Truscott points out, the absence of a true control group which received absolutely no feedback on form weakens these results (Truscott, 2004:337). Bitchener et al did include a true control group and find that direct written feedback in tandem with one-to-one conferences may be effective in improving accuracy in some areas of form governed by clear grammatical rules which can be transmitted to learners (Bitchener et al, 2005:201). It should be noted, however, that those subjects in Bitchener's study who received direct written feedback without the one-to-one conference fared little better than the control group (Bitchener et al, 2005:199,200). Semke’s conclusions are that direct correction of
errors in form does not lead to improvements in L2 writing skills or language competence (Semke, 1984:200). Likewise, Sheppard and Goring-Kepner find that error correction as part of feedback does not lead to more accurate production in the long term (Sheppard, 1992:107; Goring-Kepner, 1991:309).

The debate surrounding feedback on form is further obscured by the variety of ways in which such feedback can be delivered. Writing instructors can choose direct feedback, where the “correct” piece of language is given in response to a student’s linguistic error, or indirect feedback, where students receive an indication that they have made an error, perhaps including the location and nature of the error, so that they can attempt to make corrections themselves (see Fig 1). Ferris points to four studies which find that learners prefer indirect feedback on error, perhaps believing that it is more conducive to learning (Ferris and Hedgcock, 2004:269). It may be the case that the majority of teachers also favour indirect feedback, believing, as Lalande (1982:140) does, that it involves learners in problem solving and guided discovery and so may enhance learning. However, studies comparing the two types of feedback seem far from conclusive when taken as a group. Rob et al
(1986:88) compared three different types of indirect feedback with direct feedback in a longitudinal study and found no significant difference, leading them to advise that teachers simply mark surface errors with a line as this is quicker than providing either direct feedback or more detailed metalinguistically coded indirect feedback. However, Chandler’s study, which partly covered the same ground almost two decades later, found that direct correction of linguistic errors or simple underlining of these errors (i.e. indirect correction without any codes or metalinguistic guidance for learners) were both more effective than underlining with correction code or correction codes in the margin of the student’s text (Chandler, 2003:290). Lalande (1982) finds in favour of indirect feedback while Ferris and Roberts (2001) find that students’ writing improves regardless of feedback type (Guenette, 2007:48). The diversity of results here may, in part, be due to the fact that these studies all ask slightly different questions and that they collect data in very different ways. However, it may also be due to flaws in the basic designs of some of the studies (Guenette, 2007:48).

Feedback on linguistic forms is not the only option available to writing instructors and studies into the validity and effectiveness of feedback solely directed at the content of the student writer’s message have also thrown up some interesting results. Two studies comparing formal and content feedback both find that students receiving formal feedback over time fail to improve their written accuracy to a significantly greater degree than students receiving feedback on the content of their writing (Sheppard, 1992:107-108; Goring-Kepner, 1991:310). In fact, Sheppard’s study indicates that students receiving feedback comments on the content of their writing and its clarity actually learned more about sentence length (Sheppard, 1992:107). Both studies seem to indicate that learners who receive formal feedback over time tend to produce less complex language, when compared with those who regularly
receive feedback on content (Sheppard, 1992:107; Goring-Kepner, 1991:309), perhaps suggesting that formal feedback may have the effect of encouraging learners to avoid structures which may induce them to make formal mistakes. These two studies would initially seem to damn formal feedback as, at best, ineffective and at worst detrimental. However, as Guenette points out, Goring-Kepner’s study, like those of Fazio and Semke, find that formal feedback is ineffective as a response to journal entries but that this type of writing may be particularly unsuitable for work on formal or grammatical features of writing in any case since learners rarely revise their journal writing (Guenette, 2007:47). Guenette also points out that Sheppard’s results may have been influenced by the fact that the type of formal feedback used in his study (notes in the margin on type and location of error) may not be the most effective tactic for formal feedback (Guenette, 2007:47). While these findings in favour of focusing feedback on the content of L2 writers’ messages are highly interesting, we cannot, then, generalize them to other types of writing; for example examination answers or genres unfamiliar to L2 writers. Nor can we claim that feedback on content is superior to all types of formal feedback.

Approaches to writing instruction often carry with them implications for dealing with feedback in the classroom. Zamel’s insistence that teachers of writing should lead students through “cycles of revision” (Zamel, 1985:95) is very much at the heart of the process writing approach. She claims that attention should be focused first of all on “meaning-level issues” in response to early drafts of students’ writing and that feedback on surface-level problems can be left to a much later stage, when problems of content and meaning have been addressed (Zamel 1985:96). However, Ashwell’s study attempting to prove or disprove the efficacy of this staged approach to feedback found no advantage delivering content feedback on early drafts and formal feedback on later ones (Ashwell, 2000:243).
Indeed, Ashwell found no proof that learners are prejudiced in any way if they are given feedback on the content and the formal errors of their writing at the same time (Ashwell, 2000:243). Ashwell himself admits that his study suffers from certain design flaws (Ashwell, 2000:244) and it should also be pointed out that the study is cross-sectional and looks only at changes in redrafts. However, in the absence of more substantial studies testing Zamel’s theories on feedback in the writing classroom, we must at least conclude that her theories remain unproven. More recent approaches to the teaching of writing are much vaguer in dealing with issues of feedback. Hyland seems to indicate that both peers and the teacher will “scaffold” the L2 writer’s development through several drafts as he/she gains mastery of a genre (Hyland, 2003:26). Badger and White seem to suggest that learners might benefit from the act of comparing their inexpert attempts at new genres with a model produced by a more expert writer (Badger and White, 2000:159).

### 2.4.2 Feedback and Conferences

Perhaps the most significant result of the longitudinal study by Bitchener et al (2005:202), mentioned above, is the apparent effectiveness of a combination of direct written feedback supported by one-to-one conferences. This combination was found to be more effective than direct written feedback alone in improving learners’ accuracy in treatable, rule-based errors in form (Bitchener et al, 2005:202).

Support for conferences as a desirable or indeed a necessary feedback mechanism on learner’s writing has come from a number of sources. Studies into learner’s reactions to the feedback they receive indicate that learners frequently fail to fully understand written feedback (Ferris, 1995:47; Zamel, 1985:79). These results
lead Zamel (1985:97) to recommend that teachers do not limit themselves to “disembodied remarks” but instead set up “collaborative sessions and conferences”. In Cohen’s investigation of reformulated student writing and its value as input, he concludes that students “need assistance in comparing their version with the reformulated one, and that these comparisons need to be purposely eye-opening and engaging” (Cohen, 1983:17).

A number of studies exploring Swain’s output theory also promote the idea of conferencing with teachers or more expert peers as part of feedback, claiming that it may benefit language acquisition. Tocalli-Beller and Swain (2005:22) claim “Students need to talk about what is being taught and why they are being corrected” and that this discussion may be beneficial to language acquisition even in cases where learners disagree with the teacher’s reformulation. Qi and Lapkin point out that learners, particularly at lower levels of proficiency, may need to collaborate with teachers, peers and proficient speakers in order to improve the quality of their noticing as they compare their initial output to new input (Qi and Lapkin, 2001:296). Swain and Lapkin imply that the teacher may need to discuss feedback in order for it to have an impact on learning (Swain and Lapkin, 2002:299). However, perhaps the strongest support for the need for collaborative dialogue based around feedback on learners’ written output comes from Watanabe and
Swain who claim that L2 learning “occurs in interaction, not as a result of interaction” (Swain in Watanabe and Swain, 2007:139).

These comments in support of feedback conferences frequently contain implicit or explicit references to the Vygotskian principles mentioned above. Zamel’s description of the “reciprocal, dialectic process” (Zamel, 1985:97) is strongly reminiscent of Aljaafreh and Lantolf’s “dialogic activity” necessary to both discover the learner’s ZPD and to provide feedback within this zone (Aljaafreh and Lantolf, 1994:468). While studies confirming the superiority of scaffolded feedback targeted at the learner’s ZPD focus exclusively on discreet language items (Aljaafreh and Lantolf, 1994; Nassaji and Swain, 2000), it would seem entirely possible that such forms of feedback might also have beneficial effects on other areas of the writing skill, such as cohesion, coherence, issues of style and reader orientation.

2.5 Reformulation

The idea of reformulation as a mechanism for providing feedback on learners’ written output has interested theorists and practitioners for at least 25 years. Cohen credits Levenston with the original development of reformulation as a mechanism for feedback on learners’ written output (Cohen, 1982:5). Cohen’s initial studies into the use of this feedback strategy produced mixed results, leading him to suspect that reformulations of their initial texts might overwhelm some L2 writers; that this feedback strategy may not benefit students of all levels and that, as mentioned above, learners might need assistance in gleaning linguistic insights from reformulated versions of their own writing (Cohen, 1983:19-20).

Interest in this feedback technique has resurfaced regularly. Thornbury (1997:328) speculates that it might prove conducive to “noticing the gap” and that it might also be a very flexible tool for
both skills and interlanguage development, allowing as it does that learners may focus on those differences which they can identify and process.

“Noticing the gap” is a reference to Swain’s output theory, which holds that the act of producing language in a communicative situation can serve to further language acquisition in three different ways. Firstly, the act of producing language in a communicative context gives learners an opportunity for hypothesis testing, allowing them to “test comprehensibility and linguistic well-formedness of their interlanguage” (Izumi et al, 1999:423). Secondly, output may cause metalinguistic processing of language, perhaps deepening learners’ “awareness of forms, rules and form-function relationships” (Izumi et al, 1999:423). Finally, Swain suggests that output may trigger a noticing function, causing learners to “notice a gap between what they want to say and what they can say, leading them to recognize what they do not know, or know only partially, about the target language” (Swain, in Izumi et al, 1999:423). A number of studies exploring the output theory have chosen to incorporate reformulations of texts produced by learners (Qi and Lapkin, 2001; Adams, 2003; Swain and Lapkin, 2002; Tocalli-Beller and Swain, 2005; Sachs and Polio, 2007). These studies have used reformulations as a form of external feedback which may, in tandem with peer conferences, student-teacher conferences, stimulated recall or other complementary mechanisms, promote analysis of the differences between learners’ interlanguage and more target-like forms (Qi and Lapkin, 2001:283; Adams, 2003:371; Swain and Lapkin, 2002:298; Tocalli-Beller and Swain, 2005:7; Sachs and Polio, 2007:85).

