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THE USE OF SELF-EVALUATION STRATEGIES AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE AUTONOMY IN ACADEMIC WRITING. A CASE STUDY

de

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ABSTRACT

This case study was conducted in the context of an academic writing course at the UNRC, with the intention of inquiring whether academic writing instruction which specifically develops in the students the ability to self-evaluate their texts may enhance their process of text production and foster their autonomy. The two participants selected for the study, as representatives of high and low writing competence, wrote four essays and a self-evaluation report for each one describing their processes and strategies during text revision and their perceived quality of the essay, and completed two questionnaires, administered at the beginning and at the end of the course. The data used for the analysis came from the two questionnaires, the self-evaluation reports, the essay scores to assess writing proficiency, and the teacher feedback provided on the essays and on the self-evaluation reports. An inductive, grounded qualitative approach was used for the analysis in order to: describe the students' processes and strategies when revising their texts and their perceived strengths and weaknesses, as well as their longitudinal development throughout the course; relate the students' development to the quality of their writings; and establish comparisons between the two cases. Salient differences were found between the two participants regarding the types of revisions and their perceived strengths and weaknesses. Yet, findings indicated that both students developed longitudinally effective strategies to improve the quality of their text, their perceptions matched standards of writing quality, and they developed an ability to self-assess their texts against those standards of quality. The study finally suggests some emerging implications for teaching and research, and highlights its strength and shortcomings.

Key words: L2 academic writing – strategies – self-evaluation – writing autonomy – writing quality

To my students

For those who were, for they were the source of inspiration
and their course work was the essence of my study.
For those who will be, for they are the source of motivation
to make it worth the effort.

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Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

Writing in a foreign language is usually considered a complex activity for it requires from the student/writer ability in the L2 -linguistic ability- as well as ability in the writing skill –writing ability. The process of text production involves the complex interaction of a variety of aspects of very different nature (cognitive, linguistic and contextual), which the writer needs to attend to simultaneously drawing on different types of knowledge (Grabe, 2003; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996, 1997; Hyland, 2003). These include not only linguistic variables which require knowledge of the language system itself, but also cognitive variables which require knowledge about the process and about how to approach writing tasks, and contextual variables which require specific knowledge about the social context, the communicative purpose, the appropriate conventions and linguistic constraints of the specific genre, and readers' expectations. In EFL contexts which favour this integrative perspective, developing writing competence involves primarily developing in the students the knowledge about the various aspects of the processes, as well as an awareness of that knowledge. More specifically in undergraduate academic writing contexts, writing entails a shared knowledge of the academic context. Being able to write academically appropriate texts requires that the writer masters specific conventions of the language, discourse and genres in order to satisfy the expectations of the academic community and be accepted in it (Belcher & Braine, 1995; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Hyland, 2002, 2003; Johns, 2003). Academic literacy, thus, is a highly desirable skill for undergraduate students and, as such, it should be a major goal in writing instruction at university level.

In our advanced courses of the English Teaching-Training Program at the Universidad Nacional de Río Cuarto, the students are expected to express themselves critically in writing, showing judgement and mature reasoning as well as competence in the foreign language. Given the complexity of writing, many learners manifest difficulties in their processes of texts construction and, more specifically, in their ability to monitor and evaluate their own writing. This often makes them too dependent on the teacher's feedback and corrections on their writing, thus, limiting their capacity to manage their own writing processes, self-assess their texts effectively, and develop more autonomous writing. This difficulty can be mostly attributed to their limited knowledge about

specific aspects of writing, as well as their limited repertoire of effective writing strategies to produce, monitor and self-assess their writing. This being the situation, our undergraduate EFL writing courses at the UNRC could benefit from a type of writing instruction which, on the one hand, may equip our learners with tools to enhance their knowledge about writing and, on the other hand, may offer them systematic training in effective writing strategies that can help them produce quality texts and favour their autonomy (Hyland, 2003, p. 12).

Central issues among EFL writing teachers in academic contexts revolve around how best to teach writing in order to meet their learners' needs, and what tools to provide them with in order to enhance meaningful learning. Recent research on writing has suggested that writing competence can be enhanced by improving the learners' self-management skills and providing them with tools to revise and self-evaluate their own texts more critically and effectively. For example, some authors (Ashwell, 2000; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1996; Kavaliauskiene, 2003; Lewis, 2002) stress the importance of student awareness at the moment of processing the feedback provided by the teacher as a way to improve their own writing skills; they further suggest that the teacher should help students use that feedback effectively and should provide feedback which has a long term positive effect on the learners' ability to monitor their own performance. Recent studies have placed more emphasis on self-evaluation processes and strategies to help learners develop the ability of providing their own feedback more independently without a strong reliance on the teacher (Ashwell, 2000; Basturkmen & Lewis, 2002; Cotterall, 1995; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz 1994, 1996; Kavaliauskiene, 2003; Khaldieh, 2000; Lewis, 2002; Olivares-Cuhat, 2002; Rivers, 2001; Victori, 1999; Xiang, 2004). The authors of these studies also highlight that the knowledge the student/writer has about writing and about effective strategy use, as well as other affective factors such as perception about her own writing, her achievement and her strengths and weaknesses, all play an important role in acquiring writing competence. For example, Lewis (2002) argues that self-evaluation helps learners to become more aware of their academic achievements as well as of their strengths and weaknesses, thus, enhancing their learning processes and progress.

A key role of the writing teacher is, thus, to provide an appropriate learning environment that enhances academic writing competence by centering on the learners'

processes of production, monitoring and revision, by developing their metacognitive knowledge about writing, and by training students on systematic use of strategies that favour self-management (Hyland, 2003). Nevertheless, more research is still needed for us to make stronger claims regarding the effectiveness of such type of instruction. There is yet inconclusive evidence to prove, for example, whether the revision processes can be correlated with writing quality, or whether ineffective self-assessment can be attributed to lack of knowledge of the writing processes. This study was conducted with the aim of inquiring further into these issues. The main objective was to inquire whether developing in the students the ability to self-evaluate their texts can become a useful tool to enhance the quality of their texts. An experience with an advanced academic EFL writing course in the UNRC is presented.

A qualitative longitudinal approach using case study methodology was followed to analyze the processes and strategies for text revision of two students selected from the course and their perceived writing quality, and to compare their perceptions with the quality of their texts. Chapter 2 reviews the state of the art research in the field of L2 writing. Chapter 3 describes some major approaches to writing instruction which have provided the theoretical framework for the methodology used in the course which served as context for the study. Chapter 4 describes the study, making reference to the methodology used, the research context and the procedures for data collection and analysis. Chapter 5 reports on the results of each case using a within-case analysis. Finally, Chapter 6 discusses findings comparing the two cases in a cross-case analysis, and draws some conclusions, discussing them in relation to findings of previous research and pointing to the major strengths of the study, as well as its shortcomings.

Chapter 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Research in Language Learning Strategies

Research in EFL teaching shows that instruction in language learning strategies (LLS) is effective in improving language performance because it offers great benefits to foreign language learners, and that the successful use of strategies can promote learning autonomy and more responsibility in their own learning processes (Abraham & Vann, 1987; Chamot, 1987; Green & Oxford, 1995; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Rubin, 1975, 1987, 2005, 2007 Personal communication; Vann & Abraham, 1990; Wenden, 1987). Learning strategies, by definition, have learning facilitation as a goal and are intentional on the part of the learner, i.e., they aim at affecting the learner's behaviour, be it motivational or cognitive (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990, p. 43), and greater involvement in the learning process on the part of the learner is thought to result in increased learning (Chamot, 1987). The literature on foreign language learning strategies focuses basically on an interest to identify the characteristics of "the good language learner" (Chamot, 1987; Rubin, 1975, 1987, 2005; Wenden, 1987). Rubin (1975) was among the first researchers to investigate what good language learners do, in her belief that teachers can use that knowledge in the classroom to help less competent students learn how to learn the foreign language.

Most studies conducted in the field of LLS provide abundant evidence that, while learning the foreign language, successful learners select and apply effective learning strategies from a wide range of strategies that enhance language competence, and that less competent learners can benefit from instruction in effective strategy use (Cohen, 1987a, 1990a; O'Malley, 1987; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1989, 1990; Rubin, 1975, 1987). Research in LLS also emphasizes the importance of making students aware of the real value of the use and effective application of learning strategies, especially those used by successful learners (Oxford, 1990). In this regard, many studies in EFL strategy use have found positive correlations between the effective use of strategies and both language proficiency and academic success (Abraham & Vann, 1987; Cohen, 1987a; Ehrman & Oxford, 1989, 1995; Green & Oxford, 1995; Oxford, 1990; Raimes, 1985; Vann & Abraham, 1990). In an extensive review of the literature

on the Good or Expert Language Learner (GLL), Rubin (2005) concludes that success in leaning the foreign language highly correlates with the effective use of strategies and the learner's ability to control them.

A main area of research in language learning strategies has focused on comparing the strategies used by successful and less successful language learners (Abraham & Vann, 1987; Rubin, 1975; Vann & Abraham, 1990; Wenden, 1987). In one of the earliest studies on LLS, Rubin (1975) describes the "good language learner" as "a willing and accurate guesser" (p. 45); as a learner who has a strong drive to communicate, seeks opportunities for practice, monitors his own speech, attends to form as well as to meaning, and sees language as serving many functions. Building on these early findings, other scholars have studied and described the strategies used by L2 learners. For example, Abraham and Vann (1987) highlight the conscious use of strategies in a given learning situation, arguing that L2 learners' success depends, among many other factors, on the strategies and techniques that learners "consciously" develop and employ (p. 85). In their study, Abraham and Vann compared a successful and an unsuccessful language learner, concluding that the successful learner showed a greater variety and more effective strategy use and "ability to match his choice of strategy to the demands of the task", while the unsuccessful learner "seemed to organize his approach to all tasks in the same way" (p. 95). The authors also identified other, more personal, factors influencing the learners' approach to learning situations and their use of strategies, such as differences in their educational level and affective factors (p. 96) and suggest training poor language learners in more effective strategy use which could "lead to greater success" (p. 98). Similarly, Wenden (1987) and Horwitz (1987) found that the learners' choice and use of strategies can also depend on other personal factors which they consider important when learning the language, as well as their learning styles and preferences. Wenden (1987) concludes that teachers should benefit from these insights and from knowledge about their students' needs and "translate this knowledge into teaching strategies which will enable learners to approach L2 learning autonomously and skilfully" (p. 113).

2.1.1 Metacognitive strategies and metacognitive knowledge

In addition to cognitive and personal factors, research in LLS has found that a key factor which determines effective strategy use is the learners' metacognitive knowledge about

strategies. In this regard, in a recent study on the Good Language Learner, Rubin (2007 Personal communication) concludes that what distinguishes competent from less competent learners is not the type of strategies they use, or the "presence or absence of strategies", but rather "how those strategies are used –or not used-" by the learners to accomplish a given task or fulfil their goals; that is, "strategies are not just good or bad on their own", rather, they are "in the service of procedures". This ability of the good language learner to manage and control strategy use is referred to as the learner's *metacognitive knowledge*, and is explained by Rubin as the learner's ability to identify the source of the problem in a given learning situation, identify a solution to that problem and implement the solution successfully (Rubin, 2005, 2007 Personal communication).

Rubin (2005) describes the model called Learner Self-Management (LSM) as an interaction between the learner's metacognitive knowledge and his/her control mechanisms, or *metacognitive strategies* (which she prefers to call *procedures*); i.e., the GLL uses procedures on the basis of his/her knowledge. Within this framework, Rubin distinguishes five types of metacognitive strategies, or procedures, namely: planning, monitoring, evaluating, problem identification and problem solution, and implementation of problem-solution. The author further explains that the main difference between expert and novice language learners -what determines success- is mainly their differences in metacognitive strategies. This is tightly related to the learners' *awareness* of their learning processes. It has been suggested that a key process that distinguishes good learners from poor learners is, precisely, their ability to respond appropriately to the demands of the task. This entails a process of being aware of what one is doing, i.e., a process by which the learners make they mental processes conscious and "thus more effectively under control" (Nisbet & Shuckismith, cited in O'Malley & Chamot, 1990, p. 49).

2.2 Research in Writing Strategies

In parallel with research in LLS, much research has been conducted on writing processes, specifically in the field of EFL writing, in an attempt to study and understand what writers do while they write (Cohen, 1990; Raimes, 1985; Silva, 1992, 1993; Silva *et al.*, 2003; Zamel, 1982, 1983, 1990). Solidly founded in cognitive theories of

language learning, this research has mainly focused on comparing the writing processes of L1 and L2 writers and of competent and less competent writers, the strategies used by skilled and unskilled writers, the strategies used at the different stages of the writing process, e.g., planning, drafting and revising, and the effects of feedback. Given the scope of this study, this section mainly reviews research on strategy use by both skilled and unskilled L1 and L2 writers, and concentrates mainly on strategies used at the revision stage of the writing process.

Raimes (1985) reviewed several studies on L1 writing research comparing the strategies of both competent and less competent writers and found that experienced writers basically apply the following strategies: they draw on their background knowledge, plan their writing considering purpose and audience, and revise their text reading back and forth in a recursive manner keeping their ideas in mind instead of following a linear planning-writing-revising sequence. Conversely, unskilled writers plan less and less frequently and their plans are less flexible; they usually revise form rather than content, and their revisions are more focused on the surface-level editing than on matching to their plans, purpose or audience considerations (Raimes, 1985, p. 230). Similar results, according to this author, were found in L2 writing research comparing skilled and less skilled writers.

In addition to the studies comparing L1 and L2 writing, much research in EFL writing has aimed at investigating more specifically what L2 writers do while they compose (Cohen, 1990; Cumming, 1989; Okamura, 2006; Raimes, 1985, 1987; Silva, 1993; Silva *et al.*, 2003; Wong, 2005; Zamel, 1982, 1983, 1990). In a case study on L2 development, Silva *et al.* (2003) asked five skilled L2 writers to describe in autobiographical narratives their strategies and knowledge in acquiring writing competence. The results show that the skilled writers in the study used strategies and processes drawn on their L1 writing experiences; took advantage of written models and writing guides when constructing their own texts; considered revision as both a challenge and a necessity; showed an explicit understanding of rhetorical features and elements -mainly those typical of academic genres- and an acute sense of audience; were not generally concerned with errors and their errors were primarily local rather than global; and, finally, had a positive attitude towards teacher feedback because it

either helped them identify problems in their writing and learn from them, or because it reinforced their writing confidence (pp. 108-109).

Studies on writing processes have also addressed the issue of teacher feedback and its influence on students' processes during text revision, concluding that teacher feedback is generally positive and contributes to students' writing quality (for example, Ashwell, 2000; Cohen, 1987a; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 1995, 1997; Ferris *et al.*, 1997; Hyland, F., 1998; Hyland, K. 1990; Zamel, 1985). Some authors have studied the strategies learners use to process teacher feedback, mainly through re-writing (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Cohen, 1987a; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996; Hyland, F., 1998; Radecki & Swales, 1988). Cohen (1987a) concluded that teacher feedback is not focused enough on areas where it is most needed by the students, thus, having a limited impact, and that students "have a limited repertoire of strategies for processing" it (pp. 65-67). Similarly, Leki (1990) surveyed research on both L1 and L2 writing and found evidence that there is "little improvement", and sometimes even failure, in students' revisions based on teacher feedback due to the fact that students ignore the teacher's comments, do not understand them, do not know how to respond to them, or are not willing to surrender their ideas to the teacher (p. 62). In this regard, Cohen and Cavalcanti's (1990) study on learners' attitude toward the feedback received concluded that students make use of a very limited repertoire of strategies; thus, the authors advise teachers to train students "at all proficiency levels in the use of alternative strategies" to revise their writing (p. 147). Some researchers claim that teacher feedback is generally effective for "a particular piece of writing" (Ashwell, 2000, p. 228), and that there is no concluding evidence that it helps students to improve their writing in the long term (Ashwell, 2000; Ferris, 2003). Many authors have warned of the possible risks of an over reliance on teacher feedback at the expense of writing autonomy, and have recommended, instead, the development of effective revision strategies to help students process feedback, and raising students' awareness on those processes in order to enhance self-management and self-evaluation (Ancker, 2000; Ashwell, 2000; Basturkmen & Lewis, 2002; Cotterall, 1995; Kavaliauskiene, 2003; Lewis, 2002).

Following this rationale, recent studies have also placed more emphasis on self-evaluation processes and metacognitive strategies in the development of a more

independent writing (Ashwell, 2000; Basturkmen & Lewis, 2002; Brown, A. 2005; Ching, 2002; Kavaliauskiene, 2003; Khaldieh, 2000; Lewis, 2002; Olivares-Cuhat, 2002; O'neill, 1999; Rivers, 2001; Rubin, B., *et al*, 2005; Victori, 1999; Xiang, 2004). Cotterall (1995) proposes that autonomy is "desirable" in learning a language and suggests that students can be more efficient in their learning if they do not need to depend on the teacher "to provide them with resources or solve their problems" (p. 220). This author also suggests that, in order to assume control of their learning, students need to know how to evaluate the quality of their writing, and that it is the teachers' responsibility to give them the appropriate feedback on how to do it (p. 224). Ashwell (2000) concludes that, rather than providing feedback, a greater challenge is to help learners to become "more independent foreign language writers", and that we should devote more time to developing "our students' ability to provide the feedback for themselves", developing strategies such as self-revision (p. 246). Similarly, Kavaliauskiene (2003) suggests that it is important to train learners to make their own corrections "independently, without interference" or help from the teacher (p. 52). Lewis (2002) suggests that student self-evaluation helps learners to become more aware of their own learning processes and progress in writing because it allows them to focus on their academic achievements as well as their strengths and weaknesses and areas they want to improve. The author also highlights the role that the learners' metacognitive knowledge has in this process of awareness.

In agreement with Rubin's model of Learner Self-Management (referred to in the previous section), research in writing strategies in particular shows that the effective use of metacognitive strategies, mainly monitoring, self-correction and self-evaluation, is related to the writers' knowledge about the writing process and their ability in the writing skill. For example, many studies have demonstrated that learners with more knowledge about effective writing strategies are more successful and develop more autonomy (Gascoigne Lally, 2000; Kato, 2002; Khaldieh, 2000; Olivares-Cuhat, 2002; Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2001; Rivers, 2001; Victori, 1999). Some studies have found that learners' metacognitive knowledge correlates positively with their capacity to monitor, correct and self-evaluate their own writing, and with the quality of their writing (Khaldieh, 2000; Rivers, 2001; Victori, 1999). In addition, it has been proved that more successful writers use more effective strategies (Olivares-Cuhat, 2002; Victori, 1999),

they show more autonomy and self-directed learning and are more able to monitor their writings (Khaldieh, 2000; Rivers, 2001).

More specifically related to the process of text revision, and following this line of research, studies show that a major characteristic that distinguishes skilled from unskilled writers is the types of revisions they make and the strategies they use at the revision stage. In this regard, Zamel (1990) highlights the recursive nature of the writing process at the revision stage, i.e., writers go back in order to move forward. In a review of three different studies on revisions by skilled and unskilled writers, Zamel found that in the three studies alike, in the process of meaning-discovery, less skilled writers could "not get beyond the surface" (p. 269) to anticipate reader expectations; they were more concerned with correctness and form, viewing writing as more mechanical and formulaic; their revisions were more limited, basically concerned with lexis, grammar rules and usage; and they rarely modified ideas. The author observed that too much editing at the early stage interrupted the "flow of composing" and the on-going processes of meaning discovery. On the other hand, more experienced writers viewed their writing "from a more global perspective" and changed "whole chunks of discourse" which involved reordering the whole text (p. 269). In her study on the strategies used by writers while they composed their texts, the author found that, although all students wrote several drafts, confirming their need to discover meaning while writing, the types of revisions differed between skilled and less skilled writers. Zamel concluded that skilled writers showed an increased insight into the process. Early revisions of more skilled writers produced "more radical" changes while, as they "got closer to the final product", they were more concerned with editing for form (sentence structure, vocabulary, tense), proofreading and "polishing" the text (p. 273). Similarly, Nunan (1995) cites many studies arriving at a similar conclusion: at the revision stage, skilled writers in most of the studies reviewed "revise at all levels of lexis, sentence and discourse ... and use revisions to clarify meaning, while unskilled writers do not make major revisions [which focus on] the text ... and focus primarily on the mechanics of grammar, spelling, punctuation and vocabulary" (p. 90).

These differences between skilled and unskilled writers have been extensively cited throughout the literature (Cohen, 1990; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; McDonough, 1995; Nunan, 1995; Raimes, 1985; Sasaki, 2000; Silva, 1993; Stevenson, *et al*, 2006; Zamel,

1983). Many researchers agree that, while competent writers revise more effectively and focus more on meaning and organization, less competent writers are more concerned with usage and expression, and they tend to use less effective revision strategies, for example, focusing on micro-level features such as grammatical and lexical accuracy or mechanics, rather than on macro-level features such as rhetorical structure, clarity of ideas, purpose and audience consideration. McDonough (1995) presents a detailed review of several studies which show that inexperienced writers "do not improve their texts" after their revisions. The author attributes this to the criteria unskilled writers apply to evaluate their writings, and argues that they do not revise as much as skilled writers and that their revisions are mainly at surface or local level (71). Similar conclusions were drawn by Sasaki (2000) in his review of several studies, both in L1 and L2, comparing novice and experienced writers.

In spite of the abundant studies conducted in the field, research does not offer concluding evidence about the reasons for the above mentioned differences between experienced and inexperienced writers. A number of authors have suggested the need to develop the learners' awareness of the writing processes in order to increase their metacognitive knowledge about writing and about strategies for effective self-revisions (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996; Hyland, F., 1998; Kavaliauskiene, 2003; Lewis 2002), in their belief that this knowledge can enhance writing competence. Nevertheless, more research is needed for us to make stronger claims as to whether writing quality depends on the types of revisions, or whether ineffective revisions can be attributed to lack of knowledge of the writing processes.

2.3 Research in students' perceptions

Although much research on writing processes has studied strategy use, and specifically strategies for revision and self-evaluation, there are not yet many concluding results showing the effect this has on writing quality (Lewis, 2002; Rivers, 2001; Stevenson *et al.*, 2006). More recent studies have aimed at inquiring into the students' perceptions of their writing, i.e., what they consider good or bad in their texts, their strengths and weaknesses, in an attempt to observe whether their perceptions agree with standards of writing quality (Basturkmen & Lewis, 2002; Hyland, F., 1998; Lewis, 2002; Storch & Tapper, 1997). Storch & Tapper (1997), for example, analyzed NS- and NNS students'

annotations on their writings to see what aspects of the text they focused on when revising, and which aspects they felt positive about and which areas caused them concern. Similarly, Lewis (2002) studied students' perceptions of what they consider important in writing and about their own strengths and weaknesses in their writing, and compared these perceptions with those of the teacher throughout a writing course. This author found, on the one hand, a positive development in the students' perceptions (i.e., she observed an evolution in the ratio of positive-negative comments), as well as in the quality of the comments (i.e., they were gradually more aware of their own strengths). But, on the other hand, she found significant "lack of agreement" between the students' and the teacher's perceptions. The author highlights that this "gap" is a "real concern" and that more "in-depth research" which focuses on the details is needed to be able to make comparisons and generalize results (p. 33).

In a similar line of research, in a case study, Basturkmen and Lewis (2002) studied students' perceptions of their success in a writing course and their self-evaluations, and compared them with the teachers' perceptions of those students' success. The authors not only found that different students measure success differently and on the basis of different criteria (i.e., they have their own construction of success), but also that those constructions differ from those of the teacher, thus, suggesting the "highly individual nature" of students' ideas of success (p. 3). Although the study does not relate perceived "success" with writing proficiency, the authors recommend that the knowledge of those perceptions should lead to a teacher-student discussion about the criteria to evaluate not only success but also writing quality. They further highlight that if students' perceptions differ significantly from the teacher's, this could affect the students' self-confidence and also their own achievement (p. 3). The authors recommend that teachers should inquire further about how students evaluate their own success, suggesting that this "knowledge" can help the teacher provide the type of feedback the students need and it can help both teacher and students gain a shared understanding of what good writing entails (p. 8). This view is also supported by other researchers in the field of L2 writing assessment (Cushing Weigle, 2002; Ferris and Hedgcock, 1998).

The findings of the research reviewed in this chapter seem to highlight some still unresolved matters in writing instruction, namely:

(a) the need to reach stronger agreement between teacher and students' conception of writing quality in order to guarantee students' achievement;
(b) the need to develop students' metacognitive knowledge about writing processes and further study if that knowledge can help bridge the gap between students' and teacher's perception of writing quality.

It could be assumed that explicit writing instruction –one which raises students' awareness of what writing involves by increasing their knowledge about writing and by developing effective strategies for text revision- can contribute to bridge this gap between what good writing entails and what students' perceptions of a good written text are. The present study was mainly motivated by an interest in inquiring further and more in detail into the possible reasons that lead to differences such as those described by Lewis (2002) and Basturkmen and Lewis (2002) between teacher and student perceptions of writing proficiency. For this purpose, an exploratory longitudinal study was conducted. Within a context of writing instruction such as the one described in the above lines, the study had the following aims:

a) To describe, on the basis of the students' self-evaluations, how they revised their texts (academic argumentative essays), i.e., what they did while they revised the texts.
b) To describe, on the basis of the students' self-evaluations, what their perceptions of the quality of their texts were, i.e., their perceived strengths and weaknesses.
c) To inquire whether the students' perceptions and revisions developed throughout the course.
d) To inquire whether there was a relationship between the students' use of self-evaluation strategies for text revision and their perceptions and the quality of their texts

Chapter 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As suggested in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, developing knowledge about writing and raising learners' awareness of academic writing are central underpinnings in the instructional context of the present study. In order to have a sound basis for writing instruction, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of what writing is and what teaching writing entails. This chapter first reviews different approaches to writing instruction and describes the main theoretical models underlying them; next, it attempts to draw a synthesis of approaches which serves as the rationale for the methodology used in the course which offered the context of the present study; finally, it describes the main features of academic writing drawing on the different views proposed and which are considered in this study as the basis for evaluating writing quality.

3.1 The development of L2 writing pedagogy

In order to fully understand the development of L2 writing, it is necessary to refer to research on L1 writing. As Ferris and Hedgcock (1998) explain, L2 writing pedagogy "has largely paralleled L1 composition instruction in terms of both theory and practice" (p. 5), and has been concerned mainly with identifying similarities between L1 and L2 writing processes. Different models of L2 writing, mainly those based on socio-cognitive theories, have been particularly interested in studying and describing composing processes, i.e., what writers do while they produce their texts (Cohen, 1990; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Raimes, 1985; Silva, 1993; Zamel, 1982, 1983, 1990). More specifically, they have aimed at describing the processes and strategies of good writers in their belief that those strategies can be learned by less competent writers who can benefit from this learning.

Studies in L2 writing processes propose that L2 writers draw on their writing experiences, knowledge and skills in L1 writing. It has been suggested that good L2 writers are generally good writers in their L1, and that effective writing skills and strategies can be successfully transferred to L2 writing (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998). Based on their extensive literature review of comparative studies, Ferris and Hedgcock concluded that, conversely, L2 learners who are also less competent writers in their L1

display the same difficulties in approaching a writing task, planning and organizing their ideas, and they do not develop effectively the processes of text production and revision. The authors further add that inexperienced writers in L1, L2, or both, focus mainly on micro-level features, such as grammatical and lexical accuracy and mechanics, rather than on macro-level features such as rhetorical structure, clarity of ideas, purpose and audience considerations (p. 6). It is suggested that these limitations among inexperienced writers are due, among other factors, to their limited knowledge of the various aspects involved in composing (Victori, 1999).

The transference from L1 to L2, referred to in the literature as "The Interdependence Hypothesis" (Cummins, cited in Grabe, 2003), has been questioned by some L2 writing scholars. For example, Grabe (2003) makes the point that, although transfer is an important aspect of L2 literacy development, "it is not always clear which aspects of literacy ability transfer readily [and] which abilities do not transfer readily" (p. 247). The author further argues that for transfer to be possible, a threshold of L2 language proficiency is crucial, and explains that in the process of acquiring L2 literacy abilities, "students must develop a reasonable L2 language proficiency before they will transfer L1 processes and strategies" (Grabe, 2003, p. 248). In this view, L2 writing scholars have had a particular interest in researching the specific features of L2 writing which distinguish it from L1 writing. Based on extensive analyses of comparative empirical research, Silva (1993) concludes that, despite the many similarities between L1 and L2 writing, there are "salient and important differences" both related to the *processes of writing* and to the specific features of the *written text* (p. 657). In relation to the composing process, Silva found salient differences in the processes of planning, transcribing and reviewing in L1 and L2. For example, in the studies reviewed by the author, L2 writers did less planning, were less successful in the generation of content and goal setting, and their text production was less fluent and more laborious. At the reviewing stage, though L1 and L2 writers used similar strategies, L2 writers reviewed less, and their changes were more focused on grammar and mechanics than "on the basis of what sounds good" (p. 662). In relation to text differences, L2 writers' texts were less fluent and less effective, both at the discourse and linguistic levels. Based on his findings, Silva criticises the over reliance on L1 composing theories which are basically "monolingual and mono-cultural", and stresses the need to develop theories that explain the nature of L2 writing more adequately, arguing that L2 writing is

"strategically, rhetorically, and linguistically different in important ways from L1 writing" (p. 669). It is basically for this reason that a clear understanding of the "unique nature of L2 writing" is needed to make "intelligent decisions about adopting and/or adapting L1 practices" (Silva, 1993, p. 657). The following sections aim at describing those features of L2 writing that make it unique, arguing that it is precisely this knowledge what L2 learners should acquire in order to develop writing competence.

3.1.1 L2 writing

Writing in a foreign language is usually considered a complex activity due to the fact that the student/writer needs to develop not only L2 linguistic ability, but also writing ability as an activity with its own specific characteristics. This requires the writer's knowledge of various and different aspects, each of which must be attended to simultaneously during the writing process (Grabe, 2003; Grabe & Kaplan 1996, 1997; Hyland, 2003). Hyland (2003) identifies five types of knowledge: "*content knowledge*, i.e., knowledge of ideas and concepts in the topic area the text will address; *system knowledge*, or knowledge of the syntax, lexis and appropriate formal conventions; *process knowledge*, i.e., knowledge of how to prepare and carry out a writing task; *genre knowledge*, i.e., knowledge of communicative purposes of the genre and its value in particular contexts; and *context knowledge*, or knowledge of readers' expectations and cultural preferences" (p. 27). Different approaches to writing instructions have tended to place their focus of instruction on one or some of these aspects, failing to see the writing process from a more holistic perspective which integrates the *cognitive*, *linguistic* and *social* dimensions alike.

In EFL contexts which follow a socio-cognitive perspective, writing pedagogy specifically focuses on the learners' processes to produce, monitor and revise their texts, their metacognitive knowledge about the processes involved in writing, and the systematic training of writing strategies to enhance writing competence and favour self-management. A primary role of the teacher in this context is to develop the learners' awareness of those processes and their "ability to reflect on the strategies they use to write" (Hyland, 2003, p. 12). Seen from this perspective, developing writing competence implies primarily developing the knowledge to approach the writing tasks and the processes involved in it, as well as awareness of that knowledge. This view,

which dominated both EFL research and pedagogy during the 70s and 80s, led to an increased research interest to inquire further into the processes involved in writing, and into the writer's knowledge of those processes, i.e., the cognitive aspects involved. More recently, research has shifted the attention to the social context, viewing writing as a social communicative activity involving other factors which relate to the social purpose of writing and audience considerations. This new perspective highlights the need for developing in the learners a different type of knowledge, one which accounts for both the linguistic and the social aspect of the writing context. This growing interest in the social context has shifted the focus of research from the cognitive dimension of the writing process to another, more linguistically-oriented perspective, considering the textual and contextual dimensions.

