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# An Eye Toward Change: Examining Requests in Teacher-Student Writing Conferences

Angie M. Carter

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AN EYE TOWARD CHANGE: EXAMINING REQUESTS IN TEACHER-STUDENT  
WRITING CONFERENCES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Angie McKinnon Carter

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

May 2018

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Title: An Eye Toward Change: Examining Requests in Teacher-Student Writing Conferences

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Combining methods from speech-act theory, conversation analysis, and second-language writing (applied linguistics), this dissertation study examined the ways students and teachers make, perceive, and respond to requests during writing conferences. Aiming to discover why miscommunication occurs, this study examined how composition instructors adapt their requests to account for their own and their students' communicative backgrounds defined as language background, experience with writing conferences, and motivation for and confidence in writing. (Participants provided and explained key aspects of their communicative backgrounds in surveys and interviews.) Audio- and video-recordings of fourteen writing conferences and twenty-seven stimulated recalls of those conferences provided the raw data for capturing and identifying requests. Requests identified by teachers, students, or both were transcribed and analyzed.

The findings of this study include discovering key requests that serve to create and maintain scaffolding, an essential tool for collaborative learning. Among the styles of requests that support scaffolding and thus enable students and teachers to collaborate on revisions are silence, particularly pauses, and extended requests (S.-H. Lee, 2009). Building on a social constructivist tradition (Bruffee, 1984; Spivey, 1997), this study illustrates ways that teachers and students use requests to display (I. Park, 2015), create,

and assess (Artman, 2007) knowledge. Students and teachers enact various roles (W. B. Horner, 1979; Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015) that affect the recognition and uptake of requests. Specifically, since teachers and students often misidentify each other's roles, misunderstanding is common in writing conferences. The teachers and students in this study jointly recognized only slightly more than one-fourth of each other's requests. Thus, not only do teachers' and students' roles affect how requests are made and understood, they also impact how writers orient to being learners and writers. These effects either encourage and validate students' developing writing skills or discourage them. This study concludes by arguing that the changing demographics of college students, including increases in dual enrollment, non-traditional, and second language learners means each writing conference creates its own exigency for learning, its success determined in significant ways by the participants' understanding of and skill in managing requests. An outline for additional research on writing conferences is also offered.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### EXAMINING REQUESTS IN WRITING CONFERENCES

*Conferencing is something we do, but unexamined it remains something we do not understand and thus cannot improve.* – Laurel Johnson Black

#### **Introduction**

An implicit objective of a teacher-student writing conference is to provide targeted, individualized instruction. Its success depends in large part on alignment between the student's writing goals and the teacher's objectives for a particular paper. The primary way teachers and students present these goals to each other is through requests. As simple as this sounds, recognizing what is really being asked in practice and responding to it adequately and appropriately can be a hit-or-miss proposition. When it misses, the students' questions are not answered, or the teacher misinterprets what those questions are. At stake is the student's opportunity to learn and grow as a writer.

Often, neither composition teachers nor their students fully understand the ways that they make requests of each other. Nor do they understand how those ways determine which thoughts and ideas are introduced during a conference and how they are discussed. Walker and Elias's (1987) study identifying features of successful and unsuccessful writing conferences makes this very point. Walker and Elias defined successful conferences as those in which students helped evaluate their writing with standards that they helped to create. In their analysis, Walker and Elias specifically discount the prior experiences and non-verbal cues that precede successful interactions. In illustrating how one student employed her and her teacher's co-created evaluative criteria to her paper, Walker and Elias (1987) argue that the student's opportunity to evaluate her work was the

most important aspect of that conference's success: "Whether [the student] was following earlier patterns established with this [teacher] or picking up on some non-verbal clues as to the [teacher's] opinion . . . is not of great importance" (p. 276). Given the findings of my study, however, "those earlier patterns" or "non-verbal clues" that the student used to react to her teacher probably created the conditions for her conference's success. In less successful conferences, students either missed the cues or the teacher did not offer them.

Examining how requests function in writing conferences holds promise for determining the interactional cues that foretell a writing conference's success. Students and teachers signal the desire to talk about an aspect of the students' writing explicitly (through a command) or implicitly (through making a statement or a question, using vocabulary in an unusual way, or offering a physical copy of a paper). In the process, they make requests. For example, the following utterances were identified as requests by one or both participants of a writing conference:

"I don't feel like my review is great."

"If there is one thing that I can- need to improve the most in my writing, what would you say it is?"

"Give me your tougher feedback."

"Do you think my writing is okay?"

"Will you fix it for me?"

"So we need to change this just slightly."

"Changing? (.) What?"

"How do you know that he met her?"

“Does that make sense?”

“It’s [the topic’s] so big.”

Yet some participants did not recognize some of these utterances as requests. What occurred during the conference to make some requests more recognizable than others? How did students’ prior experiences with writing conferences, their confidence as writers, their motivation to improve, and their language backgrounds affect the presentation and reception of these utterances as requests? How do requests allow participants to display their knowledge, co-create content, and assess knowledge? This dissertation study addresses these questions. Indeed, students’ and teachers’ perceptions of conference success often aligned with their evaluation of how well their requests were understood. Thus, the answers to these questions have significant consequences for the teaching and learning that occurs during a writing conference.

For instance, much research has focused on how appropriate scaffolding influences conference success (DeMott, 2006; Ewert, 2009; Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Strauss & Xiang, 2006; Weissberg, 2006). But exploring interactions such as requesting that precede, and even set up, scaffolding is as important as examining the scaffolding itself. In this dissertation, I argue that understanding how requests lead to scaffolding and other teaching moments in the conference partially explains why participants rate some conferences as more successful than others.

This study examined writing conference interactions by blending methods from speech act theory (requests), conversation analysis, and stimulated recalls to examine first-year composition teachers’ and their students’ requests and the interactions that flow from them. The main data sources for the present study included audio and video

recordings of teacher-student writing conference interactions and stimulated recall sessions with both students and their teachers.

Completing this research adds to the body of research in several fields: applied linguistics (including sociolinguistics, speech act research, and conversation analysis), educational research, composition studies, and second language writing. The writing conference recordings contribute to the sociolinguistics fields by adding naturally-occurring data from a context that has received little attention in those fields. Stimulated recall adds to composition and second language writing studies by offering insights into interlocutors' awareness of how they create and interpret requests, including discovering how and why miscommunication occurs. This study contributes to educational research by exploring teacher-student communication in a setting analogous to teachers' office hours. Thus, both the data collected and the methods employed contribute to these fields.

This chapter provides the rationale and organization for this dissertation. It defines requests and shows how they relate to writing conference events and prior interactional studies. It then outlines the purpose and significance of the study, the research questions that guided it, and the methodological approach.

### **Background and Context**

As a teacher who meets with students regularly, I recognize that some writing conferences are unsuccessful. In particular, my English as a second language (L2) writers often have difficulty conveying their concerns about their writing. This study arose because I wanted to understand writing conferences from both sides of the desk. As a teacher of L2 writers (English L2) and as an L2 writer myself (Spanish L2), I have experienced the frustration that comes from unsuccessful conferences when the teacher,

the student, or both sense that the writing conference did not adequately address the conference's purposes.

Examining requests narrows the focus of where frustration may begin.

Specifically, what a speaker asks for determines what he or she receives. For instance, if a student asks to discuss documentation formatting, but her thesis statement requires more work, her teacher may or may not know to ask about the thesis. How the speaker asks also determines whether or not the listener will grant the request. Similarly, if the teacher makes a request that the student interprets as a statement, the student may miss the opportunity for feedback related to the teacher's request. So much can go wrong in making or receiving a request that focusing on understanding the potential for miscommunication surrounding requests provides a way to explain why some students leave conferences frustrated. Yet, it is also important to understand why and how requests work to facilitate the work in a writing conference. This study does both.

In order to recognize requests and understand how they influence writing conference interactions, I define requests and communicative background in the next section and consider how participants' communicative backgrounds may impact both how they make requests and act upon the other participant's requests.

### **Principles of Requests**

A request is an utterance from a speaker to a listener where the speaker tries to get the listener to perform an action that only, or mainly, benefits the speaker (Searle, 1969; Trosborg, 1994). In this sense, Trosborg (1994) distinguishes requests from other types of directives, future-oriented speech acts designed to commit the listener to perform a verbal or non-verbal action (p.14) during the conversation or at some point after the

conversation ends. Other directives include suggestions or advice, which differ from requests in that the speaker encourages the listener to perform an action for the listener's benefit. Furthermore, requests can vary from direct to indirect to implied presentation forms (Austin, 1962; Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; Searle, 1969; Trosborg, 1994; Weizman, 1989). I use Trosborg's (1994) and Searle's (1976) definitions of requests in this dissertation.

I also used Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) coding criteria for requests. While they did not include writing conferences in their study's scenarios, similar sociocultural factors found in their data exist in writing conferences including power differentials between teachers and students and variations in communicative background, including culture or language and amount of experience in the situation. Blum-Kulka et al.'s multilingual focus, in particular, connects to my study since their participants also represented languages other than English. Both institutional and cross-cultural factors come into play in writing conferences, making them an ideal site for studying cross-cultural interactions. Thus, examining how teacher and student participants proposed future actions for the student's paper being discussed and the writing conference itself, as well as how they interpret those requests, offered ways to understand how they misinterpreted those cues or missed them entirely.

### **Defining Requests**

A request is an actual action, a speech act, taken by the student or the teacher to move a writing conference forward or address particular topics of concern in a writing assignment. During the recall sessions, the participants' discussions regarding requests that occurred in writing conferences suggested concerns or goals implied in those

requests. In everyday conversation, people perceive needs within requests. Even the language of composition scholarship refers to “meeting student needs.” For example, Ferris et al. (2011) note that all teachers who teach L2 writers “need to be reminded that these students and their texts represent a broad range of *needs*, strengths, and challenges and to structure their feedback accordingly” (p. 224, emphasis added). Nevertheless, a need may exist independently of a request.

Thus, before proceeding further, it is necessary to distinguish a request from a need (or what prompts the request), the act of requesting itself, and any actions that follow from the request. An analogy may clarify this relationship between a request and a need. A writing conference seems, in some ways, similar to visiting a doctor. Most people see their doctors because they have symptoms that suggest a health concern (a need), not to determine what they already do well. For example, someone may suffer from debilitating back pain. Identifying and removing the source of the pain could be considered a need. Yet addressing the pain is not necessarily the same as addressing the source of the pain. While the symptom, back pain, and the need, removing the back pain, are not necessarily synonymous, it can be difficult, at times, to discuss one without referring to the other. The difference in treatment could range between prescribing pain medication or ordering an MRI to prepare for surgery. Moreover, a treatment that works for one patient’s back pain may not necessarily work for another patient’s. In a research situation, though, while patients’ needs could be difficult to determine, the requests that they make of their doctors and the doctors’ responses are visible in their interactions.

Unlike a need, a request has to be articulated and brought to the other interlocutor’s attention. While a need may be implied in a request, a need can also exist

independently of a request. This analogy illustrates that identifying needs is imprecise, ill-defined, contextual, and individual. Needs could be located in speech, in writing, or in someone's mind, making them difficult to isolate. Requests, on the other hand, take recognizable forms that can be identified, categorized, and analyzed. Focusing on requests, therefore, narrows the focus because they are visible in interpersonal interaction. While some requests are non-verbal, they are still interactional and may include a verbal component in the request itself or its uptake. Thus, this dissertation focused on identifying requests and how participants created and reacted to them rather than focusing on the goals or needs embedded in the requests, while acknowledging that goals and needs existed.

### **Relating Communicative Background to Requests**

How people produce and interpret requests is integrally related to their prior experiences with language, or their communicative background. In fact, communicative background is a critical aspect of understanding how people interpret any interaction.

A person's communicative background is his or her internal schema, developed over years of experience in various settings and with numerous role models (Hudson, 1980), for transmitting and understanding the cues required (Gumperz, 1982) to enact speech acts and to convey his or her social status (Ochs, 1996). Communicative background includes personal factors such as a person's "age, region of origin, social class (or profession) and sex" (Hudson, 1980, p. 13) and situational ones including the setting and information, such as vocabulary and topical information, acquired before the interaction began (Gumperz, 1982). Communicative background, then, is the sum total of



a person's experiences with language in macro and micro ways that influence how interactions with others in succeeding language experiences are shaped.

The interactional patterns that people employ can vary based on participants' own communicative backgrounds as well as their perceptions of other participants' communicative backgrounds. In a writing conference, communicative background, as referenced in this dissertation, includes relative familiarity with the writing conference as a genre, a writer's motivation to write and perceived ownership over his or her own paper, and participants' language use (including accents, vocabulary, sentence structures, and registers). Communicative background is part of people's prior knowledge, and most people will activate prior knowledge to handle new situations (Ohlsson, 2011). Bilingual individuals specifically, Gumperz (1992) argues, "tend to fall back on rhetorical strategies acquired in their native-language environment" to deal with an unfamiliar situation (p. 303–04). Thus, like any student unfamiliar with a writing conference, an L2 writer may use classroom interactional patterns including those acquired in his or her L1 educational experience, which, for example, may be more (or less) formal than U.S. educational contexts.

Being able to effectively convey a request in one language or one situation does not necessarily mean that a person can effectively do so in another language, a new situation, or both with a new conversational partner. A new situation can be particularly difficult if the contextual cues required to enact requesting differ substantially. Since participants' communicative backgrounds vary, it is important to investigate whether and to what extent requesting strategies differ in a writing conference context in order to

uncover how participants' various communicative backgrounds influence their interactions within the conference.

Both how much experience students and teachers have had with writing conferences and how well they understand the conference's purpose are aspects of their communicative backgrounds. These aspects complicate the understanding of requests in writing conferences. For example, Liu (2009) found that L2 writers were less likely to have had experience with writing conferences than their American counterparts. The presentation and interpretation of the projected outcomes or goals for a paper and for the writing conference itself are often unstated assumptions that present themselves subconsciously to both teachers and students (Gumperz, 1992), making those goals difficult to determine. One such assumption may be what teachers and students have been taught to value in writing and in talk-about-writing situations specifically. Anderson (2012) and Matsuda, Saenkhum, and Accardi (2013) claim that composition is in the midst of a "rhetoric-linguistic dilemma" (p. 78). Such a dilemma suggests that students' rhetorical needs of developing ideas and matching organization to purpose and audience take precedence over recognizing and meeting students' linguistic needs (Anderson, 2012; Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015; Matsuda et al., 2013). If the teacher privileges discussing content issues in writing conferences, she or he may defer grammatical concerns for later in the conference, delay them for another conference entirely, or not address them at all. Thus, prior experience including how each participant understands the conference's purpose can influence how requests are received.

While language background is only one aspect of a person's communicative background, specialized vocabulary related to this single characteristic abounds in

educational settings. Specifically, the vocabulary used to refer to students who have developed or who are developing fluency in a language beyond their first varies and carries connotative as well as denotative meanings. No term is free from these debates. I opted to use *L2* to refer to these developing learners since much of the literature reviewed for this dissertation used *L2*. I use the term *L2 writers* to refer to students who are learning to write academic English although their home language is another national language. Occasionally, I added a national language distinction in front of an *L1* or *L2* designation.

Writing is often viewed as an individual activity. Yet, like other forms of communication, writing is a social activity as much as it is an individual one (Bakhtin, 1981; Gee, 2011). Hence, people's communicative backgrounds influence not only how and what they write, but also how they talk about writing. In some ways, this definition of communicative background is similar to Bakhtin's (1981) concept of heteroglossia and Gee's (2011) definitions of big "D" and little "d" discourse. Heteroglossia means that people's utterances in word and structure interact with each other. That is, an utterance shapes and is shaped both by the current situation and situations that preceded it. As Gee (2011) noted, not only the words that people use but the ways in which they use those words impact what ideas they share with each other and how their ideas are shared. Like Gee's big-D Discourse, communicative background includes socially constructed knowledge of the way people in society interact, the groups they interact with, and the roles that they play in their groups. Practical knowledge of requesting is part of big-D Discourse. Little-*d* discourse aligns with contextualization cues (Gumperz, 1982, 1992), the information on how people interact in a given situation including the levels of

formality associated with various functions. Specifically, people take their general knowledge of requesting (Discourse) and adapt it to fit the situation and the participants with whom they are interacting (discourse).

Every writing conference is a new situation since each student and teacher brings a variety of experiences to that situation. Among the experiences that teachers and student have are the facility with English and their prior experience with writing conferences. The variations in the success in writing conferences result from the divergent experiences that teachers and students bring to the writing conference, influencing how they communicate, or miscommunicate, with each other. In this sense, successful conferences are redefined as those where effective communication occurred.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study included examining how teachers and students make and receive requests and how their requests influence subsequent interactions including the teaching and learning that occur during writing conferences. I sought to determine to what extent making and interpreting requests during a writing conference influenced work on the paper being discussed during the conference. Of particular interest was how requests were understood or misunderstood when an English L2 bilingual student met with an English L1 teacher.

Examining the speech act of requests offers one avenue for exploring how writing conferences shape and are shaped by teachers' and students' utterances and the meanings behind them (Gumperz, 1982, 1992). While conferences can be frustrating when students' implicit or explicit requests about their writing seem to go unanswered, the dialogic work of negotiating those requests can still be in process. Examining the ways in

which participants' requests or their reactions to each other's requests change is outside the scope of this dissertation, a point I return to in the final chapter. However, in this dissertation, the frustration of unanswered requests is shown to be one explanation, although not the only one, for misunderstanding exhibited in the conference. Showing this correlation between unanswered requests and frustration required tracing the thread of a request from its inception to how the listener interpreted it and attempted to respond to it as well as how the speaker responded to the listener's responses. Thus, this study shows that understanding how requests are created and interpreted offers ways to help students and teachers recognize the effects that their requests have both on interactions that occur in writing conferences and participants' perceptions of those interactions. With this understanding, writing teachers can adapt conversational tools and strategies to make their conferences with students more productive and satisfying.

### **Research Questions**

This dissertation examined how teachers and students make and understand requests during a writing conference; how they make the request's goal explicitly or implicitly known; and how they negotiate together how, if, or when the request is addressed. Thus, this study takes into account both the language of the request and what happens after an actual or perceived request. To examine requests in writing conferences, I addressed the following main question and sub-questions.

- Main Research Question: How are teachers' and students' requests formed, received, and interpreted during teacher-student writing conferences?
  - a. Which utterances do participants identify as their own or as the other participant's requests?

- b. What forms do teachers' and students' requests take?
- c. How does each participant recognize and interpret the other participant's requests?

Answers to these research questions were pursued by collecting and analyzing a substantial amount of data during a 16-week semester at an open-enrollment university in the Intermountain West.

### **Blending Interactional Methods:**

#### **Overview of the Dissertation's Methodology and Conceptual Framework**

This study's methodological approach offers a way to explore the issues raised by the ways participants articulate, present, recognize, and respond to requests. Indeed, to address the intention or meaning embedded in a student's request, teachers have to discern verbal or non-verbal cues (or both) and determine not only what, or if, the student is requesting but also plan how to address it, all within a matter of seconds. The study drew upon speech act theory, conversation analysis, and stimulated recall methods to explore how teachers adapt their approach to address their students' differing communicative backgrounds. Since this study examined how requests do and do not work, this blended approach was ideal for analyzing differences in participants' communicative backgrounds and how these differences led them to present and interpret writing conference requests in ways the other person neither expected nor understood. Through analyzing the combined effects of background differences and the presentation and interpretation of requests, my results show precise moments when miscommunication occurred and why.

For this study, writing conferences conducted as part of composition classrooms that included students with a range of communicative backgrounds provided both naturally occurring conversation and a site of intercultural interaction. In sum, participants' diverse communicative backgrounds lent variety to the presentation and reception of the requests. The writing conference situation itself also changed some utterances into requests (Gumperz, 1982; Searle, 1969). All of this was examined through multiple passes through the data, which the replay of recordings, particularly after transcription, allowed.

Each field provided a key element for the study. Conversation analysis values recording and transcribing conversations as a standard methodology (Drew & Heritage, 1992a; Gumperz, 1982; Thonus, 2002, 2004). Moreover, its focus on the organization of conversations is a necessary analytical component. In fact, Gumperz (1982, 1992), a foundational theorist and practitioner of interactional sociolinguistics, explicitly acknowledged his use of CA's organizational principles, specifically turn-taking, sequence, and "conversational negotiation" (1992, p. 305). According to Gumperz, conversational negotiation involves speakers' and listeners' cooperation to co-construct an interaction. It involves the moves and response-moves that each interlocutor makes. Gumperz argued that conversation is a "goal-oriented process" (p. 306), and as interlocutors interact, they develop the "shared understandings" that make their interpretations of the interaction possible (p. 305). The concept of adjacency pairs, in particular, provided an empirical way for my study to examine the influence of what one speaker said on what the next speaker said. Requests are one form of an adjacency pair because a request (the first pair-part) requires a response (the second pair-part) (see

Antaki, 2011; Gumperz, 1992; I. Park, 2012a, 2012b). Consequently, audio and video recordings of these adjacency pairs in writing conferences were one of the main data sources for this study.

Detailed transcripts allowed me to see “how language works to create meaning in interaction” (Tannen, 2005, p. 205). The specific aspects included in this study’s transcripts are further presented and described in Chapter 3. Briefly, a conversation analysis transcription style (Goodwin & Heritage, 1990; Jefferson, 2004) combined with separating speech in intonation units (Stelma & Cameron, 2007) showed patterns in both speech features and topic chains. Employing stimulated recalls from second language research provided a way to test the assumption that differences in communicative background influence both the form and the reception of communicative events. Those differences are visible in the transcripts. I review this research approach and discuss these methods in more detail in Chapter 3.

Speech act theory provided the definition of requests, the key focus of this study and a form that can be identified in the transcripts. If listeners misunderstand what speakers intend to say, this misunderstanding can impede their ability to effectively do what needs to be done in the writing conference: to meet the student’s and teacher’s writing goals for that conference.

While some requests were identified through approaches to conversation analysis, others were communicated in ways that neither the listener nor the researcher found salient. Since meaning can be misinterpreted, additional methods were needed to verify vague or indeterminate interactional meanings in the conferences. This study supplemented the audio and video recordings of the writing conferences with pre-



conference teacher interviews, post-conference stimulated recall sessions and interviews, and written documents. These methods allowed the participants to discuss the meaning behind their requests and provide insight into how their communicative background (their context) influenced what they asked, why they asked it, and how they perceived and reacted to what the other participant asked.

Stimulated recalls (Gass & Mackey, 2000, 2017) were particularly important and became the second main data source for this study. These involved the participants reviewing the video-recorded writing conference. They allowed participants to identify requests rather than privileging the researcher's perspective and provided a way to probe misunderstanding and miscommunication by verifying participants' interpretations of relevant interactions.

Supplemental data provided added context and deepened the analytical possibilities. Results from the background survey (Appendix B) collected at the beginning of the study period helped identify some features of student-participants' communicative backgrounds. The teachers' assignment sheets and the students' rough and final drafts added background information and ways to index aspects of class and conference contexts that were not captured on the recordings. During the stimulated recall sessions, students and teachers also completed a two-question Likert-scale survey (Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015; Walker & Elias, 1987) that rated the effectiveness of the conference, which helped identify perceptions suggesting lingering frustration over being misunderstood. The combination of these methods aided in identifying and understanding patterns that emerged and added richness to interpreting them.

Understanding potential request patterns helped identify them in writing conference interactions. In coding requests, several studies (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Thonus, 2002; Vilar Beltrán & Martínez-Flor, 2008; Weizman, 1989) that examined the various forms that requests take formed the basis for identifying and discussing requests. Additional coding focused on the roles that teachers and students assumed during their conferences (Carter, Lee, & Gates, 2016; DeMott, 2006; W. B. Horner, 1979; Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015) as those roles influenced both how requests were made and recognized.

### **Significance of the Study**

Inherent tensions exist in writing conferences between individualization (meeting individual students' writing concerns) and ritualization (people using standard-to-them patterns of speaking to interact with fellow interlocutors). Although many writing conference studies concentrated on classrooms containing solely monolingual English students (Artman, 2007; DeMott, 2006; Jacobs & Karliner, 1977; Sperling, 1990; Walker & Elias, 1987) or second language writers (Ahn & Witmer, 2009; Anderson, 2012; Eckstein, 2013; Ewert, 2009; Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Kim, 2011; Liu, 2009; Strauss & Xiang, 2006), studies that focus on composition teachers' interactions with sets of students who they perceive as linguistically homogeneous cannot fully account for the decisions that those teachers make when students' language use differs from others in their class. While good reasons existed at the time for researchers' decisions to limit their studies to a restricted range of students (often L2 students), composition classrooms are now more culturally and linguistically diverse than in the past. As a result, current and

future studies need to examine how the intermingling of students' diverse communicative backgrounds impacts writing conference interactions.

This study recognized that a composition classroom's heterogeneity may impact teachers' and students' ability to successfully interact when they meet one-to-one. To be clear, a writing conference tends to be a highly ritualized space. While teachers engage in the writing conference ritual multiple times each semester, students do not. Thus, while teachers may recognize their role in writing conferences, students often do not. Despite teachers' sensitivity to a writing conference's routine, even they may not recognize that even one significant difference between their communicative background and a student's communicative background can alter that ritual.

This need to examine how students' communicative backgrounds impact college composition generally and writing conferences specifically is becoming more urgent than ever before. Like many schools, at Rocky Mountain University (RMU)<sup>1</sup>, the site of this study, a classroom may contain, on one end of the continuum, students who received their GED and have little experience talking about writing and, on the other, students who completed AP or concurrent enrollment and are versed in talking about writing. Thus, students' experiences with writing in general, their attitudes toward it, and the perceptions of their ability to write may all vary. Furthermore, the number of multilingual speakers in the U.S. and on college campuses continues to increase (Ryan, 2013). Both of these changes can alter what students require from their composition classes and, by extension, their teacher-student writing conferences.

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<sup>1</sup> Pseudonyms are used throughout this study for the site and participants.

While examining how writing teachers accustomed to interacting with English L1 writers interacted with English L2 writers during their one-to-one writing conferences was an important part of this study, I expanded the study's focus to examine how additional aspects of communicative background influenced the recognition of requests during writing conferences. While language use was a factor, experience with writing conferences, students' confidence in writing, and their motivation to improve emerged as more important factors. This expanded view of communicative background led to the realization that every writing conference is a new experience because the experiences of the teacher and student that enter it are also constantly changing.

Through the intercultural aspects built around examining the connection among students' communicative backgrounds (Gumperz, 1982), their requests, and the impacts on teaching and learning, this study creates a bridge between writing conference research in both second language writing and composition studies. Focusing on requests and conversation analysis provided the analytical tools to investigate how students' and teachers' potentially different ways of interacting when talking about writing could mask reasons why conferences meet, or fail to meet, their expectations.

Exploring the ways students communicate their writing concerns or goals to their teachers through requests can make teachers more aware of students' subtle cues. Teachers' inability to recognize a request means they cannot address it. Because simply asking students "What do you need?" is unlikely to produce useful responses in all but a few cases, understanding the strategies used to articulate needs through requests, who employs those strategies, and how and when they are used can help teachers in the following ways. First, this understanding can help teachers recognize how the request

strategy evokes the expectation for a certain type of response. Such insights can make teachers more aware of their interactional practice in writing conferences, an initial step to producing more successful and equitable conferences. Second, understanding requests can tune teachers' ears to the absence of their expected request strategies and to notice other ways that students offer those cues. Third, through knowing how they interpret students' explicit and implicit requests, teachers can recognize how they perceive a request in a statement. Fourth, teachers can learn to probe deeper to encourage students to make requests related to their concerns or goals. Fifth, as importantly, teachers can examine their reactions once they recognize various utterances as requests. In sum, understanding requests has the potential to improve the effectiveness of writing conferences in helping students find greater success with their writing assignments.

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is divided into three parts. The first three chapters introduce the study, the literature that informs the approach taken in the research, and the methods used to conduct the study. Chapter 1 offered a rationale for this study. In sum, the mixed success of writing conferences, particularly for L2 writers, supports my desire to study why this occurs. Chapter 1 introduced the speech act of requests as a way to examine writing conference interactions. It argued for using conversation analysis and stimulated recall methods to examine why misunderstandings occasionally arise between students and their teachers. It provided a brief overview of key terms and concepts required to understand this dissertation including requests and communicative background. It offered a rationale for studying how participants' communicative backgrounds influences interactions related to requests in writing conferences. It also argued that interactions that

teachers and writers experience in writing conferences can be understood by focusing on their differences in making and recognizing each other's requests.

Chapter 2 develops the case for examining writing conference interactions using the speech act of requests. It begins by overviewing social constructivist theories of writing (Bruffee, 1984; Spivey, 1997), on which writing conference pedagogy is based. It makes the case that examining a heterogeneous classroom is a logical next step for exploring what occurs during writing conferences. Through examining prior writing conference studies, Chapter 2 also makes the case for exploring a broader definition of communicative background—one that includes language use, but also includes writing conference experience and writing motivation as key elements of what occurs in a writing conference. It also argues that, since interaction involves two participants, both participants' requests and their perceptions about how requests impact their conference should be examined. Furthermore, it offers a rationale for examining requests, arguing that they are a key aspect of interaction requiring more detailed examination. The chapter concludes by presenting the conceptual framework that blends research on questions and requests with social constructivist theory to argue that requests display, create, and assess knowledge during writing conferences.