The above-mentioned studies are directly relevant to the research described here. However, their focus is quite different in nature. Firstly, they concern themselves largely with the noticing of discreet language forms (Qi and Lapkin, 2001:289; Adams, 2003:350;
Secondly, they do not focus on the long-term effects of the noticing which may be generated by reformulation. Their data is collected from learners redrafts of their original output (Qi and Lapkin, 2001:277; Adams, 2003:347) or from the peer conferences in which they take part while comparing their original output to reformulations (Tocalli-Beller and Swain, 2005:10).

Some time before the above mentioned series of studies on the output theory, Johnson surmises that reformulation may be useful due to its ability to confront “the learner with the mismatch between flawed and model performance” (Johnson, 1988:93). However, Johnson approaches the issue from a skills perspective. He points out that, in many contexts where skills are taught and learned, “initial training may help to provide internal representation” (Johnson, 1998:92) perhaps in much the same way that the provision and analysis of “representative samples of the target genre …. [can]….. sensitize students to generic structure” (Hyland, 2004:132). Johnson, however, proposes that reformulations of learners’ texts may provide valuable skills training because they allow learners to “see for themselves what has gone wrong, in the operating conditions under which they went wrong” (Johnson, 1988:92). Johnson admits that his proposals might be seen to ‘switch the focus of attention from initial learning to feedback’ (Johnson, 1988:95) but perhaps this switch of focus is a valid one. In the context of a genre-based course of writing instruction, might it not, for the reasons discussed above, be equally valid to present learner with “models after the event” (Johnson, 1988:92) in the form of reformulations?
2.6 Promise and Pitfalls: The Research Question

In summary, there would seem to be considerable theoretical support for the use of reformulation as feedback on learners written output, particularly if used with teacher-learner feedback conferences. However, there would also seem to be possible problems with this approach. Cohen concludes that reformulated feedback may suit certain learning styles better than others (Cohen, 1983:19). Sachs and Polio point out that the perceptual salience of more traditional forms of error correction, which mark learners’ errors on their original texts, allow learners to identify their errors much more quickly and easily (Sachs and Polio, 2007:86). Other investigations suggest that, while reformulations promote noticing, language proficiency affects the quality of this noticing, with possible knock-on effects on writing improvement (Qi and Lapkin, 2001:277).

It would seem, then, that the use of reformulation as feedback on the written output of Foundations students at AAMC represents a leap into the unknown. The aim of this study is to tentatively explore this area, with a view to the possible adoption of reformulation as a feedback mechanism in the future. Thus, my research question is;

*How does the provision of feedback on writing through reformulations and teacher-student conferences affect the development of Al Ain Men’s College Foundations students’ writing?*
3.1 Introduction

This chapter will attempt to provide sufficient detail to allow for the replication of this study in other contexts, as is the expectation with reported primary research (McDonough & McDonough, 1997:65). However, my primary concern in conducting this research is to explore alternatives to current practices in feedback on writing in the teaching and learning context described below.

The HCT Writing Band Descriptors are a key element of the context within which this research took place. All assessed writing at AAMC is graded using these descriptors. Decisions as to whether Foundations students at AAMC have achieved a level of proficiency which would allow them to enter their Higher Diploma course are made with reference to these descriptors. My desire to make the HCT Writing Band Descriptors an integral part of my research led me to opt for quantitative rather than qualitative research. The relative merits and drawbacks of this decision, particularly in view of the small sample I have chosen to use, are explored below.

However, as can be seen from the research question at the end of the previous chapter, my intention is not to prove or disprove the superiority of reformulation as a feedback mechanism. Instead I have attempted in this study to bring into focus “traces .....of reality” (Byrne, D. 2002:32). I have not attempted to establish an objective truth in the positivist tradition, but rather have endeavoured to use the data reported in the next chapter to explore the possible effects of reformulation and to develop hypotheses which, in turn, can be explored in further studies. Byrne likens this use of quantitative data to “the forensic procedures of a detective investigating a crime” (Byrne, D. 2002:93).
Fig. 3 below gives an overview of my research, the various elements of which will be explored in more detail in this chapter. Appendix 2 provides an example of reformulated feedback provided to one of the subjects in this study. Appendix 3 gives examples of the highlighted and coded feedback provided to another subject as part of treatment.

3.2 Subjects and Context

All subjects in this study were Emirati, Arabic L1 speaking males aged between 17 and 20. They had all attended state-funded secondary schools in the Al Ain area and had all received one hour per week of English instruction for the duration of their secondary education. Their objective in joining the nine-month Foundations
program at AAMC was to improve their level of English and Maths so as to gain entry to their chosen three-year Higher Diploma course at the college. All subjects were full-time students and, as part of their Foundations program, they all received ten hours of English instruction per week, along with classes in Mathematics, Library / Research skills. English instruction focused on grammar and lexis as well as on the skills of reading, listening, speaking and writing. As mentioned elsewhere in this paper, writing instruction on the Foundations program is heavily influenced by genre-based approaches.

3.3 Selection of Subjects

The time and effort involved in the reformulation of learners’ written output and in feedback conferences made it impossible to use sample sizes which would enable high levels of reliability. However, I believe that the results reported for the sixteen subjects included in this study will allow me to draw some tentative conclusions. These may, in turn, indicate areas in which future research might be conducted in this area and within this context.

In selecting my sample, I was very much influenced by Byrne’s hypothesis that “if we want a sample that looks like the population, we must stratify” (Byrne, 2002:73). The entire Foundations cohort completed a piece of narrative writing along with a Reading and Listening proficiency test on entering the college. Students’ narratives were graded using HCT Writing Band Descriptors. I divided the entire cohort into three groups according to the overall score awarded to their writing at the Pre-Test stage (calculated as an average of the bands awarded under the four banding criteria). The lowest group contained students who had achieved up to and including band 4. The middle group contained students who had been awarded between band 4 and band 5. The last group, which
was the smallest, contained those students who had achieved band 5 or above. Students in these three groups were listed in alphabetical order and then numbered. From each of the lower groups I allocated the first three odd-numbered students to the Correction Code group and even-numbered students to the Reformulation group. As the group of students with higher writing proficiency scores was the smallest, I decided that it should provide four subjects for this study (two for each treatment group) using the same system as described above. Before finalising these groups, I checked that there were no significant differences between the profiles of the two groups as indicated by their Listening or Reading scores. These two groups were then matriculated into the same class, along with four other students not included in this study. In this way it was possible to ensure that their experiences in the classroom were the same for the duration of the study.

3.4 Pre-Test, Post-Test 1 and Post-Test 2

The prompts used to elicit written narratives at the Pre-Test, Post-Test 1 and Post-Test 2 stages were deliberately simple, in order to avoid any possible misunderstanding on the part of the subjects, and relatively open, giving subjects considerable latitude to choose the content of the narratives they produced at each of these three stages (see Appendix 4).

In each case, subjects completed their texts under exam conditions with a time limit of 40 minutes. These conditions were the same as those imposed on subjects as they produced their initial texts during treatment cycles (see below).
3.5 Correction Code

| S - spelling | P - punctuation |
| WW - wrong word | WO - word order |
| WT - wrong tense | G - grammar |
| - something missing |

Each cycle of this treatment started when subjects in this group completed a short narrative in answer to a written prompt under exam conditions with a time limit of 40 minutes. This was done on a Thursday, starting on Thursday of week 2 (see Fig. 3) in order to allow for feedback to be prepared over the weekend (Friday and Saturday). Feedback was completed by this researcher using a combination of correction code (see Fig. 4) and comments, which represents current feedback practice at AAMC (see Appendix 2). This feedback was cross checked by a colleague teaching on the same program and, on the relatively rare occasions where our reactions to learners’ texts differed, a third colleague provided the “casting vote” as to how the particular element of the subjects written output should be handled.

Subjects received their texts complete with correction code feedback the following Monday. At the same time, all subjects received a sheet designed to provide structure to the subsequent feedback conference. This is discussed in more detail later in this chapter. One-to-one feedback conferences between myself and each subject took place the next morning or afternoon (see the section on feedback conferences below for details). Following these feedback conferences, subjects were not asked to redraft their texts.
This treatment was carried out three times during phase 1 of this study up until Post-Test 1 (see Fig. 3) and three further times in phase 2 before Post-Test 2.

3.6 Reformulation

Subjects in this group produced short narratives under exactly the same conditions as the Correction Code group. Again, feedback was completed by this researcher (see Appendix 2 for an example of such feedback). I completed the reformulation process in two stages. The first stage, termed ‘reconstruction’ by Cohen (Cohen, 1982:5), involves correcting surface errors. The second involves making the piece “as native like as possible”(Cohen, 1982:5) while attempting to preserve the writer’s ideas. However, given that I wanted students to see a fully native-like version of their own writing which conformed to the general expectations of the narrative genre, I allowed myself considerable freedom at this stage to drop details which I thought irrelevant and, in a small number of cases, to add detail which might be expected to maintain coherence. The criterion I used for these occasional additions and deletions was that the final text should conform loosely to the generic structure of a short narrative, as presented and practiced in the writing element of the course. While there is, of course, more than one way to structure a narrative, it is felt by instructors at AAMC that at the early stages of the course, students should be given a clear indication of one acceptable narrative ‘schema’. Later in this 9-month course, this genre is revisited and expanded.