Hyland (2002) describes three main approaches to writing research: (1) a text-oriented approach, which focuses on the product, by examining different aspects of the text, either related to surface elements or discourse structure; (2) a process-oriented approach, heavily based on cognitivist theories, which focuses on the writer and "describes writing in terms of processes used to create texts" (p. 5), that is, what the writers do when they write; and (3) a reader-oriented approach, which gives special attention to the social context and the reader-writer interaction, by describing "how writers engage with an audience in creating coherent texts" (p. 5). Although each approach offers a different perspective of writing, noticing the strengths in each one is important to allow for a more holistic perspective which views writing, not only as a personal and individual act, but also as "interactional and social, expressing a culturally recognized purpose" (p. 48). Seen in this way, writing is, as suggested by Hyland (2003), a "sociocognitive activity which involves skills in planning and drafting as well as knowledge of language, contexts, and audiences" (p. 23). Thus, an effective L2 writing methodology should include insights drawn on the different approaches to account for what some authors (e.g., Grabe and Kaplan, 1996) refer to as the three basic elements of the rhetorical triangle of writing: writer, reader, and text.

3.1.2 Two views of writing: writing as process and writing as a social activity

As it has already been said, L2 writing is a complex activity which involves aspects from the *cognitive*, *linguistic*, and *social* dimensions alike. From such a holistic

perspective, writing is an interactional activity in which the three aspects of the rhetorical triangle –writer, reader and text– conflate. Writing is seen as interaction of the writer's cognitive processes, the linguistic and textual features used to produce text, and the social context in which the activity takes place; being able to write, thus, involves the writer's ability to integrate these three domains successfully. As mentioned in the previous section, different approaches in writing pedagogy have each focused on one of these aspects of the triangle in their attempts to explain what good writing involves. The two most relevant approaches which are currently more widely cited and used in writing instruction are the *process-based approach*, with a marked focus on the writer and the cognitive processes of composing, and the *genre-based approach*, with a focus on the text as a social activity and the linguistic conventions for effective text construction.

The following sections, firstly, analyze each of the approaches separately, providing a thorough description of each one in reference to: their main characteristics and goals; their underlying beliefs and theories; the main writing models proposed; the main pedagogic techniques used; and their strengths and shortcomings. And secondly, a synthesis of both approaches is proposed, considering how the strengths in each can be articulated in an integration of the three domains: cognitive, linguistic and contextual.

3.2 Writing as process. Focus on the writer

Process writing draws heavily on socio-cognitive theories of EFL teaching which were concerned mainly with learning processes and learners' awareness of those processes. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) and Wenden and Rubin (1987) offer detailed descriptions of these theories. Pioneer studies in process writing, which dominated classroom pedagogies during the 70s and 80s are those by Zamel (1976, 1982, 1983) and Raimes (1985, 1987). These authors followed the idea that, in order to teach writing, it is first necessary to understand how we write since the process of writing is very complex in nature and it involves "not only the act of writing itself, but prewriting and rewriting, all of which are interdependent" (Zamel, 1990, p. 268).

The Process Approach to writing focuses on "how writers write", i.e., what writers do when they compose a text. It aims at describing the procedures or processes writers go through to convey their meanings, as well as the various stages of composing and what

each stage entails. Particular attention is placed on the procedures for producing text (planning, composing and revising) and on the writer's internal processes that underlie the production of the written text. This view, thus, sees the writer as a creator of original written discourse, and writing as a non-linear, recursive, personal, problem-solving activity which promotes self-discovery and expression (Cohen, 1990; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Grabe, 2003; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996, 1997; Hyland, 2002, 2003; Johns, 2003; Nunan, 1995; Raimes, 1995; Zamel, 1982, 1983, 1990). In this view, writing is, firstly, *problem-solving* because it is an exploratory process of discovering meaning, of exploring one's thought and learning in order to develop one's own ideas. Zamel (1990) explains it as "a process whereby an initial idea gets extended and refined" (p. 268), and the product is likely to improve when the students learn that through this process they can explore and discover their thoughts and ideas. It is *generative* because this process of meaning discovery is "a long and painful process" (Nunan, 1995, p. 87) which entails several stages, such as rehearsing, drafting and revising, and the finished product emerges after a series of successive drafts, requiring an "incubation period" (Cohen, 1990). Further, writing is *recursive* and *non-linear* (Cohen, 1990; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Hyland, 2002, 2003; Nunan, 1995; Silva, 1993) because the different stages of the writing process (planning, writing, revising and evaluating) do not occur in sequence but, rather, simultaneously in an interactive and recursive fashion. In other words, writers move back to move forward at any point in the process, interacting with the text, composing, revising and refining what they have written and reshaping their initial plans. Finally, the Process Approach proposes that writing is *collaborative* because during the stages of monitoring, drafting, revising and editing special importance is given to the collaboration of peers and teacher intervention (Cohen, 1990; Zamel, 1990). For those favouring this view, teacher-student conferencing and peer revisions are desired with the aim of encouraging learners to talk about their drafts with the teacher or peers, as well as enhancing collaborative work.

3.2.1 The planning-writing-reviewing framework

The Process Approach to writing draws primarily on cognitive theories of L1 writing, mainly the models proposed by Bereiter and Scardamalia, frequently cited in the literature on L2 writing, and on cognitive theories of L2 language learning (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Wenden & Rubin, 1987), which see language basically as a cognitive

skill. Many authors have adopted L1 models and adapted them to L2 writing. One of the models of L2 process writing most frequently cited in the literature is the one proposed by Flower and Hayes (cited in Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Hyland, 2003; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Zamel, 1983, 1990). This model presents writing within the *planning-writing-reviewing framework* to describe "what goes on at each stage of the process" (Hyland, 2003, p. 11). It integrates cognitive with social factors and makes "explicit what otherwise may occur without the learner's awareness" (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990, p. 18). The model has also helped to explain some salient differences between skilled and novice writers and the difficulties of L2 writers as compared to those of their L1 counterparts.

These processes and the use of strategies, mainly the use of appropriate strategies during the revision stage, are thought to be what basically differentiate good writers from less competent ones (Cohen, 1987a, 1990; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; McDonough, 1995; Nunan, 1995; Raimes, 1985, 1987; Sasaki, 2000; Silva, 1993; Zamel, 1982, 1983, 1990). Cohen (1990) explains that writers differ as to the manner they plan, generate and evaluate their writing. The author describes in detail what good writes do: good writers go back to go forward; use advanced planning displaying knowledge of effective written discourse; postpone minor revisions till they have worked with content first (upper-level revisions before lower-level editing); assess different aspect of their writing; choose lexis according to the context; keep goals and audience in mind; write multiple drafts (p. 108). Many L2 writing scholars (Cohen, 1990; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Grabe & Kaplan, 1997; Hyland, 2003; Johns, 2003; Raimes, 1985; Silva, 1993) have highlighted the pedagogic relevance of teaching these strategies of good writers to less competent ones. A main implication for instruction is the need for explicit teaching of writing strategies and a main role of the teachers should be "to develop their students' metacognitive awareness of their processes, i.e., their ability to reflect on the strategies they use to write" (Hyland, 2003, p. 12).

As for the teaching focus and main pedagogic techniques used, Process Writing pedagogy is mainly concerned with issues related to "what teachers should do to help learners perform a writing task" (Hyland, 2003, p. 10) and to which activities are "believed to promote the development of skilled language use" (Nunan, 1995, p. 86). Strong emphasis is placed on developing effective strategies for planning, composing

and revising text (i.e., the procedures writers use when they plan, draft, revise and edit their texts), as well as on "developing writers' mental processes, particularly strategies used to create and revise text on their own" (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998, p. 4). Raimes (1985) further highlights the need for an approach to teaching writing which stresses "generating ideas, writing drafts, producing feedback and revising, in an attempt to make [inexperienced writers'] behaviour, and ultimately their products, more like those of the skilled writers" (p. 231). To this aim, Ferris and Hedgcock (1998) recommend placing considerable value on "higher order thinking and problem-solving skills such as planning, defining rhetorical problems [and] positioning problems in a larger context" (p. 4).

Main activities and pedagogic techniques used to guide students through the writing process include: invention and pre-writing tasks (such as invention strategies, brainstorming and planning, organization tasks), tasks for information gathering, drafting multiple versions, abundant revision (mainly text-level rather than sentence-level revision), attention to content before grammatical form, delayed editing (i.e., delaying surface corrections or editing to the final stage of the process), collaborative writing, group cooperation in drafting and editing, teacher and peer feedback, formative and instructional feedback (Cohen, 1990; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Hyland, 2003; Matsuda, 2003; Raimes, 1995). At the revision stage in particular, the teacher plays a crucial role, especially in the provision of feedback. As explained by Zamel (1990), "[w]riting taught as process of discovery implies that revision becomes the focus of the course and that the teacher, who traditionally provides feedback after the fact, intervenes to guide students through the process" (p. 276). In this intervention, Zamel highlights the importance of teacher-student conferencing "between drafts" to guide learners in the areas that need to be worked on. Peer reading and collaborative writing also contribute to the learners' ability to review their writing "with the eyes of another", thus developing a greater sense of audience.

3.2.2 The role of feedback

Teacher feedback, i.e., the teacher's responding to the students' text in the form of comments, corrections or suggestions, is very important in this orientation of writing. This approach places great emphasis on response to writing, and crucial issues relate to

when teacher intervention is more effective and when it should be made most overt and explicit (Hyland, 2003). Main pedagogic concerns related to teacher feedback revolve around the issues of *what type* of feedback to provide (e.g., local or global comments), *what aspects* of the writing to focus on (e.g., form, content or discourse), *when* in the writing cycle to provide it (e.g., in the first drafts, at intermediate stages, or in the final stages of writing), and *how* to provide it (e.g., directly or indirectly, highlighting both strengths and weaknesses or just marking errors, correcting the errors or giving suggestions), all of which have been extensively studied (e.g., Chandler, 2003; Cohen, 1987a; Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 1995, 1997, 2003; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Goldstein, 2004; Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996; Hyland, F.; 1998; Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Leki, 1990, 1992, 1995; Truscott, 1996; Zamel, 1985). Another area of concern about teacher feedback relates to its effectiveness. Much controversy has arisen as to the usefulness of teacher feedback and its effects on writing quality (complete reviews on this issue are provided by Ferris, 2003; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Frodesen & Holten, 2003), with research results proving to be "inconclusive and even contradictory" (Ferris, 2003, p. 120). In an extensive review of studies on teacher feedback, Ferris (2003) observes that results are "discouraging" as to the students' attention to and utilization of teacher feedback (p. 127); yet, the author argues that "teachers should not abandon" the provision of feedback to their students, and that they "should examine their own responding practices to see whether their feedback is clear and responsive to the needs of individual students and/or texts" (p. 134).

3.2.3 Main shortcomings

Despite the many benefits that Process Writing offers in the development of writing competence, some shortcomings have also been highlighted. First, some authors have pointed to the fact that there is no conclusive research which can explain how writers learn to write, why they make certain choices or what happens at the various stages of the composing process, nor can it account for writers' differences (Hyland, 2003, p. 13). Another aspect where Process Writing has proved wanting is in including linguistic concerns. For example, Grabe and Kaplan (1996) make the point that, even when some cognitive researchers have shown concern with linguistic skills, "they do not extend such linguistic concerns to the influence of formal features of genres or to the

requirement imposed by certain rhetorical intentions of the writer" (p. 214). As such, the authors further argue, this view privileges the "reader-writer contract", rather than "the influences on writing which derive from the topic, the genre, or the writer's intentions" (p. 214). A further shortcoming may be the overemphasis on the cognitive relationship between the writer and his/her internal processes, which fails to offer any "clear perspective on the social nature of writing or on the role of language and text structure in effective written communication" (Hyland, 2003, p. 13).

A further criticism is the overemphasis that Process Writing places on students' creativity for meaning discovery. Creative freedom, critics argue, does not provide students with "clear guidelines on how to construct the different kinds of texts they have to write" (Hyland, 2003, p. 13). In relation to this, Nunan (1995) further challenges instructors to incorporate in the classroom "the practice of studying and even imitating" the often questioned written models, on the grounds that the claim that such modelling "constricts the learner's creative freedom remains to be demonstrated" (p. 88). The author finally concludes that, if communication is to be effective, "creativity and creative freedom can only exist within certain boundaries and conventions, and a major task confronting the [EFL learner] is to identify the boundaries of his or her new language" (p. 88). A more thorough description of these boundaries and conventions is the main concern of the next section.

3.3 Writing as a social activity. Focus on the reader

The other major approach to writing which has had an impact on EFL writing instruction, particularly in the last decades, is the Genre-based Approach. While teachers who take a process orientation to writing are concerned with how students write, i.e., what processes writers go through while they compose, those taking a genre orientation stress the need to teach learners "how to use language patterns to accomplish coherent, purposeful prose" (Hyland, 2003, p. 18). That is, while the former view focuses on the writer as a creator of meaning and self-discovery, the latter focuses on the specific textual –linguistic, discursive and generic– features and conventions to fulfil readers' expectations. And just as the writer-based view of Process Writing is founded on cognitive theories of learning, so the reader-focused composition pedagogy is founded on "the social constructionist premise that ESL writers need to be

apprenticed into one or more academic discourse communities" (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998, p. 8). In this regard, the authors further recommend a writing instruction that prepares students "to anticipate and satisfy the demands of academic readers as they generate their written product" (p. 8).

Genre-oriented scholars define *genres* as "socially recognized ways of using language for particular purposes" (Hyland, 2003, p. 18). A major focus, thus, is placed on the social nature of writing and the role of the social context; special attention is given to the factors that are determined in and by the culture or community in which written texts are produced, mainly considerations of *audience* and *communicative purpose* (Martin in Hyland, 2002, 2003; also, Christie, 1999; Dudley-Evans, 2002; Dudley-Evans & St. Johns, 1998; Johns, 2003; Matsuda, 2003). Genres are goal-oriented; different genres of writing are typified by a particular structure -realized through different stages- and grammatical forms that reflect their communicative purpose. In this view, *texts* have a communicative purpose, i.e., they are written "to get things done" (Johns, 2003; Hyland, 2003), and this purpose is realized through a fixed *schematic structure* which is staged and goal-oriented. It is *goal-oriented* because it responds to its communicative purpose (e.g., we write something to achieve a goal); and it is *staged* because it follows certain social conventions for organizing the message, i.e., different texts that share the same purpose will often share the same structure (Hyland, 2003, pp. 18-19). In this view, texts are described in terms of *form* (how their elements are organized) and *function* (their communicative purpose).

This perspective of writing, thus, draws attention to the communicative purpose of texts and the appropriate lexico-grammar and discourse patterns which are determined by the social context and which are required to achieve that purpose. The lexico-grammatical features are chosen both to realize content and to create appropriate social relations, and they contribute to text organization. In other words, the communicative purpose of the text shapes its schematic structure and determines the choice of linguistic and discursive conventions. Because the role of the audience is central in genre-oriented writing instruction, specific audience considerations are a major concern. For example, special attention is given to the roles and relationships of readers and writers, to the context in which the text is produced and processed, to the formal features of the text to create

appropriate social relations, and to the appropriate linguistic choices and use of content to meet readers' expectations (Johns, 2003).

Different views about genre have given rise to different schools in genre studies[1], whose differences relate mainly to how each one identifies and defines genres, what their theoretical foci are, and whom their instruction is aimed at (Johns, 2002, 2003). Nevertheless, most genre theorists and practitioners from the various schools, according to Johns (2003), agree on certain core principles, namely: the social purpose of texts and their function, which are mainly influenced by the community or culture; the hegemonic value of certain genres over others; the strong influence of the conventions of a genre on text organization and discourse; the relevance of content and argumentation as serving a specific purpose; the functionality of the language and the grammar of the text; the tight relationship between the language –vocabulary, grammar, metadiscourse and other language conventions- and the rhetorical function of the text (p. 211). Genre-oriented scholars have highlighted the need for a type of writing instruction which considers all these aspects and aims at helping learners acquire the knowledge they need to produce texts which are appropriate for the expected audience.

3.3.1 The teaching-learning cycle

Genre-based writing instruction is heavily influenced by linguistic theories (e.g., Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics) which describe language as "systems from which users make choices to express meanings" (Hyland, 2003, p. 19). Based on this linguistic view, genre writing focuses on "identifying, practicing, and reproducing the implicit and explicit features of written texts aimed at particular audiences" as well as on assessing the purposes and audience expectations in the assignments given to the class (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998, p. 8). Another major underpinning in genre-based writing, and closely related to this linguistic perspective, is the premise that learners should be supported, or "scaffolded", in their process of text production, and that they should be provided with opportunities to develop their writing through analyzing 'expert' texts" (Hyland, 2003, p. 22). Quite differently from the traditional views of modelling, this view draws on Vygotsky's description of learning as a process whereby

[1] The three main Schools in Genre studies are those known as: The Sydney School, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and The New Rhetoric.

the learner gradually moves from an initial stage of high teacher intervention and direct modelling to independent construction and learner autonomy.

Based on Vygotsky's model of L1 learning, L2 genre theorists have proposed the *teaching-learning cycle* to explain the stages the learners move through in the learning process, and which has further been adapted to writing instruction and referred to as the *contextualizing-modelling-negotiating-constructing cycle* (cited in Hyland, 2002, 2003; Johns, 2003). This learning cycle supports the learner "through an interactive process of analysis, discussion, and joint and individual construction of texts" (Johns, 2003, p. 203), moving through five main stages. The first stage –contextualizing- builds the context for writing. The second stage –modelling- provides students with textual models representing the genres to be learnt for them to analyze, through text deconstruction, how the different stages, purposes and language interact. The third stage –negotiating- is a joint construction of the text, where students and teacher together negotiate in the production of the text, working collaboratively, before they move to the fourth stage –constructing- where the learners work independently to construct their own texts. Finally, the learners are expected to apply this learning to similar new learning situations without any teacher intervention (Johns, 2003 p. 203; also Hyland, 2003; Macken-Horarik, 2002).

Just as process writing pedagogy centres on an explicit awareness of processes and strategies, so genre pedagogy centres on explicit awareness of language use, and aims at gaining control of the rhetorical structures of specific text-types, mainly through text modelling. Methodological emphasis, then, shifts towards written genres which are characteristic of EFL students' specific academic disciplines (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998) and the knowledge required to gain control of those genres. Drawing on the genre-based cycle of teaching and learning, one main pedagogic technique involves the explicit teaching of the features of format and organization specific to the different genres. For this, teachers provide students with model texts to enhance their "understanding of how grammatical systems function in communication, to illustrate the co-occurrence patterns of grammatical structures and vocabulary, and to identify the grammatical features that typically cluster in different genres of written discourse" (Frodesen & Holten 2003, p. 153), in order to help the learners reflect on how language is used to construct central genres. Grammar in genre-based classrooms is, thus, presented as a limited set of rules

and linguistic choices and conventions needed "to produce texts that seem well-formed and appropriate to readers" (Hyland, 2002, p. 17).

Teaching genres involves developing the writers' knowledge and awareness of the linguistic features and conventions required in successful written communication. From this perspective, good writing involves making the appropriate lexico-grammatical choices to establish appropriate social interactions, and acquiring an ability to exercise appropriate linguistic choices (Hyland, 2002, p. 17) to fulfil the communicative purpose of the text and meet audience expectations.

3.3.2 Main shortcomings

One main limitation frequently mentioned about genre-based pedagogy is its overemphasis on the text product at the expense of the writer's processes involved in the production of the text. Further, the over reliance on model texts may lead to the risk of presenting text production as too rigid, static and de-contextualized. Presenting genre models "as rigid templates and forms" of language, i.e., regarding genres as "sets of rules", may fail to "acknowledge variation and choice in language" (Hyland, 2003, p. 22). Hyland calls this "a tension between expression and repression" in genre teaching, and suggests the need to strike a balance between creativity and the acknowledgement of "the ways language is conventionally used to express meaning" (p. 22).

3.4 Towards a synthesis: cognitive, linguistic and contextual dimensions

Different models of L2 writing incorporating the various dimensions of the writing process have been proposed, in an attempt to obtain a clear understanding of what L2 writing is, and what a writing pedagogy should include. These models draw on L1 theories of writing and have been adapted to L2 writing instruction. Cognitivist models of L2 writing have been elaborated based on L1 composing theories which place great emphasis on the writer's internal processes. In the previous section, I referred to the planning-writing-reviewing framework proposed by Flower and Hayes, and widely used in Process Writing. According to Grabe and Kaplan (1996), this model, which incorporates contextual influences into the cognitive processes, ignores the linguistic dimension of writing for it does not incorporate the textual components. Textual models

of writing draw mainly on linguistic theories which place a strong focus on the functionality of language. I referred to the teaching-learning cycle of text production, frequently used in Genre Writing, which scaffolds the learner in a cycle of modelling, joint text constructions and independent construction. Grabe and Kaplan argue that the model places a great emphasis on discourse and accounts for both social and textual issues, but ignores the cognitive domain.

In an attempt to build on the strengths of these two views of writing together, Grabe and Kaplan (1996) propose a model of writing which aims at integrating all three domains: the *cognitive* domain, i.e., the writer's cognitive processing; the *textual* domain, i.e., the linguistic and textual resources that instantiate the writing task; and the *contextual* or *social* domain, i.e., the contextual factors which strongly shape the nature of writing (p. 229). The authors argue that, although these three major domains are "commonly discussed in writing research", they are "seldom integrated", and they suggest arriving at a "balanced interpretation of what it really means to be able to write" (p. 203). As explained by the authors, this model draws together the three elements of the rhetorical triangle of writing -writer, reader and text- mentioned in the first section of this chapter; it was developed in an attempt to answer the question *What is writing*? and explain what writing entails. In attempting an answer, the authors extend the simple question to a more elaborated one which includes a comprehensive view: *Who writes what to whom, for what purpose, why, when, where, and how?*

This holistic and integrative view of writing proposed by Grabe and Kaplan includes important aspects which are usually favoured by either Process or Genre approaches. From a process perspective, this view of writing stresses the concern for the writer as a creator of meaning (*who*), the writing process as a cognitive activity (*writes*), and the content as meaning-discovery (*what*), all strongly related to the *cognitive* domain. In turn, these aspects can be more associated to the *textual* domain when seen from a genre perspective, which considers crucial the conventions of the written mode (*writes*), as well as the notions of genre, register and the functionality of language and the appropriate choices of discourse and linguistic conventions (*what*). Also from a genre perspective, and more related to the *contextual* domain, the model incorporates the concern for the reader (*to whom*), the important notions of communicative purpose (*for what purpose*) and underlying intentions and motives (*why*), as well as aspects related to

the social context (*when, where*). Finally, the process-based view of writing as a recursive, non-linear activity where cognitive mechanisms and skills interact in text construction (*how*) relates, again, to the cognitive domain.

In this view, writing competence entails mastering aspects related to purpose, content, rhetorical features and language control as well as processes and strategies for text construction. Being able to write competently entails both developing knowledge of these aspects of writing and awareness of that knowledge while producing and revising a text. In academic writing in particular, this involves knowledge of the specific features of the academic genres. This issue is the concern of the next section.

3.5 Academic writing: process, text and context

Academic writing is context dependent. Writing academic texts entails being aware of linguistic choices appropriate to the communicative purpose and expected by the academic community. In the context of writing instruction particularly for undergraduate students, Belcher & Braine (1995) argue about the need for *explicit teaching of academic writing*, which entails "explicit awareness of the texts, subtexts, and contexts of academic discourse" to enable writers to satisfy the expectations of the academic community (p. xv). The authors further argue about promoting among novice writers a "socio-rhetorical community", i.e., "a shared awareness of the rules" of academic genres, "how they function rhetorically, the intentions they can serve, the messages readers can construct from them" (p. xvi). In this regard, Johns (2003) argues that, because undergraduate students of English for Academic Purposes are "not yet considered initiates into disciplinary communities of professions", EAP courses do not serve a clear purpose and they generally provide a "disciplinary overview" preparing students "for life in the university" (p. 207). Nevertheless, Johns argues that "there definitely *are* conventions in all forms of this writing" that should be introduced to undergraduate students. The author mentions three main discourse categories "found in all academic genres": conventions of *structure* that control the flow of argument; conventions of *reference* that establish standard ways of addressing the work of other scholars; and conventions of *language* that reflect characteristic choices of syntax and diction (Linton, Madigan & Johnson, cited in Johns 2003, p. 207).

Drawing on research by other scholars, Johns (2003) summarizes the main characteristics of academic texts which respond to the three discourse categories described. These include, among others, explicitness of argumentation and vocabulary use, relevance of topic and content, use of metadiscourse, writer's detachment from the topic, appropriate voice and register, use of hedging, and shared knowledge (i.e., texts should comply with the genre requirements of the discourse community) (Johns, 2003, p. 208). In other words, in writing academic genres, writers need to master specific aspects related to the purpose, content, rhetorical features and language constraints of those genres.

As already said in previous sections, explicit teaching of writing implies raising students' awareness of all these features. In turn, this awareness requires that the student/writer draws on the different types of knowledge of academic writing. This brings us back to the five types of knowledge proposed by Hyland, which were described in the first section of this chapter: content knowledge, system knowledge, process knowledge, genre knowledge, and context knowledge. As suggested throughout the development of this chapter, for writing instruction to integrate these types of knowledge, it should take advantage of both process and genre methodologies.

Taking advantage of the process model of *planning-writing-reviewing* described in Section 3.2, for example, academic writing instruction can incorporate the development of effective planning, composing and revision strategies through which students can be particularly trained in keeping the goal of the writing task in mind, in considering the audience and in making the appropriate linguistic choices to express meanings (Cohen, 1990; Hyland, 2003). In this process of composing and revising, competent writers "stay on purpose", and they can "successfully move from a writer-based first draft aiming at meaning to a more reader-based text which takes into consideration audience expectations and genre conventions" (Cohen, 1990, pp. 108-109). Similarly, Ferris and Hedgcock (1998) and Silva (1993) recommend developing critical thinking and strategies for idea-generating and for effective self-revisions, keeping the writing purpose and audience in mind, and providing clear criteria to develop effective revision strategies.

Likewise, academic writing instruction can benefit from the *teaching-learning cycle of text production* based on modelling and scaffolding, described in Section 3.3. For example, some authors highlight the need to familiarize students with audience expectations and provide them with explicit teaching of unfamiliar textual patterns and with the conventions of the genres they need to produce, as well as giving them tools for improving lexico-grammatical variety and accuracy (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Hyland, 2003; Johns, 2003; Silva 1993). Ferris and Hedgcock (1998) also suggest that analysis of model texts can be used to "build students' editing skills" (p. 219).

In sum, viewed as a purposeful and contextualized interaction, academic writing considers the various components of the composing process: the *writer* (his/her knowledge, affective factors, proficiency and composing strategies); *audience* expectations (shared knowledge and conventions); the *text* (represented by its purpose, and constituent elements such as genre, rhetorical forms, lexico-grammar, mode, and so on); the *context* and the interaction of all these elements (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998, p. 8). Such holistic view, while encompassing all three domains of writing –cognitive, textual and contextual-, combines teaching practices from both theoretical perspectives: Process and Genre. It is within this theoretical framework that the present study was conducted. The integrative view of writing described above has provided the underlying methodological principles of the teaching context where the study took place, as described in Chapter 4, section 4.4.

3.5.1 Assessing academic writing: Specifications and scoring criteria

In order to assess the quality of an academic text, first it is necessary to define what we understand by "good academic writing". The previous section described the main features that a good academic text should display which, as discussed, refer mainly to conventions of structure, reference and language, each of which being determined by a specific genre and its communicative purpose.

Researchers in writing assessment highlight the importance, in academic writing courses, for instructors to share with the students the definition of "good writing", i.e., the specific features that the text should display, and the criteria used for the assessment of the texts (Astorga, 2004; Cushing Weigle, 2002; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Hyland,

2003). When assessing academic writing, teachers need to consider the task design and the scoring procedures. In this view, the authors recommend that teachers should write clear "task specifications" which make this information explicit, as well as share these specifications with the students so that they know what will be expected from them. For example, Cushing Weigle (2002) highlights that specifications are important to guarantee that the instructor has carefully considered: (a) the specific aspects of the writing to be assessed and (b) how those aspects are operationalized in the tasks and in the scoring procedures (p. 181). Some authors further stress that discussing these specifications and scoring criteria with the students *before* assessment has many instructional advantages. For one thing, discussions can help teachers to highlight the aspects students need to focus on, thus, guiding them more effectively in their process of text construction. This becomes particularly effective during text revision, as students can use those rubrics "as framework for providing meaningful feedback" (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998, p. 237). In addition, discussing the scoring criteria helps raise students' awareness on how they will be assessed, eventually promoting a shared understanding between teacher and students of what writing quality entails. As such, the specifications and scoring criteria become a "teaching tool" as well as an instrument for assessment (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998, p. 237), and they have the ultimate aim of enhancing the students' writing autonomy in academic contexts.

Researchers in L2 writing assessment highlight four minimum requirements for designing writing tasks: clarity, validity, reliability and interest (Cushing Weigle, 2002; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Hyland, 2003). Cushing Weigle explains these as follows:

> [T]he prompt must be written clearly so that test takers know what is expected of them; the task must be valid, in that it represents the skill of interest and elicits writing that accurately represents test takers abilities; scoring procedures must be consistent, so as to yield reliable scores; and the test task should be interesting to both the writer and the reader (Cushing Weigle, 2002, p. 180).

Using rubrics of standardised scoring systems, either holistic or analytic scoring, helps teachers to guarantee that the above characteristics are met. Nevertheless, some authors suggest that, in classroom assessment, standardized systems can be "tailored" to meet the specific needs and class objectives (Cushing Weigle, 2002, p. 188; also Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998). That is, because large-scale standard scoring is not usually geared to particular tasks, genres or groups of students, primary or multiple trait scoring can be used instead, which highlight one or some specific aspects –traits- related to course

objectives and take into consideration the specific writing context. In other words, trait-based scoring adapts the general characteristics of large-scale scoring and focuses the attention on the purpose of the writing task. This becomes particularly effective in classroom testing for teachers who favour process approaches to writing and those who believe that assessment should be as integrated as possible to the course curriculum (Cushing Weigle, 2002, p. 179). Nevertheless, even when adapting large-scale assessment to classroom assessment, Cushing Weigle stresses the need for teachers to guarantee the four requirements –clarity, validity, reliability and interest- described above.

On the basis of these theoretical principles and for the purposes of this study, a standardized analytic scale, namely the *Michigan Writing Assessment Scoring Guide*, was used to assess the quality of the students' essays. It was believed that the three independent scales of this analytic scale –ideas and arguments, rhetorical features, and language control- encompass the main aspects of writing that needed to be assessed, namely, aspects related to content, organization and language. In addition, the task specifications and scoring criteria given to the students for each writing task explicitly described the specific text features that would be considered for assessment; these were related to each particular writing task. That is, the three main scales of the *MWASG* were particularly adapted to make explicit reference to the specific content, discourse and language constraints according to the writing purpose and task demands.

