

Toward a Student-Centered Understanding of Intensive Writing and Writing-to-Learn in
the Spanish Major: An Examination of Advanced L2 Spanish Students'
Learning in the Writing-Intensive Spanish Content Course

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated, with all my love, to...

Karen,

Hannah,

William,

Rosalia,

Teaghan,

Emma

and

Oliver.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to build upon our understanding of the place and value of writing in the advanced foreign language curriculum. Specifically, the study examines how students in writing-intensive Spanish-major courses are affected by the writing-intensive (WI) requirement at the University of Minnesota. Writing-Across-the-Curriculum (WAC), an educational movement which began in the 1960's in England and whose most fundamental tenet, writing-to-learn, emphasizes the value of writing in the learning process, has led to the establishment of writing-intensive curricula in post-secondary institutions throughout North America. The study is an attempt to give students a voice in the FL curriculum inasmuch as it investigates students' perceptions and attitudes regarding the writing-intensive requirement and explores what they believe they learn, in terms of the course content, writing skills and the Spanish language, as a result of their participation in the writing-intensive Spanish course.

Both qualitative and quantitative data were employed in the study. Qualitative data were gathered by means of focus group interviews and open-ended questions on a written survey. Quantitative data were collected via the aforementioned survey and by way of pre- and post-write samples whereon errors per T-unit (E/T) analyses and topical structure analyses (TSA) were performed for verification of improvement in linguistic accuracy and coherence in students' writing respectively.

No statistically significant improvement was found in terms of linguistic accuracy (E/T) or coherence (TSA) over the course of the semester and findings suggest that writers in Spanish as a FL may be more apprehensive about writing in Spanish than are

English L1 writers about writing in English. Additionally it was found that many advanced Spanish student writers perceive that the workload associated with the WI requirement is excessive and that writing in Spanish as a FL is generally harder than writing in L1 English. On the other hand, however, many Spanish students expressed a belief that the WI requirement was no harder for them than for students writing in English and some expressed the sentiment that WI was actually more advantageous for Spanish students than for English L1 students given the value of writing for the language learning process.

With regards to students' beliefs about their learning resulting from engaging in intensive writing in the advanced Spanish classroom, findings show that students generally believe that they learn not only how to be better writers but also that they improve in their abilities with the Spanish language and, especially, in their understanding of the subject matter of the course. Additional findings regarding students' learning of the Spanish language are that students generally believe that not only their Spanish grammar and vocabulary improved as a result of their participation in the intensive writing in the WI course, but also their ability to speak in Spanish.

Based on the findings of the study, it is proposed that foreign language education practitioners be especially sensitive to students' perceptions and beliefs regarding both negative and positive aspects of writing in the FL curriculum.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM

Introduction

This study examines writing in the foreign language curriculum. More specifically, the study explores the perceptions and learning of students majoring in a foreign language – Spanish – who are enrolled in a writing-intensive Spanish content course at a large, public university in the midwestern United States – the University of Minnesota. The study has as an initial premise the common perception that writing, when done well, can be a very grueling task, even when performed in one’s own native language. Indeed, American author Jessamyn West (1957) once wrote the following: “Writing is so difficult that I feel that writers, having had their hell on earth, will escape all punishment hereafter” (3). A second premise that underscores this study is the notion that if writing is difficult even in one’s native language, its performance in a foreign language may be even more difficult. Finally, an important question that motivates this study is the following: If writing in a foreign language can be potentially so very difficult and stressful, what is its value in the foreign language curriculum?

The struggles and benefits of writing in a foreign language are themes that have fascinated me since I was a young college student. In 1986, having recently returned

from a two-year experience abroad in Bolivia, I enrolled in a beginning Spanish literature course at my university and was subsequently assigned to write my first academic paper in Spanish on a literary topic. It was a terribly painful experience – not because I disliked writing in Spanish, but because I disliked writing. I struggled selecting a topic but finally did turn in my few pages of what seemed a very poorly written analysis of a short story. Nevertheless, when the paper was returned a few days later, I was both relieved and overjoyed to see that I had received an ‘A’ with the annotation: “*Muy buena redacción.*” Much to my surprise, I had done well on my first Spanish writing assignment. As a Spanish major I subsequently completed many such assignments – each one an exercise in patience, longsuffering and endurance. Although I struggled mightily in my writing, I somehow sensed that both my understanding of that about which I wrote and my facility in the Spanish language were enhanced immensely through writing.

The Challenge of Writing in a Second or Foreign Language

It is no secret that formal academic writing at all levels can be extremely tedious and agonizing. Prell’s (1993) examination of a “writing intensive” course offered to native speakers of English gives the following eye-opening account which illustrates this point:

The first day students received their lengthy and explicit syllabi and met what we called the “teaching staff”. By the second week fewer than thirty students remained in the class. . . . I would not be exaggerating to say that some ninety students expressed interest in this class until they were confronted by our request for writing papers, none of which were major research papers, all of which were very topical and lively. . . . Students dropped whom the [teaching and research] assistants identified from composition courses as very good students. One or two students explained that they simply could not commit the time that such a class required. We learned vividly that writing is not a way to attract students if one is in pursuit of large enrollments. One . . . student who remained told me that all his

friends said he was crazy to take a course that required writing. . . . Further, students commented repeatedly that this was not a composition course: why were they writing? They simply saw no essential or fundamental connection between writing and learning. Even the students who stayed, knowing precisely what was required, continued to ask why writing was part of the class. (2)

In her discussion of second language writing, Hadley (2001) explains that learning to write in an academic setting, whether in one's own native language or in a second language, involves much more than just jotting things down:

Unfortunately, learning to write – even in one's native language – is not simply a matter of “writing things down.” The fact that it took 45 minutes to compose the preceding paragraph, and that it is taking even longer to write this one, attests to the truth of the statement that writing is more than the mere transcription of speech. Most people who have attempted to put pen to paper to communicate ideas would agree that expressing oneself clearly in writing can be a slow and painful process. (280)

As the examples above illustrate, the challenges of writing can be painful and daunting. Nevertheless, it would seem apparent that within the academic community, writing is viewed as absolutely essential to a university education – and not only in English departments!

Furthermore, as I experienced as a young undergraduate student, many students at colleges and universities have an added burden that can potentially cause them to feel doubly overwhelmed: having to fulfill the stiff writing requirements that a post-secondary education invariably involves in a language that is not their first. Indeed, foreign students whose native language is not English and who come to fulfill professional and educational goals at universities in the United States face the daunting task of completing all written assignments in English and of competing with other students whose first language is English. Similarly, students whose first language is

English but who study foreign languages at colleges and universities in the United States are invariably required to write extensively in the foreign language they study.

How the Study Came to Be

The present study examines how these latter writers, major-level students in foreign language departments, namely Spanish, are affected by the challenge of accomplishing academic writing in a foreign language. This research topic was selected while I was employed as a writing consultant in the University of Minnesota's Spanish Writing Center (SWC) – a service that was established in 1999 in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese Studies concurrent with and as a result of the Writing-across-the-Curriculum (WAC) movement and the resultant establishment of the Writing-Intensive (WI) requirement at the University of Minnesota.

The W-I requirement established that all students at the University of Minnesota who enrolled Fall Semester 1999 and thereafter would be required to complete four writing-intensive courses before graduation. Specifically, it was determined that at least two of the four courses should be at the 3000-5000 level, and that at least one of the courses should be in the student's major (Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing, *Writing at the University*, 3) – thus encouraging students to learn the writing genre of their chosen discipline. This meant that students majoring in Spanish at the University would be required to fulfill at least part of the WI requirement in a foreign language which, to one degree or another, they were still in the process of acquiring.

My experiences in the Spanish Writing Center suggested to me that of the standard four language skills – speaking, listening, reading, and writing – the latter is often viewed by learners of a foreign language such as Spanish, as one of the more troublesome skills to acquire and engage in. Furthermore, as a result of my personal experiences as a Spanish-as-a-foreign-language (SFL) writer, I was reminded of how excruciating it could sometimes be to produce a written assignment in a foreign language.

It is apparent that issues surrounding the W-I requirement and its effect on foreign language students are complex and often emotionally charged, a point anecdotal evidence clearly illustrates. For example, during a writing conference in the SWC one student said the following to me: “I can speak, I can read, I can listen and understand [Spanish], but I just can’t write!” Another student enrolled in a 3100-level Spanish class articulated her dislike for writing: “I love everything else about my Spanish classes,” she said, “but I hate writing!” Other students, while similarly bemoaning their struggles with writing in Spanish, simultaneously concede that having to produce Spanish in written form helps them to learn the language more effectively and permanently. Said one student: “When I learn something new [about Spanish grammar], I don’t really ‘get it’ until I use it in writing.” The present study therefore proposes to examine how, for good or for bad, the writing-intensive requirement at the University of Minnesota affects Spanish-as-a-foreign-language (SFL) students enrolled in introductory-level, W-I Spanish major courses, in their attitudes about and acquisition of writing in a foreign language, as well as how such writing affects their learning of the content of their courses.

Writing-Across-the-Curriculum (WAC)

As a background to this study, it will be beneficial to discuss the history and philosophies of the Writing-Across-the-Curriculum (WAC) movement that led to the establishment of such Writing-Intensive requirements as those at the University of Minnesota and other colleges and universities throughout the United States and Canada.

While the core theories of the WAC movement had actually always existed in academia in both Great Britain and the United States, it was not until the late 1960s and early 1970s that WAC fully materialized as a major trend in educational policy, first in the U.K and subsequently in the U.S. Nancy Martin, one of the pioneers of the WAC movement in Great Britain (commonly known there as *Language-Across-the-Curriculum, or LAC*), attributes the onset of the WAC movement to post-World War II stirrings in academia that eventually came to a head in the 1960s.

Martin (1992) states that directly following World War II there was “a sense that everything was starting afresh, that we needed to reexamine the old and try out the new” (11-12). During that time, British educational practitioners began looking at emerging philosophies of education and learning by such scholars as Piaget, Vygotsky, Luria, and others who had explored the relationship between speech and mental development and had made the distinction between so-called *social* and *nonsocial* or *egocentric* speech. As Martin notes, these theories came to be pivotal in the development of the future LAC movement. For example, they came to view the theory of egocentric speech, or what they saw as “language for oneself”, as the very “origins of writing” (12):

With the work of Piaget, Vygotsky, and Luria as both guide and stimulus, we developed the outline of a coherent theory of language in relation to mental

development, a theory that became the foundation of our courses at the University of London's Institute of Education. This theory was the intellectual seedbed from which our further work grew. (13)

These theoretical beginnings led to the development of policies that focused on the importance of students engaging in writing as a vital part of their learning.

Martin reports that there was an environment of “intense intellectual activity” that, when combined with the “volcanic climate of the 1960s, . . . profoundly affected views of education then and since.” She notes that the doctrines that emerged in Great Britain during this time helped to shift attention “from teaching to learning, to the role of teachers and to the role of language in learning” (11).

Therefore, by the mid 1960s, scholars from the University of London's Institute of Education such as Douglas Barnes, Harold Rosen, Martin, and, perhaps most notably, James Britton had begun to formalize plans for a “languages across the curriculum” movement in Great Britain. Their motivation came from their understanding of writing characterized by the three following potential descriptors which they later published in their seminal work *The Development of Writing Abilities (11-18)* (Britton et al., 1975): 1) “transactional” writing, meaning writing that is used to communicate information “to a relatively distant and impersonal audience, usually the teacher in the role of examiner” (Bizzell and Herzberg, 340); 2) “poetic” writing, which allows a writer to contemplate and speculate, and to share his or her thoughts with a somewhat more intimate audience; and, 3) “expressive” writing, which also permits students to “explore ideas informally, but in expository modes such as the class journal rather than in fiction or poetry” (340).

The University of London scholars determined that the grand majority of writing

realized in secondary schools in Great Britain was of the “transactional” type – that is, extremely formalized and product-oriented. Hence, they proposed that if students engaged in the more exploratory and personalized “poetic” and “expressive” kinds of writing (and, incidentally, speech) in all the disciplines, they would feel more empowered in their learning and hence learn more effectively (340). Indeed, as Martin proposes, the so-called London scholars felt that “students’ learning and development [depended] on their *using* language to make sense of personal experience, real or imagined” (17) rather than on rote production of language.

WAC in the United States

As in England, educational philosophies that eventually led to the Writing-Across-the-Curriculum movement in the United States had been in existence well before the actual materialization of WAC. As Russell (1992) points out, scholars associated with the “progressive education” movement as early as the 1890s had promoted the idea of writing and speaking as vital to intellectual development. Nevertheless, as in Great Britain, not until the social and political uproar of the 1960s did the use of writing as a means of teaching and learning begin to be seriously considered as a vital player in the educational system of the United States:

The social turmoil of the 1960’s . . . highlighted the role of language in education. The campuses exploded in a rash of political upheavals. Racial desegregation forced secondary and higher education to address the problem of teaching long-excluded social groups who did not write the dominant form of English. In this highly charged political environment, educators had to confront volatile issues of language and access, language and learning, that had been largely submerged when higher education placed disciplinary standards over equity and access. (29-30)

In 1966, as Russell puts it, “the American English profession’s confidence in its traditional pedagogy and disciplinary focus was deeply shaken by a month-long encounter with British colleagues at the Dartmouth Seminar” wherein a total of some fifty scholars from both sides of the Atlantic met to discuss educational policy (31). Whereas before this time educational scholars in the U.S. were comfortably drifting away from a more progressive policy toward a more stringent curriculum based on academic rigor and standardization, the British scholars “had been moving in the opposite direction, toward pedagogy centered on informal classroom talk, dramatics and expressive writing” (31). While those in the Dartmouth Seminar did not center their discussions specifically on writing per se, Russell suggests that the Seminar’s effect on educational policy in the U.S. and on the WAC movement in general is almost inestimable:

[The] Dartmouth [Seminar] had effectively reopened the crucial theoretical and policy issues that the American antiprogressive emphasis had stifled, and several of the conference participants – James Britton, Douglas Barnes, Harold Rosen, and James Moffett, among others – would, in the coming decade, create and shape the WAC movement. (32)

Indeed, after this pivotal meeting at Dartmouth, educational research and policy in the United States witnessed a renewed interest in the value of writing in the curriculum.

As a response, in the 1970s, programs with far greater emphasis on the value of writing began to emerge in post-secondary schools across the nation. For example, in 1974, Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota began to sponsor seminars wherein faculty members could receive training on writing-across-the-curriculum; and thereafter the college implemented policies that led to discipline-wide responsibility for writing at the college (Smith 1983-84, cited in Ambron, 1991, 6). In like fashion and at

approximately the same time, Central College and Grinnell College, both in Iowa, adopted similar programs (Russell, 1992, 33).

In terms of intellectual scholarship that promoted the WAC movement in the United States, perhaps the most important contributions initially were those of Janet Emig, whose (1971) study entitled *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders* was one of the first to apply theories of the University of London's scholars concerning the need for expressive or, as she termed it, "reflexive" language. In her study, Emig found that "when secondary-level students are given more opportunities to write reflexively, they engage in a more thoughtful writing process, write better and feel better about what they write, and learn more" (Bizzell and Herzberg 1986, 341). Later, Emig's (1977) landmark study, "Writing as a Mode of Learning," "wove together the British research, the Continental theories of Vygotsky, Luria, and Piaget, and American theorists such as Dewey, Bruner, and George Kelly," as Russell states (1992, 36). Indeed, Emig's paper captured the most salient features of the soon-to-blossom WAC movement in the United States – namely that writing should be "a central academic process" in all of the disciplines, not just English, and has a "unique value for learning" (127-128, cited in Russell, 36).

Following Emig's groundbreaking work, such scholars as Toby Fulwiler, Art Young, Elaine Mamon and others began to focus their attention on issues surrounding writing throughout the curriculum. As a result, the WAC movement prospered in academia in North America. For example, a 1988 study surveyed 2,735 institutions of higher education in Canada and the U.S. and found that of the 1,113 that replied, 38

percent reported having some sort of WAC program (McLeod, cited in Russell, 38-39). Moreover, of interest to the present study is the fact that, in many cases, as at the University of Minnesota, WAC led to the implementation of writing-intensive or “writing-emphasis” (Durfee et al. 1991) graduation requirements, wherein university students are required to take a certain number of classes one of whose main pedagogical components centers on both formal and informal types of writing for the learning of course content.

Overview of the Study

This study, therefore, proposes to continue filling in some of the gaps left by many years of research on the specific needs of *foreign* language writers in university curricula in the United States. More specifically, given the proliferation of WAC throughout the United States and Canada, I propose to examine the impact which this movement has had on students of foreign languages. Hence, this study will specifically explore the attitudes and perceptions that major-level students of Spanish have regarding the W-I requirement at the University of Minnesota. Additionally, the study will explore whether students studying Spanish at this institution show improved accuracy and coherence in their writing as a result of participation in a writing-intensive Spanish course. Finally, as a follow up to an investigation of students’ improvement in accuracy and coherence in their writing, the study will explore exactly what students perceive that they gain as a result of their participation in intensive writing in the W-I Spanish course.

The following chapters will review and analyze the theories underlying the study, the methods employed in carrying out the study, the findings of the study, and implications for foreign language writing curricula. Hence, Chapter 2 entails a review of the literature pertinent to issues surrounding WAC, writing to learn, and attitudes and perceptions of students regarding foreign language writing. Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the methods utilized in the study. Chapter 4 describes the findings of the study as guided by the study's research questions. And Chapter 5 provides conclusions, implications, limitations and recommendations for future research and best practices for the felicitous implementation and continuation of WAC in foreign language curricula.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) observe that the key objective of a study's literature review "is to provide a clear and balanced picture of current leading concepts, theories, and data relevant to [the] subject of study" and to afford the researcher "the understanding and insight needed to situate [his or her] topic within an existing framework" (46).

Additionally, they note that "besides providing a foundation—a theoretical framework for the problem to be investigated—the literature review can demonstrate how the present study advances, refines, or revises what is already known" about the topic of the study and is "a conscious attempt to keep in mind that the ... research emerges from and is contained within a larger context of ... inquiry" (46). As such, the present chapter comprises a review of previous research meant to validate and situate the present study within the context of current research on pertinent issues surrounding writing in a foreign language. Though the study centers on writing in a *foreign* language, this literature review relies heavily on the rich corpus of research on writing in a *second* language and, to a certain degree, on studies of writing in writers' first language, typically referred to in the literature simply as "composition".

Therefore, this literature review proposes to offer “a clear and balanced picture of current leading concepts, theories, and data” relevant to intensive writing in the foreign language classroom. In order to clarify the sequence and logic of the present chapter and to help the reader envision how this literature review establishes a rationale for the research questions of the study, I provide the following preview of how the chapter proceeds.

Hence, following this introduction the chapter first addresses the very important differences between writing in a *foreign* language and writing in a *second* language. It next comments on the current state of research on writing in the foreign language. The chapter then focuses on previous studies related to writing-across-the-curriculum (WAC) and its effect on writing in a second language, specifically ESL, as well as in the FL.

This chapter then touches upon three main foci related to learning outcomes of intensive writing in the foreign language curriculum, including, 1) writing to learn (course content); 2) writing to learn to write; and 3) writing to learn a foreign language. Hence, the section entitled “Writing to Learn (Course Content)” of this chapter reviews research on the writing-to-learn movement in academia specifically as it relates to the learning of the content of the academic course in which writing is a component and, more specifically, to how this movement has affected writers of a second or foreign language. Thereafter, in the section entitled “Writing to Learn to Write,” the chapter reviews research on students’ learning to be better overall writers in the foreign/second language classroom, including a discussion of coherence as an indicator of writing quality, students’ attitudes and perceptions of writing in the L2 classroom and “writing

apprehension” which appears to play an important role in students’ attitudes and perceptions regarding writing. Thereafter, in the section entitled “Writing to Learn a Foreign Language,” I review studies that consider the role of writing in the language acquisition process and specifically discuss various theories that suggest that writing is of value in that process, including the Output Hypothesis, the Noticing Hypothesis and the Involvement Load Hypothesis.

The chapter then discusses the importance of hearing the student voice in research on education, an important premise upon which this study is founded. Finally, to conclude the chapter, I present the three research questions of this study, briefly revisit those areas which this literature review suggests are in need of further research and discuss how this study proposes to help fill those gaps.

FL Writing versus SL Writing

From the outset of this discussion, it is important to distinguish between *foreign* language (FL) learners and *second* language (SL) learners. While similar in many important ways, each possesses certain distinct and important characteristics. For example, at the most basic level, *second* language learners reside in a country where their L2 is the primary language, thus providing for them a situation wherein the learner has ample and authentic opportunities for language acquisition and use. *Foreign* language learners, on the other hand, learn the L2 in their own country, typically in the academic classroom, which affords them limited authentic and relatively infrequent opportunities for usage.

Bullock (2006) suggests that the “typical” second language student writer does

not exist. He observes that second language writers “defy generalization due to their different culture, religions, ethnicity, language, economics, and development” (113). He notes that in any given second-language writing class, there may, at one time, be “an eighteen year old with no college experience, a visiting professor doing post-doctoral research, or a student born in the United States who speaks English with peers and in school but speaks another language at home” (113).

On the other hand, while *foreign* language learners certainly have their cultural, religious and ethnic differences, they are typically far more homogenous as a group. They are typically of the same nationality since, as the term “foreign” implies, they are learning a language from outside of their common country. Additionally, at least as regards foreign language learners in the United States and, more specifically, those who were surveyed for the present study, foreign language learners tend to be similar in age (the typical student at a university being in their late teens or early twenties) and generally have similar backgrounds in terms of their writing and language learning experiences.

In terms of a distinction between the act of writing in a foreign- versus a second-language, there are some obvious differences. For example, foreign language writers are generally required to write in their L2 in order to acquire the very language in which they write or, at higher academic levels, for purposes of learning about and analyzing an academic subject. On the other hand, second language learners’ concept of writing in academia entails much more detailed writing on subjects of professional importance to them for which they are in competition with L1 speaking students in the same course of

study – clearly a more intensive writing environment. In addition, outside the classroom, second language writers likely will find it necessary to perform everyday writing in their L2 – a note to a landlord, written instructions to a colleague, e-mail, on-line chatting – given that they are immersed in the L2 culture. Indeed, foreign language learners, as compared with second language learners, lead a much more sheltered existence, inasmuch as they are not constantly struggling to compete with native speakers of their second language.

Furthermore, in his discussion of second language writers in L1 writing classes, Bullock (2006) observes that they can be very different in their rhetorical approach to writing. The discipline of “contrastive rhetoric”, initiated by Kaplan (1966) has proved to be of great importance for ESL and English-for-academic-purposes (EAP) practitioners and students (Connor 2004), inasmuch as it first recognized that different cultures approach writing differently. For example, in some cultures it may be typical in argumentative writing for a writer to state the argument and go about validating it immediately, whereas in another culture it may be more accepted to circle around the issue and then present the argument. For a student learning English as a second language and living in the United States or other English-speaking country and enrolled in a writing class with 20 native-speakers of English, an understanding that writers of English may approach a paper differently than he or she typically does, is invaluable. By contrast, while many EFL in their countries may discuss issues surrounding contrastive rhetoric in their courses, it has been my observation that such a discussion is extremely

unusual in FL courses in the United States similar to those examined for the present study.

The State of Research on Writing in the FL

During the 20th century, preferential treatment in research in foreign language education has seemingly been given to the oral/aural skills. Indeed, even as recently as 2002, Harklau stated that “scholarship in applied linguistics – particularly the sub-field of classroom second language acquisition – has evolved in ways that implicitly privilege face-to-face interaction over learning through written modalities” (330). She attributed this trend to various historical developments in linguistics in the United States, including the fact that early on language scholars in the field of anthropology were interested in documenting Native American languages which altogether lacked writing systems. She also noted the strong influence of the European structuralists, especially de Saussure, who strongly asserted that the spoken word, not the written word, was the very essence of language and therefore the obvious focus of linguistic scholarship (332). Additionally, Scott (1996) noted that the study of writing in a foreign language historically had taken a back seat to that of speaking owing, at least in part, to the Audiolingual Method of the 50's and 60's which was founded on behaviorist psychology that stressed that “language was speech, not writing” (147). Practitioners of this method placed huge emphasis on oral repetition and pattern practice but, as Scott pointed out, “writing served only as a support skill for speaking activities” (147).

Scott also observed that in 1986, when ACTFL established its Proficiency Guidelines which delineated levels of language achievement from Novice to Superior in all four language modes—speaking, listening, reading and writing—various criticisms (see Valdes et al. 1992) of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for writing, (such as some inaccuracy and inconsistency in defining what L2 writers are capable of at the various levels), may have contributed to a surge of approaches to the teaching of foreign language writing. Hence, the resultant inconsistency in approaches to both the underlying theories and the teaching of writing in a foreign language in general have contributed to its somewhat negligible treatment in foreign language education acquisition research. As Scott stated, “ultimately, teaching FL writing has been given relatively little attention” (148).

Nonetheless, Scott (1996) also emphasized that there is great value in engaging in writing in the foreign language classroom and, hence, a great need for more research on the subject. She says:

“... it is important to recognize both the short- and long-term goals of this endeavor. In the short term, we want students to practice the target language in a modality other than speech so that they are able to communicate a message to a designated community as well as to perform adequately in courses that focus on academic writing. In the long term, we want to increase students’ overall cognitive functioning. The act of writing in the FL, just as writing in L1, requires students to think critically. When FL students are required to write beyond the sentence level from the start, they learn to communicate ideas with a reader without pressure of face-to-face communication, to record experience, to explore a subject, to become familiar with the conventions of written discourse in the target language, and to discover the link between writing and thinking” (166-7).

The above observation shows a distinct contrast from a personal experience in September 2000 when, as a new Spanish writing consultant at the newly established

Spanish Writing Center at the University of Minnesota, I attended the Symposium on Second Language Writing at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana. Prior to attending, I spoke with Paul Matsuda, a co-organizer of the symposium, and inquired as to whether a person involved in a foreign-language-writing context rather than a second-language-writing context would be welcome. I was enthusiastically invited to submit an abstract for presentation at the conference and to plan to attend. Given that the theme of the symposium was to be “Contexts of L2 Writing”, Matsuda told me, those who were involved in foreign language writing or other contexts of writing were genuinely encouraged to participate. Nevertheless, upon attending the symposium I was rather discouraged to discover that of 47 abstracts in the conference program, only 9 presentations dealt with writing in a language other than English; and of the remaining 38 abstracts that dealt with writing in English, fully 29 focused directly on ESL writing.

Similarly, in 1999 Melinda Reichelt published an analysis of articles written in the *Journal of Second Language Writing* and found that “only three of 81 articles [dealt] with writing in a second language other than English, despite the fact that the first sentence of the journal’s information for authors, printed in every issue, calls for manuscripts related to ‘second and foreign language writing’” (181).

Thus, for many years there has been a need for more research that focuses specifically on issues surrounding foreign language writing, a point upon which various scholars have concurred. For example, in a discussion on writing in the foreign language curriculum, Musumeci (1998) notes that “. . . the research on second language writing is almost entirely based on studies conducted with university-level students enrolled in English as a

second language (ESL) programs” and argues that “although applications of second language writing research serve as a springboard for innovation in the foreign language curriculum, the differences between the populations underscore the importance of further research to determine the generalizability of findings from ESL to foreign language populations” (7). Indeed, as Reichelt (1999) observes, “. . . it is important for FL writing to forge its own identity by delineating its own research agenda and pedagogical practices” (193).

Although during the last few years, researchers in L2 writing have been able to celebrate the fact that scholarship in the field has come to occupy a place of importance and legitimacy in the academy, research on writing in a foreign language continues to lag behind. Silva and Brice (2004), for example, make the following observation:

It is an exciting time to be working in the area of second language writing. Due partly to globalization and the subsequent need to communicate via computer, second language writing has become an important if not dominant focus of work in second language studies. Additionally, second language writing scholarship, in responding to the current situation, has increased its breadth and depth and has begun to break free from the constraints imposed on it by its parent disciplines, applied linguistics and composition studies, vis à vis theory, research, and instruction. In short, the study of second language writing has become a legitimate area of inquiry in its own right. (70)

Unfortunately, as previously mentioned, the increase in research on L2 writing has not been as robust for *foreign* language writing as for *second* language writing. In a recent volume of the *Journal of Second Language Writing* devoted specifically to the analysis of *foreign* language writing, Manchón and de Haan (2008) observed the following:

This growth in research output has not applied equally to investigations into second language (SL) and foreign language (FL) writing. Thus, whereas SL

writing research has expanded at the levels of theoretical discussions, empirical research, and pedagogical recommendations, FL writing has featured less prominently in theoretical and pedagogical discussions in the field.

Nevertheless, albeit on a smaller scale, it appears that the last decade or so has seen an increase of productivity in research on writing in *foreign* languages. Silva and Brice (2004) specifically note that “research focusing on foreign (as opposed to second) language contexts has proliferated, evidence both of the growth of L2 writing as a discipline and the changing role of writing in the 21st century” (80). They state that the area of foreign language writing has seen an increase of research “both geographically and conceptually” (80). For instance, in their review of the literature on L2 writing from 2000 to 2004, they observe that studies of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) emerged from all over the world, including Bulgaria (Rainville 2000), Japan (Hirose 2001; Hirose & Sasaki 2000), Tunisia (Ghrib-Maamouri 2001), the Ukraine (Tarnopolsky 2000), Switzerland, Italy, Denmark, and Germany (Bräuer 2000). Moreover, they observe that the literature on foreign language writing during that timeframe included studies of writing instruction of various foreign languages taught in classrooms in the United States, including Spanish (Roebuck 2001; Ruiz-Funes 2001), French (Calvez 2000; Kelley 2001), and German (Reichelt and Waltner 2001).

And though they still see a great need for more research into foreign language writing, Manchón and de Haan (2008) concur with Silva and Brice (2004) when they observe that “empirical research on FL writing has steadily grown, especially in the last few years” (1). They observe, moreover, that there has been a clear increase in the presence of FL writing studies in academic publications and conferences. For instance,

they note that 75% of the articles on FL writing that appeared in the *Journal of Second Language Writing*, a journal begun in 1992, were published from 1999 onward.

Additionally, they cite as an example of the increase of scholarly presentations at academic conferences, the fact that “an almost equal number of presentations on SL and FL writing were given at the American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL) Annual Conference held in Montreal in 2006” (1). Indeed, there is reason to be cautiously hopeful for the future of research in foreign language writing.

WAC and ESL

As noted in Chapter 1, the WAC movement in the U.S. had a profound influence on the way writing is taught at many post-secondary institutions today. While the WAC movement overall has enjoyed a fairly extensive examination by researchers of English L1 writing, far less has been done to explore how second or foreign language writers are affected. Most of what has been done in terms of research on how language learners are affected by WAC and writing-intensive requirements has come out of the ESL literature. For example, an extremely important issue in ESL is that of “academic writing.” Students pursuing a profession in the United States or Canada whose native language is not English first typically take ESL courses in order to prepare for the academic rigors of a curriculum in a language that is not native to them. Thereafter, upon entering their major area of study, they are faced with producing formal academic written assignments for their classes and are generally compared with students who are native speakers/writers of English. When, as a stipulation for graduation, these students are

required to enroll in writing-intensive courses as part of their discipline's curriculum, the disadvantages associated with doing academic writing in a second language become even more acute. In fact, this precarious situation has given rise to the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) movement which considers "the reasons why students are enrolled in English courses and how their goals relate to the types of courses they will take as they pursue degrees in their chosen areas of study" (Benesch, 2001, 35). Indeed, these students' ability to perform academic writing in English becomes an extremely crucial component of their very livelihood.

On the topic of ESL academic writing, Wolfe-Quintero and Segade (1999) have commented on the difficulty of the subtleties in writing for ESL students faced with the challenge of performing academic writing in English: "Tense, article, lexical, and complex syntax problems persist for many of those who have mastered the language for communication and who may know the grammar backward and forward on grammar tests." (193-194).

In addition, Wolfe-Quintero and Segade point out that ESL academic writers may have difficulties not only in learning how to write in a second language but also in acquiring the specific writing genre of their field of study (194-196); that they are competing against English L1 writers (199); that they may often feel intimidated by native English-speaking professors (199); and that, based on their difficulties in English writing, some students inevitably receive lower grades, although their knowledge of the course content is good (200).

On the same subject, Janopoulos (1995) notes that in the face of increased emphasis on writing proficiency in post-secondary education, due to the WAC movement, second language academic writers are being held to a double standard. He refers specifically to Writing Proficiency Exams (WPE) that are utilized by educators to hold all students, both native and nonnative English speakers, to a certain standard of writing quality. Janopoulos complains that while faculty across the curriculum at lower levels appear to hold second language English writers to a lower standard than they do their native English writing counterparts, at the later stages of a non-native English speakers' education, WPE raters appear actually to be less tolerant of ESL writers' mistakes. He therefore submits the following:

Consequently, a substantial percentage of NNS students may not be adequately prepared to pass WPEs, as it is quite likely that a WPE may be the first writing assignment in which they will be judged by native speaker standards. Thus, the existence of a double standard for NNS students raises serious ethical, pedagogical, and legal issues, for by virtue of what compelling argument can NNS students be held to one standard in class, only to be held to another on WPEs" (46-7).

Similarly, in her doctoral dissertation, Becket (1995) considered some of the academic writing challenges which ESL students face in the wake of the WAC movement. She specifically examined the ways in which American professors reacted to the writing of non-native English speaking students, noting that there had been a recent emphasis on the need for a clearer understanding of the particular nature of the writing required in various content areas. Becket's doctoral research brings to light once again the double standard which ESL academic writers often face in their coursework in North American curricula.

Becket performed case studies in which she first examined the reactions of both an ESL professor and a freshman chemistry professor to the writing assignments of a native Japanese speaker; and secondly, she assessed the reactions of the previous ESL professor and those of the professor of an urban development course to the writing of an Indonesian graduate student who was a native speaker of Malay.

Her findings demonstrate the inconsistency of professors' reactions to ESL writing across the curriculum. She found that although all of the professors involved were principally concerned with the content of the papers their students wrote, each of them responded differently to the manner in which the concepts were expressed and organized and that in both courses she examined (freshman chemistry and urban planning), neither student was provided with direct help on the linguistic requirements of the writing assignments.

Thus, as has been demonstrated, the academic writing needs of ESL writers have been an important area of research on WAC and second language writing. Nevertheless, the issues surrounding WAC and FL writing are somewhat different, more complex and in need of even more extensive research than what has thus far been realized.

WAC and FL Writing

An extremely important purpose of the present study is to help provide greater knowledge and understanding about how the WAC movement in universities in North America has specifically affected students enrolled foreign language programs. In a 1990 article in *Modern Language Journal* entitled "Teaching in a Liberal Arts College: How

Foreign Language Courses Contribute to ‘Writing Across the Curriculum’ Programs”, Ilona Klein called for greater collaboration between English, Writing and Modern Languages departments “in trying to find a better means of promoting effective writing” and in using writing as “a tool to enhance thinking, rhetoric, and ‘method’: i.e., teaching writing as a teaching/learning tool” (28). In essence, therefore, Klein’s article was one of the very first in the Writing-Across-the-Curriculum movement to recognize and articulate the place of foreign language departments in the WAC movement. She was, nevertheless, not one of many, inasmuch as in the literature the impact of the WAC movement on foreign language curricula has received precious little attention.

Though it can be seen as a relatively minor study, inasmuch as it was only published “in-house”, I cite here Homstad and Thorson’s (1996) study as it emerged from the same institutional context – the University of Minnesota – as the present study. In response to the Writing-Across-the-Curriculum movement at the University of Minnesota, Homstad and Thorson (1996) undertook a study wherein they invited all instructors of beginning- and intermediate-level foreign language courses in the Department of German and Scandinavian to implement both intensive and extensive writing in their classrooms. They observed that typically greater emphasis was placed on oral skills in foreign language classes at the beginning and intermediate levels. In spite of this, however, they stated that they “believe that ... both extensive writing – having students produce a significant quantity of work – and intensive writing – asking students to focus on and revise one small piece of writing for clarity – will help increase overall language proficiency and can be used to complement and support other language

skills as well” (3).

In their study, Homstad and Thorson analyzed graduation proficiency exam results for the year, and administered surveys half-way through the academic year to students. Specifically concerning comparative pre- and post writing-to-learn outcomes on the writing section of the graduation proficiency exam for students of Norwegian at the University, they state the following:

Although we cannot quantify our findings, our perception is that student performance in the writing portion of the Norwegian proficiency exam in 1994 and 1995 – after implementation of writing-to-learn activities in these classes – indicates an increasing fluency and confidence from previous years. Students wrote in greater quantity, with greater fluency and more originality ... than is indicated from previous exams. (4)

Concerning the surveys, Homstad and Thorson noted that the most obvious outcome, especially for the teacher surveys, was the wide spectrum of views about the nature and value of writing: “We found that teachers, as well as students, also had differing perceptions and definitions of what constitutes writing, grammar, assessment, etc.” (8). In spite of the inconsistency in the responses, Homstad and Thorson found that responses to the question, “Has your writing—either in your second language or your first language—improved this quarter? How? In what way?” yielded interesting results in terms of students’ and teachers’ perceptions of what writing improvement entails. They state that students who believed that their writing had indeed improved almost always associated such improvement with advances in grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure. From these results they conclude that both students and teachers tend to perceive writing “as a means of demonstrating grammar and vocabulary skills, rather than as an expression of content or critical thinking ability” (8).

Morocco and Soven (1990) complain that “in the hierarchy of recent pedagogical practices writing holds a low priority and has remained the stepchild of teaching in foreign language classes,” and propose that the inclusion of WAC procedures in foreign language classrooms can “further the already established goals of language teaching” as well as “create an active, productive classroom in which the gaps between textbook drills and meaningful communications are bridged” (845). They validate the use of WAC writing procedures in the foreign language classroom as follows:

Writing is a more faceted activity than listening, speaking or reading. Studies have indicated that writing enhances memory, aids reading comprehension, stimulates invention, deepens the capacity to form relationships between ideas, and sharpens critical thinking. Furthermore, because writing is integrative, involving cognitive, affective, and behavioral faculties, it is an active and creative learning mode. (845-6)

As a result, they performed a pilot study wherein they implemented WAC methods, including both formal process writing and informal in-class writing, into their third-year Spanish “Advanced Conversation and Composition” courses. As a rationale for the implementation of innovative WAC methods, they propose that non-graded informal writing, as well as writing that emphasizes content rather than form (e.g. grammar), helps stimulate thought in students and helps create an environment that is conducive to learning.

Morocco and Soven suggest that the overall result of implementing WAC measures in these Spanish classrooms was positive for both the instructor and the students. They note that the students’ course evaluations at the end of the semester revealed overall satisfaction with the new approaches. Among the specific positive outcomes that they report resulted from the implementation of WAC methodology in

their courses were that it apparently empowered students to “use writing to think and communicate in the target language,” as well as to “lessen students’ preoccupation with grammar and usage,” which, they state, is “often viewed by them as the sole aim of learning to write in a foreign language” (848). Additionally, the authors point out that use of WAC procedures in various cases revealed that students were more concerned with actually developing ideas in their writing rather than dutifully fulfilling a homework task.

Writing to Learn Course Content

An important focus of the present study is that of specific learning outcomes gained by students in the Spanish major as a result of their participation in WI Spanish courses. One very important potential outcome of the intensive writing which has received much attention from educational researchers outside of foreign and second languages is that of the learning of the subject matter of the WI course. While the research touches upon other learning outcomes resulting from writing, clearly the learning of course content is that which most typifies the very important concept of “writing-to-learn” which has been perhaps the single most important tenet of the WAC movement. Regarding this point, Peritz (1994) makes the following statement:

If the writing across the curriculum movement had a slogan, it would be ‘write to learn’.... What seems to hold the movement together is a shared commitment to the idea that writing is an especially powerful mode of learning. It is this idea that we advocates take to the dean’s office and from there to the faculty workshop. And it is this idea that underwrites the now commonplace claim that writing across the curriculum increases student learning. (431)

Hence, at the very core of the WAC movement and, consequently, of the present study, is the notion of “writing-to-learn” (W-L), which, as intimated above, proposes that by engaging in the complex processes of writing, not only do students improve in their ability to write but, simultaneously, their knowledge and understanding of the subject matter about which they write deepens.

Bazerman et al. (2005) observe that “Writing to Learn is based on the observation that students’ thought and understanding can grow and clarify through the process of writing” (57). In this same vein, a Chinese proverb, cited by Martin (1986), effectively characterizes the kind of learning in which WAC practitioners hope to have their students involved by engaging in thoughtful writing activities:

*Tell me, I forget.
Show me, I remember.
Involve me, I understand. (iv)*

Indeed, WAC experts have spent a great deal of energy not only in theorizing about exactly how and what students learn through writing, but also in developing writing activities that are not only applicable across the curriculum but that help students fully grasp the concepts which they are expected to understand.

It seems clear, therefore, that by engaging in intensive writing students gain more than simply learning how to be better writers. Ackerman (1993) enumerates some of the many intended benefits of the writing-to-learn movement. He notes that by engaging in intensive writing activities students may, among other things, more easily retain new ideas, make connections between new and old ideas, gain increased perceptual skills,

improve vocabulary, acquire insights into cultural and historical phenomena, improve their grammar, have increased self-esteem, attain broader thinking skills, experience increased engagement in their learning, increase their methodological skills in science, overcome anxiety involved in learning, more easily incorporate sophisticated concepts and texts, and experience more personalized learning. He also notes that in terms of the overall classroom environment, writing-to-learn methods help create a greater sense of classroom community and may also provide a record of ideas for later classroom practice (344-345).

Writing-to-Learn Across the Disciplines

Nevertheless, as various scholars (Peritz 1994, Klein 1999, Bangert-Drowns, Hurley and Wilkinson 2004, Demaree 2006, and Kieft, Rijlaarsdam and van den Bergh 2006) have observed, though a seemingly sound and undoubtedly widely accepted assumption, there is but little empirical evidence to substantiate the validity of writing as a learning instrument. “Many educational researchers have tried to find empirical evidence for the claim that writing facilitates learning,” say Kieft et al. (2006), but “the results are inconsistent and inconclusive” (18).

Still, beginning in the 1980’s with the onset of the writing-across-the-curriculum movement, researchers have continued to explore the value of writing to learn across the disciplines. It is not practical for the scope of the present study to review every study on writing-to-learn across all of the disciplines since the early 1980’s. Nevertheless, in order to better contextualize the present study within current writing-to-learn scholarship, I

provide here a review of a sampling of studies at the tertiary level which a bibliographic search from the last five to seven years yielded.

Importantly, the studies presented here are either quantitative or qualitative in nature and examine a wide variety of topics associated with writing-to learn. The experimental or quasi-experimental nature of the studies presented here is important inasmuch as there exists a fairly large corpus of anecdotal, albeit pertinent, scholarship in the literature on writing-to learn (see for example, Bye and Johnson 2004 in apparel, Lance and Lance 2006 in communication sciences, and Leydens and Santi 2006 in the geosciences). The studies reviewed in this section hail from across a wide range of disciplines in higher education, including those of math (Santos 2003), nursing (Schmidt 2004), physics (Demaree 2006), and biology (Ellis, Taylor and Drury 2006), in which the implementation of writing-to-learn strategies is less intuitive than in a foreign language department where writing is generally viewed as an integral part of the curriculum given its stature as one of the four all-important language modalities.

Santos' (2003) dissertation at the Columbia Teachers College entails a study of the value of writing to learn in a university-level pre-calculus course. The study was realized at an urban community college and involved a total of 68 students enrolled in the pre-calculus course. Santos' purpose was to determine how writing-to-learn math assignments and activities contributed to their learning and understanding of the mathematical concept of function. Of the 68 students who participated in the study, Santos observes that some sixty percent of them were determined to be of limited abilities in English, based on results from a standardized English proficiency test. Also of interest

is the fact that not only did Santos find that students did acquire an “overall understanding” of the concept of function at an “established level of mastery” in the course, but also that there were no statistically meaningful differences in the learning between English language learners and native speakers of English in the class.