The narrative structure which myself and my colleagues have chosen to present to students at this early stage of the course is a relatively simple 4-part matrix from Hyland (2004:33) shown below;
This matrix not only guided my reformulation of student written output, helping me to decide if information was redundant or irrelevant and where additions needed to be made. It also provided a point of reference during feedback conferences when I discussed learners’ feedback under the “Organisation” category (see Appendix 1).

3.7 Feedback Conferences

As mentioned above, when subjects’ texts were returned to them they also received a single sheet which was designed both to prepare them for the subsequent feedback conference the next morning or afternoon and to bring structure to this conference (see Appendix 1). On this sheet, subjects were first of all asked to identify the genre of the writing they had done. This may initially seem incongruous, given that the entire study was carried out on texts following the narrative genre. However, as the study progressed, subjects were introduced to other genres as part of their class work and I felt it necessary to clarify at each feedback session that the narrative was the genre in question. The four sections of this feedback sheet correspond to the four categories of the HCT Writing Band Descriptors, which are presented to all Foundations students early in their course in the interests of transparency.
My decision to use this sheet to provide a structure for subsequent feedback conferences, and indeed the use of these conferences themselves, was an attempt to provide a 'level playing field' for the two treatment groups. Given that feedback on writing is generally provided through correction codes, I was eager to ensure that any superior gains registered by the Correction Code group were not due simply to their familiarity with this mechanism. I fully recognise, of course, that the effects of these conferences on the overall gains registered by students can not readily be separated from the effects of coded or reformulated feedback, hence my wording of my research question in Chapter 2.

Before the start of the study, I ran a brief pilot of both this feedback sheet and the actual conference itself on four students not later used in this study. Two of these were given feedback using correction codes and the other two using reformulations. These piloting sessions were instrumental in my decision to limit feedback conferences to between 8 and 10 minutes.

Feedback conferences were alternated so that in treatment cycle 1 the Correction Code group received their conferences in the morning and the Reformulation group in the afternoon. In treatment 2, this order was reversed and so on.

During the actual conferences themselves, my aim was to structure feedback in the four areas according to the regulatory scale suggested by Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994:471). It should be pointed out here that the two initial feedback mechanisms, correction code and reformulation, exerted a very considerable influence on how the conference was conducted. Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994:467-471) recommend that feedback should try to find the learner's ZPD by moving from implicit to explicit feedback tactics so as to make feedback graduated and contingent on the learner’s need. However, this is of course impossible where a correction
code has been used since the location and nature of the error is generally indicated from the outset, forcing feedback to start at Aljaafreh and Lantolf’s (1994:471) level 7; “Tutor identifies the error”. Obviously, then, feedback conferences with subjects who had received highlighted and coded feedback were limited by the very nature of this feedback to the more explicit end of Aljaafreh and Lantolf’s scale of tutor interventions. The significance of this will be discussed in Chapter 5.

3.8 The HCT Writing Band Descriptors

As mentioned in Chapter 1 of this paper, the HCT Writing Band Descriptors (see Appendix 5) are an integral part of the context within which this research took place. They are the ultimate criteria against which students’ written output is judged and results obtained using these band descriptors may dictate whether Foundations students can continue to Higher Diploma to study their chosen course or must leave the college without a qualification. Given their importance within the context of writing instruction at AAMC, I was eager to use these band descriptors as an element of data collection in this study.

There are, however, a number of other reasons why the HCT Writing Band Descriptors proved suitable as a key element in the data collection process within this study.

Analytic scoring scales such as the HCT Writing Band Descriptors have been “found to be better suited in evaluating the different aspects of the writing skill” (Bacha, 2001:375). The ability to focus on discrete facets of learners’ written output was obviously imperative, given the research question which motivated this study and, “If applied well, ............ analytic scales can be very
informative about the students’ proficiency levels in specific writing areas” (Bacha, 2001:375).

The phrase ‘if applied well’ in the previous paragraph is obviously a significant one. As Cohen et al (2000:129) point out steps must be taken to ensure inter-rater reliability. Bacha (2001:374-375) points out that this can be considerably enhanced where raters use the same criteria with a common understanding and where less experienced raters are asked to approximate expert raters in rating.

The importance of the HCT Writing Descriptors as an element of assessment at AAMC dictates that this researcher and colleagues working at the college are obliged to attend regular standardisation sessions where the criteria listed in the HCT Writing Banding Criteria are clarified and where raters compare their assessment of various sample texts to those of more senior HCT Writing Band Descriptor users.

I have been fortunate to be able to count on the cooperation of two colleagues experienced in the use of the HCT Writing Band Descriptors for this study. Both of these raters had attended a standardisation session in the use of the HCT Writing Band Descriptors in the four months previous to the start of the study. These two colleagues very kindly rated the written output of all subjects in taking part in this study at the Pre-Test, Post-Test 1 and Post-Test 2 stages. Obviously, rating was carried out “blind”. Writing scripts for both groups were put together in no particular order and were identified only by student number. Raters were unaware of the treatment which each subject had undergone.

As an additional precaution, the scores awarded by these raters at each stage of the study were fed through the Facets program (V.3.62). This program, which claims to be “ideally suited for essay grading, portfolio assessment and other kinds of judged performances” (Linacre, 1991) is regularly used by the HCT to both
check for and compensate for inconsistencies where large numbers of raters are involved in the assessment of students writing for the purposes of key assessments. Once raters have provided their assessment using the HCT Writing Band Descriptors or a number of "anchor" scripts (usually five), Facets can model the performance of these raters and their "specific amount of leniency or severity" (Linacre, 1991). This allows the program to reach a "fair average" where raters diverge.

In the relatively rare cases where scores differed in this study, the "fair average" provided by this program was taken as the final score.

3.9 Limitations

By far the most serious limitation of this study, as has been recognised in previous chapters but bears repeating here, is the very small sample used. Cohen et al (2000:94-95) indicate that, to claim any reasonable level of reliability when using random sampling in a qualitative study of relatively small cohort such as the Foundations students at AAMC, of which there are 60, one would have to include virtually the whole cohort. While I have attempted to engineer a more representative sample by selective sampling according to writing proficiency levels (see above) I fully recognise that any claims made based on the data produced in this study must be of a highly tentative nature. However, I believe that these tentative results might prove useful in that they might point the way towards hypotheses which could then be tested in at some time in the future in better-resourced studies.

However, there are other possible limitations. Under threats to internal validity, there may be some factors which Cohen et al (2000:126) would list under “History”. Particularly in studies carried out over longer time periods, such as this one, "events other than
the experimental treatments occur during the time between pre-test and post-test observations” (Cohen et al, 2000:126). In the case of this study, I will list two such sets of events.

First of all, certain elements of the language course on which subjects were enrolled may be worth mentioning. Perhaps the most important of these is that input on writing – both on the narrative and other genres – continued in normal class time over the duration of the study. As part of this input, all subjects planned, wrote, received correction coded feedback on and redrafted four pieces of writing. There is some danger that this element of their course might have been responsible for some of the improvement recorded at Post-Test 1 or Post-Test 2.

Secondly, having completed their feedback conferences, all subjects were allowed to keep their text along with the feedback (reformulation or correction code). In essence, then, each subject had six narratives which he had produced and which he could choose to use as a study aid in preparation for Post-Test 2. Subjects were not encouraged to use their collected feedback for the purposes of study or revision. Some subjects may have decided not to avail themselves of this resource (or, indeed, to study at all) in preparation for Post-Tests. However, other more motivated subjects may have found them particularly useful. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility, for example, that some subjects from the reformulation group might have used their reformulated texts to revise extensively before Post-Test 1 or Post-Test 2. Others may have chosen not to. This may have had a considerable effect on their scores in these tests.

Finally, as mentioned in 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6 above, subjects were asked during both the treatment, Pre-Test, Post-Test 1 and Post-Test 2 stages of this study to produce written output under exam conditions and with a 40-minute time limit. The effects of these
constraints on the subjects initial written output at the beginning of each treatment cycle may have been considerable. Had subjects, for example, been allowed time to edit their output before submitting it, they might, as Cohen (1983:19) suggests, have managed to eliminate a number of errors independently, thus, perhaps improving the quality of their texts before these texts underwent coded or reformulated feedback. Such improvements would, inevitably, have affected the feedback they received. Allowing limited time for subjects to produce their initial texts might also have had considerable effect on the nature and quality of planning which took place before and during the writing process. Ellis & Yuan (2005:79) put forward the suggestion that pre-task planning may allow learners to focus on organisational elements of the texts they are about to produce. The time limitations imposed on subjects during treatment and testing in this study may have reduced or eliminated opportunities for pre-task planning. This limitation is explored further in 5.1 below.
Chapter 4  Presentation of Results

As detailed above, the data collection tool used in this study returned scores under the following four headings:

- Communicative Quality and Coherence
- Structural Range and Accuracy
- Lexical Range and Accuracy
- Mechanics

In this section, I will examine the data returned in each of these areas in turn. All scores reported here are HCT Writing Bands (see Appendix 5). Tables detailing scores in all of the above areas at the Pre-Test, Post-Test 1 and Post-Test 2 stages for both Correction Code and Reformulation groups can be found in Appendix 6.

4.1 Communicative Quality and Coherence

Table 4.1.1 and Table 4.1.2 (see Appendix 6) show the scores awarded to both Correction Code and Reformulation groups for this facet of their written output in Pre-Test, Post-Test 1 and Post-Test 2. The majority of students, five subjects in each group, failed to register improvement during either the first or second stage of this study. However, only one subject failed record any improvement in the Communicative Quality and Coherence score awarded to his written output at the end of the entire study. This subject had undergone the reformulation treatment.
Graph 1 illustrates median scores for this particular facet of their written output by both groups. These scores would seem to indicate that, while the correction code + feedback conference treatment is more effective in the short term at improving this facet of student writing, reformulated feedback + feedback conferences seems to have proved considerably more effective in the longer term. The possible reasons for this reversal will be discussed in the next chapter. As in other sections of this chapter and as highlighted in the previous chapter, these conclusions must necessarily be seen as tentative in nature given the sample size used in this study.