3.6 Hypothesis

Given the complexity of factors involved in academic writing, instruction can be most effective if it equips the learners with tools to: increase their knowledge about writing, develop more effective writing strategies, and raise their awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses, in order to enhance their ability to self-evaluate their writing autonomously. Drawing on this holistic view of writing instruction, the present study was conducted with the intention to inquire into whether training in self-evaluation strategies may enhance writing competence. It is suggested that developing in the students the ability to self-evaluate their texts, mainly through the use of revision strategies, may help them to raise more awareness of specific aspects of academic writing and of their strengths and weaknesses. This increased awareness may, in turn,

enhance writing competence and promote writing autonomy. The study was led by the following research questions:

1. Did the utilization of self-evaluation strategies help students of an advanced EFL course of the English Teacher-Training Program at the UNRC in their processes of text production and revision of their academic argumentative essays?
2. What did the students do when revising their texts, i.e., what self-evaluation strategies did they apply?
3. Which were the students' perceptions about the quality of their texts, i.e., their perceived strengths and weaknesses?
4. Did the students' perceptions and revisions develop throughout the course?
5. Was there a relationship between the students' use of self-evaluation strategies for text revision and their perceptions and the quality of their texts?

The next chapter presents a detailed description of the study, the research context and the sampling procedures, as well as the processes of data collection and data analysis.

Chapter 4. METHOD[1]

As already explained in the previous chapter, this study was conducted in the context of an academic writing course at the UNRC, with the intention of inquiring whether academic writing instruction which specifically develops in the students the ability to self-evaluate their texts may enhance their process of text production and foster their autonomy. I hypothesized that such instruction may help students to develop more awareness of the specific aspects of academic writing and increase their knowledge about writing, which, ultimately, can enhance writing competence and promote writing autonomy.

This chapter describes the study. Sections 4.1 and 4.2 present the objectives and the research questions respectively. Section 4.3 deals with the methodology selected and the justification for its use, pointing to its main strengths as well as some of its shortcomings. Section 4.4 offers a detailed description of the research context, the participants, sampling procedures and the course which served as context for the study. Sections 4.5 to 4.7 describe the materials and instruments used, and the methods for data collection and data analysis, respectively.

4.1 Objectives

The main objective of this research was to observe, through an exploratory, inductive longitudinal case study, whether the use of self-evaluation strategies could help students of an advanced EFL course of the English Teacher-Training Program at the UNRC in their processes of production and revision of their academic argumentative essays.

The specific aims of the study were the following:

a) To describe, on the basis of the students' self-evaluations, how they revised their texts (academic argumentative essays), i.e., what they did while they revised the texts.

[1] Nomenclature used in studies in Applied Linguistics (Swales, 2004). The author lists the following, as being used interchangeably: The Study, Method, Data and Methodology, Methodology, and Setting and Methodology (p. 219).

b) To describe, on the basis of the students' self-evaluations, what their perceptions of the quality of their texts were, i.e., their perceived strengths and weaknesses.
c) To inquire whether the students' perceptions and revisions developed throughout the course.
d) To inquire whether there was a relationship between the students' use of self-evaluation strategies for text revision and their perceptions and the quality of their texts.

4.2 Research questions

In order to achieve the aims proposed, the study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Did the utilization of self-evaluation strategies help students of an advanced EFL course of the English Teacher-Training Program at the UNRC in their processes of production and revision of their academic argumentative essays?
2. What did the students do when revising their texts, i.e., what self-evaluation strategies did they apply?
3. Which were the students' perceptions about the quality of their texts, i.e., their perceived strengths and weaknesses?
4. Did the students' perceptions and revisions develop throughout the course?
5. Was there a relationship between the students' use of strategies for text revision and their perceptions and the quality of their texts?

4.3 Methodology

A qualitative, empirical, longitudinal research design incorporating case study methodology was used to obtain in-depth information about the students' self-evaluation strategies and perceptions of their writing. The choice of a qualitative research methodology was based on the various benefits this methodology offers (Brown & Rodgers, 2002; Creswell, 2002; Hyland, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Nunan, 1998). Qualitative research allows the researcher to "develop a level of detail" about the subject of study from a holistic perspective; it is "emergent rather than tightly prefigured" because the researcher can modify or refine the questions as he learns more about the context, and he can have an "interpretative" view of the data (Creswell, 2002,

pp. 181-182). Nunan (1998) highlights that qualitative research is exploratory, inductive and descriptive and it offers an "insider perspective"; it is grounded, i.e., it is more oriented to discovering than to verifying results; furthermore, it is valid because it uses "real, rich and deep data" (p. 4). All these characteristics make qualitative research especially appropriate to inquire inductively into writing processes.

A number of researchers have highlighted the relevance of qualitative research in studies about ESL writing processes (Casanave, 2003; Hyland, 2002; Nunan, 1998; Polio, 2003). For one thing, it allows the researcher to explore the context-dependent nature of writing, revealing hidden processes, providing detailed explanation and understanding what is specific of a group (Hyland, 2002, p. 158). For example, some authors stress the relevance of small-scale research and qualitative, empirical, longitudinal studies in clearly defined contexts for research in writing in order to learn more about writers in specific contexts (Casanave, 2003; Hyland, 2002; Polio, 2003), arguing that most of the research which focuses on the process of writing is qualitative because such studies "seek to describe a particular phenomenon" (Polio, 2003, p. 48). Polio (2003) further stresses that, though the samples are usually small, qualitative research produces several different data that allow for the process of *triangulation*, that is, the possibility of drawing conclusions "based on coming at the data from a variety of angles" (p. 49).

A methodology that is commonly associated with qualitative research is, precisely, the case study, which has been extensively used in L2 learning research (Brown & Rodgers, 2002; Creswell, 2002; Nunan, 1998; TESOL, Qualitative Research: Case study Guidelines, 2007). A case study is basically an intensive study of a given social unit and its particular behaviour in context; this can also involve a developmental study, i.e., "an investigation of patterns and sequences of growth and change as a function of time" (Brown & Rodgers, 2002, p. 21). One of the most widely acknowledged advantages of the case study is that it utilizes a variety of methods of data collection and data analysis to examine "a facet or particular aspect" of the culture under study (Nunan, 1998, p. 77). The relevance of this methodology in L2 research has been highlighted in recent publications; for example, the *ELT Journal* has recently published the *Case Studies in TESOL Practices Series* (Stoynoff, 2004) with over 200 case studies. In his survey of the studies, Stoynoff describes the case-study methodology as a "legitimate research

design" which offers the opportunity to "contribute to the knowledge base of the ELT profession" (p. 381). According to a number of scholars (e.g. Casanave, 2003; Hyland, 2002; Mc. Donough, 1995; Silva *et al*, 2003), this methodology is particularly appropriate in L2 writing research since case studies are "well suited to explore the extraordinary diversity of L2 writers and writing contexts" (Casanave, 2003, p. 85). The variety of data collection techniques provides a detailed description of the individual under study, offers a thorough analysis of his/her practices, problems and decisions, and allows the researcher to observe the "subject's writing development longitudinally over a period of time" (Hyland, 2002, p. 158). In this regard, Hyland further highlights that case studies have been widely used "to construct cognitive models of what the writers do when they write" because this type of research reveals "the value of examining what the writers do as a source of data" (p. 25). Multiple sources of data collection and data analysis, in addition, help bring together –triangulate- multiple perspectives and sources of information to enhance the validity of the results (TESOL, Qualitative Research: Case study Guidelines, 2007). In their works, Casanave (2003), Hyland (2002) and Mc. Donough (1995) review several research studies which used this methodology to inquire about writing processes.

Nevertheless, some shortcomings are also attributed to case studies, mainly issues of validity and reliability (Brown & Rodgers, 2002; Hyland, 2002; Nunan, 1998). Reliability –or external validity- which refers to the possibility of applying results to new settings, people or samples that allow for generalizability of results, cannot be possible when a small sample is used for analysis, as with case studies. But transferability of results to other contexts is not a major issue in case study research (Hyland, 2002). The significance of the case study depends on the researcher's careful selection of the participants in order to guarantee that the individual or group under study is a typical case and is worth studying, for case studies focus on typicalness rather than uniqueness (Brown & Rodgers, 2002, p. 45; also Hyland, 2002). In addition, the use of multiple sources for data collection and data analysis, as well as external raters for data coding, can help guarantee internal validity and reduce the risks of researcher bias.

Taking into consideration the strengths of qualitative research as well as the shortcomings described above, I chose a case study methodology for the present study.

The decision of adopting a qualitative design to inquire into writing processes and the students' perceptions of their writing responds to an attempt to build on previous research on this area (Bordonaro, 2006; Hyland, F. 1998; Lewis, 2002; Rubin, B. *et al*, 2005; Sasaki, 2000; Silva *et al*, 2003; Straub, 2000; Xiang, 2004) and to follow the recommendations for more longitudinal case-study research in writing (Casanave, 2003; Mc. Donough, 1995; Xiang, 2004). Hyland (2002) cites studies which used a case study methodology to inquire into writing processes; the author highlights the relevance of this type of research for those interested in researching the students' strategies and assumptions about their writing processes, and further recommends longitudinal studies which reveal evolution over time (p. 190). In this regard, Lewis (2002) highlights in her discussion that being aware of the students' perceptions can guide the teacher's pedagogic decisions, while she recommends more "in-depth case studies" and comparisons with other studies which focus on the "details of the research methods" to have a clearer picture of the process (p. 33). Similarly, Sasaki (2000) highlights the importance of conducting more research comparing results "before and after a certain period of writing instruction" rather than cross-sectional designs, arguing that adopting a developmental perspective is "crucial for building a more comprehensive and dynamic model of L2 writing processes" (p. 262).

This study, therefore, presents a qualitative, grounded and exploratory analysis (Freeman, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994)[2], in an attempt to describe students' writing processes and their perceptions of those processes throughout a course in academic writing, by using a small group of students, in a limited context. The data were the students' written reports of their perceptions about writing and of their revision processes, as well as the scores obtained in their essays, which determined writing quality, and the teacher's feedback on the students' essays and reports. Data triangulation from multiple sources allowed observing and analysing the students' longitudinal development from different perspectives –students' perceptions, teacher's perception and standards of writing quality. The pitfalls of using a small sample within a limited context are acknowledged. No generalizations are expected to be drawn or *a priori* hypotheses tested; rather, the objective is to offer an in-depth description of a

[2] Miles & Huberman (1994) cite Wolcott's description of three major operations in the grounded approach: *description* (depicting and describing what the subject reports); *analysis* (systematically identifying patterns and relationships); and *interpretation* (making sense of meanings in context) (p. 14).

particular context -in Miles & Huberman's words, the construction of a "coherent, internally consistent argument" on the basis of a theoretical framework (p. 14). It is expected that the results will offer tentative answers to the issues addressed in Chapter 2, and open new lines of research that can eventually lead to more generalizable results. The study is described in detail in the following sections.

4.4 The context

4.4.1 Participants

For the study, two participants were selected from a total of 30 students from the course *Lengua Inglesa Académica*, of the English Teacher-Training Program of the School of Humanities, at the Universidad Nacional de Río Cuarto. In accordance with the principles of purposeful sampling[3] (Berg, 2004; Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; TESOL, 2007), the two subjects were selected as representatives of two different levels of writing competence –high and low- at the onset of the course. It was believed that selecting two subjects at the two extremes of writing proficiency at the start of the course could help establish comparisons between their writing processes and have a more comprehensive view of those processes longitudinally. Most studies in the literature reviewed presented comparisons between novice and expert (or competent and less competent) writers, and highlighed their differences. The sampling procedure is described in the following paragraphs.

Lengua Inglesa Académica is a mandatory course in the fourth year (1st semester) of the English Teacher-Training Program and it has a teaching load of 60 hours within a total of 14 weeks. Its main objective is to enhance language competence –in the four macro-skills- and has a major goal of developing academic writing competence; the genre which is favoured in the course contents is the argumentative essay. No changes were made in the course contents, materials or methodology for the purpose of the research. The course instructor is the researcher; she has approximately twelve years of experience in writing instruction, and has taught the course Lengua Inglesa Académica for six years.

[3] Merriam (1998) explains that, because in qualitative reserarch "the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight" rather than generalize results, he/she "must select a sample from which the most can be learned", and the power of this "lies in selecting *information-rich cases*" (p. 61); i.e., the reseacher must rely on *purposeful sampling* for the selection of the case.

4.4.2 Sampling procedures

The two participants for the study were selected from the intact group as representatives of a high level and low level of writing competence respectively, on the basis of the scores they obtained in the first writing task assigned in the course, an argumentative essay (Further information about the scores is provided later in this section). The procedures for selection were as follows: Data from the total of 30 students were collected throughout the course; these included two questionnaires, four writing tasks and self-evaluation reports for each essay, as explained in detail in Section 4.6. Only 18 sets of complete data necessary for the study were collected at the end of the course, due to the fact that some students did not write the self-evaluation reports for all the essays, or were absent the day the questionnaires were administered. The score given to the first writing task (Essay 1) was used for sampling selection. Two participants were selected out of the 18 who had completed the instruments.

To guarantee reliability in the scoring procedures, two raters evaluated the essays using as the scoring criteria the *Michigan Writing Assessment Scoring Guide*, hereafter MWASG (cited in Cushing Weigle, 2002). The MWASG (Appendix A) is a standardized analytic numerical scoring system for evaluating writing on three rating scales[4]: Ideas and Arguments, Rhetorical Features, and Language Control. The three scales are reported separately rather than combined in a single score. This offers the possibility of incorporating "considerations of good writing as defined by a variety of constituents", as well as providing diagnostic information on specific aspects of writing ability (Cushing Weigle, 2002, p. 115). The MWASG is a six-point scale; in the context of the course involved in this study, a score of 4 was passing, while a score of 3 or below was failing, which is the criterion used in many large-scale testing programs (p. 128). The MWASG provided the analytic scores. The essays were also given a holistic numerical score using a 10-point scale, 10 being the highest grade, 4 being the "passing" grade, and scores below this boundary were failing. The two raters agreed on the holistic score on the basis of the separate scores obtained in each of the three scales of the MWASG. A holistic score of 4 represented the borderline between passing and failing, thus, essays which received scores of 4 in at least two of the three separate

[4] 'Rating scales' as explained by Cushing Weigle, represent the "concrete statement of the construct being measured"; these can be "holistic", i.e., a single score is given to the writing sample, or "analytic", i.e., separate scores are given to different aspects of writing (p. 72).

scales obtained a passing grade of 4 in the holistic assessment, while essays which received scores of 3 or below in more than one separate scale received a failing score in the holistic assessment. Holistic scores were calculated as follows:

Separate scores in the MWASG:			Holistic score:
6 – 6 – 6	or	6 – 6 – 5	= 10 – 9.5
6 – 5 – 5	or	5 – 5 – 5	= 9 – 8
5 – 5 – 4	or	5 – 4 – 4	= 7 – 6
4 – 4 – 4	or	4 – 4 – 3	= 5 – 4
4 – 4 – 3	(borderline passing-failing)		= **4** (borderline passing-failing)
4 – 3 – 3	or below		= failing

The two raters graded the essays separately. They provided analytic scores for each of the three aspects considered in the rating scales (Ideas and Arguments, Rhetorical Features, and Language Control), and a holistic score. The interrater reliability was obtained by calculating the average of the two raters' scores. Then, the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was calculated in order to obtain the consistency between the raters (Cushing Weigle 2002, p. 135). The correlation coefficient for the analytic scoring was .88, which indicates a "strong relationship" between the scores of the two raters (p. 135). The variability among ratings, in cases of discrepancies, was one point; for this reason, there was no need for a third rater to disambiguate discrepancies. The correlation coefficient for the holistic score was .96.

The participant selected as representative of a high level of writing competence obtained scores between 5 and 6 in the different scales of the analytic scoring, and the participant selected as representative of a low level of writing competence obtained scores between 2 and 3 in the analytic scale. They received the scores 9.5 and 2, respectively, in the holistic assessment. Both scorings –analytic and holistic- are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Participants' writing competence in Essay 1[a]

Participant	Writing competence	Analytic score using the MWASG			Holistic score
		Ideas and Arguments	Rhetorical Features	Language Control	
Subject A (Carina)	**High**	6	5.5	6	**9.50**
Subject B (Maria)	**Low**	2.5	2.5	2	**2**

[a] The scores reported are the average of the scores given by the two raters

As regards the two raters, one of them was the course instructor and researcher in this study. The other rater, an outsider, is a faculty member in the Language Department, School of Humanities, UNRC; she has over 10 years of experience as an EFL teacher, and is an experienced instructor in writing. Before doing the rating, she was trained in using the MWASG.

4.4.3 Description of the course

As already mentioned, the two subjects were selected from a class taking the course *Lengua Inglesa Académica*, a mandatory course of the English Teacher-Training Program of the School of Humanities, at the UNRC; both students attended the course in the year 2005. The course aimed at developing the four language skills and placed a strong emphasis on the development of academic writing skills. It combined teaching practices from both the process and genre approaches, discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

The textbook *Academic Writing: Exploring Processes and Strategies* (Leki, 1998, CUP) was used as the main coursebook. This textbook has a strong focus on writing processes and on developing strategies for academic writing, mainly through awareness raising activities. Model texts are provided, on the basis of which students are encouraged to analyse the specific features of academic writing (e.g., content development and organization, as well as discourse and lexico-grammatical conventions). To this aim, the author includes clear theoretical explanations and definitions of these features, illustrates them and proposes guides (usually in the form of checklists or questionnaires) for the analysis and evaluation of the model texts provided. For text production, the textbook suggests activities with clear assignments; useful tips are also provided for content selection, text organization, audience considerations and use of appropriate language and register. In addition, each writing assignment includes guides and checklists for peer editing and self-evaluation, with the aim of raising students' awareness on the aspects they need to focus on while revising and to enhance their revision strategies. While based mainly on process writing, the book also incorporates many elements of genre writing, mainly its concern with tone and audience awareness, especially reflected in the recurrent references to the appropriate lexico-grammatical choices for academic writing.

In addition to the main coursebook, two booklets were used as course materials: *Materials for practice* (Placci, unpublished) and *Selection of activities for vocabulary practice, with key* (Placci & Comba, unpublished). Both were elaborated by the instructor specifically for the course, with the aim of providing students with extra practise for language and vocabulary development. The booklet *Materials for practice* includes different types of activities for text analysis and reading comprehension, language and vocabulary practice specifically related to academic writing. Typical activities include, for example, reading comprehension guides, which prompted class discussions of the texts and guided the students through the analysis of the contents of the texts as well as the specific discourse and lexico-grammar of academic writing. Other activities were language exercises, which involved paraphrasing quotes, changing the register, modalising statements, using nominalization, elaborating semantic sets and studying collocations, all of which aimed at refining the students' academic language which was expected to be used later in the students' own texts. The booklet also includes awareness activities, as well as tips and suggestions for further practice and autonomous study, and was meant to be used together with and as support for the main coursebook. Some of the activities were assigned as in-class work, mainly as group or pair work, and they led to class discussions; others were assigned as take-home quizzes or suggested as optional work for autonomous study. Class discussions aimed, mainly, at raising students' awareness of the specific features of academic writing and of the importance of considering these features when producing their own academic texts. Students were constantly reminded to consider these aspects during the process of text revision and were encouraged to use the guides and checklists for help. In turn, the *Selection of activities for vocabulary practice, with key*" was provided as extra resource material to be used for independent study. It aimed at developing mainly academic vocabulary through activities for vocabulary-building and studying collocations, among others. As the booklet provides a key, the students could check their answers while working on their own, or they could, optionally, hand in the activities for extra teacher feedback, or raise their doubts in class for further discussion. In addition, students were constantly encouraged to use different types of dictionaries and bring them to class.

The course placed special emphasis on the development of academic writing, mainly the specific features (discourse and lexico-grammar) of the academic register, by developing awareness of genre conventions and audience constraints, as well as

techniques for generating, drafting and revising texts. This process of awareness-raising was encouraged in many ways. The lessons centred on the reading and discussion of different model texts which served as input for the writing tasks. Following the constructivist view of the teaching-learning cycle of text construction (explained in Chapter 3), modelling in this course had the twofold objective of making students familiar with the genre (its discourse and lexico-grammatical conventions) and scaffolding their learning. Through the texts, the students analyzed and evaluated the different features of academic writing, thus, raising their awareness of those features and increasing their knowledge of academic writing. At a later stage, they were expected to activate and use this knowledge while constructing their own texts. In order to help them in this process, the instructor made explicit reference to the importance of considering those features as an effective strategy while revising and self-evaluating their own writings. The discussions and awareness raising-activities were strongly supported with the course materials, primarily the main coursebook (Leki, 1998), as well as through the analysis of model texts. The readings revolved around educational issues, and students could choose the specific topics for their writings. For topic selection and idea-generating, students were expected to do independent research using different types of outside sources and resources.

4.4.3.1 Writing tasks and self-evaluations

During the course, the students were assigned four writing tasks (described in Section 4.5 and transcribed in Appendix B) which aimed at the production of argumentative essays and reflected the learning goals of the course. In each essay, the students were expected to develop an argument, displaying their ability to present their thesis, show their stance, support it on the basis of outside sources, and acknowledge different views in relation to the argument. The essays were assigned as *out-of-class writing*. As suggested by Cushing Weigle (2002), out-of-class writing can be more appropriate than timed-essays when the main class objective is to emphasize writing development and assess the students' progress; it is particularly relevant in academic writing which focuses on the writing processes, "from gathering and analysing sources to generating ideas to drafting and revising essays" (pp. 173- 174).

For each writing task, clear *specifications* were given to the students with the purpose of making explicit what they were expected to do (task) and how they were expected to do

it (what aspects to consider), as well as how they would be assessed (scoring criteria) (Cushing Weigle, 2002, p. 181)[5]. Within this framework, the *task* made explicit reference to the genre, the communicative purpose and the audience, and to the *specific aspects* of the text (e.g., aspects related to content quality and development, discourse organization, register and lexico-grammar), which students were expected to consider for task appropriateness. Because the topics were optional, students were asked to specify in each essay: the specific topic they had selected, the debatable issue they raised and the purpose of the essay. The *scoring criteria* were also included in the specifications to make explicit reference to what aspects of the essay would be particularly focused on and how they would be assessed. Thus, for each writing task, the three general scales of the MWASG (Ideas and Arguments, Rhetorical Features, and Language Control) were "tailored" to the specific writing purpose and task demands. This also helped the instructor to identify the students' strengths and weaknesses more easily. The instructional benefits of adapting large-scale assessment to classroom assessment have been discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.5. The task specifications had the purpose of raising students' awareness of the aspects they should consider in the construction of their text. In class, the teacher discussed with the students the task specifications and the scoring criteria, emphasising the aspects which should be revised thoroughly during self-evaluation. As the information provided in these guidelines was supported by the theory (the course textbook and resource materials), studied and discussed in class, students were further encouraged to use the tips and the self-evaluation guides provided in those sources.

Together with the essays, the students also wrote self-evaluation reports (described in Section 4.5), in which they were expected to describe their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the text based on the aspects previously discussed in class, as well as the strategies they used -what they did- while revising their texts. Finally, each essay was returned to the students with: (a) the teacher's evaluation –a numerical score- and (b) the teacher feedback –the perceptions and comments- both on the text and on the students' self-evaluation reports, which had the aim of highlighting the teacher's agreement or disagreement with the students' perceptions of their writings. This was done following the perspective of a number of authors (Basturkmen & Lewis, 2002;

[5] The rationale for giving students task specifications was discussed more in detail in Chapter 3, Section 3.5.

Cushing Weigle, 2002; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998) who highlight the importance of gaining a shared understanding between teacher and students' perceptions of writing quality. Both the conscious use of revision strategies and the self-evaluation reports on the perceptions of their texts aimed at enhancing the students' writing autonomy. These issues were raised in Chapters 2 and 3. As described in the following sections, the four writing tasks and the self-evaluation reports constituted most of the data for the analysis of the two cases reported in this study.

4.5 Materials and instruments

Multiple data gathering instruments were used to obtain the data. These are described below.

Written Questionnaires. Written questionnaires allow the researcher to elicit the subjects' responses to a set of questions either in a structured or semi-structured format and have been extensively used as a method to inquire into learning processes and strategies (Cohen, 1987b; Cohen, 1994; Cohen & Scott, 1996; Mc. Donough, 1995). The data elicited from written questionnaires is mostly information about the learners' generalized statements (their "self-reports") about language learning behaviour and strategy use (Cohen, 1994; Cohen & Scott, 1996; Mc. Donough, 1995). In L2 writing research, this instrument provides rich information to inquire into learners' processes and perceptions of what they do when composing which, otherwise, would be left unobserved by other, more quantitative means. Nevertheless, because the self-reported information, espcially when obtained from semi-structured questionnaires, leads mainly to the identification of "generalized behaviour patterns", in order to inquire about particular strategy use in a specific writing task, the researcher should also use other means to elicit the information (Cohen & Scott, 1996, p. 93).

The instrument used in this study was adapted from a questionnaire elaborated by Cohen (1987a), which he used in a study on students' processing of teacher feedback. Alterations were made in the questionnaire to adapt it to inquire into students' processes of self-revision, rather than into revision based on teacher feedback. The final version of the questionnaire used for this research is a 13 item semi-structured questionnaire composed of guided questions (both close and open-ended) (Appendix C). Two formats,

A and B, were used at the beginning and at the end of the course, respectively. This instrument had been previously used by the instructor/researcher in her writing classes and piloted with students in former courses. As the 13 items performed well, they were all maintained. Each of the 13 items aimed at inquiring about the students' perceptions of their writing in general, rather than of a specific text. Mainly the following aspects were considered:

a) the students' perceptions of their writing and of their strengths and weaknesses (mainly items 1, 6 and 7);

b) the revision processes and strategies they report using to self-evaluate their writings (mainly items 2, 3, 4 and 5);

c) their self-concept as language learners in general and as writers in particular (items 10 and 11); and

d) their perceptions of writing in terms of preference and difficulty (items 12 and 13).

Questionnaire A (administered at the beginning of the course) included two items inquiring about aspects students would like to improve in their writing during the course (items 8 and 9 in Questionnaire A); these two questions were eliminated in Questionnaire B (administered at the end of the course) and were replaced by two items inquiring about the students' perceptions of the usefulness of writing self-evaluations (items 8 and 9 in Questionnaire B).

Writing tasks and *scoring criteria.* Four out-of-class writing tasks were assigned for the purpose of this study. The *genre* (essay) and the *discourse mode* (argumentation) remained constant in all four writing tasks, while each had a specific *communicative writing purpose*, namely: analyzing two sides of an issue (Essay 1); analyzing a problem and presenting solutions (Essay 2); supporting an argument on the basis of outside source (Essay 3); and presenting an argument and supporting it on the basis of outside sources (Essay 4). Though the selection of topics was optional, these had to be related to the topics dealt with in class. As already explained in Section 4.4 under the description of the course methodology, for each writing task, the students received specifications, describing what the task involved and how it would be assessed (Appendix B).

Students' essays. These responded to each of the four different writing tasks assigned throughout the course, as explained in the above paragraph.

Students' self-evaluation reports. These included, in the form of "retrospective report" (Nunan, 1998, p. 125), the students' comments and perceived strengths and weaknesses in their essay, as well as their own self-evaluation of the essay. Students wrote these reports following the self-evaluation guides as an aid.

As mentioned in Chapters 2 and 3, the practice of asking students to reflect on their own writing and on their perceived writing quality was implemented in this study to follow the recommendation of several authors who stress the need for teachers to learn more about the students' perceptions of the writing quality and their self-evaluation processes, and who argue that this knowledge can be used to meet students' needs and reach more teacher-student agreement about writing quality (Ancker, 2000; Ashwell, 2000; Basturkmen & Lewis, 2002; Cotterall, 1995; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Hyland, F., 1998; Kavaliauskiene, 2003; Lewis, 2002; Storch & Tapper, 1997; Victory, 1999; Xiang, 2003).

Self-evaluation reports were used in this study precisely because of "the quality of the insight they afford into an individual's behaviour" (Mc. Donough, 1995, p. 10) by offering the researcher the possibility to elicit rich and valuable information about the learners' processes and perceptions. Most of the data obtained in this type of reports is in the form of "verbal report", i.e., what learners say or believe they do while they perform a task, or immediately after task performance (retrospective verbal report) (Cohen & Scott, 1996; Mc. Donough, 1995; Nunan, 1998). Cohen (1994), Cohen and Scott (1996) and Mc. Donough (1995) surveyed several studies using verbal report to research learning processes and strategy use, and they stress the validity of this instrument. Verbal reports can be a "valuable and thoroughly reliable source" of data about these kinds of processes when interpreted with "full understanding of the circumstances under which they were obtained" (Ericsson & Simon, cited in Cohen & Scott, 1996, p. 98), and they are particularly relevant in longitudinal studies because they are used to "examine changes in knowledge and process as skill develops" (Green, 1998, p. 4). Further, Mc. Donough (1995) summarizes the benefits of verbal reports as follows:

> The point of studying such reports and perceptions of processes and activities in education is precisely to subject this mass of insights to scientific analysis and thereby acknowledge the richness of people's language learning experiences, rather than reducing it to only those aspects which are amenable to study by particular experimental means (p. 11).

The potential limitations of self reports are widely acknowledged in the literature on L2 writing research: some individuals cannot report their own cognitive processes or may be reluctant to do so; some cognitive processes may be inaccessible because they are unconcious or too complex; the reported information may be incomplete or untrue; the information provided can only lead to descriptions and it does not allow for further inferences of processes that are not reported –all of which may limit the generalizibility of the findings and the validity of the instrument if not used properly (Cohen, 1994; Cohen & Scott, 1996; Dornyei, 2001; Green, 1998; Mc. Donough, 1995). Given the several drawbacks, verbal reports need to be triangulated with other sources of data (e.g. scores on standardized testing, test validity measures, or class observation) and data analysis (e.g. an external coder) to guarentee more generalizability of the research findings. Nevertheless, the major purpose for using verbal reports is not to generalize results, but rather, "to reveal in detail ... information that is otherwise lost or inaccesible to the investigator" (Cohen, 1994, p. 881) when using more quantifiable means.

Self-evaluation guide. This was a 9-item semi-structured written questionnaire (Appendix D) which aimed at eliciting data regarding cognitive processes and reflective comments *after* the performance of the task. As with questionnaires A and B, most of the information elicited from these self-evaluation guides was in the form of a "retrospective verbal report" –in this case, the students' self-evaluation reports. The purpose of providing this guide to the students was to aid them to reflect on and self-evaluate their texts, guiding them in this process of awareness-raising. Unlike Questionnaires A and B, which inquired about the students' perceptions of their own writing in general, the self-evaluation guide was elaborated to inquire into their perception of one piece of writing in particular. Basically, items 1 to 9 in Questionnaire A about students' self-assessment of their writings in general were adapted in this guide for self-assessment of one particular essay. The 9 questions aimed at eliciting data about: the student's general perceived satisfaction with her essay (item 1), her self-evaluation of the essay (item 2), her perceived strengths and weaknesses (items 3 and

4), the aspects she revised and how (items 5 and 6), the aspect she did not revise and why (item 7), aspects of her essay she would like to improve (item 8) and other comments (item 9).