As in the present study, Schmidt (2004) attempted to assess students’ perceptions regarding writing-to-learn. He performed a “pretest-posttest, quasi-experimental, non-equivalent, control group design” study in an undergraduate-level “Nursing Management and Leadership” course at a university in the Southeastern United States. Schmidt hypothesized that “nursing students in a course incorporating [writing-to-learn] activities will perceive significant benefits from these activities” (468). Schmidt administered a modified Writing-to-Learn Attitude Survey (WTLAS) (Dobie and Poirrier 1996) at the beginning and end of the nursing course which incorporated various writing-to-learn activities and strategies. Results of the WTLAS pre- and post-semester administration reveal a statistically significant ($p = .039$) increase in students’ perceptions of the value of writing to learn activities in the course. It is, nevertheless, important to observe here that Schmidt did not take into consideration other factors that may have led to this increase. For example, he admits that the experimental and control groups “were not composed of students at identical points in their program of study” (471).

Demaree (2006) devoted a part of her doctoral dissertation at the Ohio State University to the exploration of whether students enrolled in a physics class which implemented various writing components would increase in their learning of course content. She specifically examined students’ writing in the lab part of the class. She also

states that the content of the required writing was closely connected to both the content of the lab and, additionally, to the content of a diagnostic test which was employed. She found, nevertheless, no significant improvement in long-term learning during the writing-emphasized course. Concerning the results of her study she summarizes as follows:

We saw students who wrote essays did better on many of their lab quiz questions, especially by the third (and final) writing activity. However, there were no meaningful differences in displayed content knowledge on recitation quizzes, course exams, or the diagnostic test. It seems any knowledge that was gained through the writing did not transfer to other parts of the course even though the content was relevant. (233)

Finally, Ellis, Taylor and Drury (2006) sought to explore students' perceptions of writing-to-learn activities in a first-year, undergraduate Biology course at a university in Australia. In the class, students wrote three biology lab reports, which, as the authors state, "were an important part of [the students'] assessment" in the course (9). Open-ended questionnaires were administered randomly at the end of the semester to 180 students from a total of 1170 students enrolled in the courses. The researchers performed both qualitative content analysis and quantification of the questionnaire results. The most salient result of this study for purposes of the present study, is that, as the researchers themselves articulate, "if students were not aware of the potential of learning science through writing, they tended to focus on superficial aspects of the writing experience, such as grammar, rather than the scientific knowledge that underpinned the experience" (6).

Writing to Learn in L2

In her (2007) longitudinal case studies of non-native English-speaking undergraduate students enrolled at a large university in the southern United States, L2 writing expert Ilona Leki explored, albeit very briefly, what students felt they had learned by engaging in writing in a second language. She followed four students – “Ben”, an engineering student, “Yang”, a nursing student, “Jan” a marketing student and “Yuko”, a social work student – throughout their undergraduate studies, exploring the ins and outs of their challenges and successes as they learned to write in a second language. Regarding their personal perspective on what these individual students learned from engaging in writing in a language not native to them, Leki makes the following observation:

“Because of the additional time spent with the material, the students felt that having to write about a topic allowed them to remember the content better; sometimes this was useful for upcoming exams, permitting them to skip studying for the section of the exam that would cover their paper topic. Yuko and to some degree Ben and Jan felt they understood the material better when they had written about it because writing about it called for more conscious effort. Finally, Yuko remarked that having to organize a paper on a topic caused her to also organize her thoughts on the topic, making them clearer in her own mind” (248).

These observations seem to validate the commonly accepted premise that, as we have discussed here previously, students appear to learn from engaging in writing – even when that writing is performed in a second language. Indeed, Homstad and Thorson (2000b) seem to make a strong point about the place of writing and content learning in foreign language classes at all levels when they state the following:

Writing should be an important part of the language curriculum and integrated into all levels of instruction. We believe that writing to learn, and learning to write, are essential ingredients in a successful language program. Not only is

writing one of the four skills outlined by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL) proficiency guidelines, but it is inextricably linked to cognition and learning. By introducing both extensive (that is, students write large quantities over an extended period, such as the entire semester) and intensive (that is, students write a shorter piece and focus on the quality of the composition) writing activities in the curriculum, students will not only learn important composition skills, they will also have the space to interact with the target culture, process course material, create with language, and communicate with others about topics of personal relevance. (141-142)

Nevertheless, to my knowledge, very few studies of L2 writers have closely examined this issue. Few foreign language researchers seem to have wanted to explore whether, for example, the learning that takes place as a result of writing, is somehow hindered by the fact that the writing is being performed in a foreign language, and, with few exceptions, what studies do exist, are now relatively outdated. Nonetheless, given that this is a central topic of the present study, what follows is a brief review of what studies have been realized on writing-to-learn in a second/foreign language.

Writing to Learn in ESL

In the field of English-as-a-second-language, Hirsch's (1986) doctoral dissertation explored the use of writing as a content learning tool. She assigned students to small pedagogical groups that were to focus on a particular content, and wherein students were encouraged by trained tutors to use expressive talk and writing to develop their understanding of course material. She found that there was a statistical difference in the teacher-assigned final grades of those students who participated in the study and those who did not, at the .05 level.

In order to determine which behaviors may have resulted in the statistical

findings, Hirsch performed a more detailed analysis by focusing specifically on a class entitled “Introduction to Business”, through class observations, interviews with students and tutors, and a detailed examination of tutor logs and journals. Hirsch observed that in the course students in tutoring groups performed better than those who were in the control groups (203-4) and noted that the higher scores “not only suggest a higher degree of learning by project participants but a wide margin of such learning.” Additionally, she posited that her study “demonstrated that through the use of expressive function speech and writing, adult ESL students of inconsistent and variable English skills can significantly improve their comprehension of subject area disciplines and attain a more genuine understanding of course material” (204). She includes, furthermore, that the non-traditional students in the study benefited from participation in a “learning climate ... which fostered inquiry, risk-taking, and speculation” and, as a result, they “benefited from a language-rich, student-centered learning model” (205).

Writing to Learn in an FL

In the field of foreign language writing, Andra-Miller (1991) implemented “writing to learn” methods such as free-writing and journaling in a third-year French course and found that the changes “produced encouraging results” (23). She notes that as a result of engaging her students in more thoughtful writing, “final examinations improved,” students seemed to write “with greater fluency and accuracy than in previous years,” and students’ writing “gave solid evidence of having read all the assigned readings with a good basic degree of comprehension” (27). Moreover, based on a survey administered at

the end of the academic year, she observes that the students' reaction to the more involved writing approach was very positive: "The vast majority of my students agreed that [it] had helped them to improve their French language writing skills and had helped them write more clearly and carefully" (28). Other students commented that the writing in the course gave them the opportunity to practice their writing often and without fear of correction (28). Andra-Miller summarizes her observations as follows: "I think that 'writing to learn' procedures are successful because they appear to lower the affective filter students often bring to the learning situation. These procedures reduce anxiety because they empower the student, they motivate because they seek to integrate learning with reality, and they spark self-confidence ..." (28).

In his dissertation study, Pornpibul (2002) examined the role of writing in EFL students' learning from texts they were assigned to read. The researcher followed the instructor and 15 female undergraduate students of English-as-a-foreign-language enrolled in an English reading class at a major university in Thailand during an entire semester. Writing samples, including written logs by students regarding their use of writing in their reading of the texts for the class, were collected. All students were interviewed and think-aloud reading and writing tasks were performed. Pornpibul found that the students' writing contributed to their text-based learning in five ways: 1) It permitted students to recognize gaps in their knowledge; 2) it motivated them to "assume the role of writers;" 3) it involved careful thinking; 4) it led students to review the readings; and 5) that which was written down served as a source for revision, reflection and review.

Furthermore, studies such as that of Katznelson et al. (2001) leave little doubt that, at least from the students' perspective, writing is a desirable contributor to the learning process. They performed a semester-long study of learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) and found that by engaging in writing, students feel that they learn how to write better in both their first and second language, and also acquire various "by-products" of the writing. These include, among other things, improved English grammar, stylistics, and vocabulary, awareness of self in the writing process, ability to express ideas coherently, development of an authoritative personal voice, improved self-esteem, improved ability to generate ideas through group work, improved ability to listen to others, and improved critical thinking abilities (151-2).

In a later study, the same researchers (Rubin et al. 2005) performed a case study on three EFL learners enrolled in different "writing for academic purposes" courses and having varying degrees of ability in English. The researchers' purpose was to examine "meaningful connections" between learners' writing apprehension and performance on timed essays on the one hand, and their perceived learning outcomes on the other hand, as well as to explore to what extent the perceived "by-products" from the course "express the long-term personal and social development of each learner" (17). While the results of the case studies were somewhat varied from one learner to another, they found that generally speaking learners experienced positive academic and personal outcomes from having taken their academic writing course. Summarizing their results, the researchers observe the following:

We had already found in our previous studies that, in the learner's perception, a wealth of "by-products" is generated in the setting of Academic Writing courses.

A closer look has enabled us to focus on the individuality of each learner and, in particular, to gain an understanding of the impact of some of these “by products” on the lives of the students as lifelong learners. Indeed, even though the gains are not always positively expressed, their impact on the learners’ lives outside the classroom, both academic and personal, can be seen as mostly beneficial in terms of our students’ capacity for future development. This is a sign of positive growth... (24)

Furthermore, the very same researchers (Perpignan et al. 2007) performed yet another study of “by-products” related to writing in English-as-a-foreign-language, which, given the results reported herein (see Chapter 4), are of particular interest for the present study. In their study, Perpignan et al. proposed to examine two issues related to extra outcomes resulting from writing in the FL: 1) “to explore students’ perceptions of non-writing outcomes of their academic writing courses—the ‘by-products’—in a greater diversity of setting,” and 2) “to understand the pedagogical sources and links which may lead to their emergence” (163). They examined 20 groups of Arabic and/or Hebrew speaking students in Israel, a total of 210 students, taught by 11 different instructors and coming from both undergraduate and graduate writing programs. The researchers administered self-reporting student questionnaires to the student writers and found nine categories of so-called ‘by-products’ which students perceived to have emerged from their participating in writing in FL. The nine categories of by-products included, 1) creativity (“The writing course allowed me to explore my creativity.”); 2) social interaction (“I learned how to work in a team with others, to criticize others, to give support to others.”); 3) learning the meaning of learning (“Most of all, I realized how much I have to learn on this subject.”); 4) behavior in a professional context (“Now I can explain to my pupils in school how to write a good paper.”); 5) broadening of knowledge

base (“I received some general knowledge about the world.”); 6) awareness of the meaning of writing (“I have learned to remember my audience as I write. Before it didn’t always occur to me that what’s so obvious for me, isn’t so for my audience.”); 7) affective, both positive (“My expectations of myself increased.”) and negative (“I feel demotivated to try writing again.”); 8) thinking skills, including critical thinking (“I am more critical now about everything, especially things I read.”), thinking in English (“By learning to write in English I finally learned to think in English.”), and organizing thoughts (“This course helped me in organizing my thoughts.”); and 9) what the researchers call “other skills”, including such skills as improvement in reading and speaking in the language.

Other research areas in the field of language acquisition have provided interesting, albeit indirect, support that writing in a foreign language likely leads to the learning of the content. For example, an area of some interest to various second and foreign language education practitioners has been that of content-based and immersion education, wherein course material is purposefully taught in a second or foreign language (see, for example, Snow, Met, and Genessee, 1989 and Jones and Sin 2004). Obviously content-based practitioners, and perhaps especially primary and secondary immersion educators, will have as a major concern the ability of their students to learn course material. Nevertheless, clearly the lion’s share of the research on content-based and immersion education focuses on the language learning aspects of this setting. Moreover, among the research that does focus on the learning of content in the content-based or immersion framework, to my knowledge no studies explore the specific value of writing as a

learning tool in this environment.

Writing to Learn to Write

Another important potential learning outcome of writing which the present study proposes to examine is whether or not students gain in terms of their writing skill as a result of their participation in the WI Spanish course. By this, I mean, does writing in the foreign language help students learn to become more cohesive, coherent, rhetorically sound writers, despite the fact that they are performing the writing in a foreign language? In the past, clearly, little attention has been given to this issue. To be certain, because foreign language teachers have felt a far greater need to focus on issues surrounding accuracy and fluency in the L2, rather than matters of thesis development and argument organization in writing, this issue has been somewhat neglected in the literature. On this point Dvorak (1986) says the following:

Foreign language teachers do know about writing as the ability to develop one's thoughts, organize them clearly and express them convincingly to an absent reader. But the evaluation of the clarity and effectiveness of content has generally been considered by many teachers as specifically *outside* the scope of foreign language composition courses. (147-8)

Additionally, as mentioned earlier, both students and teachers have historically tended to place less emphasis on the development of writing in the foreign language, because it was seen as less necessary than development of the other language skills – reading, listening and speaking:

For most learners [writing] is considered a generally less useful skill than the other three. Many students could realistically find themselves in contexts where speaking, listening, or reading a foreign language might be necessary, but only language majors might expect to do any extensive foreign language writing. (148)

Moreover, it should not be surprising that less emphasis has been placed on “good” writing in the foreign language class, given that conceivably most students of age to be in high school and college foreign language classrooms are still struggling to learn how to write well in their native tongue. Indeed, studies such as that of Aliakbari (2002) suggest that writing in a foreign language is necessarily a language problem and not really a writing problem (157). And Troyanovich (1974), gives the grimmest of appraisals on the matter when he states the following:

We are asking the impossible of our students by requiring writing competence in the foreign language when most of them are still struggling to acquire this kind of skill in their native language. (437, cited in Dvorak, 1986: 148)

Thus, as Troyanovich’s discouraging assessment intimates, there can be little doubt that historically the development of effective writing skills in the foreign language classroom has had numerous strikes against it.

Nevertheless, parallel to, and, I hypothesize, resulting from the WAC movement in education, there has been a surge of emphasis on the importance of developing students as effective writers and not simply as grammatically accurate writers in the foreign language classroom. Homstad and Thorson (2000a) concur with this opinion:

In recent years, there has been an increased interest in the role writing plays, or ought to play, in the foreign language (FL) curriculum. This interest was sparked originally, at least in part, by changing ideas in the field of composition studies, which are in turn influencing ESL pedagogy and raising questions about the use of writing in FL teaching. (3)

Hence, writing, not only as a means of language learning, but as an end in itself as a valuable skill to be gained by all students, has begun to take hold in the foreign language curriculum.

Given the relative newness of this development, however, little has been done, beyond anecdotally based recommendations, to show whether engaging in writing in the foreign language actually helps students to become better writers. It has been quite widely accepted, nevertheless, that the best way to teach writing skills in the foreign language or any other classroom, is to help students to see writing as a process rather than simply a product: “We do know ... that students’ writing in the foreign language improves when instructors focus on techniques that will help students look at their work critically and make successful decisions as they write” (Homstad and Thorson, 11-12). In other words, it is believed that educators will better serve their students by providing an environment wherein students may view writing as a work in progress – including brainstorming, pre-writing, peer editing, revisions, and the like.

Unfortunately, as Homstad and Thorson (2000a) have noted, little research has been done on the value of teaching the process of writing in the foreign language classroom:

Most of the research on process writing has been conducted in the field of English composition studies. Unfortunately, we do not yet know much about the FL writing process. More research needs to be conducted on how students go about writing in the foreign language and how the FL process differs from the process of writing in one’s native language. Once we understand this process, instructors will be better able to adjust specific classroom practices to help facilitate the FL writing process. (11)

Indeed, the recent trend of viewing writing as a process rather than as a product in L1 writing circles has been well documented (see, for example, Emig 1971, Britton et al. 1975, Perl 1979, and Elbow, 1981). Nevertheless, in referring to L2 practitioners borrowing from L1 writing theory, Silva (1993) notes that, despite that fact that ESL

practitioners have been encouraged to follow L1 practices in writing pedagogy, there are some vital differences between L1 writers and L2 writers. For example, he points out that, in general, L2 writing is simpler, more constrained, more difficult, less fluent and accurate, and less effective (i.e. lower holistic scores) than L1 writing. He concludes, therefore, that “L2 writing specialists need to look beyond L1 writing theories, to better describe the unique nature of L2 writing, to look into the potential sources of this uniqueness, to develop theories that adequately explain the phenomenon of L2 writing” (669).

Writing to Learn to Write in the FL

As noted earlier, moreover, it is a logical step to consider that *foreign* language writing will have its own “uniqueness” in comparison with second language writing, and therefore merits its own research focus, in terms of improving learners’ writing skills. Hence, while the research is rather sparse, a review of what we do know about the development of writing skills in the *foreign* language classroom follows.

Various authors (Schultz 1991, Laviosa 1994, Heilenman 1995, White and Caminero 1995) have proposed that foreign language students do indeed improve in their writing by engaging in the writing process in the FL class. Schultz (1991), for example, in an article on bridging the gap between beginning-level, language classes and upper-level, literary or cultural classes, notes that at her school by having taught beginning-level students such skills as semantic mapping and other cognitive strategies, faculty there have noticed a “dramatic improvement in the writing ability of their students” (987).

Similarly, in a discussion of the values of teaching the process of writing as well as the foreign language, Laviosa (1994) maintains that “an approach that teaches writing as a process through which students can explore their thoughts and ideas, and a product of a correct use of the language conventions, inevitably guides students to write good compositions” (502).

Citing complaints by upper-division French teachers concerning the level of their students’ writing abilities, Kern and Schultz (1992) examined the writing of 73 second-year French students in order to find out if the composition component in the curriculum was having a positive effect in terms of the students’ writing performance. The students were divided into three categories, low ability, middle ability, and high ability, based on a holistic rating of a writing sample at the beginning of the semester. They invited each student to write four essays during the academic year and then analyzed the essays holistically, based on criteria founded in content, organization, coherence, cohesion, and grammatical accuracy. Kern and Schultz obtained statistically significant results that showed that students engaged in the process approach to writing did indeed improve in their composing ability. They conclude that “the results of this study lead us to believe that writing instruction that focuses on the development, organization and effective expressions of original thought and not just on surface level accuracy deserves an important place in the foreign language curriculum” (10).

Valdés, Haro, and Echevarriarza (1992) proposed to examine whether the ACTFL proficiency guidelines for writing were accurate in comparison to students enrolled in first-year, second-year, and an advanced composition Spanish course at “a highly

selective, private institution” (340). They analyzed writing samples from each one of the levels for message quality, organization and style, and, what they termed “standards of language use” (341), namely grammatical and lexical ability. While noting that their findings do not wholly concur with the ACTFL proficiency guidelines (a matter of less pertinence to the present study), they observe that in all three areas of evaluation, there was marked improvement corresponding with the level of the learners. Unfortunately, however, given their focus on the ACTFL guidelines, the authors give practically no description of foreign language writing curriculum and, therefore, we can draw practically no conclusions about what led to the improvement.

Given that the present study examines more advanced writers of Spanish-as-a-foreign-language, Moser’s (1992) doctoral dissertation on the writing of advanced German-as-foreign-language learners, is particularly relevant here. In part due to her interest in the validity of the ACTFL proficiency guidelines for writing, Moser hoped to dismiss the “myth” that college students in German were not able to write at more sophisticated rhetorical levels. She elicited two writing samples, a persuasive letter to the editor and an expressive essay on an abstract topic from advanced learners of German and analyzed the samples based on their overall structure, the organization of their arguments, the level of pragmatic signaling contained in the discourse, and the kinds of errors committed by students. Her findings suggested that

... advanced writing in German is indeed an intricate process of creating meaning, but ... students working in a supportive context for L2 writing have the means to communicate on a higher level than the one traditionally pursued in the educational setting. More specifically, the study demonstrates that the external structure of the discourse, the hierarchy of arguments within paragraphs of a text, the imagery the text

contains, the inclusion of rhetorical questions and spoken discourse, and even repetition and rhythm – all are features which successful non-native writers make use of to underscore the message in their compositions. (280)

In her doctoral dissertation, Gallego de Blibeche (1993) examined how the process (composition based) and product (grammar based) approaches to writing differed in terms of Spanish-as-a-foreign-language students' quantity, quality, syntactic complexity and grammatical accuracy in writing. She found that the process approach to writing was clearly more effective than the product approach in terms of increasing students' ability to write longer essays, and was more useful in improving students' organization of discourse. Nevertheless, she found that as concerned the improvement of content quality, language use, syntactic complexity and grammatical accuracy, no significant differences resulted between the two methods.

Finally, Schlig (2005) dedicated part of her study of intermediate-level Spanish student writers to the examination of “processes that allow students to acknowledge and address strengths and weaknesses that are not necessarily tied to grammatical competence” (45). She found that students who were engaged in planning activities which discussed ideas and semantic grouping of ideas and vocabulary, and which explicitly explored effective ways to hypothesize, compare, describe and narrate in their writing, saw an increase in the quality of their essays in terms of content and organization.

Student Attitudes and Perceptions Regarding Writing

An extremely important issue surrounding learning to write on which the present study proposes to shed light involves how students feel about writing. Indeed, the perceptions and attitudes students hold regarding writing may be seen as greatly impacting how well they learn to write, whether in L1 or L2. In her (2001) article, “What Do Students Mean When They Say, ‘I Hate Writing’?”, Lynda Holmes says the following: “Working in the Academic Enrichment Center as an English tutor . . ., I hear undergraduates voicing these comments weekly, if not daily, especially during the beginning semester of their college work.” As I noted earlier, in Chapter 1, comments like these from students facing writing are not altogether uncommon. Indeed, it goes without saying that writing can be an extremely challenging, stress-producing exercise for many, if not most, students. Moreover, as I proposed in Chapter 1, writing in a language which is not native to a student can be especially stressful. Burkhalter (1990) reiterates this point when she says, “When a writer tries to express thoughts in a non-native language, difficulty increases exponentially” (233) and Richards and Renandya (2002) concur:

There is no doubt that writing is the most difficult skill for L2 learners to master. The difficulty lies not only in generating and organizing ideas, but also in translating ideas into readable text. The skills involved in writing are highly complex. L2 writers have to pay attention to higher level skills of planning and organizing as well as lower level skills of spelling, punctuation, word choice, and so on. The difficulty becomes even more pronounced if their language proficiency is weak. (303)

And Ann Raimes in the introduction to her (2002) paper on planning writing courses and training writing teachers writes the following:

A few years ago, I gave papers called “The Neurosis of Lesson Planning” and “Anguish as a Second Language” in which I explored the fact that

both learning and teaching a language promote anxiety. There is even more anxiety when writing is involved.... (306)

It appears, then, that there can be little doubt that writing in a second language is difficult and emotionally taxing.

In the present section, therefore, I review literature from ESL and FL contexts, regarding the beliefs, attitudes and perceptions students have regarding writing. The section begins with a review of literature on English L1 students' attitudes and perceptions regarding writing and is followed by reviews of studies that consider both ESL and FL students' attitudes and perceptions concerning writing. This section then concludes with a review of the literature on the issue of writing apprehension.

ESL Students' Attitudes and Perceptions Regarding Writing

In her investigation of ESL students enrolled in a community college writing course, Mountainbird (1988) utilized semi-structured interviews and various written responses from students during one semester to explore their "attitudes towards writing", their "writing identity", and their "self-direction" in writing (4). Concerning students' attitudes toward writing, Mountainbird notes that the results varied throughout the semester and were very mixed, showing both positive and negative attitudes. She observes that students' positive feelings about writing seemed to be related to "an individual awareness of progress rather than an outside measure of proficiency" (vii). She also states that students' motivations for learning to write were very complex and changed over the course of the semester, noting that "external motivations" seemed to be most important at the beginning of the semester but that "internal motivations" such as

“expression of feelings, joy in self-expression, and expansion of cognition” became more important toward the end of the semester. With regards to writer identity, Mountainbird found that the participants’ descriptions of themselves evolved during the semester from “incredulity, negativity, and denial” at first, to “a relatively positive and distinct sense of writing identity” by the end of the semester. Finally, concerning students’ self-direction in writing, the study found overall that students went from doing “global” self-evaluations and planning toward the beginning of the semester to doing more “specific and empowering” self-evaluations and planning as the semester progressed (viii).

Emphasizing the importance of estimating the “extent to which context impacts on students” and hoping to “capture the writing classroom as it was seen through ... students’ eyes” (84), Zamel (1990) realized a longitudinal case study of three ESL student writers across two semesters. The study consisted of a total of eight open-ended type interviews (four per semester) with each of the three students, classroom observations, and teacher interviews. Zamel concedes that “findings from case studies such as this are not meant to be generalizable” and notes that “after all, they are tied to the experiences of individual students in the context of particular instructional settings” (94). On the other hand, however, she observes that “such studies are illuminating precisely because they reveal that it is the particularities of classroom events and the ways in which these events impact on students that shape these students’ experiences and their perceptions of these experiences” (94).

Hence, Zamel notes that a significant outcome of her study “lies in the realization that, as teachers, we are always dealing with the unique and individual realities and

interpretations of students and must take these into account” (94). She also notes as implications of her study “the need to examine the constraints that motivate and shape the instructional models we adopt, the expectations that underlie our practices, and the decisions we make about our students” and the fact that “what students do and do not do as writers and how they come to view themselves as writers are a function of instructional context” (96).

Thomas (1992) collected data for ESL writers through interviews, conferences, observations, group discussions, students’ journals and students’ texts. Though she found very diverse results in terms of the kinds of affective experience ESL writers have in the process of composing, she found an underlying trend that students’ emotions do indeed play an important role in the composing process. For example, she concluded that an interrelationship existed between emotions that writers experience and their self-esteem and self efficacy.

Basturkmen and Lewis (2002) explored students’ perspectives on the notion of “success” in an English-for-academic-purposes writing course. They note that the following about the need for researchers to gain more access to learners’ voices in the pedagogical process: “There is ... a need to focus more on subjective understanding and to try to understand how students assess their own success, not least because students’ understanding may be at odds with those of their teachers” (31). Therefore, utilizing an e-mail dialogue format, the researchers explored the perspectives of three female ESL students, enrolled in an EAP writing course at a university in New Zealand, regarding how they “constructed activities” and their personal success in the course. Their two

instructors, a male and a female, also participated in the study. The researchers' most important finding is that while there is some overlap in terms of the students' notions of success in the EAP course, the general trend is toward individuality of responses. Indeed, the study sheds light "on the highly individual nature of the learner's perspectives" (31).

In her (2004) dissertation, Rahilly conducted a qualitative exploration of the perceptions and experiences of 21 ESL students enrolled in intermediate and advanced ESL courses at two community colleges and an adult education program. All of the participants were interviewed and the interviews were taped, transcribed and analyzed for content. Rahilly remarks concerning her findings, that the majority of the participants in the study found learning to write academic English to be very difficult and that the difficulties related to lack of experience with writing in the academy in both the second language, English, and their native language, as well as to their unfamiliarity with the kinds of assignments given in their writing classes. She also find that such affective issues as writer's block, writing anxiety and writing resistance strongly influenced the participants' writing development. Finally, she explains that differences in the participants' cultural background played a role in the difficulties experienced in the process of developing as writers.

FL Students' Attitudes and Perceptions Regarding Writing

Salih (1998) administered a 14-point questionnaire to 216 Arabic-speaking students majoring in English (EFL) concerning their perceptions of writing larger term papers in

English. Results from the questionnaire reveal the very complex nature of the composing process. He states that:

Participants felt that [writing term papers] is difficult, interesting, unpleasant, valuable, threatening, anxiety-evoking, a cause to worry, comprehensible, allow for success, reveals students' analytical thinking, mastery of writing mechanisms, and mastery of English, and tests various goals and materials. Further, the majority of the students do not like to write term papers. (48)

In her (2002) study, Bojana Petric elicited EFL students' attitudes towards writing and their development of writing skills in the academy. Of particular interest here is the fact that the study was realized at Central European University (CEU) in Budapest, Hungary where, in her words, "there is, in general no tradition of explicit teaching of writing in the native language" (9). Therefore, she notes, "writing instruction at CEU is for many students their first experience attending a writing course or having a writing tutorial" (9). Hence, one important aspect of the study for Petric, was to explore students' attitudes about new exposure to writing instruction.

Petric interviewed eight M.A. students enrolled at CEU, all of whom were in their early to mid twenties in age and seven of whom were female. All eight participants came from different countries (2 from Central Asia, 6 from Eastern Europe) and all were advanced speakers of English. She notes that their experience with writing and writing instruction was varied.

Petric employed a structured interview protocol for data collection. Participants were given a set of 90 prompts and were asked to comment orally on the prompts. Where needed, the researcher added follow-up questions for clarification. The interviews were taped, transcribed and analyzed for content. With regards to reporting of the results,

Petric states that she wished to present “more general issues related to attitudes towards writing that have relevant implications for writing pedagogy” rather than following a case study approach to reporting of results.

Results of the study are divided into five general sub-categories. First, Petric comments on the formative nature of writing instruction and observes that “for most students, the writing course and tutorials at CEU [are] their first encounter with writing instruction in any language, since ... writing is traditionally not taught in L1 in Eastern Europe” (13). Petric observes that when the participants were invited to comment on the writing strategies they employ and their attitudes regarding them, the interviewees “often referred to the writing courses they had attended, the writing instructors, or the writing assignments they were required to do” (13). This, Petric observes, provides “ample evidence in support of [Leki and Carson’s 1994] hypothesis” that the ESL writing course “may be formative in terms of familiarizing the students with types of writing or writing practices they were not familiar with before” (13).

Secondly, Petric explores issues surrounding the participants’ “attitudes in the process of change” (12). She notes that, especially with those participants who had had no previous writing instruction, the data reveal that “new attitudes are being formed, or previous attitudes are being challenged” inasmuch as the learners are being exposed to new experiences with writing (15).

Thirdly, Petric points to a theme of the “clash between attitudes and behavior” (15). She observes that two kinds of conflict are identifiable: “First, when a strategy is

evaluated positively but not used, and, second when a strategy is used but evaluated negatively” (15).

The fourth theme emerging from Petric’s study is that of “the individual nature of attitudes” (12). She observes the following about the participants’ varied responses to essentially the same situation:

Even when faced with the same experiences students respond to them in different ways. What for one student is a positive and motivating experience, for another will lead to negative attitudes and avoidance of a certain type of situation or behavior in the future.

The final theme that Petric discusses from her interview data is that of “self expression” (12). She states that all of the participants in the study seemed most interested in exploring orally their experiences, attitudes and preferred strategies. Indeed, even when the students struggled to find the correct English terminology, she explains, “they found alternative, if sometimes unusual ways to convey the intended message” (20).

In their year-long study, Asaoka and Usui (2003) examined the perceived problems of 10 EFL students, 7 females and 3 males, enrolled in the EAP program at a university in Japan. The participants kept journals, participated in oral interviews and completed a questionnaire for the study. The researchers established three main areas of concern for the students in terms of their writing in English as an FL: 1) Surface-level concerns; 2) macro-level concerns; and 3) external factors. The researchers report that surface level concerns included “discrete points” such as grammatical accuracy and “choice of appropriate/suitable expressions”. Macro-level concerns, on the other hand, included issues related to topic, focus, use of sources, coherence, conclusion, and issues

related to writing processes and organization. Finally, the researchers report that external factors which seemed to cause concern for the students included deadlines, word count, specific requirements, the “availability of appropriate sources,” perception of teachers’ expectations, lack of positive reinforcement, and attitudes toward their use of their first language (147-8).

Similar to Asaoka and Usui, Fageeh wrote his (2003) dissertation on the theme of Saudi EFL university students’ perceptions of their English writing difficulties. He expresses that he wished to allow the 37 male EFL participants enrolled at a university in Saudi Arabia to let their voices be heard with regards to their writing concerns. Fageeh used principally qualitative methods, with interviews as the primary source of data collection. Secondly, Fageeh employed data collection methods such as classroom observations, document analysis, notes and memos and follow-up e-mails and phone calls, which, he observes, were meant to “enrich the interviews by providing evidence and confirmation of the issues discussed” and to help “in interpretation of the participants’ original answers” (59). Findings of the study suggest that students have similar writing experiences in both Arabic and English and that they experience difficulties in writing in terms of limited opportunities to write, writing instruction that focuses mainly on memorization and form. Students also reported that they consider writing in EFL to be an extremely difficult skill inasmuch as it requires a strong grasp of the language’s grammar and lexicon. Fageeh also reports that students expressed their enthusiasm for the use of technology in their writing but simultaneously lamented that they have little to no opportunity to use technology. Finally, Fageeh notes that findings

indicate the participants' need to receive more effective feedback and to be exposed to different writing genres and skills and strategies so that they can improve in their writing ability.

In her (2003) dissertation, Wu used two survey instruments, an inventory for beliefs about Chinese writing and an inventory for beliefs about English writing to determine what perspective differences native Chinese EFL business-major students enrolled in both EFL and Chinese L1 writing course, held regarding writing in Chinese (L1) and writing in English (FL). 198 Taiwanese business majors were given the survey and then from that corpus 9 students were selected for further investigation, which included interviews and writing observations. Wu gleaned various findings from the data. She discovered, on the one hand, that participants felt mostly the same regarding writing in Chinese and in English in terms of course satisfaction, the meaning of writing, writing difficulty and the value of various writing strategies. On the other hand, participants' felt that, besides the obvious linguistic differences, writing in Chinese was very different from writing in English, and also felt that dictionary use and translation were vital in writing English (versus in Chinese) because they saw English writing as a translation exercise. From the nine interviewees, Wu found that their beliefs concerning writing in both languages greatly affected their writing processes and choice of writing strategies.

Bacha and Bahous' (2008) study also investigated EFL business students' writing. They explored what specific writing needs business students enrolled at the Lebanese American University had in order for them to be proficient in their coursework. The

researchers also surveyed both their business course instructors and their English-for-specific-purposes, EFL course instructors. Bacha and Bahous administered a survey to 159 business majors at the university and a parallel survey to 50 college instructors. In summarizing their results, the researchers explain that in general the students' felt their writing abilities to be better than what the faculty members felt them to be. Also, they report that faculty and students differ on what types of writing strategies should best be used for a writing class. Finally, they report that students and teachers agreed that "it is the responsibility of both the English and business faculty to collaborate in helping their students develop their business writing skills" (88).

Writing Apprehension

An important variable associated with learning to write and which the present study takes into consideration given its potential affect on students who write in the FL, is that of writing apprehension. Various scholars have examined how student writers are negatively affected by the pressures of academic writing. Daly and Miller (1975), pioneers in the study of writer anxiety, while simultaneously developing a statistically reliable, Likert-style instrument meant to measure writing apprehension, coined the phrase "writing apprehension" in reference to the condition of anxiety caused by writing. Later, Rose (1984) adopted the term "writer's block", a condition that results from writing apprehension and causes an individual to be unable to produce writing because of anxiety about the writing situation.

Moreover, numerous other researchers have explored the various ways in which “writing apprehension” may affect students in their writing, learning, and academic development. For example, Pajares and Johnson (1994) found that there is a positive correlation between students’ personal self-confidence and their confidence in writing. Fowler and Kroll (1980) and Boening et al. (1997) explored the effect of writing apprehension on academic performance and grades. Daly (1978), Faigley et al. (1981), Richardson (1981), Fishel (1983), Bates (1984), and Garrison (1998) all explored various ways in which writing anxiety can effect writing production and competency. Hayes (1981) looked at how apprehensive and non-apprehensive students approached the writing process differently and Onwuegbuzie (1998) analyzed how learning styles varied related to writing anxiety. In addition, Daly and Shamo (1976 and 1978) examined respectively how students make academic and occupational decisions based on their writing apprehension. And various dissertations of late have examined issues related to writing apprehension in L1. For example, Matthews (2001) explored the use of a pedagogical method for reduction of writing apprehension, Poff (2004) examined regimentation as a predictor of writer’s block and writing apprehension, and Corbett-Whittier (2004) performed six case studies in order to discover the frequency of high writing apprehension among college students and to explore the differences between high writing apprehensive student writers and low writing apprehensive student writers.

Writing apprehension in an L2

Nevertheless, until fairly recently little attention has been given to the specific context of foreign/second language writing attitudes and clearly there is much yet to be done. This is somewhat surprising in light of the rather healthy attention given by FL/L2 scholars since the early 1970's to attitudes and anxiety associated with the overall language-learning context. For example, by utilizing the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), Ganschow and Sparks (1996) found that there is a relationship between anxiety in high school age learners' native language skills and their foreign language aptitude; Saito and Samimy (1996) compared foreign language learners' at the beginning, intermediate and advanced levels and found that their anxiety becomes increasingly more important in terms of language performance as instructional levels increase; Donley (1997, 1999) proposed various ways in which foreign language students and instructors can identify and cope with anxiety; Onwuegbuzie, Bailey and Daley (1999) examined predictors of foreign language anxiety and found that such factors as gender, age, academic achievement, semester course load, prior history of visiting foreign countries, high school experience with foreign languages etc., "contributed significantly to prediction of foreign language anxiety" (217).

Various studies of EFL or ESL writing apprehension have adapted Daly and Miller's (1975) 26-item, industry-standard writer apprehension instrument for L1 English (Hadaway, 1987; Gungle and Taylor, 1989; Masny and Foxall, 1992; Cornwell and McKay, 1999; and Cheng et al. 1999, Cheng 2002, Lee and Krashen 2002). This was typically done by simply adding the adjectival "English" or adverbial prepositional

phrase “in English” into each question. For example, Gungle and Taylor (1989) rewrote Daly and Miller’s question number 1, “I avoid writing”, to say “I avoid writing in English;” and question number 2, “I have no fear of my writing being evaluated” to “I have no fear of my English writing being evaluated.” A few of these studies also saw it as advantageous to translate the entire questionnaire to the L2 learners’ native language (see, for example, Cheng et al., 1999 and Cheng 2002, into Chinese for EFL learners; Cornwell and McKay, 1999, into Japanese for EFL learners). Inasmuch as writing apprehension may be seen as hugely impactful on how students learn to write in the L2 and therefore comprises an extremely important aspect of the present study’s analysis, a review of studies on writing apprehension in both the ESL and the FL writing contexts follows.

Writing apprehension in ESL. Findings based on adaptations for L2 of Daly and Miller’s writing apprehension instrument vary largely because the researchers set out to answer divergent research questions. For example, Hadaway (1987) utilized an adapted Daly and Miller writing apprehension instrument to determine high and low anxiety ESL writers, and then sought to determine, among other things, whether or not there is a relationship between L1 and L2 writing apprehension and found that there is indeed a significant correlation. Gungle and Taylor (1989) on the other hand, administered the Daly and Miller survey to 210 ESL students and then utilized the results to determine whether or not there is a positive correlation between writing apprehension and attention to form and content in writing, and a negative correlation between writer apprehension

and L2 students' perceptions of departmental writing requirements as heavy or light, as well as their interest in taking advanced English writing classes. Gungl and Taylor found that there is indeed a negative relationship between writing apprehension and students' views of writing requirements and their willingness to take more advanced courses; however, they did not find a significant positive correlation between writers' apprehension and their attention to form or content in writing.

Masny and Foxall (1992) used 15 of the original 26 items on Daly and Miller's writer apprehension instrument to distinguish between low and high apprehension ESL writers. They determined that both high and low apprehension ESL writers were more concerned with form than with content in writing, but that low apprehension writers were even more concerned about form than high apprehension writers. They also found that high apprehension correlated significantly with students' willingness to take more advanced writing courses.

Writing apprehension in FL (EFL). All of the studies of FL writing apprehension in the literature review that follows emerge from the specific context of English-as-a-foreign language. For example, Lankampe (1996) developed a similar, more simplified survey to that of Daly and Miller which he administered to 147 Dutch EFL learners to explore how social and contextual factors, such as writer enjoyment, procrastination, self-perceived overall proficiency, assignment difficulty, and comparison with other students, affect writer apprehension among English for Academic Purposes (EAP) writers. He found that "social context has a relatively weak effect on levels of EAP writing apprehension and

factors affecting writing apprehension” but that “worries about proficiency appeared to be the most important factor affecting writing apprehension” (27).

Cornwell and McKay (2000) adapted, translated, and administered Daly and Miller’s questionnaire to 687 first- and second-year Japanese EFL junior college learners. They found there to be a significant negative correlation between EFL learners’ writing apprehension and both their scores on the TOEFL Test of Written English (TWE) and their secondary-level writing experience.

Yuh-show Cheng has been a very active scholar in the field of writing apprehension and EFL writing. For example, Cheng, et al. (1999) adapted and translated the Daly and Miller instrument to Chinese in their study of EFL learners in Taiwan. Their goal was to explore the overall construct of language learning anxiety and to determine how speaking and writing components differ in terms of apprehension in the language learning process. Their findings suggested that both speaking anxiety and writing apprehension seemed to correlate with a learner’s low self-confidence, but that, whereas speaking anxiety seems to be related more to the overall anxiety associated with learning a second language, L2 writer anxiety seems to be more “skill-specific”, meaning that it is more closely associated with the writing situation than with the language learning situation.

Cheng performed another, later (2002) study in Taiwan with EFL learners enrolled at a university in northern Taiwan. 165 students majoring in English-as-a-foreign language, 83% of whom were female, were administered a five-part survey which included the Second Language Writing Anxiety Test, taken from Daly and Miller (1975)

and translated and adapted for Chinese speakers, an adapted Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz et al, 1986), a Chinese Speaking Anxiety Scale and the Chinese Writing Anxiety Scale, the latter two of which were developed by the author specifically for the study. The survey also included a background information questionnaire. Statistical analyses from the findings of the questionnaire revealed among other things, that perceived second-language writing proficiency predicts L2 writing anxiety more accurately than actual second-language writing achievement; that second-language writing anxiety is not closely related to L1 writing anxiety; and that L2 writing anxiety “appeared to increase linearly with increased time of study” (647). Cheng proposes, as well, that the findings of the study suggest that FL teachers would do well to foster “students’ positive and realistic perception of their writing competence” inasmuch as it is “as important as developing students’ writing skills” (647).

In 2004, Cheng reported on a second language writing anxiety scale that he had developed and validated. The scale, called the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) was composed of three subscales which measured “Somatic Anxiety”, “Cognitive Anxiety” and “Avoidance Behavior”. The SLWAI was specifically written for the L2 context. Cheng observes that, while the Daly-Miller (1975) writing apprehension instrument has been shown to be a statistically reliable and valid survey, “there seems to be plenty of room for further improvement if the [Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension Test] is to be used in future studies of second language writing” (314). Cheng administered the SLWAI to a total of 421 EFL majors from seven different

universities in Taiwan and statistical analyses found that the instrument had “good reliability and adequate validity” (313).

Another very active scholar in the field of writing apprehension and EFL learners has been Sy-Ying Lee. For example, he and Stephen Krashen, who have also done studies of writing apprehension (1997) and writer’s block (2003) among Chinese L1 speakers, realized a (2002) study entitled “Predictors of Success in Writing in English as a Foreign Language: Reading, Revision Behavior, Apprehension, and Writing.” For the research project, they administered an adapted Daly-Miller (1975) Writing Apprehension Survey to 53 native Chinese-speakers who had recently taken a year-long English writing course at a university in Taiwan. Findings from the survey showed a “modest correlation” between reading amount and writing apprehension (i.e. those who read more, exhibited less writing apprehension), and, ironically, a “weak tendency for those who wrote more to have more writing apprehension,” a result which the researchers did not expect (535). Finally, the research also found that those writers who focus more on grammar in their revisions, also had a tendency toward greater writing apprehension.

Additionally, much like Cheng (2004), Lee developed an instrument for the assessment of FL writing performance, which he described and employed in his (2005) study. As he explains, his study “presents and tests a hypothesized structural model that attempts to explain the relationship of writing in [EFL] by Taiwanese university students to a variety of factors,” among which were the inhibiting factors of writing apprehension and writer’s block and facilitative factors, including free reading and self-initiated writing

(335). Of these factors, only “free voluntary reading” was determined to be the only meaningful predictor of writing performance.

Coherence as Indicator of Writing Quality

As noted above, a proposition of the present study is to examine whether students improve in their writing abilities during a writing-intensive foreign language course, specifically in terms of the coherence in their writing. Muller (2005) defines coherence as “a characteristic of effective writing, achieved through careful organization of ideas and the skillful use of transitions” (521). And Kirszner and Mandell (2007) say the following about coherence in writing:

It is the tight relationship between all the parts of an effective piece of writing. Such a relationship ensures that the writing will make sense to readers. For a piece of writing to be coherent, it must be logical and orderly, with effective transitions making the movement between sentences and paragraphs clear. Within and between paragraphs, coherence may also be enhanced by the repetition of key words and ideas, by the use of pronouns to refer to nouns mentioned previously, and by the use of parallel sentence structure. (786-7)

Hence, it can be said that a *coherent* piece of writing is one that connects separate discourse units together to create a well-focused argument or theme.