An interesting feature of these results is the considerable difference in the range of improvement between the two groups. As mentioned above one subject who had undergone the reformulation + conference treatment failed to show any measurable improvement in this area of his writing. On the other hand, the subject who registered the greatest improvement in this facet of his writing had undergone the same treatment (see Table 4.1.4, Appendix 6). These two ‘outliers’ (Cohen et al, 2000:81) may be anomalies. Without them, the range of improvement for the Reformulation group shows a spread similar to that of the Correction Code group (see Table 4.1.3 and Table 4.1.4, Appendix 6). Given the size of
the sample used here, it is difficult to gauge the significance of the greater range of results returned by the Reformulation group. However, given that this treatment has also returned greater ranges of improvement in other areas of this study, I will explore the possible significance of ranges in the next chapter.

4.2 Structural Range and Accuracy

Scores awarded for Structural Range and Accuracy to both Reformulation and Correction Code groups are shown in Table 4.2.1 and Table 4.2.2 (see Appendix 6). Median gains in Structural Range and Accuracy scores are considerably higher for the Reformulation group than for the Correction Code group (see Graph 2). It may also be significant that over half of the Correction Code group failed to show measurable improvement in this facet of their written production (see Table 4.2.3, Appendix 6). One Reformulation subject also failed to register any gains in his Structural Range and Accuracy scores over the duration of the study (see Table 4.2.4, Appendix 6). This subject is one of the possible outliers mentioned in the previous section. Unexpectedly, five subjects undergoing the correction code + conference treatment...
failed to show measurable improvement in their Structural Range and Accuracy scores.

Again, the range of the improvements shown by Reformulation subjects was greater than that of the Correction Code group (see Table 4.2.3 and Table 4.2.4, Appendix 6). Two subjects from the Reformulation group registered an improvement of two full bands over in Post Test 2 (see Table 4.2.4, Appendix 6). As mentioned above, I will explore the possible significance of this in the next chapter.

4.3 Lexical Range and Accuracy

Median gains in results in the Lexical Range and Accuracy category are presented below in Graph 3. While median scores for both groups fail to show measurable improvement over the first phase of treatment, the Reformulation group outperformed the Correction Code group in the second phase. Two Correction Code subjects failed to register gains in this area over the entire study (see Table 4.3.1, Appendix 6) while one subject from the Reformulation group also failed to show measurable improvement (see Table 4.3.2, Appendix 6).

Once again the range of the improvement registered by the Reformulation group is greater than that registered by the Correction Code group.
4.4 Mechanics

Median gains for both groups in Mechanics are shown in Graph 4 below. Results in this category break the trend established in the previous three sections, with median gains of the Correction Code group slightly higher than those of the Reformulation group. However, as with the previous sections, the range of the improvement registered by Reformulation subjects is greater than that of the Correction Code group (see Table 4.4.3 and Table 4.4.4, Appendix 6).

Once again, this greater range of improvement registered by the Reformulation group may be due to the presence of two outliers, Subject 5 and Subject 7. Subject 7 failed to register any measurable gains in this measure of his writing, while Subject 5 registered a gain of 1.5 bands. It should also be noted here that three subjects in the Correction Code group failed to register any measurable improvement in this area.
4.5 Synthesis and Summary

As mentioned above and as evidenced in the results contained in Appendix 6, median overall gains by the Reformulation group in three of the four areas measured by the HCT writing bands were superior to those of the Correction Code group. However, as mentioned above, the ranges of improvement registered by the Reformulation group were consistently wider than those of the Correction Code group.
Graph 5 and Graph 6 above provide a visual representation of the gains registered under all four measurement criteria by these two groups.

The noticeable absence of any measurable improvement by subject 7 of the Reformulation group is perhaps one of the most striking features of Graph 6. This effectively means that subject 7 is a consistent ‘outlier’ (Cohen et al, 2000:81), increasing the range of improvements registered under each of the four criteria. The significance of this failure to return a measurable improvement is impossible to determine, given the size of this sample. A larger sample might have thrown up more such results, but until this study can be repeated on such a sample, this must remain conjecture. Possible reasons for this apparent failure of the reformulation + conference treatment will be discussed in the next chapter. At the other extreme, three subjects, Subject 5, Subject 6 and Subject 8 posted strong performances under some of the criteria used.

The Correction Code group also presents a somewhat gap-toothed profile (see Graph 5 above). While all subjects managed to register gains under at least one measurement criterion, it would seem that this treatment produced patchy results in certain areas, particularly
Structural Range and Accuracy, where only three subjects from this group managed to post measurable gains. Ranges of improvement across the board are narrower than those of the Reformulation group. Subject 2 of the Correction Code group stands out as having registered gains in Communicative Quality and Coherence and Structural Range and Accuracy which are exceptional for the group. However, this same subject failed to register improvement under either of the other two measures.

While Graph 5 and Graph 6 are designed to provide an overview of the gains registered by these two groups, they also serve to highlight the small size of the sample used in this study. As has been pointed out elsewhere in this paper, this limitation precludes the possibility of drawing firm conclusions. However, in the next chapter, I will look at these results and at the performance of individual subjects so as to draw some tentative conclusions as to the effectiveness of reformulation and feedback conferences.
Similarly to Allwright et al, this relatively modest study seems to suggest that feedback strategies including reformulation of students’ written output followed by discussion of the changes made to students’ output seems to work reasonably successfully (Allwright et al, 1988:19), although the scale of the research reported here, along with other limitations discussed in the previous chapter make it impossible to draw firm conclusions. Again, as Allwright et al suggest (1988:1), studies in this area may be of more value where they focus on how this feedback strategy works rather attempting to provide categorical proof of its superiority. From the outset, this has been the aim of the study reported here.

I will attempt in this chapter to explore possible explanations which might account for some of the results reported in Chapter 4.

5.1 Communicative Quality and Coherence

In chapter 2 of this paper, I quote Hyland (2004:132) who speculates that ‘representative samples of the target genre ….. [can]….. sensitize students to generic structure’. As I mention in Chapter 3, during their writing classes, all subjects were exposed to and led to analyse model texts which conformed to a relatively simple, 4-stage narrative structure proposed by Hyland (2004:33)(see below).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>Gives information about characters’ situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complication</td>
<td>Presents one or more problems for characters to solve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Evaluates the major events for the characters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution</td>
<td>Sorts out problems for the characters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reformulations of subjects’ texts during treatment provided learners with further models of this structure, while subjects in the Correction Code group were provided with comments designed to make them consider changes and improvements to their texts (see Appendix 3). This difference in the feedback on organisation and generic structure might reasonably be expected to lead to a perceptible difference in the way subjects from the two groups organised and paragraphed their texts at the Post-Test 2 stage.

Differences in generic structure and paragraphing would register in the scores awarded to subjects under the Communicative Quality and Coherence category. The HCT Writing Band Descriptors list paragraphing as one of the key competencies to be considered when awarding grades in the area of Communicative Quality and Coherence. While not explicitly mentioned in the HCT Writing Band Descriptors, the importance of paragraphing is highlighted in the accompanying training manual and highlighted at banding standardisation sessions;

From band 5 or 6, there should be evidence of textual organisation such as paragraphing, and the use of topic sentences (i.e. first or last sentences in a paragraph that describe its purpose) e.g. These are the reasons the company was not a success. Firstly,...
At lower bands, however, acceptable textual organisation refers, at band 3, to simple sentences, at band 4, a single paragraph, and a multi-paragraph document at band 5.

*HCT Language Assessment: Writing, 2005:6*

Subject 5 – Reformulation Group

In the morning we went to the airport. As soon as we arrived we picked up our bags. Then we walked inside airport shops because my friend Ahmed want to buy digital camera. We found a wonderful Camera and it was cheap. So he decided to buy one. After buying camera we went into plane.

Subject 2 – Correction Code Group

In first day I stayed at home to feel relax and softball so I spent a lot of time in my bed. In second day my friend asked me to go to kabul for shopping so I called my friends to with me.

Subject 3 – Reformulation Group

In the morning I went to the supermarket to buy a ticket and flags for my car. After that I called my friends Ahmed, Mahomad, Hadi and I had to meet me at the Kables restaurant. Then we decided to go to down town to enjoy the celebration there and to have funny times to see some hows drive the cars by two wheels.

*Fig 5*

Texts produced at Pre-Test by all subjects taking part in this study were of one paragraph only. The importance of paragraphing and the use of topic sentences was, obviously, highlighted in input during the course. While all subjects produced multi-paragraph texts at the Post-Test 2 stage of this study, the two groups showed
remarkable similarity in their approaches to paragraphing. The number of paragraphs produced ranged from 3 to 5 with neither group producing significantly more or fewer than the other. All subjects chose to paragraph their texts chronologically at the Post-Test 2 stage, generally using a time marker in the topic sentence to indicate the topic of the paragraph (see Fig 5 above for examples).

All subjects, then, chose a relatively simplistic chronological structure for their output at the Post-Test 2 stage and used paragraphing to divide their texts chronologically. No attempts were made to organise texts along the lines suggested by models these subjects had analysed in class or, in the case of the Reformulation Group, seen in their reformulated texts. One possible reason for this may be the conditions under which these texts were produced. Texts produced for this study at the Pre-Test, Post-Test 1 and Post-Test 2 stages were all completed under exam conditions in 40 minutes. Texts produced by subjects from both groups for later feedback and discussion were also produced under these conditions. This factor may have been responsible for depriving subjects from both groups of the chance to apply the narrative structure which they had explored in input. Ellis & Yuan (2005:79) speculate that “pretask planning assists internal goal setting,” and may help learners to explore “the rhetorical organization of the text to be produced”. While the option of spending some time on pre-task planning before producing their texts was open to all subjects, they were given no encouragement or reminders to do so. It is impossible to be certain how much time each subject spent on pre-task planning but it seems likely that, given time pressures, these students may have limited themselves to some “on-line” planning or “editing and correcting actual textual output” (Ellis & Yuan, 2005:79). Ellis & Yuan (2005:78) report that students allowed time for pre-task planning of narratives reported engaging in “rhetorical and content planning”. It is entirely possible that, in removing the
opportunity for these subjects to engage in pre-task planning, this study has actively discouraged them from applying the structure of a narrative genre to which they had been exposed during input and, in the case of the Reformulation Group, during feedback.