Some authors have used self-evaluation questionnaires and open-ended probes to inquire into students' reported perceptions of their strengths and weaknesses, or areas of concern (e.g. Basturkmen & Lewis, 2002; Lewis, 2002; Storch & Tapper, 1997; Xiang, 2004), and students' beliefs and attitudes (e.g. Hyland, F., 2000; Rivers, 2001). For example, in Lewis' (2002) study, students responded to written prompts to write self-evaluations of their writing on four occasions throughout a writing course, while Basturkmen and Lewis' (2002) study used open-ended questions to prompt e-mail dialogue with the teacher to elicit students' perceptions of their writing. Likewise, Rivers' (2001) study was based on extensive, retrospective written self-reported data elicited from a single open-ended question combined with open-ended retrospective questionnaires administered weekly over a period of time; and Xiang (2004) used questionnaires and students' annotations on their writing to study their attitudes towards self-monitoring.

Teacher's evaluation of students' texts. The evaluation of students' texts -to determine text quality- was done using the analytic scoring system MWASG. A holistic numerical score was also given.

Teacher feedback on students' texts. These were teacher comments both about the text and about the students' perceptions and self-evaluations of their text, provided with the intention of making explicit the degree of agreement/disagreement between the teacher and student's perceptions of writing quality. These comments were used in the study when considered relevant to illustrate teacher-student agreement/disagreement about writing quality.

4.6 Data collection

In order to guarantee more reliability of results, the data were collected from multiple sources. All the data were collected and carefully documented for the analysis. The different sources used and data collection procedures are described below.

Written Questionnaires A and B. Questionnaire A was administered at the beginning of the course (week 1) and Questionnaire B was administered at the end of the course (week 14). In both administrations, students were given a few minutes to complete it in class. Students' answers to both questionnaires were transcribed and used as data for analysis. Complete transcripts are included in Appendix E.

Students' essays and self-evaluation reports. The four writing tasks assigned throughout the course were collected at weeks 3, 6, 9 and 12 respectively. As topic selection was optional, students were asked to specify in each essay: the topic selected, debatable issue, specific purpose and audience. Before handing in the final version of the essay, students could, optionally, submit a draft for the teacher to provide some feedback. Teacher-student conferences were also offered and encouraged. For each essay, the students also wrote their self-evaluation, in the form of a retrospective report, following the questions in the 9-item self-evaluation guide provided as an aid (see Section 4.5). They were also encouraged to use, optionally, the different self-assessment checklists included in the course materials (see Section 4.4). The students were given a deadline for handing in the essays with their corresponding self-evaluation reports (either in print or by e-mail). Copies of the essays were kept for the study[6] and originals returned to the students; the self-evaluation reports were transcribed and kept for the analysis. Complete transcripts of the self-evaluation reports are included in Appendix F.

Evaluation of students' essays to determine writing quality, and teacher's comments of students' writing. Each essay was returned to the students with: (a) the teacher's evaluation -the analytic score- and (b) the teacher feedback –the perceptions and comments- both on the text and on the students' self-evaluation reports. Records of the scores were kept, to determine writing quality. Transcripts of the teacher's comments and feedback were also kept for analysis; these data were considered particularly relevant in the qualitative analysis when comparing degrees of agreement/ disagreement between teacher and students' perceived writing quality. All the essays were evaluated by the course instructor; a teacher assistant in the course also participated in the assessment process to reduce rater bias. For the purpose of the study, the essays

[6] Complete transcripts of the essays are available if requested for further inquiry.

corresponding to the two subjects selected for the case-study were also rated by an external rater following the same procedures used for essay scoring for sampling (see Section 4.4, under *Sampling procedures*). The correlation coefficient for the analytic scoring was .90, and for the holistic scoring it was .98. The analytic 6-point scale MWASG provided separate scores for: ideas and arguments, rhetorical features, and language control; this facilitated the assessment of the different aspects students were expected to focus on according to the specific purpose of each writing task (This was referred to in Section 4.4, under *Description of the course*). In addition, and in order to comply with institutional standard assessment, a holistic numerical grade was given to each essay using the traditional scoring system based on the 10-point scale, 10 being the highest score, 4 being the passing mark, and scores below 4 being failing marks. The scores reported in the analysis are the average of the scores given by the two independent raters, as described in the sampling procedures, Section 4.4.

The complete scheme for data collection is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Data collection scheme

Lengua Inglesa Académica, year 2005 (14-week course)	
Week 1:	*Questionnaire A* administered
Week 3:	*Writing Task 1*: essay and self-evaluation report collected
Week 4:	Essay 1 graded and returned
Week 6:	*Writing Task 2*: essay and self-evaluation report collected
Week 7:	Essay 2 graded and returned
Week 9:	*Writing Task 3*: essay and self-evaluation report collected
Week 10:	Essay 3 graded and returned
Week 12:	*Writing Task 4*: essay and self-evaluation report collected
Week 13:	Essay 4 graded and returned
Week 14:	*Questionnaire B* administered

4.7 Data analysis

In order to answer the proposed research questions described in Section 4.2, the data collected were analyzed qualitatively, using a grounded –inductive- and descriptive approach incorporating case study methodology. It was expected that this approach would allow for an in-depth interpretive analysis of the two cases. An external coder

participated in the analysis of the data to minimize the risks of researcher bias and to guarantee higher reliability in the coding.

At a first stage, all the data were collected as described in section 4.6, and carefully documented for analysis. Both the essays and the self-evaluation reports were transcribed verbatim, i.e., no changes were made or errors corrected from the original versions. Once the self-evaluation reports were transcribed, each student comment in the report was coded into the categories for analysis; these corresponded to each of the nine items in the self-evaluation guide: 1- general perception of the essay, 2- self-evaluation of essay, 3- perceived strengths, 4- perceived weaknesses, 5- aspects focalized during revision, 6- revision strategies used, 7- aspects not revised or edited, 8- perceived need for improvement, and 9- other comments. To ease the identification of the data for analysis, each comment was identified with the letters SE (self-evaluation) and a number 1 to 4 indicating the corresponding essay, followed by another number 1 to 9 indicating the category, or item in the guide being answered, e.g.:

(SE1-1):

SE1 = self-evaluation corresponding to *essay 1*.

-1 = category, or student response to *item 1* in the self-evaluation guide.

Likewise, the students' answers to Questionnaires A and B were transcribed and coded into each of the categories for analysis; these corresponded to each of the thirteen items in the questionnaire: 1- general perception of writing quality, 2- aspects of writing generally revised, 3- aspects especially focalized during revision, 4- revision strategies used, 5- aspects not generally revised, 6- perceived strengths, 7- perceived weaknesses, 8- perceived need for improvement, 9- intentions for improvement, 10- self-concept as a language learner, 11- self-concept as a writer, 12- writing preference, and 13- writing difficulty. Answers to both questionnaires were identified with the letters QA and QB, respectively, followed by a number 1 to 13 indicating the category, or item being answered, e.g.:

(QA-1):

QA = answer to *Questionnaire A*.

-1 = category, or student response to *item 1* in the questionnaire.

In order to distinguish data from both subjects when presented together for comparison, a lower case letter was added: the letter "a" identified Carina (Case 1) and the letter "b" identified María (Case 2). Each complete answer, even when answers extended more than one sentence, was coded into one category, corresponding to the item being answered. Nevertheless, for the purpose of illustrating the analysis in Chapter 5, the answers were sometimes segmented into smaller chunks. On the other hand, when the student answered in the form of a paragraph rather than indicating the number of the question being answered, decisions had to be made as to what parts of the text fell into each category. In order to guarantee more internal validity in the coding, part of these data was given to an external rater. Agreement between raters was high, and in cases where differences were identified in the coding, agreement was reached by discussion. Finally, parts of the text which did not fall into any of the categories were given the category "other comments", and were included in the analysis when considered relevant or significant. All the data were isolated for analysis following the processes of description, analysis and interpretation referred to in Section 4.3.

In the following stage, the analysis was performed in two ways. First, a *within-case* analysis was conducted for each case separately in order to provide answers to research questions 2, 3, 4 and 5:

- RQ2: What did the students do when revising their texts, i.e., what self-evaluation strategies did they apply?
- RQ3: Which were their perceptions about the quality of their texts, i.e. their perceived strengths and weaknesses?
- RQ4: Did the students' perceptions and revisions develop throughout the course?
- RQ5: Was there a relationship between the students' use of strategies for text revision and their perceptions and the quality of the students' texts?

Next, a *cross-case* analysis was conducted with the aim of comparing the two cases and drawing some conclusions trying to find answers to research question 1:

- RQ1: Did the utilization of self-evaluation strategies help students of an advanced EFL course of the English Teacher-Training Program at the UNRC in their processes of production and revision of their academic argumentative essays?

The main objectives of the two *within-case analyses* were:

(a) to describe the students' revision processes and strategies used during the process (RQ2);
(b) to describe the students' perceptions of their writing (RQ3);
(c) to describe and interpret the students' longitudinal development throughout the course (RQ4);
(d) to identify and interpret possible relationships between the students' revision processes and perceptions and the quality of their writings (RQ5).

Each of these steps is described below.

The data used to answer research questions 2 and 3 mainly came from the students' self evaluation reports. Once the students' comments were coded into the categories for analysis, corresponding to the 9 items in the self-evaluation guide as explained above, the data were isolated for analysis following a grounded approach, rather than using an *a priori* taxonomy. Field notes were taken on the data early in the process in order to identify the main patterns for the analysis, which were guided by major theoretical considerations, developed in the following paragraphs. At this stage, main emerging patterns were noted by the researcher, and the data were analysed again following these patterns. Part of the data was given again to the external rater to help reduce any research bias in the identification of those patterns. Cases of discrepancies were resolved by discussion. The inductive analysis ultimately yielded a description of the students' revision processes and perceptions of their texts.

(a) The data used to describe the students' reported strategies during revision (RQ 2: *What did students do when revising their texts, or what self-evaluation strategies did they apply?*) came from answers to items 5, 6 and 7 in the guide, coded into categories: 5- aspects focalized during revision, 6- revision strategies used and 7- aspects not revised or edited. Each of the comments was analyzed qualitatively, identifying the students' processes of revision, the aspects they mainly focalized when self-evaluating their texts and the types of revisions they made. Based on the theoretical framework discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, three main questions guided the grounded analysis for the identification of possible patterns in those processes:

- whether the students focused on the aspects specifically described in the writing tasks and in the scoring criteria provided;

- whether they prioritized macro-level revision, or micro-level revision, or whether no patterns were perceived in the types of revision (i.e., what aspects of the text they focused on while revising it); and
- whether they displayed specific knowledge of academic writing in their revision processes.

As was suggested in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, the types of revision and the purpose and focus of their revisions are basically what distinguish competent from less competent writers. In addition, the studies reviewed suggest the importance of developing specific knowledge about academic writing to raise students' awareness of what writing quality entails, as well as sharing with the students the task specifications and the scoring criteria so that they can have a clearer idea of what is expected from them and how they will be assessed. These issues were also discussed thoroughly in Chapter 3. Thus, the analysis of the students' reported processes was approached inductively with the intention to inquire whether the data revealed any evidence of these theoretical considerations. Once the main patterns were identified in the data, the field notes were revised in case adjustments were needed.

(b) The data used to describe the students' perceived quality of their writing (RQ 3: *Which were their perceptions about the quality of their texts?*) came from answers to items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 8 in the self-evaluation guide, coded into categories: 1- general perception of the essay, 2- self-evaluation of essay, 3- perceived strengths, 4- perceived weaknesses and 8- perceived need for improvement. The student's general perceived satisfaction, category 1, was considered "positive" when she answered positively to item 1 ("Are you satisfied with the essay you wrote?"), and "negative" when she answered negatively. The student's self-evaluation of her essay, category 2, was considered "positive" when the subject self-evaluated her essay as "Excellent/Very good", "Good", or "Satisfactory", and "negative" when she self-evaluated it as "Poor" or "Unsatisfactory". The student's positive perceptions were mainly identified in category 3 ("perceived strengths"), while negative perceptions in categories 4 ("perceived weaknesses") and 8 ("perceived need for improvement"). The perceived strengths and weaknesses were analyzed qualitatively in relation to the different aspects of the writing task particularly mentioned in the task specifications and scoring criteria.

The grounded analysis of the student's perceived quality of her text was mainly guided by the question about whether the student's perceived strengths and weaknesses were particularly related to the aspects described in the task specifications and in the criteria for essay assessment. That is, the analysis aimed at inquiring whether the student considered the task purpose and scoring criteria to self-evaluate the quality of her text. The issue of to what extent the students' perceived quality agrees with definitions of writing quality was discussed in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, and also in Chapter 3, Section 3.5.

(c) The data used to answer RQ 4 (*Did the students' perceptions and revision processes develop throughout the course?*) mainly came from the students' answers to Questionnaires A and B and from their self-evaluation reports of the four essays. The answers to Questionnaires A and B, coded into the categories of analysis corresponding to the 13 items in the questionnaires, were compared in order to identify whether the students' perceptions were the same at the beginning and at the end of the course, or whether they had changed; that is, whether there was positive or negative development or no development at all throughout the course. The answers to each of the 13 items in Questionnaire A were checked against the answers to each of the same items in Questionnaire B in order to identify sameness or difference in the answer.

This comparison was also combined with a qualitative, longitudinal analysis of the self-evaluation reports of the four essays written throughout the course. In order to guide this part of the analysis, the main patterns that emerged in seeking an answer to research questions 2 and 3, and which were described above, served as a framework for the identification of any changes, either positive or negative, or lack of development throughout the course. Thus, based on those general conclusions, the longitudinal analysis aimed at inquiring whether the students gradually developed their ability to self-evaluate their texts by becoming more aware of specific aspects of academic writing, and by increasing their knowledge about writing quality. The longitudinal grounded analysis was approached with the aim of inquiring into these issues and providing possible answers.

(d) In order to answer RQ 5 (*Was there a relationship between the students' use of strategies for text revision and their perceptions and the quality of the students' texts?*),

the data analysed from the student's self-evaluation reports were compared qualitatively to the scores given to her essays. First, the student's perceived general quality of her essay (category 2), coded as positive or negative, was compared with the holistic numerical score given to her essay, in order to identify whether her perceptions agreed with general standards of quality. In order to determine the degree of agreement-disagreement between the student's perception and writing quality, the following criteria were used:

Student's perceived quality:	Holistic score:	Agreement/disagreement:
Positive	Passing mark (4 or above)	Agreement
Positive	Failed	Disagreement
Negative	Failed	Agreement
Negative	Passing mark (4 or above)	Disagreement

Second, the student's perceived strengths (category 3) and weaknesses (category 4) of the different aspects of her essays, were compared qualitatively with the analytic scores given to each of the three separate scales in the MWASG, in order to determine degrees of agreement between her perceptions and writing quality. Third, the conclusions drawn in the analysis of the student's reported processes of revisions were analysed inductively, following a grounded approach, in order to see whether those revisions as well as the strategies used related positively with the quality of her essays. The teacher's comments and feedback provided both on the essays and on the self-evaluation reports were also analysed qualitatively for further interpretation of the data when these were considered relevant for the results.

The main objective of the *cross-case analysis* of the two cases was to compare them and draw some final conclusion which aimed mainly at answering RQ 1: *Did the utilization of self-evaluation strategies help students of an advanced EFL course of the English Teacher-Training Program at the UNRC in their processes of production and revision of their academic argumentative essays?* This part of the analysis was approached inductively using all the data analyzed qualitatively in the two separate cases. The central issue of this part of the analysis was to assess whether the practice of self-evaluating their texts helped students become more aware of the features that determine academic writing quality and whether this awareness could enhance their writing competence and their writing autonomy. This is presented in the Discussion (Chapter 6).

Chapter 5. RESULTS

The main objective of this research was to observe, through an exploratory, inductive longitudinal case study, whether the use of self-evaluation strategies could help students of an advanced EFL course of the English Teacher-Training Program at the UNRC in their processes of production and revision of their academic argumentative essays. As presented in Chapter 4, the data for the analysis came from: (a) the scores given to the essays, (b) transcripts of the students' self-evaluation reports, (c) transcripts of the students' answers to Questionnaire A and Questionnaire B, and (d) transcripts of teacher feedback. For the analysis of the data, a qualitative, descriptive approach was selected, using a case study methodology of two cases. The quotes included for illustration[1] are transcribed verbatim from the data. For a clearer layout, they are transcribed in italics in block-quotation form and identified with the letters and numbers between brackets as mentioned in Chapter 4, section 4.7. Short quotes included in the main body of the text are written between inverted commas.

The two participants selected were female students. For anonymity reasons, in this study they are called Carina (Case 1) and María (Case 2). As mentioned in Chapter 4, the research context was the course *Lengua Inglesa Académica*, a compulsory language course in the fourth year of the study Program. When the research was conducted, the two subjects were attending the course and had previously received the same instruction in the foreign language since they had passed the previous language courses which are a pre-requisite for this one. Selection of participants was based on the scores they obtained in the first writing assignment at the beginning of the course, using the *Michigan Writing Assessment Scoring Guide*, as representatives of a high level (Carina) and low level (María) of writing competence (see Section 4.4). Carina's essay was rated between levels 5 and 6 in the three scales of the scoring guide (Ideas and Arguments, Rhetorical Features, and Language Control), while María's essay was rated between levels 2 and 3. In the holistic score, the essays were rated 9.5 and 2 respectively.

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[1] It is recommended that reports of case studies should present findings including in-depth discussion of each case and "illustrative quotations or excerpts" to support the analysis and interpretations (TESOL, Qualitative research: case study guidelines, 2007; also, Merriam, 1998; TESOL Quarterly, 2003).

In Questionnaire A, administered at the beginning of the course (see Section 4.5), the two participants reported some similarities and some differences in the writing skill. In relation to the similarities, they both perceived writing as difficult when compared to the other three language macro-skills. As regards the differences, they reported different self-concepts as language learners in general and as writers in particular and different perceptions of their writing. Finally, their preference for writing as compared to the other language macro-skills also differed. In all cases, Carina's perceptions were more positive than Maria's. These similarities and differences are summarized in Table 3. These aspects are expanded in the analysis of each case.

Table 3 Participants' self-concept at the beginning of the course (Questionnaire A)

Items in Questionnaire A [a]	Case 1- Carina	Case 2- Maria
1- General perception of writing (evaluation): Excellent/VG, Good, Satisfactory, Poor, Unsatisfactory	Good	Satisfactory
10- Self-concept as language learner: Excellent/VG, Good, Average, Poor, Other.	Good	Average
11-Self-concept as writer (writing skill): Excellent/VG, Good, Average, Poor, Other.	Good	Average
12- Writing preference: 1- most preferred 2- preferred 3- not preferred 4- least preferred	2: "Preferred"	3: "Not preferred"
13- Writing difficulty: 1- most difficult 2- difficult 3- easy 4- easiest	**1: "Most difficult"**	**2: "Difficult"**

[a] Numbers 1 and 10 to 13 indicate the category corresponding to the items in QA

In the next sections, the results of the study are reported as follows. Each case is described separately following a *within-case study* approach: Carina's, in Section 5.1 and María's in Section 5.2. Each case starts with a brief introduction describing the subject at the onset of the course, as reported in Questionnaire A. Sub-sections (a) and (b) describe the student's use of revision strategies and her perceptions of her own writing, respectively, as reported in her self-evaluations for each separate writing task, attempting to answer RQs 2 and 3. Next, sub-section (c) presents and interprets the results longitudinally in relation to her development throughout the course, trying to answer RQ 4, and providing some conclusions in relation to that development. Finally, sub-section (d) compares the student's perceptions and strategy use to the quality of her text -as measured by the scores and the teacher's feedback- trying to answer RQ 5, and drawing some final conclusions of the case.

5.1 Case 1: CARINA

Carina was selected as representative of a "high" level of competence in writing; she obtained a score of 9.5 in the holistic assessment in her first writing task. In Questionnaire A, which had the purpose of describing her general learning situation at the onset of the course, she evaluated her writing in general as "good" (QA-1), and evaluated herself as a "good" language learner (QA-10) and a "good" writer (QA-11). In relation to her preference for writing as compared to the other language skills, she placed it as the "second most preferred" (QA-12) and, in relation to difficulty, she placed it as the "first most difficult" (QA-13). In addition, Carina reported that, when revising her texts, she read over "all of it" (QA-2); as regards the aspects she reported paying attention to when revising, she mentioned "content, grammar, organization and, not always, coherence" (QA-3), and she reported a focused, purposeful revision process: "I read it several times, focusing each time on a different aspect" (QA-4). She further reported that she "always" revised her text (QA-5).

When asked about her strengths and weaknesses, she mentioned "content and organization" (QA-6) as her strengths; about her weaknesses, she reported an aspect related to language, mainly lack of clarity and precision: "Sometimes, I find it difficult to go straight to the point and as result my ideas are not clearly expressed" (QA-7). When asked to identify aspects she would like to improve, she showed her concern for improving language and vocabulary use, saying "I always feel I need to improve the vocabulary and I should try to use more complex structures. ... I would like to use a wider range of words (vocabulary) and would like to express my ideas more clearly" (QA-8). And in relation to how she would improve these aspects, she mentioned her intention to specifically "focus on these aspects when writing essays or other pieces of writing" (QA-9).

Throughout the course Carina wrote four essays and a self-evaluation for each one (see Chapter 4, Section 4.4). The essays responded to the four writing tasks assigned, and they were graded: 9.5, 8, 8.5 and 10, respectively, in the holistic assessment. Table 4 contains an outline of Carina's four essays, making reference to the general purpose of each writing task, as well as the topic and issue she chose to write about, and the specific purpose she chose to develop. For each essay, Carina wrote self-evaluation

reports following roughly, but not completely, the self-evaluation guide provided. In her reports, she described what she did while revising her texts as well as her perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses in her own writing. Complete transcripts of the self-evaluation reports are included in Appendix F. The following sub-sections report on the results obtained from Carina's data.

Table 4 Outline of Carina's essays: task, topic and purpose [a]

Essay 1
Task purpose: To write an essay analyzing two sides of an issue
Writing purpose: Analyzing two sides of an issue
Topic: Public education and social equality.
Debatable issue: Is public education the key for equality in society?
Purpose of the essay: "The purpose of this essay is to make people reflect upon the good and bad points that the public educational system presents."
Title: "Public education: the key for equality in society?"

Essay 2
Task purpose: To write an essay analyzing a problem
Writing purpose: Analyzing a problem/ proposing solutions to a problem
Topic: Public school education in relation to social inequalities.
Debatable issue: Does public education foster social inequalities?
Purpose of the essay: "The purpose of this essay is to present a thorough description and analysis of the negative impact of public schools in society in relation to inequalities."
Title: "Does Public education foster social inequalities?"

Essay 3
Task purpose: To write an essay using published sources for the analysis of an issue
Writing purpose: Analyzing an issue on the basis of published sources
Topic: Strengths and weaknesses of public higher education.
Debatable issue: Are the effects of public higher education more harmful than beneficial?
Purpose of the essay: "The main purpose of this essay is to make people reflect upon the positive and negative aspects of the public higher system of education in our country."
Title: "Public universities in Argentina: The two sides of the same coin"

Essay 4
Task purpose: To write an essay developing your own argument on the basis of outside sources for the analysis of an issue
Writing purpose: Analyzing your own argument on the basis of published sources
Topic: Grouping gifted students
Debatable issue: Should gifted students be grouped together and receive specialized instruction?
Purpose of the essay: "The purpose of this essay is to raise people's awareness about the importance of grouping talented students whose capacities and abilities differ from the ones of average students."
Title: "Grouping the gifted: Promotion of individual growth"

[a] Both the task and writing purpose were included in the assignment; the topic, issue, specific purpose of the essay, and the title were transcribed verbatim from the student's essays.

(a) CARINA'S REVISION PROCESSES AND STRATEGIES

The data used to analyze Carina's revision processes and strategies (i.e., RQ 2) came mainly from the self-evaluation report she wrote for each of her essays (See Chapter 4, Section 4.7). Mainly answers to items 5, 6 and 7 in the self-evaluation guide were used in this part of the analysis. These data were categories SE 5- aspects focalized during

revision, 6- revision strategies used, and 7- aspects not revised. A first pattern that the analysis of the data revealed was Carina's consistency in the way she approached her revisions. In all four self-evaluation reports, she revealed a thorough and purposeful process of revision focusing on "one aspect at a time". This had also been reported in Questionnaire A at the onset of the course, though the self-evaluation reports of the essays revealed, in addition, two distinct features in the way she used this strategy. One refers to her identification of the purpose of the writing task as the first step in the revision process, and the use of the task specifications and scoring criteria as a guide for doing this (category 5). She reported:

> *(SE1-5): When editing my writing I tried to concentrate on all the aspects pointed out in the guide for the first essay. (SE1-6): First I checked the purpose of my writing.*
>
> *(SE 2-5): When editing my writing I tried to concentrate on all the aspects pointed out in the guide for the second essay. (SE2-6): First, I checked the purpose of my writing,*

The other distinct feature of this purposeful type of revision refers to the systematic order in which she revised each aspect (category 6). In all the revisions, she reported, first, checking the purpose and revising the rhetorical structure and the content of her texts (i.e., *macro-level revision*), and leaving more local or surface features like language, grammar and mechanics (i.e., *micro-level revisions*) for the final stage of her revisions. For example, in Essay 1 ("Analyzing both sides of an issue"), she reported following this sequence as a revision strategy:

> *(SE1-6): First I checked the purpose of my writing and the pattern of organization. Then, I revised the contents included in order to see if they are relevant or not. Besides, I concentrated on the language that I used, trying to use as much academic and specific language as possible. Finally, I checked grammar and spelling mistakes.*

Similarly, in Essay 2 ("Analyzing a Problem"), Carina again reported focusing first on macro-level features, following the same order: purpose, rhetorical structure and content, and then revising micro-level features, following the order: language, grammar and mechanics:

> *(SE2-6): First, I checked the purpose of my writing and the pattern of organization and I referred to Leki's chapter. Then, I revised the contents included and I*

considered their relevance to the essay and I paid close attention to the suggestions made in Leki's chapter in relation to the development and organization . . . . Besides, I concentrated on the language that I used. Finally, I checked grammar and spelling mistakes.

Her concerns for making macro-level revision before checking micro-level aspects is also reported in the evaluation of Essay 3 ("Analyzing an issue on the basis of published sources"), this time prioritizing content, as particularly demanded by this task; this is shown in the following quote:

(SE3-5): The aspects on which I mainly concentrated when editing my writing are: the relevance of contents and resources used. (SE3-6): Of course, I also paid attention to vocabulary and language and I had some doubts in relation to punctuation so I consulted the manual that you gave us.

Carina's purposeful revisions also revealed her clear purpose in the way she checked "each aspect at a time", as shown in her additional comments introduced by the expressions "in order to see if", "trying to use" (SE1-6), " I considered their relevance to", "I paid close attention to" (SE2-6). That is, she not only knew what to revise, but also how to approach the revision.

Another pattern that was revealed by the data analysed refers to Carina's major concern for the aspects specifically mentioned in the task specifications for each writing task (a complete description of the tasks is included in Appendix B). That is, in addition to prioritizing macro-level aspects like content and organization, she revised these aspects in close connection to the purpose and constraints of each writing task. For example, the specific writing purpose in Essay 2 was "to analyze a problem and propose solutions to the problem"; the task specifications and scoring criteria for this writing task made special reference both to the use of an appropriate pattern of organization for the problem/solutions essays, and to the relevance and quality of the content in order to describe and analyze the problems and the solutions. In addition, a special suggestion was made to take into account the "tips" provided in the coursebook. Carina reported a detailed consideration of these aspects in her revisions of this essay, as reflected in the following quote:

(SE2-6): First, I checked the purpose of my writing and the pattern of organization and I referred to Leki's chapter. Then, I revised the contents included and I considered their relevance to the essay and I paid close attention to the suggestions made in Leki's chapter in relation to the development and organization: 1st presentation of the problem, 2nd considering the cause, 3rd referring to the consequences and finally pointing out the importance of this problem to the audience.

Likewise, in Essay 3 ("Analyzing an issue on the basis of published sources"), she reported focusing specifically on the relevance and quality of the sources used (content), and on how the information was organized in the way the task required ("balancing the two sides of the issue objectively"); these two aspects were particularly highlighted in the assignment and scoring criteria for this writing task. Carina reported the following revision processes:

(SE3-5): The aspects on which I mainly concentrated when editing my writing are: the relevance of contents and resources used. (SE3-6): I made many changes in relation to the information included. I think that now, all the information presented is relevant and so are the sources. . . . In the two first paragraphs, I have included information describing negative aspects of public higher education and in the following two paragraphs, the positive aspects are mentioned. . . .(SE3-9): ... I selected the information that I considered really relevant for the topic. Since I tried to write this essay using an objective tone, I tried to provide the same amount of information in relation to the good and bad points of public education.

In relation to Essay 4 ("Developing your own argument on the basis of published sources"), Carina reported making a careful selection of the most appropriate technique for organizing her writing, as suggested in the assignment. For example, she reported considering the relevance of the content, and making careful choices regarding the rhetorical pattern and tone appropriate for the writing purpose, as specially described in the writing assignment. Her use of this strategy is illustrated in the following quote:

(SE4-5): I spent much more time editing the essay than actually writing it! First, I paid careful attention to the patterns of organization, and I decided to use the pattern analyzed in the last readings done in class: addressing the opposition and arguing it, and acknowledging the opposing views and rebutting them. I think that using these techniques strengthens my argument because it shows that I have

analyzed both the benefits and the drawbacks of grouping the gifted (although I'm in favour of grouping them).However, I worked hard on this and I think that the information included in the essay is relevant and appropriate to support my stance.

Other aspects particularly highlighted in the task specifications and specifically related to academic writing were related to the use of appropriate vocabulary and tone, taking into consideration the audience expectations. These aspects were also carefully considered in Carina's revisions, again, showing a major concern for the specific task demands:

(SE4-5): From the very beginning, I paid attention to tone. I tried to make my stance clear by being as objective as possible. In order to do so, I chose neutral rather than emotionally charged language. Besides, because of the content included in each paragraph, the readers will get to know that I'm in favour of grouping the gifted, I mean, I included in each paragraph just one or two sentences mentioning the opposing view and then, the rest of the paragraph is devoted to refute that idea.

One distinct feature in Carina's thorough and effective use of the task specifications and scoring criteria for text revision was her reported use of the course materials for help. For example, in quote (SE2-6) already transcribed in previous paragraphs, she reported referring to the theory discussed in class -as shown by her mention of "Leki's chapter"- in order to make an appropriate selection of organization and content development specifically required for the task. She also reported using the extra resource material (described in Chapter 4, Section 4.4) as a revision strategy mainly for revising vocabulary and micro-level editing:

(SE3-6): Of course, I also paid attention to vocabulary and language and I had some doubts in relation to punctuation so I consulted the manual that you gave us.

(SE4-6): In relation to the use of academic vocabulary, it helped me a lot to revise the activities done in class concerning this topic. ... I found this vocabulary extremely useful to paraphrase and summarize some important pieces of information.

A final outstanding pattern that the data revealed, and closely related to her use of the course materials, was her ability to justify, explain and evaluate her choices related to

content, discourse and lexico-grammar, thus, displaying both specific knowledge about academic writing, and awareness of that knowledge. This aspect is further developed in the longitudinal analysis. These choices were related to the special aspects mentioned in the scoring criteria for students to take into consideration for assessment. Carina's ability for self-assessment and awareness is revealed in the following quotes, where underlining has been added to highlight the most meaningful expressions:

> *(SE3-6): I made many changes in relation to the information included. I think that now, all the information presented is relevant and so are the sources. . . . In the two first paragraphs, I have included information describing negative aspects of public higher education and in the following two paragraphs, the positive aspects are mentioned. . . . (SE3-9): . . . I selected the information that I considered really relevant for the topic. Since I tried to write this essay using an objective tone, I tried to provide the same amount of information in relation to the good and bad points of public education.*

Another instance where this knowledge is displayed is in her report of Essay 4, example (SE4-5), already transcribed above, mainly through the use of the following expressions: "and I decided to use", "I think that using these techniques strengthens my argument because it shows that . . . although I'm in favour of", "I think that the information included in the essay is relevant and appropriate to support my stance", "I tried to make my stance clear by being as objective as possible", "In order to do so, I choose", "Besides, because of . . . I mean, I included . . .".