Various scholars have recently examined coherence in L2 writing as a measure of writing quality, including Chiang (2003), Keyuravong (2004) and Reyes (2004-2005), all of which center their analyses on the context of writing in a foreign language. A review of these studies follows, as well as a discussion of the literature concerning one specific technique for the analysis of coherence in writing – topical structure analysis – which has particular relevance for the present study.

Steve Chiang (2003) performed a study wherein 15 native English-speaking raters and 15 native Chinese-speaking raters evaluated a total of 60 EFL compositions written by Chinese-speaking English learners at a University in Taiwan. The goal of the study was to determine whether the discourse factors of coherence and cohesion or the grammatical factors of syntax and morphology more strongly swayed the raters' perceptions of writing quality. Chiang discovered that "all except three of the 30 raters based their perceptions of 'overall quality' primarily on either of the two discourse features: coherence and cohesion" (471). Additionally, results showed that items on the rating scale used which were related to discourse features were more reliable across the two rating groups than were the grammatical features.

In her (2004) study, Sonthida Keyuravong suggests that "among the many possible aspects to assessing writing, one of the most problematic is coherence" because "it is by nature subjective" (85). Therefore, she employed Watson's (1998) topic-based analysis for evaluation of the coherence of 28 texts, written by undergraduate native Thai-speaking learners of English-as-a-foreign-language, for comparison with teachers' ratings. The application of Watson's topic-based approach established three measures of coherence for each of the 28 texts, including "average distance of moves," "percentage of coherence breaks," and "number of moves [per] 10 T-units" (95). By comparison with the teacher's ratings, the researcher found that the final variable, number of moves per 10 T-units, most closely corresponded with the teachers' ratings.

Similarly, Pablo Corvalán Reyes (2004-2005) explored thematic progression in 96 narrative and argumentative texts written by learners of English-as-a-foreign-language of

varying ages and at varying levels of linguistic development. Reyes hypothesized that “independientemente de las inexactitudes léxico-gramaticales y estilísticas halladas en los textos, la progresión temática configurada por el aprendiente incide en forma proporcionalmente directa en el proceso de asignación de coherencias”¹ (81). The study utilizes a theme-based style of analysis of coherence in the written samples and that analysis was compared to results of assessments by native English-speaking raters. The results of the study confirmed Reyes’ hypothesis and revealed significant differences in terms of the manner in which learners “structure and elaborate” texts based on genres studied and age. “Específicamente,” he explains, “se observó que mientras más débil fue la progresión temática configurada en los textos, mayor fue la dificultad percibida por los lectores nativos que arbitraron en la interpretación de los mensajes”² (104). On the other hand, “mientras más estructurada fue la progresión temática, mayor facilidad experimentaron los mismos lectores en la interpretación de los textos”³ (104).

Topical Structure Analysis

In the present study, as discussed later in Chapter 3, I will employ a topical structure analysis to examine whether or not students actually improved in terms of the coherence in their writing during their enrollment in a WI Spanish course. Therefore, it will be appropriate here to briefly review the literature on this method.

¹ “Independently of the lexical-grammatical and stylistic inaccuracies found in the texts, the thematic progression configured by the learner impacts the process of coherence assignment in a proportionately direct manner”

² “Specifically, it was observed that the weaker the thematic progression configured in the texts, the greater the perceived difficulty by the native readers who judged in the interpretation of the messages”

³ “the more structured the thematic progression, the easier the interpretation of the texts experienced by the same readers”

As an outcome of Lautamatti's (1978, 1987) development of a theory of coherence, she devised a method for the examination and mapping of the progression of topical units in writing samples, which she called topical structure analysis (TSA). Topical structure analysis has been employed both as a technique for teaching coherence to writers of English-as-a-second-language (Connor and Farmer 1990, Lee 2002, Chiu 2004) and as a method of distinguishing poor writing from good writing on samples of native-speakers of English (Witte 1983a, 1983b, Noh 1985, Chuang 1993) and of non-native speakers of English (Schneider and Connor 1990, Frodesen 1991, Wu 1998, So 2002).

With one exception (Frodesen 1991 – for reasons I explain below), those studies that examined topical structure analysis as an indicator of high and low quality writing samples of ESL writers, had results contrary to those for L1 English (So 2002). For example, Witte (1983a, 1983b) performed two studies wherein he performed TSA analysis of previously high and low rated essays of native English speakers engaged in argumentative (1983a) and expository (1983b) writing. For both the argumentative and expository writing samples, Witte found that the high rated samples revealed fewer sequential progressions but more parallel and extended parallel progressions than low rated samples. Similarly, Chuang's (1993, summarized in So 2002) TSA analysis of L1 English expository writing found that high rated samples revealed fewer sequential progressions and more parallel progressions than did low rated samples. Noh's (1985, summarized in So 2002) TSA analyses of L1 English summary writings found no

difference in the number of progressions of any kind between high and low rated samples.

On the other hand, Schneider and Connor (1990) performed topical structure analyses of the expository writing of ESL students from the TOEFL Test of Written English (TWE) and previously rated by TWE scorers. Contrary to findings for L1 English, Schneider and Connor found that high-rated ESL writing samples reveal a greater amount of sequential progressions and fewer parallel progressions than low-rated samples.

Moreover, So's (2002) results from her TSA study of college-level students learning Chinese, English, French, Japanese and Spanish as foreign languages, concur with those of Schneider and Connor. For example, she found that high-rated argumentative writing samples of advanced-level students learning English in Hong Kong utilized parallel progression significantly ($p < 0.1$) less than did low-rated samples. Similarly, high-rated narrative writing samples of intermediate-level students of FL French in the U.S. and in France used significantly more sequential progressions ($p < 0.05$) than did low-rated writers. Additionally, high-rated narrative samples of students of FL Japanese in the U.S. very significantly ($p < 0.001$) utilized parallel progressions less than did low-rated writers. Finally, though So's results from students of Spanish and Chinese in the U.S. are, she admits, from samples that are too small from which to draw significant conclusions ($n=2$ for both languages), she nevertheless found results for those samples that coincided with her findings for English, French and Japanese. In essence,

So found that for both Spanish and Chinese as FL, high rated samples contained fewer parallel progressions and more sequential progressions than did low rated samples.

Schneider and Connor offer as possible explanations for their discrepancies with previous English-as-L1 work on TSA, first, that in previous studies, such as those of Witte (1983a, 1983b), “no complete criteria for identifying sentence topics were given” and that “differences in criteria can result in substantial differences in what counts as repeated, or parallel, topic, and what counts as a different, or sequential, topic” (418). Hence, unlike previous studies, Schneider and Connor provide a detailed explanation of their TSA criteria in the appendix of their study. Secondly, they cite the need for interrater reliability in past studies, given the lack of analysis by more than just the primary researcher. Thirdly, Schneider and Connor note that there may be some qualitative differences between ESL and non-ESL writing. For example, they note that their study revealed very significant differences in terms of length between high and low rated ESL writing samples and that this fact, rather a less straightforward factor in the literature on non-ESL writing, may have an effect on differences in the holistic ratings used to establish the samples as “high” or “low”:

The consistently strong association between length and higher ratings in ESL essays may indicate the greater importance of control of syntactic structures and lexical knowledge among ESL writers relative to non-ESL writers. Below college level, length clearly distinguishes between higher and lower rated essays written by native English speakers. However, because older and more educated native speakers generally control the language, other factors, such as style, sophistication of language, and degree of development, are likely to contribute more to judgments of college-level writing than length alone. (419)

Finally, specifically regarding the differences between their results for sequential

progressions and those of previous studies, Schneider and Connor explain that there is a need to reinterpret what exactly is meant by sequential topic progression. They observe that while Witte (1983a, 1983b) “associated a greater proportion of sequential topics in lower rated essays with less coherent writing” (419), their analysis of t-unit topics in the high rated ESL essays suggested exactly the opposite: “Sequential topics, when related to preceding topics and the overall discourse topic, can actually contribute to the coherence of a text rather than detract from it” (420). Hence, Schneider and Connor propose that in order to best determine the coherence of a text, there is a need to determine the relationship of a sequential progression to the topic of the previous sentence (although they did not do so themselves in their study). They therefore propose that further research be performed to better characterize sequential progression, suggesting the following categories: directly related (to previous topic), indirectly related, and unrelated. They propose that Witte likely viewed the latter of these three to be characteristic of the high levels of incoherence in his low rated samples.

Frodesen (1991) also employed topical structure analysis to compare coherence of writing samples in her dissertation. She examined a total of 100 essays written in English by 12th grade students for a university writing assessment task which was centered on a reading. The writing samples were assessed as “passing” or “non-passing” and thereafter compared for topical structure development utilizing TSA. Of the 100 essays, 20 were written by native English speakers and given a score of “pass”, 20 were also written by native English speakers but given a score of “non-pass”, and the remaining sixty were written by non-native speakers of English of Korean (n=20), Cantonese (n=20) and

Spanish (n=20). Disappointingly, all of the essays written by non-native speakers of English were assessed as “non-pass”. Unlike Schneider and Connor, Frodesen found no significant differences in terms of the sequential progressions between the 20 passing essays by native speakers of English and the remaining 80 non-passing essays. However, the fact that Frodesen was not able to compare her non-native English speaking “non-pass” samples with corresponding “pass” samples seems to negate the possibility of meaningful comparison with results from Schneider and Connor.

In his doctoral dissertation at the University of Minnesota, Wu (1997) utilized TSA to analyze writing samples of 41 undergraduate Southeast Asian refugees in English. All 41 essays were scored by two writing scorers from the University of Minnesota’s English Center and were assessed as of “higher-quality” or of “lower-quality”. Similar to Schneider and Connor’s (1990) study, Wu found that “high-quality texts produced significantly more related sequential progressions than low-quality texts” (108). Moreover, I would note here that these results may be considered a meaningful confirmation of Schneider and Connor’s results regarding sequential progression analysis in high-quality versus low-quality texts, inasmuch as Wu modeled his analysis after that of Schneider and Connor. Said he, “Out of all the operational models, the one used by Connor and Schneider (1988, 1990) appeared to be most logical and robust, and will be used in the present study” (41).

Writing to Learn a Foreign Language

An extremely important third and final potential learning outcome of intensive writing in

the FL which the present study proposes to examine is that of the learning of the foreign language in which the writing is realized. Underscoring this section of the literature review is the premise that foreign language majors and minors at colleges and universities are still language learners and not only content learners. Barnes-Karol (2003) clearly articulates this point when she observes that such students "...are primarily language majors, not literature or comparative literature literary theory majors" (21) and that "...like their intermediate-level counterparts, our foreign language majors are still language learners" inasmuch as "both research and our practical experience, indicate that language acquisition does not stop at the end of the foreign language requirement" (23). Indeed, as she notes, language curricula in higher education "should be a means of helping our students develop their foreign language in the broadest sense of the word" (21). As such, it seems appropriate that the present research investigate exactly what role writing in a foreign language plays in further promoting the acquisition of L2 among language majors and minors.

Various scholars have examined linguistic development in language learners by analyzing learners' written L2 samples. However, very few studies have specifically explored how the very act of writing in a second or foreign language helps students improve linguistically. In fact, scholars linked to the very influential audio-lingual movement from decades ago doubted the value of writing for learning a foreign language altogether. Troyanavich (1969), for example, performed a two-year experiment wherein he compared intermediate German classes that implemented extensive in-class writing activities with those that did not, and found that there was no real difference between the

two classes in terms of results on the MLA Cooperative Tests for writing (22). A few years later, in an article entitled “How defensible is writing as an objective in short-term foreign language experiences?” Troyanovich (1974) penned the following rather spirited comment:

The emergence of both the Direct Method and the Audiolingual Reform have established the speaking objective as valid in the foreign language program. We are, however, still saddled with a writing objective which is of questionable validity for the vast majority of our foreign classes. We are in possession of the facts and the technology necessary to liberate ourselves from this inefficient and excessively tedious activity. Is it merely the security provided by a tradition to which we have become addicted that inhibits our desire to be free of it? If not perhaps the hour of liberation is at hand. (439)

While of late few doubt the value of writing in the foreign language curriculum, there is still debate about how it helps in the acquisition process. In an article discussing the implementation of more writing into the foreign language curriculum, Greenia (1992) proposes that the most important goal of writing is not to hope that students will learn grammar but rather to encourage students simply to write more coherently and meaningfully. He states that, “writing in the foreign language in itself has not proved an effective vehicle for learning grammar. Improving grammatical accuracy and usage should not be a goal . . . , although it will probably be a strong byproduct” (32). Greenia further proposes that if educators provide meaningful, contextualized, communicative opportunities for students in which to write in the foreign language, grammar acquisition will be a natural result: “The grammatical control we hope our students will acquire is best absorbed when writing is foregrounded as a communicative skill” (32).

Other scholars, such as Sandler (1987), Carrasquel (1998) and Harklau (2002), have lauded the virtues of creative and expressive writing in the foreign language

classroom. Sandler (1987) notes that at every level of the foreign language curriculum expressive writing activities such as journaling and free-write compositions may be used as unthreatening tools of language acquisition enhancement. She explains:

I have found that even at the most elementary levels journal writing, free composition, and other exercises that encourage students' uninhibited use of language to explore their thoughts can bring surprising progress in language learning. Too often the foreign language classroom presents students with psychological barriers to communication. ... Ungraded and self-expressive activities, when used as an alternate mode to everyday drill and conversational practice, offer just the kind of encouragement needed to inspire students to play with language in a non-threatening situation. (312)

Carrasquel (1998) specifically discusses engaging foreign language students in creative writing such as poetry, short stories, and imaginary conversations, as a means of helping students to develop linguistically. She maintains that by creating a positive affective and cognitive environment for foreign language learners, such writing helps students improve in their lexical storehouse inasmuch as they have to "find the appropriate word or phrase without the benefit of a model answer" (18). Moreover, she notes that given the spontaneity of such writing "the student is obliged to continuously select from among a variety of language options the combination or sets of combinations which are best suited to the social feature of the situation" and that, inasmuch as this knowledge is "transferable to both written and oral skills, over-all language proficiency is enhanced" (32). In this same vein, Harklau (2002), in an article in which she proposes to justify the role of writing in classroom second language acquisition, argues that "while it is important for classroom-based studies to investigate how students learn how to write in

a second language, it is equally important to learn how students learn a second language through writing” (329).

In this same vein, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, Homstad and Thorson’s (1996) study which investigated intensive and extensive writing in both beginning- and intermediate-level foreign language courses in the Department of German and Scandinavian at the University of Minnesota, led them to propose that both kinds of writing help to increase the overall language proficiency of students may be used to strengthen other L2 language skills.

In her doctoral dissertation, So (1997) asked the following question: “Writing to make meaning or to learn the language?” She followed 13 multi-ethnic learners of Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) during a period of two academic semesters. Data were collected via classroom observations, interviews, questionnaires, think-aloud sessions, and written essays. So found that students whom she determined to be superior-level Japanese-proficient speakers produced essays that were of better quality in terms of cognitive and textual structure features, and therefore were able to concurrently focus on the learning of content and of the language in their writing. On the other hand, students who were only advanced- and intermediate-level Japanese-proficient speakers were more constrained in their cognitive and textual structure features, and thus focused mostly on the lexical and grammatical features, rather than on the learning of content.

Theories of Language Acquisition: Input and Output

Any discussion of writing as a potential tool in language acquisition needs to take into account the theoretical arguments in the language acquisition literature surrounding input and output. In recent memory perhaps the most vocal theoretician on the matter has been Krashen (1981a), who makes a staunch distinction between *acquisition*, a subconscious attainment of language, and *learning*, a formal, conscious, proactive gaining of knowledge about grammar (98-99). Krashen maintains that while *learning* has its place in the foreign language curriculum, *acquisition* is far more important because it is that which most resembles how children develop language ability and, therefore, represents a more thorough, permanent kind of language growth (98-99, 107). Moreover, as part of his “Input Hypothesis”, Krashen maintains that for true language acquisition to take place, the acquirer must have communicative, meaningful input from the target language. Specifically, Krashen proposes that *comprehensible input*, such as reading and listening, that is “‘a bit beyond’ his or her current level of competence” (100), is necessary for the acquisition of a second language. Thus, according to Krashen, “if an acquirer is at stage or level i , the input he or she understands should contain $i + 1$ ” (100).

In terms of the productive skills of speaking and writing, Krashen clearly feels that they are not essential for language acquisition to take place. Rather, he maintains that by pushing the productive skills, instructors put students “on the defensive” by increasing what he terms the “affective filter” (e.g. anxiety, lack of self-confidence, etc.). He notes that when students write or speak they necessarily “monitor” or self-edit their production, and this results in less likelihood of true language acquisition. Hence,

Krashen emphasizes that by engaging in the non-productive skills, students receive input in a harmless yet effective manner, thereby facilitating more natural acquisition. On this matter he states the following:

If we provide relevant, interesting input, and keep our students focused on meaning and not form, if we allow production to “emerge” on its own and not force students to speak before they are ready, we will avoid much of the tension normally seen in language classes. If we avoid excessive error correction, and recognize that there is a natural order of acquisition, we will also avoid needless anxiety. (106)

Thus, as pertains to the present study’s interest in the potential value of writing as a contributor in the foreign language acquisition process, at least one major theoretician, Krashen, attributes it little worth. Dvorak (1986), summarized specifically how Krashen’s language acquisition theories may be applied to writing skills in a foreign language as follows:

1. Given the number and complexity of the rules that underlie good writing, and the relatively small subset of such that are captured by current pedagogical descriptions, most writing skills must be acquired rather than learned.
2. The source for comprehensible input is ‘extensive reading in which the focus of the reader is on the message, i.e., reading for genuine interest and or pleasure’ (Krashen, 1984, p. 23).
3. Grammar teaching and error-correction should be limited to straightforward (i.e. learnable) rules.
4. While writing competence is acquired through reading, fluency in writing performance is acquired through extensive writing practice.
5. The most effective writing practice is that which has communication as its primary focus. (154)

Nevertheless, not all academicians are in full agreement with Krashen’s Input Hypothesis. For example, Swain (1985) proposes that while comprehensible input is a necessary component of language acquisition, it does not fill in all the gaps in the process:

One [thing] I think is fundamental to our understanding of the role of input in second language acquisition is that although comprehensible input may be essential to the acquisition of a second language, it is not enough to ensure that the outcome will be native-like performance. In fact, I will argue that while comprehensible input and the concomitant emphasis on interaction in which meaning is negotiated ... is essential, its impact on grammatical development has been overstated. (236)

Swain proposes, therefore, that *comprehensible output*, which she defines as “output that extends the linguistic repertoire of the learner as he or she attempts to create precisely and appropriately the meaning desired” (252), is necessary in the course of language acquisition.

Citing Long’s (1983) and Varonis’ and Gass’ (1985) emphasis on the importance of the “negotiation of meaning” in interaction in the language acquisition process, Swain maintains that comprehensible output, namely speaking and writing, is a necessary companion to Krashen’s comprehensible input. Specifically, Swain notes that comprehensible output provides language learners the opportunity to meaningfully use and explore their linguistic resources. She notes, for example, that inasmuch as comprehensible output involves learners’ being “pushed toward the delivery of a message that is not only conveyed, but that is conveyed precisely, coherently, and appropriately” (249), it is parallel to Krashen’s $i + 1$ input principle because it encourages learners to go slightly beyond their perceived linguistic ability. Additionally, Swain has noted that comprehensible output encourages learners to move beyond simple semantic processing, as is characteristic of Krashen’s input hypothesis, to the syntactic processing necessitated by actually having to produce in the language.

The Noticing Hypothesis

Inasmuch as the present study examines students' learning of the L2 by engaging in writing – a form of output – an important theory to be considered here and which emerges from Swain's claims about the value of output in language acquisition, is that of "noticing." Concerning noticing, Swain (1997) clarifies that "the activity of producing the target language may prompt second language learners to consciously recognize some of their linguistic problems" and that it "may bring to their attention something they need to discover about their second language," thereby triggering "cognitive processes which might generate linguistic knowledge that is new for the learner, or consolidate his or her own existing knowledge" (5-6). The noticing hypothesis assumes, therefore, that "conscious awareness ... of grammar plays an important role in the process" of language acquisition (Truscott 1998). Indeed, Schmidt (1990, 1993), a major proponent of the noticing hypothesis, has claimed that noticing is a vital factor in the learning of a second language. In the following section, therefore, I review recent studies of noticing as a possible factor that may facilitate the learning of a second or foreign language while engaging in the writing act.

Studies on noticing and writing to learn a language

In the last decade or so, various studies have explored Swain's (1997) theory of *noticing*, a concept which may be of particular interest to the present study, given that, as I noted in the previous section, it appears intuitive that language learning while engaging in composition writing must involve at least some amount of noticing. Examples of recent

research that explores the Noticing Hypothesis in the context of L2 writing are Izumi et al (1999), Izumi and Bigelow (2000), Qi and Lapkin (2001) and Griffin (2004) in the context of ESL and Adams (2003), Hanaoka (2006 and 2007), Leeser (2008) and Song and Suh (2008) in the context of FL learning. A review of these studies follows.

Noticing and writing in the ESL context. In their study, Izumi et al (1999) examined the effects of output on noticing and second language acquisition. Specifically, they posed the following research questions: 1) “Does learner output promote the noticing of linguistic form when relevant input is subsequently provided?” and 2) “Does output result in the acquisition of the linguistic form?” (425). Twenty-two students of ESL enrolled in two college-level writing classes in the ESL department at a community college were asked to participate in the study. Students were first given a pre-test which assessed their knowledge of and ability with the past hypothetical conditional in English. The students were then randomly assigned to either an experimental group (n=11), which was given the opportunity to produce output in written form, or a control group (n=11), which produced no output but rather responded to true/false comprehension questions.

The study was performed in two phases. Before treatment phase one, students were given a pre-test meant to assess their abilities with the past hypothetical conditional in English. After each treatment phase, students were given a post-test. In phase 1 the students in the experimental group were asked to read and then rewrite a paragraph containing the past hypothetical conditional whereas the control group read the same passage but then answered true/false questions about the passage. In phase 2, the

experimental group was given a writing topic prompt which “called for” use of the past hypothetical conditional in a 20-minute in-class essay. Following writing of the essay, the experimental group was shown a model essay on the topic, about 80% of whose sentences were written in the past hypothetical conditional, and were asked to read and underline the essay in preparation for a writing a second version of their original essay. Meanwhile the control group wrote an initial essay on an unrelated topic (so that they had an activity to perform similar to that of the experimental group, but not for any specific purpose of the study), after which they were also given the model essay and were asked to underline it in preparation for responding to a true/false comprehension test. Both the experimental group and the control group were then given post test 2. Findings of the study reveal that, based on results from the underlining exercises, the students in the experimental group did not show statistically meaningful improvement in terms of their “noticing” of the target form, as compared to the control group. By contrast, results from the post-tests revealed that though, on post-test 1, the experimental group did not do significantly better than did the control group in phase 2, the experimental group “obtained a positive gain (13%), but the [control group] had a zero gain” and, as the researchers state, “the difference between the two groups on these second gains was statistically significant” (442). For the purposes of the present study, nevertheless, it is important to observe that no statistical differences were observed between the two groups in terms of “noticing”.

Two of the researchers from the previously reviewed study, Izumi and Bigelow performed a follow-up (2000) study to further “examine the noticing function of output

... namely,” as the researchers themselves articulate it, “the activity of producing the target language that may prompt L2 learners to recognize their linguistic problems and bring relevant aspects of the L2 to their attention” (239). Hence, as in Izumi et al (1999) Izumi and Bigelow (2000) examined the past hypothetical conditional in ESL learners by inviting two groups of students taken from the same population as the previous study to read and underline the same input containing the target form. As in the previous study, before reading the input article, members of the experimental group were asked to write an essay on the topic while the students in the control group wrote on any topic so as to maintain symmetry in the activities performed in the different ESL classes. Following these writing activities, students in both groups were given a model essay on the topic, which they were to read and underline, and then the experimental group was asked to write a second essay on the same topic as the first essay, while the control group was given a comprehension quiz based on the original reading. In phase 2, both groups were asked to read an input reading and underline pertinent information/sentences necessary for a subsequent reconstruction exercise (experimental group) or comprehension quiz (control group). Thereafter, both groups were shown the same input passage a second time and asked to complete the same follow-up activity (reconstruction or comprehension quiz) again. Findings from this experiment reveal, similar to Izumi et al (1999), that though “extended opportunities to produce output and receive relevant input were found to be crucial in improving learners’ use of the [past hypothetical conditional],” in terms of “noticing”, “output did not always succeed in drawing the learners’ attention to the target form.” Hence, the researchers lament that “further research is necessary to more

precisely specify the noticing function of output and derive effective uses of output in L2 teaching” (239).

Qi and Lapkin (2001) performed a study of “the role of noticing in a three-stage second language writing task” (title). Regarding noticing and second-language composition, the researchers say the following:

Noticing is ... an important cognitive process in L2 composing. Issues such as how noticing is related to L2 composing and what impact it has on L2 writing improvement still need to be further addressed and investigated, especially through empirical research studies. (278)

Moreover, in their literature review on noticing, Qi and Lapkin observe that “research on noticing in L2 acquisition has largely focused on input” (278). Therefore, Qi and Lapkin realized a case study of two Mandarin Chinese-speaking ESL learners/writers. The three stages mentioned in the title of their article include the following: Stage 1: the composing stage; Stage 2: the reformulation stage, wherein writers contrast their own text with a version thereof which was re-written by a native speaker of the target language; and Stage 3: the posttest stage, in which each participant received their written work from stage 1, one week after stage 2, and was asked to correct the grammar on it. While the researchers admit that given that only two writers took part in the study, their findings can only be seen as “tentative” rather than “definitive” (294), the results nevertheless suggest that “composing and reformulation promote noticing.” Nevertheless, they qualify their results further by observing that “the quality of noticing, which relates directly to L2 writing improvement, is different for learners with different levels of L2 proficiency” and observe that “promoting the quality of noticing is a more important issue to be addressed in L2 writing pedagogy” (277).

In his (2004) dissertation, Robert Griffin proposed “to answer the question of whether ESL learners from different levels in an Intensive English Program would notice gaps in their L2 knowledge while writing essays and concurrently performing a think-aloud task” and, moreover, to “investigate whether learner noticing led to L2 development” (169). Participants in his study included 10 students of ESL at intermediate to advanced levels who were invited to participate in three think-aloud writing sessions. The think-aloud sessions were performed over an academic semester and were recorded and transcribed and coded for students’ verbalized problems and automatic, non-verbalized corrections, for comparison with the written essays. Griffin reports that findings of the study are that “noticing occurred among all 10 of the participants” as predicted by the output hypothesis “that learners, when led via an output push would reflect on problems with their L2 output” (169). However, with regards to Griffin’s second motivation for the study, that noticing was necessary for L2 development in writing, Griffin observes that only grammatical accuracy (as measured by the same E/T-unit analysis employed in the present study) was correlated to noticing, while fluency, lexical density and grammatical complexity were not.

Noticing and writing in the FL context. Rebecca Adams’ notes that her (2003) study “L2 output, reformulation and noticing” (title) is a “replication and extension” of Swain and Lapkin’s (2002) study on reformulation, noticing and speaking, but for writing (347). In her study, Adams randomly assigned 56 learners of intermediate-level Spanish as FL to three treatment groups: 1) task repetition (control), 2) noticing plus task reformulation by

a native or near-native speaker, and 3) noticing plus reformulation plus stimulated recall session. All of the groups were divided into groups of two and performed the task of reconstructing a story of mixed-up pictures and then writing it down in the target language. However, group 2 met with the researcher who gave them a native-like reformulation of the task and asked them to compare their version with the native-like version. These sessions were recorded. Group 3 performed the same reformulation task as group 2 but immediately following the reformulation session, engaged in a stimulated recall session with the researcher wherein they listened to the tape-recorded session with the researcher and “were asked [by her] to recall their thoughts at the time they made the comparison” (359). A week following the initial task session, all students were supplied with the same pictures as in the initial task but this time intact and arranged as in the originally intended story. Students individually wrote down their rendition of what the story entailed in the target language. Adams reports the findings from the study as follows:

Analysis of the data indicates that learners noticed differences between their own essays and the reformulated writing, and that there were quantitative differences in the output of participants from different treatment groups, with learners who participated in both noticing and stimulated recall incorporating significantly more targetlike forms in the post-treatment output than learners from the other groups. (347)

Another study that examines noticing in FL writing is that of Hanaoka (2006) who specifically considered whether feedback on writing enhances noticing in EFL writing in his case study of two native Japanese learners of English. More specifically, Hanaoka proposed to study whether models “written independently of learners’ texts” or reformulations of learners’ original texts more effectively enhanced noticing in the

writing process. The participants engaged in think-aloud sessions with both kinds of texts and the researcher both audio- and video-recorded the sessions.

In terms of results of the study, in the first place, Hanaoka found that his more advanced learner of English noticed more linguistic features from both kinds of texts than did the less-proficient writer; and that the more advanced learner incorporated more changes from the unrelated model text whereas the less-proficient learner incorporated equal amounts from both kinds of texts. All in all, nevertheless, both learners “noticed” more features from the reformulated text than from the unrelated model text. Hanaoka observes that “the two learners’ performances suggest that models and reformulations play different but complementary roles as feedback tools” and that specifically the non-reformulated models “may serve the dual role of addressing alternative forms and developing the original content” whereas the reformulated models “may promote noticing of linguistic inadequacies in the original text through juxtaposition of the two related texts” (167).

In a later (2007) study, Hanaoka states that “the nature of ... noticing and its effect on subsequent learning in the context of EFL writing have not been fully investigated” even though more attention has been given to the topic in the literature during recent years (459). In order to examine what students spontaneously noticed during writing, Hanaoka asked 37 Japanese students of English-as-foreign-language from two English classes at the university level – one more advanced than the other – to write a story in response to a picture prompt. After writing, the students compared their writing to two native-speaker model written renditions of the story and were asked to

record in written form “whatever they noticed as they compared their original text with the models” (463). Immediately following this model comparison task, the students were asked to rewrite their essays. Finally, some two months later without previous notification, a final stage in the study involved giving the students their original writing samples and asking them to rewrite them. This was done so that the researcher could determine with what degree of permanence linguistic features had been acquired.

Hanaoka reports that, as in his previous (2006) study, more proficient learners noticed significantly more linguistic features during the different stages than did less proficient learners. Additionally, Hanaoka notes that students overwhelmingly noticed more lexical features than grammatical features and that “among features of the models that the participants notice, those that were related to the problems that they had noticed through output were incorporated at a higher rate and were also retained longer than unrelated features” (459).

Song and Suh (2008) hoped to build upon what Izumi et al (1999) and Izumi and Bigelow (2002) had discovered through their research on output and noticing in L2. Specifically, Song and Suh hoped to explore “the role of output and the relative efficacy of two different types of output task (reconstruction task and picture-cued writing task) in noticing and learning of the English past counterfactual conditional” (295). Hence, they invited 52 adult Korean EFL learners enrolled at a university in South Korea, to participate in a study in which they were randomly assigned to a reconstruction group, a picture-cued group or a control group. One week before the first treatment session and one week after the final treatment session of three, the participants took a pre-test which

included a recognition section and a written production section and established the students' abilities with the target form. Between the pre- and post-test assessments, the three groups were involved in production tasks particular to their group assignment, whether control, picture-cued writing or reconstruction.

Song and Suh report that more noticing took place overall for participants who were given the opportunity to produce output by comparison with those who did not receive that opportunity, and that in terms of the acquisition of the past counterfactual conditional, participants who were given output opportunities “performed significantly better than those in the non-output condition on the production post-test” though no difference in results was shown between the two respective output tasks (295).

Finally, Leeser (2008) studied “pushed output” among writers at the intermediation Spanish-as-a-foreign-language level to examine their abilities to notice the past tense morphology of Spanish, comprehension of aural text, and acquisition of the Spanish preterit and imperfect in writing. Forty-seven students participated in the study and were divided into two groups, one of which listened to a number of aural selections and then performed reconstruction tasks, and the other of which listened to the same selections but only answered a multiple-choice type assessment thereafter. As a measure of noticing, the researcher asked participants to take notes during the listening activity. As pre- and post-treatment measures, participants were invited to write a ten sentence paragraph before and after the treatments. Much like Hanaoka's (2007) results, Leeser's results showed that the group which engaged in the reconstruction (+output) treatment, showed more noticing of words overall. Nevertheless, the reconstruction group did not

notice the past tense forms significantly more than the non-output group. However, the reconstruction group “comprehended more information from the text” and “showed evidence of past tense development in their writing” (195).

The Involvement Load Hypothesis

Inasmuch as the present study proposes to examine what students gain in terms of FL ability as a result of their participation in intensive writing, another important theory to be considered here and which has evolved from scholarly discussions on the value of L2 output is the “involvement load hypothesis” (Laufer and Hulstijn 2001). More specifically, this theory is pertinent to the present study inasmuch as it suggests the value of writing in the acquisition of L2 vocabulary. Regarding their involvement load hypothesis and the acquisition of vocabulary, Laufer and Hulstijn (2001) define “involvement” as “a motivational-cognitive construct which can explain and predict learners’ success in the retention of hitherto unfamiliar words” (14). They suggest, furthermore, that “involvement” as it pertains to vocabulary learning tasks, is defined by three factors, namely need, search and evaluation (14). Moreover, these three factors combined comprise what Laufer and Hulstijn coin as the “involvement load” of a vocabulary learning activity. Following is a description of these three factors as well as a review of other studies regarding the involvement load hypothesis and the acquisition of L2 vocabulary.

Hulstijn and Laufer (2001) have defined need as the “motivational, non-cognitive dimension of involvement,” (543) or the “need to achieve” (Laufer and Hulstijn 2001,

14). Regarding need, the authors state the following:

We interpret this notion [of ‘need’] not in its negative sense, based on fear of failure, but in its positive sense, based on a drive to comply with the task requirements, whereby the task requirements can be either externally imposed or self-imposed. If, for example, the learner is reading a text and an unknown word is absolutely necessary for comprehension, s/he will experience the need to understand it. Or, the need will arise during a writing or speaking task when the L2 learner wants to refer to a certain concept or object but the L2 word expressing it is unfamiliar. (Laufer and Hulstijn 2001, 14)

The authors also distinguish between “moderate” and “strong” need. They propose that need is “moderate” when it is imposed by an “external agent” as when a student is asked by a teacher to use a word in a sentence (Hulstijn and Laufer, 2001, 543). On the other hand, they suggest that need is “strong” when it is “intrinsically motivated” or “self-imposed” (543) as in the case of a learner who makes a decision to express a concept which s/he does not know how to express in the target language, while writing a composition (Laufer and Hulstijn 2001, 14). Hence, “moderate” and “strong” need “subsume different degrees of drive” in the acquisition of vocabulary (14).

Hulstijn and Laufer (2001) define both search and evaluation as the two “cognitive dimensions of involvement” (543). They define search as a learner’s attempt to find the meaning of a word with which they are not familiar by consulting an L1/L2 dictionary or other authority, such as a teacher or native speaker of the target language (544). No gradations of search (e.g. “moderate” and “strong”) in their definition are given by the authors.

Evaluation comprises a comparison by the learner “of a given word with other words, a specific meaning of a word with its other meanings, or comparing the word with other words in order to assess whether a word does or does not fit its context” (544). For example, when an L2 learner looks up a word in an L1/L2 dictionary and discovers the word to be a homonym, a decision needs to be made regarding the word’s meaning by comparing all of its meanings against the specific context at hand and determining which definition best suits that context (544). Another example of evaluation occurs when the L2 learner is performing a writing task such as a composition and looks up the meaning in L2 of a word in L1, only to discover that there are multiple L2 alternatives for the word. Hence, the L2 learner must compare the various meanings against the context for which the word is needed and choose the word that best conveys the desired meaning (Laufer and Hulstijn 2001, 15). The authors also suggest differing degrees of evaluation. They propose, for example, that if the evaluation entails merely recognizing differences between words or between various meanings of a given word, it may be defined as “moderate”. On the other hand, evaluation which entails “making a decision about additional words which will combine with the new word in an original sentence or text,” it may be said to be “strong” (15).

Hence, “involvement load”, when seen as a combination of the three factors described above – need, search and evaluation – can be realized in various degrees of intensity, depending upon the L2 task in which a learner is engaged:

Each of the ... three factors can be absent or present when processing a word in a natural or artificially designed task. The combination of factors with their degrees of prominence constitutes involvement load. (Hulstijn and Laufer 2001, 544)

For example, a task in which a learner is invited to write original sentences utilizing some new words whose translation has been provided by the instructor of an L2 course, can be viewed as having “moderate” *need* (inasmuch as it is imposed by the instructor), no *search* (new words are glossed), and “strong” *evaluation* (inasmuch as the words must be evaluated against appropriate placement in learner-generated context). Moreover, Hulstijn and Laufer (2001) suggest that learning tasks might be assigned a score or “involvement index”, suggesting the intensity of involvement associated with the activity. Therefore, the factors *need* and *evaluation* may be assigned a score of ‘0’ if completely absent, ‘1’ if moderate and ‘2’ if strong. Similarly, *search* can be assigned a score of ‘0’ if absent and ‘1’ if present. Hence, the abovementioned task may be assigned an “involvement index” of 3, inasmuch as *need* in the task is moderate and therefore is given a score of ‘1’, *search* is absent and therefore merits a score of ‘0’, and *evaluation* is strong, meriting a score of ‘2’. Therefore, the sum of the scores, $1 + 0 + 2$, derives an involvement index of 3 (544).

The Involvement Load Hypothesis, therefore, presumes that the stronger the involvement load, the more likely the L2 learner will be to acquire and retain L2 vocabulary. Hulstijn and Laufer (2001) summarize as follows:

Retention of unfamiliar words is, generally, conditional upon the degree of involvement in processing these words. In other words, it is conditional upon who has set the task [need], whether the new word has to be searched [search], and whether it has to be compared, or combined with other words [evaluation]. The greater the involvement load, the better the retention. (545)

Studies of the Involvement Load Hypothesis

In an attempt to test the validity of the Involvement Load Hypothesis, “that tasks with a higher involvement load will be more effective for vocabulary retention than tasks with a lower involvement load (Hulstijn and Laufer 2001, 545), Hulstijn and Laufer performed two experiments whereby they examined the effect of involvement load on the retention of ten “low-frequency” L2 English words by advanced college-aged EFL learners in the Netherlands and Israel. Different groups of students were invited to participate in one of three vocabulary learning tasks, each of which differed in terms of its involvement index.

Task 1 entailed a reading comprehension activity with marginal glosses wherein students were given a text and ten multiple-choice comprehension items. The ten L2 English words, “whose understanding was relevant to the task,” were highlighted and glossed in the margin of the text in L1. Students were asked to read the text and then respond to the ten comprehension questions. The researchers assigned the task an involvement index of 1, inasmuch as *need* was moderate (=1) and *search* and *evaluation* were absent (=0).

Task 2 involved a reading comprehension plus “fill-in” activity. A different group of students were provided with the same text and comprehension questions as those used in task 1, but the 10 L2 English words were deleted from the text and replaced with a blank space. The 10 English words, along with 5 which do not appear in the original text, were then randomly ordered on a separate sheet of paper along with their L1 translations and L2 explanations. The students were asked to read the text and fill in the 10 blanks in the text with one of the 15 words on the separate page and, thereafter, to

answer the 10 comprehension questions. The task was assessed as having an involvement index of 2, inasmuch as *need* was moderate (=1), *search* was absent (=0) and *evaluation* was moderate (=1), inasmuch as the context was provided.

Finally, task 3 involved another group of students in the incorporation of the 10 L2 English words in the writing of a composition. In the instructions, the students were told that they had to use all of the 10 words, which were listed below the instructions, and that they could use them in whichever order they chose. Additionally, explanations of the words, including L1 gloss, and examples of their usage were provided. Task 3 was given an involvement index of 3, since *need* was moderate (=1), *search* was absent (=0) and *evaluation* was strong (=2).

Upon completion of the above tasks, the respective groups were immediately given a list of the 10 target words and were asked to give their L1 equivalents or an explanation in English of their meaning. Additionally, one week later for the Netherlands group and 2 weeks later for the Israel group, the students were asked to do the same in order to better assess long-term retention of the 10 target words.

The researchers hypothesized that retention of the words by students involved in task 3 will be better than by students engaging in tasks 1 and 2, and that retention of the words by students involved in task 2 will be higher than for those involved in task 1, based on the strength of the involvement index for each task. Results of the experiments for students in both the Netherlands and Israel are shown in Table 2.1. The results confirmed the researchers' hypothesis. They found that students performing task 3 had

significantly higher retention of the 10 words for both the immediate and the delayed post tests, than those who performed task 2. However, only for the Israel group did

Table 2.1 Word Retention Scores (Maximum=10) for Hulstijn and Laufer (2001)

	<i>N</i>	<u>Immediate</u>		<u>Delayed</u>	
		<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Netherlands Experiment					
Task 1 (Reading)	20	2.7	1.5	1.3	1.4
Task 2 (Reading + fill-in)	33	2.9	1.8	1.5	1.4
Task 3 (Writing)	34	4.9	2.3	2.6	1.8
Israel Experiment					
Task 1 (Reading)	31	2.0	2.1	0.4	0.8
Task 2 (Reading + fill-in)	27	4.0	1.9	1.7	1.5
Task 3 (Writing)	41	6.9	2.5	3.7	2.4

participants in task 2 have significantly better retention of the words on both post-tests than those who performed task 1. Regarding its value pertinent to the present study, nevertheless, it is important to note that Hulstijn and Laufer (2001) found that the composition task (task 3) resulted in significantly better retention of L2 vocabulary in both immediate and delayed post-tests, than both the reading (task 1) and the reading plus fill-in (task 2) activities.

Folse (2006) performed an experiment that at first glance appears to disprove the involvement load hypothesis. He invited 154 ESL students of varied linguistic ability (50 lower intermediate, 51 upper intermediate and 53 advanced) who were enrolled in intensive university-level English programs to engage in three vocabulary learning activities of differing involvement load. All 154 students participated in all three vocabulary learning activities but different vocabulary words were used for each activity. Students were given a “minidictionary” which gave the part of speech, a definition and

sample usage of each of the 18 words used for the study. Activity 1 was a fill-in-the-blank activity wherein students were given six words, one of which functioned as a distracter, and were asked to choose from among the words to fill in the blanks of five unrelated sentences. Activity 2, on the other hand, also involved the filling in of blanks but the words in this activity were practiced three different times in three different fill-in-the-blank exercises, thereby increasing students' exposure to the vocabulary words. Finally, activity 3 invited the students to use the given 5 vocabulary words in an original sentence. To assess learning of the words, students were given a pre-test on the vocabulary words prior to completion of the practice activities and a post-test, which was exactly the same as the pre-test, immediately following the activities. However, no delayed post-test, as in Hulstijn and Laufer's (2001) study, was administered.

Folse also assessed the activities for their involvement index. He notes that activities 1 and 2, both fill-in-the-blank activities, have an involvement index of 4, inasmuch as *need* is strong (=2), *search* is moderate (=1), and *evaluation* is moderate (=1) for his activities. On the other hand, activity 3, wherein students create an original sentence with the vocabulary, has a higher involvement index of 5, given that *need* is also strong (=2) and *search* is also moderate (=1), but *evaluation* is strong (=2).

As table 2.2 shows, Folse's study found that activity 2 (three fill-in-the-blank exercises) was significantly ($p < .0001$) more effective in helping students to retain vocabulary than both activity 1 (one fill-in-the-blank) and activity 3 (original sentence production). Moreover, there was no significant difference in the learning produced

between activities 1 and 3. Folse observes that “many educators see fill-in-the-blank exercises as a superficial or passive use of the vocabulary, especially when compared

Table 2.2 Word Retention Scores for Folse (2006)

<i>Activity</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
1 (1 fill-in-blank)	154	2.18	2.36
2 (3 fill-in-blanks)	154	4.78*	2.78
3 (original sentences)	154	2.39	2.48

*significantly higher than activities 1 and 3, at the $p < .0001$ level

to writing original sentences” (286). However, he implies that what may be even more important than whether or not a learning activity is seen as “superficial” is the “depth of processing” involved in the learning activity. He states that “when a learner encounters a blank in a sentence in a vocabulary exercise ... who can say that the learner’s process in trying out the various words in this slot, perhaps by translating many of the words or perhaps by remembering tidbits about some of the words ... is not indeed deep processing of or high involvement with the word?” (287) Laufer and Hulstijn (2001), nonetheless, observe that it appears next to impossible to operationalize “depth of processing” as well as to determine whether one activity is “deeper” than another. Indeed, it seems conceivable that given the repetition involved in the three-time fill-in-the-blank exercise, Folse’s activity 2 may entail even more “involvement” than his original sentence writing exercise. He concludes that

Although there is general consensus that deeper processing results in better learning, it remains unclear which factors specifically influence depth and therefore cannot be operationalized. Furthermore, no research has produced results that allow one exercise type to be categorized as requiring more depth of knowledge than another. (276)

At the very least, it is difficult to compare Folse's results with those of Laufer and Hulstijn (2001) inasmuch as the latter study compared activities that are sufficiently different in nature from those of Folse (e.g. writing single original sentences versus writing a full composition) and hence entail levels of involvement or depth which are practically impossible to operationalize and, therefore, compare.