5.2 Structural Range and Accuracy

As explored in Chapter 2 above, there is considerable controversy surrounding the value of feedback on grammatical form. The argument that ‘grammar correction is not helpful and may be harmful’ (Truscott, 1996:356) is not without support. Truscott (1996:354-355) cites sources who have found that grammar correction, while popular with students, can cause them to lose motivation and to “shorten and simplify their writing in order to avoid corrections”. Goring-Kepner (1991:310) claims that error-correction coupled with rule reminders are “ineffective for promoting the development of writing proficiency in the L2” in learners of both higher and lower levels of proficiency.

On the other hand, as mentioned in Chapter 2, reformulated feedback is postulated to provide an environment which allows learners to ‘notice the gap’ and to focus on those differences which they can identify and process (Thornbury, 1997:328). The benefits may, however, depend on factors such as language proficiency (Williams, 2001:333-334; Qi & Lapkin, 2001:295), learning style (Cohen, 1983:9) or the amount of training or assistance given to the learners to help them use reformulations effectively (Cohen, 1983:9; Qi & Lapkin, 2001:296).

As detailed in Chapter 4 above, median improvements in the area of Structural Range and Accuracy were significantly greater among the subjects in the Reformulation group. In an effort to explore further the nature of the effect which reformulation and feedback
conferences have had, I have examined learners’ output at the Post-Test 2 stage. This examination initially involved a straightforward count of the verb forms contained in these texts. Verb forms included Past Simple forms (affirmative and negative), Past Perfect forms (only affirmative examples were found), Present Simple forms (affirmative and negative), the “infinitive of purpose” form and present participle forms following “After” and “Before”. Misspelt verb forms were counted as correct if all consonants were present and in the correct order, as this generally allowed for easy recognition. I deemed verb forms to be incorrect if a verb tense was used which appeared unsuitable to the meaning, there were errors in subject/verb agreement or an incorrect participle was used (eg. “After go to the cinema,”). Missing verbs (eg. “I really amazed when I saw the fireworks.”) and the unnecessary insertion of verbs (eg. “I’m with my family decided to spend the holiday outside…”) were counted as individual errors. The results are shown below in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1 and Table 2 indicate that mean numbers of verbs correctly rendered are higher for the Reformulation Group, as are the errors in verb forms, although the difference does not seem significant. However, other differences between the output of the two groups at Post-Test 2 may be indicative of significant differences. If the results shown in Table 1 and Table 2 have any significance, it may be that they would seem to indicate that the reformulation + feedback conference treatment does not seem to have caused subjects in the Reformulation Group to become any less accurate in their verb forms than their peers in the Correction Code Group, who received targeted, coded feedback in this area for the duration of the study.
Fig 6 below shows attempts, not all successful, by subjects from the Reformulation Group to include subordinate defining or non-defining relative clauses in their texts at the Post-Test 2 stage. Such structures represent one way of constructing the "complex sentences" necessary to achieve band 6 or above in the Structural Verb counts of subjects’ written output at Post-Test 2 stage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correction Code Group – (n=8)</th>
<th>Correctly rendered verbs</th>
<th>Correctly rendered verbs - without repetitions</th>
<th>Incorrectly rendered verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject 1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject 2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject 3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject 4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject 5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject 6</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject 7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject 8</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
<td><strong>26.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>18.25</strong></td>
<td><strong>8.125</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reformulation Group – (n=8)</th>
<th>Correctly rendered verbs</th>
<th>Correctly rendered verbs - without repetitions</th>
<th>Incorrectly rendered verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject 1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject 2</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject 3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject 4</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject 5</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject 6</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject 7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject 8</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
<td><strong>30.375</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td><strong>8.375</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2**

Verb counts of subjects’ written output at Post-Test 2 stage
Range and Accuracy section of the HCT Writing Band Descriptors (see Appendix 5) Interestingly, the entire output of the Correction Code Group at the Post Test 2 stage contains only one such attempt (see Fig 7). While these few examples fall far short of conclusive proof, they are in keeping with the findings of Sheppard (1992:107) that coded feedback on form may cause learners to avoid subordination.

Post Test 2 - Subject 1, Reformulation Group
had the lunch in hotel restaurant. Although we were tired we went for walk near the place where we lived near.There are lot of shops.

Post Test 2 - Subject 3, Reformulation Group
On the afternoon my friends and I decided to have lunch in Al Ain Mall. While we had a lunch we saw a boy drawing a national flag by oil colours. After finishing our lunch we bought the picture that the boy drew it after.

Post Test 2 - Subject 2, Reformulation Group
The next day we got up early morning and we felt much energy so we had a special breakfast it was the most delicious breakfast ever.

Post Test 2 - Subject 7, Reformulation Group
Last two weeks, all the UAE residents were having a holiday which was the National day. The students

Post Test 2 - Subject 7, Reformulation Group
with my family. Some of my relatives came to visit my grandmother. My father and I took them to see Habbal which is a nice place now in Jeddah.

It isn't far from home. When they left,
5.3 Lexical Range and Accuracy

Studies which address the effectiveness of reformulated feedback in promoting acquisition of lexis have returned somewhat conflicting results. Results of questionnaires administered to students who had undergone a program of writing with reconstructed feedback (where reformulation is carried out at sentence level rather than text level) seem to suggest that these learners believe “noticing the gap” can be of some help to them in promoting their acquisition of lexis, although they would seem to believe that it is more effective in helping to improve their grammar (Myers 1997:16). However, there would seem to be some support for the theory that reformulated text might prove effective in helping learners to expand their vocabulary. Learner-initiated noticing tends to focus overwhelmingly on lexis rather than form or mechanics (Williams, 2001:338). Hanaoka (2007:466) found that learners examining reformulations of their own writing also focused more on lexis, noticing words they “had wanted but had been unable to use or address by alternative forms”.

Nation (2005:49) reminds EFL practitioners that they “need to see learning any particular word as being a cumulative process where knowledge is built up over a series of varied meetings with the word.” This repeated exposure is not guaranteed even where learners regularly receive reformulated feedback. Moreover, given
that the lexis used in learners’ output is dictated largely by the requirements of the task and the learners’ approach to it, there would seem to be no guarantee that lexical items noticed in reformulated feedback would appear in subsequent texts produced by learners.

However, an examination of the texts and reformulations from the various treatment cycles alongside the written output collected at the Post-Test 2 stage would seem to indicate that reformulated feedback may have had an effect on the lexical choices made by some subjects in the Reformulation Group. Fig 8 and Fig 9 below, for example, seem to indicate the inclusion in Post-Test 2 output of items “noticed” in reformulated feedback during treatment stages. These and other such instances would seem to pose some interesting questions. As no records of feedback conferences conducted as part of treatment during this study were kept, it is impossible to tell if these possible instances of noticing were initiated by the subjects or prompted during interaction with the teacher. In either case, one instance of noticing several weeks before the Post-Test 2 stage of this study would seem unlikely to lead to acquisition and subsequent production. It may be that these initial instances of noticing caused subjects to pay attention to the same items when they encountered them in subsequent classwork. Another distinct possibility is that some subjects chose to use the reformulations given to them during the various treatment phases as study aids to prepare for Post Test 2.

Fig 8 and Fig 9 above are of interest for another reason. Fig 9 shows tracts of text produced by Subject 5 of the Reformulation Group, whose gains in the Lexical Range and Accuracy category were higher than those of any other subject in the study. Fig 8, on the other hand, reproduces some of the written output of Subject 7 of the same group, whose output in Post Test 2 failed to register any measurable improvement in this area, or in any of the other
three areas measured in this study. They are reproduced here as a reminder that the failure of some subjects in this study to show measurable gains in this or other areas does not necessarily mean that the output of these subjects failed completely to respond to feedback or instruction.

Reformulation Group - Subject 7
Original written output - treatment cycle 5

*My opinion when have a test or exam
I should study hard and sleep early.*

Reformulation Group - Subject 7
Reformulated feedback; treatment cycle 5

repeat the whole test two weeks later.

I learnt that it’s important to study hard for tests and exams but that it’s also important to **go to bed early** the day before.

Reformulation Group - Subject 7
Post Test 2

*In the second day, we went to shops in London to bought clothes and gifts for my grand father and my friend. So I bought watch for my friend and I bought candle for my grand father. We spend all day walking and shopping and we went to be early to come back to WAS in the morning.*

Fig 8
5.4 Mechanics

This area of written output, which includes punctuation and spelling, is the one area in this study in which the improvements made by the Correction Code Group were greater than those of the Reformulation Group (see Chapter 4).

A number of factors may have contributed to the failure of the reformulation + conference treatment to cause improvements
comparable to those of the correction code + conference treatment. Firstly, as mentioned above in 5.3 above, learner initiated attention to form would seem to focus on unknown lexis first and foremost (Williams, 2001:338, Hanaoka 2007:466). Williams theorises that learners’ failure to focus on morphosyntactic features to the same degree as lexis may be because these elements “lack salience and are not essential for comprehending or making meaning” (Williams, 2001:388). The issue of salience and its importance in the feedback process is again highlighted in Rob et al (1986:91) who suggests that simply indicating the location of learners’ errors using a highlighter (i.e. making these errors perceptually salient) may be equally or more effective than other feedback mechanisms such as direct feedback, notes in the margins of learners’ texts or coded feedback. If the issue of perceptual salience is significant in determining what is noticed during feedback, it may then be the case that differences in spelling and punctuation between a learner’s initial output and a reformulation of that output simply do not draw the learner’s attention in the same way that new lexis or altered grammatical forms do.