This part of the analysis has aimed at providing an answer to RQ2 (*What do students do when revising their text, i.e. what self-evaluation strategies do they apply?*), mainly by analyzing categories 5 (aspects focalized during revision), 6 (revision strategies used) and 7 (aspects not revised). As mentioned in the procedures for data analysis (Chapter 4, Section 4.7), the analysis of processes and strategies was grounded on three main questions for pattern identification, which are supported by the literature reviewed: (1) whether the students focused on the aspects specifically described in the writing tasks and in the scoring criteria provided; (2) whether they prioritized macro-level revision, or micro-level revision, or whether there was absence of patterns in the types of revision; and (3) whether they displayed specific knowledge of academic writing in

their revision processes. Based on the analysis of Carina's data, three outstanding patterns were observed:

1) Carina showed consistency in the way she approached her revisions; this was characterized by two distinct features:

   - she identified the purpose in the writing task as her first step in the revision process, using the task specifications and scoring criteria as a guide for this;

   - she followed a systematic order to revise each aspect and effectively used her "one aspect at a time" technique, first, focusing on *macro-level* aspects (checking the purpose and revising the rhetorical structure and the content), then on *micro-level* aspects (local or surface features like language, grammar and mechanics).

2) Carina expressed a main concern for the aspects specifically mentioned in the task specifications for each writing task; this was revealed mainly through the following actions:

   - she revised with a clear purpose making explicit mention of the task demands, e.g., checking the purpose of the task; selecting the rhetorical structure most appropriate for the task purpose; checking content relevance (quality) and balance (quantity); checking language and vocabulary appropriate to tone and considering audience;

   - she used the course materials and extra resources for help. For example, she used the course book (Leki, 1998) mainly for the selection of rhetorical patterns and tone, and for audience considerations; and she used the other course materials for editing language, vocabulary and mechanics.

3) Carina showed an ability to justify, explain and evaluate her choices related to content, discourse or lexico-grammar, displaying both specific knowledge about academic writing and awareness of that knowledge.

Each of these conclusions is further analyzed and interpreted longitudinally in sub-section (c) corresponding to Carina's longitudinal development throughout the course.

(b) CARINA'S PERCEPTIONS OF HER OWN WRITING

The data used for finding out Carina's perceived quality of her writing (i.e. RQ 3) came mainly from her answers to items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 8 in the self-evaluation reports. These were categories SE 1- general perception of essay, 2- self-evaluation of essay, 3-

perceived strengths, 4- perceived weakness, and 8- perceived need for improvement. The criteria for the identification of positive and negative perceptions were explained in Chapter 4, Section 4.7. Carina's general perceptions of her essays were positive (category 1), although she recurrently manifested not being able to "assess" her writings (category 2). In all four essays alike she wrote: "I'm quite satisfied with my essay but I am not able to evaluate it by grading it". Her perceived general satisfaction with her essays is shown in Table 5a.

Table 5a. Carina's perceived general satisfaction with essays

Task	1- Perceived satisfaction with essay [a]	2- Self-evaluation [a]	Positive/negative perception [b]
Essay 1:	"quite satisfied"	N/D	positive
Essay 2:	"quite satisfied though less than with previous essay"	N/D	positive
Essay 3:	"quite satisfied"	N/D	positive
Essay 4:	"quite satisfied"	N/D	positive

N/D = no data
[a] Categories 1 and 2 (corresponding items 1 & 2 in the self-evaluation guide)
[b] Identified positive/negative perception as described in Chapter 4, Section 4.7

The main pattern that was revealed through the analysis of Carina's data was her tendency to self-assess her strengths and weaknesses based on the criteria for assessment provided, and particularly on the specific aspects of the text determined by the task purpose, and which were specified in the assignment.

In relation to her perceived strengths, she explicitly mentioned the content of her writings, both in terms of quality and quantity. Regarding quality, she reported as her major strengths both the use of external sources and the provision of evidence which was relevant to the writing purpose and which contributed to an objective tone. The quotes below show her careful consideration of the specific task demands and of the aspects that would be particularly considered for assessment, as described in the task assignment:

Essay 1. Writing purpose: Analyzing two sides of an issue objectively.

> *(SE1-3): I think that one of the strengths of the essay is the supply of factual evidence to support the views presented. As we have already studied, this is one of the things that we should consider in order to achieve an objective tone.*

Essay 2. Writing purpose: Analyzing a problem and proposing solutions.

(SE2-3): I think that one of the strengths of the essay is, again, the supply of factual evidence to describe the problem under analysis. I always consider the fact that presenting factual information helps to achieve an objective tone.

Essay 3. Writing purpose: Analyzing an issue on the basis of published sources.

(SE3-3): I would say that the amount of factual information as well as the references to external sources is a strength in the essay.

Essay 4. Writing purpose: Developing an argument on the basis of published sources.

(SE4-3): . . . , sometimes I tend to include interesting information that is not really relevant for my writing. However, I worked hard on this and I think that the information included in the essay is relevant and appropriate to support my stance.

In addition to her perceived strength in content quality, Carina also reported her satisfaction with content quantity. Though not explicitly revealed in Carina's reports, this perceived strength –content quantity- can also be related to her reported strategies for the careful selection of appropriate organization and development determined by the task demands, which was described in detail in the previous section. This perceived strength is illustrated in the following self-evaluations:

Essay 1. Writing purpose: Analyzing two sides of an issue objectively.

(SE1-3): Another thing that I consider a strength is that I could provide almost the same amount of information on both sides of the issue making it more neutral.

Essay 3. Writing purpose: Analyzing an issue on the basis of published sources.

(SE3-3): I would say that the amount of factual information as well as the references to external sources is a strength in the essay.

Her recurrent concern for the task purpose and for the criteria for assessment was revealed in her data through certain expressions (underlined in the quotes below) which show her awareness and knowledge of the specific features of academic writing as well as the discourse and language constraints when self-assessing her essays:

(SE1-3): . . . the supply of factual evidence <u>to support the views presented</u>. As we have already studied, this is one of the things that we should consider <u>in order to achieve an objective tone</u>. . . . I could provide <u>almost the same amount of information on both sides of the issue making it more neutral</u>.

(SE2-3): . . . , the supply of factual evidence to describe the problem under analysis. I always consider the fact that presenting factual information helps to achieve an objective tone.

(SE3-3): . . . the amount of factual information as well as the references to external sources is a [sic] *strength in the essay.*

(SE4-3): . . . , sometimes I tend to include interesting information that is not really relevant for my writing. However, I worked hard on this and I think that the information included in the essay is relevant and appropriate to support my stance.
(SE4-5): . . . I paid careful attention to the patterns of organization, and I decided to use the pattern analyzed in the last readings done in class: addressing the opposition and arguing it, and acknowledging the opposing views and rebutting them. I think that using these techniques strengthens my argument because it shows that I have analyzed both the benefits and the drawbacks of grouping the gifted.

In relation to her weaknesses, Carina was more able to see them in the subsequent essays than she was in the first one. For example, in Essay 1, although she manifested being unable to identify her weaknesses, she reported paying careful attention to the aspects that needed to be considered to assess quality; she said:

(SE1-4): It is not easy for me to identify the weaknesses that my essay presents, not because I think that it is perfect, but because I tried to follow all the necessary requirements to write a good essay. If I was [sic] *aware of my writing weaknesses I would work on them in order to improve them.*

The weaknesses she reported in subsequent essays were not particularly related to the main aspects considered for assessment, and were generally "local" aspects, i.e., more related to the particular essay than to a general aspect of her writing. For example, in Essay 2 she reported not being satisfied with how she organized the information. Although she had reported a careful selection of the appropriate pattern, as was illustrated in the analysis of strategy use, her dissatisfaction with this essay was particularly related to paragraphing:

(SE2-4): In relation to the weaknesses, I would have liked to divide the information in shorter paragraphs. Sometimes, I consider that including more and shorter paragraphs is better than including only a few and long paragraphs, but although I

tried to rearrange the information I ended up choosing this one; it is the one I found more convenient according to the information presented.

Another aspect which Carina reported as a weakness was related to the selection of relevant information in Essay 4, an aspect which was particularly stressed in the criteria for assessing this writing task, as illustrated in the following quote:

(SE4-4): Selecting relevant information is still one of my weaknesses, or at least one of the things that I find more difficult to do. As I explained in the self-evaluation of the previous essay, sometimes I tend to include interesting information that is not really relevant for my writing.

Nevertheless, in her self-evaluation she later reported satisfaction with the information of her essay, thus, this perceived weakness seems to be more related to a difficulty in the writing process (selecting information) than to a perceived weakness of her text (writing quality), as revealed in the following quote:

(SE4-3): . . . , sometimes I tend to include interesting information that is not really relevant for my writing. However, I worked hard on this and I think that the information included in the essay is relevant and appropriate to support my stance.

This part of the analysis has aimed at describing Carina's perceived quality of her texts, in an attempt to answer RQ3 (*Which are the students' perceptions about the quality of their texts?*). Her perceived quality in general was positive in all her essays. Her main strengths and weaknesses as reported in her self-evaluations are summarized in Table 5.b. In addition, some conclusions can be drawn about her perceived strengths and weaknesses. Based on the main query which guided this part of the grounded analysis – whether her perceived strengths and weaknesses were particularly related to the aspects described in the task specifications and criteria for essay assessment (mentioned in Chapter 4, Section 4.7) - her data revealed two main patterns:

1) Carina's perceived strengths were related to major aspects mentioned in the task demands and scoring criteria, revealing a special consideration of and careful attention to these aspects when self-assessing her texts;
2) Carina's perceived weaknesses were not particularly related to major aspects of the writing task; in addition, it was observed that these were not reported as a recurrent weakness of her writing in general but, rather, of one particular essay.

A longitudinal analysis and further interpretations of these conclusions are developed in the next section.

Table 5b Carina's perceived quality of her essays.

Task	Perceived satisfaction with essay [a]	3- Perceived *strengths* [b]	4- Perceived *weaknesses* [b]
Essay 1	Positive	- content quality: "the supply of factual evidence" - content quantity/ organization: "almost the same amount of information on both sides of the issue"	N/D
Essay 2	Positive	- content quality: "the supply of factual evidence"	- organization: " I would have liked to divide the information in shorter paragraphs"
Essay 3	Positive	- content quantity/organization: " the amount of factual information" - content quality: "the references to external sources"	N/D
Essay 4	Positive	- organization: "... I paid careful attention to the patterns of organization", " using these techniques strengthens my argument"	-Selecting relevant information: "I tend to include interesting information that is not really relevant for my writing"

(N/D = no data)
[a] Positive/negative perceived satisfaction as identified in categories 1 and 2 (See Table 5.a)
[b] Categories 3 and 4 (corresponding to items 3 and 4 in the self-evaluation guide)

(c) CARINA'S LONGITUDINAL DEVELOPMENT

In order to answer RQ 4 (*Do students' perceptions and revision processes develop throughout the course?*), two sources of data were combined and analyzed longitudinally. The conclusions drawn in the two previous sub-sections both regarding revision processes and strategies (sub-section a), and perceived quality (sub-section b) were interpreted longitudinally. That is, through the analysis of the self-evaluation reports for each of the four essays at different times of the development of the course, an attempt was made to identify any development, either positive or negative, or lack thereof, throughout the course, regarding her revision processes and use of strategies, and her perceived strengths and weaknesses. In addition, the data from Questionnaires A and B, administered at the onset and at the end of the course respectively, were also used for this qualitative longitudinal analysis of Carina's development, as this information could help confirm or reconsider the conclusions from the other data and their interpretations. For this part of the longitudinal analysis, mainly answers to items 1 to 8 in both questionnaires were analyzed. These were categories QA/QB 1- general

perception of writing quality, 2- aspects of writing generally revised, 3- aspects especially focalized during revision, 4- revision strategies used, 5- aspects not generally revised, 6- perceived strengths, 7- perceived weaknesses and 8- perceived need for improvement. Answers to the other items in the questionnaires are contemplated in the final discussion of the case.

As regards Carina's revision processes and strategies, the analysis of the data revealed a positive development throughout the course, which could be observed in several aspects. At the onset of the course, Carina had reported focusing mainly on "content, grammar and organization" (QA-3), and as a main strategy she had reported focusing "each time on a different aspect" (QA-4). This "one-aspect-at-a-time" strategy prevailed throughout the revisions in all her essays. As described in detail in sub-section (a), she gradually elaborated the use of this strategy, by showing a focused attention to the writing purpose of each particular task, as well as a growing concern for the task demands and constraints during text revision. As already reported and illustrated, she thoroughly considered in each revision the specific purpose of the text and, then, she carefully chose the most appropriate rhetorical structure and evaluated the relevance of the content provided, according to that purpose. In other words, she adapted her strategy of a purposeful and focused revision to the particular demands of the task. This positive development was particularly shown in her self-evaluation of the last essay, notably more elaborated –not only in terms of length but also in self-awareness- than the "one-aspect-at-a-time" technique reported at the onset of the course:

> *(SE4-5): I spent much more time editing the essay than actually writing it! First, I paid careful attention to the patterns of organization, and I decided to use the pattern analyzed in the last readings done in class: addressing the opposition and arguing it, and acknowledging the opposing views and rebutting them. I think that using these techniques strengthens my argument because it shows that I have analyzed both the benefits and the drawbacks of grouping the gifted . . . . (SE4-9): I have to admit that I worked really hard in order to write this essay. I didn't do so because of the fact that this is the final essay, but because I wanted to carefully consider all the aspects that we have learnt in the subject in relation to writing essays, and I can say that I'm quite satisfied with the result of my effort.*

Carina's data from Questionnaire B at the end of the course also revealed, and thus confirmed, her positive development in this regard. She reported focusing on "content, coherence, grammar, organization, mechanics and vocabulary" (QB-3), thus, revealing a more thorough attention than the one reported at the onset of the course. And in reference to what she did during revision, she reportedly confirmed her focused and purposeful revision:

> *(QB-4): I concentrate on one paragraph at a time and check in each one the use vocabulary, the content, grammar, etc. Then, I try to check that the content included in the development is relevant to the writing (and coincide or is related to what I state in the introduction). Finally, I specifically concentrate on the concluding paragraph! (relevance).*

Another distinct feature that characterized Carina's positive development in the use of her revision strategies was her increasing awareness of their effectiveness. This was particularly revealed in her ability to explain and justify her most effective choices, most clearly observed in the last two essays. For example, in addition to checking the relevance of the content and making appropriate choices of rhetorical pattern and tone appropriate for the writing purpose, she also explicitly reported her choices of effective strategies when a certain problem arose, as well as her reasons for making these effective elections, thus, revealing more maturity as a writer as well as increased writing competence and autonomy towards the end of the course. This is illustrated in the following quotes:

> *(SE3-9): I have read a lot of material in order to do this essay and I selected the information that I considered really relevant for the topic. Since I tried to write this essay using an objective tone, I tried to provide the same amount of information in relation to the good and bad points of public higher education. . . . Then I looked for as much relevant information as I could in the Internet, and I carefully read it at home. It was really difficult for me to make the selection of the information because sometimes I get confused and I select interesting information in relation to the topic rather than relevant information. In relation to the support used, I resorted to different sources. I included some direct quotations (when I didn't find a better way of expressing the information selected) paraphrases and I even summarized the Manifesto . . .*

(SE4-5): . . . because of the content included in each paragraph, the readers will get to know that I'm in favour of grouping the gifted, I mean, I included in each paragraph just one or two sentences mentioning the opposing view and then, the rest of the paragraph is devoted to refute that idea.

In relation to her perceived strengths and weaknesses, the data also revealed positive development longitudinally. Carina's reported strengths at the beginning of the course, namely "*content and organization*" (QA-6), were confirmed both in her self-evaluation reports throughout the course and in Questionnaire B at the end. As already explained and illustrated in sub-section (b), both content and organization were repeatedly self-assessed positively in all her essays. But the aspect which particularly showed her positive development longitudinally in this regard was her increasing awareness of and conscious attention to the specific aspects of content and organization which were given prominence in the criteria for assessing each writing task. That is, she gradually increased her awareness of the specific discourse constraints that needed to be considered for assessing quality in relation to the demand of each task. Her self-evaluation of the last essay particularly revealed this positive development:

(SE4-9): I have to admit that I worked really hard in order to write this essay. I didn't do so because of the fact that this is the final essay, but because I wanted to carefully consider all the aspects that we have learnt in the subject in relation to writing essays, and I can say that I'm quite satisfied with the result of my effort. I spent much more time editing the essay than actually writing it!

Another positive development was related to her awareness of her own progress throughout the course. For example, in Questionnaire A at the beginning of the course Carina had expressed her intentions to "improve the vocabulary and . . . try to use more complex structures" (QA-6), adding, "I would like to use a wider range of words (vocabulary)" (QA-8). At the end of the course, in Questionnaire B, she mentioned "the use of academic vocabulary" among her perceived strengths (QB-6). This positive development regarding her perceived improvement in vocabulary use can be further supported with her self-evaluations throughout the course. For example in Essay 1, she had explicitly reported her concern for using appropriate academic vocabulary, thus, reflecting her own effort to work on this aspect, as illustrated below:

(SE1-6): . . . I concentrated on the language that I used, trying to use as much academic and specific language as possible

And particularly in the last essay, she revealed more knowledge about academic vocabulary and awareness of its appropriate use; she explicitly reported selecting appropriate language both in terms of topic and tone, and effective ways to deal with this aspect. Again, her self-evaluation of Essay 4 highlights her increased confidence and positive development towards the end of the course:

Concern for topic-related vocabulary:

> *(SE4-6): In relation to the use of academic vocabulary, it helped me a lot to revise the activities done in class concerning this topic. I tried to use as much specific vocabulary as possible and I found this vocabulary extremely useful to paraphrase and summarize some important pieces of information.*

Concern for neutral language:

> *(SE4-5): . . . I tried to make my stance clear by being as objective as possible. In order to do so, I chose neutral rather than emotionally charged language.*

Finally, another positive development revealed throughout the course regarding both revision processes and perceptions was her gradually increased knowledge of the specific features of academic writing, mainly, consideration of audience, appropriate tone, use of outside sources, and the appropriate register and lexico-grammar. All these aspects were explicitly mentioned in her self-evaluation reports throughout the course; they were, reportedly, carefully considered during revisions, and positively self-assessed as strengths of her essays. In addition, her conscious and justified choices of appropriate rhetorical structures, content and lexico-grammar give evidence of her awareness of audience considerations and of her knowledge about linguistic constraints and appropriate tone. Special attention to these issues was mainly observed in the last two essays, again, displaying more specialized knowledge of academic writing towards the end of the course. This is illustrated in examples (SE3-9) and (SE4-5), transcribed in previous paragraph.

Throughout the course, the following positive development could be observed in the longitudinal analysis of Carina's revision processes and perceived strengths and weaknesses of her writing:

1) Carina's initial purposeful and focused revisions became gradually more elaborated as she incorporated more specialized knowledge about specific aspects of academic writing;
2) Carina's focused revisions were systematically guided by the specific task demands described in each task and criteria for assessment; i.e., she adapted her purposeful revisions to each specific writing task;
3) Carina's perceived strengths were carefully self-assessed against the specifications and criteria provided for assessing quality in each writing task; i.e., she developed a capacity to self-assess her writing in relations to the specific features that good academic writing entails;
4) Carina gradually revealed more awareness of and knowledge about specific features of academic writing.

(d) CARINA'S PERCEPTIONS AND REVISION PROCESSES AS COMPARED TO WRITING QUALITY

In order to answer RQ5 (*Was there a relationship between the students' use of strategies for text revision and their perceptions and the quality of the students' texts*?) mainly Carina's reported use of strategies and her perceptions of the quality of her text as analyzed longitudinally in subsection (c) were compared with the scores obtained in the essays which determined writing quality. In all her essays alike, Carina obtained scores within bands 5 and 6 in each of the three scales of the analytic scoring, as assessed with the MWASG. She obtained the holistic grades 9.5, 8, 8.5 and 10 in each of the four essays respectively (See Table 6).

Table 6 Carina's analytic and holistic scores in the four essays[a]

Writing task	Analytic score (MWASG)			Holistic score
	Ideas and arguments	Rhetorical features	Language control	
Essay 1	6	5.5	6	9.5
Essay 2	5	5	5	8
Essay 3	5	5.5	5	8.5
Essay 4	6	6	5	10

[a] The scores reported are the average of the scores given by the two raters (See Chapter 4, section 4.4).

A strong agreement was observed between Carina's general self-assessment of her essays and the holistic scores which determined the quality of her texts. In general, her perceived satisfaction with the text quality was positive in all four essays, and this related positively with the high grades obtained, as shown below:

Carina's perceived quality:		Holistic score:	Agreement/ disagreement:
Essay 1	Positive: "quite satisfied"	9.5	Agreement
Essay 2	Positive: "quite satisfied"	8	Agreement
Essay 3	Positive: "quite satisfied"	8.5	Agreement
Essay 4	Positive: "quite satisfied"	10	Agreement

In relation to her perceived strengths and weaknesses of the different aspects of her text, the findings indicated a high degree of agreement between her perceptions and the scores obtained in each of the scales in the MWASG. Among her perceived strengths, Carina reported mainly aspects related to content (content quality, supply of factual evidence, use of sources) and organization (patterns of organization relevant to task purpose) in all her essays, as described and illustrated in sub-section (b). These perceived strengths related positively to the high scores given to "Ideas and arguments" (6, 5, 5 and 6 in each of the essays respectively) and "Rhetorical features" (5.5, 5, 5.5 and 6 respectively).

An important point to notice in this regard was Carina's reported use of the scoring criteria to self-assess these aspects when revising her own essays, as well as her awareness of the writing purpose in each assignment. As described in the previous sections of this analysis, she developed an effective strategy for text revision, first, paying special attention to the writing purpose and, then, focusing thoroughly on each of the aspects mentioned in the assignments, particularly prioritizing macro-level aspects like content and organization. In addition, the data revealed her increased concern for selecting the appropriate rhetorical patterns determined by the task purpose and, as reported, she constantly consulted the coursebook to make the appropriate selections. She even made these choices explicit in her self-evaluation reports: for each essay, she described her own writing purpose and included a clear description and justification of her choice of "development and organization". Her purposeful and effective revisions, mainly in content and organization, correlated positively with the quality of her texts regarding these aspects.

Carina's gradually increasing knowledge of the specific aspects of academic writing might have contributed to the quality of her texts. When describing her revision processes, she constantly reported a concern for audience expectations and for using an appropriate tone and academic vocabulary, and she justified her choices. A qualitative analysis of the teacher feedback revealed that the teacher generally expressed agreement with Carina's comments. For example, the teacher responded positively with comments such as "Yes, very good strategy" or "very effective", with the aim of encouraging the student to continue using these effective strategies. And, though Carina did not explicitly report these specific features of academic writing as her perceived strengths, the high scores she obtained revealed that they must indeed have contributed to the quality of her texts.

Carina developed effective strategies to revise her texts, which helped her not only to develop writing competence but also more writing autonomy. As already observed throughout the analysis, her ability to self-regulate her writing developed positively: while at the beginning of the course -Essay 2- she expressed her intention for improvement (SE2-7), towards the end -Essay 4- she showed more self-management and confidence in her own learning (SE4-9). This improvement can also be positively related to text quality, as she obtained her highest grade -10- in the last essay.

Finally, her perceptions about writing self-evaluation reports developed positively throughout the course. Early in the process, she was rather reticent about self-assessing her texts and writing about her perceptions. In her report for Essay 1, she said:

> *(SE1-2): . . . I am not able to evaluate [the essay] by grading it. . . . . (SE1-9): In my view it would be easier to make this kind of evaluation after the essay has been corrected by the teacher because . . . sometimes we need other people's opinions and points of view in order to recognize and identify the weaknesses of our writings.*

Carina gradually changed this view into a more positive one and, in the report for Essay 2, she revealed more autonomy to self-assess her text and she even reported the usefulness of the task specifications and the course materials to guide this process:

> *(SE2-9): . . . the guides that we have in the manual are of great help in the production of the essays. It helps mainly to check whether what we are writing is relevant or not according to what we are asked to do.*

At the end of the course, in Questionnaire B, she reported that the practice of writing self-evaluations was "very useful" (QB-8); and when justifying her answer, she expressed her positive perception and revealed more self-awareness as an autonomous writer, saying: "Because it helped me to try to approach my own writing in as an objective way as possible. This helps to identify weaknesses in the writings" (QB-9).

The comparison of the written questionnaire at the beginning and at the end of the course showed that some of her perceptions improved, while others remained the same. Like at the beginning of the course, at the end Carina again evaluated herself as a "good" language learner (QB-10), and a "good" writer (QB-11), and evaluated her writing as "good" (QB-1); and, again, she placed writing "second in preference" as compared to the other language macro-skills (QB-12). All this suggests that her perceptions in these aspects of writing remained positive throughout the course. Yet, a significant change was her perception of writing difficulty: unlike the beginning of the course when she rated writing "the most difficult" of the four skills (QA-13), at the end of the course she rated it third in difficulty, i.e., the "second easiest" skill (QB-13). This suggests an increased confidence in her writing ability, as well as a greater development of her autonomy as a writer. It can also mean that this increased self-confidence goes hand in hand with her course achievements: the scores in her essays were consistently very good. In addition, the teacher's comments on her self-evaluation reports and the feedback provided on her essays were generally positive and showed agreement with her own perceptions of writing quality, particularly, regarding the aspects mentioned in the task specifications. This is illustrated in the following transcript of teacher feedback on Essay 1 ("Analyzing both sides of an issue"):

Aspects mentioned in the scoring criteria:	Teacher's comments on essay:
Identification of purpose, audience and issue:	*VG. Very clear.*
Organization: identification/ balance of two sides:	*Parag1: Clear contextualization and introduction of debate.*
Teacher's overall comments on the essay:	*- Well-written and well-organized.* *- Deep and serious analysis of the issue.* *- Good use of sources, mainly in relation to quality of content used, but some minor aspects related to documenting sources need to be revised (next unit!)*

Similar positive teacher comments were observed in the other essays. Likewise, the teacher's comments on Carina's perceived strengths regarding content and organization also showed agreement most of the times; the teacher added comments such as "yes, true", "I agree", "Yes, you did very well on this aspect" in most of Carina's positive perceptions of her texts. The teacher agreement with her own perceived strengths could help explain Carina's increased confidence and self-management.

This section reported on the main findings from Carina's data, describing her revision processes, her perceived writing quality and her longitudinal development throughout the course. Then, these findings were compared with the quality of her writing as measured by the scores obtained, and a positive relationship between them was observed. The findings suggest that developing effective strategies for texts revision as well as the practice of self-assessing her own writing helped Carina to develop more awareness of her own strengths, enhanced her writing competence and autonomy and contributed positively to the quality of her texts. Further discussions of these findings are considered in Chapter 6.

5.1 Case 2. MARIA

Maria was selected as representative of a "low" level of writing competence; she obtained a score of 2 (failing) in the holistic assessment in her first writing assignment. In Questionnaire A, at the beginning of the course, she evaluated her writing in general as "satisfactory" (QA-1), and evaluated herself as an "average" language learner (QA-10) and an "average" writer (QA-11). About her perceived preference for writing as

compared to the other language skills, she placed it third in preference, i.e., "not preferred" (QA-12); and about her perceived difficulty, she placed writing second, i.e., "difficult" (QA-13). In relation to text revisions, María reported that, when revising her text, she read over "all of it" (QA-2) and that she paid more attention to "grammar and organization" (QA-3). Regarding what she did while revising her text (QA-4), she reported a major concern for considering aspects specifically related to both grammar and organization: "I always look at my writing so as to see if it has grammatical errors. Since organization is very important, I always check if I have organized my paragraphs logically "(QA-4). When asked about her strengths and weaknesses, she mentioned an aspect related to content, namely, quality of support, as her strength: "The evidence that I present such as facts, statistics, opinions" (QA-6). In relation to her weaknesses (QA-7), she said, "I am not good at introducing my papers. So the introduction is for me a difficult aspect of writing an essay" (QA-7). As regards the aspects she would like to improve in her writing, she particularly expressed her concern, again, for discourse features, "Not only the introduction but also the conclusion. I want to improve paraphrasing so as to end up a paper properly" (QA-8). In relation to how she would improve these aspects, she stressed the importance of extensive reading and writing practice as an effective strategy: "Maybe reading more and having the chance of writing more essays" QA-9).

Throughout the course, María wrote the four essays assigned, each having a specific purpose and based on a topic of her choice (see Chapter 4, Section 4.4). Her four essays obtained the holistic scores 2, 4.5, 6, and 6 respectively. In addition, she wrote two extra essays: (1) Because she had failed her first essay, she wrote a second version in which she obtained 4; and (2) she wrote an optional essay suggested for extra practice, assigned between Essays 3 and 4; though this essay was not considered in the present study, comments in her self-evaluation report related to her perceptions and revision processes which were considered relevant were included for analysis and discussion. Table 7 contains an outline of María's four essays, making reference to the general purpose of each writing task, the topic and issue she chose to write about, and the specific purpose she chose to develop. She also wrote a self-evaluation for each essay. Complete transcripts of the self-evaluation reports are included in Appendix F.

Table 7 Outline of Maria's essays: task, topic and purpose [a]

Essay 1 (first version)
Task purpose: To write an essay analyzing two sides of an issue
Writing purpose: Analyzing two sides of an issue
Topic: Higher education
Debatable issue: Different educational possibilities for university students in Argentina
Purpose: "To analyze unfair inequalities in the educational opportunities among children in Argentina".
Title: *"Differences in educational opportunities among university students in Argentina"*

Essay 1 (second version)
Task & writing purpose: Same as Task 1.
Topic: Higher education
Debatable issue: Different educational possibilities for high-income and low-income university students in Argentina
Purpose: To analyze inequalities in the educational opportunities among university students in Argentina.
Title: *"Inequalities in educational possibilities among university students in Argentina"*

Essay 2
Task purpose: To write an essay analyzing a problem
Writing purpose: Analyzing a problem/ proposing solutions to a problem
Topic: Higher education
Debatable issue: Positive and negative aspects of public university education in Argentina
Purpose: "To analyze positive and negative aspects of higher education focusing on the main problems and giving some solutions."
Title: *"Public Higher Education in Argentina: What to Consider?"*

Essay 3
Task purpose: To write an essay using published sources for the analysis of an issue
Writing purpose: Analyzing an issue on the basis of published sources
Topic: Higher education
Debatable issue: Some negative aspects related to public university education in Argentina
Purpose: "To analyze some negative aspects of higher education focusing on the main problems and giving some solutions."
Title: *"Public Higher Education in Argentina: What to Consider?"*

Essay 4
Task purpose: To write an essay developing your own argument on the basis of outside sources for the analysis of an issue
Writing purpose: Analyzing your own argument on the basis of published sources
Topic: Grouping gifted children.
Debatable issue: Whether or not gifted children should be separated from average children in the regular classroom.
Purpose: "To develop my own argument. My position in this essay is to express disagreement with the idea of separating the gifted from the average children in regular classes."
Title: *"Gifted and non-gifted children in the regular classroom."*

[a] Both the task and writing purpose were included in the assignment; the topic, issue, specific purpose of the essay, and the title were transcribed verbatim from the student's essays.