In his study, Folse also took into account the factor of "time on task", something which previous studies had not taken into account but which clearly may affect the learners' retention of vocabulary. Hence, he chose, in part, to have his activity 2 involve three cloze-type activities "because it was believed that students would take the same amount of time to do [activity] 2 as they would for [activity] 3" (279). Moreover, he observes, that

Though comparing [activities] 1 and 3 would address the effectiveness of the two different types of exercises, a comparison of [activities] 2 and 3 would not only address the effectiveness of these completion versus sentence-writing tasks but would also take into account the questions of time on task. (279)

Folse notes that the time on task for activity 1, the one-time cloze procedure was about 40 minutes, whereas that for activity 2, the three-time cloze procedure, was roughly 50 minutes and that for activity 3, the sentence creation procedure, averaged about 70 minutes. Folse therefore controlled for time on task via a post hoc analysis of a subset of 31 students who spent similar lengths of time for both activities 2 and 3.

Comparative results pertinent to retention of vocabulary for activities 2 and 3, based on "time on task", give an enormous edge to activity 2, the triple fill-in-the-blank activity. Folse found that the mean vocabulary retention score for activity 2 was twice as high as those for activity 3, and that these results were significant at the $p < .0001$ level.

Certainly, these results are relevant to the present study inasmuch as time spent writing an FL composition, as in the cases studied herein, can be extensive, but, as Folse's study shows, simple "time on task" may not be the most meaningful factor in terms of vocabulary retention.

More recently, Keating (2008) performed an experiment with "beginning"-level FL learners of Spanish in the first-semester of the second year of study.⁴ He observes that previous studies on the involvement load hypothesis have only examined students at advanced language learning levels.⁵ The research questions of Keating's study somewhat reflect the research purposes of Hulstijn and Laufer (2001) but also consider students' passive and active word retention as well as time on task as a factor in the learning of vocabulary. The research questions are the following:

1. Do low-proficiency learners assigned to tasks with different involvement loads evince differential gains in word learning on tests of short-term and long-term word retention?
2. Do tasks with different involvement loads lead to differential gains in both passive and active word knowledge?
3. Do the benefits of more involving tasks hold when time on task is accounted for?

Hence, Keating invited a total of 79 students of Spanish as FL to participate in one of three vocabulary learning tasks. In order to control for whatever previous knowledge students may have had of vocabulary, Keating invented pseudowords which adhered to both morphological and phonological patterns of Spanish. His tasks 1 and 2 were exactly the same as those of Hulstijn and Laufer (2001). He describes task 1 as "reading

⁴ Note that typically "first-semester, second-year" students are referred to as "intermediate-level" students in the literature.

⁵ As noted above, Folse (2006) examined beginning-, intermediate- and advanced-level learners. Keating is, nevertheless, the only researcher to focus solely on early-learners of FL.

comprehension with marginal glosses” (372). In this exercise, students were provided with a text and a set of five true/false comprehension questions regarding the text. Eight target words were highlighted and glossed in the text’s margin. Students were to first read the text, while making use of the glossed references in the margins, and then to answer the five comprehension questions. Similar to Hulstijn and Laufer’s (2001) task 1, Keating assesses this activity as having an involvement index of 1, inasmuch as *need* in the activity is only moderate (=1), while *search* and *evaluation* are absent (=0) and the sum of these three scores is therefore equal to 1 (1 + 0 + 0). A total of 23 students participated in task 1, which took students an average of 7 minutes to complete.

Keating describes his task 2 as “reading comprehension plus fill-in” (372). Participants were given the same text and comprehension questions as in task 1 but, as in Hulstijn and Laufer (2001), the target words were eliminated from the text and blank spaces left in their place. The eight target words plus four additional words written in alphabetical order on a separate sheet of paper with a brief definition of the word and a sample sentence, both of which were written in the target language of Spanish, as well as an English (L1) gloss. Students were therefore asked to fill in the eight blanks in the text with words from the list of twelve target vocabulary items and, thereafter, to answer the five comprehension questions. Keating states that this activity carries an involvement load index of 2 since *need* is moderate (=1), *search* is absent (=0) and *evaluation* is moderate (=1). A total of 29 students participated in this activity, which took students an average of 13 minutes to complete.

Unlike Hulstijn and Laufer's (2001) task 3 which entailed the use of 10 vocabulary items in the writing of a composition, for Keating's task 3 students were given nothing to read previous to engaging in the activity but rather were given 10 minutes to review the same list of 12 words as that used in task 2, following which they were given 10 minutes to write original sentences using the 8 target words. Keating assesses this activity as having an involvement load index of 3 inasmuch as need is moderate (=1), search is absent (=0) and evaluation is strong (=2). Thus, Keating's task 3 and Hulstijn and Laufer's (2001) task 3 were both assigned an involvement load of 3. A total of 27 students performed this task, which took an average of 20 minutes to complete.

It should be noted here, nonetheless, that though the tasks are assessed as having the same involvement load, the two tasks are markedly different in terms of their meaningfulness and purpose. Clearly, the writing of a purposeful, coherent and cohesive composition as in Hulstijn and Laufer (2001) is much more meaningful and authentic than the writing of 8 unconnected and contrived sentences as in Keating's study. And this point is extremely relevant to the present study since the study specifically examines students' learning in the more meaningful context of purposeful composition.

Following completion of their respective activities, students were asked to complete a passive and an active recall post-test both immediately following the task and two weeks thereafter. Keating hypothesizes that

Consonant with the predictions of the Involvement Load Hypothesis ... scores on the tests of passive and active word recall would be highest in Task 3 (sentence writing with the target words), lower in Task 2 (reading comprehension plus

filling in the target words), and lowest in task 1 (reading comprehension with marginal glossing of the target words). (373).

Descriptive statistics for results of Keating’s experiment are given in Table 2.3 below. As confirmed by mixed ANOVA statistical analysis as well as by post hoc analysis, scores on the *passive* word recall test for tasks 2 and 3 were significantly superior to those for task 1 on both the immediate and the delayed post-test. Nevertheless, task 3 was not significantly more effective than task 2. Similarly, scores on the *active* word recall test for tasks 2 and 3 were also significantly larger than those of task 1 on both the immediate and delayed post-tests. However, scores for task 3 were significantly larger than those for task 2 on the immediate post-tests.

Table 2.3 Word Retention Scores (Maximum = 8) for Keating (2008)

	<i>N</i>	<u>Immediate</u>		<u>Delayed</u>	
		<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Passive word recall					
Task 1 (Reading)	23	1.35	1.80	0.87	0.97
Task 2 (Reading + fill-in)	29	3.76	2.61	2.43	2.98
Task 3 (Writing)	27	5.15	2.43	3.65	1.98
Active word recall					
Task 1 (Reading)	23	0.59	0.78	0.60	0.71
Task 2 (Reading + fill-in)	29	1.82	1.93	2.02	2.52
Task 3 (Writing)	27	3.37	2.17	1.69	1.58

Nevertheless, unlike Hulstijn and Laufer (2001), Keating also elected to examine the effect “time on task” on the retention of the vocabulary. To do this, he scored participants’ scores on the passive and active word recall tests to reflect words learned per minute, utilizing the average task times reported. Fascinatingly, he found that while “time on task” yielded mostly no significant differences between the three tasks, “for

Task 3, the mean words learned per minute declined significantly between the immediate and delayed posttests” (378) on both the passive and the active post-tests. He warns that since time on task was only “estimated and not measured separately for each participant, these results should be interpreted with caution.” Nevertheless, he maintains that the results of the time on task analysis do “suggest [that] the benefits of more demanding tasks are offset by the amount of time required to complete them” (378).

Accuracy as a Measurement of L2 Improvement

Since, in terms of quantifiable measurement of students’ learning of the Spanish language resulting from the intensive writing, the present study will measure the linguistic *accuracy* of students’ writing, a discussion of the literature on writing and accuracy is appropriate. Wolfe-Quintero et al. (1998) define linguistic accuracy as a speaker or writer’s ability to “be free from errors while using language to communicate in either writing or speech” (33). Additionally, Foster and Skehan (1996) define accuracy as “‘freedom from error,’ which can be measured by an analysis of target-like use, taking into account both the contexts and uses of the structure in question (Pica, 1983)” (cited in Wolfe-Quintero et al., 33). Hence, in terms of second or foreign language learner production, we may conclude that accuracy essentially denotes language production that approximates correct and authentic native language production.

On the one hand, little has been done to determine specifically whether engaging in intensive writing helps improve linguistic accuracy. On the other hand, there are numerous studies that use accuracy analyses of writing samples to determine whether a

specific pedagogical linguistic or writing technique resulted in improvement in learners' accuracy.

For example, a study that somewhat approximates the goals of the present research is that of Duffy (1999). She investigated a semester-long, writing-intensive Content Based Language Instruction (CBLI) ESL course. Her main focus was not the writing intensive component of the course, but its dual focus on language learning and content learning. She based part of her findings, among other measures, on accuracy counts of pre- and post-semester essays and found that while over the course of the semester all L2 learners benefited from their participation in the adjunct-model CBLI study in terms of their linguistic accuracy, there was no significant relationship between linguistic accuracy and content and rhetorical measures. Hence, though her main focus was not on the writing intensive element of the course, it is nevertheless of interest for the present study to note that a possible contributor to Duffy's finding of improved linguistic accuracy among the learners in her study was their involvement in intensive writing.

Another study of interest to the present research in terms of improvement in L2 written accuracy, given her interest in an enhanced writing component in the Spanish FL course she evaluated, is that of Ballman (1987). She states that her goal was "to investigate whether formal study of grammar combined with regular writing assignments would improve the syntactic complexity and accuracy of students' writing over the course of one semester" (236). Ballman studied 15 students enrolled in an intermediate high-level Spanish grammar course which she taught herself, and in which she required students to write in a journal at least twice a week, with entries of at least one full page.

In addition, she estimates that at least 70% of class time was dedicated to “overt grammar study,” and the rest of the time was spent discussing content “during which time students could use the grammar studied.” To weigh whether or not the students improved in their linguistic accuracy and complexity during the semester, Ballman collected two journal entries from each student written during the first two weeks of class, and two entries written during the last two weeks of class.

In order to specifically determine improvement in accuracy, Ballman performed an error-free-T-units per total number of T-units (EFT/T) analysis. She found no significant differences for linguistic accuracy between the journal entries from the first two weeks of class and entries from the last two weeks of class. An important observation to be made concerning Ballman’s study, especially in relation to the present study is that the only kind of writing she had her students perform was journaling – a very informal, ungraded style of writing. Hence, though Ballman’s results for journal writing and focused grammar instruction were not statistically significant, studies that more closely examine accuracy improvement resulting from other types of classroom writing (such as formal papers, essay exams etc.), are needed.

Casanave (1994) performed a more longitudinal study wherein, among other factors, she analyzed accuracy by a measure of error-free T-units in student journals over three semesters to determine whether improvement had taken place during enrollment in an ESL program. While she found no consistent improvement of accuracy in students’ writing, she nevertheless stated the following: “As I have observed that as students relax into their writing, and as they write more fluently, thoughtfully, and insightfully, the

grammatical accuracy of the writing of some of them decreases” (193). She observed, therefore, that more than just quantitative measures of factors such as accuracy ought to be involved in our conceptualization of improvement in writing.

Other examples of studies that use accuracy to determine whether a certain pedagogical method or other variable in writing is linguistically viable, include those of Frantzen (1995) (supplemental grammar instruction), Polio et al (1998) (revision instruction), González-Bueno and Pérez (2000) and Pérez-Sotelo and González Bueno (2003) (both e-mail journaling), Ellis and Yuan (2004) (planning) and Kuiken et al (2005) and Kuiken and Vedder (2008) (both cognitive task complexity). Frantzen (1995) investigated whether students showed improvement in written accuracy based on formal supplemental grammar instruction in the classroom and found that while both test and control groups improved in their accuracy, students who received supplemental grammar instruction improved at an even higher level. And Polio et al (1998) found that 64 ESL students who wrote 30 minute drafts and 60 minute revisions at the beginning and end of a semester did not significantly improve in terms of their linguistics accuracy despite receiving additional editing instruction.

Nor did González-Bueno and Pérez (2000) and Pérez-Sotelo and González Bueno (2003) find any significant improvement in grammatical accuracy as a result of first-semester Spanish-as-FL students’ participation in e-mail journal dialogues. Ellis and Yuan (2004) examined accuracy to determine whether it improved according to the type of planning (pre-task, “unpressured on-line,” or none) a student utilizes in the writing process and found that “the opportunity to engage in unpressured on-line planning

assisted greater accuracy” (59). And both Kuiken et al (2005), with university learners of Italian as FL, and Kuiken and Vedder (2008), with both learners of French as FL and learners of Italian as FL, utilized an error-per-T-unit analysis of accuracy (the same measure used in the present study), and discovered that student writers improved as a result of “cognitively more demanding” prompts for the writing.

Finally, examples of studies that employ accuracy as a means of measuring the efficacy of various kinds of feedback in L2 writing abound. Examples include Robb et al. (1986), Chastain (1990), Kepner (1991), Chandler (2003), Bitchener et al (2005), Sachs and Polio (2007), Hartshorn (2008) and Rahimi (2009). For example, Robb et al. (1986), found evidence that suggested that direct correction of errors in written work is less than optimal. Chastain (1990) investigated differences in accuracy based on writing samples from third-year Spanish students that were graded versus samples that were not graded, and found there to be no statistically significant difference for graded versus non-graded writing samples. Similarly, Kepner (1991) examined differences in improvement of accuracy based on two types of feedback: message-related and surface-error correction. She found that “the consistent use of L2 teachers’ written error-corrections combined with explicit rule reminders as a primary medium of written feedback ... [was] ineffective for promoting the development of writing proficiency in the L2” (310). In an ESL context, Chandler (2003) found that “both direct correction and simple underlining of errors are significantly superior to describing the type of error, even with underlining,” for improving accuracy in students’ writing (267). Bitchener et al (2005), examining feedback in an ESL context as well, discovered a “significant effect for the combination

of written and conference feedback on accuracy levels in the use of the past simple tense and the definite article” (191). Sachs and Polio (2007) performed a repeated measures study with ESL writers and found significant improvement in writers who received simple error correction as feedback versus those who performed reformulations. Moreover, Hartshorn (2008), in his doctoral dissertation, also in the ESL context, employed a style of error correction feedback and found that it, contrary to what others may have found, actually increased the mechanical, lexical and, to some extent, grammatical accuracy of the writers, by comparison with a control group that employed a standard process writing methodology. Finally, in an EFL setting in Iran, Rahimi (2009) compared a group of writers during a four month period who received indirect grammar feedback with a group that received no feedback and found “no significant effect” in favor of the accuracy of the group which received feedback (219).

Student Voice

An extremely important and fundamental part of the present study is that it purports to give voice to the student with regards to writing in the foreign language curriculum. As such, in the present section I discuss some of the current thinking on student voice and its place in current research on education.

Alison Cook-Sather (2006) proposes that “student voice” is founded on the conviction that “young people have unique perspectives on learning, teaching, and schooling,” that their perceptions “warrant not only the attention but also the responses of

adults “and that they ought to “be afforded opportunities to actively shape their education” (359-60).

The present study proposes to study intensive writing in the foreign language curriculum from just such a perspective – that of students. As such, it is appropriate here to give an accounting of justifications in the literature for the use and value of student voice in educational research. As Jodene Dunleavy (2008) observes, the inclusion of student voice in educational research “requires us to question our inclination to still view student voice as a radical concept and our tendency to still confuse consultation on pre-determined agendas with genuine engagement of students’ diverse ideas about the schools they want” (31).

Much has been written during the last 10 to 15 years regarding the value and importance of listening to students’ perceptions in education. For example, in their article on “Quality Assessment of University Students”, Donald and Denison (2001) give perhaps the most basic of reasons for the need to listen to students’ voices when they state that for an assessment “to be useful, [it] must meet the needs of the people whom it is intended to benefit and aid the evaluated institution to make improvements” (478).

The huge majority of literature on the topic of “student voice” centers on students at the secondary level (see, for example, Mitra 2004 and 2006, Cook-Sather 2007, Gunter and Thomson 2007, Mitra and Gross 2009 and Yonezawa and Jones 2009), whereas the context of the present study is that of students in a post-secondary context. Nevertheless, the literature does not indeed ignore “student voice” in higher education (see Batchelor 2006, Cook-Sather 2009), nor does it seem counter-intuitive to consider the value of

research on student voice at the primary and secondary levels for students at the tertiary level, given the seeming universality of the themes discussed in the literature.

Regarding student voice, Yvonna Lincoln (1995) justifies its emergence in educational research when she writes that there are “several different lenses” (88) through which to view the value of listening to students’ perceptions and opinions. For example, on the one hand, she observes that giving attention to student voices can be seen as arising from a “social and legal context” inasmuch as it is “reflective of a long evolution in the extension of civil rights” in the United States (88). On the other hand, she proposes that student voice can be seen as emerging from a “scientific context” which takes into consideration the ways in which students learn. “Since schooling is one of the most powerful shapers of both learning and acquiring word-view,” she notes, “it makes sense to attend to ways in which children actively shape their contexts and begin to model their worlds and the way in which we, in turn, shape the possibilities available for learners” (88-9). Finally, Lincoln asserts that emergent student voice research may be seen through the lens of a political context, inasmuch as historically the purpose of education in the United States has been to prepare learners for “participation in democratic processes” (89). Indeed, as she maintains, “exercising ‘voice’ in public affairs or the normal duties of citizenship requires that individuals have found their voices” (89). She laments, nevertheless, that it appears that for many years, educational institutions have failed to give students that voice.

Alison Cook-Sather (2002) builds upon Lincoln’s discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of the emergence of student voice in educational research in her article on

“authorizing students’ perspectives.” She there proposes that a variety of pedagogical theories indeed “authorize” or justify the use of student voice in academe, among which she includes “constructivist pedagogies,” “critical pedagogies,” “postmodern and poststructuralist feminist pedagogies.”

Regarding the pedagogical traditions she enumerates, Cook-Sather states that constructivist pedagogies provide “authorization” for use of student voice/perspectives in research, inasmuch as constructivism’s most shared belief is that “students actively construct their own understandings” (5). She submits that constructivists place students as “active creators of their knowledge rather than recipients of others’ knowledge” and, hence, are typically proponents of listening closely to what students have to say about their own education. Concerning critical pedagogies, Cook-Sather observes that similar to constructivist pedagogies, they give students an active role in their own learning, but that they do so from the invaluable viewpoint of social justice and equity. She observes, moreover, that critical pedagogies as a rule “contribute a commitment to redistributing power not only within the classroom, between teacher and students, but in society at large” (6). As pertains to postmodern and poststructuralist feminist pedagogies, finally, she proposes that these traditions justify student voice from the perspective of “challenging and changing current power relations in education” while simultaneously cautioning against “uncritically or unreflectively privileging student voices” (6).

Fielding (2004) further builds on the justification for the presence of student voice in research. “The framework within which the notion of voice is explored and critiqued,” he posits, “falls primarily into two categories.” The first of these is “deconstructing the

presumptions of the present,” in which Fielding describes various problem areas in current student voice research. These include “problems of speaking *about* others,” “problems of speaking *for* others,” and problems of “getting heard.” His second component of the framework from which to consider the notion of voice is what he describes as “on the necessity of dialogue.” He observes that this framework attempts to resolve issues surrounding student voice by “exploring the possibility of ‘speaking about/for others in supportive ways’ before offering the preferred ‘dialogic alternative: speaking *with* rather than *for*’ and further developing that line of enquiry through ‘students as co/researchers’” (296).

Dana Mitra (2006) attempts to legitimize the employment of student voice in research on education from a social movement theory perspective. She observes that “recent social movement theory illustrates how student voice initiatives can gain acceptance in the push for school change” (316). She notes that around the end of the twentieth century social movement theorists began to expand the movement’s application and focus from “disruptive tactics” to include an endeavor to promote internal changes of institutions” (316). Inclusion of student voice from both sides, external and internal, have their plusses and may result in three very important kinds of change, including “establishing legitimacy through gaining support of powerful insiders,” “ensuring sustainability through the ongoing provision of financial and human resources” and “ultimately defining the types of change that can be pursued” (316).

An article of great salience to the present study, inasmuch as it centers on vulnerable learner populations in higher education (rather than K-12) education, is that of

Batchelor (2006). Though Batchelor focuses her attention on specifically marginalized groups such as students with disabilities, women, underrepresented ethnic groups and disadvantaged students, her study still feels pertinent to the present study given that its student participants, as with students in perhaps any college class, can be seen to stand in a somewhat vulnerable position given the teacher-student power dynamic. Moreover, Batchelor exclaims that to limit the purview of “vulnerability” only to those stereotypical marginalized groups, can be risky:

The concept of vulnerability needs to be extended from referring to certain under-represented groups in the student body to indicating the strength or weakness of certain modes of the student voice. The danger of concentrating only on publicized and visibly vulnerable groups is that a whole dimension of hidden vulnerability is missed. The voices of statistically well-represented student groups can also be vulnerable, but in less obvious ways, if the prevailing criteria for student self-expression, their possibilities for academic identity, are skewed in a particular, and unquestioned, direction. This is in no sense to argue that the vulnerable student groups cited above are any less important, only that the notion of vulnerability in higher education is incomplete if other aspects of its meaning are not admitted. (789)

Hence, Batchelor proposes that academia’s conception of “voice” ought to include more of an ontological (as compared to epistemological and practical) perspective that centers more on “being and becoming” (787). In other words, she explains, vulnerability ought not to be seen only in terms of a state “of” but in terms of its propensity “for”, thereby implying the possibility of change and development:

A condition *of* vulnerability, a state *of*, suggests finiteness and limitation, a state where further progress is not possible. ‘Of’ is a containing preposition, defining boundaries. A condition *for*, on the other hand, indicates openness to the possibilities of movement and development. ‘For’ implies something to be done, to be achieved, a goal to be reached, a process to be activated. It denotes movement, action, growth, change and possibility, but not an eventual outcome. Recovering vulnerable student

voices is partly about moving from a closed state *of* vulnerability to a more open condition of vulnerability *for*. (790)

Therefore, Batchelor implies that there is an optimistic side to vulnerability, which may also mean “optionality”, and which can signify “an opening up, rather than a closing down, of possibilities for having a voice” (790). In other words, Batchelor here suggests that students must not only have a voice for “knowing” (epistemological) and “doing” (practical), but also a more positive, ontological voice for “being and becoming” (787). And this kind of voice is that which the present study proposes, indeed hopes to provide for students in foreign language writing curricula.

Research Questions for the Present Study

As I stated at the beginning of this chapter, the purpose of this literature review has been to “demonstrate how the present study advances, refines, or revises what is already known” about the topic and to comprise “a conscious attempt to keep in mind that the ... research emerges from and is contained within a larger context of ... inquiry” (Bloomberg and Volpe 2008, 46). The present literature review has attempted to show that while much valuable research already exists pertaining to writing in a foreign language, there yet remains much to be done. For example, as the previous section suggests, there is both a need for and value in allowing students to have their voices reflected in the planning and development of educational programs and initiatives, such as those pertaining to the implementation of writing in the foreign language curriculum. Additionally, there is a need for more research on the potential learning outcomes of writing in the foreign language and on how writing-across-the-curriculum, writing-

intensive requirements, and the intensive writing inherent to such requirements, specifically affect students of a foreign language.

As such, this study proposes to answer the following three research questions:

1. What attitudes and perceptions do L2 Spanish students enrolled in a WI Spanish course have about the WI requirement at the University and the intensive writing component in the course?
2. Do L2 Spanish students show improved accuracy and coherence in their writing after taking an intensive writing course?
3. What do students feel they learn by engaging in intensive writing in their WI Spanish course, in terms of course content, writing skill and Spanish language?

On the one hand, the research questions call for an empirical analysis of students' improvements resulting from the intensive writing in their Spanish FL courses, specifically in terms of their learning of the Spanish language, as shown by gains in linguistic accuracy, and of their learning of writing skill, as shown by gains in coherence (Research Question #2). And on the other hand, the research questions provide ample opportunity for listening to the student voice, not only regarding the potential learning outcomes of the intensive writing (Research Question #3), but also regarding how the WI requirement and intensive writing specifically affect them as foreign language students (Research Question #1).

CHAPTER 3

THE STUDY

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology and methods employed in the realization of the present study. In what follows, I discuss the institutional context of the study, its participants, the instrumentation employed in data collection for the study and the nature of the analysis of data employed to answer the three research questions of the study.

Institutional Context:

WAC and the Writing-Intensive Requirement at the University of Minnesota

In early 1990, then University of Minnesota President Nils Hasselmo issued a challenge to faculty, students and staff of the University to participate in an “Initiative for Excellence in Undergraduate Education” (Office of Planning and Analysis in the Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, ch. 6). In response to Hasselmo’s challenge, the Provost together with the Chairperson of the Twin Cities Assembly Steering Committee, appointed a 26-member Task Force on Liberal Education, composed mostly of tenured faculty. Included in the Task Force’s responsibilities was the charge to “review the current provisions for liberal education which obtain on the campus and make recommendations to change or improve those policies” (Task Force on Liberal

Education, sec. A). In its May 6, 1991 final report, among various other stipulations, the Task Force made specific recommendations about the promotion of writing skills in undergraduate education. The report recommended implementation of a “Writing Intensive” (WI) requirement throughout the curriculum: “We are persuaded that our students should be asked to write more often, in contexts that give greater purpose to their effort, and should receive prompt evaluation of the writing they produce” (sec. H).

The recommendation was that certain courses be deemed “Writing Intensive” and that students be required to complete at least four of these courses during their undergraduate education. Moreover, the Task Force recommended that all majors require a “Senior Project” that included a writing component and in which students could “engage in a creative or research activity ... that demonstrates clear understanding of the discipline’s subject matter, modes of inquiry, and particular insight into the human experience” (sec. D). The Task Force simultaneously established the Council on Liberal Education (CLE) and called for substantial training and support for instructors in order to ensure the success of the WI initiative.

In May 1998, the Council on Liberal Education issued the “Writing Intensive Course Proposal” to administrators stating that beginning in Fall 1999, “the delivery of writing instruction at the University of Minnesota [would] undergo fundamental change” (par. 1). While previously the English and Rhetoric departments and the General College had borne the major burden of writing instruction at the university, beginning fall semester 1999, “every undergraduate department in the university [would] share in that responsibility” (par. 1). This was in harmony with a statement in the Final Report of the

Task Force on Liberal Education: “Writing theory ... indicates that students write more willingly and effectively when they do so in the context of substantive, academic study” (sec. H).

As such, students entering the University of Minnesota in Fall 1999 and thereafter would be required to take four WI courses, two of which should be at the upper-division level, and at least one of which must be in the student’s major. The proposal established that WI courses were to include an assigned total of ten to fifteen finalized pages of writing, aside from informal and in-class writing. Moreover, students were to be required to do a revision of a draft after receiving feedback from the instructor for at least one of these assignments (Strong and Fruth 33).

The “Writing-Intensive Course Proposal” invited all departments to submit courses to the CLE for WI approval. The faculty of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese Studies was convinced at that time that most of the upper-division courses taught in the Department could meet the WI requirement (Klee 12 May 2000). Nevertheless, along with various Portuguese courses, they elected to submit four Spanish courses for Writing Intensive approval: Spanish 3104 (Analysis and Interpretation of Texts), Spanish 3105 (Introduction to the Study of Hispanic Civilizations), Spanish 3107 (Introduction to the Study of Hispanic Linguistics) and Spanish 3972 (Graduation Seminar), in which the Senior Project requirement is fulfilled. Since the first three of these are the required introductory courses for the Spanish major, the faculty decided that a heavy dose of writing early on would help prepare students for work in more advanced culture, literature and linguistics upper-division courses (Klee 8 June 2000).

The CLE proposal also enumerated various resources for the smooth implementation of the WI initiative. The university's Center for Interdisciplinary Studies in Writing (CISW), for example, was to maintain support services such as sample syllabi and training in the planning and implementation of WI courses for potential instructors (see Center for Interdisciplinary Studies in Writing). In addition, recurring funds were to be allocated by the Provost's office to be used as the undergraduate-admitting colleges saw fit.

In the College of Liberal Arts, the various departments were notified that funding was available for the implementation of the Writing Intensive directive and were invited to submit proposals to the Office of the Dean for utilization of the funds (Klee 8 June 2000). Those departments whose proposals were approved by the Dean's office used the allocations in a variety of ways. Some utilized the funding to create workshops and provide training in WI procedures for their faculty and teaching assistants, while others invested in WI course development. Yet others appointed teaching assistants specifically to provide support for WI courses (Carroll, "Re: WI").⁶ It was during this time that the Department of Spanish and Portuguese Studies initialized plans for the establishment of the Spanish Writing Center, a laboratory in which Spanish majors and minors exclusively could confer with advanced graduate student writing consultants specifically and solely about their Spanish writing assignments (see Strong and Fruth, 2001).

⁶ Currently the liberal education writing intensive requirement at the University of Minnesota is stated as follows: "In addition to the first-year writing requirement, you must complete four writing intensive courses. Two of the writing intensive courses must be taken at the upper division level, one of which must be taken in your major." See http://onestop.umn.edu/degree_planning/lib_eds/index.html (Accessed November 19, 2009).

Participants

Participants in the study included 32 students enrolled in two writing-intensive, introductory-level major courses in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese Studies at the University of Minnesota: Spanish 3104W, *Analysis and Interpretation of Texts* and Spanish 3105W, *Introduction to the Study of Hispanic Civilizations*.

I have opted to define the level of students who will be examined for this study as “major-level Spanish students.”⁷ In terms of the ACTFL Proficiency guidelines, it is estimated that most of the students are typically somewhere at the intermediate-mid to advanced level (Klee, 2001). Nevertheless, there is clearly a huge amount of heterogeneity in terms of language ability at this level. Both of these courses are required major-level courses and are prerequisites for advanced courses in literary (Spanish 3104) or culture (Spanish 3105) courses. One of these courses or Spanish 3107, Introduction to Hispanic Linguistics, is required for the minor.

Of the total of 16 students enrolled in the Spanish 3105W course, 15 signed letters of consent to participate in the study. Of those 15 students, 12 were female and 3 male. All 17 students enrolled in the Spanish 3104W course signed letters of consent to participate in the study and of these 12 were female and 5 were male.

⁷ I would clarify here, however, that all Spanish majors and minors at the University of Minnesota are required to take Spanish 3015 (Spanish Composition and Communication), a bridge course between first and second year language courses and the major, and, if necessary, Spanish 3021 (Advanced Communication Skills), a second bridge course providing further language and writing practice if needed, and prior to taking major-level courses.

Summary of Student Background Information

Table 3.1 below, provides results for Section I, “Personal Information”, of the end-of-semester questionnaire. Of 32 participants, 26 completed the questionnaire which was administered at the end of the semester and which, along with data regarding students’ writing attitudes, perceptions and strategies, included biographical data. Of the 26 students who completed the survey, fully 21 were female and only 5 were male. Of these, the average age of students in the two courses was 21.15 years. The average grade point average of students who completed the questionnaire, based on a 4-point scale (where A = 4.0, B = 3.0, C = 2.0, D = 1.0 and F = 0) was 3.27 or, roughly, B+, at the time of enrollment in the course. Moreover, of the 26 students who completed the survey, 6 were in their sophomore year, 14 were in their junior year, and 6 were in their senior year of their university studies. Additionally, of these 26 participants, 14 stated that they were pursuing a Spanish major at the University, 11 stated that they were pursuing a Spanish minor at the University and 1 gave no response. In response to the question, “Do you have to fulfill the ‘writing-intensive’ requirement for graduation?” 19 of the 26 students who completed the questionnaire responded “yes”, 3 responded “no” and 4 gave no response.⁸

Part A of section I of the questionnaire asked respondents to list other 3100-level Spanish courses which they had taken or in which they were currently enrolled at the University. Of the 26 respondents, 6 had taken or were currently enrolled in 1 other

⁸ As implied above, those students who began their studies at the University of Minnesota before Fall of 1999 when the current writing-intensive requirement was implemented, were not required to complete the requirement.

Table 3.1. Summary of Student Biographical/Background Information

<u>Biographical/Background Features</u>	<u>Statistic</u> (n=26)
Gender:	Male: 5 Female: 21
Average GPA:	3.27
Year at University:	Freshman: 0 Sophomore: 6 Junior: 14 Senior: 6
Course of Study in Spanish:	Spanish Major: 14 Spanish Minor: 11 No response: 1
Must complete WI requirement?	Yes: 19 No: 3 No response: 4
Other 3100-level courses:	1 other: 6 2 others: 7 3 others: 6 4 others: 5 5 others: 1 6 others: 1
Time spent abroad:	None: 16 0.5 – 1 month: 4 2-3 months: 3 6-8 months: 3
WI courses taken:	None: 5 1 other: 7 2 others: 7 3 others: 2 4 others: 3 5 others: 1 6 others: 1
Considers self a(n) _____ writer in English:	“excellent”: 7 “good”: 17 “average”: 2 “poor”: 0
Reason taking Spanish:	Learn Spanish language: 3 Learn culture/history: 0 Both, mostly Spanish language: 21 Both, mostly culture/history:

3100-level Spanish course, 7 reported taking 2 other Spanish courses, 6 reported taking 3 other Spanish courses, 5 reported taking 4 other Spanish courses, 1 reported taking 5 other Spanish courses, and 1 reported taking 6 other 3100-level Spanish courses.

Part B of section I of the questionnaire asks respondents if they have studied abroad in a Spanish-speaking country and if so, for how long. Of the 26 respondents, fully 16 reported having spent no time abroad in a Spanish speaking country, while 1 reported .5 months (2 weeks), 3 reported 1 month, 1 reported 2 months, 2 reported 3 months, 1 reported 6 months, 1 reported 7 months, and 1 reported 8 months of study abroad experience.

Part C of section I of the questionnaire inquires regarding other “writing-intensive” (WI) courses in which students have been or are currently enrolled. 5 students reported having enrolled in no other WI courses at the University, while 7 reported enrollment in 1 other WI course, 7 reported enrollment in 2 other WI courses, 2 reported enrollment in 3 other WI courses, 3 reported enrollment in 4 other WI courses, 1 reported enrollment in 5 other WI courses and 1 reported enrollment in 6 other WI courses at the University.

In response to part D of section I of the questionnaire, which asks participants to complete the statement, “Overall, I consider myself to be a(n) _____ writer in English” by circling “excellent”, “good”, “average” or “poor”, 7 of the 26 respondents circled “excellent”, 17 circled “good”, 2 circled “average” and none circled “poor”.

For part E of section I of the questionnaire, which asks students to state their “most important reason for taking Spanish courses at the University of Minnesota,” only

3 participants marked the option "...to learn the Spanish language well," while 21 circled the option "...mostly to learn the Spanish language but also to learn about Hispanic culture, literature, history, linguistics, etc." and only 2 circled the response "...mostly to learn about Hispanic culture, literature, history, linguistics, etc., but also to learn the Spanish language well." No respondent circled the possible response "...to learn about Hispanic culture, literature, history, linguistics, etc."

Preparation and Description of Writing-Intensive Course Syllabi

As noted above, two writing-intensive courses were selected for the present analysis: Spanish 3104W, *Analysis and Interpretation of Texts*, and Spanish 3105W, *Introduction to the Study of Hispanic Civilizations*. The 'W' placed at the end of the course identification number indicates that the course is one that will satisfy the Writing-Intensive requirement at the University of Minnesota. A more detailed explanation of the specific content and focus of each course, taken from the *University of Minnesota Course Guide: Spring 2001*, may be viewed in Appendix A.

Prior to the semester in which data were collected, I met with both instructors of the courses to be examined, in order to coordinate dates for data collection and to ensure that the syllabi not only met the parameters established by the University for courses deemed "writing-intensive" (i.e. a minimum of 10 to 15 pages of "formal writing", with at least one assignment involving feedback and revision) but also to see to it that they were relatively similar in terms of number and type of written assignments. As such, it was decided that both teachers would assign weekly one-page summaries meant to

engage students with the content of the course for that week and to allow students to write in a somewhat (though not totally) more informal context. Additionally, it was decided to assign a minimum of 2 somewhat longer, more formal papers around 3 to 4 pages in length and an even longer final paper or writing-intensive take-home final exam.

The instructor of the literature course (Spanish 3104W) assigned 2 papers meant to be 3 to 4 pages in length, and gave students the option of revising the second. In addition, she gave her students an essay-style final exam for which students would write a minimum of around 8 pages. The teacher of the culture course (Spanish 3105W) assigned 3 papers of 3 to 4 pages in length, the latter of which was later changed to be an annotated bibliography preparatory to the final paper for the course. The final paper for this course was to be a formal research-type paper and was to be 6 to 8 pages in length.

Methodology

The present study employs both qualitative and quantitative methods. In other words, it was felt that the implementation of both qualitative and quantitative methods would be the most effective and valid way to address the study's proposed research questions.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) explain that the dual use of quantitative and qualitative methods in research provides excellent conditions for theory development:

Qualitative and quantitative forms of research both have roles to play in theorizing. The issue is not whether to use one form or another but rather how these might work together to foster the development of theory. Although most researchers tend to use qualitative and quantitative methods in supplementary or complementary forms, what we are advocating is a true interplay between the two. The qualitative should direct the quantitative and the quantitative feedback into the qualitative in a circular, but at the same time evolving, process with each method contributing to the theory in ways that only each can. (34)

In other words, a main reason for employing such a research design is that the combination of both quantitative and qualitative data comprises a well-rounded and sensitive methodology with which to provide a more complete answer to the research questions of a given study. Therefore, I have proceeded with this format with the conviction that qualitative and quantitative data combine to create a more thorough overall view of a research situation than could be obtained were only one or the other methods used.

Hence, I followed a process in which I collected both qualitative and quantitative data in my attempt to answer the research questions of the present study and thereafter, analyzed both sets of data. In the following chapter, Chapter 4, moreover, I state the results of both the qualitative and quantitative analyses and in that same chapter as well as in Chapter 5, the concluding chapter, attempt to merge and interpret the two data sets.

What follows, therefore, is a description of the present study, including its participants as well as the specifics regarding the collection of data using both quantitative and qualitative instruments and procedures involved in their analysis and interpretation, in an attempt to more fully address the research questions of the present study.

Instrumentation

In the present section of the study, I discuss specifically which instruments and methods were utilized in the realization of the present study, in its effort to answer the proposed research questions of the study. Discussed below, therefore, are the pre- and post-write

samples collected for the study, the Student Questionnaire, which includes, among other things, the Writing Apprehension Survey (Daly and Miller 1975), Writing-Enhanced-Curriculum (WEC) Questionnaire (Beason and Darrow 1997) and a section of open-ended questions regarding the value of both the WI requirement and the intensive writing in the students' WI Spanish courses, and the student focus groups.

Pre- and Post-writes

During the first week of class, each student was asked to write an in-class impromptu essay utilizing their best writing and Spanish skills during a period of 35 minutes.

Students in the Spanish 3104W course were asked to respond to the question: *¿Por qué estudiar la literatura?* (Why study literature?). Students in the Spanish 3105W course were asked to respond to the question: *¿Por qué estudiar la cultura?* (Why study culture?). During the end of the semester, students were again asked to write in-class essays in response to the same prompt used at the beginning of the semester for each respective class.

Student Questionnaire

During the penultimate week of the semester students were given a take-home style questionnaire regarding their writing habits and strategies, and their attitudes and impressions concerning intensive writing in their Spanish class and concerning the Writing-Intensive requirement overall. The questionnaire is displayed in Appendix B.

Section I: Personal Information

Section I of the questionnaire, entitled “Personal Information”, essentially assesses differences between the subjects of the study by requesting information concerning sex, age, name, class, teacher, year in school, major and minor, other current and past Spanish classes taken, other current and past writing-intensive courses taken outside the Department of Spanish and Portuguese Studies, time spent abroad in a Spanish-speaking country, perceived ability of writing in English, and reason for taking Spanish courses at the University of Minnesota.

Section II: Personal Writing Strategies

Section II of the questionnaire, entitled Personal Writing Strategies, asks students to assess what types of strategies they use in their writing and how frequently. This section inquires about brainstorming and informal notetaking activities, outlining, planning of various kinds, drafting and revising, translation versus direct writing, use of the Spanish Writing Center, use of Spanish Spell Check, consultation with teacher or Spanish-speaking friends, and focus on grammar issues, rhetorical issues, or the content of the writing.

Section III: Personal Experience with Writing in Spanish

Section III of the questionnaire is an adaptation of Daly and Miller’s (1975) writing apprehension survey (WAS), a Likert-type scale that measures a writer’s anxiety about writing, and was adapted for use in the present study by adding the phrase “in Spanish” to

each question. Hence, Daly and Miller's question "I avoid writing", for example, became "I avoid writing *in Spanish*". As shown in Chapter 2, the literature review, the writing apprehension survey is still commonly used and accepted in the literature on writing apprehension (Cheng et al. 1999, Cornwell and McKay 2000, Lee 2002, Cheng 2002 and 2004).

Section IV: Your Current "Writing-Intensive" Course

Section IV, entitled "Your Current 'Writing-Intensive' Course," is adapted from Beason and Darrow's (1997) Writing Enhanced Curriculum (WEC) Questionnaire that assessed students' attitudes about Writing-Across-the-Curriculum. I divided Section IV into three sections so as to focus specifically on a given research question. Therefore, Section IV-A assesses students' feelings about their overall writing ability, Section IV-B addresses students' learning of their course subject matter, and Section IV-C deals with their learning of the Spanish language. Thus, in each individual section Beason and Darrow's questions concerning such factors as feedback, revision, essay exams, short and long writing assignments, grading, and teacher guided preparation for writing.

Section V: The Writing-Intensive Requirement

Finally, Section V of the questionnaire included 7 open-ended questions meant to elicit students' feelings about the purpose of the writing-intensive requirement at the University of Minnesota, and the value and/or disadvantages thereof for a student of Spanish.

- A.** *In your opinion, what is the purpose and value of the writing-intensive requirement at the University of Minnesota?*
- B.** *Specifically from the perspective of a Spanish student, what is the value of the writing-intensive requirement to you?*
- C.** *From the perspective of a student of Spanish, what do you most dislike about the writing-intensive requirement at the University of Minnesota?*
- D.** *How does the writing-intensive requirement at the University of Minnesota affect you as a student of Spanish differently from other students throughout the University?*
- E.** *What do you like most about Spanish classes that involve intensive writing?*
- F.** *What do you most dislike about Spanish classes that involve intensive writing?*
- G.** *When you write a paper in Spanish, what would you say is the single most important thing you gain from doing so (i.e. greater knowledge of the subject about which you wrote, improved overall writing ability, improved Spanish grammar, vocabulary, etc.)?*

Focus Groups

Two focus groups regarding the Writing-Intensive requirement at the University of Minnesota and students' participation in a Writing-Intensive Spanish class were held during the week of Final Exams. The first focus group was held on May 7th and the second focus group was held on May 8th, of 2001. For the first focus group, 5 of the 6 students who had signed up to participate were present. Of these 5, 2 were female and 3 were male. In addition, 4 of the participants (3 males and 1 female) were students in the culture course (Spanish 3105W), and 1 of the students (a female) was a student in the literature course (Spanish 3104W). For the second focus group, 7 of the 8 students who

had signed up to participate were present. Of these 7, 4 were female and 3 were male. Additionally, 4 of these participants (all female) were students in the culture course, and 3 (all male) of the participants were students in the literature course.

