Discourse resources in discussions of student writing: Another look at the speaking–writing connection

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Abstract

The social interactions surrounding the act of composing have often been theorized as microcosms of teaching, as sites where the effects of talk are intensified, and where dialogic discourse, or internal speech made explicit, promotes learning. Although the importance of the voice and agency are recognized, and their influence often implicitly acknowledged, research on the speaking–writing connection has yet to incorporate a translingual approach that gives attention to agency and voice. This study attempts to address voice and agency in a two-part discussion between a bilingual teacher and her Taiwanese undergraduate during a writing lab in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) class. Discursive strategies for asserting agency and giving it voice are employed to create a shared dialogic context for reviewing, evaluating, and revising a written draft. A translingual approach to understanding the problem of dialogic context for supporting literacy practices creates both obstacles and supports for realizing the potential of dialogic interaction.

Introduction

The social interactions surrounding the act of composing have often been theorized as microcosms of teaching: sites where the effects of talk are intensified, and where dialogic discourse, internal speech made explicit, promotes learning. Discussions of student writing, whether in individual writing conferences or in whole class settings, have been viewed as windows onto the development of thought, where writers can interact with others to get feedback on their writing and actualize the reader–writer relationship already implicit in the composition process (Dyson & Freedman, 2003).

While this theoretical perspective emphasizes a connection between "learning to write and learning to interpret—potentially, to reinterpret—the social world and one's place in it" (Dyson, 1995, pp. 5-6), or helping students make sense of the larger social context that lies at the heart of learning (Sperling, 1996), writing pedagogies actually change very little when laminated onto the existing structures of schooling and customary teacher/student exchanges. While the potential of critical pedagogy for promoting participatory learning has been recognized, the "dominant interpretive framework" (Ulichny & Watson-Gegeo, 1989) is a persistent, resistant pattern of teacher–student interaction. Critical theories may reveal the role of schools in perpetuating current power distribution; these same critical theories often do a poor job of showing the processes that actually perpetuate these imbalances, as teachers and students continue to enact the same roles. This social reproduction view of schooling has been echoed by educational theorists looking at the broader picture and not concentrating solely on literacy education (Ellsworth, 1989).

Microinteractions provide opportunities for examining the perpetuation of imbalances in writing pedagogy. A meta-analysis of related studies has revealed three areas that have contributed to the failure of discussions of writing to meet the high expectations placed on them: the influence of conventional discourse roles, the impact of cultural and experiential differences, and the impact of classroom culture on writing instruction (Sperling & Freedman, 2001). First, problems can occur when teachers and students assume conventional classroom discourse roles; in these circumstances, teachers will still dominate discussions (Cazden, 1988). Second, conversations around writing may break down when teachers and students follow different roles of interaction due to cultural and experiential differences. Cultural differences in conversational turn-taking, deference for teachers, and expectations for involvement in an instructional encounter, among others, will have a significant effect on the variety of responses from students during their writing conferences (Sperling, 1991, 1996). For instance, for many students, international or domestic, whose first language is not English, a university-level writing course may be their first encounter with formal one-to-one discussions for the purposes of revision, brainstorming, feedback or critical review. The final area of difficulty occurs when classrooms are not very supportive of student writing. Although pedagogical interaction can provide students with opportunities to hear writerly thought processes and see them modelled, teacher expectations—e.g., assuming that students must participate verbally in order to benefit from the conference—might help or hinder students in obtaining opportunities to hear writerly thought (Freedman & Katz, 1987; Sperling, 1988, 1990, 1991, 1992; Sperling & Freedman, 1987). These concerns raise some important questions about the critical nature of pedagogical interactions.

Of course, microinteractions are not the only evidence available. Conversations around writing can break down when teachers and students follow different roles of interaction due to cultural differences. Gender differences are one such obstacle to effective talk about writing. Teacher–student writing conference discourse has shown notable differences in the ways that male and female participants used discourse markers to index authority to speak (Black, 1998). Introducing changes in discursive patterns based on gender, however, has proven difficult (Alvermann, Commeyra, Young, Randall, & Hinson, 1997; Baxter, 2002). Perspectives due to other differences—ethnicity, class, personal history, or sexuality, for instance—can also impede effective interaction. In a study of interaction in three writing classrooms, Dysthe (1996) emphasized the importance of introducing engaging topics for encouraging student discussions and of showing students that their perspectives were valued. These approaches ultimately promoted learning about writing.

In this study, I examine how questions about critical pedagogy emerge in and through discursive interaction in a discussion of student writing. Using transcripts of taped discussions between an instructor in an English language institute and her Taiwanese undergraduate student, I explore the linguistic and discursive details through which a teacher identity or a student identity dynamically emerges in the interactional environment of the writing lab. This analysis unfolds in an episode-by-episode review of how Patricia and Tracy projected their respective roles during their writing lab discussion of Tracy's business case study draft.