Chapter 3 reviews the study's design including how conversation analysis and stimulated recall methods were employed to examine students' and teachers' requests. It explains how examining the findings and comparing them to aspects of the participants' communicative backgrounds provides ways of understanding what leads to communication and miscommunication in writing conferences. Key data included audio- and video recordings of writing conferences and stimulated recall sessions, two types of

surveys, and students' drafts. Generally, these have not been combined with the other methods. The purpose in doing so in this study was to determine how participants' request strategies and the degree of uptake (including the lack of uptake entirely) influenced their perceived success of the writing conference.

The detailed turn-by-turn CA analysis, facilitated with detailed transcripts, and stimulated recalls where participants identified their own and each other's requests helped identify requests and provided a way to interrogate miscommunication that the participants noted during their stimulated recall sessions. Coding requests for which participant made them, which participants identified them, and how they were formed and linking those strategies to participants' communicative backgrounds provided ways of understanding how requests influence the surrounding interactions including the teaching and learning that occur during writing conferences.

Chapters 4 through 6 are article-length essays reporting on key aspects of the study. These chapters provide data analysis geared toward journals in applied linguistics and composition studies. As such, they include some information found in the first three chapters. Select transcripts appear throughout these chapters.

Chapter 4, "Extended Silence as Requestive Hint," was written for either the *Journal of Pragmatics* (where much speech act work appears) or *Written Communication*. It focuses on showing how silence, particularly pauses, act as requests during writing conferences. It notes that such silence is critical to enable students to co-construct revisions on their drafts.

Chapter 5, "Building a Sentence: An Example of Extended Requesting," was written for the *Journal of Pragmatics* as it extends S.-H. Lee's (2009) definition of

extended requests to writing conference interactions. Focusing on moments during the writing conference when the teacher and student co-create sentences, the chapter illustrates the essential conditions for enacting an extended request and those that prevent that pattern from emerging. It discusses the implications the presence or absence of extended requests have for teaching and learning.

Chapter 6, “Requests by Readers and Writers,” was written for *Research in the Teaching of English* since it shows how the roles that students and teachers assume when making requests influences how students develop and convey their roles as learners and writers. It argues that some misunderstandings occur during writing conferences because participants misunderstand each other’s roles. When that happens, students in particular struggle to develop and convey their roles as learners and writers in ways that maximize the writing conference’s ability to improve their writing and revising abilities.

Chapter 7 turns toward this study’s implications. Knowing how request mechanisms work and how they lead to conference interactions allows teachers to be more aware of patterns. Specifically, understanding how requests are formed, used, and interpreted in writing conferences can help instructors identify potential areas of miscommunication and address those earlier in the conference or the course. Particularly in the ability to recognize when preferred request patterns are missing or not used in the ways that they expect, teachers can attune to either asking students for their input or proceeding with a conference activity or interaction that aligns with an implicitly stated student concern or goal. This chapter also discusses the strengths and limitations of the study and offers options for future research that build upon this study’s findings.



This dissertation also includes an extensive appendix section. It includes stimulated recall protocols, the questionnaires used in the study, and a detailed transcription key. This section's purpose is to enable other researchers to analyze this study's design and duplicate it as desired.

### **Conclusion**

Conferences can be a transformative experience for teachers and students. But as empirical studies and personal experience attest, sometimes conferences do not work very well (Eckstein, 2013; Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015; Walker & Elias, 1987). In this dissertation, I argue that differences in interactional patterns affect the recognition of students' requests and how they are discussed. Such differences impact the participants' perception of the conference's success. Applying conversation analysis and stimulated recall methods within a social constructivist framework (Bruffee, 1984; Spivey, 1997) provides a way to examine how participants' communicative backgrounds affect how requests are made and received.

This study expands our understanding beyond the current writing conference literature, which tends to be focused on tight participant demographics that mask differences between language and talk-about-writing experiences and internal attitudes such as motivation and confidence. When I first began the research, I was most concerned about how miscommunication occurs in writing conferences. As the study progressed, I realized that understanding miscommunication also required understanding when requests work and when they do not, including examining requestive strategies that had received little prior attention. This dissertation argues that expanding the context in which the study occurs allows for a closer examination, and thus a deeper understanding,

of how differences in communicative background can influence (mis)communication of students' writing concerns or goals as realized through requests.

## CHAPTER TWO

### RECOGNIZING KNOWLEDGE: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### **Introduction**

Chapter 2 develops a conceptual framework for analyzing requests by noting how writing conference pedagogy fits within a social constructivist framework (Bruffee, 1984; Spivey, 1997). This chapter argues for the value that heterogeneous classrooms offer for examining interactions in writing conferences. It does so by providing an expanded definition of communicative background that draws from previous studies on writing conferences. This chapter concludes by offering a conceptual framework that blends research on questions and requests with social constructivist pedagogies to argue that students' and teachers' communicative backgrounds influence the ways that they use requests to display, create, and assess knowledge during writing conferences. Moreover, although scaffolding has received significant attention in prior studies on writing conferences, this chapter argues that understanding requests through a social constructivist lens helps explain how requests initiate and maintain scaffolded teaching strategies during writing conferences.

Teaching and learning involve conversations that usually involve some type of request. At the beginning of this study, I adopted Searle's (1969) definition of a *request*: an utterance where the speaker asks the listener to perform an action that mainly benefits the speaker (see also Trosborg, 1994). Adopting this definition aligned my study with other studies on requests in pragmatics (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Trosborg, 1994) and in writing conferences or tutorials (Thonus, 2002). By their nature as the first pair-part of an adjacency pair (Goodwin & Heritage, 1990), requests set up many interactions and

sequences (S.-H. Lee, 2009; I. Park, 2015). As I. Park (2015) has noted, people use various request styles to convey their knowledge of writing and the content that they are writing about. Studying requests in one instructional context, the writing conference, offers a way to explore how knowledge is displayed, created, and assessed.

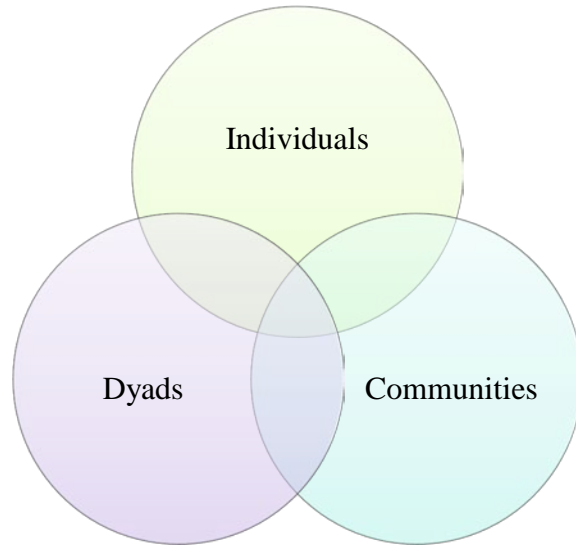
The forms that requests take, however, are only part of the equation in understanding how requests function in a writing conference. To facilitate these conversations, interlocutors use their prior knowledge of current or similar situations to apply previously attained requesting patterns to the current interaction. Since the ways in which people display and build knowledge is based on their prior experiences with discourse communities and particular contexts, understanding interlocutors' backgrounds can help explain not only how requests are formed and received but also how interlocutors use them to co-create and display knowledge during writing conferences.

### **Constructing Writing Through Requests**

Writing conferences are consistent with a social constructivist view of writing (Bruffee, 1984; Spivey, 1997). For this reason, many researchers (Ahn & Witmer, 2009; Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015; Patthey-Chavez & Ferris, 1997; Sperling, 1990; Strauss & Xiang, 2006) who examined students' and teachers' interactions as they discuss students' drafts used Vygotsky's theoretical framework to explore how groups become knowledge-building entities (Spivey, 1997). Spivey (1997) argued that constructivist theorists fall into three camps, depending on how they conceptualize "constructive agents": (a) a focus on individuals, (b) a focus on small groups or dyads, or (c) a focus on communities and societies (p. 10). As Spivey noted, "In almost any composing situation the agent can be seen as an individual or as individuals, as [she] view[s] agency . . . , but

also can be seen as a system whose components interact directly or as a larger discourse community” (1997, p. 124). While many theorists, as Spivey noted, tend to fall into one of the three camps, in this dissertation, I look at how individuals’ uses of discourse conventions acquired from various discourse communities influence the ways that they use requests in the writing conference dyad.

Although theorists in all three camps view knowledge as being co-produced, those in the first group believe the individual ultimately determines whether to accept, or internalize, the co-created knowledge. As Spivey (1997) explained, “[T]he social knowledge of interest to constructivists is viewed as *in* people, rather than as something external to them” (p. 13). Like Spivey, I view agency as individual. At the same time, I acknowledge the power of groups to influence what individuals say, believe, and do. In essence, rather than seeing three distinct groups, I see three groups that have symbiotic relationships with each other, as shown in Figure 1. In particular, I aim to explore how the individual and dyad influence each other. Thus, I am most interested in how each individual’s socially constructed knowledge interacts with that of her or his fellow interlocutor, particularly within the writing conference context, as evidenced through their use of requests. This study regards individuals as constructive agents who employ their tacit knowledge of small and large group dynamics, processes, and knowledge in order to co-create meaning with another person. Thus, the focus of this dissertation is on examining how requests function in a writing conference by employing a social constructivist framework that acknowledges participants’ communicative backgrounds.



*Figure 1.* Visual representation of the intersection among the constructive agents for three social constructivist camps. The three camps are based on Spivey’s text-based descriptions, but the overlap and visual representation is my schema. Adapted from *The constructivist metaphor: Reading, writing, and the making of meaning*, by N. N. Spivey, 1997, San Diego, CA, Academic Press.

### **Expanding the Context**

What kinds of requestive interactions occur in a writing conference, and how might those change as the speakers and their communicative backgrounds vary? This question guided my exploration of the existing literature. In fact, understanding the relationship between the individual and the group is critical to understanding how I approached my research study. Specifically, the literature points to three significant reasons why the present study is needed. These key reasons and how they overlap with requests are illustrated in Figure 2.



*Figure 2.* Venn diagram illustrating how three components of communicative background overlap with requests.

First, little research on teacher–student writing conferences examines how students’ and teachers’ differing experiences affect the interactions that occur in a writing conference. Two studies (Black, 1998; Liu, 2009), however, come close. Both explore how students’ language backgrounds relate to both their prior experience with conferencing and what occurs in the writing conference. Liu’s (2009) study examined how Americans with English L1 backgrounds generally had more experience with the writing conference than English L2 students. Black (1998) explored how students’ cultures and the ways in which language use marks them (African-American Vernacular English) may impact their interactions with their teacher. While her sample size of three students is small for these claims, as she acknowledges, the key question for the chapter in which she discusses these themes is relevant when applied to requests: “What happens when it becomes clear that we are miscommunicating, but we are unable to understand

why and seemingly unable to keep talking at each other in the same ways?" (p. 90). In fact, Black's (1998) question relates to the next gap in the literature.

Second, while many writing conference studies have focused on either English L1 (Artman, 2007; Carnicelli, 1980; DeMott, 2006; Jacobs & Karliner, 1977; McLaughlin, 2009; Sperling, 1990; Walker & Elias, 1987) or English L2 students in English Language Learning classrooms (Ahn & Witmer, 2009; Eckstein, 2013; Ewert, 2009; Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Koshik, 1999, 2002), few have addressed both (Black, 1998; Liu, 2009). This imbalance has an important implication. While language itself can be a factor in explaining the interactions that occur in writing conferences, little research explores the ways that teachers adapt their requests or instructional style to account for differences in students' backgrounds, their prior experiences with writing conferences, and their motivational differences. In other words, even though the writing conference's structure takes on the trappings of many institutional encounters (Antaki, 2011; Drew & Heritage, 1992a), that structure is intended to individualize instruction for a particular student. Yet how a teacher adapts instruction to meet the needs of Student A and then Student B and then Student C who have widely different communicative backgrounds has received little attention. What research has been done focuses on classroom settings (Anderson, 2012; Ferris et al., 2011; Matsuda et al., 2013) or writing center tutorials (Thonus, 1999, 2002, 2004) rather than on writing conferences. However, even these studies focus mostly on language background rather than including other aspects of participants' communicative backgrounds.

Third, only a small handful of studies on talk-about-writing situations mention speech acts generally or requests specifically: one theoretical work (W. B. Horner, 1979)



and three empirical studies (Artman, 2007; I. Park, 2015; Thonus, 2002). Most empirical studies that examine requests in these situations focus on how requests are used in writing center tutorials (I. Park, 2015; Thonus, 2002). Even that research, however, is minimal. Some work (Koshik, 2002; I. Park, 2012b, 2012a) addressed how questions are used in these settings and are thus related to requests. Searle (1969) noted, “Asking questions is really a special case of requesting” because the speaker is “requesting information” (p. 69). Thonus (2002) included request strategies that look similar to I. Park’s (2012a) polar questions. Thus, questions that have been identified in other composition research could theoretically be additional request types that appear only in writing conferences.

While requests have not received significant attention in writing center or writing conference studies, the speech act of requesting has been studied extensively in other contexts, including cross-language (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Trosborg, 1994; Vilar Beltrán & Martínez-Flor, 2008) and institutional contexts (Drew & Heritage, 1992a; Gumperz, 1992; S.-H. Lee, 2009). Cross-language contexts, in particular, relate to this dissertation’s focus on requesting that occurs between English L2 writers and their English L1 teachers.

To understand how requests are used in writing conferences, it is important to understand how people use them in casual conversation (Bruffee, 1984; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). The concepts of both heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981) and contextualization cues (Gumperz, 1982, 1992) suggest that people bring notions of appropriate requesting from known situations (i.e., classroom discourse or everyday conversation) into a new one—in this case, a writing conference (Black, 1998; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Jacobs & Karliner, 1977; Vilar Beltrán & Martínez-Flor, 2008). Thus,

students may default to their knowledge of classroom discourse or everyday conversation in their initial writing conference interactions. Those requesting strategies can even vary between one language and another (Trosborg, 1994; Weizman, 1989) and from one situation to another.

Students and their teachers, then, often take for granted how they communicate with each other. For example, failing to recognize differences in each other's communicative backgrounds can lead to teachers and students to use different words when referring to the same concepts when making requests about writing (Alexander, 1972; Bruffee, 1984; Gumperz, 1992), such as when students use the word "opinion" when their teachers prefer "argument." It can also lead to favoring some interactional sequences for moving into or out of a request (Austin, 1962; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Lanigan, 1977; Searle, 1969; Trosborg, 1994; Vilar Beltrán & Martínez-Flor, 2008). For instance, teachers may employ a teaching strategy such as waiting for a response (Mehan, 1979) where students may prefer to be asked a question that more directly requests their participation. Or, it can lead to preferring some signals over others for sending or interpreting requests (Alexander, 1972; Lanigan, 1977). If the listener expects a different expression from the speaker, he or she can miss or misinterpret the speaker's communicative intent. Thus, what a speaker intends to say may not be what the listener interprets.

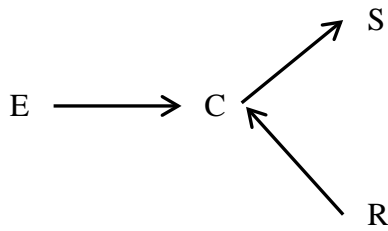
While the primary focus of this study involves recognizing teachers' and students' requests as they occur in writing conferences, the ability to interpret the speaker's intended meaning for making a request depends on understanding the relationship among two key elements. Specifically, interpreting requests involves (a) examining participants'

communicative backgrounds (prior experiences with writing conferences, language background including making and interpreting requests—in English and other languages, and writing motivation) and (b) discovering how questions and requests are used to display, create, and assess knowledge. These elements influence the interactions in which requests are embedded. In turn, that interactional flow influences participants' perceptions about the writing conference's success. The rest of this chapter explores the literature related to these two main themes in more detail and builds a conceptual framework to help explain how participants determine how requests are solicited, received, and acted upon in the co-creation of knowledge during a writing conference.

### **Negotiating Diverse Communicative Backgrounds in Writing Conferences**

People's experiences lie at the heart of their communicative backgrounds. In this section, I discuss how composition literature has addressed the key forms of communicative background that I focused on in this dissertation: language use, prior experience with writing conferences, and student motivation to write. I also explore how each of these aspects of communicative background influence how the speech act of requesting functions in a writing conference.

Each of these core aspects of communicative background relates to conversation in everyday situations, and by extension, to writing (Bruffee, 1984). Alexander's (1972) schema shows how a message is created and conveyed provides a visual representation of that communicative background (see Figure 3). Thus, individuals' prior knowledge of and experience with both writing conference dyads and the societies and communities to which they belong or want to belong (E) and their way of communicating those (S) affect the meaning that is created in a "current" writing conference (R). Considering that each



E = prior experience, backgrounds, attitudes

S = symbols used to convey the concept

C = concept that evolves from E, S, R

R = current situation, object, or event

Figure 3. One person's representation of a concept. Alexander, H. G. (1972). *The language and logic of philosophy*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. p. 15.

interlocutor has their own schema, when teachers and students interact with each other, each one's representation of a concept and the way that they transmit and receive that concept interacts with the other person's representation of that concept. Alexander's (1972) schema, then, offers a way to describe how interlocutors' various prior experiences with varieties of English and other languages, their motivation to engage in writing and rewriting, and their prior experiences with the writing conference dyad affect what occurs in the writing conference and the knowledge that is produced. Essentially, it helps answer the following question: how do composition instructors' and students' requests change during a writing conference when each one interacts with someone whose communicative background differs from their own?

### **Implications of Cultural and Linguistic Diversity**

Cultural and linguistic diversity are aspects of communicative background. As the preceding chapter suggests, "Multilingualism [in the United States and on college campuses] is a daily reality for *all* students" (Jordan, 2012, p. 1)—and, I would add, their teachers—whether they interact with multilinguals or they are multilingual themselves

(see also Edwards, 2010, pp. 234–235). Nevertheless, distinctions among students can be important since, as Ruecker (2011) notes, the writing needs of an international student (Costino & Hyon, 2007; Ruecker, 2011), a Generation 1.5 student (Harklau, Losey, & Siegal, 1999; Ortmeier-Hooper, 2008; H. Park, 2010; Ruecker, 2011), or a resident multilingual speaker (Costino & Hyon, 2007; Ruecker, 2011) can vary. Thus, the interactional patterns or successes attributed to writing conferences with English L1 student writers (Artman, 2007; Carnicelli, 1980; DeMott, 2006; Jacobs & Karliner, 1977; McLaughlin, 2009; Newkirk, 1995) do not always apply to English L2 students, according to researchers who have studied writing conferences for these students (Eckstein, 2013; Ewert, 2009; Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Patthey-Chavez & Ferris, 1997; Strauss & Xiang, 2006). Moreover, although Ruecker (2011) categorized all English L1 speakers as “monolingual,” variations in English L1 students’ communicative backgrounds, including their dialects (see Black, 1998; Williams, 2012) or their status as a nontraditional or first-generation students (Wingate, 2015), create different linguistic needs that teachers should meet. Consequently, what students request and how they do so can vary as well.

While writing conferences offer a way to address individual students’ needs (Ferris, 2003; Ferris et al., 2011), few studies (Black, 1998; Liu, 2009) have examined how teachers make those adaptations in writing conferences. Yet studies (Anderson, 2012; Ferris et al., 2011; Friedrich, 2006; Matsuda et al., 2013; Ortmeier-Hooper, 2008) focused on how composition instructors, usually with English L1 backgrounds, react to more language diversity, particularly the presence of L2 students, in their classrooms can provide cues for how adaptation occurs during writing conferences. These studies are

important since a teacher's reaction to classroom diversity impacts what occurs in a writing conference (Black, 1998). As composition research with L2 writers suggests, students' language use, as one aspect of their communicative background, can influence the teachers' reactions to the presence of L2 writers in composition classrooms (Ferris et al., 2011; Matsuda et al., 2013), teachers' perceptions of students' requests or needs (Ferris, 2003; Matsuda et al., 2013), and the ways in which feedback is offered (Ewert, 2009; Ferris et al., 2011). Thus, variation in language use and experience with writing, among other aspects of communicative background, can affect not only how a request is made in a writing conference but also how it is interpreted.

**Recognizing variation in linguistic background.** The literature suggests that a range of language backgrounds among students is likely broader than most teachers realize (Jordan, 2012). The literature notes that teachers recognized multilingual writers in several ways. Often students self-identified as multilingual (Matsuda et al., 2013) although some deliberately chose not to (Ortmeier-Hooper, 2008). Teacher respondents (Matsuda et al., 2013) also mentioned that they recognized multilingual students from their speech (spoken accents, fluency, vocabulary, and syntax), their writing (grammar and vocabulary), or both (see also Anderson, 2012). Beyond recognizing these features, it is unclear how teachers determined student needs. It seems possible that teachers assumed that the presence of these features constituted a student writing need.

**Responding generally to variation in linguistic background.** At the same time, effective communication depends on interlocutors assuming that they share the same terminologies and ways of conducting an interaction (Gumperz, 1992). Consequently, the presence of a wide range of linguistic backgrounds in mainstream classrooms presents

new opportunities and challenges for teachers. Ferris et al. (2011) and Matsuda et al. (2013) found that teachers responded to multilingual students in one of two ways: adapting instruction or ignoring students' differences. Both studies reported that some teachers adapted their teaching to address those needs by holding additional teacher-student conferences with them, by spending more time explaining grammatical issues, or, in some cases, by overlooking issues. Another set of teachers, as Matsuda et al. (2013) reported, focused on grammatical and language issues "at the expense of feedback on global issues" (Ferris et al., 2011, p. 221) while the best teachers, according to Ferris et al. (2011), balanced content and rhetorical issues.

Teachers who did not adapt their instruction also fell into two groups. One group emphasized the need for all students "to raise their awareness of 'good' academic writing" including the need for excellent researching, analyzing, and reading skills applied to their own and other texts (Matsuda et al., 2013, p. 78; see also Wingate, 2015). The second group of instructors did not adapt their strategies to address L2 writers' needs either because they were unaware of the differences or felt that those differences were unrelated to helping students with their writing, interpreted as organization and content (Ferris et al., 2011; Matsuda et al., 2013). In fact, Eckstein's (2013) study noted that teachers who ignored or dismissed differences among students and treated all students similarly by using a more conversational, collaborative, and nondirective conferencing style failed to recognize that some students instead favored attention on lower-level concerns while developing their language proficiency. In each case, what students said they wanted from the conference related to their perceived writing needs, and sometimes a mismatch existed between students' and their teachers' perceptions of those needs.

The variation in these approaches suggests, as Rafoth (2015) noted, that teachers are as unprepared to address multilingual writers' needs as writing center tutors are. These surveys' (Ferris et al., 2011; Matsuda et al., 2013) findings suggest that teachers alone determined students' needs. It is unclear whether teachers consulted with their students about the issues that students wanted to address in their writing. In other words, how active students were in articulating their needs about their writing to their instructors remains unclear.

### **Responding in writing conferences to variations in linguistic background.**

The increasing heterogeneity of composition classrooms suggests that writing conference participants who recognize differences in each other's communicative backgrounds can react to those salient differences more directly than they would in a more public setting, such as the regular classroom. Several studies (Eckstein, 2013; Thonus, 1999, 2002, 2004) illustrate what can occur when differences in participants' language background are marked. Thonus (2004) found several differences in how tutorials proceeded when English L1 tutors worked with English L2 writers compared to when those tutors worked with English L1 writers. Specifically, tutors tended to talk longer, to use less mitigation when asking L2 writers to make changes to their paper, and to negotiate less when setting the agenda for the session. Yet, according to Thonus (1999), English L2 tutees viewed these differences as acceptable since they expected their tutors to act more like teachers even though tutors felt uncomfortable assuming that role. Eckstein (2013) noted that pre-matriculated international students' levels of English proficiency seemed to influence the approach that they wanted the teacher to take during the writing conference. Students with less language proficiency wanted more discussion about lower-level concerns and



favored more direct feedback while students with more language proficiency favored the nondirective, conversational-style conference that the teachers tended to prefer. In this case, L2 students' ability to communicate effectively influenced their perception of what they needed. While Eckstein (2013) did not examine specific interactional sequences, it seems clear that a desire for more direct language instruction or more conversational interaction was based, in part, on the students' expectations for how the conference would meet their individual needs.

### **Implications of Variation in Writing Conference Experience**

Language use is only one aspect of communicative background. Another includes students' prior experiences having writing conferences. Thus, the reasons for the differences that Thonus (2002, 2004) found could relate as much to students' relative familiarity with writing conferences as to their language use. Liu's (2009) study is one of the few that connects writing conference experience and students' language background. While studies focusing on composition classrooms only mention in passing the feedback that teachers provide to students about their papers (Ferris et al., 2011; Matsuda et al., 2013), it is important to remember, as Ferris et al. (2011) concluded in their article, "Response strategies are central to the design and implementation of writing instruction" (p. 227). Response strategies and participants' experiences with them are also key aspects of both teachers' and students' communicative backgrounds. Teachers' and students' experiences with writing conferences can vary in frequency, quantity, and perception of conferences' purpose, value, and procedures.

**Teachers' writing conference backgrounds.** Teachers' experiences are generally both experiential and theoretical. Teachers gain experience from conducting

many conferences. They are also versed in literature on how to provide feedback on student writing in many ways, including through writing conferences (Beach, 1986; Carnicelli, 1980; Davis, Hayward, Hunter, & Wallace, 2010; Flynn & King, 1993; Harris, 1986; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Murray, 1979; Weissberg, 2006). In addition to theorizing the pedagogy of writing conferences, several of these sources provide strategies for conducting them.

Another aspect of teachers' communicative backgrounds is their relative facility in adapting their methods to students' individual needs. For instance, the most effective responses to L2 writers' papers came from teachers who both recognized L2 writers in their classes and adapted their instruction to meet each student's needs (Ferris et al., 2011). Generally speaking, such teachers address both content and grammatical issues through scaffolding approaches that closely mirror Vygotsky's (1986) zone of proximal development (ZPD). In other words, their commentary is focused, limited, and scaffolded to address both the students' content and ways to effectively polish their writing.

These teachers avoid privileging rhetorical concerns over lower-level concerns (Anderson, 2012; Matsuda et al., 2013). Yet such a focus may be part of teachers' experience with conferences and writing studies. Despite more recent research (Anderson, 2012; Matsuda et al., 2013) questioning the prevailing view that favors using a nondirective approach (see Murray, 1979) and focusing on higher-order concerns over lower-order concerns, this approach lingers (see Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015). At the same time, teachers wage an internal battle as to how best to use their time in a conference—content, grammar, or both. Consequently, their expectations for what should

be discussed during writing conferences can influence their (mis)interpretation of students' requests by preventing them from recognizing students' requests as legitimate.

**Students' writing conference experience.** Meanwhile, students learn what a conference is and how it works by interacting with their teachers. Liu's (2009) study is one of the few that explores how students' language backgrounds relate both to students' prior experience with conferencing and to what occurs in the writing conference for them. Specifically, she found that English L1, American students, who tended to have more experience with writing conferences, understood how to take the lead and ask questions that led to feedback directed to specific components of the essay while L2 students tended to ask for and receive general writing advice. It is important then to understand the backgrounds that students bring to a writing conference since those backgrounds affect both their expectations for and the interaction within the conference.

For instance, students with prior writing conference experience may have recognized a teacher's focus on content concerns over grammatical ones, thus reinforcing the "rhetoric-linguistic divide" (Matsuda et al., 2013). Moreover, those students may request topics, encode requests, or interpret teacher requests differently than students without writing conference experience. To prepare students for the conference, some teachers instruct students about what a writing conference is, how it works, and what their role is ahead of time, but others do not. Therefore, student participants may lack interactional patterns to take full advantage of their writing conferences, leading to less-than-desirable outcomes. Both participants' expectations about the conference's purpose, its format, and the students' writing provide lenses to understand the interactions that occur during a conference.

Indeed, people's experiences with requests are largely formed in everyday conversational situations, including classroom discourse and everyday conversation. While enough similarities exist among classroom discourse, everyday conversation, and writing conference interaction (Black, 1998; Jacobs & Karliner, 1977) to make using prior experience a rational choice, writing conferences evince key differences in terms of topic selection and interactional patterns to both everyday conversation (Black, 1998) and classroom discourse (Jacobs & Karliner, 1977). While this point is as relevant to teachers as to students, students' less powerful position in the classroom and the conference usually disadvantages them more than their teachers by students not knowing when to adapt their preferred request strategies to a new situation. Moreover, unfamiliarity with what occurs in a writing conference makes it more difficult for some students to make requests that would produce more effective writing conferences, even if they receive prior instruction about the writing conference.