A third focus group was held after the week of final exams, on May 30th, 2001, but only 2 of the 3 recruited students participated, both of whom, a male and a female, were students in the Spanish 3104 course. While 2 participants are clearly not ideal for the focus group dynamic, a focus-group-style interview was nevertheless realized and pertinent and worthwhile data collected. A qualitative analysis of the focus group data will be used to address all four of the study's research questions. Appendix C contains the Focus Group Guide generally followed in each of the sessions.

I have chosen the focus group as a vehicle of data collection because of its unique potential for producing very fruitful qualitative data. Different from one-on-one interviews where only one set of opinions and experiences is revealed, the focus group provides an intimate setting wherein individuals may express their opinions, feelings and experiences with others of like mind, or at the very least, possessing a common experience.

Analysis of the Data

In the present section, I discuss specifically how the various data collections were analyzed in an effort to answer the research questions of the present study. Therefore, in this section I discuss analysis of the Writing Apprehension Survey (Daly and Miller 1975) (Section III, "Personal Experience with Writing in Spanish" of the Student Questionnaire) and the WEC Questionnaire (Beason and Darrow 1997) (Section IV,

“Your current ‘writing-intensive’ class” of the Student Questionnaire). I also discuss analysis of the pre- and post-write samples for the study, including the Error-per-T-Unit accuracy analysis and the topical structure coherence analysis. Finally, I discuss specifically how the qualitative data collected for the study were analyzed, including both Section V, “The Writing-Intensive Requirement,” the open-ended question section of the Student Questionnaire and the student focus groups.

Analysis of the Writing Apprehension Survey

The Writing Apprehension Survey (WAS) (Daly and Miller 1975) was used to assign a numeric score to each student, indicative of their anxiety about writing in Spanish. Daly and Miller originally derived their WAS scores utilizing the following formula:

$$78 + \text{negative statements} - \text{positive statements}$$

The original survey developed by Daly and Miller (1975) contained a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 = “strongly agree”, 2 = “agree”, 3 = “uncertain”, 4 = “disagree” and 5 = “strongly disagree”. However, as per recommendations by Reed et al. (1988) and procedures followed subsequently by Pajares and Johnson (1994), the Likert scale used for the Writing Apprehension Survey in the present study contained no “uncertain” response so as to avoid the potential for “faulty group placement or inaccurate total apprehension scores” (Reed et al., 1988, 2). However, given the elimination of the “uncertain” response and, therefore, the employment of a 4-point rather than a 5-point

Likert-type scale, calculations for the present study were realized from a starting point of 65, or the mean of the highest possible score of 104 and the lowest possible score of 26. Hence, $(26 + 104)/2 = 65$ was the formula employed in calculation of writing apprehension scores.

Analysis of the WEC Questionnaire

Section IV of the Student Questionnaire, “Your Current ‘Writing-Intensive’ Class”, elicits students’ perceptions regarding their learning in the WI class. The survey employed for the present study is an adaptation of Beason and Darrow’s (1997) survey which elicited English L1 students’ perceptions regarding their learning in the L1 WI classroom. Specifically, Beason and Darrow inquired about students’ perceptions of the learning of course content and writing ability as a result of engaging in various “writing-to-learn” activities in the WI class. For the purposes of the present study, I adapted the survey to inquire about students’ perceptions of their learning of the Spanish language as well.

Students were asked to respond “strongly agree”, “agree”, “did not do this”, “disagree” or “strongly disagree” to the statements in the instrument. Though the adapted survey employed in the present study included all eleven of Beason and Darrow’s questions, for the purposes of addressing Research Question 3 of the present study, I have only included results for their first item, which states the following:

Overall, my [writing ability / understanding of the subject matter / knowledge of the Spanish language] was improved by doing the writing assignments (such as 1-page summaries, 3-4 page papers, essay exams, etc.) in this class.

Moreover, as did Beason and Darrow in their study, I have specifically counted and report in Chapter 4 students' responses of "agree" or "strongly agree" to this item, thus enabling me to compare results for the present study of students of Spanish-as-FL with results from Beason and Darrow's English L1 study.

Error per T-Unit Accuracy Analysis

Regarding the E/T-unit analysis, Wolfe-Quintero et al. (1998) note that it "appear[s] to be related to holistic ratings and short-term change in intact classes" which clearly describes the setting in which the present research was carried out. For this reason, I chose to employ the E/T-unit accuracy analysis. As noted above, students were asked to write essays both at the beginning and end of the semester. The samples were then submitted to the E/T-unit analysis to determine whether any sort of improvement in grammatical accuracy had occurred during the writing-intensive semester. Writing samples were first divided into T-units utilizing Schneider and Connor's (1992) criteria, which can be viewed in Appendix G of this document. Thereafter, the E/T-unit analysis was performed following Polio's (1997) guidelines for the error analysis, which can be viewed in Appendix C. After dividing the writing samples into T-units and counting the total number of errors in each, I calculated an E/T-unit figure by dividing the total number of errors by the total number of T-units in each writing sample. Following the calculation of the E/T-unit index, a two-tailed t-test was employed to determine whether significant improvement in linguistic accuracy had taken place from pre- to post-write assignments during the course of the semester.

Additionally, it is vital to note here that in order to ensure the overall consistency of the E/T-unit analysis, a second rater, a professor of Spanish at a small, liberal arts college with extensive experience in the assessment of writing, was recruited to assess 20%, or some 11, of the total of 48 writing samples. In order to do this, the co-rater and I first met for about an hour to review the error classifications in the error guidelines adapted from Polio (1997) and practiced rating various writing samples together in order to ensure that both of us were clear about the guidelines. Following this training period, we rated the 11 writing samples separately and then came back together to compare our results. A Pearson Correlation statistic was computed for ratings by both raters and was 0.945 ($p < 0.01$), which indicates good interrater reliability. Furthermore, where there was disagreement on whether to assess an item as an error or not, we discussed the item and came to a consensus and final decision together. Having established an acceptable level of interrater reliability, I alone completed the accuracy analysis for the remaining 37 writing samples.

Topical Structure Coherence Analysis

Topical structure analysis of the pre- and post-write samples from the semester-long study was performed to determine whether significant improvement in writers' coherence had taken place during the semester. Given their detailed explanations of methodologies used and in light of the fact that their analysis was on L2 data, I utilized Schneider and Connor's (1992) guidelines for TSA analysis, which can be viewed in Appendix D of the present document. I also adopted Schneider and Connor's definition of "improvement",

as more frequent use of sequential progression in the writing samples. After performing the topical structure analysis and calculating the total number of parallel, sequential and extended parallel progressions in both the pre- and post-write samples, a two-tailed t-test was also employed to determine whether a significant increase in the employment of sequential progressions took place during the course of the semester.

To ensure consistency in the rating, which included selection of T-unit topics and, later, determination of topical progressions in the writing samples, a second rater was recruited for assessment of approximately 20% of the writing samples. The rater was a professor of Spanish at a small, liberal arts college with extensive experience in writing assessment. The procedure for rating the samples was two-tiered. The written samples had already been divided into t-units for the E/T-unit accuracy analysis described above. The TSA analysis, therefore, entailed the identification of each t-unit's topic and, thereafter, the decision as to whether progressions from t-unit to t-unit were "parallel", "sequential" or "extended parallel".

In preparation for the TSA co-rating I prepared a 6 page document, entitled "Topical Structure Analysis Training Guidelines," which included instructions for both t-unit topic selection and assessment of progression type. The document included examples of my own making as well as from Noh (1985), Schneider and Connor (1990) and Wu (1997) and is included here in Appendix E. Part B of the document specifically explains topic selection and the co-rater and I spent around an hour reviewing the procedures and then underlined topics on some practice t-units included in the document. Following this exercise we examined two writing samples from the present study and

practiced topic selection together in an effort to ensure consistency between raters.

Thereafter, we performed topic selection on 10 writing samples separately and then came back together to compare results. Of 236 t-units in the 10 writing samples, we agreed on 205, yielding an acceptable though not optimal interrater reliability of 86.86%. Where we disagreed on the topic of a given t-unit, the co-rater and I explained our reasoning for our individual decision and then came to a consensus and final decision for each t-unit's topic.

Following topic selection, the co-rater and I examined Part C of the "Topical Structure Analysis Training Guidelines" document, which clearly explains how to establish topic progressions in a writing sample. For the actual progression analysis, I created a template which facilitated diagramming of the topic progressions in the written samples. An example of a completed TSA progression analysis is included in Appendix F. For the topical progression analysis, we two raters were in agreement on 212 of 228, or 92.98%, of the total progressions – an acceptable level of interrater reliability. Again, where there was disagreement as to the progression, we discussed our individual decisions and came to a consensus. Following the co-rating, I proceeded to assess the topical progression in the remaining writing samples.

Qualitative Data Analysis

As noted earlier, both qualitative and quantitative methods have been employed to collect data for the present study. The qualitative data include results from student focus groups and from Section V ("The Writing-intensive requirement") of the Student Questionnaire.

Responses to the open-ended questions of Section V of the Student Questionnaire were transcribed for analysis. Also, the focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed, resulting in some 30,000 words or some 73 pages of text.

Following transcription, the data were initially analyzed using Qualrus, a software program meant to facilitate the analysis of qualitative data for recurring themes.

However, though this initial coding of the data provided an excellent overview of the data and a meaningful first exposure for the researcher to what the data contained, it was, nevertheless, determined that this preliminary analysis was insufficient in terms of finding meaningful and intuitive themes in the data. As a result, the data were re-analyzed manually following the methodology described by Foss and Waters (2007).

To perform the analysis of the qualitative data, therefore, I first color-coded all of the data, by drawing a line down the right side of each page to signify both the date and the specific source of the qualitative data. Then, I carefully re-read all of the transcriptions, pencil in hand. As I came across a statement containing a meaningful theme pertinent to the research questions of the present study, I bracketed that thought with my pencil and then wrote a specific code indicative of the message of the comment next to the comment, as well as the page number of the document wherein the comment appears. Each bracketed and coded theme I considered to be a “unit of analysis” (Foss and Waters 2007, 188) or, what Perpignan et al (2007) have termed a “response unit”, the title for such units which I will use throughout the rest of this study. In cases where a specific comment from the data constituted more than one theme of import to the research questions of this study, multiple codes were written in.

Following coding of the entire data set in this manner, I went through each page of the transcriptions and cut out with scissors each one of the bracketed and coded response units. Moreover, in those cases where a specific response unit had been assigned more than one code, I made multiple copies of the respective unit. Following cutting out and, where necessary, copying of the response units, I began to sort the excerpts from the transcriptions into piles. As a pile gained more than three excerpts I would label the pile with the common code by placing a sticky note above the pile. Moreover, as a pile grew larger, as Foss and Waters (193) recommend, I would pause for a moment and reconsider the excerpts in the pile and decide whether more than one theme had emerged from the pile and, if so, divide out those quotes representative of a unique theme and label them appropriately with a sticky note. Moreover, throughout this process I kept a pile labeled “Don’t know” into which I placed excerpts about whose placement I was as yet unsure. I continually reexamined the “Don’t know” pile and as multiple common threads emerged from that pile, I would create a new pile based on a common thread.

After all response units had been assigned to a pile, as per Foss and Waters’ recommendations, I went through the piles again to be sure that “all of the codes on the excerpts in each pile [were] relevant to the label [I’d] given it” (194). As necessary, therefore, response units were moved from given piles and new piles with different labels were formed until all I felt that the piles were appropriately divided. In the end there were some response units that were not assigned to piles and those were set aside for possible use in later research. Piles of pertinent response units were then placed into

envelopes and then assigned to one of 5 categories, representing various aspects of the research questions for the study, which included: 1. Perceptions regarding the WI requirement at the University of Minnesota; 2. Perceptions regarding the intensive writing in the WI Spanish course; 3. Writing to learn course content; 4. Writing to learn to write; and 5. Writing to learn the Spanish language.

Following sorting of the piles into their respective categories, I then went through each individual pile in each respective category and reviewed each pile for the presence of what Bigelow (in press) has termed “intensifiers”. In other words, I looked for words or phrases that intensified or made more emphatic a specific response unit. Examples of words or phrases that I considered to cause a response unit to be more emphatic might be adverbs such as “very”, “really”, “totally” and “absolutely” or phrases such as “without a doubt” or, in the case of responses in Section V of the Student Questionnaire where the data were given in written form, I considered such things as an exclamation point “!” or underlining of a phrase to be an intensifier of the response unit wherein they appeared. Additionally, I considered the repetition of an adjective or other descriptor to be indicative of an emphatic phrase as in the comment: “Long, long papers.”

Hence, the total number of response units per a given theme was tallied as well as the number of those response units containing an intensifying word or phrase and latter number was divided by the former number, yielding a percentage of excerpts containing an intensifier and, it was hoped, indicating the emotion or fervor with which the sentiment in the response units was expressed. Finally, in tallying the response units of the respective themes, no theme having less than 6 response units was deemed to be of

significant size for inclusion in the report of these data that follows in Chapter 4, unless those response units contained intensifiers.

Perception versus Attitude

Research Question #1 of this study asks about students' "perceptions" and "attitudes" regarding the WI requirement at the university and the intensive writing in their Spanish courses. Hence, though in reporting results pertaining to that question I do not steadfastly delineate between which responses are "perceptions" and which are "attitudes", I believe, nonetheless, that it will be of value to clarify what those two terms mean for the present analysis.

Larsen's definitions of "perception" and "feeling" in his 2003 study of ESL and basic writers' beliefs about academic writing are extremely helpful. To clarify, it should be understood that in the present study that which I refer to as "attitudes" is seen as the equivalent of Larsen's term "feelings". Larsen states that "perceptions" are more "cognitive" in nature and are typically viewed by participants "at a personal distance" (57). On the other hand, Larsen explains that "feelings" (or in the present study, "attitudes") are considered to be more "affective" in nature and express "the part of writing more connected to the 'self'" (57).

More specifically, Larsen gives the following explanation of perceptions:

This part of the students' responses and comments from the interviews is related to their awareness of academic writing as a general concept and its particular features of importance. The responses in this area reflect their cognitive ability or knowledge of composition as something removed from their own "selves." In other words, it is looking at writing as something

from which they have a certain personal distance. It exists as a topic or subject area in itself. (64-5)

On the other hand, Larsen offers the following clarification of “feelings” (attitudes):

As opposed to perceptions, this area of the students’ responses in the interviews focuses on their affective reactions. This indicates something to which they express some level of personal and emotional attachment, mainly relating very much to their own writing and abilities. In other words, “connected to the self” rather than “personal distance.” (65)

Hence, to summarize, in the present study as in Larsen’s study, “perceptions” are seen as students’ “cognitive” understanding of the WI requirement and the intensive writing in their courses as viewed from a personal distance. A hypothetical example of a student’s “perception” regarding the WI requirement at the University of Minnesota, therefore, might be expressed in a statement such as the following: “The WI requirement is meant to help students become better writers for their future professions.” This statement may clearly be considered a “perception” inasmuch as it shows little affective attachment to the student. It is cognitive in nature and seems to be stated at a personal distance.

On the other hand, “attitudes” (feelings) in the present study are seen as students’ “affective” connection to the WI requirement and the intensive writing in their courses as related closely to the “self”. A hypothetical example of a statement which may be seen as expressing “attitude” would be the following: “I hate writing because it keeps me up all night worrying about it every time I have to write a paper in Spanish.” This statement expresses a students’ “attitude” about writing inasmuch as it is clearly connected to the “self” and expresses the strong (affective) emotion of “hate”.

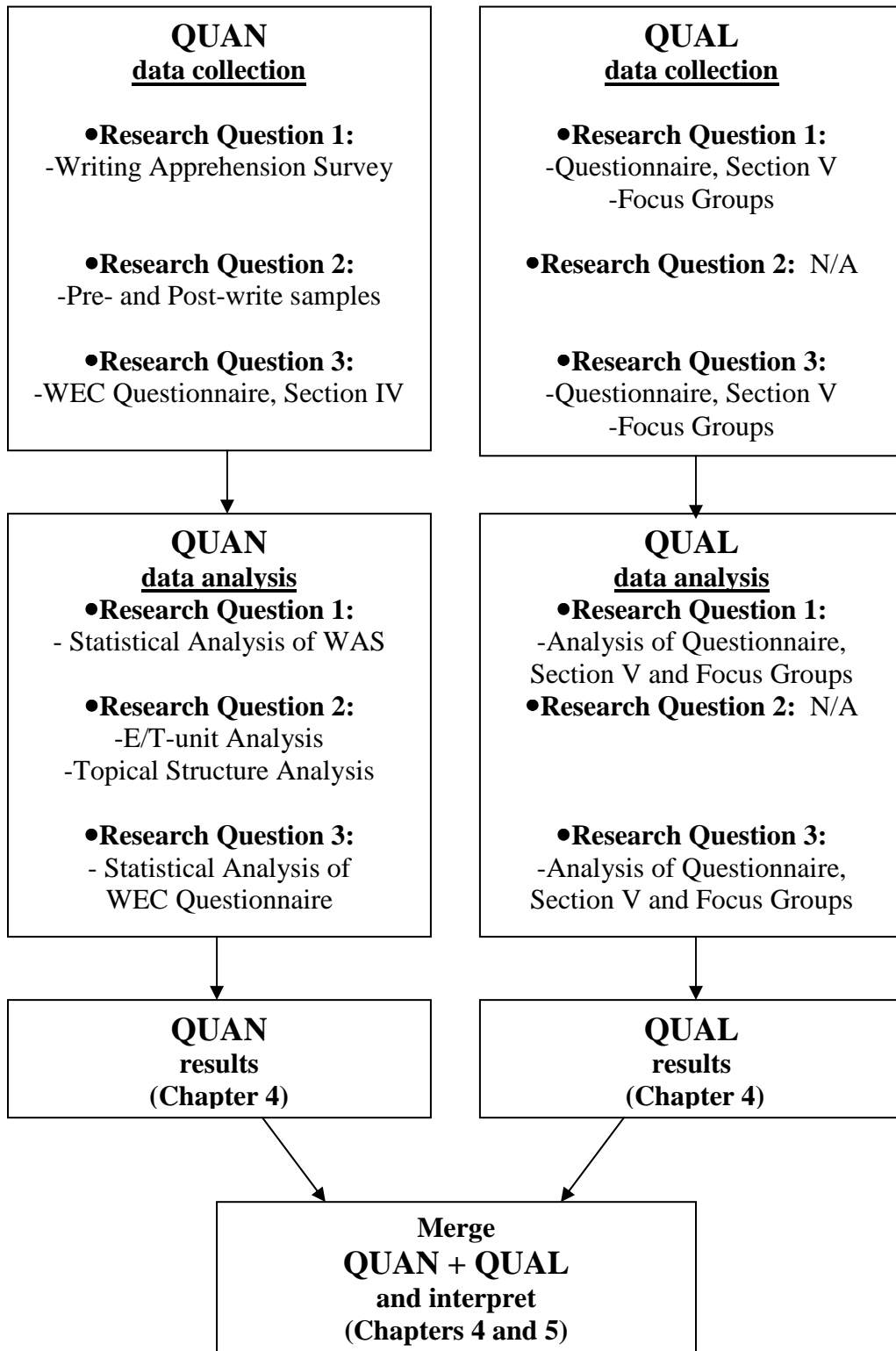
Summary of Methodology for Answering the Research Questions

To close this discussion of the methodology, methods and circumstances surrounding the realization of the present study, in this section I will articulate and summarize specifically how the aforementioned research instruments were utilized in answering the three research questions of the study. Moreover, in order to fully clarify the proposed research methodology for the reader, in figure 3.1 below I have provided a diagram, adapted from Plano Clark and Creswell (2008), which illustrates the application of the aforementioned instrumentation and analyses in answering the research questions of the study.

Hence, in answering Research Question 1, the quantitative instrument used is the Writing Apprehension Survey (Daly and Miller 1975) and the qualitative data are taken from Section V of the Student Questionnaire and from the student focus groups. To answer Research Question 2, no qualitative data were employed but the Errors-per-T-unit Analysis and Topical Structure Analysis quantitative instruments were employed. Finally, to answer Research Question 3, the quantitative instrument used was the WEC Questionnaire (Beason and Darrow 1997), included in Section IV of the Student Questionnaire, and the qualitative instruments, as with Research Question 1, were Section V of the Student Questionnaire and the student focus groups.

Following collection of data via these quantitative and qualitative instruments, the data were analyzed as described in this chapter and the results will be presented in Chapter 4. Finally, the data will be merged and interpreted concurrent with presentation of the data in Chapter 4 and in the conclusions and discussions sections to be included thereafter in Chapter 5 of the present document.

Figure 3.1 Application of Instrumentation in Answering Research Questions of the Present Study (adapted from Plano Clark and Creswell 2008).



CHAPTER 4

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

This chapter provides results of the data collection and analysis in response to the research questions of the study. The chapter is organized sequentially by research question, beginning with Research Question 1.

Results for Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asks the following:

What attitudes and perceptions do L2 Spanish students in WI Spanish courses have about the WI requirement at the University and the intensive writing component in the course?

This section provides results found in answer to this research question. I first provide results for the Writing Apprehension Survey (WAS). Thereafter, I discuss results concerning students' attitudes and perceptions regarding the WI requirement at the University of Minnesota followed by results regarding students' attitudes and perceptions of the intensive writing in their course. For each of these subsections, I first give results

from the pertinent open-ended questions in Section V of the Student Questionnaire, followed by results from the three focus groups.

Results of Writing Apprehension Survey (WAS)

As I showed in Chapter 2 of this study, writing apprehension is a well-documented phenomenon among student writers in higher education. It seems appropriate, therefore, that an initial consideration of research question 1 include an examination of how FL students actually feel about writing in a foreign language. Hence, as I noted in Chapter 3, an adapted Writing Apprehension Survey (WAS) (Daly and Miller 1975) was employed to ascertain if and to what degree the students in the study feel apprehension about writing in a foreign language. Section III, “Personal Experience with Writing in Spanish” of the Student Questionnaire is, therefore, a version of Daly and Miller’s (1975) WAS, adapted to specifically consider FL students’ apprehension regarding writing in the FL.

The Writing Apprehension Survey (WAS) scores were derived by the following formula:

$$65 + \text{negative statements} - \text{positive statements}$$

There are a total of 26 questions on the survey, 13 of which are deemed “positive statements” regarding a respondent’s experience with writing and 13 of which are deemed “negative statements” regarding the respondent’s writing experience. “Negative statements” in the Writing Apprehension Survey (WAS) included items 2, 3, 6, 9, 10, 11,

12, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20 and 23, and “positive statements” include items 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 13, 16, 18, 21, 22, 24, 25 and 26. The mean result for all students taking the WAS was 66.65 (SD = 17.08).

Table 4.1 provides comparative results from the present study and from that of Pajares and Johnson (1994) which studied L1 English writers. This study is included here for comparison inasmuch as those researchers also followed the recommendation of Reed et al. (1988) to reduce the 5-point Likert scale to 4 points by eliminating the “uncertain” response.⁹ Inasmuch as Pajares and Johnson do not include the complete data for the WAS results in their study, no statistical comparisons were performed between the two studies, however it is of interest to note here that mean results for the L2 Spanish learners in the present study are higher (66.65), or indicative of more

Present Study (N=23)	Pajares and Johnson (1994) (N=30)	
<u>Mean</u>	<u>Pre-test mean</u>	<u>Post-test mean</u>
66.65	63.77	60.90

apprehensive writers, than for both pre- (63.77) and post-test (60.90) mean results for L1 English writers in Pajares and Johnson. It is noteworthy that the WAS scores for the present study were a post-test (end of semester) measure. In other words, students tested in the present study took the WAS following a writing-intensive semester. Therefore,

⁹ Reed et al. (1988) suggested that by eliminating the “uncertain” response from the 5-point Likert scale, greater reliability would be maintained. See Chapter 3 for a more detailed description of this adjustment.

perhaps the most meaningful comparison here is between the present study's post-test mean result (66.65) and Pajares and Johnson's post study mean result (60.90). Though no comparative statistical analysis are possible here since I do not have access to Pajares and Johnson's complete data set, these results suggest that students writing in a foreign language may indeed be more apprehensive of that writing than English L1 writers writing in English. Clearly, more research on the matter is merited.

Perceptions and Attitudes regarding WI and IW

In the present section I will address findings from the qualitative data regarding students' perceptions and attitudes concerning first, the writing-intensive (WI) requirement at the University of Minnesota and second, the intensive writing (IW) in which students were engaged during their WI Spanish course. A total of 7 themes, including some 16 sub-themes were gleaned from the open-ended question section (Section V) of the student questionnaire and from the focus group transcriptions regarding these two topics. The themes and their respective sub-themes will be introduced and discussed in the following sections. Additionally, and prior to reviewing findings specific to the WI requirement and the IW in the students' course, I include immediately below a discussion of a topic common to both and which resulted as one of the most common themes in all of the qualitative data, that of workload.

Workload: Special Mention

Before discussion of more specifics regarding students' attitudes and perceptions regarding the WI requirement and the intensive writing (IW) in their Spanish courses, the topic of workload merits special mention. Though later in this chapter I will more specifically address the topic of workload as it relates to the WI requirement and IW in the course, it is important to note from the outset that this theme was clearly one of the most common and most intensely expressed themes in the entire qualitative corpus. Indeed, there were a total of 25 response units regarding students complaints about the extreme nature of the workload associated with the writing-intensive requirement and, specifically, with the intensive writing in the WI Spanish course, and of those 25 a huge majority, or some 18 (fully 72%!), were expressed with an intensifying word or phrase. Examples of this come from Section V, the open-ended questions section of the student questionnaire, in response to the question, "What do you most dislike about Spanish classes that involve intensive writing?"

There is lots of writing!

Long, long papers.

It takes a lot of time for me to produce a paper in Spanish...

The workload!

Hence, an extremely important and prevalent finding of the present study is that students find intensive writing to be just what it claims to be – intensive – and, generally speaking, they are not very happy about it. As I noted earlier, I will discuss the issue of workload more fully and more specifically as a perception of students regarding the writing-

intensive requirement and regarding the intensive writing they perform in their WI classes.

Perceptions and Attitudes Regarding the WI Requirement

This section provides results from data collected by the qualitative instruments employed for the study regarding the students' attitudes and perceptions about the Writing-Intensive requirement at the University of Minnesota. Instruments used to collect these data included Section V of the Student Questionnaire, which asked open-ended questions regarding the writing-intensive requirement as well as the three student focus groups. The findings are presented below divided into the following three themes: 1. The purpose of the WI Requirement, including the perception that the WI requirement is, not surprisingly, to improve students' writing, and the belief that writing is indeed an important skill to learn; 2. Workload and the WI requirement, including the students' belief that the workload is just too much and that they end up taking more "WI" courses than necessary; and 3. WI in Spanish vs. WI in English, which includes the students' general perception that writing in Spanish is harder than writing in English although, ironically, some students believe that the WI requirement is not harder for students majoring in Spanish than for students in other non-foreign-language majors, and the belief that the WI requirement is actually more valuable for students enrolled in foreign language majors like Spanish than for students in other non-FL majors.

Table 4.2 provides the number of response units and portion of intensifiers for each emerging from the qualitative data regarding the abovementioned perceptions with

regards to the writing-intensive requirement at the University of Minnesota. As shown there, with regards to the purpose of the WI requirement, some 21 responses indicated, not unexpectedly, that its main value is to help students improve in their writing ability.

Table 4.2 Themes emerging from qualitative data regarding students' perceptions and attitudes concerning WI requirement.

Themes	Intensifiers/No. of response units (%)
1. Purpose of the WI requirement:	
A. Purpose is to improve writing	0/21 (0%)
B. Writing is an important skill	3/6 (50.0%)
2. Workload and the WI requirement:	
A. Workload is too much	5/7 (71.4%)
B. We take too many "WI" courses in Spanish major	7/13 (53.9%)
3. WI in Spanish vs. WI in English:	
A. Writing in Spanish is harder than writing in English	7/18 (38.9%)
B. WI requirement is <u>not</u> harder for Spanish students	0/17 (0%)
C. WI requirement is more valuable for Spanish majors	2/6 (33.3%)

However, none of these response units, or 0 %, were expressed with any sort of intensifier. In addition to this finding, six students mentioned that not only is the improvement of writing the main purpose of the WI requirement, but also that writing is a very important skill to learn. Moreover, 3 of the 6 students, or half, who stated that writing is an important skill to learn, did so emphatically.

With regards to results surrounding students' beliefs concerning workload and the WI requirement at the university, table 4.2 shows that while only 7 students expressed this specifically, fully 5, or 71.4% of them did so emphatically. Additionally, 13 students expressed their belief that in the end, Spanish majors take too many so-deemed "WI" courses and fully 7 of those respondents, or 53.9%, did so with some sort of intensifying marker.

Finally, as pertaining to WI in Spanish versus WI in English, table 4.2 shows that three main themes emerged from the qualitative data. First, some 18 response units were counted which conveyed the belief that writing in Spanish is harder than writing in English, and 7 of those, or 38.9%, were conveyed with an intensifying word or phrase. On the other hand, ironically, some 17 response units emerged stating that the WI requirement of the university is actually not harder for Spanish students, though none of those 17 were expressed emphatically. Finally, the belief that the WI requirement is actually more valuable for students majoring in Spanish than for students from other non-FL majors, was expressed 6 times in the qualitative data, 2 of which, or 33.3%, were expressed with an intensifier.

In the sections that follow I discuss more thoroughly each one of the themes shown in table 4.2 that emerged from the qualitative data regarding students' perceptions and attitudes concerning the WI requirement at the University of Minnesota. Hence, I will give specific examples of response units emerging from the data and, where possible, will attempt to tie the theme to topics and theories emerging from previous literature on the topic.

The Purpose of the WI requirement

This section provides a more thorough review of students' beliefs and perceptions emerging from the qualitative data for the present study regarding the purpose and value of the WI requirement at the University of Minnesota. Specifically, two themes emerged from the data, including the students' feeling that the purpose of the WI requirement is to teach students to be better writers and the belief that writing is indeed an important skill. I give examples of each emerging from the qualitative data for the study. I would note, here, as well, that very little has been done specifically in the literature on L2 writing in terms of WI requirements at colleges and universities across North America, such that there is little previous data with which to compare and within which to situate results from the present study. Nevertheless, I submit these results as extremely interesting to the specific institutional context of the present study.

The purpose of the WI requirement is to improve writing. The most recurring finding regarding the purpose of the WI requirement at the University of Minnesota was, not surprisingly, that it was meant to help students to be better writers. Though this sentiment was never expressed with an intensifying word or phrase, indeed some 21 response units stating this point emerged from the qualitative data. Examples of response units stating this belief come especially from the open-ended section, Section V, of the Student Questionnaire, and specifically from question A, which quite directly asks students "In your opinion, what is the purpose and value of the writing-intensive

requirement at the University of Minnesota?” Examples of responses to this question include the following:

It provides the university a chance to insure that as graduates we know how to express our ideas in writing. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question A)

I believe the purpose is to help students become better writers by making them write more frequently. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question A)

To try to ensure that university graduates are competent writers.

The purpose is for the student to improve their writing skills – coherence, organization, vocab., etc. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question A)

To allow students to gain the skills needed to create, present and formulate their ideas in an intelligent, cohesive manner. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question A)

To help students learn how to organize their thoughts and put them together in a coherent manner. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question A)

While it is not surprising that so many students believe the value of the WI requirement to be that it helps students to become better writers, it is nevertheless important to observe that students in the Spanish major herein surveyed have an understanding of the requirement at the University of Minnesota, which, for the most part, aligns with the university’s self-stated purpose for the requirement that “WI courses provide opportunities for [students] to improve [their] writing through assignments that help [them] learn both the course material and the way scholars in various fields write and think,” and that “these courses offer [them] an environment to develop ... greater facility and confidence in [their] writing” (University of Minnesota 2004, 34).

Writing is an important skill. An additional finding emerging from the data was that not only is the WI requirement to help students become better writers, but that that skill is an important one to learn. While comprising only six response units, it is noteworthy that three of those response units, or 50%, were given emphatically. Furthermore, it is clear from the responses given regarding this topic that the students believe that writing is important more specifically as a skill for their professional life and the acquisition of future employment. Indeed, 5 of the 6 response units centered on this more practical application of writing skill. Examples of comments expressing this belief include the following:

The purpose of the writing-intensive requirement is to ensure that graduates are capable of quality writing, which is a very important skill in this world. (Student Questionnaire, Question A)

Writing is a very important skill, I think, in any workplace or any walk of life. To be able to communicate well, writing. (Focus Group, 5/08/01)

Writing is an important skill, no matter what you do, so, the university wants everybody to have, you know, at least a minimum, you know, level of competence when they get their degree from here. (Focus Group, 5/08/01)

It is fascinating, therefore, that while the university sees writing from a perhaps more lofty perspective – that of learning more effectively in their academic courses (see University of Minnesota 2004, 34) – the students seem to believe the WI requirement has the more practical application of getting them a better job when they graduate.

Workload and the WI requirement

As I noted earlier, one of the most recurring themes to emerge from the qualitative data was that of workload. Indeed, students surveyed for the present study seem to concur that the WI requirement entails a daunting amount of work. Additionally, moreover, the present study explored specifically how students majoring in Spanish felt about the WI requirement at the university, and found the intriguing trend that students feel they do too much writing in the Spanish major. I discuss these results in the following two sections.

WI workload is too heavy. As table 4.2 illustrates, students expressed the belief that the workload associated with the WI requirement is too heavy 7 times in the qualitative corpus. Moreover, of those 7 response units, fully 5, or a whopping 71.4%, were expressed emphatically. Examples of comments stating that the WI requirement is too workload-heavy include the following:

It gives me too much work to do. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question B)

It is too large a requirement. Fewer classes would be nice. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question C)

While very little research on students' beliefs regarding WI requirements appears in the literature on writing, and even less so regarding those of L2 students, the above comments, to be sure, concur, at the very least, with what previous researchers have observed about the difficult nature of the writing process. As Bruce Ballenger, author of *The Curious Writer* (2005), has observed regarding his own experience with writing:

When I was in college I used to say this to anyone who asked how I felt about writing: *I don't like writing but I love having written*. What I meant, of course, is that I often felt satisfaction with the product of writing—the paper or essay—but didn't like the work that it took to produce it. (34)

Some college students may not even feel satisfaction about the final product of their writing, as did Ballenger during his undergraduate days. However, the author's words do seem to encapsulate findings from the present study regarding students' beliefs about the WI requirement: “[they don't] like the work that it [takes].”

Too many “writing-intensive” courses. I set apart “writing-intensive” in the heading to this section for good reason. I do so because some 13 response units, 7 of which were expressed emphatically, emerged from the qualitative data stating the sentiment that the WI requirement demands that in the end Spanish majors do too much writing. This perception brings us to perhaps a core issue with regards to WI requirements at colleges and universities across North America: For some academic majors, such as those housed in the sciences, the WI requirement is somewhat less intuitive than for other majors, such as those in the modern languages or, indeed, English. In other words, the response units here observed imply that when all is said and done, *every* class in the Spanish major is “writing-intensive”. In fact, in my discussions with the instructor of the SPAN 3104 course, she flatly stated that she would teach the course as “writing-intensive” even if it were not so deemed by the university, because that is the way she teaches. This may not be true, on the other hand, for an instructor in the biology major. Indeed, including intensive writing in a class in the sciences is perhaps less intuitive since, historically, little writing has been required in those majors. Hence, only those science classes deemed by

the university as “writing-intensive” typically include intensive writing. On the other hand, for the Spanish major the complaint by the students in the present study emerges that they end up taking too many “writing-intensive” courses in the Spanish major. Examples from the qualitative data expressing this sentiment were especially common in responses to Question C of Section V from the Student Questionnaire, which asks the following: “From the perspective of a student of Spanish, what do you most dislike about the writing-intensive requirement at the University of Minnesota? Examples of responses include the following:

The requirement does seem a little ridiculous... – from my perspective all of my classes are work intensive. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question C)

Many of my classes for my major are writing-intensive, so I feel I have taken more writing classes than I need. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question C)

That you don't have a choice whether you can take a class W-I or not, i.e. you end up taking way more W-I classes than you need to take. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question C)

Since this requirement was instated, it's almost impossible to find a class that is NOT writing intensive. The requirement doesn't take into account the unique situation of a foreign language major. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question C)

Therefore, the establishment of a WI requirement at the University of Minnesota, at least, appears to have the ironic and, I assume, unwanted effect of causing students, who believe that they already do large amounts of writing in their major, to believe that they are doing too much writing as a result of the requirement and, indeed, that they are doing more than other students in other academic majors across the curriculum. Said one student, “I dislike that as Spanish students we seem to get punished because we end up

doing MUCH more than the writing-intensive requirement for CLA actually asks for” (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question C).

WI in Spanish versus WI in English

Another subset of themes that emerge from the qualitative data regarding the WI requirement, center on students’ beliefs about the differences between writing in Spanish, their L2, and writing in English, their L1. Themes of interest that emerge from the qualitative data relevant to this opposition, include the belief that writing in Spanish is harder than writing in English but, ironically, that the WI requirement is not necessarily harder for students majoring in Spanish than for students in other non-FL majors and, moreover, that the WI requirement is actually more valuable for FL majors than for other majors. I discuss these results below.

Writing in Spanish is harder than writing in English. A finding from the analysis of the qualitative data is that many students believe that writing in a FL, in this case Spanish, is more difficult than writing in English – a finding which, to the present researcher, does not seem at all surprising. Indeed, as the literature review in Chapter 2 of the present document shows, it is a common belief in previous research that writing in L2 is harder than writing in L1. Indeed, results from the present study of the Daly and Miller (1975) writing apprehension instrument, compared with Pajares and Johnson (1994), suggest that L2 writers experience at least more apprehension in their writing than do L1 writers.

Unfortunately, however, no other previous research has attempted to compare specifically the writing apprehension of L2 writers to that of L1 writers.

As mentioned earlier, table 4.2 shows that a total of 18 response units expressing the belief that writing in Spanish-as-FL is more difficult than writing in L1 English, and that some 38.9% of those responses were expressed with an intensifying word or phrase.

Examples of response units from the qualitative data emerged largely in response to Question D from Section V of the Student Questionnaire, which asked the following:

“How does the writing-intensive requirement at the University of Minnesota affect you as a student of Spanish differently from other students throughout the University?” Sample responses include the following:

Writing in a foreign language is obviously much more difficult than writing in English, so I think the requirements should be different. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question D)

It's not our first [language] so it's harder for us. People who have trouble writing a paper in English, well it's twice as hard for us in Spanish. A lot more effort needs to go into it. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question D)

This school doesn't realize that 15 pages of formal writing in Spanish is much more difficult than the same amount in English. Because Spanish is not my native language, it is more involved and time consuming to write formal papers. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question D)

It is much more difficult to write in Spanish than English, so we are at a disadvantage. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question D)

Moreover, not surprisingly, students' opinions regarding this topic more specifically seem to be founded on mostly linguistic factors, as the following responses illustrate:

I think taking a writing intensive course in Spanish is a lot more difficult than taking a writing intensive course taught in English. As a native English speaker, I know the grammar rules & have lots of experience writing papers. As a student studying a foreign

language, you either know it or you don't. You can't "B.S." your way through a paper or through the grammar. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question D)

As students of Spanish I think we are forced to focus more on language usage and less on developing ideas and organization.... (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question D)

It is time consuming and frustrating when you aren't sure of rules, spellings, etc. and you have to look them up or ask for help. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question F)

WI in Spanish is not harder than WI in English. Amazingly, however, and seemingly contrary to the results from the previous section, an additional theme that emerges from the qualitative data is the belief expressed in fully 17 response units, that the WI requirement is actually not harder for students majoring in Spanish than for other students in non-FL majors. I would note here, however, that in the previous section, the huge majority of the response units identified in the qualitative corpus emerged specifically from the Student Questionnaire, where anonymity was fully guaranteed, and that 38.9% of the response units were stated emphatically. To wit, 15 of the 18 response units analyzed in the previous section, or 83.3%, came from the Student Questionnaire, whereas only 3 responses came from the less anonymous focus group interviews. On the other hand, for the present section none (0 %) of the 17 response units were stated with an intensifying word or phrase and 11 of the responses, or 64.7%, came directly from the focus groups, where, though caution was taken by the researcher to provide the most safe and un-inhibiting environment possible, it is still possible that students felt less able to express their opinions freely.

Nevertheless, the fact that 17 total response units did indeed emerge from the data merits an accounting here of those results. Moreover, it is important to note that results

from the last section seemed to focus more on students' beliefs about the actual writing act in Spanish versus English, whereas responses in the present section are directed more toward the completion of the WI requirement generally, irrespective of the difficulty of the actual writing to be done. Additionally, it is important to observe here that students did not report a perception that the fulfillment of the WI requirement was easier for Spanish majors than for non-FL majors, but rather simply that it was not harder for them. Furthermore, as we shall see in the following section, a common belief among those students surveyed was that the WI requirement is actually more valuable for students of foreign languages because it affords them an added opportunity for language learning, along with all of the other learning which other academic majors gain by fulfilling the requirement, as illustrated by the following statement from a student regarding the differences between WI in Spanish and WI in English: "It's probably not as much of a hassle to me because I know I need the practice writing in Spanish" (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question D).

Hence, examples of response units from the data which reveal the belief of some students that the WI requirement is no harder for students of Spanish than for students enrolled in other, non-FL majors across the curriculum in response to Question D ("How does the writing-intensive requirement at the University of Minnesota affect you as a student of Spanish differently from other students throughout the University?"), include the following:

I don't think it does – there are writing intensive requirements in other classes as well.
(Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question D)

It doesn't. I just do research in two different languages. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question D)

As I noted above, examples of responses downplaying the difficulty of fulfilling the WI requirement in Spanish from the focus group data abound. Various students, for example, observed that, as was discussed earlier in this chapter, “intensive writing” in a Spanish class is the norm rather than the exception and therefore it is not particularly alarming to take a Spanish class that has been deemed “writing-intensive”. For example, a male student in the May 8 focus group said the following: “I don’t think it’s that big of a deal to say ... it’s a writing intensive class—I don’t think it means much because ... it seems like in a class you’re taking you end up writing stuff anyway” (Focus Group, 5/8/01). And similarly, a male in the May 7th group said:

To tell you the truth I don't even, with Spanish, I don't notice the difference between like writing intensive classes and non-writing intensive classes because, I mean, part of your learning process with the Spanish language is learning how to write it and, you know, really the only way you can do that is to practice writing papers and stuff like that. So, I mean, at each level we've had to write, you know, maybe not as much as in a writing intensive class, but, you know, at each- in each class, whether it's writing intensive or not you have to write. And so, you know, I really- to tell you the truth, I don't even notice if the class is writing intensive or not. There's always that part of it that is due to writing. (Focus Group, May 7)

Furthermore, a female in the May 8th focus group observed that whereas the writing may be linguistically more difficult in Spanish, by comparison teachers grading the writing of students in L1 English tend to be more critical because English is the students’ native language, whereas the FL instructors, conversely, tend to understand that Spanish majors are typically not native speakers of the language and, therefore, compensate for that in the grading:

I think Spanish papers and English papers; I have about the same amount of, you know, stress about both of them because the English papers are looked at more critically, I guess, by the teacher – like they have a higher expectation because you're a native speaker and then with Spanish, I think at the level I'm at right now the teacher knows, that, you know, I'm not native and this is, you know, I've only had so many years of Spanish and they look at it a little bit more lenient, I guess. (Focus Group, May 8)

WI in Spanish is more valuable than WI in English. An additional finding from the qualitative data regarding the differences between WI in Spanish and WI in English is the enlightening perception by students that the WI requirement is actually more valuable for students of Spanish and other FLs than for students of other non-FL majors across the curriculum. While only 6 response units so stating were gleaned from the data, it is worthy of noting that 2 of those responses, or 33.3% of the 6, were expressed emphatically.

The justification for this belief seems to be underscored by the students' general perception, as will be reported later in this chapter, that writing is beneficial to the learning of a language. This seems to suggest that students concur with Swain's theories of comprehensible output (1985) and noticing (1997). Indeed, such statements as the following suggest that at least some students see the linguistic value in using the language in written form:

It is more applicable – the other students already know English, but I'm learning how to write and how to use Spanish. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question D)

As a Spanish student I can see its usefulness a little more clear[ly] whereas a Science major may just find it annoying. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question D)

It gives us an advantage because we are continually developing our writing and grammar skills. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question D)

I kind of feel like writing-intensive in a language is more important than writing-intensive in another class. (Focus Group, 5/30/01)

Therefore, at least some Spanish students seem to take a more positive view of the WI requirement as not only valuable for their learning of writing generally but also as a meaningful tool for their learning of the Spanish language.