However, it cannot be claimed that subjects in the Reformulation Group simply were completely oblivious to the changes in punctuation and spelling which had been included in reformulations of their output. The feedback conferences which came at the end of each treatment phase were designed, to some extent, to ensure that learners were led to pay attention to major differences between their own text and the reformulation. A short section of each conference was dedicated to mechanics and learners were asked to indicate differences in spelling and punctuation between their own text and the reformulation they had been given. As these conferences were part of treatment and not designed as data collection tools, they were not recorded or transcribed. The proportion of each conference spent discussing issues of cohesion,
grammar, lexis, spelling and punctuation was not recorded. However, it is possible that the relative ineffectiveness of the reformulation + conference treatment to improve students’ output in spelling and punctuation may be due in part to the amount of time spent discussing these issues in feedback conferences. Watanabe & Swain (2007:138) found that when learners discuss the differences between their output and reformulations ‘the amount of time spent explaining correlates highly with the amount learned’. It may simply be the case that learners were pushed to spend more time and effort exploring grammatical and lexical differences between their output and the reformulation. Such exploration would include examining form and meaning in the case of grammatical structures and, in the case of lexical differences, part of speech, meaning, style and collocation. This time spent talking about grammatical and lexical items may have been important in initiating learning. On the other hand, episodes of noticing involving orthographical and punctuation errors may have been more perfunctory or demanded less effort on the part of the subjects in this group.

Finally, as mentioned in the previous section on lexis, the issue of how learners made subsequent use of their feedback may be significant here. Those subjects who received coded corrections on their output collected, over the course of the study, six narratives produced by themselves in which lexical, grammatical, orthographical and punctuation errors had been made perceptually salient using a highlighter pen and coded. On the other hand, subjects in the Reformulation Group collected six reformulations of their six narratives. If, as I suggest above, some subjects in this study may have used their feedback as study aids to prepare for Post-Test 2, the effect of visual salience identified by Robb et al (1986:91) may have caused learners in the Correction Code group
to focus more on their spelling and punctuation errors than those subjects who had received reformulated feedback.

5.5 Feedback Conferences and ZPD

As mentioned in Chapter 3, one reason for including feedback conferences in this study was to compensate in some measure for the fact that all subjects were familiar with highlighted, coded feedback but completely unfamiliar with reformulated feedback. These conferences were intended to provide a framework which would support subjects within the Reformulation Group as they tried to come to grips with an unfamiliar feedback format, a measure recommended by Cohen (1983:19). In the case of the Correction Code group, the role of these feedback conferences was to remove the potential ambiguities and misunderstandings often inherent in coded feedback (Ferris, 1995:49).

As a framework for feedback conferences, I chose to use the regulatory scale proposed by Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994:471) reproduced below.

0. Tutor asks the learner to read, find the error and correct them independently, prior to the tutorial.
1. Construction of a ‘collaborative frame’* prompted by the tutor as a potential dialogic partner.
2. Prompted or focused reading of the sentence that contains the error by the learner or the tutor.
3. Tutor indicates that something may be wrong in a segment (e.g. sentence, clause, line): ‘Is there anything wrong in this sentence?’
4. Tutor rejects unsuccessful attempts at recognising the error.
5. Tutor narrows down the location of the error (e.g. tutor repeats or points to the specific segment which contains the error).
6. Tutor indicates the nature of the error, but tries not to identify the error (e.g. ‘There is something wrong with the tense marking here.’).
7. Tutor identifies the error (‘You can’t use an auxiliary here’).
8. Tutor rejects learner’s unsuccessful attempts at correcting the error.
9. Tutor provides clues to help the learner arrive at the correct form (e.g. ‘It is not really past but something that is still going on’).
10. Tutor provides the correct form.
11. Tutor provides some explanation for use of the correct form.
12. Tutor provides examples of the correct pattern when other forms of help fail to produce an appropriate responsive action.

* A collaborative frame refers to the collaborative setting constructed between the tutor and the learner as the tutor is introduced into the situation as a potential collaborative partner.
This scale, which moves from implicit to explicit, provides a collaborative frame which can be used to regulate learner-teacher interaction during feedback with the objective of co-constructing “a zone of proximal development in which feedback as regulation becomes relevant and can therefore be appropriated by learners to modify their interlanguage system” (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994:480). This same scale was used by Nassaji & Swain in their study comparing the effectiveness of feedback targeting the ZPD with randomised feedback, in which they found that “the ZPD student exhibited consistent growth over time”, eventually outperforming the non-ZPD subject in accuracy in the use of articles (Nassaji & Swain, 2000:48). Nassaji & Swain (2000:49) did, however, find that randomised feedback which made no attempt to find or work within the learners ZPD could also have some beneficial effect, particularly when this feedback was explicit in nature.

In Chapter 3, I briefly explored the effect which both reformulation and correction code treatments might have on feedback conferences attempting to use the above 13-point regulatory scale to ensure that feedback was delivered within the subject’s ZPD. Reformulated feedback left subjects’ original texts untouched, allowing for a more complete use of both implicit and explicit intervention, as detailed in the regulatory scale above. On the other hand, feedback conferences with subjects from the Correction Code Group were limited to the more explicit types of intervention (numbers 7 – 12 in the regulatory scale above) because errors had already been highlighted and coded.

The effects of these two types of feedback on the conferences which followed them became apparent in the early stages of this study, during initial piloting of feedback conferences. I believe these effects provide the clearest indicator of the essential difference between these two types of feedback.
On the one hand, highlighted and coded feedback, which makes the location and nature of the error explicit from the outset, would seem to cast both learner and teacher in a more limited role. The learner is deprived of the opportunity to identify and repair, with or without guidance from the teacher, errors which (s)he might be capable of rectifying with minimal support. The teacher is put into the position where (s)he immediately provides a considerable level of support, regardless of the needs of the learner. As mentioned above, Nassaji & Swain (2000:49) point out that feedback which is generally more explicit can have beneficial effects. Ferris & Roberts (2001:161) found that learners whose errors were highlighted managed to self-edit their output more effectively than learners who received not indication of the location or nature of their errors. However, in a longitudinal study previously mentioned in this paper, Robb et al, (1986:89-91) make only the modest claim that error correction is equally effective in the long term whether it involves direct feedback, coded feedback or simply highlighted feedback and that the possible negative effects of this form of feedback on fluency development may be “offset by the practice effect arising from weekly writing assignments”.

In contrast, reformulated feedback by its very nature allowed for the full use of Aljaafreh & Lantolf’s regulatory scale, permitting feedback to be “negotiated between the learner and the teacher” and “provided at the right point or within the learner’s zone of proximal development” (Nassaji and Swain, 2000:36).

This key difference between coded and reformulated feedback may be highly significant. Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994:480) put forward the theory that “other repair may inhibit, or at least retard, the development of self-repair”. They claim that “as implicit forms of feedback become more relevant, and explicit forms become less relevant in regulating the novice’s corrective behavior, by implication, novices assume increased control over their linguistic
activity in the L2" (Aljaafreh and Lantolf 1994:480). Graphs tracking progress in the four areas dealt with in this study (see Chapter 3) show median scores after the first and second phases of this study. The Reformulation Group showed progress in phase 2 which was equal (in Structural Range and Accuracy) or superior (in all other areas) to their progress in phase 1. This is not true of the Correction Code Group, whose median score in two of the areas measured failed to improve at all in phase 2. The reason for this difference is impossible to ascertain given the design of this study. I have hypothesised above that this difference might be due, in some part, to the possible use of reformulated feedback as a study aid in preparation for the exam. However, an alternative hypothesis might be that regular reformulated feedback coupled with feedback conferences had the affect of helping some subjects in the Reformulation Group to “assume increased control over their linguistic activity in the L2" (Aljaafreh and Lantolf 1994:480) with attendant improvements in their written output. Future research might usefully include interviews with subjects and/or pre and post study language proficiency tests as data collection tools in order to further explore this area.

5.6 Ranges of Improvement

In presenting my results in the previous chapter, I mentioned that the ranges of improvement returned by the Reformulation Group were broader in all areas than those of the Correction Code Group. I mentioned the presence of possible ‘outliers’ (Cohen et al, 2000:81) in the Reformulation Group. I would like to briefly explore this area further here before presenting final conclusions and implications.
Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reformulation Group - (n=8)</th>
<th>Correction Code Group - (n=8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structural Range and Accuracy – Gains over the course of the study</td>
<td>Structural Range and Accuracy – Gains over the course of the study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading scores collected before Pre-Test</td>
<td>Reading scores collected before Pre-Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject 3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject 7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject 4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject 2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject 6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject 1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject 5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject 8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td>$R^2$=0.7336</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3, above, shows Spearman rank correlation coefficients between gains in Structural Range and Accuracy Scores over the course of this study and scores obtained in the pre-study Reading test for both groups. This correlation would seem to be considerably stronger in the case of the Reformulation Group than in the case of the Correction Code Group.

I should mention from the outset that this study was not designed to explore correlations. This is evident from the research question, the failure to collect more comprehensive information about the language levels/preferred learning styles of the subjects for the purposes of correlation, and the fact that I have chosen a sample size which is deemed by many to be insufficient for correlational research (Cohen et al, 2000:93).

It is also important to note that correlation does not indicate causality (Cohen et al, 2000:116). There may be other factors in the background, such as the language proficiency, metalinguistic knowledge or learning styles of the Reformulation Group subjects which cause this possible relationship between reading proficiency...
and gains in Structural Range and Accuracy over the course of this study.

However, the correlations in the Table 3 suggest that, at least in the area of grammatical range and accuracy, some learners may benefit considerably more from reformulated feedback followed by feedback conferences than others, and that it may be possible to predict, to some extent, the effectiveness of this feedback treatment and the learners who might benefit most from it. Possible predictors, as mentioned above, might be language proficiency, metalinguistic knowledge, learning styles or motivation.