In sum, both teachers' and students' backgrounds shape their interactions when they meet each other in the writing conference. And that has implications for how they make and interpret each other's requests. Thus, studying the variation in participants' backgrounds is important to understanding the significance of their requests.

### **Implications of Student Motivation**

Like other aspects of communicative background, students' motivations to write also vary. As Mackiewicz and Thompson's (2015) study is one of the few that connects motivation to talk-about-writing situations, their definition of motivation is relevant to this study. Motivation includes "student writers' interest in writing tasks, their self-efficacy about successfully completing the tasks, and their abilities to self-regulate their

performances” (p. 38). In sum, student writers’ desire to write, their internal sense of being able to write, and their ability to succeed at writing vary, potentially independently of other aspects of their communicative background. Therefore, motivation to write, and specifically to revise, could influence the types of requests that students make, their responses to their teachers’ requests, or both.

Beyond the types of requests that students make, Strauss and Xiang’s (2006) definition of agency suggests parallels to Mackiewicz and Thompson’s (2015) definition of motivation and provides reasons that students might have for making requests. Agency, according to Strauss and Xiang (2006), refers to several interrelated concerns: an ability to understand the “task at hand” and its “demands”; an ability to perceive a range of options for successfully addressing that task; an ability to evaluate those options, develop, and evaluate plans for implementing the steps to task completion; and the ability to reach the goal by using the identified strategies (p. 356–357). Students then might use requests to obtain help in any of these areas. Or, by their resistance to their teacher’s requests, they could suggest that they want help with a different focus or none at all.

### **The Conceptual Framework: Identifying Request Types Used to Display, Create, and Assess Knowledge**

This section reviews the relevant literature on requests specifically because that literature connects to the literature on writing conferences that mentions directives generally and requests specifically. Although perception of what has occurred in a writing conference or tutorial (Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015; Thonus, 2002; Walker & Elias, 1987) and the interactions within either (Carter et al., 2016; DeMott, 2006; Ewert, 2009; Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Haneda, 2004; Jacobs & Karliner, 1977; Koshik, 2002;

C. Lee, Carter, Ashworth, & Krage, 2013; Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015; McLaughlin, 2009; Newkirk, 1995; I. Park, 2012b, 2012a, 2015; Strauss & Xiang, 2006; Thonus, 2004; Weissberg, 2006) tend to be addressed separately in the literature, I contend that they need to be understood together to interpret how knowledge is co-created in writing conference situations. A key reason for why perceptions about and interactions within writing conferences need to be addressed together is that dealing with each separately reports only half of the story. Dealing with perception alone provides valuable insights into whether conferences are successful or not, but it does not explain the internal schemas that predict success or failure. Examining interaction points to important features that exist in writing conferences such as scaffolding. Yet a particular interaction's recurrence does not necessarily imply its worth. My study uses perception to identify successful interaction and links interaction and perception to students' and teachers' communicative backgrounds, which will improve the field's understanding of how knowledge is displayed, created, and assessed during writing conferences.

### **Displaying Knowledge in Writing Conferences**

Both teachers and students display knowledge in writing conferences or tutorials through their use of questions and requests. Additionally, how teachers and students define their roles in conferences is a critical aspect of their prior experience. It is important to realize that the forms that they use to make requests relate to the roles that they assume in the writing conference. However, those roles also have implications for how they build and display knowledge in the writing conference. This section addresses the relationships among participants' use of questions and requests, the roles that they

enact, and the ways in which participants display to each other their respective knowledge of writing and a student's paper while discussing it.

**Linking questions and requests.** I. Park's studies (2012a, 2012b, 2015) use conversational analysis to explore how students use questions to solicit information from their teacher (or tutor) and to position their own and the teacher's epistemic knowledge. In each study, I. Park noted that a question's form positions a speaker's writing knowledge in relation to the other participant's knowledge. In focusing on how epistemic knowledge is conveyed through the questions that students ask, even if those questions are not phrased as questions, I. Park shows how the question style determines the succeeding interactional sequence.

*Students' displays of knowledge.* According to I. Park's studies (2012b, 2012a, 2015), students who were less certain about how to proceed used one of two forms to begin a new conversational sequence: either interrogative-style polar questions (2012a) such as "Should I do X?" or epistemic downgrades (2012b, 2015) formed as "I don't know + if/wh- complement" (2012b) or "I don't know X" (2015). I. Park (2012a) explained that since the interrogative sounds like a question, teachers often respond to it as a request to fill in the information even though it is phrased as a closed-form question. Moreover, a polar question also mitigates the force of the request, making it sound less demanding (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). In other words, students might be acting politely rather than uncertainly. An epistemic downgrade, on the other hand, "is produced and treated as a request for help" because the writing problem presented is generally "broad" (I. Park, 2015, p. 8). As students seek to close an interactional sequence, they might use declarative questions (statements with rising intonation) to present a potential revision

strategy (I. Park, 2012a). That is, the student could be making an implicit request to verify a revision strategy. The difference between these forms lies in the question's explicitness. Yet, each could act as a request for advice.

On the other hand, when students in writing center tutorials were more certain about what they needed from a conference, they used "a high entitlement form" to ask specifically for what they wanted (I. Park, 2015, p. 5). In this case, students used a form such as "I need X" or "I want X" to identify a specific problem that they wanted help with and to direct the tutor's knowledge toward addressing it (p. 5). As I. Park explained, both the form of the request and the way it was presented conveyed the student's authority: "the highly entitled request turns are produced in a straightforward manner mostly void of delays, mitigations, and accounts" (2015, p. 8). Students using this form convey a higher degree of knowledge about their paper and what it needs than those who used epistemic downgrades or interrogatives.

*Teachers' displays of knowledge.* Like students, teachers display their knowledge during writing conferences both through the ways that they respond to student requests and through their own requests. In fact, the manner in which students convey their relative lack of knowledge, compared to their teachers, influences the type of information that teachers provide, more than the question's form would suggest. For instance, I. Park (2012a) found that when confronted with an interrogative question, teachers provided both the requested yes or no response and a rationale for their response. Epistemic downgrades, on the other hand, are more subtle than interrogative questions. By placing their own knowledge as lower than the teacher's through using epistemic downgrades (I. Park, 2012b), students implicitly requested that the teacher fill the gap in the student's



knowledge by providing advice relevant to the provided complement (e.g., “I’m not sure how to write this paper”). Thus, this form encouraged the instructor to elaborate more. By leaving the actual action or desired knowledge to be filled open, the student opened a range of options. Among two, the teacher could clarify the kind of information the student wanted or the teacher could provide a suggestion based on topics discussed earlier in the conference. A teacher could respond to an interrogative question with just yes or no, although they usually do not. Epistemic downgrades require longer responses.

Through the questions they ask, teachers also display their epistemic status as more knowledgeable than that of their students. Koshik (2002) found that teachers use reverse polarity questions (RPQs) to convey criticism of a student’s text, to illustrate why the noted issue is problematic, to encourage the student to recognize the problem, and to suggest a possible revision. While the question’s form (i.e., “Is that what you want to do here?”) looks like “a simple yes/no question [...] asking for information” (p. 1868), it “make[s] assertions of the opposite polarity to that of the form of the question” (p. 1855). Moreover, Koshik clarified that the “teacher’s state of knowledge vis-à-vis the question” and prior aspects of the interaction influenced the student’s recognition of an RPQ (p. 1868). In this sense, RPQs function as test questions rather than real questions because the teacher presumably already knows the answer and asks the question to confirm that the student will provide the preferred response. Yet a test question may still act as a request because it invites the student to recognize the problem that the teacher has identified, potentially acting as a prelude to building a revision together.

**Enacting roles.** Part of the problem in identifying requests in writing conferences is determining who benefits from the requested action (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) since

benefit is largely shaped by participants' roles, and those roles can shift (DeMott, 2006; Waring, 2016). One useful way of conceptualizing how role shifts affect requests in a writing conference is W. B. Horner's (1979) creation of "text-act theory," adapted from Searle's (1969) speech act theory. Specifically, W. B. Horner (1979) argued that speech acts from teacher to student differ from speech acts from reader to writer. While not mentioning requests per se, W. B. Horner raised important questions about how texts are written and read for whom and by whom. These questions have implications for how requests could be understood during a teacher-student writing conference.

The nature of interaction suggests that both participants' roles are important. Since both participants co-construct the interaction (Bruffee, 1984; Gumperz, 1982, 1992; Sacks et al., 1974; Spivey, 1997), successful conferences require core elements of interaction from both the teacher and student for the conference to function as intended. Thus, the student's perspective about what works for them is as critical to successful conferencing as the teacher's perspective and as understanding the interactions themselves. In fact, as some studies suggest (Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015; Walker & Elias, 1987), a positive perception about a conference indicates that beneficial interactions have occurred. Because each person brings something new to each conferencing situation, both teacher and student potentially perceive the students' goals for a paper or for the conference quite differently. Moreover, a teacher's communicative background may lead to missed cues if the current student's goals or concerns differ from those of prior conference participants.

W. B. Horner's (1979) theory foregrounds the reality that, when reading a written document, teachers and students each assume two roles (see also Carter et al., 2016).

Such a lens helps to contextualize the relationship between DeMott's (2006) and Mackiewicz and Thompson's (2015) findings and the ways that participants' make and interpret requests. DeMott (2006) and Mackiewicz and Thompson (2015) found that their participants enacted various roles during scaffolding situations. These roles align with W. B. Horner's (1979) text-act theory, as I discuss below.

*Teacher roles.* In terms of teacher roles, W. B. Horner (1979) posited that, at one moment in a writing conference, teachers might enact a teacher-evaluator role by conveying shortcomings in meeting an assignment's criteria. At another, they might take the role of the intended audience and ask the student to present a fresh perspective to the issue at hand. These roles roughly track with DeMott's (2006) roles for teachers which range from guide to coach to evaluator to gatekeeper. As teachers shift among these roles, they ask the students questions. When acting as a reader, a teacher might suggest changes. Such changes would benefit the reader at the expense of more work from the writer. That benefit for the reader at the expense of the writer's additional workload may suggest that a request is being made. However, since both roles exist, a question or suggestion could be perceived as a request in one role but not in another. For example, a reader might request clarification where an evaluator's saying the same thing might be viewed as an order or a suggestion, depending on how the student interprets the role that the teacher has assumed. To complicate matters further, Thompson, according Mackiewicz and Thompson (2015), trains her tutors to avoid enacting either peer or teacher roles. Instead she trains them to be "'apprentice' writing teachers" (p. 50). The range of possible teacher roles (Waring, 2016) and the rhetorical shifts necessitated by each suggest how difficult the tutoring task can be for Thompson's writing tutors.

*Student roles.* Similarly, student participants could enact multiple roles: student (Carter et al., 2016; W. B. Horner, 1979), writer (Carter et al., 2016; W. B. Horner, 1979), and reader (W. B. Horner, 1979; Spivey, 1997). Student participants assuming a student role may perceive a suggestion to change their text as an order, given the teacher's more powerful institutional role. And this could occur whether they enact "good student" roles (having drafts or asking questions) or "bad student" roles (resisting the teacher's advice or being less prepared) (DeMott, 2006). How the teacher interprets the student participant's role may influence how he or she reacts to the student's display of knowledge and requests. Meanwhile, if the teacher acts as a reader and the student acknowledges that role shift and shifts to the role of writer or reader, then suggestions by the teacher to make changes to the paper could be read as requests since those changes improve the reader's experience. This is because a writer presumably has more autonomy to agree or disagree with a proposed change than a student.

Determining whether an utterance benefits the reader or the writer, the teacher or the student, or both in their respective speaker or listener roles adds an additional dimension to the process of identifying utterances as requests in writing conferences. Examining writing conferences requires such a layered approach because teachers and students can make requests in either their roles as teacher and student or reader and writer, or even both at the same time (W. B. Horner, 1979). Such blending or switching between roles needs to be accounted for when identifying and analyzing requests.

*Roles' effect on conferences.* Participants' perceptions of their roles may affect how they ask or answer questions and how well they engage in the knowledge construction that could be happening during the writing conference. In this sense,

Koshik's (2002) study on reverse polarity questions (RPQs) suggests that some questions do not act as typical speech-act requests. They may, however, act like W. B. Horner's (1979) text-act requests by suggesting a revision that benefits the reader. Koshik (2002) notes that some RPQs such as "Is it clear?" are harder for students to respond to affirmatively because "[they are] framed from the reader's perspective" (p. 1864). Thus, the only way in which RPQs could be seen as requests are in the way teacher-as-reader points to a failure and hints that the issue needs to be addressed in the next draft to improve the reader's reading experience. The problematic aspect of RPQs is the assumption that the student understands the implied remedy. For example, a teacher may ask, "Is X relevant?" The answer no is implied in the way the question is asked. Yet the need to delete text may not be clear to the student (p. 1865). On the other hand, RPQs might enact more of an evaluator role that may impede scaffolding and negotiation.

I. Park's studies (2012a, 2012b, 2015) provide empirical evidence that could support Liu's (2009) point that students with more knowledge of conference expectations tend to ask questions that provide them with more specific help with their papers. In other words, students with more writing conference experience can enact roles that position themselves as more knowledgeable both about conferencing and their papers by asking questions that get them the help that they need. By using these forms, their knowledge-displays position them as "good" students (DeMott, 2006) and set the teacher up to give more specific advice than the general questions that students with more limited conference experience tend to ask (Liu, 2009). Moreover, students being too tentative in presenting what they already know may not necessarily result in them being labeled "bad" students, but it may result in them not receiving the help that they need. Thus,

tying the forms that students use to make requests to their communicative backgrounds is important in understanding how student needs conveyed as requests are recognized and then addressed. In this sense, because my study shows how two aspects of students' language and situational experience interact in a writing conference situation, it adds an important dimension to the literature by examining a situation that has received little scrutiny in institutional contexts.

### **Creating Knowledge in Writing Conferences**

As the preceding section illustrated, some writing conference studies have begun to examine pre-scaffolding or pre-teaching interactions by focusing on how students and teachers ask questions or make requests, including how those questions or requests set up certain writing conference interactions. The next section establishes the need to examine the requests that presumably set or keep scaffolding and negotiation in motion. In this sense, the teaching interactions that occur within conferences, frequently focusing on the extent of scaffolding and negotiation (DeMott, 2006; Ewert, 2009; Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015; Strauss & Xiang, 2006) illustrate how that knowledge is created.

Bruffee (1984) calls knowledge a "social artifact . . . [,] the product of human beings in a state of continual negotiation or conversation" (p. 646-647, see also (Kuhn, 1996; Spivey, 1997). Embedded in these discussions are issues of agency (Strauss & Xiang, 2006) and teachers' pedagogical approaches that impact the conference style (Ewert, 2009). Consequently, many talk-about-writing studies focus on scaffolding and negotiation interactions including outlining scaffolding's benefits and illustrating how it occurs (DeMott, 2006; Ewert, 2009; Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015; Sperling, 1990; Strauss & Xiang, 2006; Weissberg, 2006). Yet how do

composition instructors know what to scaffold or how to negotiate changes with their students? Examining participants' requests offers a way to answer this question.

**Scaffolding.** Since requests often begin interactional sequences (I. Park, 2012a, 2015), studying requests offers a way to understand how requests lead to scaffolding and other teaching moments. As a technique for sequencing instruction, or giving instruction in measured pieces, scaffolding (DeMott, 2006; Ewert, 2009; Strauss & Xiang, 2006; Weissberg, 2006) enables teachers to address student requests. Often in the form of a question or in a statement that acts like one, requests follow students' presentations of the topic that they wish to discuss. DeMott's (2006) comparison between how the composition literature suggested scaffolding should work in a conference to what actually occurred in the conference is relevant to this point. DeMott found that many conferences that he examined displayed a lack of dialogue, a lack of student comprehension about their writing after the conference concluded, and missed opportunities at "critical decision points" (p. 17). In essence, he found that key aspects of effective scaffolding were missing from the first-year composition writing conferences that he analyzed. Similarly, both Ewert (2009) and Strauss and Xiang (2006) analyzed how the interaction between teachers and students determined what was discussed and how teachers organized instruction. In this sense, identifying topics that are discussed during a conference provides an entry point into ascertaining the students' expectations or their goals for the conference or a particular paper, either or both of which could form the impetus for a request.

**Negotiating.** For instance, Ewert (2009) concluded that the combination of scaffolding and negotiation determined whether each instructor's stated interactional

style of encouraging their L2 writers' involvement matched their actual conferencing practice. Ewert found that of the two teacher participants (Mary and John), Mary encouraged students to begin the conference by discussing their papers, leading them to negotiate a few key content- and rhetoric-focused revision topics. Having fewer topics allowed more time to jointly discuss those topics and create a revision plan for them. On the other hand, John's directive feedback focused on his interpretation of students' texts, largely related to syntactical and grammatical concerns. Ewert's (2009) study suggests the need to examine how conference topics are proposed. In some ways, Mary's approach seemed to allow students to articulate needs as requests that then influenced which topics were discussed. John's approach, on the other hand, seemed to use the written document as a request. While agenda-setting is not the same as requesting, some requests occur during this phase of the conference (I. Park, 2015), and analyzing requests may be related to recognizing whose agenda is being followed and why.

As Ewert's (2009) study also suggests, effective scaffolding responds to student input. Similar to how Ewert noted the ways in which Jane and her students jointly determined what to work on during the conference, Strauss and Xiang (2006) suggested that teachers and students collaborate to solve students' writing problems. That is, both Ewert (2009) and Strauss and Xiang (2006) suggested that students and teachers should jointly determine the direction of the conference and identify student concerns before addressing them (see also Thonus, 2002). Then they should jointly discuss those concerns. This process may commence with either the teacher's or student's request.

In this sense, the need for students to develop an agentive stance toward their writing early in the writing process, Strauss and Xiang (2006) argued, is critical.



Engaging in more dialogue and mediation (or negotiation) led to students in their study either being in control of the conference and their writing or lacking that control. As Bruffee (1984) noted, “The place of conversation in learning, especially in the humanities, is the largest context in which we must see collaborative learning” (p. 645). Essentially, the person talking is the one learning. Similarly, Walker and Elias (1987) found that students who participated in creating evaluative criteria and in using them to evaluate their own papers rated their conferences higher than students whose teachers presented the evaluative criteria and did the evaluating for them. Thus, students who contributed more to the conference’s work rated the conference as more successful. When both students and teachers contributed to the terms by which the student’s work would be evaluated, they co-created that evaluative knowledge (Bruffee, 1984; Spivey, 1997). Asking for help (potentially requesting) is a form of doing work in the conference because it enables the student to test out his or her newly created knowledge and it conveys the student’s agency over his or her paper.

Although learning how scaffolding and negotiation work is critically important for effective pedagogy, little research has been done on what precedes scaffolding. In fact, if the teacher misses or misinterprets a request, she or he may impede needed negotiation. Alternatively, she or he may scaffold instruction that the student does not need. Thus, understanding interactions that precede scaffolding or that are embedded in it are as important as scaffolding itself. Examining requests is one way to illuminate pre-scaffolding structures, determine how the teacher knows that it is time to enact a scaffolding approach, and evaluate whether certain requests lead to certain kinds of scaffolding. In sum, the ways students communicate what they know about their papers

and how to address their writing concerns or goals have received less attention than the ways in which they are addressed. In turn, not knowing how writing concerns are presented can lead to less effective writing conferences, and, by extension, less effective writing and revision.

### **Assessing Knowledge in Writing Conferences**

Little research has focused on how teachers or students assess knowledge once it has been displayed or created in a writing conference. Those that do take two forms. First, Artman (2007) examined the comprehension requests (single utterances, generally) that teachers and students use to clarify points that they have made during a sequence. Second, some studies (Gulley, 2012; Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015; Thonus, 2002; Walker & Elias, 1987) examine the overall success of the writing conference, usually, but not always, connecting success to the conference interactions. In this section, I address both ways of assessing knowledge and how each relates to requests.

**Assessing knowledge during the conference (comprehension requests).** The most obvious way in which knowledge is assessed during a writing conference comes in the form of a comprehension request. Comprehension requests generally conclude a sequence and usually take forms such as “Does that make sense?” In examining how students reacted to their teachers’ use of comprehension requests, Artman (2007) found that students tended to respond affirmatively even if they did not understand what the teacher meant or they disagreed with teacher. Thus, while the students in Artman’s study recognized and responded to the illocutionary force of the request, the interaction did not accomplish the teacher’s purpose. A less direct way of assessing knowledge is implied in how tutees responded to tutors’ directives (Thonus, 2002). When they occurred, tutees

either accepted the proposition embedded in the tutor's directive, or they offered a reason for rejecting it. This finding implies that tutees have evaluated the tutor's assessment of their knowledge of the paper and responded to it in ways that match their position vis-à-vis their paper. Both of these ways of assessing knowledge are based on evaluating a particular interaction or interactional sequence.

**Assessing successful conferences.** Most of the research related to evaluating conferences assesses the conference as a whole once it has ended. In fact, perception of writing conference success emerged as a key theme in the literature. Such perceptions are built on expectations of the conference. In this sense, expectations about the conference's purpose and perceptions about its success look forward and backward, respectively, at the conference. Expectations look forward to the conference and include the students' and teachers' assumptions about what should be discussed during the conference, the manner in which topics should be addressed, and the projected outcome of the conference itself and its potential effects on the paper being discussed. Perception involves reflecting on and evaluating in real time how well the conference is meeting those expectations. Specifically, teachers' perceptions of their student writers' needs and student writers' perceptions of their own needs may lead to requests and may prompt interactions related to the issues introduced by the requests.

Moreover, the research reviewed to this point in the chapter relates to writing conference success in two main ways: (a) the perception of productive discussion and successful revision or (b) the perception of a lack of effective discussion. If participants' displays of knowledge and the ways in which they build knowledge lead to effective discussion of the paper and successful revision, then both participants will view the

conference as a success. Moreover, most studies that evaluated the overall success of the writing conferences also examined some aspect of the writing conference interaction. In essence, both teachers' and students' prior experiences with academic discourse and conference expectations may establish conditions that lead to what other researchers (Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015; Thonus, 2002; Walker & Elias, 1987) have determined to be successful conferences or tutorials. These studies suggest that specific types of interactions are more likely to lead participants to identify the conference as a success. For example, among other findings, Thonus (2002) reported more successful tutorials when tutors encouraged students to take a stronger authorship role and when students and tutors accurately interpreted each other's directives and correctly assessed each other's communicative intent.

Conversely, tutors, and by extension teachers, can recognize when tutorials, or conferences, are not going well (Rafoth, 2015). Ferris et al.'s (2011) summary of writing conference studies that identified "limitations or challenges" (p. 208) when using face-to-face writing conferences for L2 writers (see Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Patthey-Chavez & Ferris, 1997) illustrates the hit-or-miss success many writing teachers experience when using writing conferences regularly. Eckstein's (2013) and Liu's (2009) studies illustrate that the students' expectations lead to specific outcomes as a result of the conference. That is, participant expectations influence the interactions that occur during writing conferences. Their studies also support the conclusion that when a mismatch exists between students' and their teachers' perceptions of the students' needs, that mismatch often led to less successful writing conferences. This phenomenon of mixed success may

explain why some teachers question their use of conferencing as valuable for all writers (Gulley, 2012).

Rather than dismissing writing conferences as optional (Gulley, 2012), recognizing that success varies provides an opportunity to examine writing conference interactions and to determine how request strategies, interlocutor's perceptions of them, or both offer a way to understand at least one key aspect of student-teacher conferences about writing: their requests. Indeed, making teachers' intuitions about a writing conference's success (Rafoth, 2015) visible by identifying interactional patterns and their effects makes two outcomes more likely: teachers and tutors can avoid interactions that impede progress, and they can more effectively use the patterns that facilitate progress in the writing conference (see Black, 1998). Mackiewicz and Thompson's study (2015) was designed to do exactly this. Similar to Walker and Elias (1987), Mackiewicz and Thompson (2015) employed perception surveys to identify the highest-rated tutorials. They then created training sessions based on successful interactions and the most effective use of those interactions. In essence, they examined student-tutor interactions with the goal of moving beyond what intuitively works to identifying specific features that can be duplicated in other sessions.

I argue that linking participants' perceptions of a writing conference's value to the interactions within it are implicitly related to identifying and meeting students' requests. As Gumperz (1982, 1992) explained, broad differences in interlocutors' expectations for the back-and-forth of interaction may affect how well teachers and students interpret each other's communicative intent, including recognizing requests. Whether or not teachers and students normally share cues, when teachers recognize students' communicative

intent by appropriately responding to their cues (Thonus, 2002), they set their students up for success. Inappropriate responses to those cues disadvantage students. Moreover, examining participants' expectations of the conference's purpose and their perceptions of how a particular conference worked are important because these can impact what occurs not only in the current conference but also in subsequent ones. This study had a similar goal focused on understanding the ways in which requestive utterances work in teacher-student writing conferences. In part, this dissertation study tested the following proposition: The higher the degree of alignment between the expectations for the writing conference and what actually transpired, including how each participants' requests were acted upon, the higher the perceived success of the conference.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

This chapter linked the literature on students' and teachers' communicative backgrounds to the ways in which they display, create, and assess knowledge in writing conferences. While the literature tended to focus on narrowly defined, often exclusive, demographic groups, I offered an expanded definition of communicative background that included participants' language backgrounds, their experiences with writing conferences, and their motivations for writing. I argued that students' communicative backgrounds inform their perceptions of and interactions within writing conferences, potentially influencing how requests are made. I therefore claimed that research in heterogeneous contexts was required to determine how or whether teachers adapt their requests to address their students' communicative backgrounds. I further noted that writing conferences are subject to the same tensions that occur in any situation where communicative backgrounds differ, including miscommunication. Specifically, people's

interactions are based on their expectations of a situation, which are often formed from prior experience and their perceptions of successful writing conferences, and the perception that their requests have been acknowledged and addressed. This connection between perception and interaction linked research on writing conferences to research on requests.

Moreover, when students come to a writing conference, whether on their own accord or as mandated by the course, they come to receive help on their papers, and obtaining help usually, though not always, starts with a request. This chapter showed that asking for help is associated with the speech act of requests, but request forms and their manners of expression tend to vary depending on participants' prior experience making requests and their experience with and motivation to be in a writing conference. This chapter noted that, although much research has been done on requests, little has focused on how they occur in writing conferences. This chapter suggested some potential links to indirect request forms derived from composition research's focus on questions. Nevertheless, a review of the current research suggested the need for research on requests within a writing conference context.

This dissertation study focused on identifying how teachers and students signal their own requests and how teachers and students recognized, negotiated, and acted upon each other's requests during a writing conference. In part, this research addressed Bruffee's (1984) call to "examine and understand the complex social symbolic relations among the people who make up language communities" (p. 651). I argued that a study design that examined the relationships between the participants' perceptions of writing needs that manifested as requests and participants' interactions within the writing

conference more effectively captured the influences on how requests are made and perceived which, in turn, may influence how the teacher and student discuss the students' writing and how they co-create the knowledge needed to aid revision in the process.

While this chapter acknowledged the significant amount of writing conference research focused on addressing student needs through scaffolding and negotiation, this study's focus on requests limited the analysis to a portion of the interaction that, I believed, set up or maintained other interactions. While some studies of writing tutorials employed conversation analysis to study requests (I. Park, 2015; Thonus, 2002), to my knowledge, no studies on writing conferences have done so. This study began to address this gap. I argued that exploring how participants use requests to communicate their concerns about writing is as important as exploring how their requests are addressed since a missed or misinterpreted request may result in overlooking a concern or addressing it insufficiently.

Employing conversation analysis methods to examine requests helped identify request patterns located in the writing conference and helped examine how they vary among interlocutors, potentially producing the following insights. First, examining interactions revealed the types of requests participants tended to use during writing conferences. Second, examining the request strategies that students employed suggested which strategies lead to the most useful responses from the teacher, determined by the student in follow-up interviews, and vice versa. Third, examining the uptake of requests, or lack thereof, suggested which strategies either were not recognized as requests or produced less effective, or less enthusiastic, responses. Fourth and finally, comparing the strategies participants employed to their communicative backgrounds proposed links



between one or more aspects of a participants' backgrounds and the strategies that they employ. Chapter 3 presents the study design that investigated these issues.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Introduction**

This chapter provides an overview of this study's design. While the data collection methods in this study are not new, combining them strengthened the benefits of each. This chapter describes the types of collected data, the schedule for collecting them, and detailed analytical procedures employed during and after data collection. It also provides rationales for these choices. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the ethical considerations raised by this study and how those were addressed as well as reviewing the limitations of the study's design.

This study expands the body of research conducted in recent decades at the intersection of the fields of sociolinguistics, speech act theory, composition studies, second language writing, and educational research. Exploring the speech act of requests as they occur in teacher-student writing conferences adds naturally occurring data from an interactional setting that has received little prior attention in speech act research, sociolinguistics, or institutional research. By combining speech act theory with conversation analysis and stimulated recalls, this study shows how these tools work together to better understand naturally occurring talk about writing.