Perceptions and Attitudes Regarding IW in the Course

This section provides results from data collected by the qualitative instruments employed for the study regarding the students' attitudes and perceptions about the intensive writing (IW) performed specifically in the writing-intensive Spanish course. Instruments used to collect these data included Section V of the Student Questionnaire, which asked open-ended questions regarding intensive writing as well as the three student focus groups. The findings are presented below divided into the following 2 themes and 6 subthemes, as shown in table 4.3: 1. Negative views of the intensive writing in students' WI courses included the belief that the workload was too heavy, the expression of their dislike or hatred of the writing in the course or of writing in general, and the belief of some that the IW is very stressful and/or frustrating; and 2. positive views of the intensive writing in the course, including students' perceptions that they grow more confident in their writing as they engage in the writing activity, that they feel proud when they finish a writing

project and that, though they confess that it can be difficult, they admit that it is overall a positive learning activity for them.

Table 4.3 shows that with regards to negative views of the IW in Spanish courses, the expression by students of their belief that the workload associated with the intensive

Table 4.3 Themes emerging from qualitative data regarding students' perceptions and attitudes concerning the intensive writing (IW) in their courses.	
Themes	Intensifiers/No. of response units (%)
1. Negative views of IW:	
A. Workload	13/18 (72.2%)
B. I hate writing.	2/7 (28.6%)
C. Writing is stressful/frustrating	1/6 (16.7%)
2. Positive affect and IW:	
A. My confidence grew	3/7 (42.9%)
B. I feel proud when I finish	1/7 (14.3%)
C. I admit it's good for me	0/8 (0%)

writing (IW) in their coursework is very heavy, is found in the form of 18 response units, 13, or 72.2% of which, were expressed emphatically. Additionally, students said that they dislike/hate writing some 7 times and twice emphatically (28.6%), whereas they specifically conveyed that they found the IW to be stressful and/or frustrating a total of 6 times, one of which was expressed with an intensifier (16.7%). Finally, as pertains to students' positive views of the intensive writing in their Spanish courses, 7 times they

observed that their confidence in their abilities grew as they practiced writing in Spanish and 3 of these responses, or 42.9% were given emphatically. Similarly, 7 responses by students stating that they felt proud of themselves after completing a writing project (with 1 or 14.3% expressed emphatically) and 8 expressions (no intensifiers) of students' belief that the intensive writing in their courses, though admittedly difficult, was of worth to them, were gleaned from the qualitative data.

Negative views of intensive writing in the course

Among negative views expressed by students regarding the intensive writing in their WI Spanish courses were the belief that the workload was too heavy, that they disliked the writing and that they found the writing to be extremely frustrating or stressful. I discuss each one of these subthemes below.

Workload is heavy. A very common sentiment expressed by students regarding the writing in their WI Spanish course, was one similar to the following, expressed during a focus group for the present study: "Seeing all that writing on the syllabus, it was kind of like, 'Wow, this is going to be a lot of work'" (Focus Group 5/07/01). Workload is a topic which was given special mention in the introduction to this entire section on qualitative data. This is because not only was it one of the most common themes to emerge from the entire corpus but also because it was expressed as a concern of students with regards to both the WI requirement and the present topic – the intensive writing in the WI Spanish course. Specifically regarding students' attitudes concerning the

workload associated with the intensive writing in their courses, I reiterate that, as shown in table 4.3, some 18 response units emerged from the data and that of those 18, 13, or fully 72.2% of the units, were uttered with the use of an intensifier. Therefore, especially with regards to the writing in the students' Spanish courses, this theme is clearly an important one.

This theme was especially prevalent as a response to Question F from Section V of the Student Questionnaire, which asks, "What do you most dislike about Spanish classes that involve intensive writing?" In fact, of the 18 response units counted for this topic, fully 14 of them, or 77.8%, were expressed in response to this question, and 11 (or 78.6%) of those response units comprised the total number of 14 response units which were communicated with an intensifier. Examples of responses, specifically to Question F of Section V of the Student Questionnaire, regarding the heavy workload associated with the writing in the WI Spanish course, include the following:

Long, long papers.

Workload becomes too much sometimes, especially if you're taking more than one writing –intensive class.

It's a lot of writing.

There is lots of writing!

The workload!

Moreover, various students clarify in their statements exactly what causes the workload to be so heavy in their courses. For example, students complained that there just was not enough time to complete all the writing:

Sometimes I wish I had more time to write the paper. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question F)

It takes a lot of time for me to produce a paper in Spanish, and usually I'm frustrated by my inability to get deep into the subject matter...." (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question F).

Other students expressed dismay at the frequency of the assignments:

[There is a lot of] time involved in writing so many papers. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question F)

I don't like the frequency of the assignments. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question F)

Finally, yet other students expressed the concern that the workload was so heavy in their WI course because, as touched upon earlier in this chapter, they feel it's harder to write in a foreign language, like Spanish:

It is a heavy work load, because writing in Spanish takes a lot more time. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question F)

It is time consuming and frustrating when you aren't sure of rules, spelling, etc. and you have to look them up or ask for help. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question F)

The topic of workload is, therefore, not only an important part of the qualitative data regarding the WI requirement at the university but also a very prevalent theme with regards to the students' experiences with intensive writing in the WI Spanish course. Notwithstanding this is not an unexpected theme to have emerged from the data, it is still an extremely important one which, other than anecdotally, has been somewhat neglected in the literature on writing in L2. Clearly, however, this is not a topic to be ignored. If, as Horwitz et al (1986) have claimed, there is a negative affect associated with language learning in the classroom and, as Krashen (1981a) has proposed, there is a need to keep

the “affective filter” lower in the classroom, surely there is a need for researchers and practitioners to consider what negative effects the heavy workload associated with the writing-intensive foreign language class may be having on students enrolled in those classes.

I hate writing. An additional finding emerging from the data on the intensive writing in the WI courses is the sentiment expressed in 7 different response units, 2 (28.57%) of which were done so emphatically, is the dislike some students have for writing generally. Again, as with workload, this is perhaps not a surprising outcome of the data analysis, given the general acceptance among writing and foreign language practitioners of the difficult nature of the writing act. One student, in response to Question E from Section V of the Student Questionnaire which asks what students like most about Spanish classes that involve intensive writing, responded as follows: “To be honest, I really don’t like to write. I agonize over papers and am slow at writing them” (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question E). Another, in response to the same question, stated that a favorite part of such classes is “finding out that we won’t do a paper” (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question E). Another student, when asked about this in a focus group, simply said the following: “I hate to write papers.” It is clear, therefore, that some students have a strong dislike for writing and that this can be exacerbated in WI courses.

Writing is stressful and frustrating. Akin to the previous topics, various students expressed specifically that they find writing to be stressful and or frustrating. Again, this

is perhaps not altogether surprising since we have already established that some students are often averse to the amount of work which a WI course entails and, as observed in the previous section, simply dislike writing. As noted previously and shown in table 4.3, a total of six response units expressing students' frustration and/or stress resulting from the stress associated with the writing in the WI Spanish course, were gleaned from the qualitative data, and one of these, or 16.7%, were accompanied by an intensifying word or phrase. An example of such response units was the following:

It is so stressful to have so many deadlines all the time. I am taking 2 writing-intensive classes this semester, and am more behind on sleep than ever before. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question C)

Moreover, a common justification for feeling stressed or frustrated about the writing in the WI course was the students' inability to fully express what they wanted to say in Spanish. For example, one student said the following:

I think it's frustrating to ... know what you want to say in English and ... know you have ... intelligent ideas, but when it comes out in Spanish it just doesn't sound right. I mean you say it but you say it more ... simply ... so it doesn't come out ... as you wanted to say it. So, I think that part of it is frustrating. (Focus Group 5/08/01)

And another student expressed a similar sentiment:

What I dislike the most about the writing intensive requirement as a Spanish student is the amount of stress and frustration that I feel while writing a paper and the length of time it takes me to write a Spanish paper vs. an English paper. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question C)

Again, these sentiments are neither unexpected nor novel, but they do merit the notice and addressing of foreign language writing practitioners.

Positive views of intensive writing in the course

On the other hand, I am amazed at just how positive and optimistic some students were about the writing in their WI Spanish courses, having engaged in the often difficult process myself. Indeed, various positive themes emerged with regards to IW, including the feeling by various students that they gained in confidence in their writing in Spanish as they performed the writing tasks in the class, a feeling of pride about their written work once it was finally completed and a confession that though it can be difficult, they know that the intensive writing is good for them in various ways. I discuss these three themes in the following three sections.

I gained confidence. A positive finding from the data regarding the intensive writing in the WI Spanish course, is the fact that various students felt that they grew in their confidence in writing in Spanish over the course of the semester. Some 7 students expressed this feeling and, impressively, 3 of those response units, or 42.9% of them, were expressed emphatically with an intensifier. It is of interest here, as well, to point out that for the most part when students state that they have gained in confidence in their writing as a result of their engagement in intensive writing in the WI Spanish course, they mean, more specifically, that they have become more confident in their use of written Spanish. For example, in response to Question G from Section V of the Student Questionnaire (“When you write a paper in Spanish, what would you say is the single most important thing you gain from doing so?”), one student said the following:

Confidence and fluency in my writing. The more I write, the less I need to consult dictionaries, grammar books, etc. while doing so. I'd love some

day to write almost without using those tools, like I usually do in English.
(Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question G)

And another student, responding to Question B (“Specifically from the perspective of a Spanish student, what is the value of the writing-intensive requirement to you?”) from the same section, expressed the following:

As a Spanish student, writing intensive courses allow me to become more confident in my command of the Spanish language. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question B)

Finally, one student in the May 7th focus group, said,

I think you get more confidence and become more comfortable with it.... I notice that ... I've gotten a lot more comfortable in- haven't had to use the dictionary as much. (Focus Group 5/07/01)

Happily, therefore, some students feel that they are improving in the writing in Spanish and this helps them to feel more confident in their writing and use of the Spanish language. This is a positive finding inasmuch as, starting with Daly and Miller (1975) so much has been written about the apprehension associated with writing. It seems encouraging, therefore, that an outcome of the IW for at least some students is that they feel that they improve in their confidence in writing in FL – a sign that their writing apprehension is lowering.

I felt proud of myself when I was done. An additional theme emerging from the qualitative data is that students gained a sense of pride from doing the writing projects assigned in the writing-intensive Spanish course. As shown in table 4.3, 7 response units revealed this sentiment and one of those, or 14.29% was accompanied by an intensifier. Examples of responses wherein students’ expressed their feeling of pride from

completing writing assignments include the following, which was a response to my questions in the May 30th focus group about how doing all the intensive writing in the WI Spanish course made the students feel: “As far as the second [paper] on *La casa de Bernarda Alba* – that one really stuck with me because I remember spending a lot of time on that, and I was really proud of that paper.”

In particular, various students expressed the sentiment that writing a big paper in Spanish made them feel good about their abilities in Spanish. For example, a student in the May 7th focus group stated the following: “I sometimes question my Spanish abilities, and after I write, you know, five or six pages, I think, well, you know, maybe I’m not doing so bad.” A student in the May 8th focus group expressed a similar feeling when she said the following: “I just like to write papers.... I like to see ... how I’ve improved and- I don’t know, it just makes me feel good about my Spanish, I guess.” Finally, in response to Question E from Section V of the Student Questionnaire, which asks, “What do you like most about Spanish classes that involve intensive writing?” one student expressed the personal pride she feels regarding her language and the writing of papers in Spanish: “I do fairly well in them and do, in the end, enjoy knowing that I’ve produced decent papers in another language.” Comments such as these showing the pride students feel in their writing as an example of their ability to produce a formal work in a language that is not their first, surely exemplify the kind of positive “by-products” resulting from the act of writing in a foreign language to which studies such as those of, Katnelson et al (2001), Rubin et al (2005) and Perpignan et al (2007) attest.

I admit it's good for me. A final positive view of the intensive writing in the WI Spanish class which emerges from the qualitative data collected and examined for the present study, results as a sort of by-product of a negative view of the same. It is true, as explained in an earlier section, that many students expressed their distaste for the writing act and for the actual writing intensive requirement at the university; however, as a side note, various students expressed almost in the same breath that they knew it was good for them in many ways. Indeed, as shown in table 4.3, a total of 8 response units expressing this very sentiment were gleaned from the qualitative data, though none of the response units were expressed in the company of an intensifier.

Examples of response units wherein students confessed that the writing was actually good for them, even though they disliked some aspect of it, include that expressed by a student in the May 8th focus group, who explained that he takes Spanish classes as a way to give himself a change from all of the memorization-intensive science courses he takes in his science major:

I could just drop the Spanish and just have all like, math, brain type classes or whatever, but that's not as fun. And, you know, it doesn't hurt so much. [Writing] is painful for me ... and you know, because you have to use a whole different mind to think about it. And I like keeping it around just for a little extra challenge.... But in the end, I feel good about it.

And numerous statements similar to this emerged in Section V of the Student Questionnaire. For example, one student whom I cited earlier as one who strongly disliked writing, followed her comment with a confession that many very good things have come to her as a result of the writing, in the end, including some of the

abovementioned positive outcomes such as increased confidence and a feeling of pride following the writing. I cite the entire response here again to illustrate:

I mostly like the lecture, discussion and reading. To be honest, I really don't like to write. I agonize over papers and am slow at writing them. Nevertheless, my writing has improved this semester, I am less intimidated by having to write papers, and I have received very good grades and encouraging feedback from my instructors.

Similarly, another student, responding to Question F of Section V of the Student Questionnaire, which asks what students most dislike about Spanish classes that involve intensive writing, stated, "There is lots of writing! Even though I know it's good for me in the long run." And another student responding to the very same question observed that though it was hard to perform the work in the WI Spanish class, it is clear that students begin to improve in their writing and in their abilities with the Spanish language:

I think Spanish classes that involve intensive writing can be very difficult and stressful for students who are first trying to get into the class, [but] after your first few writing assignments, you begin to feel that you're getting a grasp on things and you notice your Spanish skills are getting better.

For me, this finding is a particularly important one. Indeed, while writing can be the cause of much hardship among students, especially when performed in a foreign language, it is encouraging for FL writing practitioners to hear comments from students such as these, confessing that though they complain about how much work it entails and about how difficult it can be to write in a language which is not native to them, they still see great value in it.

Summary of Findings for Research Question 1

I conclude this section by summarizing the findings for research question 1, which asked the following:

What attitudes and perceptions do L2 Spanish students in WI Spanish courses have about the WI requirement at the University and the intensive writing component in the course?

Hence, with regards to the Daly and Miller's (1975) writing apprehension survey, it was found that scores by students enrolled in WI Spanish courses suggest that they may have a slightly greater amount of writing apprehension while writing in Spanish than do students writing in English as L1, as indicated by a comparison of means with Pajares and Johnson's (1994) post-test data. Additionally, regarding the WI requirement specifically, at the university it was found that students see its purpose as that of helping students to become better writers, which some of them consider an important skill to learn, especially for future employment. On the other hand, students expressed that the workload which the WI requirement occasions is too much and that since all classes in the Spanish major require enough writing to be considered "writing intensive", students majoring in Spanish actually take too many writing-intensive courses. Moreover, it was discovered that many Spanish students believe that writing in Spanish is harder than writing in English while many others believe that the WI requirement is not harder for Spanish majors than for students in other non-FL majors. In fact, various students even proposed that in terms of its value as a language acquisition tool, the writing resulting from the WI requirement is of greater value to FL majors than to non-FL majors.

Finally, with regards to students' perceptions and attitudes specifically concerning the intensive writing in their WI Spanish courses, both positive and negative views were expressed. Negative views of the intensive writing in students' courses included the very prevalent perspective that the workload was too heavy. Additionally, a number of students expressed the feeling that they just dislike the writing and, moreover, that it is too stressful and frustrating. As regards positive views concerning the intensive writing in the WI Spanish course, some students expressed the feeling that they grew in their confidence in writing in Spanish over the course of the semester, that they felt proud of their work after completing such a work-heavy project and, that though in many cases they strongly dislike writing, they admit that it is of value to them as a learning tool, especially in terms of their acquisition of the Spanish language.

Results for Research Question 2

This section reports results pertaining to research question 2, which asks the following:

Do L2 Spanish students show improved accuracy and coherence in their writing after taking an intensive writing course?

Following are results from the E/T-unit accuracy analysis and the topical structure coherence analysis of the pre- and post-write samples gathered for the study.

Results of E/T-Unit Accuracy Analysis

Table 4.4 provides descriptive statistics and results of the t-test statistical analysis performed on the errors-per-t-unit accuracy analysis of the pre- versus post-write samples. As shown there, on the 24 pre-write samples, the mean number of errors per t-

unit was 1.25 (S.D. = 0.46) whereas the mean number of errors per t-unit on the post-write samples was only very slightly higher than those for the pre-writes: 1.26 (S.D. = 0.58). These data indicate, as shown in table 4.4, that no significant improvement was observed between the pre-write and the post-write samples in terms of errors-per-t-unit accuracy. These results can be seen as both surprising and not so surprising. On the one hand, as will be seen under results for Research Question 3, students seem overwhelmingly to believe that their abilities in the Spanish language improve as a result of their engaging in intensive writing in Spanish. Hence, it might be expected that statistically significant improvement would be observed.

Table 4.4 **Descriptive Statistics and T-Test Results of Errors/T-Unit on Pre- and Post-Write Samples**

<u>Pre-Write</u> (N=24)	<u>Post-Write</u> (N=24)	<u>Comparison</u>	
Mean (S.D.)	Mean (S.D.)	t	significance of t
1.25 (0.46)	1.26 (0.58)	- 0.21	.836

On the other hand, it is imperative to note here that, in the end, a semester, in terms of language learning, is perhaps a very short length of time at the intermediate and advanced levels. Various researchers have observed that one semester can be seen as a very limited timeframe in which to expect to see improvement in accuracy at any level. González-Bueno and Pérez (2000), for example, noted as a limitation of their study of e-mail in foreign language writing for which they observed no statistically significant improvement in terms of accuracy, that “the limited time of one semester during which

the experiment was carried out” likely had affected their results (196). And Rubin et al. (2005) expressed a similar sentiment: “We cannot expect dramatic result in writing performance after short-term writing instruction” (22).¹⁰

Moreover, given that the classes observed for the study assumed a certain amount of linguistic ability on the part of the students, it is perhaps safe to assume that many of the students were at a more advanced stage of fine tuning their skills – a fact that would, to my mind, make noticeable improvement in terms of accuracy somewhat less perceptible than might be the case at the beginning or intermediate levels of Spanish where grammar and new vocabulary are the focus. In a 1998 study, González-Bueno, for example, attributed “a reduction in grammatical accuracy” to the fact that “students ventured to use more complicated grammatical structures and, at the same time, decreased self-monitoring” (cited in González-Bueno and Pérez 2000, 195). For the present study, therefore, given the students’ positive observations regarding linguistic improvement during the semester, I believe it to be entirely likely that some sort of improvement took place, though not observably so in terms of linguistic accuracy.

Nevertheless, it seems conceivable that if students believe that they have improved, whether in terms of accuracy or in any other way, perhaps that very fact can be seen as improvement. As Casanave (1994) has observed, perhaps our notion of improvement “needs to be reconceptualized” (179):

How do we make a convincing case to students, skeptical teachers, and administrators against always insisting on grammatical accuracy, which in some

¹⁰ Note, however, that Klee and Tedick’s (1997) study of a content-based Foreign Language Immersion Program (FLIP) for Spanish majors at the University of Minnesota during one 10-week academic quarter, found that in such an intensive immersion context, students did show some gains in terms of both general writing proficiency ($p < .01$) and grammar development ($p < .05$).

cases really does seem to drop over time as students lose their fear of making mistakes and begin taking greater risks? Is it possible to weigh the benefits of risk-taking and attention to accuracy in sensible ways? Are there other measure of language change that will show growth at intermediate and advanced levels in convincing ways, and in ways that can be used easily by teachers and students? I cannot answer all these questions here. What does seem to be clear, however, is that students and teachers together need to reconceptualize notions of growth and improvement in more complex, multifaceted, and individual ways. (199)

Results of Topical Structure Coherence Analysis

Table 4.5 provides descriptive statistics and results of the t-test analysis performed on the topical structure analysis of the pre- versus post-write samples in the study. As is shown there, for the pre-write samples, 30% of the topical progressions were parallel progressions, while 48% were sequential progressions and only 22% were extended parallel progressions. On the other hand, for the post-write samples, 27% of the topical progressions were parallel progressions, 52% were sequential progressions and 23% were extended parallel progressions. As with results for the accuracy analysis described in the previous section, these data likewise indicate no statistically significant improvement in terms of coherence. Nonetheless, there is a slight increase in the percentage of sequential progressions from pre- to post-write samples, though the increase is not statistically significant. As noted in Chapter 2 of this document, Schneider and Connor (1990) found that increased sequential progressions in topical structure analyses were indicative of better rated writing samples. Hence, this slight increase may suggest that more research, perhaps of a more longitudinal nature, may be merited on the effect of WI and IW on the improvement of students' coherence in their writing in FL and, moreover, on the value of topical structure analysis as an instrument for assessing coherence in writing.

I would observe here again that students generally perceived that, to one degree or another, their writing ability had indeed improved (see Results for Research Question 3, below). Hence, as with the results for accuracy, I would again suggest that the fact that students felt they had improved may be seen as “improvement” in and of itself.

Table 4.5 Descriptive Statistics and T-Test Results of Topical Structure Analysis of Pre- and Post-Write Samples

<u>Progression type/Total number of progressions</u>	<u>Pre-Write</u> (N=24)	<u>Post-Write</u> (N=24)	<u>Comparison</u>	
	Mean (S.D.)	Mean (S.D.)	t	significance
PP/Total	0.30 (0.09)	0.27 (0.12)	0.93	.362
SP/Total	0.48 (0.11)	0.52 (0.14)	- 0.95	.354
EPP/Total	0.22 (0.10)	0.23 (0.09)	- 0.36	.722

Moreover, the fact that the data for the topical structure analysis were also gathered during only one semester, seems, as noted previously for accuracy, to be perhaps too short a time for there to be any observable improvement.

Summary of Findings for Research Question 2

I conclude this section by summarizing the findings for research question 2. They are that no statistically significant differences were found between pre- and post-write samples for the present study, either in terms of the E/T-unit accuracy analysis or in terms of the topical structure coherence analysis. Therefore, since no quantifiable

improvements were found in terms of linguistic accuracy or coherence, it behooves us now to consider exactly what students feel they learn in terms of the Spanish language and their writing abilities. Hence, in the next section, we will consider these issues as well as the question of what students feel they learn in terms of course content and/or the subjects about which they write in their WI Spanish courses.

Results for Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asks the following:

What do students feel they learn by engaging in intensive writing in their WI Spanish course, in terms of course content, writing skill and Spanish language?

If, at least in terms of E/T-unit analysis of accuracy and topical structure analysis of coherence, students do not show significant improvement from beginning to end of a WI Spanish course, then what do they believe they gain from engaging in intensive writing in the WI Spanish course? Following are results of data collected in response to this research question, including that from the adapted WEC Questionnaire (Beason and Darrow 1997) (Student Questionnaire, Section IV, “Your Current ‘Writing-Intensive’ Class”), from qualitative data collected, including that taken from Section V, the open-ended question section of the Student Questionnaire, and that gleaned from the student focus groups.

Results of Adapted WEC Questionnaire

Table 4.6 provides results for the Writing-Enhanced-Curriculum (WEC) Questionnaire adapted from Beason and Darrow (1997). Specifically, it shows students' responses regarding how much students believe that writing helps them to learn the content of the course in which the writing takes place, how much the writing helps them to become better writers generally and how much the writing helps them to learn the Spanish language. As did Beason and Darrow, I report here the percentage of answers for each learning area which were in the categories of "agree" or "strongly agree", in response to the statement that "by doing the writing assignments (such as 1-page summaries, 3-4 page papers, essay exams, etc.) in this class" my learning of the course's content/writing skills/the Spanish language was increased.

Course content was the learning area which clearly received the most responses of "agree" or "strongly agree", fully 96% (24 of 25) of responses having been found in those two categories. On the other hand, both the categories of writing ability learning and Spanish language learning received only 77% (20 of 26) and 76% (19 of 25) of responses in those categories. In the following sections, I discuss these specific results in greater depth, including how results for content learning and writing ability compare with those of Beason and Darrow's (1997) results for English L1 students for the WEC Questionnaire, a comparison which is not possible for the area of Spanish language learning inasmuch as Beason and Darrow had no such results for L2. I also include results of qualitative data analyses for perceived learning of each focus area resulting from the intensive writing performed in the WI Spanish course.

Table 4.6 Percent of students responding “agree” or “strongly agree” regarding how much doing the writing assignments in the WI Spanish course helped them to learn course content, writing ability and the Spanish language.

Learning area:	Percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed the writing improved respective learning area
Course content:	96.0% (24/25)
Writing ability:	77.0% (20/26)
Spanish language:	76.0% (19/25)

Writing to Learn Course Content

In this section I provide comparative results for the adapted WEC Questionnaire (Beason and Darrow 1997) with those of the original study performed by the authors of the WEC Questionnaire. Following these comparative results, I provide results from the qualitative data collected regarding students’ perceptions of their learning of course content resulting from engaging in the intensive writing in their WI Spanish course.

WEC Questionnaire: Writing to Learn Course Content

Table 4.7 provides comparative data between the present study and that of Beason and Darrow (1997) for L1 English writers regarding how effective students believe writing to be as a help for their learning of the content of the course in which they write. The clear majority of students for both studies feel that “Doing the writing assignments for the class,” was of value for the learning of course content. Nevertheless, results for the

present study were even stronger (96%) than results for Beason and Darrow’s L1 English study (84%).

Table 4.7 Comparison of results for Beason and Darrow (1997) and present study of percentage of students who answered “agree” or “strongly agree” regarding how much doing the writing for their class improved their learning of course content.

	Beason & Darrow (1997)	Present Study
Percent of students who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the writing in their course helped them learn course content:	84.0%	96.0%

Thus, though no statistical analyses are possible for these data, the results suggest that the FL students in the present study are stronger in their view that the writing in their courses is valuable to their learning of course content than are those in the L1 English study realized by Beason and Darrow. Clearly, however, more research is needed to examine the differences L1 and FL students’ views of the value of writing as a means of learning course content.

Writing to Learn Course Content: Qualitative Findings

Analysis of the qualitative data for students’ perceptions about their learning of course content as a result of their engagement in intensive writing yielded a total of 13 response units in which students stated that they do indeed believe that the intensive writing strengthens their learning of the content of the course and of the content about which they specifically wrote. Moreover, 5 of the 13 response units, or 38.5%, were expressed with

an intensifier. Many of these responses were given in answer to Question G of Section V of the Student Questionnaire, which inquires of students what they feel the most important thing they learn from writing a paper in Spanish is. For example, one student responded to Question G as follows: “Enhanced knowledge of subject matter: I learn and memorize much more effectively after having written it down,” and yet another wrote, “I learned a lot more about the subject matter.” Moreover, responses expressing similar sentiments and emerging from the focus group interviews are exemplified by following, which was uttered in the May 7th focus group: “The writing really helps to reinforce what we’ve learned, and really helps to ... solidify that in my mind.”

Thus, the qualitative data gathered for the present study seems to suggest that what dozens of writing-to-learn practitioners have insisted about the value of writing for the learning of course content (see “Writing to Learn”, Chapter 2 of the present document) for example, corroborates what the students surveyed in the present study appear to believe. Indeed, it is clear that many of the students enrolled in WI Spanish courses in the present study agree emphatically that the writing does indeed lead to their better learning of the content of the course and of that which they write about in the courses.

Writing to Learn to Write

In this section I provide comparative results for the WEC Questionnaire with those of the original study performed by Beason and Darrow (1997) with English-as-L1 university students. Following presentation of the comparative data, I offer results from the

qualitative data collected for the present study regarding students' beliefs about their learning of writing skills as a result of their participation in the intensive writing in their WI Spanish course.

WEC Questionnaire: Writing to Learn to Write

I reiterate, as shown in Table 4.6, that students generally agreed that doing the writing activities in the course benefited them in terms of their improvement as writers, inasmuch as 20 of the 26 students who responded, or 77%, responded “agree” or “strongly agree” to the item. However, by comparison with results for the learning of the course content in the previous section (24/25 or 96%) these results are quite low.

Table 4.8 provides comparative data between the present study and that of Beason and Darrow (1997) for L1 English writers. Though unlike the previously reported results relative to the learning of course content, results relative to the learning of writing skill for the present study of FL writers (77%) are extremely similar to those of Beason and Darrow’s study of English L1 learners (76%). Again, no statistical

Table 4.8 Comparison of results for Beason and Darrow (1997) and present study of percentage of students who answered “agree” or “strongly agree” regarding how much the writing in the course improved their writing ability.		
	Beason & Darrow (1997)	Present Study
Percent of students who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the writing in their course helped them learn to be better writers:	76.0%	77.0%

comparison is possible since I do not have access to Beason and Darrow's specific data, however these results are surprisingly similar and suggest that FL student writers and L1 student writers hold similar views regarding the value of intensive writing for their better learning of the writing skill.

Writing to Learn to Write: Qualitative Findings

Findings from the qualitative data suggest that students enrolled in writing-intensive Spanish courses at the University of Minnesota do indeed believe that they improve as writers by engaging in the intensive writing in the course. In fact, between the data collected from Section V of the Student Questionnaire and that collected in the student focus groups, some 20 response units were gleaned, and 3 of those responses, or 15% were conveyed in the company of an intensifying word or phrase. Examples of response units that convey the belief of students that the writing performed in their classes does lead to their improved writing ability, include the following uttered in the May 7th focus group, in answer to the researcher's question as to whether students felt that they had improved as writers as a result of their writing in the WI Spanish course:

I really do see an improvement in my writing over the year. You know, between the papers that I was writing in the beginning of the year and the papers that I wrote in prior classes to ... the paper that I'm working on now.... (Focus Group 5/07/01)

And similarly, another student in the same student focus group made the following response to a similar question:

Definitely, definitely, because at first you're kind of intimidated because you're writing in Spanish, and that's something that's foreign to you, so your ideas don't flow like they do when you're writing in English. But

after a while, after you get used to it, that initial block, that kind of disappears and [you] just could become more comfortable, more comfortable using ... Spanish words and forming ideas in Spanish. (Focus Group 5/07/01)

It is important to note, here, nevertheless that in analyzing the qualitative data with regards to students' learning of writing ability resulting from their intensive writing in the Spanish WI course, it was often difficult for me to fully distinguish whether the student was actually referring to their improvements as a writer, regardless of the language, or simply in terms of their Spanish language abilities – though I tried as a mediator of the focus groups and in my wording of the Student Questionnaire to emphasize this distinction. An example of this dilemma appears in the second of the two quotes from the May 7th focus group given above. This student states that he “definitely” improved as a writer but then goes on to describe himself as improving specifically with regards to word choice and idea formation “in Spanish.” In the end, I counted examples such as these as response units exemplifying students' beliefs that the intensive writing did indeed lead to them improving as writers, whether in English or Spanish. This decision was made because of the great care I took as mediator and researcher to help students understand the difference between language learning and the learning of writing skill and, moreover, because it seems intuitive that students would feel that they were indeed improving as writers by actually engaging in the writing act in their classes. It was, nonetheless, sometimes problematic as I culled the qualitative data for response units related to both kinds of learning.

Writing to Learn Spanish Language

A final issue of the present study as regards Research Question 3 was whether or not students feel that an outcome of the intensive writing in their WI Spanish class was their learning of the Spanish language. Indeed, it is a feasible assumption that though the courses analyzed here are so-called “content courses”, they may still, nevertheless, be considered language courses inasmuch as all of the students participating in the two courses are learners of Spanish as L2 and, therefore, still in the process of acquiring the language. Hence, in this section, I present results from Section IV, Part C, of the Student Questionnaire, which assessed students’ perceptions of their learning of the Spanish language as a result of their participation in the intensive writing in their Spanish course.

As table 4.6 shows, the percentage of students who responded “agree” or “strongly agree” regarding how much they believed the writing helped them in their learning of the Spanish language was 76% or 19 of 25 responses. While this still represents a majority of the students, it is of interest here that, as with results for learning of writing ability, the present result is considerable lower than the result of 96% regarding the learning of the course content.

No comparative results with Beason and Darrow’s L1 English study are presented here because those researchers do not look at this issue given that they surveyed students writing in their native language of English.

Writing to Learn Spanish: Qualitative Findings

Inasmuch as there is not comparative data for the learning of the Spanish language in the Beason and Darrow (1997) study, as a part of the focus group interviews I elicited the students' perceptions regarding this topic. I reiterate here that Research Question 3 asked specifically what students feel they *learn* by engaging in intensive writing in their WI Spanish course. Themes emerging from the open-ended questionnaire and focus group interviews regarding students' perceptions and beliefs about writing and the learning of Spanish language are presented below.

The main theme – writing helps students learn the Spanish language – includes the following three subthemes: A. Writing helps students learn Spanish grammar; B. writing helps students learn Spanish vocabulary; and C. writing helps students improve their speaking of Spanish. This theme and its three subthemes are included in table 4.9, together with the number of response units emerging from the qualitative data and the number of response units which were produced with intensifiers, indicators of the emotion or emphasis with which the response was expressed in the data. As shown in table 4.9, then, the belief of students that engaging in intensive writing actually does help them improve in their language abilities appears 33 times in the qualitative data – more times than any other theme in the entire corpus – and 27.3% of the time (9/33) this perception was given emphatically. Additionally, expression of the belief of students that writing helps them to learn Spanish grammar specifically, appears 18 times in the qualitative corpus and 33%, or 6 out of 18, this belief was expressed with an intensifier. Moreover, the student perception that intensive writing helps them to learn Spanish

vocabulary specifically appears 12 times in the data and, as with grammar, 33% (4/12) of those utterances were expressed emphatically. Finally, students expressed their belief some 11 times that intensive writing also helps them to improve their speaking of Spanish, 2 of which (18.2%) were expressed in the company of an intensifier. Hence, in the following sections, I discuss this theme and its corresponding three subthemes with specifics taken from both the student questionnaire and the student focus groups.

Table 4.9 Themes emerging from qualitative data regarding writing to learn the Spanish language.

Themes	Intensifiers/No. of response units (%)
Writing helps students learn the Spanish language	9/33 (27.3%)
A. Writing helps students learn Spanish grammar	6/18 (33.3%)
B. Writing helps students learn Spanish vocabulary	4/12 (33.3%)
C. Writing helps students improve in their ability to speak Spanish	2/11 (18.2%)

Writing helps students learn the Spanish language

As I noted earlier, the students' belief that intensive writing in their courses led to their learning of the Spanish language was the single most common theme to emerge from all of the qualitative data for the present study. Again, some 33 response units were counted and, importantly, 9 of these responses, or 27.3%, were expressed with an intensifying

word or phrase, which indicates the strength with which the belief was expressed. For example, in response to Question B of Section V of the Student Questionnaire, which asks, “Specifically from the perspective of a Spanish student, what is the value of the writing-intensive requirement to you?” 13 different students referenced the value of the WI class in helping them to learn the Spanish language, a few of which are provided below:

As a Spanish student, the writing intensive requirement really helps to improve my knowledge on the language and better understand the different grammatical concepts.

It really improved my overall Spanish.

As a Spanish student, writing intensive courses allow me to become more confident in my command of the Spanish language.

Actually, I feel it gives me a better understanding of the language and its uses.

To practice and perfect the language.

It forces me to continually use my knowledge of Spanish language and grammar.

Some students expressed that writing for their Spanish class afforded them the opportunity, even forced them, to use the language outside of class. Indeed, various students lamented the fact that unless you go to a Spanish-speaking country, you don’t get many intensive opportunities for the learning of the language. For example, one student in the May 7th focus group was emphatic about the importance of writing as a means of learning the language, especially in the university setting where other opportunities to use the language may not be so readily available:

If you really want to become a good fluent speaker I think you really have to speak Spanish every day and in many settings and probably the only way you're going to be able to do that is to go to a country where they speak Spanish. But in the university setting I think we can really improve our knowledge of the language. And the best way to do that, I believe, is through writing.... I think in the university writing's very important.

Another student in response to Question E from Section V of the Student Questionnaire, which asks, "What do you like most about Spanish classes that involve intensive writing?" wrote that "It helps me to improve my Spanish skills since I cannot practice it in conversation outside of class as much." And another, in response to Question B, which asks, "Specifically from the perspective of a Spanish student, what is the value of the writing-intensive requirement to you?" responded that it helped "to speed up and expand our understanding of the Spanish language since we are not immersed in it."

Clearly, this was a common theme in the students' responses as various students commented on the fact that writing either afforded them the extra practice with the language or forced them to do so. For example, another student responding to Question B suggested that the value of the intensive writing was to afford them "higher intensity of exploration in a language that is not my first; [a] chance to improve more," and yet another, also in response to Question B, wrote that the value of the writing "for [students'] Spanish – for students to better understand the language. The more a person is engaged in a foreign language the more efficient the learning process." Finally, one student, responding to Question A from Section V of the Student Questionnaire, observed that "writing is an important and difficult aspect of learning language, and by being forced to write students will improve."

Responses such as these regarding the value of writing for the purposes of learning a foreign language, of course, seem to go hand in hand with Swain's (1985, 1997) theories of comprehensible output and noticing. Though the statements above by the students surveyed for the present study are only their perceptions regarding the value of writing, they nonetheless seem to go a long way toward showing that students, by engaging in the comprehensible output activity of controlled, intensive writing, are "noticing" aspects of the language and, moreover, becoming aware of their own learning processes.

Writing helps students learn Spanish grammar. A more specific finding to emerge from the qualitative data pertaining to the value of intensive writing for the learning of Spanish, spoke directly to the learning of Spanish grammar specifically. And again, these comments seem to coincide well with what Swain proposed as the value of comprehensible output in the acquisition of language. As a reminder, some 18 response units proposing the value of intensive writing for the learning of the language, and of those, 6, or 33.3%, were expressed emphatically. For example, in response to Question G from Section V of the Student Questionnaire, which asks, "When you write a paper in Spanish, what would you say is the single most important thing you gain from doing so?", fully 8 students directly mentioned that it helps them specifically to learn Spanish grammar. Examples of such comments in response to Question G, include the following:

It lets me know that my grammar is solid and improves my ability to express myself.

Improved writing skills in general, but also a better understanding of Spanish grammar.

Improved overall writing ability and Spanish grammar.

1) Knowledge of the subject. 2) Grammar.

Similarly, in response to Question B (Specifically from the perspective of a Spanish student, what is the value of the writing-intensive requirement to you?), two students clearly stated that the learning of grammar was an important outcome of the intensive writing imposed by the WI requirement:

Again, to better our writing skills. Like things in my everyday Spanish grammar are better. Just little things like verb endings.

As a Spanish student, the writing intensive requirement really helps to improve my knowledge on the language and better understand the different grammatical concepts. It also helps me to better [know] how to express my ideas in Spanish.

One student responding to Question G even specifically mentioned that she “notices” her grammar mistakes as she engages in writing – “I am much more [conscious] of noticing my grammar mistakes” – which, one might assume, would be cause for “notice” by Swain and other scholars who have examined the function of noticing in output (Izumi et al 1999, Izumi and Bigelow 2000 and 2002, Qi and Lapkin 2001, Adams 2003, Hanaoka 2006 and 2007, Song and Suh 2008 and Leeser 2008).

Writing helps students learn Spanish vocabulary. As shown in table 4.9, another finding in the qualitative data regarding students’ beliefs concerning writing and the learning of the Spanish language, points directly to the learning of vocabulary. Of the 12 response units which emerged from the data regarding writing and the learning of Spanish

vocabulary, 4, or 33.3%, were expressed in the company of an intensifier. The topic of vocabulary learning is one that has received particular attention from scholars who have investigated the involvement load hypothesis (Laufer and Hulstijn 2001). As observed in Chapter 2, the literature of the present study, this hypothesis suggests that the more heavy the “involvement” which a vocabulary learning activity entails, the more likely the retention of the new vocabulary. Again, “involvement,” say Laufer and Hulstijn, is “a motivational-cognitive construct which can explain and predict learners’ success in the retention of hitherto unfamiliar words” (14). Moreover, writing, especially the kind examined in the present study – intensive writing with a component of longer essay production – is seen as having a very high involvement load, and hence, ought to lead to the effective learning of vocabulary. And, at least in the opinion of some 12 students in the present study, 4 of whom so opine emphatically, this is the case.

Moreover, I would note here, that at least two of the studies pertaining to the output and the noticing hypothesis (Swain 1985, 1997) which were reviewed in Chapter 2, found that what students noticed and, therefore, learned most by writing in a second language, was indeed vocabulary. To review, both Hanaoka (2007) and Leeser (2008) found that students that engaged in meaningful writing overwhelmingly noticed more lexical features than grammatical features. Studies such as these, therefore, appear to confirm what many students seem to believe – namely, that engaging in intensive writing helps them to increase their L2 vocabulary.

Examples of response units wherein students express their belief that they particularly learn vocabulary as a result of engaging in intensive writing in their WI

Spanish course, include comments such as the following from a student in the May 8th focus group:

Writing forces you to think critically about something. It's like, when you're in these upper division Spanish classes you can't just talk, you know, "me llamo es blah, blah, blah." You can't do all that easy stuff. You need to be able to learn how [to use] your vocabulary and learn how to express your ideas, and writing really forces you to do that.

Another student in the May 30th focus group expressed his understanding that in order to really learn a word, a student needed to actually see the word in printed format, as is the case, of course, in writing:

I know vocabulary more [as a result of the intensive writing]. Because, I can't remember where I heard this but some people believe- some scholars believe that you don't really learn-or you don't really know a word until you actually see it printed. And, I think it's a very interesting comment.

Finally, a student in the May 7th focus group, made the very astute observation that writing allowed him to slow down and actually learn new words, whereas the expediency of the speaking act does not allow a person to take the time to look up words in a dictionary or more meaningfully focus on vocabulary:

I've found that I've learned a lot of new words taking writing-intensive classes in Spanish because when you're speaking in class you don't have time to look up words you don't understand. But when you're writing you can sit there and look up the words that you need to learn. And then next time you're speaking say, "Oh, I just learned that word. I can throw that into my conversation." So, I learned a lot of new words and ways to say words...

Writing helps students improve their speaking of Spanish. A final finding regarding the learning of the Spanish language as an outcome of engaging in the intensive-writing in

the WI Spanish course, is that, as the final quote from in the last section intimated, it helps them become better speakers. As that student observed, writing allows you the luxury of slowing down and “noticing” (Swain 1985, 1997) the grammar and vocabulary of a language, which is not usually the case at all during the speaking act. Hence, 11 response units, 2 (18.2%) of which emphatically so, emerged from the qualitative data stating that writing actually helps them to be better speakers of the Spanish language, because they can slow down and actually learn the more specific grammatical components and lexical items of the language, which they can then employ in their oral production of the language later on. Examples of response units which conveyed this belief include the following three comments gleaned from the questions in Section V of the Student Questionnaire which very plainly explain these students’ belief that intensive writing not only helps them become better writers but also better speakers:

It helps with both writing and speaking skills. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question B)

I think [the] practice makes me more comfortable and confident in my speaking/writing. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question D)

[Spanish classes that involve intensive writing] better both my spoken Spanish and written. (Student Questionnaire, Section V, Question E)

Comments to the same effect emerging from the focus group data include that of one student in the May 7th focus group who quite simply said: “I think good writing spills over into good speaking.” Another student from the May 8th focus group said, “When I write papers I have to look up words and that helps expand my vocabulary so I can express myself more clearly when I’m talking.” And another student from the same May

8th focus group said the following: “I think there are a lot of words that you would use in a paper, like transition words, that can be applied to your speech as well that maybe you wouldn’t learn if you weren’t writing a paper.” Finally, a student in the May 30th focus group made a comment regarding the oral/aural value of writing. In other words, this student believed that by writing in Spanish and seeing the language in written form, he has become a better listener in Spanish conversations which might otherwise be difficult had he not seen and produced Spanish in written form:

I feel like with learning about writing it kind of gives you a basis so that- 'cause when people talk, like “Cómo ‘tá?” you know, they don’t always pronounce the s’s all the time and sometimes you think you won’t have a clue what the person’s saying and I feel ... like- if you understand the writing a little bit more, ... I understand the speaking a little bit more.