Theoretical Framework

The speaking–writing connection is an important site for microanalysis of the dynamics of text production and mediation of knowledge about academic writing. This does not, of course, obviate the need to conduct careful ethnographic analyses of larger social contexts; rather, it demonstrates how institutional, sociocultural and sociohistorical expectations are observable in the discursive choices of teachers and students. Likewise, analysis that looks solely at the expectations of the participants, the roles they play or the contextualization cues they heed is not sufficient. The question is not to look at the discourse of the conference *alone*, or at the layers of nested context *alone*, but at both together. Of particular interest are the institutional representations apparent in these factors, and the dilemmas they engender for teachers and students alike. This approach can help to address questions about the perceived success or failure of an exchange.

Discussants cocreate, or fail to cocreate, a shared support structure in the dialogic process of conversation about writing. Asking how they do this is a critical element for understanding how talk about writing supports learning. An examination of the irreducible properties of the language, the relational activities of the speakers, as well as the habitual communicative practices and value orientation of the users will help illuminate the mediated nature of knowledge about writing, especially the interplay between formal knowledge of writing and the social world in which it is used and discussed. Or as Hanks so eloquently described it, language practice is saturated by context "right down to its semantic bones" (1996, pp. 140-141). This perspective invites analysis that focuses attention on how "power and control translate into principles of communication" (Bernstein, 1996, p. 47).

Examining a methodologically complex question through discourse analysis requires careful attention to the nature and study of discourse itself. Two basic schemata to studying discourse persist throughout the variety of approaches available today (Macbeth, 2003). The first takes naturally occurring discourse as its data, as exemplified by sequential analysis of discourse-in-interaction, in which the identities of the teacher or the student are coconstructed, deconstructed and negotiated in real time. Mehan (1979, 1992, 1994) and Cazden (2001), whose work has helped to expose the role of discourse in perpetuating inequality in schools, are major representatives of this approach. The second approach, exemplified by variations on critical discourse analysis, focuses on formal–analytical categories that are not part of the "real" interaction experienced by participants (e.g., Fairclough, 1992; Gee, 1999, 2011).

The current study examines naturally occurring discourse in sequence without recourse to formal–analytic categories, and does so in the tradition of conversational analysis, which has already contributed to the study of the intersection between speaking and writing, when writers speak about texts. Gumperz (1982) examined frames on the micro level of discourse strategies, establishing the embedded nature of context within discourse. Frames, he concluded, or "expectation[s] about the world, based on prior experiences, against which new experiences are measured and interpreted" (Tannen, 1993), contain metamessages, information about the contexts of social situations, about beginning, continuing, altering, and closing them (Tannen, 1984, 1987; Tannen & Wallat, 1993). They also contain contextualization cues, which provide the actors with clues to the

situatedness of social activity. Goffman (1961) examined participation frames from a sociological perspective, demonstrating how in interpersonal interactions, people respond to institutional and social expectations of the frames they encounter, while also simultaneously coconstructing these frames. Individuals not only respond to institutional and social expectations, they also coconstruct participation frames as they proceed through their interactions (Goffman, 1961). The academic literacies model attempts to explain how literacy practices are nodes of contestation, embedded in local meaning, with overlapping functions and features of both oral and literate practices contributing jointly to the achievement of many communicative practices.

The New Literacy Studies (New London Group, 1996; Street, 1993, 1999) and practice-engagement theory (Reder, 1994) have investigated how literacy practices are embedded in local meaning, defining literacy as a set of socially or culturally patterned *practices* used by learners located within larger *communities of practice*. The overlap between the functions and features of both oral and literate practices—the "many culturally-patterned communicative practices draw jointly on speech and writing in their routine accomplishment" (Reder, 1994, p. 38)—come into play in understanding how talk about writing includes both oral and literate communicative practices. Discourse analysis is embedded in ethnography of communication studies to describe individual literacy practices situated within localized cultural practices (Chafe, 1982; Dyson, 1993, 1994; Heath, 1983).

Lea and Street (1998) illustrated this dynamic in their academic-literacies study of college-level writing students. They conducted semistructured, in-depth interviews with thirteen staff members and twenty-six students at two British universities regarding their understanding of issues of epistemology, authority, and disputation of knowledge in academic discourse. Students responded that although they were aware that different courses have different requirements for academic writing, it was often difficult for them to gauge the essential differences and write accordingly; writing assignments or prompts rarely made the implicit expectations accessible to the students. For their part, teachers were comfortable with identifying and using the aspects of text that are considered essential for marking them as members of their respective discourse communities, but could not articulate these details to their students. And although many tutors claimed to know what successful writing looked like, they were unable to explain concepts such as critical analysis to the researchers or to their students.

As a result of this analysis, Lea and Street concluded "the elements of successful student writing are in essence related to particular ways of constructing the world and not to a set of generic writing skills" (p. 163). Learning to write in the academy is thus a process of adapting to a social world with many competing forms of knowledge creating and knowledge sharing. Students must struggle to negotiate the conflicting practices they confront in their various courses. While earlier models saw student writing as a technical skill (study skills model) or as a means of acculturation into the discourse community (academic socialization model), the "academic literacies" model conceptualizes student writing in this light as both "meaning-making" and "contested" (p. 172). Work with younger students has demonstrated that they must learn to project a "successful student" identity that includes behaviors and attitudes (Hawkins, 2005).