Methodologies related to speech act theory, conversation analysis, and stimulated recalls are needed to examine how writing conference interactions between student writers and their writing teachers lead to co-constructed moments (Bruffee, 1984; Spivey, 1997), including scaffolding and other critical moments for teaching. Specifically, these

methods investigate how talk works in writing conferences including how scaffolding functions and how misunderstandings arise from differing perspectives.

In Chapter 2, I established that more research is needed to examine how teachers and students determine what to scaffold and how. I argued that studying requests can provide insights into how interactions may unfold when teachers' and students' communicative backgrounds differ. I further argued that miscommunication can occur at any point in creating, recognizing, or responding to requests. In order to understand how requests function in writing conferences, this study is guided by the following questions:

- Main Research Question: How are teachers' and students' requests formed, received, and interpreted during teacher-student writing conferences?
  - a. Which utterances do participants identify as their own or as the other participant's requests?
  - b. What forms do teachers' and students' requests take?
  - c. How does each participant recognize and interpret the other participant's requests?

I answered these questions by focusing on writing conferences as the research event, specifically ones conducted as part of a mainstream, first-year composition classroom that included English L1 and L2 writers. I specifically explored two types of interactional request patterns. First, I explored patterns that suggested that students and teachers used requests to co-create revisions or revision plans. Second, I explored patterns that elicited confusion, tension, or misunderstanding related to language use miscues, variation in writing conference expectations, or mismatches in writing motivation. In sum, I sought to

understand how and why participants' writing conference requests were understood or misunderstood, resulting in either co-creating or inhibiting revision.

The following pages describe my study's design, the data collection and analysis methods I used, and review how data were protected.

### **Study Design**

Focusing on requests in writing conferences contributes to research methods in composition studies and second language writing by identifying how the form and manner of a request facilitates talk related to improving writing within two discourses potentially unfamiliar to students: teacher-student writing conferences and academic writing. Specifically, examining requests offers a way to determine how the teacher knows to erect scaffolding. Conversation analysis (Drew & Heritage, 1992b) and its concomitant elements of interactional sociolinguistics (Gumperz, 1982, 2003) provided methods for examining the extent to which students' and teachers' different communicative backgrounds influence how they interpret each other's speech acts such as requests. Stimulated recall provided the means for obtaining participant perspectives. Understanding how requests are created and received required discussing request-making choices and interpretations with both the speaker and the listener. I compared findings derived from conversation analysis to participants' backgrounds to examine how backgrounds influence how participants interact with each other (Gumperz, 2003).

### **Rationale**

My experience with conferencing including my concern that language use impeded productive conferencing suggested that writing conferences would be an ideal study site. My desire to understand why and how conference interactions both inform and

impede writing conference work led to creating an approach that combined examining the interaction's content, the interaction's sequence, and the participants' manners of speaking (Gumperz, 2003, p. 223). Through its focus on turn-by-turn analysis of recorded interaction, conversation analysis provided the analytical methods to analyze how requests work. Such systematic analysis showed how interactional sequences are based on prior utterances. Examining requests provided a way to analyze how the teaching and workshopping moments in the writing conference are set up. Stimulated recalls (Gass & Mackey, 2000, 2017) provided a way to confirm interpretations with participants (Gumperz, 2003). Combining methods is similar to Thonus's (2002) study, which blended interactional sociolinguistics, directives, and discourse analysis to study both tutors' and students' perspectives of writing center tutorials.

While Thonus's (2002) and my methodology are similar, there are important differences. First, focusing on requests limited the variables being studied. Second, while teacher-student and tutor-student writing conferences have similar features, tutor and teacher roles vary, sometimes substantially. This suggests that interlocutors make or perceive requests differently in teacher-student than in peer-to-peer contexts. Third, while Thonus interviewed students and tutors about their experiences, I used stimulated recalls to enhance participants' memories and encourage elaboration of area of potential miscommunication (see DiPardo, 1994; Gass & Mackey, 2000) and Likert surveys (Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015; Walker & Elias, 1987) to track conferences' success. I then compared the surveys to the stimulated recall sessions and recorded conferences.

## **Overview of Procedures**

This study began by soliciting participants. Teachers volunteered for the study by responding to an email that I sent asking for participants. Writing instructors were chosen first since their consent was required to contact their students. I also met with teachers for initial interviews to determine teachers' language backgrounds, their prior experiences with conducting conferences, and their rationale for using them.

During the first week of the study semester, students who opted in by signing informed consent forms completed the Background Survey, which asked questions about their language background, their experience with writing conferences, and their writing motivation (see Appendix B). Since I was concerned about how variation in participants' communicative backgrounds might create misunderstandings, this study depended on recruiting as many L2 writers as possible. To ensure a range of communicative backgrounds, I identified one section of English 201 from each teacher's schedule that included the largest number of English L2 students willing to participate.

To capture naturally-occurring requests as well as participants' perceptions about the writing conference, I collected a variety of data. Prior to the conference, teachers asked the student participants to spend two minutes writing their goals for the conference. Students wrote their names on these Goal Sheets and the teachers put them in a data collection envelope used to store study materials produced during the conference. Audio and video recording conferences, the main data sources for this study, was the next step in understanding the nature of miscommunication surrounding requests.

The next step involved conducting stimulated recalls (Gass & Mackey, 2000, 2017) to determine how students and teachers created their own requests and to obtain

more details about they interpreted the other person's requests and why they responded as they did. Using stimulated recall sessions is somewhat new to composition (see also Newkirk [1995]). These stimulated recall sessions involved one participant and me watching the video recording of the writing conference. Student recalls generally occurred within a week after their conferences although several occurred up to three weeks later. Teacher recall sessions occurred after the student recalls. The stimulated recall sessions were also audio and video recorded to collect non-verbal gestures or actions.

Since I was first interested in understanding how recognition and uptake of requests occurs, I reviewed the conference recordings to develop questions for the stimulated recall sessions. I used previous studies on requests (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Thonus, 2002; Vilar Beltrán & Martínez-Flor, 2008) to identify utterances that could have been requests. During the recall sessions, I asked participants to identify their own and the other participants' requests. Before watching the video recording of the writing conference, the participants, particularly the student participants, and I defined requests for each other. As the video recording played, either the participant or I stopped the video to discuss request interactions.

During these moments, I asked participants to provide their perspectives on what occurred surrounding requests, particularly when an interaction faltered. These discussions aided in identifying places where misunderstandings or miscommunications related to either person's requests occurred. These discussions helped determine whether that break in the interactional flow was a result of misunderstanding or miscommunication. I also believed that participants' perceptions about a conference's

success could point to issues of misunderstanding or miscommunication during the writing conference. To acquire teachers' and students' perceptions about the conference's success, those who attended stimulated recall sessions completed a two-question Likert-scale perception survey (see Appendices D and E).

As the terms *misunderstandings* and *miscommunications* are often used interchangeably or even to stand in for situations involving non-understanding (see Kaur, 2011), I define these terms and then explain how I looked for each in the recordings. Misunderstandings are places where one person intended to say X but the listener understood Z (Kaur, 2011). In terms of miscommunication, I looked for places where the speech act itself was misconstrued (Taguchi, 2013). For instance, a participant may not have recognized a request, may have interpreted as a request an utterance that the speaker did not intend to be a request, or may have made a request using the "wrong" level of directness or politeness for the situation. To discover misunderstandings, I asked participants to clarify their intentions at places where a repair occurred and places where they said that the listener misunderstood them. Similar to places where misunderstanding occurs, miscommunication was marked by a repair or an overt reaction by the listener indicating that the speech act was not understood.

I gained insight into participants' communicative backgrounds through reviewing the conference video and by asking participants to clarify information from the Background Survey. I also asked them for more details about prior teacher-student writing conferences, other teachers' comments about their writing, or conversation with others about their writing including writing center tutors, friends, or family members. I specifically asked L2 writers about their language background including their experiences



writing in languages other than English. These questions were designed to provide contextual information about the student participants that existed prior to their entering the writing class and to identify the types of requests that they had experienced related to their writing.

Since the requests made were related to the students' drafts, collecting them allowed me to see what was indexed during the sessions. I collected students' rough drafts prior to and after the writing conference in order to collect notes created during the writing conference. I collected students' final drafts as soon as they finished them. I also attempted to collect their final drafts with their teacher's comments, but several of the teachers did not provide written feedback on the final drafts. Collecting their final drafts allowed me to see which requests, if any, they acted upon during the revision process.

### **Participants**

Rocky Mountain University (RMU)<sup>2</sup>, an open-enrollment university, was an ideal site for this study because it enrolls students with a range of communicative backgrounds and because a large number of its English Department's faculty consistently use writing conferences in their composition classrooms. The context of the university, its student body, and the English Department impacted the selection of the study's participants.

This study examined how the making and receiving of requests influenced subsequent interactions during writing conferences where people with differing communicative backgrounds were likely to meet. Thus, a range of participant backgrounds was needed so that some intercultural communication could occur. Interculturality was created by having English L1 teachers and some English L2 students

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<sup>2</sup> All participant and study site names have been changed to pseudonyms.

in the study. Participants included four composition teachers and their students in English 201—Intermediate Writing, the second semester of a two-semester first-year composition course. Writing instructors were required to have at least four years of experience conducting writing conferences, their classrooms needed to have a mix of English L1 and English L2 writers, and all instructors needed to teach the same course. If a teacher participant taught more than one section of English 201, student participants were selected from only one of that instructor’s classes. The rest of this section explains how participants were chosen, the types of data that were collected, how it was collected, and the rationale for its collection.

### **Teacher Participants**

Based on an informal faculty poll, slightly more than half of RMU’s English Department’s 120 full-time and adjunct faculty use conferences (Carter & Lee, 2015), although no departmental policy requires them to do so.

Five full-time faculty volunteered for this study, and four were selected to participate. While the department has a standardized syllabus for the freshman composition classes, full-time faculty can adapt the syllabus as they see fit. Table 1 provides an overview of the teachers’ relevant experience (see also Appendix H).

I collected data from four instructors and their students. Emily Forest, Ken Leighton, Caitlin Meier, and Malcolm Reynolds<sup>3</sup> each had experience conducting writing conferences, their classrooms included a mix of English L1 and English L2 writers, and all instructors taught English 201, although Forest taught an Honors section. All four teachers had taught writing by using writing conferences. Specifically, they met

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<sup>3</sup> All names are pseudonyms.

Table 1

*Demographics of Teacher Participants*

Teacher Name	Rank	Number of Years		Conference(s)		Languages		Genre of paper at first conference	Student participants
		Teaching	Confer- -encing	Per term	Length	Fluent	Additional attempted		
Emily Forest	Full-time, non-tenured	27	20	2	Varies (10-15 min)	English	French Spanish	Researched Argument	Tim Drake Peter Hale Rachel Westbrook
Ken Leighton	Tenured	nearly 30	nearly 30	2	varies (10 or 30 min)	English French	Latin	Researched Argument	Yeti Grant Julia Kelli Austin Bancraft
Caitlin Meier	Tenured	24	24	4	15-20 min.	German Russian English	None	Summary	Rachel Seymour Kimberly Saylor Romeo Escobar
Malcolm Reynolds	Tenure-track	14	13	3	10-15 min.	English	German	Analysis	Tonya Medina Suzanne Adkins Eddie Michaels Daniel Belmonte

individually with their students at least twice during the semester. The teachers had been teaching for 10 to 30 years and had been using writing conferences for most of that time. That these teachers all had used writing conferences for years ensured a difference in experience between them and their students. Although all teachers identified English as their L1, I learned during the initial interview that Caitlin Meier was multilingual, speaking two additional languages in addition to English. The other three teachers had had some experience learning a language for their degree requirements. I asked them about their language backgrounds because I felt that knowing or attempting to learn another language would influence how they interacted with their L2 writers. All of the teachers were excited to participate in the study and examine their own writing conference practice.

### **Student Participants**

The diversity that comes with open enrollment produces a range of student preparation levels, including some students needing developmental-level courses. Besides preparation levels, RMU's diversity includes a growing minority population, currently between 10–15% of the student body. In a typical class, several students (both English L1 and English L2) speak one or more languages in addition to English, and they usually represent a range of socioeconomic classes. Specifically, a typical writing classroom of 23 students could have 1–3 international students, 1–3 Generation 1.5 students, 2–3 high performing students, and 5–8 students who have matriculated up through Development English or English Language Learning courses, with the remainder being placed in the class by their ACT or Accuplacer placement test scores.

Data collection was designed to show students as multifaceted. Having students with different language backgrounds, writing motivations, and familiarity with writing conferences created variety, which impacted how teachers made and interpreted requests. Table 2 identifies the required and optional characteristics of the study participants.

Table 2

*Characteristics of Student Participants Selected for the Study*

Student Participant Criteria	Required	Optional/Preferable
The student participants were in the same classes as the teacher participants.	X	
The classes studied included both English L1 and English L2 students.	X	
The class had a substantial number of L2 students.	X	
All or most of L2 students in the chosen class agreed to participate in the study.	X	
L2 participants had a range of experience with writing conferences from having had several conferences to having never had a conference.		X
L2 participants had a range of writing motivations from those having the desire to improve their skills to those who see little value in writing.		X
Some L1 students in the class provided background and post-conference perception surveys.	X	

Students in six classes (two each from Forest and Reynolds, and one each for Meier and Leighton) completed background surveys. Since the hardest attribute was finding students who spoke English as an L2, the most important characteristic of the chosen classes was that they contained several English L2 writers. Of the four classes that were chosen for data further collection, each had a response rate on completing the background survey of more than fifty percent, and each class had several students who

indicated that they spoke a language other than English. Figure 4 provides the aggregate data about students' language experiences (both L1 and L2) for the students who had completed a background survey in these four classes. Yet, once students with an L2

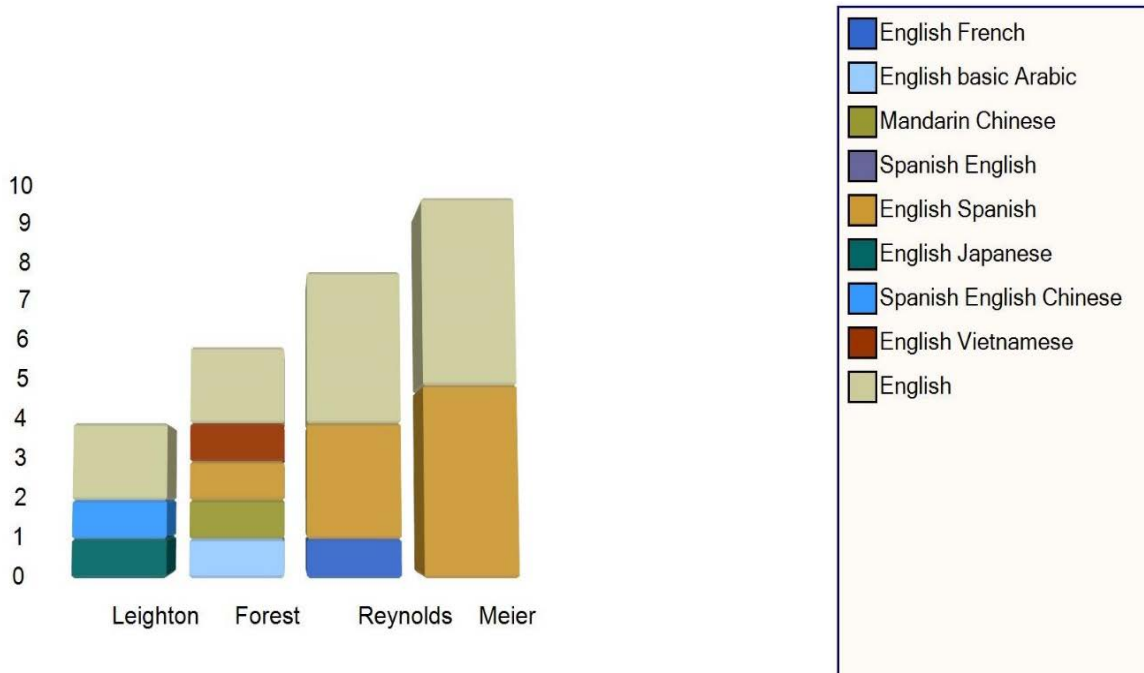


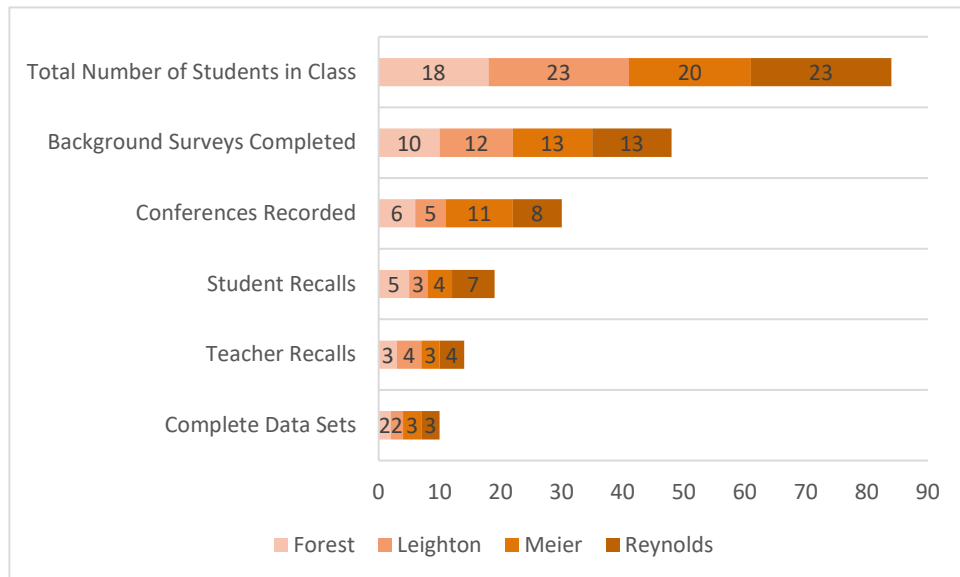
Figure 4. Chart of potential student participants' language experiences listed by teacher.

This chart shows the range of languages spoken by the students who completed a background survey. This chart demonstrates the range of linguistic diversity in the classes, even though English is the sole language for a majority of students.

background had been identified, identifying other aspects of students' communicative backgrounds (including level of writing motivation and the extent of experience that they had had with writing conferences) became equally important. Moreover, collecting that data from English L1 as well as English L2 students acknowledged that language background was only one aspect of students' prior interactional experiences. For instance, most students in this study had either never had a writing conference before this

semester, or they had only had one or two experiences with writing conferences. Furthermore, while these participants tended to rate their confidence level between 2 to 4 on a 5-point scale, with most rating their confidence around a 3, they rated their motivation to improve their rating higher. The motivation ratings fell between 3 to 5, with most students evenly divided among the highest two categories. These features in addition to language use seemed to contribute to how they made and interpreted requests.

To have a sufficient sample size, I aimed to gather complete data sets from 12 to 16 teacher-student pairs across the four teachers' classes with half coming from students who spoke English as their L2. Obtaining this sample required planning for student attrition. Figure 5 shows both the teacher and aggregate totals for each stage of data collection. Of the students who completed the background surveys, only 6 to 15 students



*Figure 5.* Stages of data collection. This chart shows the attrition of participants for each stage of data collection.

each class agreed to have their writing conferences recorded. Based on information in the background survey, I recorded writing conferences with 4 to 12 students and met 4 to 6

students for recall sessions before having recall sessions with the teachers for 3 or 4 of those students. Table 3 provides the demographics for the student participants whose teachers completed a recall session of their writing conference (see also Appendix G and I). These students' data was analyzed for this study. The student participants were nearly balanced between male and female participants, with seven men and six women participating. Students' ages were slightly less balanced with eight students being 18-21 years old, four being 22-25 years old, and one being older than 26. Appendix I makes teacher-student dyads apparent (see also Table 1), provides details on the supplemental data collected for each student, and shows which student-teacher dyads have a complete data set. The background survey column is not shown since completing it and signing informed consent forms signaled students' willingness to participate.

### **Data Collection**

Once I had obtained approvals for the study from the study site's dean, department chair, and IRB (see Appendix A), data collection occurred in phases. As data was collected, it was organized in folders on an external hard drive by data type. When not in use, physical copies of drafts, surveys, and consent forms as well as back-up copies of electronic files were kept in a locked drawer in my office.

### **Phases of Research**

The following outline describes the steps for the study's data collection. Numbering continues across sections.



Table 3

*Characteristics of Student Participants Whose Teachers Completed a Stimulated Recall*

Student name	Gender	Age	Language background	Experience with talking about writing prior to the study semester	Confidence in and motivation for writing
Tim Drake	M	18-21	Fluent in written and spoken English; spoke some Vietnamese as a child	Minimal experience with both talking with a teacher and a fellow student about writing. Experience with teacher “forgettable.”	Highly confident and very highly motivated
Peter Hale	M	18-21	Fluent in written and spoken English; learned to speak and write Chinese on a two-year religious mission	Had not met with a teacher about his writing but had discussed it with a fellow student and a writing center tutor.	Highly confident and very highly motivated
Rachel Westbrook	F	18-21	Fluent in written and spoken English	Had had 1 or 2 experiences talking to teachers and a fellow student about her writing.	Average confidence and very highly motivated
Yeti Grant	M	18-21	Fluent in written and spoken English	Had meet with a teacher 4 or 5 times and had talked with a fellow student.	Average confidence and motivation
Julia Kelli	F	18-21	Fluent in written and spoken English	Had no experience talking about writing with another person.	Low confidence and average motivation
Austin Bancraft	M	22-25	Fluent in written and spoken English; learned to speak Japanese on a two-year religious mission.	Had no experience talking about writing with another person.	Highly motivated and highly confident

Student name	Gender	Age	Language background	Experience with talking about writing prior to the study semester	Confidence in and motivation for writing
Rachel Seymour	F	18-21	Fluent in written and spoken English	Had had 1 or 2 experiences talking to teachers and fellow students about her writing.	Average confidence and highly motivated
Kimberly Saylor	F	22-25	Fluent in written and spoken English	Had not met with a teacher about her writing but had discussed it with a fellow student.	Low confidence but very highly motivated
Romeo Escobar	M	18-21	Fluent in written and spoken English; learned to speak and write Spanish on a two-year religious mission, also had some experience speaking Spanish as a child	Had not met with a teacher about his writing but had discussed it with a fellow student.	Average confidence and high motivated
Tonya Medina	F	22-25	Fluent in written and spoken English and Spanish	Had not met with a teacher about her writing but had discussed it with a writing center tutor.	Highly confident and very highly motivated
Suzanne Adkins	F	18-21	Fluent in written and spoken English and French, learned both simultaneously as a child	Had had 1 or 2 experiences talking to a teacher and fellow student about her writing.	Highly confident and very highly motivated
Eddie Michaels	M	26-29	Fluent in written and spoken English	Had not met with a teacher about her writing but had discussed it with fellow student.	Average confidence and very highly motivated
Daniel Belmonte	M	22-25	Fluent in written and spoken English; learned to speak and write Spanish on a two-year religious mission	Had no experience talking about writing with another person.	Average confidence and highly motivated

**Phase I: Find participants.** This phase occurred before the semester and within the first week of the semester.

1. In response to an email invitation that I sent to full-time and adjunct faculty at RMU, four full-time faculty members who met the teacher participant criteria agreed to participate. Each taught at least one section of English 201.
2. A week before the study semester began, I reviewed the parameters of the study, reaffirmed each teacher's willingness to participate, and had them sign consent forms.
3. During the first week of the teachers' classes, I reviewed the consent from with their students. Those willing to participate completed the Background Survey (Appendix B) and signed the consent forms.
4. After reviewing the surveys, I chose the teachers' courses that had the most L2 writers and informed the teacher of that section's selection.

**Phase II: Pre-conference preparation.** This phase occurred during the first few weeks of the semester.

5. I had an initial interview with each teacher (see Appendix C) and collected the assignment sheet for the first writing assignment.
6. Each instructor provided a tentative schedule of dates when they planned hold writing conferences with their students. I received a detailed schedule from each teacher a couple of days before the writing conferences.

**Phase III: Record conferences and gather rough drafts.** This phase occurred shortly after the first paper was assigned. The time during the semester varied from teacher to teacher.

7. Prior to their conferences, most students provided an electronic copy of their rough drafts (see Appendix I).
8. Teachers conducted and recorded the conference sessions using an audio recorder and a video recorder that I provided. Only conferences related to the first writing assignment were recorded.
  - a. Before starting the recording devices, the teachers asked the student participants to spend two minutes writing their goals for the conference. After the conference the teacher either put the Goal Sheets in the data collection envelope that I had provided, or they sent the students to my office where I collected the Goal Sheet.
  - b. Unprompted by the researcher, teachers began the business part of the conferences with their own request or an opening designed to elicit a request from the student.
  - c. When the conferences concluded, the teachers sent the student participants to me so that an administrative aide or I could scan their conference notes whether on the rough draft or another paper.
9. After each day's conferences, I downloaded the audio files and sent them to the students except for Forest. The audio recorder did not work for her conferences, so I was unable to send the audio files to the students.

**Phase IV: Post-conference follow-up.** This phase occurred after the writing conferences for the first paper had been completed. The timing varied by instructor.

10. Once audio recordings of the conferences, interviews, or recalls were received, I redacted names and sent the files to Same Day Transcription for a full orthographic transcript including initial timestamps and preliminary indications of pauses.
11. I scheduled stimulated recalls and reviewed each conference to prepare interview questions and identify the sections for further review.
12. Student participants participated in stimulated recall sessions as soon as possible after their conferences. Before watching the video during the recall session, students completed a Likert-scale perception survey. They reviewed their responses to the Background Survey afterward. (See Appendix D.)
13. Teacher participants participated in stimulated recall sessions after their students had completed theirs. They completed a Likert-scale perception survey after watching the video recording. (See Appendix E.)
14. Recall audio recordings and initial transcripts were sent to student and teacher participants.

Below, I provide the rationale for each data type included in this study. As the writing conference is a dialogic space, a fuller meaning of writing conference interactions can be obtained by collecting data from both inside and outside the conference, and from both the teacher and the student. As Leander and Prior (2004) argue, “When possible, simultaneous and multiple means of data collection (e.g., audio, video, and fieldnotes) provide optimal data sources for both focusing and complicating the analysis of

communication across various modes and media” (p. 206). Thus, having several types of data allowed me to compare data types with each other, leading to a fuller representation of the context and its impact on participants’ requests. Analyzing requests that were made and how the participants interpreted those requests required collecting the following types of data.

- Audio and video recordings of writing conferences
- Background Surveys
- Goal Sheets
- Interviews with both student and teacher participants
  - Pre-Conference Interview (audiotaped): An interview with teachers prior to the conferences.
  - Stimulated Recall (audio and videotaped): The researcher reviewed the videotaped writing conference with the student and teacher participants on different days.
- Conference Perception Survey: A two-question Likert survey that captured impressions of the conference’s success from each participant’s perspective (Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015; Walker & Elias, 1987)
- Student writing including
  - Drafts brought to the writing conference, with and without conference notes (rough drafts)
  - Drafts submitted for a grade, with and without the teachers’ comments (final drafts)

- Assignment sheets of writing assignments that were discussed during the conference, obtained from each teacher participant

### **Audio and Video Recording the Conferences**

Audio and video recordings of teacher-student writing conferences were the primary data collected in this study. This is consistent with conversation analysis methodology, which works with naturally-occurring data and uses recordings to obtain that data (Drew & Heritage, 1992b; Goodwin, 2007; Gumperz, 2003). To maintain a natural setting, the teacher-participants operated the equipment, although I set up the devices in their offices and provided operating instructions.<sup>4</sup> These recordings were important because identifying requests required multiple passes through the data and stimulated recalls required showing the recordings as the stimulus.

Recording the audio and video separately provided several benefits. Doing so preserved data.<sup>5</sup> For data analysis, audio recording provided the best sound quality, and audio files uploaded easily into Audacity (Version 2.1.2, *Audacity*, 2015) improving the speed and accuracy for identifying and timing pauses. Video recorded non-verbal interactions and provided the context needed to identify indexicals. These body language cues helped to identify or clarify moments when a speaker made a request and aided in interpreting the listener's reaction to it. As Leander and Prior (2004) have explained, "The talk-text binary is . . . misleading. . . . [W]riting and speaking typically interact with other sign systems" (p. 202). Non-linguistic features included hand gestures, drawings that the teacher or student made such as idea maps or organizational schematics, glances

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<sup>4</sup> A Sony ICD-SX712 Digital Flash Voice Recorder positioned on the table directly between the participants recorded the audio. A Canon Vixia R500 or R70 recorded the video.

<sup>5</sup> No audio recordings occurred for all six of Emily Forest's conferences and for one of Ken Leighton's students (Austin Bancraft).

at the listener or speaker, and facial expressions that signaled confusion about, hesitancy toward, or uptake of an idea. Some students responded to verbal requests, particularly comprehension requests, with a head-nod rather than a verbal “yes” or backchannelled “uh-huh.” By showing how and where students and teachers oriented toward the student’s draft, the video recordings provided way to identify objects indexed verbally. Without video recordings, both the nature of some requests and the students’ uptake of them would have been less clear. In sum, having separate audio and video recordings facilitated analysis.