As with the first Case Study, the following sub-sections report on the results obtained in the analysis of María's data. The same order is followed.

(a) MARÍA'S REVISION PROCESSES AND STRATEGIES

The data used to analyze María's revision process and strategies (i.e., RQ2) came mainly from her self-evaluation reports written for each of her essays. As with the first case study, the data coded into categories SE 5- aspects focalized during revision, 6- revision strategies used and 7- aspects not revised, were used for this part of the

analysis. Two main patterns could be identified in the data. One is related to what aspects of the essays María mainly focused on during revision (category 5). In all four essays, she reported the same revision process, namely, concentrating both on organization and grammar. This is shown in the following quotes:

> *(SE1-5): Honestly, the aspects I mostly concentrated on when revising my writing were related to organization and language.*
> *(SE2-5): The aspects I always concentrate on when revising my papers are related to organization and language, from my point of view, the most difficult aspects.*
> *(SE3-5)* and *(SE4-5):* Idem self-evaluations 1 and 2.

This was also reported in Questionnaire A at the onset of the course (QA-3: aspects focalized during text revision). In addition, her reports throughout the course revealed another distinct feature related to this focus: she reported using a process of "self-questioning" as a strategy to guide her revision. For example, in Essay 1 ("Analyzing both sides of an issue"), she said:

> *(SE1-5): Honestly, the aspects I mostly concentrated on when revising my writing were related to organization and language . . . . (SE1-6): What I asked to myself after writing the essay was: Did I organize the essay properly? Did the introduction make sense? What about the academic vocabulary used? Was it used meaningfully? What about language?*

In the subsequent self-evaluation reports, even when each writing task had a different purpose, requiring a different rhetorical structure and appropriate lexico-grammar, she reported the same strategy; nevertheless, she did not make any reference to the specific writing purpose.

> *(SE2-6): I always ask to myself after writing: did I organize the essay properly?, what about language?, was the academic vocabulary properly used?*
> *(SE3-6): I always ask to myself after writing: did I organize the essay properly?, what about language?, was the academic vocabulary properly used? All these questions help me organize my information more accurately.*

Even when this strategy prevailed in all her revisions throughout the course, María did not report, nor did the analysis of the data reveal, a particular focus for this self-questioning, or its effect. That is, neither the questions nor the order in which she posed them seemed to reveal any clear purpose in the use of the strategy; and even when she

was consistent with the aspects she reported focusing on during the revisions (organization, language, academic vocabulary), she did not report how she approached the revision of each of those aspects addressed in the questions. This issue is further discussed and interpreted in the longitudinal analysis in sub-section (c).

The other pattern revealed by María's self-evaluation reports is related to her concern for both *macro-level* (organization) and *micro-level* (grammar) aspects. Yet, no particular order of priority or staged-revision can be identified in her data. She repeatedly reported making changes related to lower-level aspects such as lexis and grammatical structures, thus, showing a stronger focus on surface editing than on substantial revisions in content or organization, even when these two aspects were her major concern. For example, in all the essays she reported correcting language and vocabulary:

> *(SE1-6): After a thoroughly revision, I made some changes concerning language and lexis (I had to look for collocations!).*
> *(SE2-6): Always after a thorough revision, I make changes, usually about language and lexis, mainly collocations.*
> *(SE3-6):* Idem essay 2.
> *(SE4-6): Yes, I changed some words for more suitable ones (vocabulary), and then I changed some structures (grammar).*

One particular feature related to this last aspect –language and vocabulary editing- refers to her use of the course materials. She particularly reported checking the vocabulary activities practised in class, as a strategy aimed at revising vocabulary used in her texts:

> *(SE4-6): Yes, I changed some words for more suitable ones (vocabulary), and then I changed some structures (grammar). I would like to say that the vocabulary activities done in class helped me a lot!!*

As with the first case-study (and as described in Chapter 4, Section 4.7), the analysis of the students' revision processes and strategies (i.e., RQ2) was grounded on three main questions for pattern identification: (1) whether the students focused on the aspects specifically described in the writing tasks and in the scoring criteria provided; (2) whether they prioritized macro-level revision, or micro-level revision, or whether there was any absence of patterns in the types of revision; and (3) whether they displayed

specific knowledge of academic writing in their revision processes. Using these themes as a framework to answer the question, and based on the analysis of María's self-evaluation reports, the main patterns that could be observed through her data were the following:

1) María's revisions showed a concern for both organization and grammar, and revealed no distinct staged process or reference to the task purpose or task specifications.
2) María's use of the "self-questioning" strategy to guide her revision for organization and language (grammar and vocabulary) displayed no particular focus or order in the questions, and revealed no clear purpose in the use of the strategy.
3) María's concern for both macro-level (organization) and micro-level (grammar) aspects showed no special sequence during revision and particularly prioritize lower-level editing.

In her self-evaluation reports, María did not explicitly report using or referring to the task specifications during her revisions; and the data did not reveal any reference to its use. Yet, the analysis of her data revealed, more implicitly, an increased attention to the characteristics of academic writing which were mentioned in the writing task, especially her concern for using academic vocabulary. Further analyses and interpretations of these conclusions are presented in the longitudinal analysis of her development, in sub-section (c).

(b) MARÍA'S PERCEPTIONS OF HER OWN WRITING

The data used for the analysis of María's perceived quality of her writing (i.e., RQ 3) came mainly from her answers to items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 8 in the self-evaluation guide. These were categories SE 1- general perception of essay, 2- self-evaluation of essay, 3- perceived strengths, 4- perceived weakness, and 8- perceived need for improvement. The criteria for the identification of positive and negative perceptions were explained in Chapter 4, Section 4.7. María's general perceptions of her essays (category 1) were not very positive; in all of them she reported not being very satisfied with what she wrote. Yet, she self-evaluated (category 2) essays 1 and 4 positively; essay 2 was self-

evaluated negatively, and she did not self-evaluate essay 3. Her perceived general satisfaction with her essays is shown in Table 8.a.

Table 8a María's perceived general satisfaction with essays

Task	1- Perceived satisfaction with essay [a]	2- Self-evaluation [a]	Positive/negative perception [b]
Essay 1:	"not very satisfied"	Satisfactory	positive
Essay 2:	"not so much satisfied"	Poor	negative
Essay 3:	"not so much satisfied" (but a little more than with the previous one)	N/D	negative
Essay 4:	"not so much satisfied" (less than with the previous one)	Satisfactory	positive

N/D = no data
[a] Categories 1 and 2 (corresponding items 1 & 2 in the self-evaluation guide)
[b] Identified positive/negative perception as described in Chapter 4, Section 4.7

Regarding perceived strengths and weaknesses, one main pattern that the analysis of the data revealed was María's tendency to prioritize lower-level aspects in her positive perceptions of writing quality. For example, in relation to her perceived strengths (category 3), María recurrently mentioned her satisfaction with "the use of linguistic markers" for discourse organization; this positive comment was reported in her self-evaluations of the four essays alike. The use of lexico-grammatical features appropriate to the organization of the text and relevant to the specific text purpose was one of the aspects mentioned in the task specifications of the four essays. And although María did not particularly report checking the task specifications, the analysis of her data revealed her concern for the task purpose regarding this aspect –use of appropriate language. This was observed in her self-evaluation report of Essay 1, mainly in her ability to explain the purpose of each phrase selected:

Essay 1. Writing purpose: Analyzing two sides of an issue objectively.

> *(B-SE1-3): What I can consider positive in my paper is the use of linguistic markers at the beginning of each paragraph. Each linguistic marker gives the paragraph a specific purpose; for instance:*
> *1st P: 'In Argentina, ... ': the linguistic marker introduces the topic.*
> *2nd P: 'Taking into account... ': It presents the negative aspect of the issue to be developed.*
> *3rd P: 'Some experts in the field of ... ': It includes experts' opinions showing the negative side of the issue and also, giving support.*
> *4th P: 'Unlike... ': It introduces and analyzes the other side.*
> *5th P: 'According to some experts' vantage point ... ': It analyzes the topic providing an example about 'bright and slow students' and about the different social classes they belong to.*
> *6th P: 'To conclude, ... ': It sums up or rounds of the topic.*

In subsequent self-evaluations, she continued reporting this aspect as her strength; yet, she did not make any explicit reference to the task purpose, nor did the data reveal any marked relation between the linguistic markers she reported using and the specific writing purpose in each essay. That is, her choices seemed to be associated with academic writing in general, not specifically determined by the task demands:

Essay 2. Writing purpose: Analyzing a problem and proposing solutions.

> *(SE2-3): What I can consider positive in my essay is the use of linguistic markers at the beginning of some paragraphs. Each linguistic marker gives the paragraph a specific purpose; for instance: A recent emphasis on (P. 1; Not only ... but also...; (P.3); Still (P.5); But (P.6); In 1.995 (P.7); It is evident that (P.8).*

Essay 3. Writing purpose: Analyzing an issue on the basis of published sources.

> *(SE3-3): What I can consider positive in my essay is the use of linguistic markers at the beginning of some paragraphs. Each linguistic marker gives the paragraph a specific purpose; for instance: In recent years, the heavy emphasis on... (P. 1); Still, there are some dissatisfactions .... (P.3); According to Marcela Mollis... (P.4); But, the most common complaint... (P.5); In 1,995,... (P.6); It is evident that,... (P.7).*

Essay 4. Writing purpose: Developing your own argument on the basis of published sources. *(SE4-3):* Same as previous ones.

Another pattern that the data revealed was Maria's tendency to self-assess negatively macro-level aspects of her texts, mainly aspects related to organization and content. For example, an aspect she repeatedly mentioned in her self-evaluation reports as a perceived weakness (categoy 4) was her concern for poor content and support:

> *(SE1-4): Concerning my weaknesses, I truly believe that my writing should have had more expert's opinions and more personal ideas so as to link and support the topic being discussed and the content. I consider that support (for example in the way of outside sources) is a fundamental prerequisite for a good essay organization.*

> *(SE2-4): Concerning my weaknesses, I truly believe that it would be interested [sic] to have more experts'opinions in order to link and support the topic and*

content under discussion. I, personally, consider that support and justification are two fundamental prerequisites for a good essay organization.

Appropriate content and support were among the main aspects taken into account in the scoring criteria. In addition, each writing task made specific reference to the use of appropriate content for the development of the essay. Though María did not explicitly mention checking the scoring criteria, her comments above revealed her awareness that these aspects are, indeed, essential to achieve writing quality; i.e., she developed the awareness that she could not yet achieve writing quality. This can be observed mainly in her explanations of her perceived weaknesses, mainly through the expressions "I truly believe that" and "I consider that ... are fundamental".

The other perceived weakness that María reported, and also related to macro-level aspects, involved essay organization, and her reported inability to organize her ideas effectively and successfully in her essays. And again, selecting the appropriate organization according to task purpose was one of the aspects particularly highlighted in the specifications of all four essays. Her reported weakness in dealing with organization is shown in the following quotes:

(SE3-4):Concerning my weaknesses, I truly believe that I need to organize my information more coherently in order to link and support the topic and content under discussion I, personally, consider that support and justification are two fundamental prerequisites for a good essay organization.

(SE4-4): Concerning my weaknesses, it seems that it is always the same problem: "essay organization". It seems to me that my writings are never well-developed. I realize that writing clear ideas down on paper is really difficult.

Her concern for organization was mentioned in Questionnaire A, and it was also observed in the self-evaluation reports of her four essays regarding the aspects she would particularly like to improve (category 8); that is, in addition to perceiving it as a weakness of her writings, María explicitly reported this aspect as a perceived need for improvement:

(SE1-8): What I would like to improve is the way in which I organize my essays. For me, the organization of essays is a hard and tough activity because I never know how to put ideas clearly in paper.

(SE2-8): What I would like to improve is essay organization because I never know how to put ideas clearly in paper so as to write a well-organized essay.

(SE3-8): (Idem Essay 2). . . . *For me, it is very difficult to know what ideas to include and develop in the essay, and what information to left aside.*

(SE4-8): Yes, as I always say, what I would like to improve is essay organization, and I know how to do it: reading and writing a lot.

This part of the analysis has aimed at describing María's perceived writing quality, attempting to answer RQ3 (*Which are the students' perceptions about the quality of their texts?*). As reported in her self-evaluations, María's general perception of the quality of her essays was rather negative. Her strengths and weaknesses as reported in her self-evaluations are summarized in Table 8b.

Table 8b María's perceived quality of her essays

Task	Perceived satisfaction with essay [a]	3- Perceived *strengths* [b]	4- Perceived *weaknesses* [b]
Essay 1	Positive	- Lexico-grammatical choices: "the use of linguistic markers at the beginning of each paragraph" (a list of phrases follows).	- Content quality: "...my writing should have had more expert's opinions and more personal ideas so as to link and support the topic".
Essay 1 (2nd version)	Negative	- Lexico-grammatical choices: "the use of lexis (academic vocabulary), and the use of some linguistic markers"	- Content quality/ organization: "lack of clear organization . . . lack of content and supporting ideas or justification"
Essay 2	Negative	- Lexico-grammatical choices: "the use of linguistic markers at the beginning of some paragraphs" (a list of phrases follows).	- Content quality: "... it would be interested to have more experts' opinions in order to link and support the topic and content under discussion".
Essay 3	Negative	Idem Essays 1 and 2.	- Content quality/ organization: "... I need to organize my information more coherently in order to link and support the topic and content"
Essay 4	Positive	Idem Essays 1, 2 and 3.	- Organization: "it is always the same problem: 'essay organization'".

[a] Positive/negative perceived satisfaction as identified in categories 1 and 2 (see Table 8.a)
[b] Categories 3 and 4 (corresponding to items 3 & 4 the self-evaluation guide)

Some conclusions can be drawn in relation to María's perceived strengths and weaknesses. As with Case Study 1, this part of the analysis was guided by the general issue of whether the student's perceived strengths and weaknesses were particularly related to the aspects described in the task specifications and criteria for assessment (mentioned in Chapter 4, Section 4.7). Based on this as a framework to answer the question, two main patterns could be observed through the grounded analysis of the data:

1) María's perceived strengths were related to appropriate lexico-grammatical choices (a micro-level aspect) which, though not explicitly reported, indirectly revealed her attention to an aspect mentioned in the task specifications, namely, use of appropriate lexico-grammar and academic vocabulary;
2) María's perceived main weaknesses were her considerable concern for content and organization (macro-level aspects) which, though not explicitly reported, indirectly revealed her attention to those aspects specifically mentioned in the criteria for assessment; even when her perceptions were negative, she showed awareness of the importance of these features for assessing writing quality and her perceived difficulty in achieving it.

Her tendency to self-assess positively her command of micro-level aspects and negatively her command of macro-level aspects somehow showed her awareness of her own limitations and inability to meet acceptable standards of writing quality. A longitudinal analysis and interpretation of these conclusions are presented in the next section.

(c) MARÍA'S LONGITUDINAL DEVELOPMENT

As with Case study 1, RQ4 (*Do students' perceptions and revision processes develop throughout the course?*) was approached analyzing longitudinally two main sources of data: the conclusions drawn from the analysis of María's revision processes (sub-section a) and her perceived quality of her own writing (sub-section b). This longitudinal analysis allowed for a qualitative interpretation of any development throughout the course, either positive or negative, or lack thereof, in relation to her revision processes and perceptions. And, again as with Case Study 1, the data from Questionnaires A and B, mainly answers to Items 1 to 8, were also used for the qualitative longitudinal analysis. These were categories QA/QB 1- general perception of writing quality, 2- aspects of writing generally revised, 3- aspects especially focalized during revision, 4- revision strategies used, 5- aspects not generally revised, 6- perceived strengths, 7- perceived weaknesses, and 8- perceived need for improvement.

Considering María's revision processes and the strategies used during revision, the analysis of the data allowed the identification of both positive and negative

development throughout the course. One outstanding pattern was María's limited repertoire and lack of development of effective strategies for text revision. In relation to the aspects she reported focusing during revision, the data analyzed did not provide evidence of longitudinal development; rather, it revealed lack of development. In all her self-evaluation reports, she persistently reported focusing on "grammar and organization", in addition to "asking herself questions" when revising these two aspects in her texts. As described in detail in sub-section (a), María used this "self-questioning" technique in the revisions of all her texts. Yet, even when this revision strategy prevailed throughout the course, María did not report, nor did the analysis of the data reveal, a specific focus in her self-questioning, or its effects. As already described, the data did not reveal a clear purpose in the use of the strategy; neither did she report on how she approached the revision of each of the aspects addressed in those questions; i.e., she did not report considering the task purpose or the specific discourse and language demanded by the task when revising each of the aspects she reported focusing on during revision. She did not seem to adapt the self-questioning strategy to the specific task demands, especially regarding the appropriate discourse organization required for the writing purpose, even when this was her major concern. For example, in her first essay, María obtained a failing grade and received teacher feedback with suggestions aimed mainly at how to improve the text organization. In her re-written version of the text with revisions based on the feedback received, no substantial changes could be observed regarding the type of revisions used for improving this aspect, as illustrated in her quote:

> *(SE1b-5): As I already said in the other 'prácticos', the aspects I mostly concentrate on when revising the paper are: grammar and organization (this aspect is my recurrent problem).*

Towards the end of the course, she continued reporting the same revision processes, thus, reflecting practically no development in the use of effective strategies and no awareness of how to approach each of the aspects effectively; this can be particularly seen in her use of the word "always":

> *(SE4-5) I <u>always</u> concentrate on: 1) organization, 2) grammar, and 3) the use of suitable vocabulary. <u>Always</u> after revising my paper I find some mistakes that need correction*

Another aspect which revealed lack of development regarding María's revision processes was related to her tendency to prioritize micro-level editing over macro-level revisions. As already described in sub-section (a), María reported making changes mainly in grammar and lexis. For example, the same comments were observed in Essay 1 at the beginning of the course and in Essay 3, towards the end:

> *(SE1-6): . . . I made some change concerning language and lexis (I had to look for collocations!). . . . (SE1-7): For all the other aspects that I did not check, I consider them satisfactory from the point of view of language and grammar.*

> *(SE3-6)2: Always after a thorough revision I make changes, usually about language and lexis (mainly collocations). . . . (SE3-7): For all the other aspects that I did not check, I believe they are satisfactory.*

Yet, even when her self-evaluation reports showed lack of development regarding revision processes, a comparison between Questionnaire A and Questionnaire B allowed for the identification of some positive development by the end of the course. For example, while at the beginning of the course she reported focusing only on "grammar and organization" (QA-3), at the end she mentioned "grammar, organization and collocations" (QB-3). This is consistent with her increased concern for vocabulary, as reported in her self-evaluations, and with her tendency to prioritize lexis and grammar in her revisions. In addition, Questionnaire B also showed a positive development in relation to the strategies she reported using at the end of the course. For example, apart from revising "grammar and organization" (QA-4), as reported at the onset of the course, her answers in Questionnaire B at the end of the course revealed that now she checked the purpose of her writing and the task demands when revising her text, and that she followed a staged revision, as reflected through the words "first", "then" and "finally". This positive development is apparent in her comments in both questionnaires, as illustrated below:

> *(QA-4): I always look at my writing so as to see if it has grammatical errors. Since organization is very important, I always, check if I have organized my paragraphs logically.*

> *(QB-4): First of all, I check the organization of my writing, then I concentrate mostly on grammar. Finally, I read my claim to see if it is appropriate to the kind of essay I'm writing and its purpose.*

The strategies mentioned in Questionnaire B were not reported in her self-evaluations throughout the course, which may explain María's increasing awareness of the writing purpose and task constraints at the end of the course.

In relation to her perceived strengths and weaknesses, the longitudinal analysis of María's data revealed both positive and negative development. The data revealed a lack of development regarding her perceived weaknesses; i.e., she reported the same weaknesses longitudinally throughout the course, showing no awareness of her own improvement. A significant feature was the fact that in Questionnaire A at the course start, María had reported as her perceived strength: "the evidence that I present such as facts, statistics, opinions" (QA-6). Yet, this perceived strength –content quality- became her perceived weakness longitudinally. As already described in sub-section (b), María recurrently mentioned her concern for "poor content and organization" in all her essays. For example, in Essay 1 she self-assessed the content of her writing negatively, as already illustrated in example (SE1-4), and in her re-written version of the same essay after feedback was received, her self-evaluation of this aspect did not change:

> *(SE1b-4) (2nd version): The weaknesses in my writing are: lack of clear organization, lack of content and supporting ideas or justification.*

Similarly, María self-assessed negatively her use of content and organization in the following essays, as was already described in sub-section (b). This negative perception, specifically concerning essay organization, was also confirmed at the end of the course, in Questionnaire B; her perceived weakness was again "organization" (QB-7). In addition, María's negative development regarding organization could also be related to her lack of development regarding the use of strategies for effective text revision, and her limited repertoire of strategies. She recurrently highlighted the effectiveness of asking herself questions when revising her text; yet, using this self-questioning technique did not seem to help her to improve her essays or, at least the data did not reveal a positive perception in this regard. For example, in Essay 3, even when she reported the effectiveness of asking herself questions, she reported essay organization as her perceived weakness in her essay:

> *(SE3-6): I always ask to myself after writing: did I organize the essay properly?, what about language?, was the academic vocabulary properly used? <u>All these</u>*

> *questions help me organize my information more accurately. . . . (SE3-4): Concerning my weaknesses, I truly believe that I need to organize my information more coherently in order to link and support the topic and content under discussion.*

On the other hand, María's positive development could be observed mainly in relation to her perceived strengths. Her data revealed a consistent satisfaction with the use of academic vocabulary and linguistic markers to signal essay organization:

> *(SE1b-3): I think that the strengths in my essay are: the use of lexis (academic vocabulary), and the use of some linguistic markers* (She includes a list of examples).

These two aspects, which were mentioned in her self-evaluation reports in all her essays alike, had not been reported in Questionnaire A at the onset of the course, thus, gradually showing more awareness of specific features of academic writing longitudinally. In addition, because the use of appropriate language and lexis was one of the aspects mentioned in the task specifications, this concern revealed María's attention to the task specifications and scoring criteria regarding this aspect, even when she did not report their use, as well as more knowledge of the characteristics of academic writing. Another positive aspect related to her linguistic choices –both her use of linguistic markers and academic vocabulary in general- was the fact that they reflected her imitation of model texts. For example, many of the linguistic markers used in her essays, as reported in her self-evaluations, were "copied" from the texts analyzed in class. This showed her tendency to resort to model texts as a source of input to increase her own vocabulary. As already mentioned in the description of the course methodology (Chapter 4, Section 4.4), the identification and analysis of appropriate lexico-grammar in model texts were particularly emphasized in the classes.

Throughout the course, the following development, both positive and negative, could be observed in the longitudinal analysis of María's revision processes and perceived strengths and weaknesses of her writing:

1) María's perceived strengths (use of academic vocabulary and linguistic markers) remained positive longitudinally. In addition, the use of the task specifications, as well as the use of model texts and resource materials, seemed to have contributed to her positive perceptions of these aspects.

2) Maria's perceived weaknesses showed a lack of development; she consistently had the same perceptions of weaknesses throughout the course, and she revealed no development of effective revision strategies to improve them.
3) María revealed little awareness of effective strategies for texts revisions as well as poor use of the task specifications and scoring criteria; she mainly used them for micro-level aspects.

(d) MARÍA'S PERCEPTIONS AND REVISION PROCESSES AS COMPARED TO WRITING QUALITY

In order to answer RQ5 (*Was there a relationship between the students' use of strategies for text revision and their perceptions and the quality of the students' texts*?) María's reported use of strategies and her perceived strengths and weaknesses were compared longitudinally to the scores given to the essays which determined writing quality. Except for her first essay, which obtained scores between bands 2 and 3 in the analytic scoring and a failing grade holistically, the other essays obtained scores between bands 4 and 5 in the different scales of the MWASG (Ideas and arguments, rhetorical features and language control), and passing grades between 4 and 6 as holistic scores. A gradual positive development could be observed in relation to her writing quality, as her grades became gradually higher in each of the different aspects of the text (See Table 9).

Table 9 María's analytic and holistic scores in the four essays[a]

Writing task	Analytic score (MWASG)			Holistic score
	Ideas and arguments	Rhetorical features	Language control	
Essay 1	2.5	2.5	2	2
Essay 1 (2nd version)	3	3.5	4	4
Essay 2	4	4	4.5	4.5
Essay 3	4	5	5	6
Essay 4	4	5	5	6

[a] The scores reported are the average of the scores given by the two raters (See Chapter 4, section 4.4).

María's general self-assessment of each of her essays did not reveal a very strong agreement with the holistic scores which determined the quality of her writing. In general, she tended to perceive the quality of her texts more negatively than the teacher,

except for her first essay, which she self-assessed positively, but obtained a failing grade. In her re-written version, she had a more negative perception of the text quality, probably because of the negative teacher feedback received in the first version; yet, she obtained a passing grade. Similarly, she self-evaluated Essays 2 and 3 negatively, but obtained passing grades of 4.5 and 6, respectively. However, even though 4 was the "passing" grade, obtaining scores on the borderline between passing and failing somehow showed "partial agreement" between the quality of her texts and her rather negative perceptions. María's perception developed more positively towards the end of the course, specifically in the last essay, probably because of her gradual improvement in the previous ones: she self-assessed Essay 4 positively, thus, her perceptions agreed with the good grade obtained –6- the highest of all her essays. Agreement/disagreement between her perceptions and the quality of her essays is shown below:

María's perceived quality:		Holistic score:	Agreement/ disagreement:
Essay 1	Positive: "satisfactory"	2	Disagreement
E1 (2nd versions)	Negative: "poor"	4	Partial agreement
Essay 2	Negative: "poor"	4.5	Partial agreement
Essay 3	Negative: "not so much satisfied"	6	Disagreement
Essay 4	Positive: "satisfactory"	6	Agreement

Regarding María's perceived strengths and weaknesses of the different aspects of her text, the findings indicated partial agreement between her own perceptions and the quality of her texts, as measured by the analytic scores she obtained in the three different scales of the MWASG. While more agreement could be observed between the scores obtained and her perceived strengths, more disagreement could be observed between the scores obtained and her perceived weaknesses. In relation to her strengths, María reported micro-level aspects related to lexico-grammar, namely, "the use of academic vocabulary and linguistic markers" as the strengths in all her essays alike. The qualitative analysis of the teacher's feedback and comments in the assessment of these aspects revealed close agreement with María's perceptions. For example, when reporting them as her perceived strengths, she received positive comments by the teacher showing agreement, such as: "yes, good" (Essay 1); "Yes, I agree. You did very well on this; you have incorporated much of the language studied in class. Very good!" (Essay 3). María's positive perceptions remained constant regarding these aspects in the other essays, and so did the teacher's comments showing positive agreement. An important point in this regard was the fact that María, reportedly, developed effective

strategies to improve her academic vocabulary. As already described in the previous sub-sections, María always revised her use of vocabulary and the linguistic markers of discourse organization and consulted the coursebook and other course materials for help. In addition, as suggested in the various class activities, she used the texts analyzed in class as "models to imitate", as a strategy for improving her vocabulary. The use of these revision strategies seems to have contributed positively to the quality of her texts regarding this aspect.

On the other hand, more disagreement between teacher and student's perceptions of quality was found in relation to her perceived weaknesses. As described in the previous sub-sections, María's perceived weaknesses were "poor content and lack of essay organization", as reported in her self-evaluations; yet, while her perceptions tended to be generally negative, the scores obtained both in "Ideas and arguments" (I&A) and "Rhetorical features" (RF) in the analytic scoring became, though slightly, gradually higher. Closer agreement was observed in Essays 1 and 2 between María's perceived weaknesses and the poor quality of the essays' content and organization as measured both by the low scores obtained in the two analytic scales –I&A and RF- and the teacher's rather negative comments. However, more disagreement was observed in Essays 3 and 4 between her perceptions and her writing quality: while her perceptions remained negative regarding content and organization, her scores slightly increased. The teacher's comments also revealed this disagreement. Table 10 displays examples from the data showing the gradual development in the quality of María's essays as compared with her own perceptions; examples of teacher feedback are also provided to illustrate agreement or disagreement.

Table 10 María's perceived weaknesses as compared to writing quality and teacher's perception

Task	María's perceived weaknesses [a]	Teacher's feedback and comments on essays and reports [b]	Analytic scores [c]	Agreement/ Disagreement
E1	[SE1-4] "... my writing should have had more expert's opinions and more personal ideas so as to link and support the topic being discussed and the content" (1) "... support and justification are fundamental for a good essay organization" (2).	(1) Teacher's comments on essay: - "Make your issue clear" - Parag.2, last sent: "this concept needs further support" - Parag.3: "this is a strong claim. It needs further support & justification". (2) "This essay needs some revision of organization mainly" (A detailed list of suggestions follows)	I&A: 2.5 RF: 2.5	Agreement (negative perception→ negative feedback and low scores)

E1, 2nd version	[SE1b-4] "The weaknesses in my writing are: lack of clear organization, lack of content and supporting ideas or justification).		I&A: 3 RF: 3.5	Agreement (negative perception→ low scores)
E2	[SE2-4] ". . . it would be interested to have more experts'opinions in order to link and support the topic and content under discussion" (3). [SE2-5] "The aspects I always concentrate on when revising my papers are related to organization" (4)	(3) "Yes, true; in general, you have good ideas but . . . you would need to support them a bit more; mainly, you should analyze a bit further the problem (consequences, people affected, etc.) and the suggestions". (4) "Notice that the organization is clear in general (there is coherence throughout the whole essay), but you did not really follow the pattern required for the task, which is . . ." (list of specific suggestions on essay)	I&A: 4 RF: 4	Partial agreement (negative perception→ rather negative feedback and slightly higher scores)
E3	[SE3-4] ". . . I truly believe that I need to organize my information more coherently in order to link and support the topic and content under discussion" (5)	(5) But you did much better this time. You mainly need to revise the order of some of the information included. . . . See my comments in relation to this aspect" (Suggestions on essay).	I&A: 4 RF: 5	Disagreement (negative perception→ more positive feedback and higher scores)
E4	[SE4-4] ". . . it is always the same problem: essay organization . . . It seems to me that my writings are never well-developed. I realize that writing clear ideas down on paper is really difficult".		I&A: 4 RF: 5	Disagreement (negative perception→ higher scores

[a] Perceived weaknesses as reported in item 4 in the self evaluation reports.
[b] Numbers between brackets indicate the corresponding segment of the subject's comment that the feedback responds to.
[c] Scales in the MWASG: I&A= Ideas and arguments; RF = Rhetorical features.