Ulichny and Watson-Gegeo (1989) examined the roles of control and knowledge played out by teachers and students during writing conferences. Theorizing from a social reproduction view of schooling, they suggested that new pedagogies such as process writing actually change very little when laminated onto the existing structures of schooling and customary teacher/student exchanges, what they called the "dominant interpretive framework." Although they point out that while critical theories may reveal the roles of schools in perpetuating current power distributions, they also concluded that critical theories do a poor job of showing the processes that actually perpetuate these imbalances. The authors suggested that microanalyses of teacher–student interactions might help to clarify these processes.

Methodology

The discussion of writing analyzed here was recorded in the computer lab of a content-based academic course offered by the intensive English program at a Pacific Rim university located in the United States. The course was designed for international undergraduates who planned to major in business, but who did not yet meet the university's standards for English proficiency. The conference occurred in the middle of the semester, so the class had had time to establish the expectations for active student participation in writing conferences. The writing assignment asked the students to write a short case study on the ethics of buying handmade rugs made by child laborers in Morocco. The class had viewed a short documentary on an American wholesaler who frequently traveled to Morocco to buy rugs for sellers in North America. Tracy, a Taiwanese undergraduate student in her first year at the university, and Patricia, a bilingual English–Spanish writing teacher, met twice during the lab to discuss Tracy's first draft.

The Participants

Tracy

Tracy was a first-semester freshman, planning to major in psychology. Although she had completed high school in Taiwan, her spoken English was quite advanced, thanks to a bilingual kindergarten program and continuous private tutoring in English throughout her schooling. Her accent was very clear, and her speech fluent. As she explained in her recall interview, she was willing to play an active role in discussing her writing. Tracy had been in the United States for nine months, during which she had completed several noncredit ESL courses.

During her recall protocol interview, Tracy stated that she viewed the conferences as a chance to ask questions about written comments from the teacher that she didn't understand. While she usually looked forward to her conferences with Patricia, she expressed dismay over written corrections on her drafts—*"I'll feel like 'humph, you know. I spent a lot of time on it'…"* She also emphasized that she was willing to independently seek out solutions to her writing dilemmas—*"I would rather know why it's no good, or, you know, rather than seeing all the words crossed out, or 'you should put this rather than that.' I'd rather you tell me to change it and I will go find the words."*

Patricia

Patricia was a bilingual instructor and a doctoral student in applied linguistics. While growing up, Patricia spoke Spanish at home, acquiring English in kindergarten and elementary school, and then learning formal written Spanish in high school and college. She had five years' full-time experience teaching Spanish and English. Her program supervisor recommended her as "extremely thorough" in her responses to student papers. During her recall interview, Patricia stated that she wanted to emphasize thinking in her teaching. She professed a strong commitment to the draft process and shared how she would take her graduate seminar papers through drafts before she was happy with them. Because of this intensive drafting, she thought of writing as arduous work. Thus she had a great deal of sympathy for her students. She explained to me: "*And [writing's] a hard process. And so I figure if I don't understand, and I'm a native speaker, I don't expect them to understand. And so they need to question things*." Her shared experiences led Patricia to praise her students frequently and sincerely; she understood that they were uncomfortable sharing their drafts. She pondered the usefulness of the writing conference as a means of improving student writing. Like Tracy, Patricia attributed the success of the conference to Tracy's efforts to participate actively.

Data Collection

In the initial data collection step, Patricia agreed to tape writing conferences during an afternoon class held in the computer lab. As she circulated among the students, she carried a small tape-recorder and turned it on when talking to participating students about the papers she had read and returned. Four students agreed to participate in this step.

As soon as possible following the writing lab session, Tracy's and Patricia's perspectives on the discussions were collected through stimulated recall protocols (DiPardo, 1994; Erickson & Mohatt, 1988; Newkirk, 1995). This procedure allowed participants to listen to the recorded discussion and to talk freely about what they thought happened during the interaction. Participants in a writing conference are like theater performers who can use a "backstage area" (Newkirk, 1995, p. 195) to privately express their tensions, frustrations, misunderstandings, and personal interpretations. This stimulated recall procedure was first used in educational anthropology by Erickson and Mohatt (1988), who replayed videotapes of classroom discussions to elicit comments from the participants. DiPardo (1994) used stimulated recall to encourage students and their adjunct tutors to talk freely about their writing conferences.

Tracy and Patricia each listened to the recording of their discussion and commented on what had transpired. Both interviewees could stop the tape at any time to make comments or describe what happened during the conference. Both also answered several open-ended questions above their writing process and writing attitudes.