### **Background Surveys**

The Background Surveys allowed students to identify key aspects of their communicative background. As such, they were critical supplemental data. These surveys were critical to finding students with English L2 backgrounds. I scheduled the first recall sessions with students who listed languages either only or in addition to English on their Background Surveys. Students who completed stimulated recall sessions clarified aspects of their communicative background during the recall sessions.

### **Goal Sheets**

Since I was interested in seeing how, or if, students’ goals translated into requests during the conference, I asked them to record those goals on a Goal Sheet. I posited that the conference interactions would in some way relate to students’ desired outcomes for that paper. Having the students record their goals ahead of time provided a way to match the goals’ topics with requests that occurred and to determine if those goals became the perlocutionary force behind the students’ requests or if the conference interaction induced some changes to the students’ requests.



As the time needed to complete the Goal Sheet reduced the time available to talk with their teachers, I emailed the Goal Sheet to students so they could complete it prior to meeting with their teachers. Only one student used the emailed form (Grant). The other students recorded their goals during the allotted conference time.

### **Interviews and Stimulated Recalls**

Conducting interviews and stimulated recalls allowed participants to identify requests and provide needed context to understand their requests. Although participants in this study were not attuned to the theoretical underpinnings of their conference interactions, their intuitive sense about what requests were and how they worked for them allowed participants to verify my interpretations of the request interactions. Thus, these conversations with participants were the second most-important data collected.

**Initial interview (teacher).** Data collection began with a semi-structured interview with each teacher designed to elicit demographic and pre-conference perceptual information (see Creswell, 2013; Seidman, 2006). During this interview, teachers shared their prior experiences with writing conferences including their perceptions about how requests functioned in them as well as their expectations for the study semester's conferences. Teachers also provided information about their language backgrounds, particularly about the languages that they spoke, wrote, and identified with, how they learned those languages, and how they saw those languages impacting what they did in the classroom and during the conference. Conducting pre-conference interviews with the teachers also established that they met the criteria to be in the study and allowed more time for reviewing recorded writing conferences during the recall session.

**Stimulated recall sessions.** The main purpose of the stimulated recalls was to allow participants to identify requests. The recalls also enabled participants to reflect on why they felt that their requests were understood or misunderstood and to discuss how prior experiences, or the lack thereof, with talk-about-writing situations affected the current conference.

These recall sessions blended elements from Newkirk's (1995) writing conference study with Gass and Mackey's (2000, 2017) stimulated recall protocol for second language research. Similar to Newkirk's (1995) study, I reviewed the video recording of the writing conference with the student on one day and the teacher on another. As Gass and Mackey (2000, 2017) recommended, a written protocol set the tone for the stimulated recall and authorized the participants or the researcher to stop the recording and make comments as often as either would like.<sup>6</sup> The protocol also ensured, as Gass and Mackey (2017) explained, that the session's discussion focused the participants' attention on the "there and then" of the writing conference instead of the "here and now" of the stimulated recalls (p. 60). (Appendices D and E provide the students' and teachers' stimulated recall protocols, respectively.)

During recall sessions with Dr. Meier and her students, I realized that pausing seemed to act as a request. From that point, in addition to asking about request forms noted from prior research, I also asked students and teachers to interpret each other's pauses. Having a good sense of where requests might appear was important in order to ask participants to provide details bearing on how they recognized or made a request and

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<sup>6</sup> Like Newkirk (1995), I found that I was more likely to stop the recording than the participants.

Teachers, however, were more likely than students to stop the recording.

how they interpreted the interactions that followed from it, including ones that did not appear to immediately following a request.

*Scheduling the sessions.* Scheduling stimulated recall sessions involved balancing the competing demands of timely data collection and respecting participants' time and other commitments. Timing involved two aspects: scheduling sufficient time for each conference (Gass & Mackey, 2000, 2017) and scheduling the recall sessions as closely as possible to the writing conference (Seidman, 2006). Based on Gass and Mackey (2000) suggested scheduling, I planned 90-minute sessions. I budgeted three or four times the 15-minute conference's length for the recall session (p. 84–89). I then added time for discussing the Goal Sheets, Background Surveys, and completing the Perception Surveys. To ensure enough time for each stimulated recall, I scheduled the sessions at two-hour intervals. The IRB-protocol was based on this timing.

Due to scheduling conflicts among the researcher and the participants, scheduling the stimulated recalls within three days after the writing conferences (Seidman, 2006) proved difficult. While most student recalls occurred within a week of their conferences,<sup>7</sup> several occurred as much as three weeks later. Thus, student recalls took longer to schedule and complete in relation to when the writing conferences occurred than anticipated when designing the study. To mitigate these timing issues, I provided students and teachers with transcripts of the writing conferences that we reviewed along with the video recording.

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<sup>7</sup> Bancraft, Grant, Kelli (Leighton's students); Escobar, Saylor, Seymour (Meier's students), Adkins, Belmonte, and Michaels (Reynolds' students) all had their conferences within a week. Medina (Reynold's student) had hers 10 days later. Forest's students had theirs two and three weeks later. Forest and Reynolds had theirs four and five weeks later.

The timing in relation to the writing conferences was especially critical for teachers. Since they met with more students, their memories of each individual conference were more fleeting. Yet students' recalls had to occur before the teachers' recalls for two reasons. First, my study's design and the IRB protocol limited the teachers' time commitment to reviewing no more than four of their students' writing conferences. Having students complete the recall first increased the likelihood of having a complete data set. Second, examining if teachers changed their requests when meeting with English L2 writers required learning which students had an English L2 background. Thus, meeting with students before their teachers facilitated purposeful sampling. All four teachers did a stimulated recall involving reviewing at least three of their students' writing conferences. Those students represented a range of prior writing conference from none to some and at least one of those students had an English L2 background.

*Sequence of the recall.* For students, the 90-minute sessions were divided into two parts. The first 60 minutes involved (1) rating their conferences, (2) defining requests and providing instructions for the recall, and (3) replaying the video of the writing conference and pausing to identify and discuss the requests found. The last 30 minutes clarified students' answers from the Background Survey. For teachers, the 90-session proceeded like the students' sessions except teachers did the Perception Survey after watching each recording and they did not discuss their interview responses. For both teachers and students, follow-up questions after reviewing the video recording asked them to discuss "requests that you wanted to make but did not make" and requests that they perceived as not understood or as misunderstood. This later set was important, particularly when it involved a request type that the teacher did not recognize.

## **Perception Survey**

While other studies (Carnicelli, 1980; Eckstein, 2013; Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015; Walker & Elias, 1987) have examined participants' perceptions surrounding the conference, my study adds interviewing and stimulated recall sessions to determine *why* participants rated the conference as they did. For the Perception Survey, students and teachers completed two Likert scales. One scale recorded participants' perceived success of the conference. The second recorded the degree to which the other participant understood the participants' requests. Comparing these surveys to information gathered during the stimulated recall provided a way to see how closely conference success correlates with participants' requests being recognized and the goals embedded in the request being satisfactorily acted upon.

In order to prevent limited conference time from being used to administrate this study, I opted to have teachers and students complete the Perception Survey during the stimulated recall. Nevertheless, conducting the Perception Survey during the recall session precluded knowing in advance which conferences were successful or unsuccessful.

## **Student Drafts**

Since focusing on a student-produced text was a key feature of each writing conference, having access to a written version of that text was important for several reasons. Drafts aided the transcription process, facilitating transcribing passages that were read from the draft, often quickly and quietly. Even when the exact language from the draft was not referenced, having a copy of the draft allowed me to see what the teacher and student examined during the writing conference. For instance, as expected,

participants referred to the drafts with indexicals: “this part,” “these comments,” “what do you mean here?” and so on. In addition, comparing the initial draft’s focus with notes made during the writing conference helped to clarify the topics embedded in the requests. Thus, having the original rough draft and the copy that captured any notes made on it during the conference aided in preparations for the recall session and for data analysis.

Comparing the final drafts to the rough drafts from the conference helped identify changes and match them to interactions during the conference. Analyzing the changes that the teacher requested to the changes that the student made showed which requests the student recognized and had the necessary skill and desire to effect those changes. Exploring the rationale behind the absence of change was beyond the scope of this study.

The final draft also connected the classroom to the conference. Classroom activities and instruction established expected outcomes for the paper that students tried to achieve and that teachers aimed to help students obtain. Writing conference expectations involved participants negotiating how to achieve the assignment’s requirements and determining what they could realistically accomplish during a writing conference. Requests from both participants revolved around these expectations.

### **Assignment Sheets**

Teachers’ assignment sheets provided background information specific to the writing assignment on which the conference was based. Knowing the assignment’s criteria helped identify the topics and topic shifts critical to being able to interpret when requests were made. Both teachers and students referred to the parameters and expectations of that assignment during the conference, making having that background

information important. Moreover, the criteria embedded in the assignment often became the topics that students referenced when requesting help with their paper.

### **Data Analytical Methods**

Analyzing requests involved comparing the requests that students and teachers identified separately and analyzing those requests' form and function related to surrounding utterances in the writing conference. Discovering these effects required an iterative data analysis approach that prepared and analyzed data as it was collected and revisited as additional data came in (Merriam, 2001). This section describes the three distinct but inter-related steps that comprise this study's analysis: 1) preparing data for analysis, 2) coding data, and 3) analyzing data. Table 4 links the research questions with the data collection and analytical approaches required to answer each question.

Additionally, two divergent aspects of requests emerged during the recall sessions and subsequent analysis that focused the analysis. First, some requests, such as pauses, invited collaboration. In essence, they provided a way to see the conversational strategies that enact social constructivist writing pedagogies (Bruffee, 1984; Spivey, 1997). Second, when looking at the transcripts, some students' requests seemed to be answered. Yet during the recall session, participants noted missed, misunderstood, or unfulfilled requests and rated their requests as only being somewhat understood. Their frustration about requests not being fully understood or fulfilled provided a way to probe what was not working in those places.

Table 4

*Relation of Research Questions to Data Collection and Data Analysis Procedures*

Research Question	Data	Analysis
Main: How are teachers' and students' requests formed, received, and interpreted during teacher-student writing conferences?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey of communicative background (language background, writing conference experience, writing motivation)</li> <li>• Pre-conference interview (teacher)</li> <li>• Audio and videotaped conferences</li> <li>• Stimulated recall (post-conference)</li> <li>• Student papers: Students' rough drafts and final drafts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CA approach to the transcripts</li> <li>• Compare requests found in the conferences with stimulated recall sessions</li> <li>• Group request patterns by demographic information, writing conference experience, and writing motivation</li> </ul>
Sub a: Which utterances do participants identify as their own or as the other participant's requests?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audio and videotaped conferences</li> <li>• Stimulated recall (student and teacher, separately)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use stimulated recalls to see what requests the participant noticed, particularly if the other participant did not believe s/he was sending a request or if the participant failed to recognize a request</li> </ul>
Sub b: What forms do teachers' and students' requests take?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audio and videotaped conferences</li> <li>• Stimulated recall</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify request patterns in the writing conferences</li> <li>• Correlate requests by demographic information, writing conference experience, and writing motivation</li> </ul>
Sub c: How does each participant recognize and interpret the other participant's requests?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audio and videotaped conferences</li> <li>• Post-conference stimulated recalls (student and teacher, separately)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transcribe conferences using a CA approach using both audio and video to create a unified transcript</li> <li>• Use rough drafts and videotaped recordings to identify indexicals within the conference</li> <li>• Compare conference transcripts to stimulated recall sessions to identify areas of collaboration or misunderstanding.</li> </ul>



## **Preparing Data for Analysis**

This section is organized by this study's three main data types: 1) audio and videotaped data (conferences, interviews, and stimulated recalls), 2) surveys (background and perception), and 3) written documents (drafts and assignment sheets). Data analysis overlapped with data collection. The initial overlap began while reviewing the conference tapes to prepare for the stimulated recall sessions. I identified potential requests based on prior research (Artman, 2007; Koshik, 2002; I. Park, 2012a, 2015; Thonus, 2002) and wrote questions to ask the participants. Research memos captured initial analytical thoughts about the requests and the reactions to them found in the data facilitating follow-up with participants during the data collection phase. The memos also aided in coding and analyzing data.

After being prepared using the procedures below, data was imported into QSR International's NVivo 11 software, providing a central location for all the data and the generated codes. Each student's data was grouped into cases therein, and each student's case was grouped under their teacher's case.

**Transcribe audio and video recorded data.** After all recordings were transcribed orthographically by a transcription service, I formatted the teacher-student writing conferences to align with conversation analysis' detailed transcription. While many conversation analysis transcripts use Jefferson's phonetic approach, more recent studies employing conversation analysis (Goodwin, 2007; I. Park, 2012b) or using detailed transcripts from other methodologies (Gilewicz & Thonus, 2003; Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015; Thonus, 2004) present their study transcripts orthographically. To be consistent with these trends, words were transcribed orthographically, an approach

compatible with both conversation analysis and prior studies that analyze talk about writing.

***Rationale for orthographic transcription.*** All participants were given the opportunity to see that their words were presented accurately and in ways that avoid stereotyping them. The decision about how to present participants' wording was both a political issue (Bucholtz, 2000; Ochs, 1979) and a practical one. Since the way a transcript is presented can affect how the readers perceive the participants (Gumperz & Berenz, 1993; Leander & Prior, 2004), Gumperz and Berenz (1993) argue that an orthographic transcription reduces the possibility that some participants' utterances are presented in ways that trivialize or stereotype them. Furthermore, participants needed to recognize themselves and approve of how they are represented in their transcripts. This consideration was particularly important for this study. As students often have lower status than their teachers and L2 students can be particularly conscious of negative ways in which they are perceived in institutional contexts (see Ortmeier-Hooper, 2008), I tried to avoid the appearance of bias in the transcript.

Gumperz and Berenz (1993) further argue that using orthographic spelling maintains consistency and makes computerized searching for phrases easier. They acknowledge that some pronunciation varieties are not best-represented orthographically; therefore, they suggest recording the colloquialism's common spelling and putting the orthographic spelling in parentheses. For example, words typically ending in *-ing* such as “*going to* (‘gonna,’ ‘gon,’ ‘-a’) and *want to* (‘wanna,’ ‘wan’)” as features that can indicate a “stylistic mismatch among participants” (p. 97). This particular exception to a general orthographic style was particularly important in this study as the phrase *want to*,

often pronounced as *wanna*, recurred in writing conferences when students established a revision agenda or when teachers suggested potential revisions (Carter, Lee, & Gates, 2015a; C. Lee et al., 2013; I. Park, 2015). For example, phrases such as “I wanna (‘want to’) work on my thesis” signaled an implicit request to begin a topic sequence in the conference. Therefore, transcripts use common colloquial spellings as needed with orthographic spellings in parenthesis.

*Conference transcripts.* Transcribing was an iterative process involving identifying and recording both “content and rhythmic organization” (Gumperz & Berenz, 1993, p. 94). Content organization, done in the first pass, involved dividing the recording into what Gumperz and Berenz (1993) call “*events*” or “thematically coherent and empirically boundable portions” (p. 94). I marked units and utterances that seemed like requests while waiting for the transcript’s return. Identifying topic shifts provided a way to examine the impetus for the shift, which sometimes was a request. Locating the content organization of each writing conference, specifically noting potential requests, comprised my preliminary analysis before the stimulated recall session with participants.

I marked teacher- and student-identified requests, noted during the recall sessions, on the writing conference transcripts. Further detailed transcription focused on adapting these sections to include conventions blended from Jefferson (2004), DuBois et al. (1993), Gumperz and Berenz (1993), Gilewicz and Thonus (2003), and Thonus (2002). While the transcripts also required detailed attention to some micro-level features that participants used as contextual cues, I did not provide minute detail for the entire writing conference transcript, choosing to focus instead on the requests that participants had identified and surrounding interactions.

Specifically, I identified pauses and overlaps (Gilewicz & Thonus, 2003) and added syllable lengthening, volume, and stress to participant-identified requests, since Gumperz (1982; Gumperz & Berenz, 1993) illustrated that these features may occur around requests. Identifying pauses was particularly important as several participants suggested during recall sessions that they acted as requests at times. Lexical notations such as accents, pauses, overlaps, and syllable lengthening generally follow Jefferson's (2004) system. Du Bois et al.'s (1993) system supplied paralinguistic transcription symbols such as @ for laughter. Appendix F provides the full transcription key.

The third step involved identifying rhythmic organization and non-verbal aspects. Overlaps in speech were marked first. Explanations of non-lexical phenomena, such as gestures and body position, were added based on the video recordings (Goodwin, 2007). The last step involved dividing turns into "informational units" (p. 95), also referred to as intonation units (see Stelma & Cameron, 2007). Previously identified features such as accents, pauses, overlaps, pitch, and stress helped identify intonation units since pauses and stress, in particular, are key ways to recognize intonation boundaries.

***Stimulated recalls and interviews.*** Turning to the interviews and stimulated recall sessions, I looked for discussions where participants interpreted each other's language patterns of requests and responses to requests. The rhythmic features of pauses, overlap, stress, and pitch were not included in these transcripts since participants' descriptions of the interactions were more important rather than how they talked about them. Changes in topic were marked by changing lines. The original writing conference was added to the recall transcript with the labels "conference begin" and "conference end" distinguishing

the conference from the recall. While columns looked neater, they impeded coding in NVivo.

**Timing.** Having detailed transcriptions produced in a timely manner was essential for future data collection as well as subsequent coding and analysis. Each teacher's writing conferences occurred during a three- to four-day period allotted for drafting and revising the first paper. Due to the volume of conferences that were produced in such a short time, I required assistance to complete the transcripts in time for the stimulated recalls.<sup>8</sup> Although I would have preferred to transcribe everything myself, Same Day Transcription, a transcription service experienced with transcribing research-related recordings, expedited this process by producing the orthographic transcription of the words, providing timestamps, identifying speakers, and noting pauses. After receiving initial transcripts, I transformed the transcripts into the format needed as described above. The same service provided transcripts of the recall sessions.

**Collation of surveys.** As the data were collected throughout the study, participant attributes were collated from four forms into two spreadsheets. The first spreadsheet, derived from the consent forms and background surveys, included the following attributes: students' and teachers' pseudonyms; students' and teachers' study ID numbers; level of writing conference experience and writing motivation; L1 languages spoken or written; L2 languages spoken or written; participants' gender; students' school-level (freshman, etc.). The second spreadsheet, derived from goal sheets and post-conference perception surveys, included the students' goals for the conference, teachers'

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<sup>8</sup> Fifteen to twenty conferences at 15-20 minutes yielded a total of between 4 to 6.5 hours of recordings. Orthographic transcription required approximately three times that amount while providing CA-level transcription detail required at least three or four additional hours per 15 minutes of recording.

and students' ratings about the conference's success, and their ratings of how well the other participant in the conference understood that person's requests. When data collection ended, I imported these spreadsheets into NVivo.

**Preparation of written data.** Written data included assignment sheets and students' rough drafts and final drafts (clean copies along with ones including their and their teachers' notes). Any identifying information associated with a particular participant's written material was changed to the participant's pseudonym.

Comparing rough drafts to final drafts provided a way to identify changes. I used Microsoft Word's compare feature to identify all the changes between the draft used during the writing conference (rough draft) and the draft submitted for the final grade (final draft). I uploaded a PDF preserving Word's coding into NVivo where I coded the comparison drafts using a modified version of Sommers' (1980) coding scheme (Carter, Lee, & Gates, 2015b; C. Lee et al., 2013). This system identifies changes at the word, phrase, sentence, theme, punctuation, and source (or citation) level and further identifies changes as additions, deletions, substitutions, or relocations. I compared these changes to revision discussions in the conference surrounding that portion of the draft.

### **Coding for Requests**

Preparing for analysis and doing analysis overlapped when coding for requests. In some ways, coding is analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). In this section, I review this project's coding process from early coding that identified request strategies to later coding that thematically analyzed the ways those requests were used. This coding process illustrates the iterative nature of analysis and shows how coding for requests involves both preparatory and analytical moves.

**Identification of requests.** Identifying requests occurred as a preliminary step while I prepared for the stimulated recall sessions, but it occurred more directly during the recall sessions themselves. I looked for request patterns already identified in the literature (Artman, 2007; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Koshik, 2002; I. Park, 2012a, 2012b; Trosborg, 1994; Vilar Beltrán & Martínez-Flor, 2008), particularly at the beginning and end of topic sequences. The stimulated recalls were integral to identifying requests and analyzing them. Participants identified their own and the other participants' requests. I also stopped the tape at places where I believed requests occurred. Thus, participants confirmed or refuted the veracity of that preliminary coding. Participants also explained why they made or responded to requests. For instance, during the recall sessions, the pause emerged as a potential request strategy (see Chapter 4). As a result, I examined the videotapes to record gaze and facial expressions that indicated problems processing requests. Signs of positive uptake such as leaning toward the participant and overlapping speech also provided clues needed to identify requests that preceded those interactions.

Once the writing conference transcripts were imported into NVivo, I coded requests as teacher-identified or student-identified. An NVivo matrix query distinguished the requests that were only identified by the teachers from those only identified by the students from those that both identified. As request patterns emerged, I compared the uptake of various patterns to students' demographic information. As potential correlations were identified, I further analyzed the requests to determine how the teachers and students interpreted each other's requests based on the requests' various forms.

**Identification of request types.** Once identified, requests were further examined for the strategies used to create them, the function of various strategies on subsequent

interactions, and the possible meanings that participants inferred from the requests themselves and the strategies used to create them. This is where rhythmic elements mentioned in the transcript section became important since they were specifically related to the “*situated interpretations* on which the conduct and outcome of the exchange depends” (Gumperz & Berenz, 1993, p. 92, emphasis in original).

The original plan for data analysis was use previous schemas of request strategies (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Thonus, 2002; Vilar Beltrán & Martínez-Flor, 2008) to create a schema of requests found in writing conferences. That plan changed when two request patterns that did not appear in these schemas emerged during analysis: pauses as requests (discussed in Chapter 4) and extended requests (discussed in Chapter 5). Thus, data analysis focused on understanding how pauses and extended requests are created during teacher-student writing conferences and the extent to which they occur during a writing conference predicts the level of collaboration in a writing conference.

**Identification of roles.** I also coded requests in NVivo by the roles that the participants assumed when making them. Those roles included student (Carter et al., 2016), writer (Carter et al., 2016; W. B. Horner, 1979), teacher (Carter et al., 2016; Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015), and reader (W. B. Horner, 1979; Spivey, 1997). While students and teachers can adopt the role of reader, student participants generally assumed the roles of student or writer when making requests while teacher participants assumed the roles of teacher or reader. Chapter 6 explores this finding in more detail.

### **Analyzing Requests**

The analysis focused on understanding the factors surrounding teachers’ and students’ understanding of the same utterance as a request, or the lack thereof. When the



participants defined requests for me before we watched the conference video, they often gave textbook definitions of requests using language that mirrored Searle's (1969). Yet the utterances that students and teachers actually identified as requests did not necessarily match these textbook definitions. Thus, while the literature assumes that requests have certain standard structures that can be coded analytically, the participants defined requests subjectively in practice. Therefore, some utterances identified as request forms in the existing literature were not consistently identified as requests by the participants.

Analysis continued by comparing the quantity of student-identified requests to teacher-identified requests. To examine why some requests were responded to and others were not, I compared identified requests to the roles that participants assumed. Identified requests and participants' roles were compared to the attributes retrieved from students' Background Surveys and from teacher and student Perception Surveys. Part of the process of interpreting requests included the following elements: analyzing how participants' requests are addressed; determining how participants use words, phrases and various sentence structures to make requests; examining how they use requests to make or encourage grammatical and content-level choices in the student's writing; and analyzing how they discuss and analyze those choices.

**Relation of questions and requests.** Existing studies provided tools needed to identify patterns and to discuss the meaning of those patterns found in this study's writing conferences. Comparing questions generally and requests specifically against Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) and Trosborg's (1994) categories provided a way to determine if writing conference interactions produced different styles of requests or if participants enacted requesting differently from the everyday situations that these authors identified.

Writing conference studies that used conversation analysis suggested that requesting or questioning sets up subsequent interactional sequences. Specifically, I. Park's examination of polar questions (2012a) and epistemic downgrades (2012b) and Artman's (2007) focus on teachers' comprehension requests, suggested some interesting parallels to requests. Looking for how requests set up interactional sequences led to the discovery of pauses as requests and extended requests (S.-H. Lee, 2009).

**Assignment of benefit.** During the analysis phase, determining the roles that the participants assumed was essential in assigning benefit. Assigning benefit meant determining whether the speaker or the listener received the primary benefit from performing the action referred to in the directive. While a speaker may utter both requests and suggestions, a request benefits the speaker while a suggestion benefits the listener (Searle, 1969). Assigning benefit was complicated when the writer (the student) did not recognize that the teacher had assumed the role of a reader. The stimulated recall sessions helped determine to whom the participants in a conference assigned an utterance's benefit, particularly in ambiguous situations. Interpreting requests through the lens of the roles that participants assumed also suggested how each participant viewed the other participant's status. Thus, these roles were important while analyzing the conference data.

**Examination of listener reactions.** Once the requests themselves had been identified, I examined how the listeners reacted to them. How listeners respond to requests has received less attention in the literature reviewed for this dissertation than the request strategies themselves. The conference transcripts facilitated identifying requests. Requests received as such were recognizable due to evidence of uptake, even minimal uptake. Once an utterance was acknowledged as a request, it was further evaluated by the

listeners' level of uptake. That degree of enthusiasm from enthusiastic to hesitant aided in understanding participants' ratings for how well the conference met their goals.

Identifying requests when the speaker's communicative intent of presenting a request was not received was harder. Technically, an utterance does not count as a request if the listener does not recognize it. Yet it was also important for this study to identify utterances intended as requests. Stimulated recall sessions helped identify these, enabling missed or misunderstood requests to be analyzed.

**Connection of perceptions and requests.** I was particularly interested in determining how communication involving requests influences the participants' evaluation of the writing conference. In other words, do participants see writing conferences as more effective when their requests are understood and acted upon than if they are not? While more occurred in these writing conference than requests, it was nevertheless instructive to determine whether a correlation existed between the analysis of the requests and the post-conference survey data about the conference's effectiveness.

### **Ethical Considerations**

I attempted to balance confidentiality and protecting participants' data with a desire for them to collaborate in the data analysis. Mainly, I aimed to protect the students from possible negative repercussions from their teachers, to protect the teachers from possible negative repercussions from their students and administrators, to collect timely data that led to more effectively understanding the requests that occur in the conferences, and to help teachers to understand their practice more effectively. This section presents issues of data collection and management that impacted confidentiality and privacy. I

also discuss ancillary concerns about how participants benefitted and were kept from harm beyond privacy concerns.

### **Informed Consent**

All participants read and signed informed consent documents before participating in any part of this study. These documents spelled out what they were asked to do, what kinds of data were collected, how that data was protected and used, and what their responsibilities were during the study. Participants also could select their own pseudonym, if desired. I needed explicit permission from the participants in order to use the information contained in any recordings (Seidman, 2006). According to FERPA regulations, students must provide written permission to use their student records. Conferences were considered such a record. The consent forms included all this information and provided information on how to opt out during the study if desired. Additionally, I verified participants' continued consent prior to recording the stimulated recall.

### **Transferability**

With so many possible permutations of diversity, this study only describes these particular participants' experiences related to how they form, use, interpret, and respond to each other's requests. Generalizations were neither possible nor intended. The statistics used in this dissertation are descriptive rather than generalizable. While insufficient data was collected to fully analyze the effect of language use or levels of writing conference experience on the writing conference, the patterns of requests that were identified and the mismatch between teachers' and students' identified requests provide useful information for both researchers and practitioners of writing conferences.

## **Teacher Power**

By nature of their position of authority in the classroom and the institution, teachers have more power than students, which could have inhibited students from feeling free to express their actual feelings or thoughts. I designed the study to reduce the number of these conflicts. I studied other teachers and their students instead of myself or my own students. This allowed me to transcribe and analyze their work immediately during the semester. To maintain confidentiality, other than what we discussed in our official interviews and stimulated recall sessions, I did not discuss the study with the teacher participants or anyone else in the department until the study period ended.

I had students complete the recalls first since I believed that doing so would protect their relationships with their teachers. This timing prevented the recall from affecting students' grades since teachers had finished grading students' papers before our meeting. However, knowing the students' responses from the recalls facilitated asking questions about the teachers' interactions with students that I otherwise would not have been able to ask.