The lack of agreement between María's perceptions and the text quality, which was more marked in Essays 3 and 4, can also be related to her revision processes and the strategies used. As was already reported in the previous sub-sections, María did not develop effective strategies for improving macro-level aspects of the texts like content and organization; rather, she used a limited repertoire of strategies for self-assessing her text. She had reported "asking herself questions" as a strategy for revising the different aspects of the text (this technique was suggested in the coursebook as "tips for self-assessment"), but she did not report, for example, checking the task purpose in order to self-assess the selection of appropriate discourse and content; rather, she approached all revisions in the same way. Little or no development of effective strategies for improving essay organization and development was observed in relation to the feedback provided by the teacher. For example, the negative feedback she received from the teacher on discourse organization in Essay 1 was followed by a list of suggestions for improvement. Yet, these suggestions were not effectively taken into consideration in her re-written version of the essay, as shown by María's still negative perceptions and the

low scores obtained both in the aspects "Ideas and arguments" and "Rhetorical features". Her perceptions in the subsequent essays remained negative, probably connected to an increased negative self-concept due to the low scores and negative feedback received. And, while agreement between her general perceived satisfaction and the scores obtained was stronger towards the end of the course, her perceived weaknesses remained the same. This is illustrated in the following comment reported in Essay 4, and stressed by the words "always" and "never":

> (SE4-4): *Concerning my weaknesses, it seems that it is always the same problem: "essay organization". It seems to me that my writings are never well-developed. I realize that writing clear ideas down on paper is really difficult.*

Finally, María's attitude towards the practice of self-assessing her text was positive. At the end of the course, she reported that writing self-evaluations was "very useful" (QB-8); however, she did not seem to be able to see a clear purpose for writing them or an increased awareness of her own progress and writing autonomy. When justifying its usefulness, she explained, "It helped me analyze our writings specifically" (QB-9).

The comparison of the written questionnaire at the beginning and at the end of the course showed that, in general, her perceptions remained the same. Her self-concept as a language learner improved from "average" at the beginning of the course (QA-10) to "good" at the end (QB-10). But her perceptions regarding writing in particular did not develop: like at the onset of the course, María again evaluated herself as an "average" writer (QB-11), and evaluated her writing as "satisfactory" (QB-1); and, again, she placed writing third in preference as compared to the other language macro-skills, i.e., "not preferred" (QB-12). All this seems to suggest that her perceptions of writing did not change throughout the course and were, in general, not very positive. In addition, a negative development was observed in relation to her perceived writing difficulty: while she had placed writing as second most difficult at the onset of the course (QA-13), she placed it first, i.e., "the most difficult", at the end (QB-13). This increased perception of writing difficulty can be explained in relation to her increased awareness of what writing quality entails. She became gradually more aware of the aspects that contribute to the quality of academic texts and, thus, she simultaneously developed more awareness of her own limitations and difficulty to achieve acceptable standards of

writing quality. This is illustrated in her comments, mainly in Essays 3 and 4 towards the end of the course:

> *(SE3-8): What I would like to improve is essay organization because I never know how to put ideas clearly in the paper so as to write a well-organized, well-developed essay. For me, it is very difficult to know what ideas to include and develop in the essay, and what information to left aside.*
>
> *(SE4-9): What I would like to say is that the essay took me too long to get it over. I consider that this particular kind of essay (developing your own argument) is a very hard task.*

Yet, her perceived writing difficulty could also be associated with a positive development in her general attitude to improve the quality of her texts. In Questionnaire A, when asked about the aspects of her writing she would like to improve (QA-8), she mentioned aspects related to discourse organization; and when asked about how she could improve those aspects, she answered: "Maybe reading more and having the chance of writing more essays" (QA-9). This intention was consistent with her work and participation throughout the course: she was a hard-working student, frequently did extra work, re-wrote one failed essay and wrote an optional one suggested for extra practice, frequently handed in vocabulary activities suggested as take-home work and, as recommended by the instructor, she regularly attended office hours in order to receive more personal feedback and clear up her doubts. This intensive practice and self-determination can also help explain her improvement and higher achievements towards the end of the course.

This part of the analysis has reported on the main findings from María's data, describing her revision processes, her perceived writing quality and her longitudinal development throughout the course, comparing them with the quality of her writing as measured by the scores obtained, and the teacher feedback provided. Findings showed agreement between the quality of her texts and her perceived strengths, but less agreement could be observed between text quality and her perceived weaknesses. This was explained in terms of the student's rather limited development of effective strategies for macro-level revision throughout the course. The findings suggest that the practice of self-assessing her texts might have helped María in her revisions of lower-level aspects, but did not greatly contribute to macro-level revision, or to the

improvement of the aspects she perceived negatively. In addition, writing self-evaluation reports helped her to acquire more knowledge about and become more aware of the specific aspects of academic writing, i.e., what good writing entails; yet, this practice did not seem to help her become more aware of the aspects she had indeed improved, or of those she was concerned about. Nor did it seem to help her develop the ability to effectively revise these aspects while self-assessing her own texts. Further discussions of these findings are presented in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6. DISCUSSION

The previous chapter reported on the results for each of the two participants separately using a within-case analysis. This chapter discusses the finding in view of salient patterns of similarities and differences across the two cases regarding their longitudinal processes and writing quality. The conclusions drawn are interpreted and discussed in relation to findings of previous research which was reviewed in Chapter 2 in this study. A cross-case analysis is used to attempt an answer to Research Question 1:

> *Did the utilization of self-evaluation strategies help students of an advanced EFL course of the English Teacher-Training Program at the UNRC in their processes of production and revision of their academic argumentative essays?*

The two subjects were originally selected as representatives of a high level –Carina- and a low level –María- of writing competence based on the scores they obtained in their first essay at the beginning of the course. Throughout the course, Carina's writing competence remained consistently high with holistic scores between 8 and 10, obtaining the highest score in her last essay, and with scores between bands 5 and 6 in the three different analytic scales (Ideas and arguments, rhetorical features and language control). María's writing competence, though slightly, improved longitudinally, reaching a medium level of writing competence towards the end of the course: she started with a failing grade in Essay 1, and her grades gradually improved with holistic scores of 4, 4.5 and 6, obtaining the highest score in the last two essays; likewise, her analytic scores increased from bands 2 and 3 (in both versions of Essay 1) to bands 4 – 4.5 (Essay 2) and bands 4 – 5 (Essays 3 and 4). In both cases, the quality of their writing improved.

The study initially posed the need to inquire whether the revision processes and strategies used by students while self-assessing their texts could contribute to the quality of the texts. This issue was mainly addressed when answering RQ2 in the analysis of both cases. The findings seem to agree with findings by major research on writing strategies and revision processes, described in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, indicating that the main differences between competent and less competent writers generally lie in the types of revisions they make and in the aspects they focus on while

revising their texts (Cohen, 1990; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; McDonough, 1995; Nunan, 1995; Raimes, 1985; Sasaki, 2000; Silva, 1993; Silva *et al.*, 2003; Stevenson, *et al*, 2006; Zamel, 1983). Salient differences found between the two subjects in this study revealed that, while Carina generally used the strategies of competent writers, María tended to display those of the less competent writers. On the one hand, Carina used effective revision strategies throughout the course. Her reported purposeful strategy of "checking one aspect at a time" was systematically and effectively used in the revisions of all her essays, always checking the task purpose as the first step, and moving from a focus on macro-level aspects, revising the discourse patterns and content appropriate to the purpose, to micro-level editing and mechanics, as the last step. She seemed to have gradually improved the use of this strategy, as she effectively acquired the ability to adapt it to the specific writing purpose of each particular essay, with its own task demands and language constrains. Her reported use of the task specifications and criteria for assessment when revising her texts, in addition, seemed to have enhanced her ability to gear her revisions effectively to the demands of the task and to address those specific situations. María's revision strategies, on the other hand, did not seem to develop positively throughout the course. She generally reported the same processes when revising her texts and, longitudinally, the focus of her revisions –content and grammar, reportedly her two areas of major concern- remained the same. In addition, the way she approached the technique of "asking herself questions" to revise those two aspects of the text did not seem to have a clear purpose. Even when she acknowledged the technique as effective and helpful for her, she did not seem to adapt it effectively in order to deal with the aspects she was mainly concerned about, or with the specific purpose of each writing task. Rather, she seemed to approach all revisions in the same way: she checked the text organization and some micro-level aspects like vocabulary and grammar and prioritized micro-level revisions. For example, she revised the linguistic markers used for discourse organization –a micro-level revision- rather than the appropriate discourse patterns required by the task and the writing purpose –a macro-level revision.

My findings show that Carina's revision processes tended to resemble those of competent writers, as found in studies indicating that expert writers revise more effectively showing an explicit understanding of the purpose, rhetorical features and elements typical of academic genres (Silva *et al.* 2003), focus more on meaning and

organization from a "global perspective" (Zamel, 1990) and leave micro-level editing to the last stages of the revision process. By contrast, María's revisions seemed to reflect those of the less competent writers, who are generally more concerned with usage and expression, and tend to use less effective and more limited revision strategies; for example, they tend to revise form rather than content, focusing on the surface-level editing and micro-level features such as grammatical and lexical accuracy or mechanics, and their revisions are more mechanic and formulaic (Cohen, 1990; Cumming, 1989; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; McDonough, 1995; Nunan, 1995; Okamura, 2006; Raimes, 1985, 1987; Sasaki, 2000; Silva, 1993; Silva *et al.*, 2003; Stevenson, *et al*, 2006; Zamel, 1982, 1983, 1990). Furthermore, these differences showed a relationship with the text quality of the two participants. While Carina –who displayed the characteristics of the competent writer- remained within a high level of writing competence throughout the course, María –whose writing processes were more closely related to those of the less competent writer- slightly moved up from a low level to a medium level of writing competence towards the end of the course.

In addition, differences regarding their metacognitive knowledge were found between the two students. Carina's selection of effective strategies was reflected in her ability to check the task purpose and make the appropriate discourse and lexico-grammatical choices, as well as to justify those choices. In other words, she displayed the knowledge of what strategies to use *and* why or when to use them effectively. By contrast, María's more limited ability to effectively revise the aspects of the text she was mainly concerned about, like essay organization, seemed to be related to her limited metacognitive knowledge of strategies as well as her inability to adapt them to the task demands. She approached all revisions in the same way. Some possible reasons for her improvement, though, are suggested later in this discussion. These findings are in agreement with those of research on the GLL (Rubin, 1975, 2005), which found that what distinguishes successful and unsuccessful language learners is not their knowledge of strategies but, rather, their metacognitive knowledge of how those strategies are used –or not used- to perform a task. For example, good language learners respond appropriately to the demands of the task and display the "ability to match their choice of strategy to the demands of the task", while unsuccessful learners tend to "organize [their] approach to all tasks in the same way" (Abraham and Vann, 1987, p. 95; also, O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Rubin, 2005). Furthermore, the findings in the

present study confirm those of studies on L2 writing strategies which found positive correlations between knowledge of writing processes and academic success; e.g., learners with more knowledge about effective writing strategies are more successful, use more effective monitoring strategies, and develop more autonomy (Gascoigne Lally, 2000; Kato, 2002; Khaldieh, 2000; Olivares-Cuhat, 2002; Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2001; Rivers, 2001; Victori, 1999). In the present study, Carina, the more competent writer, displayed more metacognitive knowledge about effective writing strategies than María, the less competent writer, and her revision processes were more elaborated and more effective.

Another issue related to writing processes and strategies –and also addresed when answering RQ2- was whether the students' ability to revise and self-assess their texts effectively could be related to their knowledge about writing; i.e., whether lack of or poor knowledge about the specific features of the quality of academic writing limited their ability to self-assess their text effectively according to standards of writing quality. The studies reviewed in Chapter 2 suggested that sharing with the students clear task specifications and discussing with them the aspects of the texts they are expected to attend to, as well as the criteria on which they will be evaluated, can increase their knowledge of writing and raise their awareness of what to revise and how, in order to maximise the effectiveness of their revisions (Astorga, 2004; Cushing Weigle, 2002; Ferris and Hedgcock, 1998). The finding in this study showed a positive use of the task specifications and the scoring guide in both students when revising their texts, as shown in their self-evaluation reports. This positive use seemed to have helped them increase their awareness of and knowledge about writing, as was observed mainly in their frequent mention of specific features of academic writing. Yet, salient differences between the two students were found regarding which aspects of the text mentioned in the task specifications each student revised more effectively. As illustrated in the analysis in Chapter 5, Carina used the task specifications effectively in order to follow a purposeful revision of her essays, checking "all the aspects" that would be specially considered for assessment. Furthermore, in order to self-assess her own choices for essay development and discourse organization, she strategically took advantage of the coursebook "tips" for self-assessment and scoring criteria, as recommended in the assignments. It can be inferred that this practice helped her not only to increase her knowledge of academic writing and of effective strategies to revise her texts, but also to

acquire the capacity to justify her choices. For example, as illustrated in Chapter 5, in her self-evaluation reports she explained and justified her choices of discourse and lexico-grammar based on the writing purpose, the expectations of the audience and the appropriate tone expected for the task. In this process, she gradually displayed greater self-management skills and more writing autonomy. By contrast, María's use of the task specifications seemed to be more limited, contributing mainly to her effective revisions of micro-level aspects of the text, like language and vocabulary. The task specifications explicitly mentioned that the use of appropriate academic vocabulary would be considered for the assessment of the essays. María's self-evaluation reports revealed her concern for incorporating new academic vocabulary, mainly appropriate linguistic markers for discourse organization, and she particularly attended to these aspects when revising her essays, thus, showing knowledge of one important feature of academic writing. In addition, she developed two effective strategies to maximize her revision of these aspects: she consulted the vocabulary activities provided in the course materials and practiced in class, and she also took advantage of the model texts to incorporate new vocabulary. Both actions helped to improve the quality of her essays regarding this particular aspect. Thus, while Carina's use of the task specifications helped her to improve the quality of macro-level features of her essays, mainly content and organization appropriate for the writing purpose, María's use of them helped her to improve micro-level aspects of language and vocabulary. In both cases, the students acquired more knowledge of specific features of academic writing, and the quality of their texts improved regarding those aspects, as shown in the gradually higher scores they obtained. In view of these findings, it can be inferred that both students profited from having the task specifications prior to the writing activity and self-evaluation, and that this practice helped them raise their awareness of writing and contributed to their writing quality. As we can see, these findings are in line with suggestions made by the authors mentioned in the literature review.

A further area of concern was whether acquiring knowledge of the aspects which determine academic writing quality helped them become more aware of their own strengths and weaknesses (an issue addresed mainly in the answers to RQs 3 and 4), and whether their perceptions agreed with standards of writing quality and improved their writing competence (addressed in RQ5). The findings indicated that both students gradually acquired more knowledge of what writing quality entails, and that this

knowledge built their awareness of their perceived strengths and weaknesses. Nevertheless, the two students seemed to differ as regards the aspects of the text they self-assessed positively or negatively. The findings revealed that Carina's perceived strengths were macro-level aspects like content and organization: she particularly self-assessed positively her "supply of factual evidence" to support her views as well as the appropriate choices of discourse organization. Early in the course, she had reported that she carefully considered "all the necessary requirements of a good essay" when revising her texts (aSE1-4), suggesting that she was conscious that she did not perceive weaknesses. And even when she did mention weaknesses in subsequent essays, these were micro-level aspects specific of one particular essay. In addition, the aspects of her essays which she self-assessed positively were specifically mentioned in the task specifications and scoring criteria, which, again, suggests an effective use of them and an increasing ability to self-assess her texts on the basis of standard criteria. On the other hand, María in general self-assessed positively micro-level aspects of her essays, namely, her "use of linguistic markers for discourse organization", while she tended to self-assess negatively macro-level aspects, namely, "content development and essay organization". Because her perceived weaknesses were generally about major aspects of the essay which were particularly mentioned in the assignment, she seemed to have carefully revised those aspects based on the scoring criteria when self-assessing her essays. In other words, she did acquire knowledge of the aspects which determine writing quality, yet, she simultaneously became more aware of her own perceived inability to meet those expectations of writing quality. Furthermore, she seemed to be unaware of her own improvements in both essay organization and content development: even though her scores in these two aspects –"ideas and arguments" and "rhetorical features"- increased slightly longitudinally, and the teacher's comments also highlighted this improvement in her essays, her perceptions of both aspects remained negative throughout the course. This suggests that using the strategy of self-assessing the strengths and weaknesses of her essays helped María increase her declarative knowledge about writing, but it did not seem to help her to address her areas of major concern, or become more aware of her own improvements. The findings in this study suggest that both students acquired more knowledge of academic writing quality. This knowledge was revealed in their increasing ability to self-assess the aspects of the text which were explicitly mentioned in the assignments, as well as in their increasing awareness of their perceptions of writing quality based on those criteria. And

particularly in cases of perceived weaknesses, the students seemed to be more aware of their own intentions *and* limitations to achieve standards of writing quality. In this regard, María, the less competent writer, acknowledged her perceived writing difficulties, despite her efforts to do her best. These findings seem to agree with those of previous research on students' perceptions of their writing. For example, in Xiang's (2004) study, students' wrote annotations to self monitor their writing, and salient differences were found between high achievers and low achievers in their areas of concern: while the former expressed their concern mainly to improve proficiency, the latter were mainly concerned with language operations (p. 244).

In relation to whether the students' perceptions agreed with standards of writing quality, the findings indicated that agreement between the students' perceived writing quality and, both, the scores obtained and the feedback received from the teacher was strong in both cases. Less agreement, though, was observed between María's perceived weaknesses –content and essay organization- and her writing quality. As illustrated in Chapter 5, while her scores slightly increased longitudinally and the teacher feedback became gradually more positive in relation to these two aspects, her own perceptions remained negative longitudinally revealing no positive development. Stronger agreement was observed between her perceived strengths –the use of academic vocabulary and linguistic markers- and the teacher positive feedback on those aspects, as well as her gradually higher scores. On the other hand, Carina's perceived strengths related positively to her high scores and to the teacher's perceptions of her texts; in most cases, the teacher's comments were positive and showed agreement. An interesting finding can be highlighted in this study as compared to other studies about L2 writing perceptions (Basturkmen & Lewis, 2002; Lewis, 2002), which found little or no agreement between the students' and teacher's perceptions of writing quality and attributed this to a lack of criteria students have to self-assess their texts. In Lewis' study, students evaluated their own writing on the basis of their perceived strengths and weaknesses in the writing skill in general, rather than on a particular text, while in Basturkmen & Lewis' study, students assessed their success in writing on the basis of "their own constructions" of success. The higher agreement found in my study can be attributed to the fact that the students were given the criteria for assessment and were offered guidance on how to assess their texts based on those criteria. Furthermore, this seems to offer evidence of the benefits of sharing with the students the criteria for

assessment –a practice that has been recommended by several researchers (as discussed in Chapter 3, section 5.1), and which is an issue thoroughly addressed in this study.

Some salient differences were observed between the two students regarding their own perceptions and their longitudinal development. In the case of Carina, the more competent writer, the positive teacher-student agreement seemed to have helped her increase her self-confidence as a writer and her positive perception of writing difficulty towards the end of the course. At the course start, she had been reluctant to self-assess her essays and had expressed her preference for receiving the teacher's assessment of her essay *before* writing her self-evaluation report. But, as her own perceptions agreed with those of the teacher and her grades remained high, she gradually seemed to acquire more ability to self-assess her texts on the basis of shared criteria of writing quality. She became more aware of her own strengths, and displayed greater self-management skills and more writing autonomy. This growing self-confidence can also help explain her positive perception of writing difficulty towards the end of the course: in Questionnaire B, she placed writing as the "second easiest" skill (a-QB-13). A different development was observed in María –the less competent writer. Although her writing quality increased slightly (especially in Essays 3 and 4), her negative perception of writing difficulty increased, too. It seems that, the more aware she was of the aspects that contribute to writing quality, the less satisfied she was with the quality of her essays. In addition, the low scores she obtained early in the course (Essays 1 and 2) could have also contributed to her lower self-confidence. She was persistently unsatisfied with macro-level aspects of her text and, even after experiencing some improvement, she tended to justify her negative perception as her inability to meet standards of writing quality. An interesting point to make is that, unlike her perceived weaknesses, María's general satisfaction with the quality of her essays slightly improved by the end of the course: she self-assessed her writing as "satisfactory", both in Essay 4 (bSE4-2) and in Questionnaire B (bQB-1). This positive general satisfaction can be explained as resulting from the gradual improvement of her grades. Yet, no improvement was observed in her perceived weaknesses, which were generally related to the aspects she considered "fundamental" for good writing. Her negative perception of important aspects of her essays can also help explain her increased negative perception of writing difficulty towards the end of the course: in Questionnaire B, she placed writing as the "most difficult" language skill (b-QB-13). It can be inferred, in

this regard, that the practice of self-assessing her essays did not help María to develop effective revision strategies to deal with the areas she needed the most and was most concerned about. Her improvement, then, can be attributed to other factors. For example, it can be the case that María profited from the intensive practice of analysing model texts and using them as a tool for improving both her academic vocabulary and some features of academic writing, such as the use of linguistic markers for discourse organization; these features were, indeed, incorporated in her texts. Her positive use of model texts seemed to have enhanced both her vocabulary-building strategies and the quality of her texts. Other aspects of academic writing, like considerations of audience and appropriate tone, though not explicitly mentioned in her self-evaluation reports as her strengths, were indeed incorporated effectively in her essays. These aspects contributed to the quality of the texts, and they were assessed positively by the teacher. In general, María did show increasing awareness of writing quality when revising her texts. Yet, by the end of the course, she still seemed to display the strategies of the less competent writer, showing little ability to deal with her perceived weaknesses autonomously and still depending on teacher feedback for effective revisions of macro-level aspects of her essays.

6.1 Summary

The practice of having students self-evaluate their own essays was originally proposed in this study as a way to enhance the students' revision processes and their perceptions of writing quality, mainly by increasing their knowledge of writing and of effective self-revision strategies. It was also believed that the students could benefit from having the task specifications and scoring criteria before assessment as a useful tool to guide their revisions and to self-assess their essays on the basis of standards of writing quality. Several positive outcomes were observed in the students' processes of self-assessing their essays. Both students developed an awareness of what aspects of the text would be given prominence for assessment and, thus, they consciously considered those aspects when revising their essays. Both students improved their writing quality and, in most cases, their own perceptions matched their improvement. The students' perceptions –either positive or negative- responded to standards of writing quality. This was mainly revealed in the strong agreement observed, in general, between their

perceived strengths and weaknesses and the scores obtained. In addition, the teacher's comments and feedback showed agreement, in most cases, with the students' own perceptions. Both students used the task specifications and scoring criteria as an effective strategy for self-assessment, as they tended to focus their revisions on the aspects they knew they would be particularly assessed. Both students made positive use of the course materials –the main coursebook and extra activities for vocabulary and language practice- as an effective strategy when revising different aspects of their essays. While Carina profited more from the coursebook mainly to solve macro-level issues like selecting the appropriate discourse organization and topic development, tone and audience considerations, María tended to use those resources effectively for vocabulary revisions or for model texts. Finally, both students expressed their positive perceptions about self-assessing their essays. In Questionnaire B at the end of the course they both evaluated the practice of writing self-evaluation reports as "very useful" (QB-8).

The positive outcomes observed in both students seemed to show that developing self-evaluation strategies for text revision had a two-fold benefit. First, it was useful for the *students* to learn about their own writing progress and the processes which, eventually, improved their writing. This was particularly enhanced by two additional teaching techniques. One was the provision of the criteria for assessment which gave students a clear idea of what would be assessed in their essays and how, following the recommendations of researchers on L2 writing assessment (Astorga, 2004; Cushing Weigle, 2002; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998). This practice became a useful tool for students as they made their revisions and assessed their essays on the basis of those particular aspects. The other useful tool was the provision of teacher feedback on the students' own reports, highlighting agreement or disagreement. The strengths of self-assessing their essays did not lie *only* in the fact that students became more aware of their strengths and weaknesses based on their knowledge of writing, but also in the fact that the teacher *responded* to their perceptions showing agreement or disagreement with them. The teacher's response and feedback, both positive and negative, could further help the students have a clearer idea of whether their own perceptions met the teacher's expectations and the standards of writing quality.

Second, it was useful for the *teacher* to learn more about the students' particular needs and areas they were most concerned about, and to gear her teaching practices to those weak areas in order to satisfy the students' needs. One effective way of doing this was the teacher's responding to the students' self-evaluation reports, thus, creating a kind of "dialogue" with the student: the teacher responded to the student's own perceptions showing agreement or disagreement, or provided suggestions for further improvement, especially when the student's perceptions were negative or did not agree with those of the teacher. The ultimate aim was to gain more shared understandings of writing quality. The students' self-evaluation reports also provided rich information about the students' revision processes and strategies and about which strategies seemed to be most effective to enhance those revision processes. For example, Carina's strategy of "checking each aspect at a time", using the scoring criteria as a guide, seemed to have worked effectively. In this regard, my findings seem to support those of researchers on L2 writing strategies who have recommended a systematic training in the strategies used by the competent writer (Cohen, 1990; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Grabe & Kaplan, 1997; Hyland, 2003; Johns, 2003; Raimes, 1985; Silva, 1993).

6.2 Implications for teaching and research

The findings in this study seem to support the initial hypothesis that developing in the students the ability to self-assess their own texts, mainly by writing self-evaluation reports, could enhance their writing competence. Some implications can be considered for teaching and further research. For self-revisions to be effective, students need to have clear and objective criteria on which to base those revisions. It is important for teachers not only to share with their students the criteria for assessment but also to discuss with them expectations of writing quality (Astorga, 2004; Cushing Weigle, 2002; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Hyland, 2003). When students have a clear idea of what is expected from them, they can self-assess their texts more effectively against those criteria and build their self-confidence as autonomous writers. Self-evaluations which are solely based on the students' own perceptions of writing quality can lead to their misinterpreting expectations, and can result in frustration.

Teachers should provide students with clear task specifications which describe the purpose of the writing task and the specific characteristics of the text that need to be addressed, according to the corresponding genre. Class discussion should favour a systematic use of those specifications as useful guidelines for self-assessment. In this

view, the teacher may develop effective revision strategies in the students by guiding them to identify a purpose in their revisions, by enhancing their conscious use of the self-assessment guidelines, and by helping them to identify the task purpose, the genre and the specific language constrains as well as to focus specifically on those aspects. Some authors (e.g. Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Rollinson, 2005) propose explicit teaching of revision strategies; Rollinson (2005) further suggests developing in the students the skills to self edit their writing through critical reading, as well as discussing "effective revision" and "modelling adequate and inadequate revision strategies" (p. 28). The development of effective revision strategies and self-assessment skills can be enhanced by teaching practices which favour process writing as well as by those which favour a more genre-oriented approach to writing. A few basic pedagogic practices for effective self-assessment may be suggested: a systematic training in effective revision strategies like those used by the more competent writers; awareness raising on the specific characteristics of the text that need to be taken into consideration, e.g., the lexico-grammatical and discourse constrains of the genre; the provision of model texts to scaffold the students' revision processes. Some L2 writing researchers have proposed a more linguistically-oriented approach to guide the students' revisions and develop self-assessment skills. For example, Astorga (2004) proposes a self-assessment guideline following a Systemic Functional Linguistic model of text construction which makes explicit the characteristic linguistic features of the genre the student is practicing; in this way, the student has "objective and explicit criteria" on which to assess her learning (p. 64).

Further research using linguistically-oriented teaching practices is still needed to prove their effectiveness for self-assessment. New findings can also offer insightful views of the validity of such linguistic models for self-assessment in writing development. Furrthermore, linguistically-oriented research of this kind should also study the self-assessment strategies that writers use in relation to the linguistic constrains of the genre under study and the socio-political context in which writing occurs. In a recent issue of the *Journal of Second Language Writing*, some scholars (e.g. Atkinson, 2003; Casanave, 2003) have suggested that L2 writing reseach should move beyond the focus of writing as a highly cognitive, individualistic, asocial process to writing as a context-dependent, social activity. Furthermore, Casanave (2003) has also stressed the need for

more qualitative case studies which follow the writing development of a particular writer longitudinally in a particular, local setting (p. 86).

The findings of the present study also call for further research in the students' perceptions of writing quality and in differences in the criteria that teachers and students have to assess writing quality. For example, more research is needed to inquire about how students evaluate their success in writing and how their perceptions relate to writing quality. This study found higher agreement between the teacher's and students' perceptions than that found in other studies (Basturkmen & Lewis, 2002; Lewis, 2002) reviewed in Chapter 2. It was suggested earlier in this discussion that sharing assessment criteria with the students could have contributed to such high teacher-student agreement, as opposed to those studies which showed that students based their self-evaluations on their own criteria. Though my findings are significative and reveal the validity of assessment criteria, further research would be needed to make stronger claims in this regard, and new findings could reveal interesting insights regarding the validity of this teaching practice. Also, further research in students' perceptions should inquire more into how students respond to writing as a social, context-bound activity with its own social purpose rather than as an individualistic process. In addition, more studies comparing students' perceptions and writing quality are needed to allow for more generalizable results. The present study suggests the need to inquire further into how students' perceptions agree with socially accepted notions of writing quality –in this case, how academic texts respond to the language constrains and expectations of the academic community. In this regard, Casanave (2003) has recommended more case study research which looks "more closely at how particular assessment criteria are developed" and at the "impact of such criteria" on both writing and the writer (p. 88). It can be suggested that further research should aim at validating low-stake, non-standardized writing assessment and assessment criteria.

6.3 Final remarks

The purpose of this study was to observe, through an exploratory longitudinal case study, whether the use of self-evaluation strategies could help students of an advanced EFL course of the English Teacher-Training Program at the UNRC in their processes of production and revision of their academic argumentative essays.

The main source of information to inquire into the students' processes was the self-evaluation reports they wrote, describing their revisions and perceptions of their essays. These reports provided a very rich source of information about the students' processes and strategies as well as about their longitudinal development throughout the course. Some limitations should be acknowledged, though, in the choice of the instrument to elicit the data. As described in Chapter 4, self-reports may be insufficient to elicit information about metacognitive processes, particularly when the learner is not experienced enough, does not have sufficient metacognitive knowledge or is not aware of it, or does not have the ability to verbalize her own metacognitive processes (Cohen & Scott, 1996). This was particularly noticed in the case of María, the less competent writer, who did not seem to be particularly aware of her own achievements. It can be the case that, being a rather immature writer, still struggling with processes which demanded great cognitive effort, she was less aware of her metacognitive processes, or she was unable to actually verbalize her internal processes and strategy use in her self-evaluation reports. Other sources of data, such as teacher-student interviews, could have helped to minimize this weakness. This suggests the need to use a variety of instruments to elicit information about students' metacognitive processes. Nevertheless, the validity of this instrument can be highlighted in this study. The analysis was based on combined data from questionnaires –which elicited the students' self-reported perceptions of generalized writing behaviour- and from self-evaluation reports –which elicited their processes and perceptions of a specific writing activity after task performance. Both instruments were appropriate to provide rich data about cognitive processes and perceptions which were further compared to the analitic and holistic scores measuring writing quality. This triangulation of the data distinguished this from other studies reviewed in Chapter 2 which based their analysis solely on students' self-reported perceptions. Reliability was also garanteed by the presence of an external coder and rater who participated both in the processes of data coding and essay scoring.

The strengths of this study lie in the methodology used. The adoption of a qualitative longitudinal approach allowed for an in-depth interpretive analysis of the students' revision processes and their perceptions, both in terms of their longitudinal development throughout the writing course, and in relation to their writing competence. In addition, selecting a case study methodology offered the benefit of analyzing the two

cases and their development in a limited context. This helped reveal rich and in-depth information on their processes longitudinally. As already mentioned in Chapter 4, the choice of this methodology is widely supported by L2 writing researchers and has been particularly recommended in recent L2 writing publications. Furthermore, selecting two learners, each representing a different level of writing competence, allowed for the identification of significant differences between them, as well as strong patterns of similarities. The small sample and the narrow scope of the research, though, do not allow for generalizations of the results; more research is needed to be able to generalize results. Yet, as already acknowledged, the aim of case-studies is not to make generalizations but, rather, to produce an in-depth study of an individual in her local context, and to inquire into the complexities of the writing process. In this regard, the two participants were studied within their own particular setting (a university course in academic writing), and they both provided rich, in-depth data about their writing development and behaviour within this particular context. In addition, the longitudinal nature of the study was relevant to study the learners' perceptions and processes at different times of their development, precisely because processes change dynamically.