Data Analysis

Because Tracy and Patricia met twice during the computer lab period to talk about Tracy's draft, this discussion occurred in two parts. The first part (1) occurred early in the writing lab period when Patricia stopped at Tracy's workstation to look over her work and give her some comments. The first part contains four episodes. The second part of the discussion

(2) took place later in the period, when Patricia stopped by to check on Tracy's progress. This part contains three episodes. Table 1 provides brief summaries of the topics of each episode. The full draft of Tracy's paper can be found in Appendix A. The transcription key can be found in Appendix B. Idea units were marked—reflecting the assumption that breaks in speech reflect a change in the speaker's object of consciousness (Chafe, 1980, 1986)—at the boundaries of major tone groups with periods, and sometimes at the boundaries of minor tone groups with commas.

Table 1. Episodes

Episode 1-1: Setting the stage (lines 01-21)
Patricia opened the first part of the discussion with a monologue summarizing her impressions of Tracy's draft, whereupon she introduced one problem to be discussed. Tracy listened quietly, and responded with "uh-hmms" at the appropriate pauses in Patricia's discourse.
Episode 1-2: Tracy's question (lines 22-28)
Tracy asked a question which appeared to initiate a frame change. After an interruption by another teacher speaking to Patricia, she asked a question about moving some text in her draft. Patricia answered Tracy's question.
Episode 1-3: Patricia's response (lines 29-50)
Patricia responded to Tracy's question with another lengthy monologue.
Episode 1-4: Exchanging maxims of writing (lines 51-62)
Tracy reiterated a *maxim of writing* that was frequently repeated in class: "so conclusion is not my opinion" (line 51). By this section, the two had achieved the highest degree of conversational cohesiveness that they would reach in this conference. They agreed on Patricia's maxim, "Just summarize it," (line 52) with a simultaneous "uh-hmmm" (lines 53-54). In Patricia's next utterance, "But you have a good organization," she summarized the conference with a statement repeated from the opening lines in the first episode. The first part of the conference ended with the conventional expressions of thanks.
Episode 2-1: Tracy's second question (lines 63-70)
In this second part of the discussion, Tracy posed a question regarding her draft after an opening discourse marker from Patricia ("OK, Tracy"). Patricia responded that Tracy had two options.
Episode 2-2: Tracy's clarification (lines 71-76)
Tracy clarified that she actually meant to compare two points: "Well actually I'm just like compare, comparing these two." She read some of her text to show how she was trying to express her comparison.
Episode 2-3: Patricia's suggestion and closing (lines 77-89)
After a brief pause, Patricia offered a possible sentence for inclusion in Tracy's draft. Tracy listened, back-channelled, and responded "Oh Okay." She had no more questions for Patricia at this time. This second portion of the conference ended, as the first, with the typical closings.

Results

The results of the case study provide a brief description of the events in the discussions, describing the major aspects of each episode. It addresses the basic question, "what went on in this discussion of student writing?"

Part One

(1) Part 1 of a writing lab conversation between Patricia (teacher) and Tracy (student) about Tracy's draft for business case writing assignment

001 P: OK Tracy when I saw your essay I thought (.2) the first thing was you have a good (.2) organization.
002 You have a good introduction and it's (.2) in terms of the grammar it's (.2) it's pretty good.
003 There's a few mistakes here that (.2) that I pointed out and there's a few more that (.2) that I didn't point out.
004 But-um (.2) your first paragraph is very good, it talks about McHenry. (H)
005 Now the only thing that I was worried about was (H) here you start talking about Morocco.
006 T: [softly] \Uh-hmmm\
007 P: And (.2) at the end dec you 'kind of tie it into McHenry acc but it's almost like it's a whole separate topic. (H)
008 T: \Uh-hmmm\
009 P: So if you can (.2) s put a sentence in at the beginning (.2) that indicates how this is related to Morocco, (H)
010 acc and then you can explain it in a little bit more detail,
011 and that would make thi:s (.2) paragraph a lot smoo:ther.
012 T: [softly] Or can I just move the Morocco part into the (.2) Hashad's point of view tha:t mmake (.5)
013 [*Another teacher approaches and asks the Patricia a question. Patricia responds.*]
014 P: [speaking to the teacher] No I didn't see it.
015 [speaking to T] Go ahead.
016 T: Can I put the Morocco: situation into the (.2) this paragraph?
017 Then will make the reason why that Hashad think doesn't think (.2) s there is anything wrong abusing child labor.
018 P: Yeah you can do that, y-I- (E)
019 Yeah that was my initial thought was to move this to the paragraph with Hashad, <u>but</u> here at the <u>end</u> you do make that connection.
020 You said acc "he is concerned about those children because they are too young (.2) to secide to decide what kind of job they want".
021 So it is related, dec but there's a few sentences here where I thought (.2) <Q Uh (.2) acc maybe she should move this. Q>
022 T: \Uh-hmmm\
023 P: So (.2) you can either put a sentence <u>here</u> (.2) to make that connection <u>earl</u>ier (.2)
024 \Uh-hmmm\
025 <u>Or</u> you can move it. OK?
026 T: \Oh\
027 P: And then the paragraph on Hashad, I know you just worked on that last week, but it needs to be developed just a little bit more. (H)
028 And (.2) um (.2) put (.2) you know (.2) another idea in there, and then you need a conclusion that summarizes everything. (H) Go ahead.