I also attempted to protect the students' confidentiality by not sharing what I learned during their recall session with their teachers. Early in data collection, I slipped and told Meier that Romeo had not made a request when she thought that he had. Discussing how the form of an utterance can lead to a misunderstanding was enlightening. Nevertheless, I was more vigilant in future recall sessions to not share students' labeling of their own or their teachers' requests. The other exception occurred at the end of the study. When reviewing Yeti Grant's conference, Leighton said that Grant had not returned for his second conference. However, Grant had told me that he planned

to meet with Leighton after his recall session with me. I asked Leighton for clarification. When he considered the timing again, he acknowledged that Grant had returned for that second writing conference. I attribute these lapses in protocol to being a novice researcher in the first case and also trying to protect a student's relationship with his teacher in the second.

### **Data Management**

Data management included protecting participants' confidentiality and managing the data. All materials that linked the participants' actual names to their pseudonyms were kept in locked filing cabinet in my university-provided office. A spreadsheet with original names, pseudonyms, and identification numbers was kept in its own file folder separate from the other study materials on the master hard drive. I only used this file during the initial data collection. Once participants' pseudonyms were associated with the collected data and real names were removed, that file linking actual names to pseudonyms and a single back-up copy remained in my locked file cabinet. Working documents were identified by the participants' pseudonyms, study identification numbers, or both. Collected data resided on two external hard drives. One provided a working copy; the other backed-up the data.

Another data management issue involved preventing the teachers from inadvertently accessing each other's data. I bought dedicated SD memory cards for each instructor. Teachers recorded the names of each student participant who recorded a conference. I collected these logs and SD cards at the end of each day. I avoided mixing up the cards by keeping these in individual folders and working with one at a time.

All participants were offered recordings of their conferences and recall sessions. While it may seem problematic to give participants copies of the recordings, Seidman (2006) presents Valerie Raleigh Yow's arguments, according to the 1976 U.S. copyright law, that recorded material is jointly owned by the researcher and the participant, or in my case, the research and *two* participants. I emailed students their writing conference recordings soon after the conference. None of the students wanted a copy of the recall session. Each teacher received a USB-drive with their conferences and their own recall.

Another data management issue with ethical undertones concerns the time needed to transcribe the audio-visual material. While the most ethical approach was to transcribe the materials myself, that was unworkable. I scrubbed information that linked the recording to the participants' real identities before securely transmitting the recordings electronically. Same Day Transcription also signed a confidentiality agreement. To distinguish transcripts from each other, all transcripts received a descriptive heading with the student's and teacher's pseudonyms. After receiving the transcript from the service, I added the following information to the transcript's heading: participant ID numbers, recording type (conference, stimulated recall, or interview), descriptive title and transcript version number, audio and video file names, the date the recording was made and its length, and participant reference key.

### **Design Limitations**

This study's design contains several limitations generally related to the study's timeframe and the number of participants.

### **Sufficient Sample Size**

Two limitations relate to conducting this study. The first concerns the small number of culturally and linguistically diverse students available to participate. Only two to five English L2 students were expected in each class. While their participation was critical to the study's success, they were a small percentage of the entire class. Thus, this demographic has more overall representation than other demographic groups in the class. If none had participated, however, the purpose of doing the study would not have been realized. These concerns were balanced by trying to select two English L1 and two English L2 writers for each class. Despite some problems with data collection, the study generally has this representation.

Another concern was that study participants would drop out before data collection was complete. Recording more writing conferences than needed mitigated this concern. This solution came with the limitation of requiring more time and resources to record and transcribe the conferences and meet with students for stimulated recall sessions. Since data analysis commenced alongside data collection, I could not wait to learn which participants stayed in the study before starting the analytical process. Recording more writing conferences worked for English L1 students. With three or fewer English L2 students in each class, it was not possible to collect data from additional English L2 students. To facilitate their participation, I attempted to have the stimulated recall sessions for L2 writers first. I also recorded writing conferences for all students who wanted to participate instead of limiting the study to only English L2 writers.



## **Time Limitations**

Finally, time was a key limitation both for the participants and the researcher. The study window took longer than the first four to six weeks of the semester anticipated when the study began. Teachers conducted their conferences from the fourth week through the fourteenth week of a sixteen-week semester. The key reason for recording the first conference was to increase the likelihood that differences between students who had had conferences and those who had not would emerge. I was also trying to capture the “newness” of the situation since the instructor and student would still be acclimatizing to each other early in the semester. The later the semester progressed, the more familiarity they had with each other. That familiarity made participants more aware of each other’s conversational patterns.

Another important time limitation was mitigating the time commitment for the participants. The writing conference was the only part of the study included in the course’s regular routine. Completing the post-conference stimulated recalls were all extra. Student participants committed to at least two additional hours. Teacher participants invested up to four hours to account for the loss of class time, the longer timeframe for each conference to allow students time to complete the Goal Sheets, and the number of students for whom they did stimulated recall sessions. When the data collection window occurred at the beginning of the semester (which was generally less busy than later in the semester), participant retention improved. Fewer students participated when their conference occurred near the end of the semester. Regardless of when data collection occurred, being involved in the study represented a time investment

by the participants that lead to some withdrawing from the study. Nevertheless, the study's design mitigated many of these potential issues.

### **Conclusion**

This study focused on how requests shape discussions about a student's academic writing. This chapter described the research site, the participants' characteristics, the data needed, the procedures used to select participants and collect the data, and the analytical methods that were employed. It also included rationales supporting these choices. Since requests take many forms and some of these forms carry meaning outside the denotative meaning of the utterance, the range of collected data helped to analyze the combination of the forms and their meanings, to explore how students communicate their goals, and to examine how their teachers react to that presentation.

This chapter also connected the methodology with the conceptual framework. Specifically, speech act theory allows me to look at how requesting works in a writing conference while conversation analysis allows me to see how the act of requesting plays out in a turn-by-turn analysis. Adding elements of second language research also allowed me to examine how variation in participants' communicative backgrounds influenced how they made and received requests and how those differences influenced writing conference interactions. In this section, I have illustrated how these methodologies combine their strengths to enable an examination of how specific interactional forms influence how requests are presented and received during a teacher-student writing conference.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 present findings related to the types of requests that were found, how these findings are similar to and different from prior research about requests,

how the writing conference situation may suggest reasons for those differences, and how and why miscommunication related to requests occurs during writing conferences. Since each chapter is intended as a potential publication to an academic journal, some repetition of the review of literature and methodology should be expected.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### EXTENDED SILENCE AS REQUESTIVE HINTS

Chapter 4 was written as a stand-alone article chapter. It illustrates how pauses, and other forms of silence, act as requests during writing conferences. It explains the critical role silence plays in enabling students to co-construct revisions on their drafts.

#### **Introduction**

Conversations with students are filled with pauses. In everyday conversation, silence acts as an invitation from the speaker for the listener to take the floor (Sacks et al., 1974). However, viewing periods of silence only as a turn-taking mechanism limits the ability to understand how they function during teaching interactions, specifically in ways that engage students in their own learning. During a teacher–student writing conference, particularly when a teacher and student are discussing how to add material to a student’s rough draft, noticeable silences in the form of pauses, gaps, or lapses (Sacks et al., 1974) can simultaneously act as requests.

This chapter continues the research on requests in talk-about-writing institutional contexts (I. Park, 2015; Thonus, 2004) by examining how teachers continue a scaffolding sequence (DeMott, 2006; Ewert, 2009; Sperling, 1990; Weissberg, 2006). Specifically, I analyze how and when teachers and students recognize, or fail to recognize, pauses and other forms of silence as requests during writing conferences in sequences intended to create new or additional content for the student’s draft. I found that teachers maintain a scaffolding structure by strategically using pauses and gaps as requests during the teaching phase of a writing conference.

## **Literature Review**

While there is much research on requests (Austin, 1962; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; S.-H. Lee, 2009; I. Park, 2015; Searle, 1969; Weizman, 1989), requests in the specific institutional context of writing conferences or writing tutorials have been examined less frequently (Artman, 2007; Melnick, 1984; I. Park, 2015; Thonus, 2004). How instructors phrase requests when instructing and enabling students to improve their own papers is important to understanding how those requests encourage or discourage students from contributing ideas to the conference.

### **Hinting or Prompting**

For instance, as Mehan (1979) noted in his extended research on a single classroom, teachers make requests through both grammatical and non-grammatical forms. Grammatical forms include declarative statements or questions while non-grammatical forms include verbal utterances or non-verbal actions like nodding or backchanneling that do not fit within traditional grammar. In an observation particularly relevant to this chapter, Mehan noted that the teacher started a sentence and waited for students to fill in the next word. While students may be familiar with such prompting or hinting from prior classroom experience, they may not be familiar with how it functions during a writing conference. Hinting also occurs in every day conversation, as Weizman (1989) explored. Additionally, Mackiewicz and Thompson (2015) found such prompting occurs infrequently in writing tutorials, which share features of writing conferences.

### **Scaffolding**

Prompting or hinting can occur during a scaffolded approach to teaching writing. This approach, on which writing conferences are based, is intended to guide students

toward improvements in their paper that they cannot produce on their own (Spivey, 1997; L. S. Vygotsky, 1978). To be optimally effective, successful scaffolding sessions during writing conferences require both the teacher and the student to contribute (DeMott, 2006; Ewert, 2009; Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015).(Artman, 2007) Thus, scaffolding is consistent with a framework that values the group's creation of knowledge (Spivey, 1997; L. S. Vygotsky, 1978). For example, Strauss and Xiang (2006) found that students who negotiated and talked more with their teachers had more control of their conferences than those who did not. Similarly, Walker and Elias (1987) reported that students who helped develop and apply evaluative criteria to their own papers deemed their conferences to be more successful. These studies point to the value of examining specific interactional features that enable effective negotiation and co-construction of evaluative criteria or even text within a writing conference.

Frameworks that involve the creation of knowledge by a group suggest that teachers use linguistic tools, among others, to accomplish this purpose. The linguistic aspects of scaffolding, however, particularly how requests play a part in framing or maintaining the scaffolding approach, have received less attention than other aspects of this approach. When enacting a scaffolding approach, teachers employ conversational mechanisms that are familiar to them as practitioners of both writing conferences and scaffolding but that are not necessarily familiar to their students, particularly those who have not participated in writing conferences in the past. The situational context of the writing conference, then, is important as the context aids in understanding how silence functions within the writing conference and how students who lack prior experience with conferencing may (mis)read how silence functions in the writing conference.

## **Turn-Allocation and Sequencing**

From a conversation analysis perspective, examining silence is related both to turn-allocation and sequencing, specifically the concept of adjacency pairs. Silence in a writing conference, as in other conversations, can be a "turn-allocation technique" (Sacks et al., 1974, p. 701) in that either party can use it to select the next speaker. Pauses, as defined by Sacks et al., occur when the speaker stops speaking momentarily before continuing. According to their rules of turn-taking, an extended "silence" will not be seen as a "lapse" when the next speaker has been selected (p. 715). However, in a two-party conversation such as a writing conference, particularly when a teacher wants the student to be the next speaker and to add a word or phrase, a pause can become a lapse. A student may misinterpret a pause as the teacher gathering her thoughts, or the student may need more time to gather his, particularly if the silence is accompanied by the teacher writing.

Thus, periods of silence in conversation take several forms, according to Sacks et al. (1974). "Silence" is the broad term for a salient period when no one speaks. "Pauses" are noticeable moments of silence within a speaker's turn while "gaps" are periods of silence between speakers' turns. "Lapses" are extended periods of silence that carry the expectation that someone should have started talking. Lapses can turn into pauses or gaps, depending on which speaker begins to end the lapse. To make the definitions more complicated, a gap between speakers can be read as a pause if the current speaker has selected the next speaker. As a result, I tend to use either "silence" or "pause" when talking about salient moments where neither speaker is talking.

In fact, while most people recognize silence in "transition-relevant places" as the current speaker selecting the next speaker (Sacks et al., 1974, p. 716), most people are

also remain silent when the current speaker stops talking to write. For example, in a transcript of the interaction between a doctor and a patient, ten Have (2007) noted a nearly 15-second period of silence interrupted only by the doctor's intake of breath. Neither the patient nor her mother talked while he wrote. This pattern speaks to the prior experience students and teachers bring to a writing conference. As Spivey (1997) noted, sociocultural knowledge, or "the filter through which experience is perceived," and the "immediate situational context" influence each other (p. 84). In fact, Spivey asserted that "... discourse is embedded in contexts, which influence 'extra-textual' construction. The meaning constructed for a text is affected by other texts, written and spoken, that precede and follow it" (p. 84). A writing conference is a spoken text constructed by the participants, and their prior experiences with talking in one-to-one situations as well as talking to a teacher (in the case of a student) or to a student (in the case of a teacher) influence what occurs in the current situation.

In the case of constructing a sentence together, the teacher may solicit the student's input. Although a lapse after the teacher hands the floor to a student might suggest that the student does not realize that the teacher wants her to say something, other options exist as well. As noted above, the teacher might be writing, thus diluting the turn-taking mechanism of the silence. Moreover, as Sacks et al. (1974) have argued, "Turns are valued, sought, or avoided" (p. 701). Even if students realize that their teachers have requested a response by pausing, students choose whether to engage. Among two possible reasons for declining the pause as a "requestive Hint" (Weizman, 1989), a student may want to respond but does not have a ready answer, or a student may be unclear about what the teacher is looking for. In the case of constructing a sentence, a



pause can simultaneously act as a turn-taking mechanism and as the first pair-part of an adjacency pair. A pause acts as a turn-taking mechanism if the student recognizes that the teacher has given her the floor. The pause also acts as the first pair-part of an adjacency pair since the teacher expects a restricted range of answers for his fill-in-the-blank request.

### **Data and Methodology**

To examine requests in teacher-student writing conferences, four teachers teaching sections of the same course consented to have the first writing conference of the semester audio- and video-recorded with four to eleven of their students, who also consented. All four instructors (Emily Forest, Ken Leighton, Caitlin Meier, and Malcolm Reynolds) taught a section of the second semester Intermediate Writing course offered at an open enrollment university located in the United States' Intermountain West. Each volunteered for this study. Forest, Leighton, and Meier had been teaching writing for more than 20 years, but all had been teaching for at least 14 years and had used writing conferences as a feedback method for most of that time. Forest, Leighton, and Reynolds required their students to meet with them twice during the study semester while Meier met with her students four times. While Forest, Meier, and Reynolds scheduled their conferences for 15-20 minutes, Leighton scheduled 30-minute conferences. The conferences themselves lasted between 7 to 40 minutes with most falling in the 15- to 25-minute range. Each conference involved reviewing a draft version of the student's paper. In addition to the recorded conferences, students provided their rough drafts, notes from the conference about their papers, and their final drafts. All students and teachers in this study signed informed consent documents. Each was given a pseudonym for this study.

After the conference, both student and teacher participants met the researcher one at a time for a stimulated recall session where they individually watched the conference video and identified their own and the other participant's requests. Data analysis benefitted from matching teacher and student recalls of the same writing conference. The students who were chosen to complete stimulated recalls represented a range of language backgrounds, prior writing conference experience, and motivations for writing. Two of the teachers and their students completed their recall sessions within three days to one week of the conference. The other two teachers and their students met the researcher for the recalls two to four weeks after their conferences. In all but one case, both the student and the teacher completed a recall session of the same conference. Thus, the data for this chapter comes from fourteen writing conferences and twenty-seven recall sessions, representing approximately 30 hours of data. Places in the writing conference where the student, the teacher, or both identified requests during the recall session were selected for more in-depth analysis. Those sections were transcribed using Conversation Analysis protocols (see the transcription key in Appendix F).

In this chapter, I focus on sequences that involve the teacher using long pauses during scaffolding sequences. This chapter's findings are illustrated with three teacher-student dyads from the larger data set (see Table 5). Of the three students whose conferences are highlighted in this chapter, only Rachel Seymour, Meier's student, had had writing conferences prior to the study semester. For both Tonya Medina and Kimberly Saylor, Malcolm Reynold's and Caitlin Meier's students respectively, the first writing conference of the semester was their first experience with meeting with their teachers about a draft. Nevertheless, all three women had experience talking about

Table 5

*Teacher-Student Writing Conference Dyads Used to Illustrate Silence in Writing*

*Conferences*

Student	Teacher
Rachel Seymour	Caitlin Meier
Kimberly Saylor	Caitlin Meier
Tonya Medina	Malcolm Reynolds

*Note.* All names are pseudonyms.

writing either through peer review or writing center tutorials. Both Seymour and Saylor reported English as their only language while Medina reported Spanish as her first language and English as her second. While all three women were motivated to improve their writing as noted on their initial background surveys (see Appendix G), their confidence varied considerably. Medina had a high degree of confidence in her writing while Seymour noted average confidence and Saylor reported low confidence. Thus, both students' and teachers' backgrounds influenced aspects of the writing conference.

### **Analysis**

One of the questions for this study was, how do participants recognize and interpret each other's requests? In the following analysis, I examine ways in which both teachers and students use and react to silence. I explore how some silences act as turn-taking mechanisms (either to hold or yield the floor), how pauses or lapses act as requests under certain conditions, and how teachers and students recognize the differences among types of silence.



7 ((Medina makes an oval with her hands and on “focus” pushes them away from her, but her gaze remains on Reynold’s face.))

9 (.8)

10 MR<sup>(T)</sup>: It would be um (.7) like (.5) that’s the key example (.) from the movie.

11 TM<sup>(S)</sup>: okay.

12 MR<sup>(T)</sup>: => <That (.) um> (1.5) that um (.5) lets us know that this isn’t

13 (1.7)

14 TM<sup>(S)</sup>: The typic[al::=

15 MR<sup>(T)</sup>: =<Romance> movie, right/

16 TM<sup>(S)</sup>: okay.

The first long pause (line 9) occurs after Medina’s request for clarification (line 5). Since the utterance (line 5) itself acts as a request, the .8-second pause (line 9) confirms that Medina wants Reynolds to take the floor. Its length suggests that Reynolds needed time to create a suitable reply. Reynolds’ response (line 10) indicates that he understands the floor has passed to him. In addition to the pause before his response, Reynolds’ turn contains three pauses, two of which are significant in length at .7- and .5-seconds respectively. The first of these pauses (.7 seconds) is nearly as long the pause after Medina’s request on line 9. Medina, however, does not take the floor at either of these pauses. She likely reads Reynolds’ use of “um” before the first pause (.7 seconds) and “like” before the second pause (.5 seconds) as cues that Reynolds intends to continue his turn. Reynolds finishes his turn by characterizing the plot point that she summarized in the previous sequence (not presented in Excerpt 1) as “the key example from the movie” (line 10). According to Reynolds’ recall, using the word “example” builds on Medina’s use of “focus point,” in that the example is an illustration of the plot as a whole. Medina backchannels her acceptance of this point, allowing Reynolds to hold the floor (line 11). In his next turn, he begins to provide the rationale for this criterion, saying “[the

example] lets us know that this isn't" (line 12). However, he stops before providing that characterization, and a 1.7-second gap ensues. As with his turn at line 10, Reynolds' turn at line 12 is filled with repetition. Each "that um," the first part of the phrase, is followed by significant pauses, 1.5 and .5 seconds. While Medina does not attempt to complete or continue the sentence after the "ums," she does fill in the blank after "isn't" with "the typical," including elongating "typical" (line 14). Reynolds confirms that she is on the right track by immediately jumping in with "romance movie" (line 15). In his recall, Reynolds remarked that he and Medina marked their agreement on this point for her review by completing each other's sentences.

In much the same way that a discordant note in music sets up a resolution, the 1.7-second lapse after the verb "isn't" (lines 12-13) sets up a first pair-part because it sets up a grammatical need to finish the sentence. The sentence does not sound finished ending with the word "isn't" both because Reynolds' intonation suggests that he intended to continue the utterance and because the utterance has the form of a subject-verb-predicate noun or predicative adjective. The utterance's form suggests that a noun or an adjective that renames or describes "this," meaning "this movie," is required to complete the sentence-in-progress. Thus, the 1.7-second gap on line 13 acts like the fill-in-the-blank requests that Mehan (1979) noted in his analysis of classroom talk. Given that to this point Reynolds' has often used pauses to maintain the floor to verbalize his own ideas, it is unlikely that he intended for Medina to read the lapse on line 13 as a requestive Hint for her to complete the sentence. Nevertheless, by volunteering "the typical" Medina helps Reynolds finish the sentence, a common occurrence in everyday speech when the speaker struggles to complete his or her thought. In fact, neither Reynolds nor Medina

identified this particular silence as a request in their recall session, focusing on other requests around it. At the same time, the silence's length and the incomplete utterance prior to it contribute to the silence becoming a lapse. In fact, the existence of that moment of waiting at a critical juncture has much in common with the examples that follow. While the teacher did not create the lapse intentionally, it enabled the teacher and student to co-create material for the student's paper.

**When the student stops talking.** Students also use silence to ask teachers to fill in information. In Excerpt 2, Seymour uses the epistemic downgrade (I. Park, 2012b) "I didn't know really what to put <in between>" to ask for what she wants and the .5-second pause to select Caitlin Meier, her teacher, as the next speaker (line 12).

(2) Transition Needed

Seymour-Meier Conference

RS<sup>(S)</sup>: Rachel Seymour      CM<sup>(T)</sup>: Dr. Caitlin Meier

04:48

- 1 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: Do you think when you see this now again do you think we should have a
- 2 sentence going from this sentence into that sentence/
- 3 RS<sup>(S)</sup>: <Sure.>
- 4 I was having –cause I, I wrote this one first, because –
- 5 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: Yes. [Yes, right.]
- 6 RS<sup>(S)</sup>: [-Introduction and] conclusion are always my like –
- 7 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: oh.
- 8 RS<sup>(S)</sup>: My weird points –
- 9 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: okay.
- 10 RS<sup>(S)</sup>: For some reason.
- 11 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: okay.
- 12 RS<sup>(S)</sup>: => And I- I didn't know really what to put <in between> (.5),
- 13 so I just kind of was like=
- 14 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: =Do you remember the example [sentence] we had on the board/] (.)

15 RS<sup>(S)</sup>:

[(unclear)]

16 The in between sentence/ (.9)

This sequence is set up by Seymour's less-than-enthusiastic reply to Meier's request that Seymour include a transition sentence. Although Seymour responds "sure" (line 3), the drawn-out nature of her response suggests that she is not convinced that that is what should occur in her paper. After explaining why she wrote what she did (lines 4-10), she presents her concern, "I didn't know really what to put <in between>" (line 12). In this sense, this form conveying an epistemic downgrade, elongating "in between," and following it with a half-second pause combine to act as Seymour's request that Meier offer a way to create a transition sentence for this section of Seymour's paper.

The pause seems to act a turn-taking mechanism for several reasons. Even though it is relatively short, only a half-second, it is long enough to be noticeable. Also, Seymour's pause is shorter than Medina's as Seymour self-selects and continues her turn. Before she can finish, Meier interrupts to address Seymour's request with her own question (line 14). Meier's interruption suggests that she understood both Seymour's concern (line 12) and the pause that yielded the floor to her even though it took her a couple seconds to respond (seconds that were filled by Seymour's continued turn).

### **Pauses and Lapses as Requests**

In the next two examples, the teacher seems to use pausing as a "requestive Hint," (Weizman, 1989), but the students' respective uptakes of those hints vary. Meier is the teacher in both. In each, Meier uses the pause to request students' contribution in altering or providing wording needed to improve their drafts.



**Pause as request.** In Excerpt 3, Meier uses hints to convey the problem in Seymour's paper and to invite her to contribute solutions to that problem. This sequence occurs earlier in the same conference from which Excerpt 2 is drawn.

(3) Adding a qualifier

Seymour-Meier Conference

RS<sup>(S)</sup>: Rachel Seymour      CM<sup>(T)</sup>: Dr. Caitlin Meier

02:45

- 1 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: => Here's the pr- a small, small issue. (1.1 with intake of breath)
- 2        => Just shopping (.7) °in itself, °
- 3        => Just the internet in itself. (.7)
- 4 RS<sup>(S)</sup>:     okay.
- 5 CM<sup>(T)</sup>:     Just video games, or just say sex.
- 6        These are not (.) <addictions,>
- 7        Right/
- 8        They- they can just be hobbies.
- 9 RS<sup>(S)</sup>:     mm-hmm.
- 10       =>     (1.0)
- 11 RS<sup>(S)</sup>:     So excessive/
- 12 CM<sup>(T)</sup>:     <Ye:s.>

In this passage, Meier sets up the interaction by noting an issue with Seymour's paper by saying "Here's . . . a small issue" (line 1). As she reads the opening sentence of Seymour's draft, she pauses after each noun for nearly a second (lines 2-3). This pausing combined with the emphasis on "just," which does not appear in Seymour's draft, causes Seymour to direct her attention to this section of her paper, as illustrated in the video. In this sense, these short pauses for dramatic effect act as a request for Seymour to notice a concern in her paper. The repetition of the word "just" and the identical pause of .7 seconds has the desired effect. With the affirmative backchannel response "okay" (line

4), Seymour acknowledges that she has picked up the hint to notice the issue. Having succeeded in making her point with the pauses and strategic emphasis, Meier clarifies the issue—these actions as presented in the draft could “just be hobbies” (line 8). Seymour confirms that she understands and agrees with Meier’s point with the affirmative acknowledgement token “mm-hmm” (line 9). Rather than continuing her turn after Seymour’s acknowledgement token, Meier waits (line 10). The full second when both are quiet shifts the request for the next speaker back to Seymour and acts as an invitation for Seymour to consider alternate wording for this section. The pause ends when Seymour contributes “excessive” with rising intonation (line 11). Meier’s emphatic elongated “yes” (line 12) immediately confirms that this answer works.

As Excerpt 3 illustrates, these pauses, in part because of the utterances that precede them, act as requestive Hints for the student to recognize an issue with her paper and to contribute changes to it. While some may argue that the utterances before the pauses are the actual requests, it is hard to imagine this passage being as effective without the pauses. Certainly, Meier’s utterance “Here’s a . . . small issue” (line 1) lets Seymour know that they are going to work on a specific aspect of her paper and sets up the need to notice the issue. Yet the pausing functions to identify precisely where the issue is located. In contrast, an utterance setting up the purpose of the sequence is not present in Excerpt 1. In setting up the interaction in this way, Meier conveys a concern with Seymour’s paper, rather than simply identifying the problem. Meier uses the pauses at the beginning of this sequence (lines 2-3) to hint at the issue that she has already identified, but the student has not. Later in the sequence, the pause (line 10) acts both as a turn-taking mechanism for Meier to select Seymour as the next speaker and as a requestive Hint

allowing Seymour to help address that issue. Together, both sets of pauses act as an invitation for Seymour to contribute to changing her paper. The length of the pause, which is longer than expected in a typical everyday conversation, allows Seymour time to contribute an appropriate word, demonstrating Seymour's knowledge of her own paper and her alignment with Meier's purposes for the introduction of this assignment.

**Lapse as request.** In this final example, Excerpt 4, the pauses are both more frequent and longer than the previous example (Excerpt 3). In part, this difference from the prior example stems from the length of the additional wording that Saylor and Meier are creating (writing an entire sentence rather than finding an additional word) and to the miscommunication between Saylor and Meier about who should construct the sentence. This sequence occurs about midway through Saylor's writing conference with Meier. Prior to this point, Meier has informed Saylor that she is missing a topic sentence. Excerpt 4 begins with Meier identifying the last sentence of the paragraph that they just skimmed together as Saylor's point (line 4). Meier sets up the sentence-writing sequence on line 5, "So let's- we'll write the first one together." The sentence-writing itself begins on line 20.

#### (4) Creating a topic sentence

Saylor-Meier Conference

KS<sup>(S)</sup>: Kimberly Saylor (student)      CM<sup>(T)</sup>: Dr. Caitlin Meier (teacher)

9:37

- 1 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: >°"This kind of drastic measure works for most people, though
- 2                    unfortunately it doesn't work for all."°<
- 3                    So this is it.
- 4                    This is our point. (.4)
- 5                    So let's- we'll write the first one together.
- 6                    Every paragraph is gonna (going to) need.

7 KS<sup>(S)</sup>: Is gonna (going to) need.

8 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: But this is how I'm going to suggest you do it.

9 KS<sup>(S)</sup>: okay.

10 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: So here's our point. (.9)

11 ((At "here" Meier points to wording that she just underlined on page 2.))

12 So we are going to say

13 and my suggestion is just to get over

14 "oh my God" how am I going to start this/

15 ((Meier writes at the bottom of page 1—near where this topic sentence

16 will need to be placed.))

17 KS<sup>(S)</sup>: yeah.

18 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: => One really quick way is to say this.

19 => "One (.5) important (2.1) point (2.4) Gawande (.7) makes,"

20 (2.0)

21 ((Meier writes. After writing "makes," Meier quickly glances at Saylor.))

22 See/ (.5)

23 ((Saylor nods.))

24 "is (.) that (5.7)

25 ((Meier scratches her nose during the pause after "that" and then writes

26 "successful."))

27 successful (1.9) weight loss

28 (3.8)

29 ((Meier stops writing, briefly, and glances at Saylor. Saylor is looking

30 at the paper and does not seem to notice. Saylor nods.))