This area is mentioned here purely in order to present another possible reason for the wider ranges of improvement recorded by the Reformulation Group. I will revisit this point in the next chapter when discussing implications for future research.
Chapter 6 Conclusions and Implications

In this final chapter, I will briefly summarize my conclusions before examining implications for both classroom practice and future research. However, before drawing conclusions here, I would like to include one final reminder of the limitations of this study, previously discussed in Chapter 3. The most significant of these, as mentioned before, is the small sample size which I have, for reasons of limited resources, been forced to use. This limitation, as discussed previously, precludes the possibility of firm conclusions or claims of incontrovertible proof. The following conclusions, then, must be taken of indications of the effects of reformulated feedback used in tandem with feedback conferences, rather than conclusive proof of these effects.

6.1 Conclusions

As indicated in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, reformulated feedback followed by one-to-one feedback conferences which attempted to scaffold subjects’ comparisons of their original output with a reformulation seem, in this study, to have proved more effective than highlighted and coded feedback with feedback conferences in the areas identified in the HCT Writing Band Descriptors as Communicative Quality and Coherence, Structural Range and Accuracy and Lexical Range and Accuracy. Coded feedback with subsequent conferences would seem to have had a more beneficial effect in the area of spelling and punctuation over the course of this study.

Reformulation followed by feedback conferences seems to have led to improved median Communicative Quality and Coherence scores, although the choice to have subjects produce writing under exam conditions during treatment, Post-Test 1 and Post-Test 2 may
account to some extent for the failure of subjects to take on board the generic narrative structure exemplified during input and in the reformulations given to the Reformulation Group. This point is discussed further below.

Again, in the area of Structural Range and Accuracy, there are indications that the reformulated feedback followed by conferences may be more effective in improving learners’ written output over time than coded feedback and conferences. This result is interesting in light of a recent study by Sachs and Polilo (2007:85) which found that coded feedback allowed learners to revise their written output more accurately. The study described in this paper has produced no data to suggest that coded feedback followed by conferences is more effective in improving grammatical accuracy over time than reformulation followed by conferences. If anything, the higher median scores of the Reformulation Group would suggest that reformulated feedback followed by conferences may be more effective in promoting grammatical accuracy over time, although a study conducted on a larger scale would be necessary to determine whether these benefits are limited to a relatively small proportion of learners or the majority. An examination of the texts produced at the Post-Test 2 stage of this study would also seem to lend some support to the findings of Goring-Kepner (1995:309) and Sheppard (1992:107) that coded feedback may cause some learners to avoid subordination. This study can not hope to present conclusive proof of this, however, due to the absence of a true control group with which the Reformulation and Correction Code groups might be compared.

In the area of Lexical Range and Accuracy, median gains would seem to indicate that the reformulation + conference treatment is more effective in helping learners to achieve gains in their written output over time. Once again, the size of the sample used here makes this conclusion a highly tentative one, and indeed higher
median gains in this area would seem to hinge on the performance of one or two subjects in the Reformulation Group. A larger study would be needed to determine if the reformulation + conference treatment benefited a significant proportion of learners and indeed which learners benefited most from this treatment. This point is discussed further in the Implications for Further Research section below. An examination of the output of the Reformulation Group at the Post-Test 2 stage would also seem to indicate that some subjects may have managed to assimilate lexical elements of their reformulated language into their own interlanguage. However, the mechanism by which this might have happened is unclear from this study and further investigation would be necessary to discover exactly how reformulated feedback + conferences may have led to the acquisition of new lexis.

The area of Mechanics is the only one in which the reformulation + conference treatment seems to have led to lower gains than coded feedback followed by conferences. As mentioned above in Chapter 5, the reasons for this are unclear. Possible explanations include the fact that highlighted, coded feedback may make errors of spelling and punctuation more perceptually salient to learners, which may lead to improvements over time. Another possibility is that subjects in this study may have used their feedback as a study aid in preparation for Post Test 2, in which case the highlighting of errors in this area may have made subjects from the Correction Code group more conscious of the importance of orthographical and punctuation errors than their peers in the Reformulation Group. Finally, the nature of the interaction focusing on errors in this area in feedback conferences may have meant that less time was spent discussing individual errors in punctuation and spelling, which in turn may have led to less effective learning (Watanabe & Swain 2007:138).
6.2 Implications for Classroom Practice

I have highlighted throughout this paper the fact that, due to the limited resources at my disposal, I have been forced to conduct this study on a much smaller sample than I would have liked. The issue of resources is important. The process of reformulating is a time-consuming one for the writing teacher and individual teacher-student feedback conferences would seem impractical in many teaching and learning contexts for the same reason. Factors such as learner preference, learning styles and levels of language proficiency may also influence the effectiveness of reformulation as a feedback mechanism. These issues, discussed further below, have not been explored in great depth in this study. Indeed, as emphasised in this paper, the study I have conducted offers only tentative indications of the possible effects over time of reformulation and feedback conferences on learners' written output. For these reasons, it is difficult and perhaps unwise to suggest categorical implications for classroom practice. However, I will lay out below a number of issues highlighted by this study which are of relevance for classroom practitioners.

Firstly, the research described in this paper is not designed to disentangle the effects of coded or reformulated feedback from the conferences which followed them. However, there would seem to be considerable evidence from previous studies supporting the need for interaction and discussion as part of the feedback process. As mentioned in Chapter 2, learners often fail to understand the feedback on their written output (Ferris, 1995:47; Zamel, 1985:79). Particularly where reformulated feedback is used, assistance in the interpretation of their errors may be desirable (Cohen, 1983:17). Indeed, it may be the case that the process of language acquisition occurs during such discussions (Watanabe & Swain, 2007:139). However, this interaction may not necessarily need to take place between teacher and student. Peer discussions of feedback on
writing may prove a more practical, less resource-heavy and perhaps equally effective alternative to the teacher-student feedback suggested by the study reported here (Watanabe & Swain, 2007:139), although longitudinal studies in this area would be advisable to test this hypothesis.

Secondly, while the study described here fails to provide incontrovertible proof of the superiority of reformulation, it may help to dispel the fear that a move to reformulated feedback represents an unreasonable risk which might prejudice the development of learners’ written output. Highlighted and metalinguistically coded feedback on learners’ writing may represent the “status quo” in many teaching and learning contexts, as indeed is the case at AAMC. However, this study has provided tentative indications that, at least in the case of some learners, greater gains can be made in the areas of coherence, grammatical accuracy and range and lexical accuracy and range by providing reformulated feedback followed by conferences. These benefits may be dependent on various learner characteristics, as discussed below. It would seem possible, however, that reformulated feedback followed by conferences may provide a better forum for the scaffolding of learning and offer more opportunities for some learners to assume control over their own development, as discussed in Chapter 5 above.

Cohen (1983:19) speculates, the value of reformulation as a feedback mechanism is dependent on certain learner characteristics then further research is needed in this area, as discussed below. However, there may be an argument for allowing learners to choose the form which feedback on their writing should take (Cohen 1983:19). This might allow those learners who, because of language proficiency, learning style or motivation, find reformulated feedback more effective to “self select”, reducing the workload on
the teacher and targeting those learners for whom reformulation might be most effective.

Another possibility is the incorporation into the repertoire of the writing teacher of activities which may have some of the inherent benefits of reformulated feedback but do not demand the same resources in terms of time. One such possibility is the technique suggested by (Badger & Goodith White, 2000:159) which allows learners to attempt a new writing genre or part thereof before comparing their initial attempt to a model. While this technique does not allow for direct comparison between a learner’s interlanguage and a native-like equivalent, it would seem to provide a forum within which learners might be led to discuss structures, lexis and the organisational features of the model text and how these compare to learners’ own initial attempts.

6.3 Implications for Future Research

The tentative results described in this study can only be confirmed or disproved by repeating this study with a much larger sample. However, apart from this obvious implication, I have mentioned a number of areas in this paper which might prove the bases for future research.

As mentioned above, this study has not included a true control group, a criticism which Truscott (1996:341) levels at a number of studies. In the absence of a group who received no feedback, one is in fact comparing two treatments against each other. The danger of this approach, as Truscott (1996:339) puts it is that when comparing two feedback mechanisms “better than’ could just as well mean ‘less harmful than’”. While it might be difficult to arrange longitudinal studies during which some learners would take part in class work and produce the same texts as their peers but receive no
feedback, such a study would give a clearer idea of the effects of reformulation over time.

Studies which disentangled the reformulation treatment from feedback conferences of various kinds might also be of use. Cohen (1983:19) in his early investigations into this area suggests that learners may need help from the teacher in comparing their output to the reformulated version. Studies investigating the nature which this help might usefully take could be of considerable value. As mentioned in the previous sections, Watanabe & Swain (2007:138) found that learning occurs in peer discussion of reformulated feedback but that language proficiency levels may influence the effectiveness of this technique. I have hypothesised in Chapter 5 above that teacher-learner conferences based around reformulated feedback may prove a much more suitable forum for scaffolding, given that they allow for the level of support to be tailored to the needs of the learner. Is this also true of peer conferences which examine reformulated feedback? What affect might such conferences have over time on students’ written output?

Future studies in this area might also wish to consider the best approach to eliciting written output for later reformulation. As mentioned in Chapter 5, the fact that texts for reformulation were produced under exam conditions in this study may have interfered with the planning process and induced organisational problems which might not otherwise have been present. Perhaps as Cohen (1983:20) suggests, it might be preferable to allow learners to plan, edit and redraft their output before reformulation takes place. In this way, students might be able to weed out those errors which they were capable of correcting independently.