029 T: So conclusion is not my opinion.
030 P: [Slightly nasalized] Right (.2) just summarize it. Uh-hmmm=
031 T: =\Uh-hmmm\
032 P: Yeah (.2) but you have a good organization.
033 And sometimes I think that's the hardest thing fer (.2) us to do=
034 T: =OK.
036 P: 'K do you have any questions?
037 T: No.
038 P: OK.
039 T: Thank you.
040 P: You're welcome.

Part One is dominated by the exchange of maxims that Tracy and Patricia used to demonstrate their shared understanding of institutional expectations for academic writing. Patricia opened Part One with a monologue summarizing her impressions of Tracy's draft, whereupon she introduced one problem to be discussed. Patricia presented her reading of Tracy's draft in the past tense: "when I *saw* your essay" (1). Tracy listened quietly, and responded with "uh-hmms" at the appropriate pauses in Patricia's discourse (lines 6 & 8).

Tracy was silent as Patricia made an "opening statement" (lines 1-11). Patricia's frequent self-repetition achieved through parallelism is easier to visualize in Figure 1, which shows the reorganization and reanalysis of Patricia's opening monologue. "Thing" was repeated twice during these lines, as a link between the opening and closing of the monologue: "the first thing" (line 1) and "the only thing" (line 5). This parallelism also signaled a change in topic. To paraphrase the teacher: *we've talked about the good things in your draft, but I do have one problem to bring to your attention.* The phrase containing "a good" was also repeated twice: "a good organization" (line 1) and "a good introduction" (line 2).

Figure 1. Transcript with Parallelism Highlighted

a.	**OK Tracy when I saw your essay I thought (.2)**				
b.	I thought ***the first thing*** was				
c.	you have a **good** (.2) organization,				
d.	you have a **good** introduction and			*it's,*	
e.	in terms of the grammar			*it's*	(.2)
f.				*it's*	**pretty good**
g.	**there's a few mistakes** here	that	(.2)		
h.		that			**I pointed out**
i.	**and there's a few more**	that	(.2)		
j.		that			**I didn't point out**,
k.	but-um, your first paragraph			*is*	very **good**
l.	it talks about McHenry, (H)				
m.	now ***the only thing*** that I was worried about			*was*	(H)
n.	here you start talking about Morocco.				

Figure 1 demonstrates how repetitive parallelism can be observed in three appearances of "it's," repeated each time with a variation in the length of the following pause. Likewise, "that" was repeated four times; contrasting pairs appear in "that… that I pointed out" versus "that… that I didn't point out." Another contrasting unit appeared with "a few": "there's a few mistakes here" and "there's a few more."

Patricia praised Tracy's draft in vague terms. She pronounced the organization, the introduction, and the grammar all "good" or "pretty good." She pointed out "a few mistakes," but there are "a few more" that she doesn't point out. She declared Tracy's first paragraph "very good." Having established the draft as a good piece of work, Patricia stated that the "only thing" she was worried about had to do with the subject of Hashad's role in the text. "The only thing" echoed "the first thing" in line b. She did not leave many opportunities for Tracy to say anything.

Further cohesion was provided in lines 19-21 through the repetition of "thought:" "that was my initial thought" and "where I thought". The contrast provided by the reformulation of "thought" from noun to verb helped to denote the boundaries of the utterance.

Tracy did not seize the chance to speak, but back-channeled "uh-hmmm" (lines 6 and 8). At line 12, she finally spoke, making an "initiation move" (Cazden, 1988, p. 65) that initiated a frame change, but she was interrupted by another teacher speaking to Patricia (lines 13-14). In lines 16-17, Tracy repeated her question: "Can I put the Morocco: situation into the (.2) this paragraph?" When Patricia answered Tracy's question, she spoke less smoothly than she had previously, as evidenced in her glottal stops and hesitation in line 18. But she quickly recovered the equilibrium she possessed early and returned to the smooth, repetitive flow, this time punctuated by fortis enunciation (lines 19-21).

Patricia also employed hedges and appeared to minimize her role through her discourse: "if you can" (line 9), "and then you can" (line 10), and "a little bit" (line 58). Patricia's use of "a few mistakes" (line 3), and "the only thing I was worried about" (line 5) conveyed a message that learning to write a well-formed essay in English was not a big deal. This may have been an attempt to level the power dynamic between the student and the teacher as representative of the institution.

In line 21, Patricia quoted herself: "Oh (.2) maybe she should move this." This form of self-ventriloquation may have a number of purposes. It may have been a face-saving presentational ritual, allowing Patricia to represent herself as a dedicated teacher who had given the draft a lot of thought. Or it may have been evidence of Patricia's discomfort with her role as a critic of her students' writing, prompting her to try to further distance herself through self-quotation from the difficult and uncomfortable task of responding to a draft.