31 is a result (1.6) of

32 => (3.6)

33 changing" (.) what/

34 ((At "what/" Meier slides the draft toward Saylor))

35 (1.4)

36 KS<sup>(S)</sup>: => Changing your (.4).

37 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: Changing one's (.6).

38 KS<sup>(S)</sup>: => °changing your° whole [(*language*).

39 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: [Yeah,]  
40 See/  
41 <“Changing one’s”>, “changing” (.) tsk (1.4)  
42 ((Meier writes.))  
43 KS<sup>(S)</sup>: °One’s.° (.5)  
44 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: => Here, how about this/  
45 => “changing physical (3.5) and [mental”  
46 ((After saying “mental” Meier glances at Saylor, still reading the draft.))  
47 KS<sup>(S)</sup>: [Mental], Yeah.  
48 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: => uh, what/ (.)  
49 ((Meier looks at Saylor.))  
50 “changing physical and <mental>”  
51 KS<sup>(S)</sup>: => Um (2.0)  
52 ((Saylor looks into the air.))  
53 I wouldn’t want to say “habits,” but (.5)  
54 ((Saylor looks into the air.))  
55 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: “Physical and [mental] habits,”=  
56 KS<sup>(S)</sup>: [mental]  
57 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: =exactly,  
58 yeah, but uh (.) let’s see.  
59 => “ As a result of changing physical and mental (.5) <factors>”/(.5)  
60 ((On “factors,” Meier looks at Saylor.))  
61 as[pects.”]  
62 KS<sup>(S)</sup>: => [Yeah, as]pects.  
63 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: [okay]  
64 KS<sup>(S)</sup>: [I like aspects.] (.5)  
65 ((Saylor looks at Meier.))  
66 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: “Aspects (.) changing physical and mental aspects.”  
67 ((Meier writes “aspects” and points to the words as she repeats them.))  
68 (2.5)  
69 ((Meier rereads the sentence during the pause.))

70           That is a good start.  
 71           ((Saylor nods her head.))  
 72 KS<sup>(S)</sup>:           [okay.]  
 73 CM<sup>(T)</sup>:           “One important [point] Gawande makes is that successful weight loss is a  
 74           result of changing physical and mental [aspects.”]  
 75 KS<sup>(S)</sup>:           [°aspects°]  
 76           ((Meier reads the sentence that she just wrote, pointing with her pen as  
 77           she reads. She jabs at the words “physical,” “mental,” and “aspects” as  
 78           she reads them. Saylor looks at the draft, following the sentence with  
 79           her eyes as Meier reads it.))

Excerpt 4 is the longest sentence-building sequence in this study. It contains several pauses at key junctures, starting at line 19. The 2.1- and 2.4-second pauses after “important” and “point” (line 19) are significant but do not seem intended as requestive Hints for the following reasons: 1) Meier is completely focused on writing the opening to the sentence. This is consistent with her turn just prior to writing where she offers a way to “start” with “one quick way is to say this” (line 18). She then writes the opening part of the sentence using phrasing consistent with Graff and Birkenstein’s (2010) *They Say/I Say* templates, “One important point Gawande makes” (line 19).

After writing the first five words of the sentence, Meier signals her interest in Saylor contributing to the sentence. First, after saying “makes” (line 19), she simultaneously pauses for 2 seconds (line 20) and glances at Saylor (line 21). Ten Have (2007) notes that such pauses can act as a “phrasal break” (p. 167) that influences the listener to look at the speaker. That does not occur in this case. Meier then follows her glance with an overt comprehension request, “See/” (line 22). Again, this utterance does not produce the results that Meier wants since Saylor nods but does not yet jump in (line

23). What is Saylor agreeing with when she nods? If she understands Meier's pause as a request, why is she not adding to the sentence?

Meier continues writing. After writing "successful" and "weight loss" (line 27), Meier pauses writing and glances at Saylor (lines 29-30). Saylor either does not notice or ignores these attempts to catch her attention. Thus, Meier ends up writing nine more words (lines 24-33) each accompanied with significant silences including a 3.8-second pause after "weight loss" (line 28) and a 3.6-pause after "of" (line 32) after she initially signals that she wants Saylor to contribute (line 20).

As Meier nears the end of the sentence, her utterances signal more insistence that Saylor help flesh out the sentence. Meier writes the next word "changing" (line 33), both adding "what/" and sliding the draft toward Saylor as more overt prompts. The 1.4-second silence at line 35 confirms that Meier wants Saylor's input. Saylor immediately contributes language at her next turn (line 36). The interaction continues to have a fill-in-the-blank vibe, but rather than continuing to hint with the pauses, Meier's use of "what/" acts as a more direct request for Saylor to fill in the next word.

At the same time, a couple of factors prevented Saylor herself from responding during this section as Meier intended, according to Saylor's recall. First, during the long pauses at lines 24-32, Saylor was focused on Meier's writing. In fact, Saylor noted during her recall that the pauses correlated with the times that Meier was writing. At the beginning of the sequence, the video corroborates Saylor's impression: Meier's pauses co-occur with her writing each word, one word per pause: "One (.5) important (2.1) point (2.4) Gawande (.7) makes" (line 19). After this point, however, Meier's hand briefly stops moving before she starts write the next word. At these moments, Meier glances in

Saylor's direction after saying "makes" (line 19), "weight loss" (line 28-30), and "of" (line 32). These glances, combined with the pause in both her speech and her writing, clearly suggest that Meier wanted Saylor to start contributing to building the sentence. Saylor, however, did not notice these glances as her gaze was entirely on the draft and what Meier was writing or had written.

Saylor's lack of uptake causes Meier to more directly request Saylor's involvement by Meier suggesting the word "changing" with rising intonation followed by a brief pause less than .4 seconds and "what" in a questioning tone (line 33). A 1.4-second gap ensues (line 35). In her recall session, Saylor said that at that moment she remembered "wanting to be able to say something. I just had no idea, like, where she [Meier] was going with it." Saylor's uncertainty about how to proceed is evident in her response. Rather than adding much new language to the sentence, she repeats the word "changing" and offers "your" as the next word (line 36). The brief pause after Saylor finishes suggests she was waiting for Meier to take a turn while, at the same time, Meier was waiting for Saylor to continue. When an additional word is not forthcoming, Meier uses her turn to correct Saylor's phrase by changing "your" to "one's" (line 37), reflecting an earlier sequence where Meier had noted that Saylor was using *you* too much in her paper. Again, Meier waits for .6 seconds to allow Saylor time to come up with the next word or phrase. In offering "changing your whole (language)" in an undertone (line 38), Saylor does take her turn to speak. But, focused on providing the next idea in her paper, she either did not notice Meier's correction at the previous turn or was too focused on providing the next word to deal with that correction at this point.



In fact, sentence production stalls for several turns. Meier and Saylor repeat the word “changing” for a total of four turns (lines 36-41) before Meier adjusts the phrase from “changing one’s” (line 41) to “changing physical (3.5) and mental” (line 45). As the sentence nears completion, Meier again indicates that she wants Saylor’s contribution, specifically a noun to complete the phrase from line 45, by saying, “uh, what/ (.)” followed by a brief pause (line 48) and repeating the phrase “physical and mental aspects” (line 50).

Saylor picks up the turn almost immediately with “um” (line 51) which both acknowledges that she knows that Meier expects her to contribute wording while also giving her time to think of an appropriate word. Consistent with her willingness to wait at other points during this sequence, Meier acknowledges Saylor’s control of the floor by allowing the pause to continue without filling in.

The pause works. By offering “I wouldn’t want to say ‘habits’” followed by a .5 second pause after “but” (line 53), Saylor shows both that she knows that a noun needs to come in that place and her uncertainty about what that noun should be. In this sense, her pause selects Meier as the next speaker who quickly picks up the turn by adding Saylor’s word “habits” to the phrase “physical and mental” (line 55). Meier continues her turn by asking for time to think with “yeah, but uh (.) let’s see” (line 58). These filled pauses are reminiscent of Reynolds’ filled pauses in Excerpt 1. Meier then repeats the phrase to this point “as a result of changing physical and <mental>” followed by a brief pause (.5) to offer “factors/” (line 59). As she questions “factors” as the appropriate word, she glances at Saylor (line 60). Seeing no uptake, Meier offers “aspects” (line 61). Before Meier can finish the word, Saylor interrupts, taking the floor with “yeah” and repeating “aspects”

(line 62). Meier repeats the end of the sentence (line 66). A 2.5-second silence ensues as she re-reads the sentence, before evaluating it, “That’s a good start” (line 70).

That Meier wanted Saylor to contribute seems clear in the way that she combines pausing with other requests such as “see/” and “what/” that signal the fill-in-the-blank nature of the interaction more overtly. The overt request “So let’s- we’ll write the first one together” (line 5), accompanied with extended pauses throughout the sequence together, functions as a method for allowing Saylor to contribute to addressing issues in her paper. The pauses are longer than in typical turn-taking situations because like other teaching situations, Saylor needs time to develop a response. The wording does not already exist—it has to be created on the spot. That process takes time. Meier acknowledges that pressure by waiting a significant amount of time before she adds wording or redirects the student’s attention.

Understanding why students do not fill in the blank at all or as quickly as expected speaks to the importance of the stimulated recall sessions. I specifically asked Saylor about the pauses in this sequence during her recall session. According to her recall, Saylor recognized that she and Meier were writing the topic sentence together. However, Saylor said that she felt that either of them could contribute, that the pauses were not just intended for her (Saylor) to jump in. Mehan’s (1979) description of classroom interactions provides a partial explanation. He noted that a “teacher [can] receive[. . .] answers when she had not asked what would conventionally be called questions” (p. 42). His example exactly parallels what occurs in Saylor and Meier’s conference: the teacher begins a sentence and pauses for the students to finish it. Mehan’s (1979) explanation confirms why Saylor would recognize the pause as a fill-in-the-blank,

a turn-taking mechanism where either person can select to fill in the next word. Saylor noted in her recall that she recognized the pauses as opportunities to fill in. However, she did not read them as a request for *her* specifically to fill in.

Another significant aspect of this sequence is how the glances coordinate with the pauses. Since Saylor was focused on her paper and the words that Meier was writing, Saylor did not notice Meier glancing at her during the pauses, particularly the long pauses at the beginning of the sentence (lines 20-32). Some of these pauses stretch to nearly four seconds long (the pauses after “weight loss” and “of” on lines 28 and 32, respectively). Missing those glances also meant that Saylor missed part of her cue to contribute. Had she recognized the glances, she might have recognized that Meier was giving her a non-verbal cue, through her eye gaze, that it was her turn to jump in. As demonstrated in Seymour’s conferences (Excerpts 2 and 3), even a half-second pause can be long enough for the listener to recognize that the speaker’s prior utterance was intended as a request.

Saylor was focused on a different non-verbal cue, however: Meier’s writing the sentence. According to Saylor, Meier paused long enough to write the word that she had just said. She then immediately provided another word. In Saylor’s view, according to her recall, she could have jumped in with a word of her own, but she viewed Meier’s writing as an indication that Meier was basically constructing the sentence as an example for Saylor. If Saylor contributed, great; if not, that worked, too. Thus, the construction of this sentence doesn’t have the same collaborative feel as Excerpt 3 because Saylor’s uptake is a little slower and because Meier ends up writing most of the sentence. This is not to say that the sequence is unsuccessful. The pauses continue throughout the entire sequence suggesting that Meier intentionally created lapses that she hoped Saylor would fill.

In contrast to Saylor's recall, when reviewing the conference during Meier's recall, both Meier and I saw this sequence, particularly starting at line 18, as a request. Saylor did not perceive the sequence as a request. What could be the reason for this disconnect? Meier's wording that launches into this sequence might have subverted her intention for Saylor to co-create this topic sentence with her. Meier starts this sequence saying, "my suggestion is" (line 13) and "one really quick way is to say this" (line 18). Those phrases suggest that Meier intended to write all or part of the topic sentence for Saylor. Meier's pausing without the glances on line 19 suggests that, true to what she said, she was providing a way for Saylor to begin. After that, Meier began glancing at Saylor with the pauses, suggesting that Meier wanted Saylor's help in supplying the wording. This interpretation is consistent with how Meier began the sequence "we'll write the first one together" (line 5). The declarative sentences (lines 13 and 18) that came later were more explicit and more recent in Saylor's memory, however, and, thus, potentially sent a stronger signal than the pausing did. According to Saylor, the pausing seemed to function as a way for Meier to gather her thoughts. That interpretation would be consistent with the wording that Meier used once the actual writing commenced, even though Meier's intention from both the beginning of the sequence and as recalled later was to have Saylor co-create the wording with her.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have analyzed silences during writing conference sequences. In doing so, I have shown that, while silence is a typical conversational pattern and turn-taking mechanism, it also assumes the function of a request under certain conditions. Specifically, pauses tend to function as requestive Hints when the teacher and student co-

create content (Excerpts 3 and 4). The teacher sets up that intention with a declarative statement that frames the following sequence: “So . . . we’ll write the first one together” (Excerpt 4, line 5) or “here’s . . . a small, small issue” (Excerpt 3, line 1). When that scaffolding aspect of teaching is not overt (Excerpts 1 and 2), however, pausing tends to revert to its usual function of speaker-selecting-next-speaker. As Spivey (1997) noted,

Organization of [a] social product [such as a writing conference] is often conceived in terms of participation structures, which are patterns of speaking and listening that are, to some extent, idiosyncratic to the immediate group (with rules collaboratively constructed by the group) but are also influenced by larger society. (p. 90).

In this sense, the pause echoes the fill-in-the-blank pattern that Mehan (1979) noted in his study, but the pattern itself exists in everyday conversation. Thus, hinting patterns exist in other contexts, suggesting that students and teachers recognize and employ them in writing conferences.

If the pause does, in fact, function as a “requestive Hint” (Weizman, 1989), it sometimes turns into a lapse, to use Sacks et al.’s (1974) term. This happens when the pause continues for too long. In this case, the teacher may self-select and continue speaking by either providing the next word or by making a more overt request for the student to contribute. It is in these cases of repair where the pause’s function as a request becomes clear. If a student does not fill the blank, so to speak, the teacher may follow up with a question: such as “see/” (similar to Excerpt 4, line 22 and 40). Again, a pause would ensue. In their analysis of writing center tutorials, Mackiewicz and Thompson (2015) found limited instances of tutors using hinting as a strategy. They acknowledged

that the nature of their analysis (employing coding and lacking contextual information) made hinting difficult to determine. Nevertheless, their results suggest that requestive Hints occur during writing tutorials, albeit infrequently. Conversation analysis allows for the fine-grained analysis that reveals the features of such hinting. The stimulated recalls provide context.

As a pattern “idiosyncratic to the group,” Meier, according to her recalls, consciously employed the fill-in-the-blank pattern as a tool. Yet even with her own students, this pausing pattern exhibits subtle differences because Meier interacted with different students. In essence, she used pauses as requestive Hints, and at times, she intentionally created lapses. In fact, each dyad created minor variations in the pattern to make it work for them. The pauses in Seymour and Meier’s content-building sequence (Excerpt 3) are shorter because Seymour, who had had more experience with writing conferences, picked up on the hints for Seymour to contribute more quickly. On the other hand, the pauses in Saylor’s conference during these content-creating episodes were noticeably longer than those in Seymour’s. Even though Saylor, who was relatively new to conferencing, recognized the pauses in Excerpt 4 as an invitation to co-create the sentence, she misread her teacher’s intention for Saylor to provide more content. In both cases, content was created with the students’ input. I argue, then, that Meier’s pattern accomplished its purposes because she adapted how she employed it with different students to elicit their engagement.

At the same time, a conversational analysis of this data shows that this pattern does not appear in many of the other conferences and certainly not as extensively as it does in Excerpt 4. For example, while Medina and Reynolds identified some utterances

as requests in Excerpt 1, neither identified the pauses themselves as significant. In fact, in this study, only Meier identified the pauses in her conferences as requests. Her three students who did recall also identified the pauses as significant, although they were not always sure what Meier wanted them to do after the pause. In fact, the examples presented here are a small sample of many similar sequences that occurred in Meier's conferences with her students. Thus, even when the students were not sure what to add or who should do the adding, they seemed to understand that the pause acted as a hint for filling a blank. This agreement suggests that the co-creative aspect of the interactions was a significant aspect as to why pauses functioned as overt requests in those sequences and not in others.

Another key reason for this difference in recognizing the pauses' significance between Meier's conferences (Excerpts 3 and 4) and Reynold's conference with Medina (Excerpt 1) are the utterances that precede the pauses. Even though the pauses in Excerpt 1 are generally the same length as the pauses in Excerpts 3 and 4, the pauses in Excerpt 1 are not preceded by an utterance that marks the segment as collaborative. For example, Meier began the sequence in Excerpt 4 with the statement, "We'll write the first one together" (Excerpt 4, line 5), that both Saylor and Meier identified as a request. On the other hand, the frequent repetition of words, including placeholders such as "um," suggests that Reynolds was trying to figure out his point rather than trying to co-create an answer with Medina. Such patterns are common in everyday conversations, so no judgment is attached to this evaluation. The fact that Medina jumps in with "typical" as soon as she catches the thread of Reynolds' point allows him to reach his main point of

identifying the type of movie that Medina has watched as a “romance.” In this sense, the fill-in-the-blank pattern exists but more as a conversational move than a teaching one.

As this chapter has illustrated, when pauses act as requests in writing conferences, they can serve as a scaffolding tool because of their function as requestive Hints. Pauses are significant in a writing conference interaction because the silence marked by the pause allows both the student and the teacher to think of material to add to the draft that they are modifying. The wording prior to the pause is also significant because it provides the cues that the student needs to fill in appropriate wording. However, without a period of silence, the student would not be able to process and fulfill the request. And in fact, the student may not recognize the prior utterance as more than a rhetorical question. Thus, pauses become a way for the teacher to continue to use a scaffolding approach, act as a guide for the student writer to create content that meets the teacher’s criteria for the writing assignment, and allow the teacher and student to co-create the material. While the final sentence may largely be produced by the teacher (as in Excerpt 4), the teacher’s act of pausing seems to convey to the student that they are co-creating, leading to language that is more likely to end up in the final version of the paper.

In this chapter, I discussed how pausing in teacher-student writing conferences can have at least two functions: pausing as a turn-taking mechanism and pausing as a request to fill in the blank. A pause can adopt a requestive function when it co-occurs with other request forms. In those situations, however, those other request forms do not seem as salient to the participants as the silences are. Thus, the pause as an integral component of the first pair-part seems to compel a response. In much the same way as an absence of the second pair-part of a question-answer sequence is marked, a lengthy



pause, long enough to become a lapse, is also marked. These examples illustrate that the mere presence of a pause, however, does not convey a requestive function. Sometimes, the pause acts to signal the next speaker's turn, and only that function. Yet, in those cases when the teacher intends the pause to be read as a request, the teacher tends follow a pause that the student does not fill with a more direct request form such as a comprehension request: "see/ (Excerpt 4, line 22) or "what/" (Excerpt 4, line 33). Understood in this way, pausing is as integral to a scaffolded approach as the content that the teacher and student discuss.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### BUILDING A SENTENCE: AN EXAMPLE OF EXTENDED REQUESTING

Chapter 5 examines the extent to which extended requesting, found in one institutional context (airline reservations), can apply to a different institutional context (writing conferences). Because it extends the conversation with S.-H. Lee's (2009) article that sets out the concept of extended requesting, this chapter is written with the intention of submission, after revisions are made, to a scholarly journal. It offers implications for teaching and learning that arise from the presence or absence of extended requests.

#### **Introduction**

Chapter 4 determined that a key condition for pauses to act as requests occurs when a teacher and student co-construct material for the student's draft. Chapter 5 zooms out from the pauses as the focus of the analysis to their role in the interactional patterns that teachers employ to engage students in their revising processes. In this chapter, I examine topical sequences in writing conferences to determine the extent to which S.-H. Lee's (2009) extended request pattern occurs in teacher-student writing conferences, an educational institutional context. S.-H. Lee's analysis of interactions between customers and ticket agents showed that extended requesting is a pattern within institutional settings. This chapter shows that extended requests occur within writing conferences when the teacher and the student jointly create or revise a sentence.

This chapter analyzes the differences in how requests function in extended request sequences and topical sequences, two interactional patterns in which pauses appear.

Specifically, this chapter explores the following questions:

- How do extended requests differ from topical sequences in writing conference situations?
- What features do extended requests have in writing conference situations?
- How often do extended requests occur in writing conferences?

The answers to these questions have implications for how teaching and learning occur during writing conferences. While both sequences commence with participants' co-constructing material, they differ in students' engagement levels and the way pauses function within the sequence. Furthermore, if extended requests occur frequently, we can be confident that students are co-constructing material for their papers and developing writing skills that will aid future revision. If extended requests occur infrequently, either additional patterns are being used to save time for extended requests or students are not receiving enough scaffolded instruction to be able to revise effectively on their own.

Specifically, pauses tend to act as requests in longer sequences that fulfill a teacher's request to write a sentence piece by piece over a series of interactions. S.-H. Lee (2009) called this pattern "extended requesting." Examining teachers' and students' participation patterns suggests that teachers set up and maintain extended requests to encourage students' input in their papers' revisions, whether students contribute actively or reluctantly. Thus, extended requests that emerge during writing conferences are one method that teachers use to scaffold instruction during the writing conference. Topical sequences (Heritage, 2004; ten Have, 2007) are similar to extended requests in that participants focus on a single section and topic area within the student's text. Topical sequences differ from extended requests in that the student provides less input and observes the content-creating process more than actively engaging in it.

To illustrate how and when the extended request pattern appears in writing conferences, this chapter proceeds as follows. I first review the concept of extended requesting in more detail. Then I show how developing content is a form of extended requesting in writing conference situations. Building on both the previous chapter and S.-H. Lee's (2009) work, I show how pauses and lapses contribute to extended request sequences in writing conferences. I contrast examples of extended requesting in writing conferences with those that do not follow the pattern. I conclude by showing that the differences between extended requests in writing conferences and other institutional contexts (S.-H. Lee, 2009) provide a lens for determining whether scaffolded learning is occurring during a teacher-student writing conference.

### **Literature Review**

Writing conferences are designed to engage students in talking about and revising their work. Despite their benefit to both students and teachers as a friendly, low-stakes interaction, writing conferences are an institutional interaction with rules blended from everyday conversation (Black, 1998; Sacks et al., 1974) and classroom discourse (Jacobs & Karliner, 1977; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). Drew and Heritage (1992a) have noted the importance of studying the sequential organization of institutional contexts to understand how participants orient to their official nature. Examining the ways participants orient sequentially to this blend of discourse conventions offers a way to understand the interactional work done within writing conferences, student' involvement in that work, and its impact on their learning.

In educational settings, requests are a crucial part of most talk-about-writing situations, and studying requests offers a way to examine the interactional work of

writing conferences and gain insight into the type of learning that occurs during these situations. For instance, I. Park (2015) noted that the ways that students make requests during writing center tutorials establish their authority over their texts and their knowledge. That, in turn, leads to general (low-epistemic) or specific (high-entitlement) requests for help in their papers. I. Park (2015) also noted that requests can set up sequences. While not referencing S.-H. Lee's (2009) work, I. Park's (2015) analysis suggests that exploring longer sequences in talk-about-writing contexts is valuable because doing so helps determine the relationship between start of the sequence and its development.

While typically based on the traditional two-part adjacency pair, extended requests diverge from it. Based on Schegloff and Sacks's (1973) research on sequences, a request and its response are usually considered as an adjacency pair: the request is made with one participant's turn (the first pair-part of an adjacency pair) and is granted or rejected by the other participant (the second pair-part) (Curl & Drew, 2008; Drew & Heritage, 1992a; Goodwin & Heritage, 1990; S.-H. Lee, 2009; ten Have, 2007). S.-H. Lee (2009) argued that a two-part adjacency pair sequence did not fully explain the pattern for a common institutional encounter: making a flight reservation. Instead, an airline reservation requires a longer pattern. Specifically, S.-H. Lee (2009) identifies five features common to the extended request sequences occurring in airline reservations:

First, the action of requesting is extended over several sequences that specify a request. It is constructed and completed as the components of a request are specified piece by piece over several sequences. Second, because it is extended over sequences, the action of requesting is collaboratively constructed by the

parties. Third, the content of a request is also a joint construction between the parties. What the request amounts to is an outcome achieved by bringing what the requester wants into an agreement with what the recipient can grant. Fourth, the action of requesting can proceed in alternative ways of being customer-directed or agent-directed. Finally, development of the action of requesting is constrained by a particular order in which a particular component is processed in the course of specification. (p. 1258)

Excerpt 1 of an interaction between a customer and an agent making an airline reservation provides an example of how extended requesting functions.

(1) KA 103 (S.-H. Lee, 2009, p. 1254)

- 1 C: Yes: uh I'd like to make a reservationç
- 2 A: => .hh Yes when and where do you go [:
- 3 C: [Yes Pusan:
- 4 (.)
- 5 C: On the seventhç
- 6 (0.4)
- 7 A: => On October seventh departing from: Seoul to Pusan?
- 8 C: No. From Cheju to Pusan:
- 9 (6.0) ((keyboard sounds))
- 10 A: => Yes around what time would you want:?
- 11 C: => Yes about after three o'clock.
- 12 A: => .hh Three thirty five: five forty: (we have thes[e h
- 13 C: => [Oh: yes
- 14 please make a reservation for three thirty five [:
- 15 A: [How many
- 16 people is this: [:
- 17 [One person:

Each feature that S.-H. Lee (2009) described occurs in this example from S.-H. Lee's data, as described below. As is typical of extended requests, this excerpt begins with a gloss of what the speaker wants, "I'd like to make a reservation" (line 1). This request sets the sequence in motion. As the sequence continues, the request for the actual reservation is built turn by turn as the reservation agent asks for details and the customer provides them, S.-H. Lee's first and third features, respectively. The sequence of making a reservation is built on discovering the key information so that the reservation can be made: the cities of departure and arrival, the date of departure, the time of day for the flight, and the number of passengers. Throughout the sequence, the customer and the agent jointly work to fulfill the customer's request in terms of requestive patterns. Collaboration, a core component of S.-H. Lee's second and third features, occurs through request forms, such as questions, as well as the content each person contributes. For instance, lines 2, 7, and 10-13 identify key information needed to complete the request. Lines 7 and 10, in particular, include questions that move the interaction along. S.-H. Lee (2009) specifically highlights the sequence from lines 10-12 regarding when the flight leaves as an instance of co-creation. As S.-H. Lee explained, while the customer knew the departure and arrival airports (see line 8), he or she did not know the particulars about flight times to request a specific reservation.

The precise details of the location, the day, the time of the flight, and the number of passengers are completed sequentially so that either the agent or the customer can take the lead in asking for that information, S.-H. Lee's fourth feature. This particular order demonstrates S.-H. Lee's fifth feature, which is that the sequence follows a pre-determined order. The request fulfillment is standardized since the agent cannot record

the number of passengers until she or he knows the location and the date of travel. If the customer tries to provide information out of order, the agent redirects the customer's attention to the next needed piece of information in order to complete the request. Thus, an extended request is enacted through the combination of the requestive utterances, the content that fulfills the request, and the order in which the sequence occurs. By the end of the sequence, the customer has a reservation to go from Seoul to Pusan at 3:35 on October 7: the complete request.

In arguing for an extended request sequence, S.-H. Lee (2009) also argued that the flight reservation sequences did not match pre-request sequences or interrupting sequences. Pre-requests are designed to determine whether the conditions necessary for a request to occur exist. If so, as determined by the listener's go-ahead response, the speaker proceeds with the request. Excerpt 2 below, from this study's data, provides an example of a pre-request sequence where the condition is met.

(2) Looked at comments?

EF<sup>(T)</sup>: Emily Forest (teacher)      PH<sup>(S)</sup>: Peter Hale (student)

00:10

- 1 EF<sup>(T)</sup>:            Holy smokes, ninety-three and a half.
- 2                    You did awesome. (2.0)
- 3                    I'm going to put 2:15 for J-----'s okay.
- 4 PH<sup>(S)</sup>:            okay.
- 5 EF<sup>(T)</sup>:    =>    [Did you have] a chance to look at the comments/  
6                    [[[Forest and Hale look at Forest's laptop screen.]]]  
7                    [[[Sound of door closing in the hallway.]]]
- 8 PH<sup>(S)</sup>:    =>    I did. (1.0)
- 9 EF<sup>(T)</sup>:    =>    Any questions on the comments/ (3.0)
- 10 PH<sup>(S)</sup>:        Um, no.





The topical chain begins with Kelli's statement (line 1): "Something that's been super hard for me is taking the person out of it." Leighton responds to this request, providing information on why it is important and the general concept for 20 lines. Kelli repeats her concern on line 23. Leighton starts a completely new topic chain, however, by praising Kelli's performance on a quiz (line 26). In this case, the interruption precedes Leighton's continued response to Kelli's request for help with the point of view in her paper. In contrast to both pre-sequences and interrupting sequences, the additional turns in extended requests neither establish the conditions necessary for fulfilling a request nor interrupt its fulfillment; rather, those turns do the work of fulfilling the request.