I would note here that all of the comments above seem to suggest that students are indeed “noticing” (Swain 1985, 1997) grammar and vocabulary in their writing and then are able to utilize it in the speaking act, which suggests that, at least from these students’ perspective, acquisition of the language has resulted from their having engaged in the writing act. Disappointingly, however, the value of writing in helping students to be better speakers of L2 is a subject that, to the best of my knowledge, is seldom actually examined or even discussed in the literature on L2 writing, a notable exception being Hubert’s (2008) dissertation. Hubert, who found there to be a strong correlation between writing and speaking development, especially at intermediate and advanced levels, concurs with what I say above about the study of one of the language modalities – writing, speaking, reading or listening – as affecting the acquisition of one of the other three modalities:

The most common general tendency among SLA researchers is to carry out investigation within a single usage category, producing research that describes the effect(s) of activity in one of these areas on the overall acquisition of the target language ... by each learner population. This approach has proved very useful in that a great deal of research has been produced describing the nature of each type of activity and the role that each plays in language acquisition. However, it is much less common for SLA researchers to look at how development in one of these categories affects and/or is affected by concurrent development in another of the three. This lack of comparison is currently a serious weakness in SLA, as researchers have either completely ignored, taken for granted, or avoided mention of the effect(s) that learner progression toward more native-like TL proficiency in one of these areas may have on their progression in one or more of the other three. (1)

Other researchers, like Robert Weissberg, have examined writing and speaking together but not specifically how one effects the acquisition and development of the other. For example, in his (2006) book entitled *Connecting Speaking and Writing in Second Language Writing Instruction*, Weissberg never actually addresses the value of writing for becoming a better speaker, but rather proposes that oral conversation should be utilized more as a part of the language learning process along with writing in second language writing classes.

Comparison of Three Learning Areas

What follows is a comparative analysis of all three of the learning areas examined – learning of content, learning of writing ability and learning of the Spanish language. I first compare results from Section IV, “Your current ‘writing-intensive’ class”, of the Student Questionnaire for each one of these areas. As I stated earlier, Beason and Darrow’s (1997) L1 English writing study, from whose survey Section IV of the present study’s student questionnaire was based, did not, for obvious reasons, include a section

on the students' perceptions of writing as a tool for the learning of a foreign language. Therefore, as a way of more meaningfully including results from the present study regarding students' perceptions of writing and the learning of Spanish, I provide a comparative analysis of the adapted Beason and Darrow survey for all three of the learning areas and, thereafter, in order to further clarify differences between students' beliefs regarding the three learning areas examined in the present study and to better merge the findings of both the quantitative and qualitative data for the study (Plano Clark and Creswell 2008, 380), include a discussion of the qualitative data – taken specifically from Question G (When you write a paper in Spanish, what would you say is the single most important thing you gain from doing so?) of the student questionnaire.

WEC Questionnaire: Comparison of Three Learning Areas

For purposes of comparison of results for section IV of the student Questionnaire, Table 4.10 gives results for all three learning areas examined, namely course content, writing ability and Spanish language.

Hence, to reiterate, 96% (24 of 25) of the students surveyed in the present study responded “agree” or “strongly agree” with regards to the statement that the writing performed in their WI course helped them to learn the content of the course, 77% (20 of 26) of students surveyed marked that “agree” or “strongly agree” that the writing in their course helped them to improve as writers generally, and 76% (19 of 25) of students surveyed “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the writing in the course helped them to learn better the Spanish language.

Table 4.10 Comparison of results for present study for percentage of students who answered “agree” or “strongly agree” regarding how much the writing in the course helped their learning of content, writing ability, and the Spanish language.

	Course Content	Writing Ability	Spanish Language
Percentage of students who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the writing helped them learn...	96.0%	77.0%	76.0%

In order to compare results for all three learning categories, I adjusted the Likert-scale from Beason and Darrow’s (1997) study by eliminating the center point of the scale (namely, 3=n/a) and then adjusted all scores of 4 (=disagree) on the previous scale to 3, and all scores of 5 (=strong disagree) on the previous scale to 4. Thereafter, I ran statistical analyses of results for the adjusted scale, including descriptive statistics, shown in Table 4.11 below and an analysis of variance, shown in Table 4.12 below.

Hence, as table 4.11 shows, for responses regarding students’ beliefs about the value of intensive writing for the learning of course content, a mean score of 1.58 was calculated (S.D. = .58) based on the adjust Likert-scale, where 1=strongly agree, 2=agree,

Table 4.11 Descriptive statistics for adjusted Likert-scale (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=disagree and 4=strongly disagree) for results of students’ perceptions of how the writing in their WI course helped their learning of content, writing ability, and Spanish language (Section IV of questionnaire)

<u>Content Learning</u>			<u>Writing Improvement</u>			<u>Spanish Learning</u>		
Mean	S.D.	N	Mean	S.D.	N	Mean	S.D.	N
1.58	.58	24	2.00	.72	24	2.00	.66	24

3=disagree and 4=strongly disagree. Moreover, for the area of writing improvement, a mean score of 2.00 was calculated (S.D. = .72) and for the area of Spanish language learning, a mean score of 2.00 was also calculated (S.D. = .66).

Table 4.12 ANOVA results for adjusted Likert-scale (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=disagree and 4=strongly disagree) survey of students' perceptions of how the writing in their WI Spanish course helped their learning of content, writing ability and Spanish language

<u>Content Learning</u>		<u>Writing Improvement</u>		<u>Spanish Learning</u>		<u>ANOVA</u>	
<u>Mean</u>	<u>S.D.</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>S.D.</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>S.D.</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Sig.</u>
1.58	.58	2.00	.72	2.00	.66	4.83	.012*

*p < .05

Table 4.12 shows results for the ANOVA test calculated to determine whether the variance of results given in table 4.11 were statistically significant. As is shown in table 4.12, the F score of 4.83 was shown to be statistically meaningful at the p , .05 level (p = .012), indicating that there is statistically meaningful variance between these three means.

Additionally, in order to more clearly understand results reported in table 4.12, I performed a post-hoc t-test analysis on the data. More specifically, the post-hoc t-test analysis was performed to determine in which direction results from the ANOVA were meaningful. Table 4.13 below shows the results for the post-hoc t-test analysis. As noted in the footnote for table 4.13, those means sharing a subscript letter were found to be significantly different.

Table 4.13 Results of Post hoc analysis results for ANOVA of survey of students' perceptions of how writing helps their learning of content, writing ability, and Spanish language (adapted Likert-scale: 1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=disagree and 4=strongly disagree)

<u>Content Learning</u>		<u>Writing Improvement</u>		<u>Spanish Learning</u>	
<u>Mean</u>	<u>S.D.</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>S.D.</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>S.D.</u>
1.58 _{a,b}	.58	2.00 _a	.72	2.00 _b	.66

Note: Means sharing subscripts are significantly different at the $p < .05$ level.

Interestingly, therefore, doing the writing assignments for the WI Spanish class was believed by students to be significantly ($p < .05$) more valuable in terms of the learning of course content, than for improvement in writing and for the learning of the Spanish language.

Qualitative Findings: Comparison of Three Learning Areas

In this section I propose to present comparative results from the qualitative data, including Section V of the Student Questionnaire and the student focus groups, for all three of the learning areas considered – learning of course content, writing ability and the Spanish language. Table 4.14 reports the number of response units counted wherein students expressed the sentiment that they gained learning or skill as a result of the writing in their WI Spanish course. As table 4.14 shows, 13 response units, 5, or 38.5% of which were expressed with an intensifier, were counted wherein students stated that they learned course content from the intensive writing. Moreover, some 20 response units, 3, or 15% of which, were stated emphatically, were counted in which students expressed the belief that they learned writing skills as a result of the writing. Finally,

fully 33 response units, 8, or 24.2% of which were expressed with an intensifying word or phrase, were counted in which students stated the belief that they learned more about the Spanish language as a result of the writing.

A glance at table 4.14, therefore, shows us that students do indeed believe that all three of the proposed learning areas – course content, writing ability and Spanish language – are enhanced as a result of the writing in the WI Spanish course. However, while the learning of the Spanish language is that area for which clearly the most response units was counted (n=33) and the learning of course content is that area for which the least amount of response units was counted (n=13), if we consider the intensity with which the response units were expressed, the learning of course content is clearly the most emphatic (fully 38.5% of response units expressed with an intensifier). By the same token, a relatively strong number of response units were counted in which students

Table 4.14 Themes emerging from qualitative data, pertaining specifically to learning of course content, writing ability and Spanish language.

Themes	Intensifiers/No. of response units (%)	
Course content	5/13	(38.5%)
Writing ability	3/20	(15%)
Spanish language	8/33	(24.2%)

expressed that they felt they learned writing ability by engaging in the intensive writing in their course (n=20) but these were not expressed particularly strongly (15% of

response units expressed with an intensifier) by comparison with the learning of the Spanish language (24.2%) and the learning of course content (38.5%).

In order to help further clarify the differences between students' responses regarding the three stated learning areas, I believe it will be valuable here as well to discuss specifically the findings from Question G of Section V, the open-ended question section of the Student Questionnaire. A focus here on Question G, in comparison to the data from the student focus group interviews, may serve as a way of leveling the so-called playing field as much as possible when comparing results for the three respective learning areas. Indeed, it seems to me that an across-the-board comparison of results emerging from the focus group interviews which were mediated by me, an unavoidably biased (albeit careful) researcher, may potentially provide a skewed comparison.

Moreover, Question G from Section V of the Student Questionnaire, was presented in written form, thereby avoiding the bias which the voice quality and tone and even the actual physical presence of a focus group mediator might cause. This is not to say that the focus group findings are not meaningful and important, only that I have chosen, for this comparative analysis, to eliminate whatever bias they may contain.

Hence, Question G of Section V of the Student Questionnaire asks the following:

When you write a paper in Spanish, what would you say is the single most important thing you gain from doing so (i.e. greater knowledge of the subject about which you wrote, improved overall writing ability, improved Spanish grammar, vocabulary, etc.)?

A more specific analysis of this question, comparing results specifically pertaining to what students felt they gained in terms of the learning of course content, writing skill and the Spanish language, follows.

It is important to note here also that not always did students write a “single most important thing” gained from the writing but rather two or three skills gained. In such cases, all of the skills mentioned were counted. One such example was the following response: “The ability to coherently and intelligently present my ideas in Spanish, and to expand my vocabulary.” Hence, inasmuch as this response references both the student’s ability to write well (“coherently and intelligently”) and the student’s ability to do so in the Spanish language (“...in Spanish, and to expand my vocabulary”) it was assessed to be a response unit counted toward both learning of writing ability and learning of the Spanish language.

In five separate cases, students wrote only “improved overall writing ability” (n=3) or something to the effect of “improved overall writing ability and confidence in that ability” (n=2). It is a limitation of Question G that “improved overall writing ability” was a suggested response inasmuch as it may imply both the learning of writing and the learning of writing specifically in Spanish. Therefore, cases such as these were counted toward both learning of writing ability and learning of the Spanish language since there is no way to know exactly what the students full intended meaning was in writing such a response.

Table 4.15, therefore, reports findings for the analysis of responses to Question G, specifically dealing with the learning of content, writing ability or the Spanish language. As the table shows, 9 response units were counted which expressed that the most important thing gained from writing a paper in Spanish was knowledge of the subject about which the paper was written, and 2 of those response units, or 22.2%, were

Table 4.15 Themes emerging from Question G of Section V of Student Questionnaire, pertaining specifically to learning of course content, writing ability and Spanish language.

Themes	Intensifiers/No. of response units (%)
I learned content	2/9 (22.2%)
I learned better writing skill	0/9 (0%)
I learned the Spanish language	1/16 (6.3%)

accompanied by an intensifying word or phrase. Similarly, 9 students expressed the sentiment that the greatest thing they learned from writing a paper in Spanish was the ability to write better. However, none of these response units were expressed with an intensifier. Finally, 16 response units, one of which (6.3%) was expressed with an intensifier, were counted as expressions that the most important thing gained from writing a paper in Spanish was the learning of some aspect of the Spanish language, whether vocabulary (n=3), grammar (n=7) or simply general fluency in their writing in Spanish (n=11).¹¹

Once again, it is clear from these data that students believe that they gain in terms of all three of these learning areas as a result of the writing in their WI

¹¹ Note that references to these three areas does not add up to 16, or the total number of response units citing the learning of Spanish language as the most important thing gained from writing a paper in Spanish. This is because various students responded by mentioning more than one area of language learning (e.g. “The 3 most important things I’ve noticed that I have gained are greater knowledge of the subjects I wrote about, increased vocabulary & I am much more conscientious of noticing my grammar mistakes.”), but such responses were only counted as one response unit in favor of the learning of the Spanish language.

Spanish course. Nevertheless, once again, the area of course content learning, while only yielding a total of 9 response units, was that area which received the strongest emphasis (2, or 22.2% of response units expressed with an intensifier), as compared to the area of learning of writing (0/9, or 0%) and even as compared to the area of Spanish language learning for which the greatest number of response units was counted (n=16, only 1, or 6.3% expressed with an intensifier).

These results are even more interesting in light of the examination of the three learning areas as shown previously through the lens of the adapted WEC Questionnaire (Beason and Darrow 1997). As was noted in the previous section, “doing the writing assignments for the class” revealed that the learning of course content was significantly ($p < .05$) the most important outcome. It seems clear, therefore, that though students perceive that they make gains in all three of the proposed learning areas, they are most emphatic or “intense” in their expression of the learning of the content of the course about which they wrote in their papers. However, the total number of response units counted from the entire qualitative corpus (all of Section V of the Student Questionnaire and student focus groups), as shown in table 4.14, was higher for the other two learning areas – learning writing ability (n=20) and Spanish language (n=33). It is in just such a polemic where having chosen to employ both qualitative and quantitative instruments to answer the research questions becomes advantageous. Indeed, the quantitative instrument – the WEC Questionnaire – yields statistically significant results in favor of the learning of course content as the area perceived by students to be the most gainfully learned as a result of the writing in their WI Spanish course. And, though in the

qualitative data, a smaller number of response units were counted for the learning of course content than for the other two learning areas, the higher presence of intensifying words and phrases in the company of those response units, leads us to conclude that while all areas are perceived as gained by students, that of course content is perhaps even more so than are the learning of writing skill and the learning of the Spanish language.

Moreover, these results generally coincide with what Beason and Darrow (1997) found for English L1 writers at the university level. Though they did not report any sort of statistical comparison between the learning areas of course content and writing ability in their study, I find it very interesting and confirming of the results for the present study that their results also seem to suggest that the learning of course content (84% responded “agree” or “strongly agree”) was even more strongly perceived as a gain resulting from intensive writing, than was the learning of writing skill (only 76% responded “agree” or “strongly agree”).

Summary of Findings for Research Question 3

I conclude this section by summarizing the findings for research question 3, which asked the following:

What do students feel they learn by engaging in intensive writing in their WI Spanish course, in terms of course content, writing skill and Spanish language?

Findings suggest that students believe that they learn course content, writing skills and Spanish language as a result of participating in the intensive writing associated with their

writing-intensive Spanish course, but also suggest that students perhaps feel even more strongly that they learn the course content as a result of the writing.

Hence, results from the adapted Writing-Enhanced-Course Questionnaire (Beason and Darrow 1997) indicate that while a majority of students feel they learn in all three of the learning areas as a result of the intensive writing, they feel so significantly more about the learning of course content than they do about the learning of writing skill and of the Spanish language. Findings from the qualitative instruments for the study, including Section V of the Student Questionnaire and the student focus groups, also found that students feel they learn in the three areas mentioned as a result of their writing, and though response units regarding their learning of the Spanish language were especially ample, those response units counted for the learning of course content were especially emphatic. Moreover, this suggestion was seemingly confirmed by a more specific analysis of Question G of Section V of the Student Questionnaire, which also showed that though there were more response units counted in which students expressed their belief that they learned the Spanish language as a result of the writing (n=16, only 1, or 6.3%, with intensifier), the number of response units which expressed that the learning of course content was gained from the writing were so expressed with a greater percentage of intensifying words or phrases (n=9; 2, or 22.2%, with intensifiers).

Finally, specifically with regards to learning of the Spanish language, students expressed a belief that the intensive writing helps them learn both Spanish grammar and vocabulary, but also that it helps them to be better speakers of the language.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter provides a review of findings for each of the research questions for the study, as described in Chapter 4, and attempts to situate the findings in the context of previous studies in the literature. It also discusses the limitations and pedagogical implications of the study and recommendations for future research.

Review and Discussion of Results

In the present section, I will first discuss results for Research Question 1 which explored how students feel about the Writing-intensive Requirement at the University of Minnesota and, more specifically, regarding the intensive writing performed in their WI Spanish major courses. Secondly, I will review results for Research Question 2, which examined whether students improved in terms of accuracy and coherence in their writing in Spanish during the WI Spanish course. Third, I will discuss results for Research Question 3 which asked what students feel they learn in terms of course content, writing skill and the Spanish language, as a result of their participation in a WI Spanish course. Finally, to conclude this section, I briefly revisit and reiterate the value of having sought out and listened to the “student voice” in the present study.

Review and Discussion of Results for Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked the following: What attitudes and perceptions do L2 Spanish students enrolled in a WI Spanish course have about the WI requirement at the University and the intensive writing component in the course? Following is a summary of the findings of the study regarding this research question and a discussion of the significance of the findings in light of previous research. I will first discuss results of the adapted Writing Apprehension Survey (Daly and Miller 1975) followed by a discussion of students' attitudes and perceptions regarding the WI requirement at the University of Minnesota and their attitudes and perceptions regarding the intensive writing in their WI Spanish courses.

Writing Apprehension Survey

Data for Research Question 1 regarding writing apprehension were collected via an adapted form of Daly and Miller's (1975) Writing Apprehension Survey. The survey was adapted by eliminating the central point on their original Likert-type scale, thereby producing a 4-point scale. Results of the survey, as compared to that of Pajares and Johnson (1994), who also used the adapted 4-point scale, for L1 English writers, suggested that writers of Spanish as FL may be more apprehensive about writing in Spanish than are English L1 students about writing in English. Nevertheless, this suggestion is not conclusive inasmuch as no statistical comparisons were possible between the two studies, given that I had no access to Pajares and Johnson's original data. The study found that the Spanish students here surveyed scored an average 66.65

on the Writing Apprehension Survey at the end of the WI Spanish course whereas the English L1 students in Pajares and Johnson had a mean score of 63.77 on the pre-semester administration of the survey and an even lower 60.9 on the post-semester administration of the survey.

It would not be at all surprising, nevertheless, were a statistical comparison between Pajares and Johnson's results for English L1 writers and results from the present study possible, to find that the difference in terms of writing apprehension between L1 writers and FL writers was indeed statistically significant in the direction of greater overall apprehension amongst FL writers. Indeed, the added component of foreign language anxiety in the FL classroom (Horwitz et al. 1986), together with that of writing apprehension seems intuitively to add up to an overall greater amount of writing apprehension in the FL context. Though no other studies of writing apprehension among FL writers have compared results with writing apprehension among L1 writers, neither would such a finding as the aforementioned results suggest go contrary to the common belief among L2 writing practitioners that writing in a foreign or second language can be extremely difficult.

Perceptions and Attitudes Regarding the WI requirement

As noted above, one of the main foci of Research Question 1 was to identify the perceptions and attitudes which the students surveyed held regarding the writing-intensive requirement at the University of Minnesota. Qualitative instruments, including Section V of the Student Questionnaire, which contained open-ended questions to which

students were asked to respond, and the student focus groups, were used to gather data regarding this part of research question, and the data were analyzed for the presence of response units related to this topic. Hence in response to this part of the question, this study found, not surprisingly, that there were various response units (n =21, 0% with intensifiers) expressing that the purpose of the WI requirement was to help students to become better writers – a belief that seems to coincide well with the University of Minnesota’s self-reported purpose for the requirement (see University of Minnesota 2004, 34). An additional important finding from these data was that some students (n=6, 50% with intensifiers) believed writing to be an extremely important skill to be gained from a university education and, therefore, an extremely desirable outcome of the WI requirement at the university.

Perceptions regarding workload resulting from the WI requirement at the University of Minnesota emerging from the qualitative data were especially emphatic. For example, some response units (n=7, 71.4% with intensifiers) strongly expressed the feeling that the workload caused by the WI requirement was too great. Moreover, even more response units (n=13, 53.9% with intensifiers) expressed the belief that the WI requirement caused students to take too many so-called “writing-intensive” courses because, in their view, all Spanish courses in the Spanish major (i.e. at the 3100-level and higher) are by nature writing-intensive.

Finally, interesting findings were gleaned from the qualitative data regarding students’ perceptions of the differences between fulfilling the WI requirement in Spanish as L2 and fulfilling it in English as L1. For instance, a relatively numerous amount of

response units (n=21, 33.3% with intensifiers) were gleaned expressing the sentiment that writing in Spanish-as-foreign-language is just harder than writing in their native language of English. However, almost as many response units, though with less intensity (n=17, 0% with intensifiers), expressed the belief that the WI requirement was no harder for students majoring in Spanish than for students majoring in a major where the writing-intensive requirement was fulfilled in L1 English. Moreover, a handful of responses (n=6, 33% with intensifiers), expressed the thought that the WI requirement was actually better for the Spanish major than for other non-FL majors on campus because it afforded the former an opportunity to practice and learn more about their foreign language by writing so much.

To fix these specific results in the context of other studies in the field of L2 writing poses a somewhat difficult task. As I have stated previously, there is a relative dearth of research associated with foreign language students' attitudes and perceptions regarding WAC and Writing-Intensive requirements at university levels. And, indeed, previous studies have often been founded on anecdotal rather than empirical evidence. Nevertheless, the present study does seem to concur with studies, especially common in the 1990's when WAC was just emerging as an important curricular initiative in colleges and universities across North America. For example, studies such as those of Becket (1995), Janopoulos (1995) and Wolfe-Quintero and Segade (1999), which found that ESL students often face unfair challenges in terms of their academic writing at the university, seem to coincide well with the findings of the present study that many students of Spanish-as-FL at the University of Minnesota feel that the WAC-initiated WI

requirement there causes them to have to do even more work than do students in other majors. Moreover, on a more positive note, studies such as those of Morocco and Soven (1990) regarding third-year of Spanish-as-a-foreign-language and Homstad and Thorson's (1996) of students of Norwegian-as-a-foreign-language, which found that students benefited both linguistically and rhetorically from the implementation of WAC measures in their FL classes, seem to go hand in hand with the present study's findings regarding the WI-requirement's value as a tool for the teaching of writing and the foreign language.

Perceptions and Attitudes Regarding IW in the Spanish Class

A second focus of Research Question 1 regarded what perceptions and attitudes students have regarding specifically the intensive-writing (IW) performed in their WI Spanish class. Qualitative data collection instruments also included Section V of the Student Questionnaire and the student focus groups for this part of the research question. Findings from the analysis of the qualitative data reveal that students hold both negative and positive attitudes and perceptions regarding the intensive writing in their Spanish courses. Not surprisingly, for example, workload was again an issue. Indeed, many responses expressing that the workload associated with the WI course was too heavy, were counted (n=13) and these responses were generally emphatic (72.2% with intensifiers). Moreover, some students expressed the feeling that they simply dislike the writing (n=7, 28.6% with intensifiers) and others observed that it was too stressful and/or frustrating (n=6, 16.7% with intensifiers). In terms of positive perceptions regarding the

IW in their Spanish WI courses, various responses emerged expressing students' feeling that their confidence had grown as a result of the intensive writing in the course (n=7, 42.9% with intensifiers), that they felt proud of themselves as a result of having endured and completed the writing (n=7, 14.3% with intensifiers) and that though they may strongly dislike the writing, they admit that the writing was a good thing for them (n=8, 0% with intensifiers).

Again, as with the data which documented students' beliefs about the WI requirement at the University of Minnesota, data regarding the intensive writing in the specific WI Spanish course, coincides more or less with previous studies regarding WAC and L2, such as those of Morocco and Soven (1990) and Homstad and Thorson (1996) for FL writers and Becket (1995), Janopoulos (1996) and Wolfe-Quintero and Segade (1999) for ESL writers. For example, inasmuch as Becket (1995), Janopoulos (1995) and Wolfe Quintero and Segade (1999) call for sensitivity to the unique situation of the ESL writer in the writing-intensive or WAC-driven classroom, the present study points out and calls for sensitivity regarding issues such as workload, stress and frustration inherent to the writing-intensive Spanish-as-FL classroom. Moreover, while Morocco and Soven (1990) and Homstad and Thorson (1996) extol the positive outcomes of writing in the foreign language curriculum, so does the present study point to some students' gains in self-pride and confidence as language learners and writers. These results also coincide well with the more recent studies of Katznelson et al. (2001), Larsen et al. (2005) and Perpignan et al. (2007), who have studied and written about the positive "by-products"

resulting from writing in the foreign language classroom, including, as with the present study, greater confidence and pride in students' writing.

Review and Discussion of Results for Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked: Do L2 Spanish students show improved accuracy and coherence in their writing after taking an intensive writing course? Following is a summary of the findings of the study regarding this research question and a discussion of the significance of the findings in light of previous research.

Accuracy Analysis

Data collection and analysis for Research Question 2 yielded no statistically significant results; that is, empirical data collected at the beginning and end of the semester did not reveal improvement in students' accuracy and coherence in writing. Specifically, the error-per-t-unit accuracy analysis of pre- versus post-write samples yielded a mean 1.25 (SD=0.46) on pre-writes as compared to 1.26 (SD=0.58) for the post-write samples ($t = -0.21$; $p = .836$). For the topical structure analysis, parallel progressions comprised 30% of all progressions on pre-write samples and 27% of all progressions on post-write samples ($t = 0.93$; $p = .362$); sequential progressions comprised 48% of all progressions on pre-write samples and 52% of all progressions on post-write samples ($t = -0.95$; $p = .354$); and extended parallel progressions comprised 22% of all progressions on pre-write samples and 23% of all progressions on post-write samples ($t = -0.36$; $p = .722$).

As I observed in Chapter 4, it was perhaps not unexpected that results of the accuracy analysis (E/T-unit) of pre- and post-write samples in the present study did not reveal any sort of statistically significant improvement. Indeed, previous research analyzing accuracy improvement during one semester (see, for example, Ballman 1987; González-Bueno 1998; González-Bueno and Pérez 2000) seems to illustrate that to find no statistically observable improvement in terms of linguistic accuracy during a period of time as short as one semester could be seen as more the rule than the exception.

Nevertheless, as I noted in Chapter 4, the qualitative data collected for the present study suggest that generally students perceived that by engaging in intensive writing they do improve in terms of their knowledge and use of Spanish grammar. I reiterate here that, as Casanave (1994) posits, perhaps our notion of “improvement” in second language acquisition ought to be reconfigured. Indeed, the very fact that a student believes that he or she has improved linguistically, might in and of itself be considered a form of improvement. Few experts in applied linguistics would discredit the notion that a feeling of self-assurance and positive affect could be considered less than optimal in terms of its value in the learning of a foreign language. Furthermore, the measures used to demonstrate improvement may not be adequate given the relatively short term (i.e. 15 weeks) of this study.

Coherence Analysis

As with the accuracy analysis of the pre-and post-write samples for the present study, it was not surprising that no statistically significant improvements were discovered. And

again, inasmuch as qualitative data for the present study suggest that both students and their teachers seem to perceive that the intensive writing in their courses was of value in terms of helping students to improve rhetorically as writers, it behooves researchers to reconsider the meaning of “improvement” and whether or not a student’s positive attitude regarding such improvement does not indeed comprise some form thereof.

Additionally, however, regarding the topical structure analysis specifically, I would note that it is of interest that the trend in the results of the present study was toward a decrease in parallel progressions from pre- to post-write, and toward an increase in sequential progressions from pre- to post-write. Again, these results were not statistically meaningful. However, according to previous TSA research performed on second language writing samples such as that of Schneider and Connor (1990) and So (2002), just such a trend has been observed as indicative of more highly rated writing samples. Hence, it is my opinion that further research of a more longitudinal nature is merited.

Review and Discussion of Results for Research Question 3

A question that underscores Research Question 3 is the following: If, indeed, students do not improve measurably in terms of linguistic accuracy and coherence in their writing, as per results from Research Question 2, what do they learn or, more especially, what do they believe they learn as a result of the intensive writing in their WI Spanish course? More specifically, Research Question 3 asked the following: What do students feel they learn by engaging in intensive writing in their WI Spanish course, in terms of course

content, writing skill and Spanish language? Hence, this section summarizes the findings of the study regarding writing and the learning of course content, of writing ability and of the Spanish language and discusses their significance in light of previous research.

Both quantitative and qualitative instruments were employed in answering this question. The quantitative instrument used to respond to this part of Research Question 3 was the adapted WEC Questionnaire (Beason and Darrow 1997) contained in Section IV, Part B, of the Student Questionnaire. The WEC Questionnaire comprised Section IV of the Student Questionnaire. Only one item from Beason and Darrow's (1997) original WEC Questionnaire was analyzed for purposes of the present study, inasmuch as that item most directly addressed the focus of Research Question 3. The item asked students to respond to a statement regarding their learning of the three areas mentioned in Research Question 3 namely, course content, writing ability and the Spanish language, and employed a Likert-type scale which offered the possible responses of "strongly disagree", "disagree", "agree" or "strongly agree". The statement said the following: "Overall, my writing ability/understanding of the subject matter/knowledge of the Spanish language was improved by doing the writing assignments (such as 1-page summaries, 3-4 page papers, essay exams, etc.) in this class." I tallied the number of responses of "agree" or "strongly agree", following Beason and Darrow's lead, for each one of the learning areas. Qualitative instruments used included the open-ended questions found in Section V of the Student Questionnaire and the student focus groups.

Summary and Discussion of Writing to Learn Course Content

This section reviews results concerning students' perceptions and attitudes pertaining to the intensive writing in their WI Spanish courses and its effect on their learning of the course's content. Additionally, the section proposes to contextualize the results within previous research related to this topic. The section includes a summary and discussion of findings from Section IV, Part B of the Student Questionnaire (the WEC Questionnaire) and from the qualitative instruments employed for the study, including Section V of the Student Questionnaire and student focus groups.

Results from the WEC Questionnaire, Section IV, Part B of the Student Questionnaire revealed that 96% of students surveyed for the present study marked "agree" or "strongly agree" in response to the statement: "Overall, my understanding of the subject matter was improved by doing the writing assignments (such as 1-page summaries, 3-4 page papers, essay exams, etc.) in this class." This result was somewhat higher than results for Beason and Darrow's study of English L1 writers, which reported that only 84% of students responded "agree" or "strongly agree" to the statement.

Analysis of the qualitative data gathered for the study, yielded a count of some 13 response units which expressed the sentiment of students that the writing in their course helped them to learn the subject matter of the course. Moreover, 5 of those statements, or 38.5%, were expressed in the company of an intensifying word or phrase.

As I explained in Chapter 2, the literature review, there is little empirical evidence in support of the claim that by engaging in writing, students gain stronger learning of the content of the course in which they write (Peritz 1994, Klein 1999, Bangert-Drown et al.

2004, Demaree 2006, Dieft et al. 2006), despite the millions of dollars and countless hours of work which have gone into establishing WAC and writing-to-learn in colleges and universities across the world. And even less empirical evidence exists validating the use of WAC and writing-to-learn principles in second and foreign language curricula. Nevertheless, as shown above, much like their teachers and university administrators, students enrolled in WI Spanish courses at the university strongly believe that writing does lead to learning of the subject matter of the course. Indeed, this finding concurs with what other L2 practitioners and researchers, such as Andra-Miller (1991), Homstad and Thorson (2000b), Pornpibul (2002), Katznelson et al. (2001), Rubin et al. (2005), Leki (2007) and Perpignan et al. (2007), have suggested – namely, that students believe that they learn more about the content of their course, when they engage in writing in the course. And, as I have stated previously in Chapter 4, such a belief on the part of students, in my opinion, speaks volumes to the validity and value of writing-to-learn as a teaching methodology.

Summary and Discussion of Writing to Learn to Write

This section summarizes findings with regard to students' perceptions and attitudes concerning intensive writing and their learning of writing skills. Moreover, the section proposes to situate the findings within the context of previous research on this topic. The section includes a summary and discussion of findings from Section IV, Part A of the Student Questionnaire (the WEC Questionnaire) and of the qualitative findings from Section V of the Student Questionnaire and from the student focus groups.

Results from the WEC Questionnaire, Section IV, Part A of the Student Questionnaire revealed that 77% of students surveyed responded “agree” or “strongly agree” in response to the statement: “Overall, my writing ability was improved by doing the writing assignments (such as 1-page summaries, 3-4 page papers, essay exams, etc.) in this class.” This result was almost exactly the same as results for Beason and Darrow’s English L1 study, which found, similarly, that 76% of students responded “agree” or “strongly agree” to the statement.

Analysis of qualitative data gathered for the present study, revealed a total count of 20 response units expressing the belief that the intensive writing in the students’ WI Spanish course helped them in their learning of better writing skills. Furthermore, of these 20 response units, 3, or 15%, were expressed with an intensifying word or phrase.

To my mind the present study’s findings for “writing to learn to write” merit special mention in terms of what they contribute to a more complete understanding of WAC and WI as they pertain to FL writers. Previous FL writing scholars (Schultz 1991 and Laviosa 1994, for example) have proposed that FL students appear to improve in terms of their rhetorical abilities, and some have endeavored to show empirically that such improvement actually does occur (Kern and Schultz 1992, Moser 1992, Gallego de Bebliche 1993). And yet others (Schultz 1991, Laviosa 1994, Heilenman 1995, White and Caminero 1995, Homstad and Thorson 2000a, Schlig 2005) have expressed their strong opinion that by engaging in the writing act in the L2 context, students do improve overall as writers, whatever the language in which they write. Hence, while the present study found no improvement in its participants’ writing, at least in terms of coherence, it

is again noteworthy that some 77% of students surveyed are of the opinion that the intensive writing does help them to become better writers. Moreover, findings from the qualitative data for the study seem to confirm this belief. And, as with the learning of course content, I would emphatically suggest here that the fact that students quite strongly believe that they learn to be better writers, even while writing in a language not native to them, can be seen as a form of evidence that they do indeed improve in their writing, even if, in the short term, immeasurably so.

Summary and Discussion of Writing to Learn Spanish

This section summarizes findings with regard to students' perceptions and attitudes concerning intensive writing and their learning of the Spanish language and attempts to situate the findings within the context of previously published literature related to the topic. The section includes a review and discussion of results gathered from Section IV, Part C of the Student Questionnaire (the WEC Questionnaire) and of the qualitative findings from Section V of the Student Questionnaire and from the student focus groups.

Findings from the WEC Questionnaire, Section IV, Part C of the Student Questionnaire showed that 76% of students surveyed for the present study marked "agree" or "strongly agree" in response to the statement: "Overall, my knowledge of the Spanish language was improved by doing the writing assignments (such as 1-page summaries, 3-4 page papers, essay exams, etc.) in this class." Inasmuch as Beason and Darrow were not interested in gathering data relative to the learning of a foreign

language, no comparison of this specific learning area is possible with results from their study of English L1 writers.

Analysis of the qualitative data gathered for the present study, yielded a count of 33 response units in which students expressed the sentiment that the intensive writing in their WI Spanish course helped them to learn the Spanish language. Of these 33 response units, moreover, 9, or 27.3%, were produced accompanied by an intensifying word or phrase. Additionally, the analysis of the qualitative data found more specific findings regarding the intensive writing and the learning of Spanish. For example, 18 response units, 6 (33%) of which were given emphatically, were counted expressing the belief that the writing specifically helped them to learn Spanish grammar. Additionally, 12 response units, 4 (33%) of which were expressed with an intensifier, were counted stating that students believed that they learned Spanish vocabulary specifically as a result of the intensive writing. Finally, 11 response units, 2 (18.2%) of which emphatically, were found in the data expressing the specific belief by students that the writing actually helped them to become better speakers of the Spanish language.

These findings remind us that the writing-intensive Spanish classes herein studied, though strongly content-based, nevertheless are still somewhat laboratories for language learning and that students in these courses are “still primarily language majors, not literature or comparative literature literary theory majors” (Barnes-Karol 2003, 21). Indeed, it is clear from the results of the present study that the participants surveyed are still anxiously engaged in the language acquisition process. Moreover, I would remind the reader that as with the other two learning areas studied here, the very fact that

students seem to believe that they learn language as a result of their engagement in intensive writing in their WI course, goes a long way in support of the argument for the use of writing as an instrument for language acquisition. Indeed, as Casanave (1994) suggests, perhaps our definition of what entails linguistic “improvement” ought to be reconfigured to include students’ attitudes and perceptions regarding their linguistic learning. Furthermore, the findings herein reported seem to coincide well with previous studies on writing and the learning of language such as those of Andra-Miller (1991), Homstad and Thorson (1996), So (1997) and Carrasquel (1998) which all suggest that writing in the foreign language classroom is of value, not only as a tool for the learning of writing, but as a tool for the learning of language.

In addition, with regards to the suggestion that writing in FL actually aids students in their learning of Spanish, I would propose that students’ comments on this topic reinforce the importance of and contribute to our understanding of the “output hypothesis” (Swain 1985) and of the notion of “noticing” (Schmidt and Frota 1986; Swain 1997), even though not empirically so. Indeed, by listening to Spanish FL writers in the present study, it has become clear that, at the very least, students do take notice of the grammar and vocabulary in their writing – whether or not it actually results in measurable learning. Moreover, students expressed their belief that by slowing down during writing and “noticing”, they felt more capable in the more spontaneous mode of speaking in the FL – which various students observed was of great importance to them, both personally and professionally, in terms of specific hoped-for outcomes of their pursuing Spanish studies at the University.

I would also mention here that the findings of the present study appear to show some evidence in favor of the involvement load hypothesis (Laufer and Hulstijn 2001), which states, generally speaking, that the more “involved” a learner is, or the heavier the “involvement” of a specific task, the more likely the learner will be to learn vocabulary. While studies on this hypothesis have yielded somewhat varied findings, in general the literature sides in support of the concept that greater involvement, as that entailed in the writing act, generally does lead to greater learning of vocabulary (Laufer and Hulstijn 2001, Hulstijn and Laufer 2001, Folse 2006 and Keating 2008). And inasmuch as students surveyed for the present study generally appear to believe that the writing does indeed help them to learn Spanish vocabulary, since it often involves the heavily “involved” and meaningful use of new words, the present study, in the researcher’s opinion, serves as further evidence in favor of the involvement load hypothesis, albeit only based on students’ perceptions.

Finally, I would observe that I found it to be of particular interest that students expressed the belief that engaging in writing in the foreign language, as in their WI Spanish classes, helped them additionally to become better speakers of the language. As Hubert (2008) observes, very little research has been carried out to examine the impact of one of the language modalities, such as writing, on another one of the modalities, such as speaking. Indeed, Hubert’s dissertation, which interestingly found there to be a strong correlation, especially at intermediate and advanced levels, between the writing ability of his Spanish-as-FL students and their speaking ability, is an exception. Hence, while little evidence, aside from Hubert’s recent study, exists which shows the relationship between

the learning of proficient writing and the learning of proficient speaking, the present study suggests that students believe that such a correlation exists and, as a result, serves as a call to researchers to more fully consider this topic.

Summary and Discussion of Comparison of the Three Learning Areas

Comparative results from the item selected from the WEC Questionnaire (Beason and Darrow 1997) (“Overall, my writing ability/understanding of the subject matter/knowledge of the Spanish language was improved by doing the writing assignments (such as 1-page summaries, 3-4 page papers, essay exams, etc.) in this class”) reveal that students are significantly more convinced that the writing of a paper led to their learning of subject matter more than of writing skills or the Spanish language. Fully 96% of the total responses regarding the learning of topic of the paper were found in the area of “agree” or “strongly agree” whereas only 77% were so regarding the learning of writing skills and 76% for the learning of the Spanish language. Results for all three learning areas were compared statistically and findings of the statistical analysis revealed that FL students believe that the writing in the course led significantly more to the learning of the subject matter ($p < .05$) than to the learning of either writing ability or of the Spanish language. Moreover, though, for obvious reasons, Beason and Darrow did not survey students regarding FL learning, it is nonetheless interesting that their results and those of the present study coincide regarding learning of course content and that of writing ability inasmuch as both studies found that students perceive the learning of

course content to be a greater outcome of the intensive writing than the learning of writing skill.

Findings from the qualitative instruments employed by the study confirm that students believe that the writing in their WI Spanish course led to greater learning and understanding of the course's content, to the learning of better writing skills and to the learning of the Spanish language. To review, with regards to the learning of course content, a total of 13 response units, 5 (38.5%) of which were stated in the company of an intensifying word or phrase, were counted across all of the qualitative data for the study. Moreover, with regards to the learning of writing skill, a total of 20 response units were counted, 3 (15%) of which included an intensifier. Finally, as pertains to the learning of Spanish language, the highest count of response units was obtained. In all, 33 response units were counted stating that students' believed that they gained learning about the Spanish language as a result of the intensive writing, 8 (24.2%) of which were expressed in the company of an intensifying word or phrase. I found it interesting that while the area of the learning of the Spanish language received the most response units, the area of the learning of course content was that which was expressed with the strongest emphasis, a result which coincides both with the findings, described above, for the WEC Questionnaire in the present study and in Beason and Darrow's (1997) study.

Additionally, a more specific analysis of Question G from Section V of the Student Questionnaire, which asked, "When you write a paper in Spanish, what would you say is the single most important thing you gain from doing so (i.e. greater knowledge of the subject about which you wrote, improved overall writing ability, improved Spanish

grammar, vocabulary, etc.)?” was performed. Question G yielded a count of 9 response units, 2 or 22.2% of which were expressed emphatically, referring to the learning of the subject of the paper as the most important thing gained from the writing. By comparison, 9 response units stating that the writing skills was that which was most learned, though 0% were expressed with intensifiers, and 16 response units, 1, or 6.2% of which was stated with an intensifier, were counted as stating that the Spanish language was that which was most learned as a result of the writing of a paper. It is interesting here to note that though these findings for the analysis of Question G of Section V of the Student Questionnaire reveal that for the learning of the Spanish language the greatest number of response units was counted, at the same time, the percentage of response units counted containing an intensifying word or phrase, regarding students’ perceptions of the learning of course content was the greatest.

This finding reiterates to my mind that students indeed feel quite strongly that learning of all three areas – course content, writing skill and Spanish language – results from their involvement in the intensive writing in their course, but, as quantitative results from the WEC Questionnaire item also suggest, they feel most emphatic about their learning of the course content even though total response unit counts are much higher for the area of Spanish learning in the qualitative data. Indeed, I believe that the extra effort expended in counting those response units which contained an intensifying word or phrase, has helped us gain a more insightful view of these comparative results, above and beyond a simple counting of response units. Thus, the goal of the mixed methods design of the study, to combine both qualitative and quantitative methods in order to obtain a

clearer, more comprehensive understanding of the research context, has, to my mind, been realized in the present study.

A Final Word about Student Voice

To conclude this section of review and discussion of the research questions of the present study, I would like to reiterate that this study comprises a serious effort to listen to students and, hence, to give them a voice regarding the foreign language writing curriculum and their learning therein. And, as was suggested in Chapter 2, the literature review of the present study, to my mind and to the minds of many educational researchers (Yvonna Lincoln, Alison Cook-Sather, Dana Mitra, Denise Batchelor, to name only a few), this is an extremely important and worthwhile endeavor. Hence, in the present study I have earnestly attempted to listen to and account for students' feelings and beliefs regarding the WI requirement at the university and regarding the intensive writing in their Spanish courses, in the hopes of creating a more complete vision of exactly what their needs are and of how FL writing practitioners should proceed as they continue to develop and fine-tune the writing involved in the FL curriculum.

Limitations of the Study

While the present study is valuable in terms of its contribution to our understanding and the future development of foreign language writing curricula, as with all studies, it is not without its limitations. An initial observation, for example, is that the study does not boast the comparative benefit of control group classes wherein the writing intensive

requirement is not a major factor. However, because of the way in which the University of Minnesota's intensive writing requirement was implemented in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese Studies, all three entry-level courses to the major are designated as Writing Intensive. Furthermore, aside from the University requirement, it is my conviction that to establish such courses wherein the intensive writing component would not be a major part of a class would potentially deprive the students of an invaluable learning tool.