Tracy back-channeled in lines 22 and 24, but Patricia dominated the discussion again until the end of line 25, when she concluded with, "Or you can move it, OK?" Tracy echoed softly with "OK" (line 26), and Patricia continued on through line 28.

This segment of the discussion figured prominently in the recall interviews as a key event in the writing conference that showed why it had been successful. While listening to the playback of the discussion, Patricia stopped the tape at Tracy's question on line 12 and said, "*See, right there Tracy's thinking. Ok, she's finding a … I made a suggestion, she thought*

of a different one. So that's what I like to see is when they start thinking and making their own suggestions." She focused on the first contribution by Tracy as evidence that Tracy was learning to think for herself as a writer, and she commented that Tracy seemed to be realizing that it was possible to write this passage in a different way, and that she felt more comfortable with it. Then she offered a qualification: "*There's, you know, better ways, but she at least thought of an alternative*." Patricia couldn't remember what Tracy ultimately ended up doing, whether moving the paragraph or making the connection.

When Tracy listened to this part of the discussion, she recalled that Patricia wanted her to "*change a little bit*" and move the part about McHenry to an earlier point in her draft, so her readers would know that what followed was related to McHenry.

In her second initiation move, Tracy reiterated a *maxim of writing* that was frequently repeated in class: "so conclusion is not my opinion" (line 29). Patricia responded by saying "Right, just summarize it" (line 30), with a slightly nasalized, gravelly voice that is markedly different from her voice quality during the rest of the conference, as if to acknowledge that she was saying something that had been said many times before. By this stage in the discussion, the two had achieved the highest degree of conversational cohesiveness that they would reach. They agreed on Patricia's maxim, "Just summarize it," (line 30) with a simultaneous "uh-hmmm" (lines 30-31). In Patricia's next utterance, "Yeah (.2) but you have a good organization" (line 32), she summarized the discussion with a statement repeated from the opening lines of Part 1 (see line 1 and line a in Figure 1) and also appealed to institutional expectations for starting an essay with an introduction, another maxim for writing.

Patricia's pronouns provide information about the relationship between the speakers (Fillmore, 1997). As she summarized the conference, she repeated a phrase she used at the beginning of the conference: "but you have a good organization." The conjunction "but" can imply a negation of the expectations previously expressed, or it can indicate a change in topic (Tannen, 1993). In the following line, Patricia used the first person plural in what appeared to be a hedge. This move also provides a clue to the participant frame (Tannen, 1993): "that's the hardest thing fer (.2) us to do." This was the only instance of the first person plural in this discussion. The hedges continued here in Patricia's use of a pause, and also in the first, and only, instance of non-mainstream, rather informal, pronunciation of "fer." In lines 32-33, some contextualization cues were present in the social deixis to mitigate the illocutionary force. These expressions of social deixis, together with the hedges, provide further evidence for Patricia's discomfort with the footings she had to assume in the institutional field.

The first part of the conference ended a probe for additional questions by Patricia (line 36), a negative response from Tracy (line 37), a final "OK" from Patricia (line 38), an expressions of thanks from Tracy (line 39), and Patricia's conventional "You're welcome" (line 40).

Part Two

(2) Part 2 of a Writing lab conversation between Patricia (teacher) and Tracy (student) about Tracy's draft for business case writing assignment

041 P: [a little later] OK, Tracy.
042 T: OK um so (.2) should I change this paragraph?
043 P: You have two options.
044 You can either change it or just add a few sentences to it.
045 T: To make this and this paragraph related.
046 P: (H) Yeah (.2) to make this section on Morocco (.3) and the children of Morocco (.2) related to how McHenry feels about that situation.
047 T: Well actually I'm just like compare, comparing these two.
048 P: Uh-huh=
049 T: =So I put like "<u>however</u>" in there
050 P: Right.
051 T: And I put "this is the reason why that McHenry concerned about what happened."
052 P: OK. (.6)
053 [louder] What you can <u>say</u> <u>is</u> <Q However the situation in Morocco is 'different. >Q
054 <Q In Morocco there is no such system and <u>this</u> is why McHenry is so concerned about it Q> (H)
055 T: \Hmmm\
056 P: And then for example (.2) <Q children over the age of 12 are free to work Q>
057 T: Oh OK.
058 P: Okay. So if you just throw in a little bit about McHenry here then it sounds <u>more</u> like a comparison.
059 T: Oh OK.
060 P: Okay? Any other questions? No?
061 T: Thank you.
062 P: You're welcome.

Part Two of the discussion occurred several minutes later, after Patricia had circulated through the computer lab answering the questions of some other students. When she returned to Tracy, she used a discourse marker, "OK, Tracy" (line 41), to initiate a new exchange. Tracy was ready with a question regarding her draft, asking if she should change a paragraph in her draft (line 42). Patricia responded that Tracy had two options.