Watanabe & Swain (2007:138) speculate that there may be a link between levels of language proficiency, “affective aspects” and the effectiveness of feedback conferences. Cohen (1983:19)
speculates that reformulation may be of greater benefit to “monitor users”. Other studies suggest that levels of language proficiency may influence the quality of noticing which takes place as learners compare their own output with reformulations (Qi and Lapkin, 2001:277). There would seem, then, to be a number of possible factors which might influence the successfulness of reformulation and feedback conferences. I have speculated in the previous chapter that the wide variations in improvements registered by the Reformulation Group in this study may not be entirely random, and may indeed correlate to some other factor, such as language proficiency, reading proficiency or preferred learning style. However, this study did not set out to examine the factors which might cause such variation, and factors such as sample size make correlation unreliable. Future studies might usefully choose to collect much more information about subjects before starting treatment. Such information might include preferred learning style, language proficiency level, reading proficiency level, levels of metalinguistic knowledge, attitudes towards feedback and levels of motivation. It would seem highly possible that some of these factors may influence the effectiveness of reformulated feedback and feedback conferences, at least in the area of grammatical range and accuracy, as hinted at by the results of this study, and possibly in other areas of writing. Attempts to find correlations between the factors mentioned above and improvements in learners’ written output over a longitudinal study incorporating reformulation, feedback conferences or both might produce some interesting results.

Finally, I have speculated in the previous chapter that learners may have decided to use their reformulated feedback in different ways. A relatively simple post-study interview might have shed more light on how exactly learners chose to take advantage of reformulated feedback. Did they return to their reformulations and use them as
study aids before tests, for example? Did they choose to pick lexical or grammatical elements from their reformulations and “try them out” in subsequent writing? The answers to these questions might be interesting in their own right, but might also prove to shed further light on how reformulation could help learners improve their written output.
References


### Appendix 1 Teacher – Student Conference Matrix

**What type of writing are you going to talk about with your teacher?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Writing</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a description of a routine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a past narrative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a description of a place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a comparison of two things</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a essay giving your opinion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a description of a person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Organisation**

Are you happy with your paragraphs? If not, how can you improve the way you make paragraphs?

Are you happy with the words you use to link your ideas together? What would you like to change?

**Grammar**

What are the most common grammar problems in this writing?

What questions would you like to ask about grammar?

**Vocabulary**

Are there any places where you used the wrong word in this writing? Do you understand why it was wrong?

**Mechanics**

Do you have any problems with punctuation? Do you understand why your punctuation wasn’t correct?

What spelling problems did you have? Are there any spelling rules or patterns that can help you to remember the correct spelling?
Appendix 2

An Example of Reformulated Feedback

Last summer, I had two weeks off. I didn’t have anything to do so I got really bored. I decided to take a trip to Dubai to pass the time and do some shopping. I live in Al Ain so it takes at least two hours to drive there.

I left home at 8:00am after having a light breakfast. At first, I felt really relaxed but I always get angry when I drive in Dubai because the traffic is really heavy and you get stuck for hours.

Things improved when I got into the city centre. I visited the museum and I really enjoyed it. It’s a great place to learn about the history of the UAE. I also had a nice time at the shops and I got everything I wanted. I bought some new sandals and a great new mobile phone so I was quite happy when I left the city to come home.

Next time I go to Dubai, I think I’ll take more money. It’s a great place for shopping but the prices are quite high.
A couple months ago, me and my family decided to have a short trip to Dubai so we started to get some staff, such as food, drinks, and equipments. We hoped this trip was going to be wonderful one.

In the morning, we got up early so we started to get ready for the trip. We began to move and we were so excited for that. The trip usually takes about one hour. However, it took three hours with us and that's what made this trip become a bad one. That started when we were in the middle of the road, the car stopped and that was because we didn't fill it with petrol. My dad called his friend to help him get some petrol. My dad's friend went to the petrol station and got some petrol. Then we continued the trip.

In my opinion, I think we should fill the car before we get going to another trip.

Could you split the middle paragraph into two separate ideas?

Is there anything else you could do in your conclusion, instead of giving your opinion?
Appendix 4 Test Prompts

Prompts used to elicit samples of writing from subjects at Pre-Test, Post-Test 1 and Post-Test 2 stages

Pre-Test

“Last week you came to college for 2 days of orientation. Write about the things you did for those two days.”

Post-Test 1

“Write about the last holiday you had.”

Post-Test 2

“Describe a trip that you remember well.”
## Appendix 5  
### HCT Writing Band Descriptors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bands</th>
<th>Communicative quality and coherence x 2</th>
<th>Structural range and accuracy x 1</th>
<th>Lexical range and accuracy x 1</th>
<th>Mechanics x 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 9     | • Extremely clear, well organised, and logical with plentiful ideas and support material from the writer  
      • Text flows seamlessly  
      • A wide range of structures used accurately and confidently  
      • A wide range of vocabulary used accurately and confidently  
      • Rare slips rather than errors may occur |
| 8     | • Well organised, clear and logical presentation and development of ideas with adequate and relevant support material  
      • Text flows well causing no strain to the reader  
      • A good range of sentence structures are shown, with confident control  
      • Confident choice and use of vocabulary with only rare ‘off key’ notes to indicate that this may be a non-native speaker  
      • Very few minor errors occur and these are not significant |
| 7     | • Well organised with a clear and overall progression of ideas  
      • Content is sufficient to the task but could be expanded more and may contain slight irrelevancies.  
      • Well controlled use of a range of cohesive devices  
      • An adequate range of simple and complex sentences occur with adequate control shown  
      • Vocabulary generally appropriately used and adequate to the task  
      • Occasional awkwardness caused by word, idiom or register choice  
      • Occasional non-intrusive spelling and punctuation errors |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bands</th>
<th>Communicative quality and coherence x 2</th>
<th>Structural range and accuracy x 1</th>
<th>Lexical range and accuracy x 1</th>
<th>Mechanics x 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>• Main and subsidiary points are clear and well organised, but may contain minor irrelevancies or inappropriacies • A range of cohesive devices used, though not always accurately</td>
<td>• Generally accurate use of sentence structure, though range of complex sentences is limited</td>
<td>• Vocabulary choice generally adequate in general topics or own specialist area, but may be inadequate to express a wide range of ideas with precision • Most of the time, appropriate choice of words, idioms and register give the text a feeling of fluency.</td>
<td>• Occasional errors in spelling may still occur • Uses capital letters, full stops, commas, apostrophes, brackets, and bullets, with only occasional unobtrusive errors (Spelling fully accurate if using Spell Checker or copying from a text)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>• Overall meaning of simple and more complex communications adequately conveyed though clarity will vary • Organisation of text contributes to overall clarity • Wider range of cohesive devices is attempted</td>
<td>• Simple sentences generally correct and some complex sentences can be used, but not often accurately • Errors in subject verb agreement may still occur</td>
<td>• Vocabulary generally appropriate but limited to familiar contexts • Occasionally, appropriate choice of words, idioms and register gives glimpses of fluency</td>
<td>• Spelling errors still intrude, but do not impair meaning • Uses capital letters, full stops commas and apostrophes appropriately, with only occasional errors (Almost fully accurate if using Spell Checker or copying from text)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>• Meaning clear in straightforward communications; where the content is more complex meaning comes through only intermittently • Simple cohesive devices used appropriately</td>
<td>• Can construct simple sentences but errors in subject verb agreement and word order are frequent • Appropriate choice of basic tenses</td>
<td>• Range of vocabulary becomes wider but may be inappropriate • Text is stilted</td>
<td>• Spelling errors intrude though words are mainly recognisable with effort • Uses capital letters and full stops almost without error • Commas and apostrophes missing or misused (Almost fully accurate when using Spell Checker or copying text)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 5 (contd.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bands</th>
<th>Communicative quality and coherence x 2</th>
<th>Structural range and accuracy x 1</th>
<th>Lexical range and accuracy x 1</th>
<th>Mechanics x 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>• Meaning only clear in short, simple communications, and becomes unclear if content becomes more complex • Little or no evidence of cohesive devices</td>
<td>• Attempts simple sentences with some awareness of, but limited control of, basic sentence structure and word order</td>
<td>• Vocabulary limited to simplest personal or work related topics</td>
<td>• Attempts at spelling unfamiliar words may be unrecognisable • Independent spelling of familiar words accurate on the whole • Uses capital letters and full stops most of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>• Can convey only the simplest ideas • Can convey information by positioning words correctly in a form or diagram</td>
<td>• Begins to produce a few short sentences and phrases independently, but with little or no control of sentence structure</td>
<td>• Vocabulary limited to common words</td>
<td>• Can spell a few common words accurately • Some evidence of punctuation but usually inaccurate • Can copy sentences accurately • Can write legibly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>• Can convey information by positioning words correctly in a form or diagram, but may omit information occasionally</td>
<td>• Essentially unable to make sentences or multi word messages</td>
<td>• Can write words from memory in a limited range e.g. name, address, job</td>
<td>• Can form letters independently &amp; accurately, but confuses upper and lower case except when copying Cannot spell words not given • Can copy words accurately</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Communicative Quality and Coherence

### Table 4.1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Correction Code Group (n=8)</th>
<th>Reformulation Group (n=8)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject 1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Subject 4</td>
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</table>

**Median**

<table>
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**Mode**

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<th>Reformulation Group</th>
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### Table 4.1.2

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Reformulation Group (n=8)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post Test 1 compared with Pre Test</td>
<td>Post Test 1 compared with Post Test 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject 1</td>
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<td>-0.5</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Subject 3</td>
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<td>0.5</td>
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<td>Subject 5</td>
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<td>Subject 7</td>
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**Median**

<table>
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<th>Subject</th>
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**Mode**

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### Structural Range and Accuracy

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#### Structural Range and Accuracy: Gains

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**Table 4.2.1**

**Table 4.2.2**

**Table 4.2.3**

**Table 4.2.4**
## Lexical Range and Accuracy

### Lexical Range and Accuracy Scores

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*Table 4.3.1*

### Lexical Range and Accuracy: Gains

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*Table 4.3.3*

### Appendices 6 Test Scores (contd.)
# Appendix 6

## Test Scores (contd.)

### Mechanics

#### Mechanics Scores

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#### Table 4.4.1

#### Mechanics: Gains

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