The descriptions and findings in this study, it is hoped, could offer new insights into research and pedagogy on L2 writing processes. In the light of the findings, I advocate writing instruction which enhances the learners' ability to self-assess their texts, in the belief that developing their writing competence entails helping them to become autonomous writers. It is also hoped that the study will offer but a small contribution in decision-making for writing instruction.

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APPENDIX A
Michigan Writing Assessment Scoring Guide[1]

	Ideas and arguments	Rhetorical features	Language control
6	The essay deals with the issues centrally and fully. The position is clear, and strongly and substantially argued. The complexity of the issues is treated seriously and the viewpoints of other people are taken into account very well.	The essay has rhetorical control at the highest level, showing unity and subtle management. Ideas are balanced with support and the whole essay shows strong control of organization appropriate to the content. Textual elements are well connected through logical or linguistic transitions and there is no repetition or redundancy.	The essay has excellent language control with elegance of diction and style. Grammatical structures and vocabulary are well-chosen to express the ideas and to carry out the intentions.
5	The essay deals with the issue well. The position is clear and substantial arguments are presented. The complexity of the issues or other viewpoints on them have been taken into account	The essay shows strong rhetorical control and is well managed. Ideas are generally balanced with support and the whole essay shows good control of organization appropriate to the content. Textual elements are generally well connected although there may be occasional lack of rhetorical fluency: redundancy, repetition, or a missing transition.	The essay has strong language control and reads smoothly. Grammatical structures and vocabulary are generally well-chosen to express the ideas and to carry out the intentions.
4	The essay talks about the issues but could be better focused or developed. The position is thoughtful but could be clearer or the arguments could have more substance. Repetition or inconsistency may occur occasionally. The writer has clearly tried to make the complexity of the issues or viewpoints on them into account.	The essay shows acceptable rhetorical control and is generally managed fairly well. Much of the time ideas are balanced with support, and the organization is appropriate to the content. There is evidence of planning and the parts of the essay are usually adequately connected, although there are some instances of lack of rhetorical fluency.	The essay has good language control although it lacks fluidity. The grammatical structures used and the vocabulary chosen are able to express the ideas and carry the meaning quite well; although readers notice occasional language errors.
3	The essay considers the issues but tends to rely on opinions or claims without the substance of evidence. The essay may be repetitive or inconsistent: the position needs to be clearer or the arguments need to be more convincing. If there is an attempt to account for the complexity of the issues or other viewpoints this is not fully controlled and only partly successful.	The essay has uncertain rhetorical control and is generally not very well managed. The organization may be adequate to the content, but ideas are not always balanced with support. Failures of rhetorical fluency are noticeable although there seems to have been an attempt at planning and some transitions are successful.	The essay has language control which is acceptable but limited. Although the grammatical structures used and the vocabulary chosen express the ideas and carry the meaning adequately, readers are aware of language errors or limited choice of language forms.
2	The essay talks generally about the topic but does not come to grips with ideas about it, raising superficial arguments or moving from one point to another without developing any fully. Other viewpoints are not given any serious attention.	The essay lacks rhetorical control most of the time, and the overall shape of the essay is hard to recognize. Ideas are generally not balanced with evidence, and the lack of an organizing principle is a problem. Transitions across and within sentences are attempted with only occasional success.	The essay has rather weak language control. Although the grammatical structures used and vocabulary chosen express the ideas and carry the meaning most of the time, readers are troubled by language errors or limited choice of language forms.
1	The essay does not develop or support an argument about the topic, although it may 'talk about' the topic.	The essay demonstrates little rhetorical control. There is little evidence of planning or organization, and the parts of the essay are poorly connected.	The essay demonstrates little language control. Language errors and restricted choice of language forms are so noticeable that readers are seriously distracted by them.

[1]In Cushing Weigle (2002, p. 119)

APPENDIX B
Writing tasks

Essay 1
Task purpose: To write an essay analyzing both sides of an issue
Writing purpose: Analyzing both sides of an issue
Assignment
- Select an issue (a debatable topic) you'd like to write about related to the educational or university system in our country. (*) See the list of suggested topics below.
- Identify the two sides of the issue, and analyze them as thoroughly and objectively as possible.
- Identify the *purpose* of your writing and your *audience* (see Leki, p. 221 for useful tips).

Writing task
- Write an essay presenting and analyzing the two sides.
  Note: Be sure to use an appropriate pattern of organization and relevant linguistic markers and vocabulary. Use *Leki*, pages 222-223 for help on development and organization, and useful tips for this type of essay.
- Write a self-evaluation of your writing. For this you may refer to the criteria for evaluation, and describe your own perception of your strengths and/or weaknesses and any other aspect that you would like to consider. You can use the self-evaluation guide provided with these materials.

Scoring criteria
For this essay, the following criteria will be particularly considered for evaluation:
a) Identification of the purpose, audience and issue
b) Clear debatable statement
c) Organization: identification and balance of the two sides
d) Content: objective analysis of the two sides, and relevant support
e) Use of appropriate language (lexico-grammar) for organization and tone
f) Appropriate grammar, vocabulary & mechanics

Essay 2
Task purpose: To write an essay analyzing a problem
Writing purpose: Analyzing a problem/Proposing solutions to a problem
Assignment
- Identify a *problematic situation* in our education, or the university system in our country. It may be related to or derived from *Essay 1*.
- Consider the problem as thoroughly and objectively as possible.
- Consider alternatives for change and/or possibilities for improving the situation.
- Identify the *purpose* of your writing and your *audience*.

Writing task
- Write an essay presenting the problem and analyzing it thoroughly. You may choose to concentrate on one of the two possibilities below:
  a) A thorough *description and analysis of the problem*, the people affected, its consequences, etc.
  b) A presentation of the problem and a more detailed *analysis of possible alternatives* for change, or some possible –and plausible- suggestions.
  Note: Be sure to use an appropriate pattern of organization and relevant linguistic markers and vocabulary. Use *Leki*, pages 226 & 228-229 for help on development and organization, and useful tips for this type of essay.
- Write a self-evaluation of your writing; same as with *Essay # 1*.

Scoring criteria
For this essay, the following criteria will be particularly considered for evaluation:
a) Identification of the purpose, audience and topic
b) Clear identification of the problem
c) Organization: balanced development of the problem/solution
d) Content: clear and thorough analysis of the problem/solution, and relevant support provided
e) Use of appropriate language (lexico-grammar) for organization and tone
f) Appropriate grammar, vocabulary & mechanics

Essay 3
Task purpose: To write an essay using of published sources for the analysis of an issue
Writing purpose: Analyzing an issue on the basis of published sources
Assignment

- Choose a topic you want to write about, concentrate mainly on the *type of support* you will use, and analyze it thoroughly. You can choose one of your previous essays (*Essay 1,* or *2*) and improve it adding more outside sources for support.
- Identify the *purpose* of your writing and your *audience*.

Writing task

- Write the essay paying special attention to the support you use, and the way you present the support using appropriate language & conventions for quoting.
  Note: Because the focus in this writing will be placed on content quality, use of published sources and their relevance to the topic and to the purpose of the writing, language used to introduce sources and the use of reporting verbs and conventions for quoting, be sure you:
  a) use appropriate citing conventions (consult the APA Manual when necessary), relevant linguistic markers to introduce sources, and appropriate verbs of reporting;
  b) use the extra readings as outside source.
- Write a self-evaluation of your writing: same as with the other essays.

Scoring criteria

For this essay, the following criteria will be particularly considered for evaluation:

a) Identification of the purpose, audience and topic
b) General organization and development of the topic
c) Content: quality and relevance of the support using outside sources
d) Use of appropriate language and conventions for documenting outside sources
e) Appropriate grammar, vocabulary & mechanics

Essay 4

Task purpose: To write an essay developing your own argument on the basis of outside sources for the analysis of an issue

Writing purpose: Analyzing your own argument on the basis of published sources

Assignment

- Select a topic you want to write about. It may be related to your previous writing.
- Collect all the sources you have selected as background reading for your paper, or the annotations you wrote for them.
- Identify the *purpose* of your writing and your *audience*.

Writing task

- Write an essay in which you present your own argument, acknowledging and responding to the opposing view. The assignment must include: the essay and the Reference list.
  Note: You are expected to use:
  - the appropriate techniques studied in class; choose the one/s you consider most appropriate for your purpose
  - outside sources correctly documented and cited; use Leki (Chapter 11), and/or the APA Manual for conventions for documenting sources
  - the appropriate language and vocabulary required for the task.
- Write a self-evaluation of your writing: same as with the other essays (see checklist below for help)

Scoring criteria

The following aspects will be considered when grading this essay:

- Organization
- Identification of the purpose.
- Identification of the argument; debatable statement: Is it clearly stated?
- Pattern/s for organization: Is it/ are they appropriate? effective in relation to the purpose?
- Use of linguistic choices for organization: Are they appropriate? Are they varied?
- Paragraphing: Does each paragraph have a clear purpose? Are they balanced? Do they follow a logical, coherent organization?
- Content
- Main ideas for supporting argument: Are they clear? Are they sound? Coherent?
- Is the main idea in each paragraph clearly supported?
- Techniques for supporting argument: Are they relevant? Varied?
- Use & quality of outside sources: Are they relevant? Are they properly used to support main ideas? Are they up-dated? Are the people quoted important & relevant?
- Use of appropriate language & conventions for documenting outside sources.
- Use of content vocabulary: Is it rich & varied?

- Tone
  - Use of appropriate language for tone. Is it objective?
- Language
  - Variety & richness of vocabulary & language in general.
  - Grammar.
  - Punctuation & mechanics.

APPENDIX C
Questionnaires A and B

Questionnaire A (Beginning of the course)

Think about your writing in general and answer as honestly as you can.

1. How would you evaluate your writings in general?
   Excellent/Very good ___ Good ___ Satisfactory _____ Poor _____ Unsatisfactory ___

2. How much of your writing do you read over after you write it?
   All of it _____ Most of it _____ Some of it _____ None of it _____

3. What aspects do you mostly concentrate on?
   None ____ Content _____ Coherence _____ Grammar ___ Organization _____
   Punctuation ___ Spelling _____ Vocabulary _____ Other? (Specify) _____

4. When you revise your writing, please, describe what you do. Be as clear and specific as possible.
   _____

5. If you do not revise your writing (or parts of it), please, explain why you don't do so.
   _____

6. Which do you think are the *strengths* in your writing? _____
   _____

7. Which do you think are the *weaknesses* in your writing? _____
   _____

8. What aspect/s would you like to improve in your writing? _____
   _____

9. How would you improve those aspects? _____
   _____

10. How would you rate yourself as a *language learner*?
    Excellent/Very good _____ Good _____ Average _____ Poor ____ Other? ____

11. How would you rate yourself in the skill "*writing*"?
    Excellent/Very good _____ Good _____ Average _____ Poor ____ Other? ____

12. Where would you place *writing* in order of *preference* in relation to the other skills?
    (most preferred) 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ (least preferred)

13. Where would you place *writing* in order of *difficulty* in relation to the other skills?
    (most difficult) 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ (easiest)

Name: _____
Date: _____

Thank you!!

Questionnaire B (End of the course)

Think about your writing in general and answer as honestly as you can.

1. How would you evaluate your writings in general?
   Excellent/Very good ___ Good ___ Satisfactory _____ Poor _____ Unsatisfactory ___

2. How much of your writing do you read over after you write it?
   All of it _____ Most of it _____ Some of it _____ None of it _____

3. What aspects do you mostly concentrate on?
   None ____ Content _____ Coherence _____ Grammar ___ Organization _____
   Spelling _____ Vocabulary _____ Other? (specify) _____

4. When you revise your writing, please describe the things you do that help you make effective revisions. _____

5. If you do not revise your writing (or parts of it), please, explain why you don't do so.
   _____

6. Which do you think are the *strengths* in your writing? _____
   _____

7. Which do you think are the *weaknesses* in your writing? _____
   _____

8. How useful was it for you to write self-evaluations of your writings?
   Very useful ____ It helped in some aspects _____ It didn't make any difference _____

9. Why? _____
   _____

10. How would you rate yourself as a *language learner*?
    Excellent/Very good _____ Good _____ Average _____ Poor ____ Other? ____

11. How would you rate yourself in the skill "*writing*"?
    Excellent/Very good _____ Good _____ Average _____ Poor ____ Other? ____

12. Where would you place *writing* in order of *preference* in relation to the other skills?
    (most preferred) 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ (least preferred)

13. Where would you place *writing* in order of *difficulty* in relation to the other skills?
    (most difficult) 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ (easiest)

Name: _____
Date: _____

Thank you!!

APPENDIX D
Self-evaluation guide

Self-evaluation Guide - Writing
Writing task: _____

Think about the essay you wrote and evaluate it. Try to be as critical and honest as you can.

1. Are you satisfied with your essay? _____

2. How would you evaluate it?
   Excellent/Very good ___ Good ___ Satisfactory ___ Poor ___ Unsatisfactory ___

3. Which do you think are the *strengths* in your essay? _____
   _____

4. Which do you think are the *weaknesses* in your essay? _____
   _____

5. What aspects did you mostly concentrate on when revising/ editing your writing?
   _____
   _____

6. For the aspects you revised, please, indicate if you needed to make any changes. Which ones? Describe what you did (Be as specific as possible). _____
   _____

7. For the aspects you didn't check or didn't edit, please, explain why you didn't do so.
   _____

8. Are there any aspects of the essay you would particularly like to improve? Do you know how you could do it? _____
   _____

9. Other comments: _____
   _____

Name: _____
Date: _____

APPENDIX E
Transcripts of answers to questionnaires A and B

a- Participant 1 (Carina)

Categories (Item in the questionnaire)	*Questionnaire A* (At the beginning of the course)	*Questionnaire B* (At the end of the course)
1- General perception of writing quality	(QA-1): Good [positive]	(QB-1): Good [positive]
2- Parts of essay generally revised (all of it, most of it, some of it, none of it).	(QA-2): All of it	(QB-2): All of it
3- Aspects specially focalized (none, content, coherence, grammar, organization, punctuation, spelling, vocabulary, other)	(QA-3): content, coherence (not always), grammar, vocabulary; generally all	(QB-3): content, coherence, grammar, organization, spelling, vocabulary.
4- Revision strategies used	(QA-4): I read it several times, focusing each time on a different aspect.	(QB-4): I concentrate on one paragraph at a time and check in each one the use vocabulary, the content, grammar, etc. Then, I try to check that the content included in the development is relevant

		to the writing (and coincides or is related to what I state in the introduction). Finally, I specifically concentrate on the concluding paragraph! (relevance)
5- Aspects not generally revised	(QA-5): I always do, except in exams (sometimes I don't have enough time to do it)	(QB-5): I always do!
6- Perceived strengths	(QA-6): In general, I don't have problems with content & organization, but I always feel I need to improve the vocabulary and I should try to use more complex structures.	(QB-6): Organization / use of academic language.
7- Perceived weaknesses	(QA-7): Sometimes, I find it difficult to go straight to the point & as a result my ideas are not clearly expressed.	(QB-7): Sometimes selecting the information.
8- Perceived need for improvement [a]	(QA-8): As I said before, I would like to use a wider range of words (vocabulary) and would like to express my ideas more clearly.	(not asked)
9- Intention for improvement [a]	(QA-9): I'll try to focus on these aspects when writing essays or other pieces of writing.	(not asked)
10- Self-concept as language learner	(QA-10): Good	(QB-10): Good
11- Self-concept as writer (writing skill)	(QA-11): Good	(QB-11): Good
12- Writing preference	(QA-12): 2nd (preferred)	(QB-12): 2nd (preferred)
13- Writing difficulty	(QA-13): 1st (most difficult)	(QB-13): 3rd (easy)
QB-8/ QB9: Perceived usefulness of self-evaluation (very useful/ It helped in some aspects/ It didn't make any difference) [b]	(not asked)	(QB-8): very useful [positive] (QB-9): Because it helped me to try to approach my own writing in as an objective way as possible. This helps to identify weaknesses in the writings

[a] Items 8 and 9 were not included in Questionnaire B.
[b] Items not included in Questionnaire A

b- Participant 2 (María)

Categories (Item in the questionnaire)	*Questionnaire A* (At the beginning of the course)	*Questionnaire B* (At the end of the course)
1- General perception of writing quality	(QA-1): Satisfactory[positive]	(QB-1): Satisfactory[positive]
2- Parts of essay generally revised (all of it, most of it, some of it, none of it).	(QA-2): All of it.	(QB-2): All of it
3- Aspects specially focalized (none, content, coherence, grammar, organization, punctuation, spelling, vocabulary, other)	(QA-3): grammar and organization	(QB-3): grammar, organization, other: collocations.
4- Revision strategies used	(QA-4): I always look at my writing so as to see if it has grammatical errors. Since organization is very important, I always, check if I have organized my paragraphs logically	(QB-4): First of all, I check the organization of my writing, then I concentrate mostly on grammar. Finally, I read my claim to see if it is appropriate to the kind of essay I'm writing and its purpose.
5- Aspects not generally revised	(QA-5): N/D	(QB-5): Because I consider those aspects as satisfactory.

6- Perceived strengths	(QA-6): The evidence that I present such as facts, statistics, opinions.	(QB-6): The use of linguistic markers in every paragraph.
7- Perceived weaknesses	(QA-7): I am not good at introducing my papers. So the introduction is or me a difficult aspect of writing an essay.	(QB-7): Organization.
8- Perceived need for improvement [a]	(QA-8): Not only the introduction but also the conclusion. I want to improve paraphrasing so as to end up a paper properly.	(not asked)
9- Intention for improvement [a]	(QA-9): May be reading more and having the chance of writing more essays.	(not asked)
10- Self-concept as language learner	(QA-10): Average	(QB-0): Good
11- Self-concept as writer (writing skill)	(QA-11): Average	(QB-11): Average
12- Writing preference	(QA-12): 3er (not preferred)	(QB-12): 3er (not preferred)
13- Writing difficulty	(QA-13): 2nd (difficult)	(QB-13): 1est (most difficult)
QB-8/ QB9: Perceived usefulness of self-evaluation (very useful/ It helped in some aspects/ It didn't make any difference- Why?) [b]	(not asked)	(QB-8): very useful (QB-9): It helped me analyze our writings specifically.

[a] Items 8 and 9 were not included in Questionnaire B.
[b] Items not included in Questionnaire A

APPENDIX F
Transcripts of self-evaluation reports

a- Participant 1 (Carina)

Self –evaluation of essay 1

[A-SE1-1] I'm quite satisfied with my essay
[A-SE1-2] but I am not able to evaluate it by grading it.
[A-SE1-3] I think that one of the strengths of the essay is the supply of factual evidence to support the views presented. As we have already studied, this is one of the things that we should consider in order to achieve an objective tone. Another thing that I consider as strength is that I could provide almost the same amount of information on both sides of the issue making it more neutral.
[A-SE1-4] It is not easy for me to identify the weaknesses that my essay presents, not because I think that it is perfect, but because I tried to follow all the necessary requirements to write a good essay. If I was aware of my writing weaknesses I would work on them in order to improve them. Sometimes, we need to ask someone else to read the final version in order to see if the main purpose has been achieved or not and in order to be able to grade the essay.
[A-SE1-5] When editing my writing I tried to concentrate on all the aspects pointed out in the guide for the first essay.
[A-SE1-6] First I checked the purpose of my writing and the pattern of organization. Then, I revised the contents included in order to see if they are relevant or not. Besides, I concentrated on the language that I used, trying to use as much academic and specific language as possible. Finally, I checked grammar and spelling mistakes.
[A-SE1-7] I always make changes when I edit my writings because I always feel that there is a better way of expressing what I want to say.
[A-SE1-8] N/D
[A-SE1-9] In my view it would be easier to make this kind of evaluation after the essay has been corrected by the teacher because, as I said before, sometimes we need other people's opinions and points of view in order to recognize and identify the weaknesses of our writings.

Self –evaluation of Essay 2

[A-SE2-1] As with the previous essay, I'm quite satisfied with this one

[A-SE2-2] but I cannot evaluate it by grading it.

[A-SE2-9] Actually, I felt quite more satisfied with the previous essay than with this one because I consider that it is easier to present the strengths and the weaknesses of an issue than presenting some topic as a problem and suggesting a solution.

[A-SE2-3] I think that one of the strengths of the essay is, again, the supply of factual evidence to describe the problem under analysis. I always consider the fact that presenting factual information helps to achieve an objective tone.

[A-SE2-4] In relation to the weaknesses, I would have liked to divide the information in shorter paragraphs. Sometimes, I consider that including more and shorter paragraphs is better than including only a few and long paragraphs, but although I tried to rearrange the information I ended up choosing this one; it is the one I found more convenient according to the information presented.

[A-SE2-5] When editing my writing I tried to concentrate on all the aspects pointed out in the guide for the second essay.

[A-SE2-6] First I checked the purpose of my writing and the pattern of organization and I referred to Leki's chapter. Then, I revised the contents included and I considered their relevance to the essay and I paid close attention to the suggestions made in Leki's chapter in relation to the development and organization (1st presentation of the problem, 2nd considering the cause, 3rd referring to the consequences and finally pointing out the importance of this problem to the audience). Besides, I concentrated on the language that I used. Finally, I checked grammar and spelling mistakes.

[A-SE2-7] I always make changes when I edit my writings because I always feel that there is a better way of expressing what I want to say. Generally, I don't make changes as regards the content but I do make changes in relation to the organization of the ideas presented.

[A-SE2-8] N/D

[A-SE2-9] Further comments: the guides that we have in the manual are of great help in the production of the essays. It helps mainly to check whether what we are writing is relevant or not according to what we are asked to do.

Self-Evaluation of Essay 3

[A-SE3-1] I can just say that I'm quite satisfied with it.

[A-SE3-2] As it always happens to me I cannot evaluate my work by grading it.

[A-SE3-3] I would say that the amount of factual information as well as the references to external sources is a strength in the essay.

[A-SE3-4] N/D

[A-SE3-5] [A-SE3-6] The aspects on which I mainly concentrated when editing my writing are: the relevance of contents and resources used.

I made many changes in relation to the information included. I think that now, all the information presented is relevant and so are the sources. All the information is related to public higher education in Argentina. In the two first paragraphs, I have included information describing negative aspects of public higher education and in the following two paragraphs, the positive aspects are mentioned. Of course, I also paid attention to vocabulary and language and I had some doubts in relation to punctuation so I consulted the manual that you gave us (but I still have some doubts).

[A-SE3-5] [A-SE3-6] I have read a lot of material in order to do this essay and I selected the information that I considered really relevant for the topic. Since I tried to write this essay using an objective tone, I tried to provide the same amount of information in relation to the good and bad points of public higher education. I have read this essay several times and each time I read it I made significant changes, mainly in relation to *content* an *organization*.

[A-SE3-7] N/D

[A-SE3-8] N/D

[A-SE3-9] I decided to write about public higher education in Argentina because I have previously dealt with different aspects of education but not with the one that concerns me the most. Then I looked for as much relevant information as I could in the Internet, and I carefully read it at home.

It was really difficult for me to make the selection of the information because sometimes I get confused and I select interesting information in relation to the topic rather than *relevant information.*

In relation to the support used, I resorted to different sources. I included some direct quotations (when I didn't find a better way of expressing the information selected) paraphrases and I even summarized the Manifesto written by the rectors of all the universities in Argentina.

Self-Evaluation of Essay 4
[A-SE4-1] I'm quite satisfied with the result of my effort.
[A-SE4-2] N/D
[A-SE4-3] However, I worked hard on this and I think that the information included in the essay is relevant and appropriate to support my stance.
[A-SE4-4] Selecting relevant information is still one of my weaknesses, or at least one of the things that I find more difficult to do. As I explained in the self-evaluation of the previous essay, sometimes I tend to include interesting information that is not really relevant for my writing.
[A-SE4-3] However, I worked hard on this and I think that the information included in the essay is relevant and appropriate to support my stance.
[A-SE4-5] [A-SE4-6] I spent much more time editing the essay than actually writing it! First, I paid careful attention to the patters of organization, and I decided to use the pattern analyzed in the last readings done in class: addressing the opposition and arguing it, and acknowledging the opposing views and rebutting them. I think that using these techniques strengthens my argument because it shows that I have analyzed both the benefits and the drawbacks of grouping the gifted (although I'm in favour of grouping them).
[A-SE4-6] In relation to the use of academic vocabulary, it helped me a lot to revise the activities done in class concerning this topic. I tried to use as much specific vocabulary as possible and I found this vocabulary extremely useful to paraphrase and summarize some important pieces of information.
[A-SE4-5] From the very beginning, I paid attention to tone. I tried to make my stance clear by being as objective as possible. In order to do so, I chose neutral rather than emotionally charged language. Besides, because of the content included in each paragraph, the readers will get to know that I'm in favour of grouping the gifted, I mean, I included in each paragraph just one or two sentences mentioning the opposing view and then, the rest of the paragraph is devoted to refute (sic) that idea.
[A-SE4-7] N/D
[A-SE4-8] N/D
[A-SE4-9] I have to admit that I worked really hard in order to write this essay. I didn't do so because of the fact that this is the final essay, but because I wanted to carefully consider all the aspects that we have learnt in the subject in relation to writing essays, and I can say that I'm quite satisfied with the result of my effort.

b- Participant 2 (María)

Self-evaluation of Essay 1
(b-SE1-1) Personally, I'm not so much satisfied with my essay;
(b-SE1-2) however, I would evaluate it as a satisfactory piece of writing.
(b-SE1-3) What I can consider positive in my paper is the use of linguistic markers at the beginning of each paragraph. Each linguistic marker gives the paragraph a specific purpose; for instance:
1st P: 'In Argentina, ...': the linguistic marker introduces the topic.
2nd P: 'Taking into account...': It presents the negative aspect of the issue to be developed.
3rd P: 'Some experts in the field of ...': It includes experts' opinions showing the negative side of the issue and also, giving support.
4th P: 'Unlike...': It introduces and analyzes the other side,
5th P: 'According to some experts' vantage point ...': It analyzes the topic providing an example about 'bright and slow students' and about the different social classes they belong to.
6th P: 'To conclude, ...': It sums up or rounds of the topic.
(b-SE1-4) Concerning my weaknesses, I truly believe that my writing should have had more expert's opinions and more personal ideas so as to link and support the topic being discussed and the content. I consider that support (for example in the way of outside sources) is a fundamental prerequisite for a good essay organization.
(b-SE1-5) Honestly, the aspects I mostly concentrated on when revising my writing were related to organization and language. What I asked to myself after writing the essay was: Did I organize the essay properly? Did the introduction make sense? What about the academic vocabulary used? Was it used meaningfully? What about language.
(b-SE1-6) After a thoroughly revision, I made some changes concerning language and lexis (I had to look for collocations!)
(b-SE1-7) For all the other aspects that I did not check, I consider them satisfactory from the point of view of language and grammar.

(b-SE1-8) What I would like to improve is the way in which I organize my essays. For me, the organization of essays is a hard and tough activity because I never know hot to put ideas clearly in paper.
(b-SE1-9) N/D

Self-Evaluation of Essay 2
(b-SE2-1) Personally, I am not so much satisfied with my paper,
(b-SE2-2) so I would evaluate it as a poor piece of writing. Essay writing is really difficult for me.
(b-E2-3) What I can consider positive in my essay is the use of linguistic markers at the beginning of some paragraphs. Each linguistic marker gives the paragraph a specific purpose; for instance:
- A recent emphasis on (P. 1)
- Not only ... but also... (P.3)
- Still (P.5)
- But (P.6)
- In 1.995 (P.7)
- It is evident that (P.8)
(b-SE2-4) Concerning my weaknesses, I truly believe that it would be interested to have more experts'opinions in order to link and support the topic and content under discussion. I, personally, consider that support and justification are two fundamental prerequisites for a good essay organization.
(b-SE2-5) The aspects I always concentrate on when revising my papers are related to organization and language , from my point of view, the most difficult aspects. I always ask to myself after writing: did I organize the essay properly?, what about language?, was the academic vocabulary properly used?.
(b-SE2-6) Always after a thorough revision I make changes, usually about language and lexis (mainly collocations).
(b-SE2-7) For all the other aspects that I did not check, I consider them satisfactory.
(b-SE2-8) What I would like to improve is essay organization because I never know how to put ideas clearly in paper so as to write a well-organized essay.
(b-SE2-9) N/D

Self-Evaluation of Essay 3
(b-SE3-1) Personally, I am not so much satisfied with my paper, however, I am a little more satisfied than the one I wrote previously. Essay writing is really difficult for me.
(b-SE3-2) N/D
(b-SE3-3) What I can consider positive in my essay is the use of linguistic markers at the beginning of some paragraphs. Each linguistic marker gives the paragraph a specific purpose; for instance:
- In recent years, the heavy emphasis on... (P. 1)
- Still, there are some dissatisfactions ... (P.3)
- According to Marcela Mollis... (P.4)
- But, the most common complaint... (P.5)
- In 1.995,... (P.6)
- It is evident that,... (P.7)
(b-SE3-4) Concerning my weaknesses, I truly believe that I need to organize my information more coherently in order to link and support the topic and content under discussion. I, personally, consider that support and justification are two fundamental prerequisites for a good essay organization.
(b-SE3-5) The aspects I always concentrate on when revising my papers are related to organization and language , from my point of view, the most difficult aspects.
(b-SE3-6) I always ask to myself after writing: did I organize the essay properly?, what about language?, was the academic vocabulary properly used?. All these questions help me organize my information more accurately. Always after a thorough revision I make changes, usually about language and lexis (mainly collocations).
(b-SE3-7) For all the other aspects that I did not check, I believe they are satisfactory.
(b-SE3-8) What I would like to improve is essay organization because I never know how to put ideas clearly in the paper so as to write a well-organized, well-developed essay. For me, it is very difficult to know what ideas to include and develop in the essay, and what information to left aside.
(b-SE3-9) N/D

Self-Evaluation of Essay 4
(b-SE4-1) I'm not so much satisfied with my paper; I'm a little more satisfied with the one I wrote previously. However, I accept what I wrote.
(b-SE4-2) I would evaluate it as a satisfactory piece of writing.

(b-SE4-3) What I consider positive in my writing is the use of linguistic markers not only at the beginning of the different paragraphs but also throughout them: (detailed list of examples is included)
(b-SE4-4) Concerning my weaknesses, it seems that it is always the same problem: "essay organization". It seems to me that my writings are never well-developed. I realize that writing clear ideas down on paper is really difficult.
(b-SE4-5) I always concentrate on: 1) organization, 2) grammar, and 3) the use of suitable vocabulary. Always after revising my paper I find some mistakes that need correction.
(b-SE4-6) Yes, I changed some words for more suitable ones (vocabulary, and then I changed some structures (grammar). I would like to say that the vocabulary activities done in class helped me a lot!!
(b-SE4-7) There are some aspects that I did not check because I consider them good.
(b-SE4-8) Yes, as I always say, what I would like to improve is essay organization, and I know how to do it: reading and writing a lot.
(b-SE4-9) What I would like to say is that the essay took me too long to get it over. I consider that this particular kind of essay (developing your own argument) is a very hard task.