Tracy clarified her question, asserting that she actually meant to compare two points: "Well actually I'm just like compare, comparing these two" (line 47). She read some of her text to show how she was trying to express her comparison. Patricia back-channelled "uh-huh" (line 48) in response, but Tracy proceeded without allowing a pause. She read some of her draft out loud to show how she had altered her text to reflect her goals (lines 49, 51). Patricia continued to back-channel (line 50). But when Tracy had finished her question, Patricia said, "OK," and then waited for an extended six seconds before continuing with another lengthy monologue.

She offered some suggestions for additional sentences for Tracy's draft, raising the volume of her voice. She suggested that Tracy add an extra clause to her draft to clarify McHenry's perspective on child labor in Morocco, dictating a few sentences to Tracy and using the fortis enunciation she employed earlier while re-establishing the writing conference frame:

(53) What you can say is <Q However the situation in Morocco is 'different.>Q
(54) Q<In Morocco there is no such system and this is why McHenry is so concerned about it Q>. (H)

As Tracy back-channeled "\hmmm\", Patricia continued without pausing:

(56) And then for example <Q Children over the age of 12 are free to work Q>.

Tracy responded to these instructions with "Oh, OK" (line 57). Patricia summarized her statement in line 58: "Okay, so if you just throw in a little bit about McHenry here then it sounds more like a comparison." This marked the last substantive comment in Part 2 of the exchange. Tracy listened, back-channelled, and responded, "Oh Okay" (line 59). She had no more questions for Patricia. This second portion of the conference ended, as the first, with the same thanks and closing. Tracy later incorporated these lines verbatim into her draft (see Appendix A, lines w-x, *emphasis added*).

In Part 2, Tracy spoke up because she had been encouraged to do so. Patricia was eager to encourage her students to talk and demonstrate that they were actively participating in their conferences. But despite these expectations, Tracy's questions opening the second part of the conference once again led to a disruption in Patricia's discourse. First, Patricia answered Tracy's question, telling her she had two choices for improving her paragraph. When Tracy pointed out that she meant to compare paragraphs, and showed how she had altered her text to reflect her goals, Patricia responded with a six-second pause, then, speaking in a louder voice, she dictated two sentences for Tracy to adopt. After her second attempt to ask questions and guide the discussion, Tracy once again returned to back-channeling until the end of the discussion.

Discussion

The problem that seems immediately clear upon examination of this transcript, and has been apparent to colleagues who provided peer checks of the analysis, is that the conference was not as successful as Patricia and Tracy claimed it had been. For both, the contributions made by Tracy and the questions she posed seemed to be the most compelling evidence that all had gone well. Tracy had participated, unlike some of her classmates whose tapes are full of monotone responses mainly of the phatic type—"yes, OK, uh-huh." At this level, Tracy had indeed contributed a question, but how well, really, did she succeed in directing the course of the conversation? Both Tracy and Patricia felt that Tracy's participation—suggesting a revision to her draft—indicated that the conference was a success. The conference took place in the middle of the semester, so both would have had some time to establish the expectations that would lead to fewer I-R-E exchanges and more comments and back-channeling from the student. Although this conference is an example of a meeting between participants who are familiar with each

other, the analysis of the discourse raises serious questions about the efficacy of the discourse to allow Tracy to participate to the fullest extent possible.

It is possible that Patricia's initial monologue and subsequent responses to Tracy's questions could be interpreted as Patricia "speaking for" Tracy (Schiffrin, 1994), since as an English language learner, Tracy did not yet possess full mastery of the code. In discussing a similar monologue, Sperling has suggested that "the teacher had to work around silence in order to keep up his end of the conversation" (1991, pp. 145-146). Rules for conversation suggesting that each participant has an important role to play can be seen in the work of Grice (1975) and Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974). Patricia may have been attempting to maintain her end of the conversational contract while maintaining Tracy's end as well. Or this explanation may be only part of several simultaneous reasons for her verbal performance in lines 01-15.

Her use of the first person plural may have been meant as another way of expressing solidarity, perhaps as a fellow writer, to provide some relief from the institutional aspects of her role. This mitigation may be glossed as a "good teacher" presentation: "*I did the hard work of reading your draft and commenting on it."* Patricia also may have been attempting to create solidarity with Tracy through positive presentational rituals, creating positive face for both. Or the solidarity may be built through her use of parallelism.

Avoidance rituals apparent in Patricia's discourse include tight cohesiveness of her opening paragraph that makes any contribution by Tracy difficult. There were several places where Patricia paused at a clause-final point, so Tracy had few opportunities to interrupt. If Tracy had attempted to question or respond to a teacher comment, but had done it non-expertly, the resulting pragmatic disruption may have been embarrassing for both.

Both Tracy and Patricia found themselves on different footings vis-à-vis each other, and this was reflected in the ways they addressed each other. As an outsider both institutionally and culturally, Tracy appeared to operate with a sense of the weight of Patricia's institutional position. She was aware of the articulated expectations for her involvement in the writing conference. Tracy's attempts to show involvement reflected her socially situated sense of self and participation as it changed over time. After listening to Patricia's opening lines, she attempted to ask a question, thereby switching the conversation from the primary to the secondary frame. When her attempts to work within the class frame precipitated a disruption and recovery by Patricia, she frequently resorted to back-channeling, but also took opportunities to make initiation moves that allowed her to take the floor. On both occasions when she asked a question, she received an emphatic response from Patricia. After the second such event, in which Patricia dictated a few lines for Tracy to write, Tracy did not ask any more questions.