An additional limitation of the study, moreover, is that the data herein would surely be enhanced by the participation of a greater number of students and instructors in the study. Although time and resources did not permit it, to have been able to collect data from an even greater number of writing-intensive Spanish classes, would most certainly have proved beneficial to both the quantitative and qualitative analyses of the study.

Similarly, I am keenly aware that a sixteen-week semester is a relatively short time in which to examine issues surrounding improvement in linguistic accuracy and writing ability. Indeed, results for accuracy and coherence related to Research Question 2 seem to have been directly affected by the brevity of the timetable for the study, inasmuch as no statistically significant changes were observed. Hence, although, again, time and resources did not permit it, greater longitude would most certainly have enhanced a study of this nature.

Another potential limitation pertaining to the writing samples collected for the study is that at the end of the semester when the post-write was completed, my sense was that the students were weary and as a result may have afforded the task less effort than

they did for the pre-write at the beginning of the semester. Evidence of this was the fact that I had to eliminate a handful of the writing sets because in the case of those few students the post-write was far shorter and had a far less serious tone than the pre-write. Hence, it seems that a better approach may have been to ask the respective teachers of the classes to grade both writing samples in order to ensure that students took both seriously.

Moreover, it is clear that with regards to results for writing apprehension among the learners who participated in the present study, not only a post-semester but also a pre-semester administration of the Writing Apprehension Survey (Daly and Miller 1975) would have been optimal. Indeed, by doing so, not only would even more meaningful comparisons with studies of ESL writers such as that of Pajares and Johnson (1994) have been possible, but also stronger conclusions regarding the direct effect of the intensive writing in the semester-long course might have been drawn.

I would also observe that a potential limitation of the present study is that of the fairly tightly written focus group interview protocols (see Appendix B). Indeed, I followed them closely and though the focus group interviews were considered to be of a semi-structured type, it is clear from reviewing them, that the focus of our discussions was fairly controlled by the protocol. As the mediator of the group I did my best to ensure that students felt comfortable expressing their honest thoughts about their writing and learning in their WI Spanish courses, but I fear that at certain points I may have remained too closely tied to the bullet points displayed in the protocol, thereby preventing participants from following potentially important and meaningful tangential conversation topics.

Another potential limitation of the present study entails my personal background and motivation for the study. As the principal researcher, I am not without my personal biases which certainly cannot be ignored in terms of their effect on the results of this study. For example, I have had my own struggles with writing which have caused strong opinions in me regarding the writing act and I have had to struggle to ensure that these biases did not shine through as I collected data for the present study, though it is doubtful that I was completely successful.

Additionally, I would observe that I perceive that there are differences between results from Section V of the Student Questionnaire and those from the focus group data. By this I mean that responses to the open-ended questions in Section V of the Student Questionnaire seemed, in my opinion, to be markedly more direct and pessimistic than those emerging from the focus groups where I, myself an instructor of a writing-intensive 3100-level course, was present. Indeed, as I reviewed the qualitative data it became clear to me that my physical presence in the focus groups may have inhibited students in their responses and caused them to come across as wanting to appear more optimistic than were responses given in the even more anonymous Student Questionnaires.

Pedagogical Implications of the Study

In Krashen's (1981) watershed work on language learning, he discusses the need for lowering what he terms the "affective filter" in the second language class. In other words, he suggests that a learning environment wherein students' anxiety is low will be an optimal environment for the learning of languages. In the present study, I have

examined the presence of writing apprehension in L2 student writers and have found evidence that suggests that it may be even more pervasive among language learning writers than among students writing in their L1. Surely, this finding ought to instruct language educators' understanding of the place of writing in the classroom environment. Indeed, if writing in some way causes elevation of the affective filter in the language classroom, appropriate measures ought to be considered to help ensure that it is lowered to a point that it does not affect students' language learning. As I stated earlier in this study, even the more advanced, major-level, writing-intensive Spanish courses are still laboratories for language learning and acquisition.

Moreover, regarding the teaching of writing in the L2 classroom, Ken Hyland (2003) has said the following:

Writing is among the most important skills that second language students need to develop, and the ability to teach writing is central to the expertise of a well-trained language teacher. But while interest in second language writing and approaches to teaching it have increased dramatically over the last decade, teachers are often left to their own resources in the classroom as much of the relevant theory and research fails to reach them" (Preface, p. xv).

And similarly, Ann Raimes (2002) made the following observation regarding the planning and implementation of L2 writing courses.

A few years ago, I gave papers called "The Neurosis of Lesson Planning" and "Anguish as a Second Language" in which I explored the fact that both learning and teaching a language promote anxiety. There is even more anxiety when writing is involved, especially when many teachers themselves do not feel entirely comfortable with writing in English, even if it is their native language. Today, with a burgeoning of conflicting theories, planning a writing course is like walking a minefield. It involves so many choices about where to go next, what is the best step to take, and what is the best route to the goal. Taking a wrong step in this context

might not be as dire as stepping on a mine, but it can undermine our confidence and detonate our students' resistance. (306)

And, finally, Richards and Renandya (2002) seem to add very nicely to what Raimes and Hyland say about planning and teaching L2 writing courses.

With so many conflicting theories around and so many implementation factors to consider, planning and teaching a course in writing can be a daunting task. Which theoretical strands are we going to adopt? Are we going to use the process approach or the genre-based approach? Or an eclectic approach? What will be the focus of our course? What activities are likely to help students develop their writing skills? How do we treat learner errors? Do we correct all error types? How do we get students to self-edit? (303).

Hence, with so much at stake and so many stress-causing issues with which to deal in the programming and installation of writing in the L2 curriculum, it seems that studies such as the present one are greatly needed to instruct our pedagogical practices. Indeed, as I discussed earlier, this dissertation represents an attempt to listen to students' perceptions about the writing class in the Spanish major and to allow them to have a "voice" in the pedagogical process. Clearly, as Cook-Sather (2006) has observed, repeating a quote cited earlier in Chapter 2 of the present study, students ought to "be afforded opportunities to actively shape their education" (359-360).

Therefore, I believe that the pedagogical implications of the present study are perhaps its most important outcome. In their study, Beason and Darrow (1997) suggested that "listening [...] means more than just hearing. It also means we value what people have to say" (115). Thus, inasmuch as the present study has, in large part, been an attempt to hear and value and not just listen to what students have to say regarding writing-across-the-curriculum and intensive writing in the advanced foreign language

curriculum, it is hoped that it may serve to inform future pedagogical initiatives pertaining to writing in the foreign language classroom. On this point, another statement by Beason and Darrow (1997) regarding their study seems most appropriate:

In this study, we pay special attention to students, who traditionally have had little input in formal assessment efforts. The emphasis on student and teacher feedback is not a mere diplomacy ploy, or just an attempt to ‘sell’ WAC and assessment to faculty and students. Because these individuals understand firsthand how a WAC classroom operates and because of the demands of WAC on their energy and academic lives, they have a right to be heard and have an insider’s perspective on how WAC works. In short, we invited teachers and students to speak because we felt their voices were worth hearing, and then we listened. (100)

It is my belief that studies such as that presented here comprise a vital form of investigation meant to meaningfully address teaching practices in the language classroom.

In terms of specific implications for pedagogy in the advanced Spanish content classroom, I would reiterate a point that became clear to me during the collection of data for the present study. To wit, writing can be very challenging for some students while relatively easy for others. Cummins’ (1979) “linguistic interdependence hypothesis” theorizes that if a language learner’s proficiency in a linguistic skill, such as writing, is well developed in the learner’s L1, that aptitude will likely correlate with a strong propensity for proficiency in that skill in the L2 as well. Moreover, and by the same token, a deficiency in the skill in the L1 may likewise result in a deficiency in the same skill in the L2. This theory is relevant because, as in any university-level, English L1 writing-intensive course, the writing-intensive foreign language content course also typically comprises learners who bring vastly diverse writing skills and experiences to the

classroom. Indeed, irrespective of the language in which the writing is performed, whether in the L1 or in the advanced FL class, university students seem to carry with them a set of conceptions and experiences pertaining to writing that seem to supersede linguistic boundaries. Regarding the two classes examined in the present study, for example, it was shown that some FL students feel strong apprehension about writing whereas others seem to have no more than a healthy respect for such writing. In my estimation, therefore, as with any instructor across the L1 university curriculum, it behooves the foreign language content course instructor to carefully and sensitively assess the attitudes and abilities of students in terms of their writing skills and experiences, both in the L1 and the L2, and to find and employ practices in the teaching, assignment and assessment of writing that will optimize the pedagogical potential of writing in their classrooms, given the vast disparity among students' writing abilities and experiences.

Furthermore, I see it as paramount here to reiterate that generally speaking the students surveyed in the present study perceived that writing in the FL classroom is, in spite of some potential complications, a valuable resource for the learning and teaching of course content, writing ability and Spanish language. For example, results for the present study suggest a potential linguistic benefit of the writing in the WI Spanish course – that it may have strengthened the speaking ability of students enrolled in the course. And, as Hubert (2008, 12) notes, this potential outcome of writing has been grossly overlooked in the literature on both the speaking and the writing modalities in second language

acquisition. Clearly, FL writing practitioners ought to continually seek to both discover and optimize the learning that can result from the writing in their classes.

In addition, this study serves as a reminder that foreign language students enrolled in writing-intensive courses face special circumstances, different from those of their colleagues whose coursework is done in either in the L1 or ESL context. Indeed, to adopt the terminology which Norton Peirce (1995, 9) has coined, both the writers' "social identity" (that which "integrates the language learner and the language learning context") and their "investment" (that which "conceives of the language learner, not as ahistorical and unidimensional, but as having a complex social history and multiple desires") ought to guide FL practitioners' understanding of and work with FL writers. For example, the most basic of these special circumstances is, of course, that foreign language students, unlike both native-language and ESL students, are not immersed in the culture of the language in which they are required to write. As a result, writing in the FL is not, per se, a real-world necessity for them – essentially, they write only for the academy. Clearly, therefore, FL writers' "social identity" and "investment" in the target language and culture is unique and conceptions of these factors ought to instruct the work of both FL practitioners and researchers.

Along with this point, it is interesting to note that in many cases the only preparation students have had for the intensive writing required in their major-level courses, has been, typically but not always, two years of college language courses (or the high school equivalent) and a third-year course or two, meant to bridge the writing and linguistic gap between language-level and major-level courses. Unfortunately, however,

many upper-level educators lament that this is not nearly enough preparation (Valdés et al. 1992). Indeed, foreign language teaching practitioners ought to carefully assess the linguistic abilities of their students and sensitively adjust their teaching accordingly.

Finally, at a certain point in my career, a student enrolled in a major-level Spanish course on Latin American Culture course told me that if he really wanted to learn Latin American history, he'd go to the History Department and take the course in English. He said that the learning was simply too slow and that he could gain the knowledge in his native tongue much more easily. His implication, I believe, was that he was taking the content course in Spanish because he loved Spanish and wanted to improve his abilities with it. This comment leads to questions such as the following: What is our main purpose as educators in foreign language departments? Are foreign language departments primarily for the teaching of language or for the teaching of content? If the former, then, in terms of writing, more emphasis should be placed on writing to learn the foreign language; if the latter, then more emphasis should be given to writing to learn course content; if both, then researchers and educators need to explore what would be the proper emphases of writing methodologies so as to achieve such a goal. Clearly, then, there is much to be done yet.

Thus, a vital recommendation of this study is that we continue to listen to and assess the needs of our students regarding foreign language writing, and, hopefully, motivate change on their behalf. Through studies such as the present one, we can learn more about why students study foreign languages, what they hope to gain in the process,

what aspects of the curriculum they specifically feel to be beneficial, and therefore, what changes foreign language educators must make.

Recommendations for Future Research

A common thread in the studies described in the review of the literature in this study is that there is still much to do in the research of foreign language writing, though recent trends are encouraging (Manchón and Haan 2008). Hence, this study represents yet another call to advance further research on foreign language writing.

An initial recommendation for future research on foreign language writing centers on how foreign language students view themselves as writers in a new linguistic and cultural community. Moreover, I believe that further exploration by researchers of the notions of “social identity” and “investment” (Norton Peirce 1995) will pay great dividends toward the establishment of a more complete theory of foreign language writing. Indeed, for researchers to attain such a theory, we must begin to further explore exactly how foreign language writers “identify” themselves personally and socially with the target language community and how strongly committed or “invested” they are in their attempt to integrate with that community. For example, researchers must begin to ask themselves exactly why foreign language learners write. Do they indeed hope to gain membership in a new linguistic community? Do they write strictly so that they can learn a foreign language? Do they write so that they can learn more about the culture of the target language? Are they interested in acquiring the full regimen of a foreign language community’s rhetoric or is their writing quite simply performed as a function of academic

requirements for graduation for an institute of higher education? Undoubtedly, attempts by researchers to answer such scholarly inquiries will help us to more clearly establish and characterize foreign language writers as unique from first- and second-language writers and will surely lead to even greater awareness of the need for further research on the place and value of writing in the foreign language curriculum.

Moreover, it is my hope that future researchers might consider what students in the present study have said regarding the value of intensive-writing in their learning of course content, improved writing and especially, given my specific bias as an applied linguist, of the Spanish language. Indeed, as pertains to this third learning area, it is my strong hope that researchers may explore how engagement in the language modality of writing might lead to gains in the other language modalities. In the present study, for example, findings suggest that intensive writing may lead to improvements specifically in the modality of speaking. Nevertheless, Hubert (2008), one of the very few researchers who have attempted to study the value of writing practice for the improvement of FL speaking ability, has observed that not only is there a dearth of such studies, but also generally of any studies which cross modality lines to explore the value of engagement in one modality for improvement in another. He says:

There is a limited amount of research available that compares [the four modalities] and their corresponding skill sets against each other.... A search of the major journals that publish articles dealing with SLA reveals a striking tendency toward the treatment of these skills as separate entities. Also, within U.S. university ESL and FL departments, reading, writing, speaking, and listening tend to not be integrated together in the classroom, but regarded as separate entities to be both taught and assessed separately.... [and this] is very possibly a less-than-optimal method of studying SLA. (12-14)

Hence, a strong outcome of the present study shall be the suggestion that future research explore not only the writing modality but rather how engagement and improvement in the writing modality may lead to stronger skills in the other modalities – speaking, reading and listening.

Additionally, it has become clear to me during the pursuit of this research that issues surrounding writing apprehension in the foreign language are in need of the attention of researchers. For example, the present study raises such questions as the following: What are the most salient differences between apprehension in L1 writers and apprehension in FL writers? Is there a clear relationship between L1 writer apprehension and FL writer apprehension? How might the phenomenon of “foreign language anxiety” (Horwitz et al. 1986) affect the presence of writing apprehension among foreign language writers? Does writing in a foreign language increase writing apprehension or can it somehow serve to decrease writing apprehension by allowing students to experiment and explore meaningfully in the foreign language?

Furthermore, I believe a valuable avenue of future research is that of the potential for improvement in both coherence and accuracy in FL writing as a result of involvement in intensive writing. As noted earlier, the present study was limited to the timeframe of one academic semester, or some 16 weeks. Clearly, studies of improvement in accuracy and coherence as they are affected by intensive writing would greatly benefit from longer longitudinal parameters. Furthermore, the number of students who participated in the present study was fairly small and it appears obvious that access to greater numbers of

participants in combination with a longer timeframe would yield at least somewhat more observable and generalizable results.

Finally, studies similar to the present study, in which the researcher seriously attempts to listen to and record what students have to say about their writing in a foreign language, can help further understanding of the noticing hypothesis. Indeed, much of what I asked the students involved in the present study to do was to “notice” and articulate what they perceive they learn in terms of the Spanish language, from the intensive writing in their WI Spanish course. Clearly, future studies wherein students are asked to express what they “notice” linguistically during the writing process will no doubt increase our understanding of the noticing hypothesis.

Conclusion: Some Final Observations

In the end, as I explained in Chapter 1 of this study, the topic of WAC and writing-to-learn in the foreign language curriculum chose me, and not I it, when, in the summer of 1999, I was approached by the Department of Spanish and Portuguese Studies to be one of the first writing consultants in the newly-formed Spanish Writing Center. The fact is, nevertheless, that I am greatly pained by writing and have struggled with writing apprehension myself over the years. Nevertheless, among the greatest joyful and successful experiences I have had in my academic life, are those which have come to me in the process of writing in Spanish as a foreign language. Indeed, though it was often stressful, frustrating and burdensome for me, as with many of the students surveyed in the present study, in the end I believe that writing plays an essential role in the learning

processes in the foreign language classroom. Indeed, in regards to foreign language writing I would concur with what Miller and Webb (1995) say about writing in general; namely that it can “change your life” and “broaden your world” (1). It is my hope, therefore, that the present study provides even more impetus among practitioners of foreign language education and, more specifically, of foreign language writing, to create a learning environment through writing wherein students may have changed lives and broadened worlds.

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APPENDIX A

**Survey of Spanish Writing-Intensive Courses
at the University of Minnesota - Spring 2001**

Please take a few moments to respond to the following survey about the writing in your class this semester and in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese and University of Minnesota overall. Remember that questionnaire will be kept confidential -- your instructor will not see your responses so please be as candid as possible. (Remember to do both sides of each page!)

I. Personal information

Name: _____ Male: _____ Female: _____ Age: _____

Class: _____ Teacher: _____

Year in school: _____ Major: _____ Minor: _____

Do you have to fulfill the "writing-intensive" requirement for graduation? Yes No

A. What (3000-level and above) Spanish classes have you taken or are you currently taking at the U of M?

Class:	Semester and year:
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

B. Have you traveled abroad in a Spanish-speaking country for an extended length of time? If so, explain:

Country:	Purpose/Description:	Year:	Length of stay:
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

C. Are you currently taking or have you previously taken any other "writing-intensive" classes outside of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese? If so, which?

Class:	Semester and year:
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

D. Please circle the word that best completes the following statement about yourself:
 Overall, I consider myself to be a(n) _____ writer in English:

Excellent

Good

average

Poor

E. Circle the number of the response that best completes the following statement for you:

My most important reason for taking Spanish courses at the University of Minnesota is ...

1



...to learn the Spanish language well.

2



...to learn about Hispanic culture, literature, history, linguistics, etc.

3



...mostly to learn the Spanish language but also to learn about Hispanic culture, literature, history, linguistics, etc.

4



...mostly to learn about Hispanic culture, literature, history, linguistics, etc., but also to learn the Spanish language well.

II. Personal writing strategies

Please respond to the following statements by circling the number that best corresponds to your personal writing strategies and habits, where...

1 = always, 2 = frequently, 3 = sometimes, 4 = seldom, and 5 = never:

When writing a paper for my Spanish class ...

	alwys	frqntly	somet	sldm	nvr
1. I do brainstorming or other kind of informal notetaking.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I create an outline before I start writing.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I like to just start writing without doing any kind of planning.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I like to give myself plenty of time to think about and write the paper.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I write a first draft a few days before it's due and let it sit for a day or two before revising.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I write the entire paper the night before it is due, or a few hours before it is due.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I like to write it out in English first and then translate it to Spanish.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I like to write the whole paper out before doing any sort of revision.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I like to revise paragraph by paragraph or chunk by chunk as I go along.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I take it to the Spanish Writing Center for help with the grammar.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I take it to the Spanish Writing Center for help with organization and thesis development.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I discuss it with my teacher before turning it in.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I use the Spanish Spell Check to make sure there are no grammar errors.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I ask a Spanish-speaking friend to read it and give me suggestions.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I put a lot of effort into the Spanish grammar in the paper.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I put a lot of effort into the actual writing (organization, flow of ideas, etc.) of the paper.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I put a lot of effort into the information (content, evidence, etc.) included in the paper.	1	2	3	4	5

III. Personal experience with writing in Spanish.

The following statements are in reference to your experience with writing in Spanish. Please circle the number that best corresponds to your personal feelings and experience, where...

1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=disagree, and 4=strongly disagree.

	SA	A	D	SD
1. I avoid writing in Spanish.	1	2	3	4
2. I have no fear of my Spanish writing being evaluated.	1	2	3	4
3. I look forward to writing down my ideas in Spanish.	1	2	3	4
4. I am afraid of writing essays in Spanish when I know they will be evaluated.	1	2	3	4
5. Taking a Spanish course that is intensive in writing is a very frightening experience.	1	2	3	4
6. Handing in a Spanish writing assignment makes me feel good.	1	2	3	4
7. My mind seems to go blank when I start to work on a writing assignment in Spanish.	1	2	3	4
8. Expressing ideas in Spanish through writing seems to be a waste of time.	1	2	3	4
9. I would enjoy submitting my writing in Spanish to a magazine for evaluation and publication.	1	2	3	4
10. I like to write my ideas down in Spanish.	1	2	3	4
11. I feel confident in my ability to clearly express my ideas in written Spanish.	1	2	3	4
12. I like to have my friends read what I have written in Spanish.	1	2	3	4
13. I'm nervous about writing in Spanish.	1	2	3	4
14. People seem to like what I write in Spanish.	1	2	3	4
15. I enjoy writing in Spanish.	1	2	3	4
16. I never seem to be able to clearly write down my ideas in Spanish.	1	2	3	4
17. Writing in Spanish is a lot of fun.	1	2	3	4
18. I expect to do poorly in Spanish classes that are heavy in writing assignments.	1	2	3	4
19. I like seeing my thoughts on paper in Spanish.	1	2	3	4
20. Discussing my writing in Spanish with others is an enjoyable experience.	1	2	3	4
21. I have a terrible time organizing my ideas in a Spanish course that is intensive in writing.	1	2	3	4
22. When I hand in a writing assignment in Spanish I know I'm going to do poorly.	1	2	3	4
23. It's easy for me to write good compositions in Spanish.	1	2	3	4
24. I don't think I write in Spanish as well as most other people in my Spanish classes.	1	2	3	4
25. I don't like my writing in Spanish to be evaluated.	1	2	3	4
26. I'm not good at writing in Spanish.	1	2	3	4

IV. Your current “writing-intensive” class

A. Overall writing ability

The following statements concern how the intensive writing in this Spanish class has helped you in terms of improving your overall ability as a writer (e.g. thesis development, ability to make ideas flow, ability to prove a point, etc.) in any language (English or Spanish). This is referred to below as “writing ability”. Please circle the number that best corresponds to your personal feelings and experience, where...

1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=did not do this (n/a), 4=disagree, and 5=strongly disagree.

	SA	A	N/A	D	SD
1. Overall, my writing ability was improved by doing the writing assignments (such as 1-page summaries, 3-4 page papers, essay exams, etc.) in this class.	1	2	3	4	5
2. My writing ability was improved by receiving feedback (either oral or written) from fellow students about the writing I did for this class.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My writing ability was improved by receiving feedback (either oral or written) from the teacher about writing I did for this class.	1	2	3	4	5
4. My writing ability was improved by giving feedback to other students about writing they did for this class.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My writing ability was improved by revising at least one rough draft of a writing assignment for this class.	1	2	3	4	5
6. My writing ability was improved by taking essay exams for this class.	1	2	3	4	5
7. My writing ability was improved by doing short writing assignments (about 1-2 typed pages) for this class.	1	2	3	4	5
8. My writing ability was improved by doing longer writing assignments (3 or more typed pages) for this class.	1	2	3	4	5
9. My writing ability was improved by being told by the teacher how she would grade writing assignments (the teacher explained her criteria for evaluating writing).	1	2	3	4	5
10. My writing ability was improved by being supplied with a written explanation of what I was supposed to do for a particular writing assignment (a written set of directions).	1	2	3	4	5
11. My writing ability was improved by being given a sample (or model) of how a previous student had done a writing assignment.	1	2	3	4	5

B. Learning of class subject matter

The following statements concern how the intensive writing in this Spanish class has helped you in terms of improving your understanding of the subject matter of the class. Please circle the number that best corresponds to your personal feelings and experience in this class, where...

1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=did not do this (n/a), 4=disagree, and 5=strongly disagree.

	SA	A	N/A	D	SD
1. Overall, my understanding of the subject matter was improved by doing the writing assignments (such as 1-page summaries, 3-4 page papers, essay exams, etc.) in this class.	1	2	3	4	5
2. My understanding of the subject matter was improved by receiving feedback (either oral or written) from fellow students about the writing I did for this class.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My understanding of the subject matter was improved by receiving feedback (either oral or written) from the teacher about writing I did for this class.	1	2	3	4	5
4. My understanding of the subject matter was improved by giving feedback to other students about writing they did for this class.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My understanding of the subject matter was improved by revising at least one rough draft of a writing assignment for this class.	1	2	3	4	5
6. My understanding of the subject matter was improved by taking essay exams for this class.	1	2	3	4	5
7. My understanding of the subject matter was improved by doing short writing assignments (about 1-2 typed pages) for this class.	1	2	3	4	5
8. My understanding of the subject matter was improved by doing longer writing assignments (3 or more typed pages) for this class.	1	2	3	4	5
9. My understanding of the subject matter was improved by being told by the teacher how she would grade writing assignments (the teacher explained her criteria for evaluating writing).	1	2	3	4	5
10. My understanding of the subject matter was improved by being supplied with a written explanation of what I was supposed to do for a particular writing assignment.	1	2	3	4	5
11. My understanding of the subject matter was improved by being given a sample (or model) of how a previous student had done a writing assignment.	1	2	3	4	5

C. Learning of Spanish language

The following statements concern how the intensive writing in this Spanish class has helped you to improve in terms of your knowledge of the Spanish language (i.e. grammar, vocabulary, ability to write more like a native Spanish-speaker, etc.). Please circle the number that best corresponds to your personal feelings and experience in this class, where...

1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=did not do this (n/a), 4=disagree, and 5=strongly disagree.

	SA	A	N/A	D	SD
1. Overall, my knowledge of the Spanish language was improved by doing the writing assignments (such as 1-page summaries, 3-4 page papers, essay exams, etc.) in this class.	1	2	3	4	5
2. My knowledge of the Spanish language was improved by receiving feedback (either oral or written) from fellow students about the writing I did for this class.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My knowledge of the Spanish language was improved by receiving feedback (either oral or written) from the teacher about writing I did for this class.	1	2	3	4	5
4. My knowledge of the Spanish language was improved by giving feedback to other students about writing they did for this class.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My knowledge of the Spanish language was improved by revising at least one rough draft of a writing assignment for this class.	1	2	3	4	5
6. My knowledge of the Spanish language was improved by taking essay exams for this class.	1	2	3	4	5
7. My knowledge of the Spanish language was improved by doing short writing assignments (about 1-2 typed pages) for this class.	1	2	3	4	5
8. My knowledge of the Spanish language was improved by doing longer writing assignments (3 or more typed pages) for this class.	1	2	3	4	5
9. My knowledge of the Spanish language was improved by being told by the teacher how she would grade writing assignments (the teacher explained her criteria for evaluating writing).	1	2	3	4	5
10. My knowledge of the Spanish language was improved by being supplied with a written explanation of what I was supposed to do for a particular writing assignment.	1	2	3	4	5
11. My knowledge of the Spanish language was improved by being given a sample (or model) of how a previous student had done a writing assignment.	1	2	3	4	5

V. The Writing-intensive requirement

Please answer the following questions as clearly and honestly as possible:

A. In your opinion, what is the purpose and value of the writing-intensive requirement at the University of Minnesota?

B. Specifically from the perspective of a Spanish student, what is the value of the writing-intensive requirement to you?

C. From the perspective of a student of Spanish, what do you most dislike about the writing-intensive requirement at the University of Minnesota?

D. How does the writing-intensive requirement at the University of Minnesota affect you as a student of Spanish differently from other students throughout the University?

E. What do you like most about Spanish classes that involve intensive writing?

F. What do you most dislike about Spanish classes that involve intensive writing?

G. When you write a paper in Spanish, what would you say is the single most important thing you gain from doing so (i.e. greater knowledge of the subject about which you wrote, improved overall writing ability, improved Spanish grammar, vocabulary, etc.)?

APPENDIX B

Focus Group Guide

INTRODUCTION

Greeting

Explain purpose of the focus group:

An opportunity to discuss your feelings about intensive writing in Spanish and the “Writing-Intensive Requirement” at the University of Minnesota.

Explain ground rules:

My role as moderator

The session will be recorded

The confidentiality of your comments

Freedom to express individual opinions – no right or wrong comments

Speak one at a time and as clearly as possible – no side-conversations

I want to learn from you

Explanation of terms:

Briefly introduce yourselves: name, major, minor

DISCUSSION STARTER

In your opinion, why is there a Writing-Intensive requirement at the University of Minnesota?

FOCUS QUESTIONS

How does the Writing-Intensive requirement at the University of Minnesota affect you specifically as a student of Spanish?

When you looked at the syllabus at the beginning of the semester and saw how much writing there would be (and knowing that it’s a Writing-intensive class) how did it make you feel?

Now looking back at all the writing you’ve done this semester, how do you feel?

CONTENT, WRITING ABILITY, OR SPANISH LANGUAGE?

EXPLAIN TERMS:

Learning of course content (literature or culture, for example)

Learning or improving your general writing ability

Learning or improving your ability in the Spanish language (grammar etc.)

Did writing in your Spanish class help you learn the material or content of the class (literature or culture)? If so, how?

Did writing in your Spanish class help you learn the Spanish language (grammar etc.)? If so, how?

Did writing in your Spanish class help you learn how to be a better writer overall (in English or Spanish)? How?

Which one of these did the intensive writing in your Spanish class help you improve or learn most, if any?

Which of these (learning course content, learning Spanish language, or learning how to be a better writer) is the most important to each of you? In what ways?

SPECIFIC TYPE OF ASSIGNMENT

As I understand it, everyone had to write weekly one-page summaries.

What were your feelings about those?

What did everyone learn from doing those?

What sort of problems did you have in writing them?

As I understand it, you've also had to write some bigger papers (like 3 to 4 pages in length) this semester:

How does it make you feel to be required to write a sort of bigger paper in Spanish?

What did everyone learn most from doing a bigger paper?

What sort of problems did you have in writing them?

SUMMARY QUESTION

So what is the value in taking a writing-intensive class in Spanish, if any?

Have we missed anything?

CONCLUSION

Thanks for coming.

I may want to interview some of you one-on-one. Would it be okay if I called and asked to chat with you individually in more detail about some of these things?

APPENDIX C

Guidelines for error analysis, **(adapted for Spanish from Polio 1997, 138-139)**

- a. Do not count spelling errors
- b. Do not count comma errors
- c. Base tense/reference errors on preceding discourse; do not look at the sentence in isolation
- d. Do not count errors in capitalization
- e. Count errors that could be made by native speakers
- f. Disregard an unfinished sentence at the end of the essay

APPENDIX D

Coding Guidelines for Topical Structure Analysis (taken from Schneider and Connor 1992, 427)

T-Units (T)

1. Any independent clause and all its required modifiers.
2. Any non-independent clause punctuated as a sentence (as indicated by end punctuation)
3. Any imperative

Parallel Progression (P)

1. Any sentence topic that exactly repeats, is a pronominal form, or is a synonym of the immediately preceding sentence topic.
2. Any sentence topic that is a singular or plural form of the immediately preceding sentence topic.
3. Any sentence topic that is an affirmative or negative form of the immediately preceding sentence topic.
4. Any sentence topic that the same head noun as the immediately preceding sentence topic.

Sequential Progression (S)

1. Any sentence topic that is different from the immediately preceding sentence topic, that is, not (1)-(4) in P.
2. Any sentence topic in which there is a qualifier that so limits or further specifies an NP that it refers to a different referent.
3. Any sentence topic that is a derivation of an immediately preceding sentence topic.
4. Any sentence topic that is related to the immediately preceding sentence topic by a part-whole relationship.
5. Any sentence topic that repeats a part but not all of an immediately preceding sentence topic.

Extended Parallel Progression (Ex)

Any sentence topic that is interrupted by at least one sequential topic before it returns to a previous sentence topic.

APPENDIX E

Topical Structure Analysis Training Guidelines

I. TSA, as stated by Schneider and Connor (1990), “examines how topics repeat, shift, and return to earlier topics in discourse.” It is used to describe the overall coherence (semantic connectedness) of a writing selection.

II. TSA involves three steps: A. Divide into t-units; B. Identify topics of t-units; and C. Identify progression of topics. All three steps are discussed below:

A. Divide document into t-units (minimal terminal units), which are:

1. Any independent clause and all its required modifiers.
2. Any non-independent clause punctuated as a sentence (as indicated by end punctuation)
3. Any imperative

B. Select topics of sentences (t-units) (adapted from Noh, 1985 and Wu, 1997):

1. The most important thing to ask yourself when identifying the topic of a sentence/t-unit is:

Who or what is this sentence about?

The topic is the main “theme” of the sentence. They are most usually nouns or noun phrases and are typically, but not exclusively, the grammatical subject of the sentence. For example, in the following sentence:

Juan llegó a la casa para desayunar.

Juan is clearly the topic (or theme) of the sentence.

2. Complex sentences:

- a.** In general, it is best to find the main clause of the sentence first and distinguish it from subordinated clauses. Most often, the topic of a sentence will be the subject of the main clause in a complex sentence. For example, in the following sentences:

Ya que la novia no lo había llamado, Juan llegó a la casa para desayunar.

Sin que otros lo pudieran detener, Juan llegó a la casa para desayunar.

Juan llegó a la casa para desayunar aunque varios amigos intentaron desviarlo.

Juan es una persona de que todos podemos fiar.

Juan is still clearly the topic.

b. Exception: Nevertheless, there are exceptions to this general rule in which it becomes necessary to consider what Noh (1985) refers to as the “topical context” of the sentence. For example, when the main clause introduces a clause which is thematically more related to the previous and following sentences and to the writing sample as a whole, the topic will be found in the subordinated clause. This commonly occurs in sentences wherein an introductory phrase (such as *implicar que, dudar que, decir que, inferir que, querer decir que, sugerir que, demostrar que, ser* _____ *que* [note the presence of ‘*que*’] precedes a subordinated clause which has stronger thematic relevance. Therefore, in sentences such as the following:

Estos hechos demuestran que Juan ha llegado a las once.
Se cree que Juan ha llegado a las once.
Los expertos proponen que Juan nunca llegó a la casa.

Juan is still considered the topic of the sentence even though it is actually the subject of the subordinate clause in the sentence.

3. Other possible exceptions/trouble makers:

a. Metatextual structures: The subject of metatextual structures such as “*A continuación consideraremos el problema de...*,” “*Próximamente voy a aclararla teoría de...*” or “*En mi opinión...*” do not constitute the topic of a sentence.

b. Existential ‘*hay*’: typically what comes after ‘*hay*’ will be the topic of the sentence. For example, in the following sentence:

Hay muchos académicos que estudian la literatura.

“*académicos*” is the topic of the sentence.

c. Pro-drop: Remember that Spanish is a pro-drop language (i.e., unlike in English, Spanish most often does not require an explicitly named pronoun as the subject of a sentence). Therefore the topic may actually be implied. For example, in the sentences:

Llegué a casa a las once.

Yo is the topic of the sentence even though it doesn’t actually appear in the sentence. **Note:** These topics should be identified parenthetically next to the sentence, as in the examples below:

Soñamos con visitar España algún día. (nosotros)
Antes que te cases, mira lo que haces. (tú)

d. “Se” and passive voice: In passive constructions, it is important to carefully consider which element in the sentence is most thematically prominent and/or relevant to the overall context in which it is found. For example, in the sentences:

Se destruyó el cuadro de Goya ayer.
El cuadro de Goya fue destruido ayer.

“El cuadro (de Goya)” is clearly the topic of both sentences.

e. Infinitives: In many cases the topic of a sentence will be an infinitive which functions much like a noun phrase. For example, in the following sentences the infinitival topics are underlined:

Es muy malo fumar cigarrillos.
Es importante estudiar todos los días.
Querer es poder

4. Once you have identified the topic of the sentence, underline it and proceed to the following sentence. If the topic is implied write it next to the sentence in parentheses and underline it.

For practice: Underline the topic of the following sentences.

1. Está claro que Marta no lo quiere a José.
2. El estudio de la cultura es un aspecto indispensable del estudio de la lengua.
3. En verdad, no es posible separar las dos porque está encodificada la historia cultural de un pueblo en la lengua que habla.
4. Como norteamericanos estudiando español, es importante estudiar los aspectos culturales que mezclan para crear el mundo latinoamericano que existe hoy día.
5. Estos aspectos incluyen los españoles, los indígenas, los esclavos africanos y sus descendientes, los labradores asiáticos, la economía internacional, los diferentes cosmovisiones y religiones.
6. Si estudiemos el lenguaje español sin estudiar las culturas, el resultado es la habilidad de hablar y escribir sin la habilidad de comunicar.

7. Fuera del contexto de su cultura, la lengua sirve tanto para crear malas comunicaciones como crear comunicación verdadera.
8. Desde una perspectiva más personal, el acto de estudiar culturas extranjeras enseña a un individuo quien es en el contexto de su propia cultura.
9. En el zócalo, hay muchos ejemplos de arte contemporáneo que ejemplifican este concepto.
10. Estas razones sugieren que los infantes no deberían de tomar miel hasta la edad de dos años.

C. Establish topic progression (from Schneider and Connor, 1990):

1. Parallel Progression (P)

- a. Any sentence topic that exactly repeats, is a pronominal form, or is a synonym of the immediately preceding sentence topic.
- b. Any sentence topic that is a singular or plural form of the immediately preceding sentence topic.
- c. Any sentence topic that is an affirmative or negative form of the immediately preceding sentence topic.
- d. Any sentence topic that the same head noun as the immediately preceding sentence topic.

2. Sequential Progression (S)

- a. Any sentence topic that is different from the immediately preceding sentence topic, that is, not (1)-(4) in P.
- b. Any sentence topic in which there is a qualifier that so limits or further specifies an NP that it refers to a different referent.
- c. Any sentence topic that is a derivation of an immediately preceding sentence topic.
- d. Any sentence topic that is related to the immediately preceding sentence topic by a part-whole relationship.
- e. Any sentence topic that repeats a part but not all of an immediately preceding sentence topic.

3. Extended Parallel Progression (Ex): Any sentence topic that is interrupted by at least one sequential topic before it returns to a previous sentence topic.

More specific guidelines about topical structure diagramming (Noh 1985):

→ Compare the topic [of the sentence] with the topic of the immediately preceding sentence. ...

→ If the sentence topic is regarded to be the same as the preceding sentence topic, assign it to the same level as the preceding one ([this is a] parallel progression).

→ If the topic is regarded as being different from the preceding sentence topic, assign this topic one level below [or to the right of] the previous topic ([this is a] sequential progression).

→ Finally, if the topic is a resumed topic, having been interrupted by one or more sequential progressions, then assign it to the same level as that earlier topic ([this is an] extended parallel progression).

→ Repeat [these steps] for each sentence in the passage.

“The identification of progression type between sentence topics is the most crucial factor for the construction of the topical structure of a discourse. The placement of topics in the topical structure is directly determined by how we perceive the shift of topics from one to the next. If the topic in one sentence is regarded to be the same as the topic in the previous sentence, it will be placed at the same level in the topical structure as the preceding one. But if it is regarded as different, the placement of the topic will be one level below [or to the right of] the previous one. In addition to the comparison with the sentence topic immediately preceding, the current sentence topic should be compared with the topics of all the preceding sentences to check whether it is a resumed one or not. If the current sentence topic is regarded to be the same as some prior, interrupted, topics, the judgment has even more drastic consequences. Because ... this topic can be raised [or shifted back/left] to the level where the interrupted topic has been placed. Therefore the decision of sameness or not between any two consecutive sentence topics would be the determining factor for the whole configuration of the topical structure” (91-2).

“The three types of topical progression between sentences may be regarded as topic shift phenomena. This means that the moves from one sentence to the next could be considered as shifts of topic. From the perspective of topic shift, we can say that, when the topic of one sentence is the same as the topic of [a] previous sentence, topic shift is not made, while when the topic is different from the previous one, topic shift is made. One problem we are facing here is to lay the ground on the basis of which topics between sentences can be compared. In other words, on what basis can we say that two topics are the same or different? For this problem, two rules are adopted...:

[The] first rule is lexical or referential cohesion: If two topics are considered to be lexically or referentially [the] same, the movement from [the] first topic to the second is regarded as a case in which a topic shift is not made.

The second rule is: If two topics are not [the] same either lexically or referentially, but they are in the relationship of ‘base level category and instance of subordinate category’ in a hierarchical generality, the two topics are to be regarded as [the] same, and thus topic shift is also considered as not having been made” (96-7).

Example in English (from Schneider and Connor, 1990):

Essay (“/” indicates a t-unit boundary; underlining indicates the topic of the t-unit):

1. There are many different contributions between artists and scientists to Society. / 2. First, artists contribute to society for entertainment. / 3. Many people need it for relax after hard work. / 4. Artists contribute to society as film artists, singers and so on. / 5. Furthermore artists contribute to society with make new-work fields which are related with kind of activity. / 6. Scientists contribute to society with improve knowledge of the people, especially for the student. / 7. In addition scientists contribute their new finding for human wealth. / 8. For example, they make transportation easier and faster with new types of jets. / 9. However, sometime scientists make new types of weapons which can be used for abolish human life. / 10. In conclusion, artists contribute to society with become an film artist, singers and so on. / 11. The other hand scientist contribute to society with increase human wealth, / 12. but in contrast scientists can make human life to abolish./

Topical Structure Analysis of essay above:

1. different contributions
2. artists (sequential)
3. many people (sequential)
4. artists (extended parallel)
5. artists (parallel)
6. scientists (sequential)
7. scientists (parallel)
8. they (parallel)
9. scientists (parallel)
10. artists (extended parallel)
11. scientists (extended parallel)
12. scientists (parallel)

Note: If a sequential progression appears to be completely “unrelated” to the overall topic of the essay, please indicate it parenthetically.

APPENDIX F

Sample Topical Structure Analysis

Writing Sample: J1

Contesta la siguiente pregunta con un ensayo bien organizado y pensado y utilizando tu mejor español: “¿Por qué estudiar la literatura?” (35 minutos)

Yo estudio la literatura por muchas razones. El estudiante de una lengua tiene que estudiar la literatura de la lengua porque es voz de la cultura. Un poema escrito en inglés no tiene la misma mensaje cuando traslado en Español. Es porque el autor ha tenido años para mejorar sus escritos y el lector posiblemente no sabe mucho de la lengua, y puede aprender del autor.

La cultura es representada en las cuentas y vida diaria de la gente. La literatura no tiene que ser verdad, pero muchas veces refleja la sociedad. Por ejemplo, “La casa de Bernarda Alba” escrito por Lorca, muestra la vida de familia Española que vive en el campo. Antes de leer, no sabía como aburrida fue la vida de una mujer en esta tiempo. Lorca muestra que la mujer no puede irse donde o cuando cualquiera.

Otro ejemplo de la representación de una cultura en la literatura es “2 de la tarde” por Arredondo. En la cuenta, Arredondo dibuja una pintura del pelado de hombre mexicano. Él se lleva ropas muy coloridas y habla sucio a las mujeres porque no tiene imagen positiva de él mismo. El pelado es presente en la cultura hoy en día aunque la cuenta toma lugar probablemente en los setentas.

La literatura obviamente es buen representación de la gramatica de una lengua. El autor no puede ser publicado sin muchas correcciones en su gramatica. La obra final ayuda al lector saber buen gramatica.

El estudiante de alguna lengua tiene que mejorar su entendimiento de la cultura y de la gramatica de la lengua por estudiando la literatura.

—FIN—

Topical Structure Analysis of Writing Sample J1

(SP=sequential progression; PP=parallel progression; EP=extended parallel progression)

Level: 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓

Topics:

1	Yo ...
2	El estudiante ... [SP]
3	Un poema ... [SP]
4	el autor ... [SP]
5	el lector ... [SP]
6	(el lector)* ... [PP]
7	La cultura [SP]
8	La literatura [SP]
9	(la literatura) ... [PP]
10	La casa de ... [SP]
11	(yo)... [EP]
12	Lorca... [SP]
13	2 de la tarde... [SP]
14	Arredondo ... [SP]
15	Él... [SP]
16	(Él)...[PP]
17	La literatura ... [EP]
18	El autor ... [EP]
19	La obra final ... [SP]
20	El estudiante ... [EP]

*“()” indicate an implied, unstated topic