Even though she was a fairly advanced and confident English learner, Tracy did not yet possess full pragmatic competence. Relevance requires that the speaker leave implicit everything that the hearer can be trusted to supply with less effort than would be needed to process an explicit prompt (Sperber & Wilson, 1995). In the ongoing development of understanding during a conversation, material that is repeated can be assumed to have

some specific relevance; shared information can be safely elided. Parallelism focuses on information that the speaker cannot count on the hearer to know. In instructional contexts such as the writing conference where the interlocutors do not share the same first language, this distinction seems especially important. Parallelism marks assumptions about the lack of shared context, and the need to convey important information; it points to meaning that cannot be left implicit.

Thus parallelism has an instructional purpose as a common resource in instructional talk. In the classroom context, repetition of this type can provide rhythm that reinforces group synchrony; it provides extra time for the listeners to process the message and catch up with the group. Teachers use parallelism, including the reformulation of phrases into related forms, as a way to gain and hold students' attention (Sacks et al., 1974; Scollon, 1982). Patricia may be using parallelism in the manner she is accustomed to using it while conducting classes. This analysis reveals the ways that a useful strategy in one context does not support the instructional goals specific to another context, the writing conference. Speaking in maxims does not require the kind of independent thinking that Patricia would like to instill in her students.

Implications for Research

This descriptive case study will serve as a pilot for future research that examines how discourse resources contribute to the coconstruction of context. The analysis reveals theoretical questions and invites further collection of ethnographic data, but this attempt offers suggestions for how such an approach might proceed. Assuming that the context of a discussion about writing is indexed in the utterances—in the discourse of the writing conference itself—then the speaking–writing connection is a rewarding site for examining the dynamics of text production and mediation of knowledge about academic writing. Further research is needed to understand the microdynamics of the dominant interpretive framework begun by Ulichny and Watson-Gegeo (1989). How do the structure of schooling and the distribution of authority create dilemmas and embarrassments for participants? How can these hindrances be mitigated? Can they be effectively addressed in the traditional structure of schooling? These questions promise a rich and fruitful agenda for future research.

Appendix A: Tracy's draft

"Child Labor in the Industry"

The International Carpet is a rug importer and distributor in New York. The buyer of this company, Mr. James McHenry, just made a tentative agreement with the carpet manufacture, SOMARTA, in Morocco. Their agreement is that McHenry's firm is going to provide wool for SOMARTA in exchange the export of rug to the Wholesalers in New York. However, after visiting the factory in Morocco, McHenry was somehow worried about the use of child labor in the SOMARTA factory. He saw a lot of young women under the age of twelve, working four or five to a loom. McHenry comes from America, a country which is very concerned about child labor. Therefore he cannot help but feel that there is something wrong with the working age of the children. On the other hand, the managing director of SOMARTA, Mr. Abdelhadi Hachad, is not surprised about this situation. Both of them have different points of view toward the use of child labor. Their opinions can be seen in how they view the working age for child labor.

First of all, McHenry feels very uncomfortable with the working age of children. He thinks that twelve year old kids are too young to work. In America, a child has to be age sixteen to work and a working permit is required. Therefore, the government and the parents of the children can clearly understand what kind of work is going to be given to these children. Thus parents can help the children decide if they should accept this job, and parents can tell them the consequences of taking the job. Furthermore, the working time and the amount of the work will also be under control since the permit will be submitted by the government. ***However, the situation in Morocco is different. In Morocco, there is no such system. Children who are over age twelve are free to work***. The amount and the time of the work is not restricted in Morocco. This is the reason why McHenry is worried about the situation. He is concerned about those children because they are too young to decide what kind of job they want. Young children are not familiar with the style of the work, therefore McHenry thinks that they are too young to work.

On the other hand, Hachad is not concerned about child labor. He does not think that it is a problem because child labor is common in his country. Children need to make living by working in Morocco. Therefore Hashad thinks there is nothing wrong with the workers whereas McHenry is very worried about it. Besides, Hashad relies on the maalema system which they hire older women to supervise the children. He thinks that maalema will take care of the children. Thus he thinks that there is nothing to worried about.

Appendix B: Transcription Key

,	clause-final intonation: falling
.	clause-final intonation: rising or falling
?	clause-final: question
:	elongated syllable
-	self-interruption with glottal stop
(H)	audible inhalation
(E)	audible exhalation
<Q…Q>	quotation-like speech
=	latched speech
…	long pause
(.5)	(five second) pause
“”	quote from student writing
\ \	back-channeling by listener
__	underlining indicates fortis enunciation
acc	acceleration of rate of speech
dec	deceleration of rate of speech

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