The pattern of extended requesting also occurs in teacher-student writing conferences. S.-H. Lee's (2009) explanation of how extended requests are created and maintained has strong parallels to the patterns that students and teachers use to co-create a sentence. In fact, the correlation of S.-H. Lee's five features confirms that this pattern exists in more than one type of institutional encounter. Moreover, since collaboration is a core aspect of extended requesting, according to S.-H. Lee, and since teacher-student writing conferences are intended to be collaborative interactions, it would be logical to assume that extended requests occur frequently in writing conferences. Yet they do not. The following analysis section demonstrates features of the extended request pattern in two writing conference interactions. The section continues by demonstrating that while components of extended requests exist in topical sequences in writing conference, key components of the extended request pattern are missing, preventing some meant-to-be collaborative sequences from rising to the level of an extended request. In the discussion section, I argue that these findings have implications for teaching and learning writing.

## **Data and Methodology**

Data for this study comes from audio- and video-recorded writing conferences from students enrolled in four sections of Intermediate Writing at an open-enrollment university in the Intermountain West. Three students from each class completed additional data collection including providing their rough drafts and their final drafts and completing a stimulated recall. In the stimulated recall, the students and their teachers met with me separately to watch the video-recorded writing conference. They were instructed to stop whenever they noticed a request by either party in the writing conference. Places where the teacher, the student, or both identified a request along with the topic sequence in which the request was located were transcribed using Conversation Analysis protocols (see Appendix F for the Transcription Key). In this chapter, I focus on sequences that involve the teacher, the student, or both creating a new sentence for or modifying an existing sentence in the student's paper.

### **Analysis**

Broadly speaking, extended requests are topical sequences because they deal with the same topic over several turns. Analysis involved comparing each turn in sentence-creating or -building topical sequences to S.-H. Lee's five characteristics of extended requests. As various topical sequences were recategorized as extended requests, I further explored how silence and other request forms functioned within the extended request pattern.

Unlike a flight reservation which requires an extended request pattern for the institutional work to be done (S.-H. Lee, 2009), extended requests are one of several patterns that teachers and students employ during teacher-student writing conferences.

Thus, while extended requests occur, they occur much less frequently in this data than in S.-H. Lee's. Moreover, this section reviews how various request forms, including pausing, function to create an extended request sequence. These sequences perform the educational function of both scaffolding instruction and engaging the student in learning during a writing conference. Since not all requests results in extended request sequences, however, this section begins with two examples illustrating how the extended request pattern occurs during writing conferences. The second section evaluates two examples that have some features of extended requests but do not fully employ the pattern.

### **Extended Requests**

The action of writing an entire sentence or adding to it requires connecting it to ideas presented earlier in the paper and those that came later. Students do not always know how to create these transitions nor do they understand, at times, how to convey the main point of their paragraph succinctly. In the following sequences, the teacher engages the student in creating these transitions by using extended request sequences that actively solicit the student's input in adding content to the student's draft. Despite the teacher's efforts to engage her students, students can choose whether to engage actively or reluctantly. The following sections examine how an extended request differs depending on the students' relative level of engagement.

**Active engagement.** The following sequence (Excerpt 4) illustrates how a teacher can engage a student in the process of creating material for her revised draft. The sequence involves Caitlin Meier and Rachel Seymour adding material to Seymour's topic sentence.

(4) Fat Paradox

RS<sup>(S)</sup>: Rachel Seymour (student)      CM<sup>(T)</sup>: Dr. Caitlin Meier (teacher)

G=gloss      R=request      C=completed request

11:05

- 1 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: I think you notice something at the end,  
2 R=> what's the phenomenon again/  
3 What were you saying at the-  
4 RS<sup>(S)</sup>: The fat paradox  
5 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: R=> And, (.7) what is that (.) <do>,  
6 ((Meier air-circles a section on the third page then looks at S1.))  
7 what's our topic sentence <was>/ (.9)  
8 ((Meier continues to air-circle the same section.))  
9 RS<sup>(S)</sup>: Um, how the brain [communicates] with the stomach -  
10 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: [Yes.]  
11 G=> Are we saying that strong enough/  
12 Well, we have "brain" right there.  
13 ((On "brain" Meier points to the word in S1's draft.))  
14 RS<sup>(S)</sup>: uh-huh.  
15 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: "Having the brain to cause this <phenomenon.>"  
16 R=> >I think it needs a little more<  
17 RS<sup>(S)</sup>: okay.  
18 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: R=> which/ (.4) which <then,>/ (1.4)  
19 pre- which then causes us to/ (.)  
20 ((On "which," Meier circles her right hand as she looks at Seymour.))  
21 RS<sup>(S)</sup>: "Fall prey to [the fat paradox]"  
22 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: [<Ye:s>], or "to overeat."  
23 RS<sup>(S)</sup>: Okay. (.6)  
24 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: Alright/  
25 RS<sup>(S)</sup>: okay. (1.5)  
26 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: uh-, uh, which, (.7)  
27 ((Meier begins to write the sentence at the top of S1's draft.))



reverse polarity question has the form of a yes/no polar question, it functions more as a statement. In this case, it would be difficult for Seymour to answer yes to Meier's question. Thus, the question and its implied no answer establish the core request, or a gloss, for the extended request sequence: how can we make the topic sentence stronger? While S.-H. Lee (2009) does not specify a gloss as a key feature in his five-feature checklist of an extended request, he seems to include it as part of the sequential aspect of requesting. In essence, an extended request sequence begins with a gloss that is then "specified and produced piecemeal through the sequences" (p. 1251). In this sequence, Meier's question becomes an invitation for Seymour to work with Meier to add wording to her existing topic sentence. Meier points out the word "brain" in line 12 followed by reading the phrase in which it appears in line 15. Meier then clarifies her request from line 11 with the utterance, "I think it needs a little more" (line 16). With the backchannel "okay" (line 17), Seymour indicates that she understands Meier's request.

A core purpose of extended requests in writing conferences is for the student to engage with the teacher in producing content for the student's paper. The fact that Meier wants Seymour to contribute to constructing that additional material becomes clear in the next three lines both in what Meier says and the actions that accompany her words (lines 18-20). In these lines, Meier uses the fill-in-the-blank pattern that I described in Chapter 4. This pattern involves pausing after words in places that are not typically transition-relevant (Sacks et al., 1974) as a signal for Seymour to contribute the next word or phrase. In doing so, Meier begins to create a bridge between Seymour's current wording and the additional language that Meier wants to see in order to help Seymour clarify her topic sentence. Meier starts with "which" followed by a brief .4-second pause. When it is

not filled, she continues her turn by repeating “which” and adding an elongated “then” followed by a 1.4-second pause (line 18). Again, the pause is not filled, causing Meier to add more wording “which then causes us to/” (line 19). The wording in the form of an adjective dependent clause provides a form for Seymour to fill in, the pauses offer the opening for her to contribute, and Meier’s circling her hand while looking at Seymour (line 20) all signal that Meier wants Seymour’s input. At line 21, Seymour contributes “sFall prey to [the fat paradox].” In this sense, Seymour has accurately interpreted Meier’s requests to co-create the additional content. In fact, Meier had used pauses as an invitation for Seymour to fill in content earlier in the conference. So, by this point, Seymour was familiar with the drill, so to speak. This particular part of this example clearly relates to S.-H. Lee’s (2009) second and third extended request features, the act of requesting is “collaboratively constructed by the parties” and is a “joint construction of the parties” (p. 1258). Such a feature is critical in writing conferences. Both Seymour and Meier use rising intonation style, which sounds like a question to the other person’s ears, to ask the other for input. Moreover, Meier’s pauses provide the space for Seymour to contribute actively and purposefully to revising her own paper.

The end of the sequence demonstrates the outcome of the request. The sequence ends as Meier asks Seymour to repeat the wording that they have co-created (lines 28-29). Seymour supplies that language (line 30), and Meier evaluates it as acceptable (line 34). Where lines 11 and 16 gloss the request, line 32 states the completed request. The nature of writing a sentence also aligns with S.-H. Lee’s (2009) fifth feature, the request must occur in a particular order. Such an approach allows the teacher, Meier in this case, to guide the student toward effective topic sentence production. Meier is able to not only





10 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: So here's our point. (.9)  
11 ((At "here" Meier points to the words she just underlined on page 2.))  
12 So we are going to say  
13 and my suggestion is just to get over  
14 "oh my God" how am I going to start this/  
15 ((Meier writes at the bottom of page 1—near where this topic  
16 sentence will need to be placed.))  
17 KS<sup>(S)</sup>: yeah.  
18 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: R(G)=> One really quick way is to say this.  
19 "One (.5) important (2.1) point (2.4) Gawande (.7) makes,"  
20 R=> (2.0)  
21 ((Meier writes. After writing "makes" Meier quickly glances at Saylor.))  
22 R=> See/ (.5)  
23 ((Saylor nods.))  
24 "is (.) that (5.7)  
25 ((Meier scratches her nose during the pause after "that," then writes  
26 "successful."))  
27 R=> successful (1.9) weight loss  
28 R=> (3.8)  
29 ((Meier stops writing, briefly, and glances at Saylor. Saylor is looking at  
30 the paper and does not seem to notice. Saylor nods.))  
31 is a result (1.6) of  
32 R=> (3.6)  
33 R=> changing" (.) what/  
34 ((At "what/" Meier slides the draft toward Saylor))  
35 (1.4)  
36 KS<sup>(S)</sup>: => Changing your (.4).  
37 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: Changing one's (.6).  
38 KS<sup>(S)</sup>: => °changing your° whole [(*language*).  
39 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: [Yeah,]  
40 See/

41 <“Changing one’s”>, “changing” (.) tsk (1.4)  
42 ((Meier writes.))  
43 KS<sup>(S)</sup>: °One’s. ° (.5)  
44 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: => Here, how about this/  
45 => “changing physical (3.5) and [mental”  
46 ((After saying “mental” Meier glances at Saylor who is still looking at  
47 the draft.))  
48 KS<sup>(S)</sup>: [Mental], Yeah.  
49 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: => uh, what/ (.)  
50 ((Meier looks at Saylor.))  
51 “changing physical and <mental>”  
52 KS<sup>(S)</sup>: => Um (2.0)  
53 ((Saylor looks into the air.))  
54 I wouldn’t want to say “habits,” but (.5)  
55 ((Saylor looks into the air.))  
56 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: “Physical and [mental] habits,”=  
57 KS<sup>(S)</sup>: [mental]  
58 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: =exactly,  
59 yeah, but uh (.) let’s see.  
60 => “ As a result of changing physical and mental (.5) <factors>”>/(.5)  
61 ((On “factors,” Meier looks at Saylor.))  
62 as[pects.”]  
63 KS<sup>(S)</sup>: => [Yeah, as]pects.  
64 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: [okay]  
65 KS<sup>(S)</sup>: [I like aspects.] (.5)  
66 ((Saylor looks at Meier.))  
67 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: “Aspects (.) changing physical and mental aspects.”  
68 ((Meier writes “aspects” and points to the words as she repeats  
69 them.))  
70 (2.5)  
71 ((Meier rereads the sentence during the pause.))  
72 That is a good start.

73 ((Saylor nods her head.))  
 74 KS<sup>(S)</sup>: [okay.]  
 75 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: C=> “One important [point] Gawande makes is that successful weight loss  
 76 is a result of changing physical and mental [aspects.”]  
 77 KS<sup>(S)</sup>: [°aspects°]  
 78 ((Meier reads the sentence that she just wrote, pointing with her pen  
 79 as she reads. She jabs at the words “physical,” “mental,” and “aspects”  
 80 as she reads them. Saylor looks at the draft, following the sentence  
 81 with her eyes as Meier reads it.))

Having identified the problem that Saylor is missing a topic sentence, Meier initiates a sequence designed to help Saylor rectify that problem. The first sentence is critical. As S.-H. Lee (2009) notes, the opening utterance acts a gloss for the rest of the sequence. Meier begins this sequence by asking Saylor to build a topic sentence with her: “So let’s- we’ll write the first one together” (line 5). The language of this sentence conveys that Meier intends Saylor to co-create the topic sentence with her. It initiates a scaffolding approach where the teacher and the student work together to solve an issue in Saylor’s draft.

Saylor and Meier both know that a topic sentence will be the final result, but as yet, they do not know how that sentence will look. As S.-H. Lee (2009) explains, an extended request differs from a pre-request sequence or a series of requests in that the requester does not know what the ultimate fulfillment of the request is. It is not until the end of the sequence that Saylor and Meier recognize the sentence that they have co-constructed as meeting the purpose of a topic sentence.

Key requests occur throughout this sequence. For example, Meier actually provides what could be consider three glosses for the core request of building the topic sentence: “we’ll write the first one together” (line 5), “But this is how I’m going to suggest you do it” (line 8), and “One really quick way is to say this” (line 18). As

explained in Chapter 4, and according to Meier's recall, Meier intended for line 5 to be the core request. However, lines 8 and 18 muddy that request somewhat, diluting its intention to solicit Saylor's input. Nevertheless, these requestive utterances accomplish two purposes for Meier. First, she signals that she and Seymour will, or should, co-create the topic sentence. Second, she signals the scaffolding approach by noting that she will provide guidance as they "write the first one together" and providing suggestions for how to start. Additional requests include long pauses at lines 20, 27 and 28 where Meier looks at Saylor, essentially asking her to contribute. Near the middle of the sentence, the requests become more overt, "'of (3.6) changing' (.) what (1.4)'" (lines 31-33). When the sentence's construction stalls somewhat (lines 36-43), Meier offers both a suggestion "Here, how about this/" (line 44) and a request for Saylor engage in constructing the sentence by approving or rejecting the suggestion. Choosing the final wording, which becomes a choice between "factors" and "aspects" (lines 60-62) completes the request. In this sense, the sequence itself demonstrates S.-H. Lee's (2009) features because the request is accomplished sequentially, the content of the request and the linguistic patterns of requesting come from both parties, and the final product is the completed request: a co-constructed topic sentence.

While an aspect of the adjacency pair style of sequential organization exists throughout this sequence, it is important to note that the sentence itself is interactionally completed through a series of these requestive sequences. In sum, the participants' creation of a sentence is the result of their contextual understanding that they are creating a sentence. It takes more than a single first pair-part and second pair-part to accomplish that action. Essentially, then, while the interaction between Saylor and Meier contains

several requests, the entire sequence follows an extended request pattern because both are oriented to finishing a sentence.

At the same time, it is clear both from Meier's recall and from her turns in this sequence that Meier is more attuned to co-creating the sentence than Saylor is. The beginning of the sequence demonstrates this misalignment. The sequence begins with an utterance that sets up the collaborative nature of the rest of the sequence: "So let's- we'll write the first one together" (line 5). Meier's next utterance in the same turn is a request for Saylor's future work on her paper—to include a topic sentence in each paragraph (line 6). Saylor acknowledges the need to do so by repeating part of Meier's words in her turn (line 7). Meier's utterance on her next turn is where mixed messages begin to occur as Meier says, "But this is how I'm going to suggest you do it" (line 8). While teachers may recognize this utterance as providing a suggestion, the utterance could also be read as a repair of the previous request that asked the two of them to co-create the sentence (line 5). In fact, some people could interpret the request on line 8 as Meier's intent to write the sentence rather than inviting Saylor to write with her. While that utterance transitions into the actual creation of the sentence, the language in the next utterance, "and my suggestion is just to get over 'oh my God' how am I going to start this" (lines 13-14), does not have the same force in requesting Saylor's involvement. Rather, it is a suggestion about how the sentence could be produced. The word "start" is critical. Meier seems to literally mean that she is offering wording to *begin* the sentence. Given Saylor's lack of uptake in the pauses that follow, it appears that she read "here's how I suggest you begin" as "I'll write this one for you."

Nevertheless, Meier's use of various request types including statements, pauses, and direct questions keeps the sequence moving and eventually succeeds in receiving Saylor's input on the sentence. All of these patterns aid in creating the extended request and, more importantly, encouraging Saylor's involvement. Meier begins the request by asking Saylor to build a sentence with her (line 5). Despite the intervening utterances that could have confused this purpose for Saylor, Meier's subsequent utterances clarify that she maintains that co-constructed orientation throughout the sequence. Additionally, like her conference with Seymour, several of Meier's utterances prominently feature pauses and lapses. When pauses and lapses occur during content-creation sequences, they perform a fill-in-the-blank requestive function. As such, they are a key feature in extended request sequences in writing conferences. They also demonstrate that requestive patterns flow through the sequence, S.-H. Lee's second feature. Finally, direct questions such as "'changing' (.) what?" (line 33) and comprehension requests such as "see?" (line 40) provide more explicit openings for Saylor to contribute. These repeated request types eventually overcome Saylor's reluctance to contribute, regardless of how that reluctance emerged.

While both examples illustrate key similarities with S.-H. Lee's (2009) extended request pattern, a key difference between S.-H. Lee's extended request sequences and these writing conference sequences is Meier's evaluation of Saylor's and Seymour's contributions. In Excerpt 4, Meier evaluates the sentence that she and Seymour are co-creating in two places. The first evaluation occurs on line 22 with an elongated "Yes" in response to Seymour's contribution on line 21 of "fall prey to the fat paradox." Meier's second evaluative comment "Yes, something like that?" (line 34) occurs after she reads

the newly completed phrase. Admittedly, that utterance does not sound like a ringing endorsement. Nevertheless, it signals a general acceptance of what has been produced and allows her and Seymour to move on. Similarly, when Saylor offers her own lackluster endorsement of the word “habits” (Excerpt 5, line 54), Meier concurs with Saylor’s evaluation by immediately saying, “exactly” (line 58). Again, after the entire new material is read, Meier evaluates it with “That is a good start” (line 71). Thus, evaluation consistently occurs in extended requests in writing conferences, a feature that seems absent from monetary service encounters.

Prior studies of writing conferences (Artman, 2007; Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015; Strauss & Xiang, 2006; Walker & Elias, 1987) have noted the importance of evaluation. This finding, then, identifies a linguistic marker related to evaluation. While evaluation is not limited to extended request sequences, its presence in those sequences suggests that asking students to assess the co-created knowledge is an important aspect of developing their writing skills. As Walker and Elias (1987) noted, students’ ability to evaluate their own writing was a factor in higher rated conferences. When teachers ask students to evaluate co-created content, teachers tell students that their judgments are important and valid. Furthermore, when students test their evaluations with the teacher, they are more likely to recognize good writing later.

Another key difference between extended request features in monetary interactions (S.-H. Lee, 2009) and the teacher-student interactions presented in this chapter is that the teacher tends to direct the interaction. Meier’s direction of both extended requests sequences with Saylor and with Seymour suggests this pattern. These differences are integral to the teaching and learning situation. Scaffolding generally starts



when the teacher notices a concern for the student to address. Since the teacher has more writing experience than the student, she could simply identify and correct the problem herself. Instead, the teacher creates a sequence that allows the student to work through the problem with the teacher's assistance. Thus, the extended request allows the teacher and student to partner on improving a draft. By co-creating content, the idea is that students will be able to work through the process later on their own.

### **Topical Sequences**

Of the four instructors in this study, only Meier builds content with her students using extended requests. For this reason, Meier is able to achieve both their participation during the conference and their understanding of how to use the co-produced material after the conference. In this section, I examine content-creation sequences that, while related topically, do not follow an extended request pattern. Rather than co-creating content, topical sequences allow participants to demonstrate their knowledge. The following excerpts illustrate how the looser structure of the topical sequence allows those knowledge displays to occur.

**Lack of student input.** Excerpt 6 not only illustrates a shift away from the extended request pattern but it comes from one of Meier's conferences. The same teacher's use of a different pattern suggests that teachers employ a range of patterns depending on their purposes, contexts, or constraints.

Excerpt 6 comes from Meier's conference with Romeo Escobar, an 18-21 male who was meeting Meier for his first-ever writing conference. Despite this being his first writing conference, Escobar was somewhat familiar with talk-about-writing situations, having reported doing peer reviews in the past. Although he rated his confidence as

average, he reported his motivation to improve his writing as above average (a 4 out of 5). Sensing his average confidence, Meier noted during her recall session that she aimed to improve Escobar's assessment of his writing throughout this conference.

The sequence starts in much the same way as Excerpts 4 and 5. Similar to how she began with Seymour's (Excerpt 4) and Saylor's conferences (Excerpt 5), Meier provides context and content needed to understand the concern in the paper that needs to be addressed: Meier's reading of the second paragraph of Escobar's rough draft (lines 1-2). She makes her request in lines 5-12, and sentence-creating takes lines 15-20. The pattern changes slightly at the point where the sentence-creation begins at line 15. The relative lack of intermediate requests following the gloss and prior to the complete sentence and particularly the absence of Escobar's contributions to the sentence are the key differences between this sequence and previously presented extended request sequences. This sentence-creation sequence is much shorter than the sentence creation in previous sequences. After describing what occurs in this section, I explain the ramifications of this pattern in more detail below.

#### (6) Add material

RE<sup>(S)</sup>: Romeo Escobar (student)      CM<sup>(T)</sup>: Dr. Caitlin Meier (teacher)

G=gloss R=intermediate request C=completed request

06:53

- 1 CM<sup>(T)</sup>      °“Gawande notes that (. .) to lose weight (2.9) and to exercise °=”
- 2            ((Meier underlines the words as she reads Escobar's second
- 3            paragraph.))
- 4            =See (. .)
- 5            <right here,> what you could do (.7)
- 6            ((Meier points to the space between the first and second sentences.))
- 7            based on what you asked me a second ago, (.6)

8 ((Meier points to Escobar.))

9 G=> <I think,> I would suggest that you <do add> something

10 before you say, “Gawande notes that.”

11 Tell us over<all> (. .)

12 see >tha- that’s what I was trying to say.< (.4)

13 ((Meier looks at Escobar.))

14 R=> What- what is Ca- Caselli’s situation overall before the surgery/ (.5)

15 RE<sup>(S)</sup>: [O:kay.] ((okay))

16 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: [What you could say] is [he,]

17 RE<sup>(S)</sup>: [um]

18 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: C=> For years he struggled (.6) with weight gain (.9) because he was

19 overeating.”

20 ((Meier looks at Escobar the entire time while saying this utterance.))

21 (.7)

22 RE<sup>(S)</sup>: Okay.

23 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: And then you say, [“Gawande] notes that to lose weight.” (. .)

24 RE<sup>(S)</sup>: [yeah]

25 ((Meier returns her attention to the paper as does Escobar. She air-

26 underlines “to lose weight” as she speaks that.))

27 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: Yes/

28 RE<sup>(S)</sup>: yeah.

29 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: **Yes.**

30 RE<sup>(S)</sup>: That’d be good. (. .)

For writing a sentence, this sequence is considerably shorter than Saylor’s. While it starts and ends similarly, the middle of the sequence is where the reduced length is most noticeable. During the recall session, Meier identified her turn, which includes lines 4 through 9, as a request for Escobar to add a sentence between the topic sentence and the explanatory sentence that follows it. These utterances seem similar to the glosses that start an extended request pattern.

The sequence begins to shift from an extended request to a topical sequence at this point. As noted, the sentence-building component occurs from lines 14-19. At the end of her turn, Meier asks Escobar a question to encourage him to provide content for the sentence: “What is Caselli’s situation overall before the surgery?” (line 14). The nature of the question suggests that an extended answer like the ones that occurred in the previous excerpts should follow. Instead, Escobar’s manner of responding suggests that he understands Meier’s point. Escobar responds with an elongated acknowledgement token “O:kay” followed by a backchannel repetition “okay” (line 15). The lack of a pause is important here. In fact, before Escobar can formulate a longer response to her question (line 14), Meier has already signaled her intent to provide the language needed for that section: “What you could say is [he]” (line 16). While these utterances are similar to what had occurred in other writing conferences, the pauses or lapses accompanied by glances are missing. Their absence suggests that Meier did not want Escobar to supply the wording here. Rather than encouraging him to articulate that wording by waiting, Meier accepts his turn as the answer to her question and immediately offers the needed content. While Escobar’s overlapped “um” (line 17) with her turn could be read as his preparing to respond, Meier instead constructs a possible sentence on her own: “For years he struggled (.6) with weight gain (.9) because he was overeating” (lines 18-19). Thus, Meier both requests a change to Escobar’s paper and provides the wording needed to meet that request without his input. Despite the overt requests for change, the shape of the interaction does not allow Escobar to collaborate with Meier in creating that change.

One key similarity and two key differences between the previous examples mark this sentence’s construction. The similarity is that Meier pauses in fill-in-the-blank

appropriate spots during the sentence (line 18) as she did during the previous examples (Excerpt 4, line 18). Unlike those examples, however, these pauses are shorter and are not accompanied by either Meier's writing or her glancing at Escobar. Instead, she maintains eye contact with him during this entire sequence. The ultimate effect of the sequence is that it feels more like a brainstorming session than a collaborative sequence. A further contrast to the previous patterns where the sentence was co-constructed is that Escobar evaluates the sentence. Having constructed the sentence herself, she asks Escobar to confirm that the sentence works for him by asking, "Yes/" (line 27). Escobar answers with a backchanneled "yeah" (line 28). Meier repeats his affirmative evaluation with an emphatic "Yes" (29), and Escobar further evaluates the sentence with "That'd be good" (line 30). In this sense, Escobar contributes to the interaction by agreeing that the sentence fits in his paper. That contribution seems less interactive than the previous examples. It is unclear, in other words, how effectively Escobar could produce such a sentence on his own based on this sequence.

The continued sequence (Excerpt 7) offers the possibility that more interaction will occur. The sequence continues with Meier asking Escobar whether she should write the sentence that she just produced on his paper (line 31). He agrees (line 33 and 35), and Meier starts writing a revised version of the sentence that she presented at line 18-19 (lines 49-50). This time, constructing and writing the sentence occur simultaneously and are accompanied by significant pauses: a 2-second stretch after "Caselli," 2.2-second pauses after "struggled" and "had," and pauses longer than three seconds after "with," "gain," and "time" (line 49-50). Unlike the sentence-building sequence in Saylor's conference (Excerpt 5), Meier does not glance at Escobar as she writes the sentence. In

part, this difference can be explained by Excerpt 6 where she already constructed the sentence. Meier also acknowledged during her recall that she did not intend for Escobar to contribute to the wording. Thus, the sequence ends as it began with Meier directing the sentence's construction. While a sentence that can be included in Escobar's paper is the end result, the action of producing it does not have the same collaborative feel as the ones in Seymour's (Excerpt 4) and Saylor's (Excerpt 5) conferences.

(7) Review Added material (continued from Excerpt 6)

RE<sup>(S)</sup>: Romeo Escobar (student)      CM<sup>(T)</sup>: Dr. Caitlin Meier (teacher)

G=gloss R=intermediate request C=completed request

07:31.4

- 31 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: R=> Should I add the whole sentence so we have a good example/ (1.0)  
 32 ((Meier looks at Escobar as she asks this question.))  
 33 ((Escobar nods slightly before he or Meier say "yeah."))  
 34 Y[eah]  
 35 RE<sup>(S)</sup>: [°yeah°]  
 36 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: Okay (.)  
 37 What did I just say, though/  
 38 See, we should just listen to the [recording].  
 39 RE<sup>(S)</sup>: @[@@]  
 40 ((Meier points to the audio recorder.))  
 41 CM<sup>(T)</sup>: >@@@<  
 42 We could say, "For years,"  
 43 RE<sup>(S)</sup>: um-hmm  
 44 (1.5)  
 45 and let's do another author tag, (.7)  
 46 ((Meier looks at Escobar during the pause.))  
 47 "For years, Gawande explains," (.9)  
 48 yes/



The first key variance relates to the lack of collaboration. The third feature of an extended request involves co-constructing the request (S.-H. Lee, 2009), and building the sentence really is the core request in this sequence. However, the content of the sentence is not co-constructed by both parties. Meier essentially creates the entire sentence on her own. The initial construction on lines 18-19 and the revised version on lines 49-50 are produced by Meier without Escobar's input. In this sense, this sequence lacks an essential feature of extended requests: collaboration of both speakers in fulfilling the request.

The second key variance is that the request is not fulfilled "over several sequences that specify a request" (S.-H. Lee, 2009, p. 1258). Although the discussion regarding this part of Escobar's paper takes several turns, the action of building the sentence does not take multiple turns. Moreover, although the sequence begins with a turn that sounds like a request (lines 5-9), the sentence itself is created in one turn (lines 18-19 or 49-50). The lack of glances and even slight additional pauses while writing suggests that Meier did not actively solicit Escobar's participation to co-create the additional sentence. While Escobar contributes by evaluating the sentence (lines 28 and 30), his direct participation is minimal. Thus, the pattern differs substantially from the extended request pattern (S.-H. Lee, 2009), suggesting that this excerpt is not an extended request even though the entire interaction revolves around creating additional content for Escobar's paper.

Two reasons emerge from an analysis of the recall sessions that may help explain why this excerpt's pattern differs from the pattern demonstrated in the previous section's excerpts. First, Meier noted during the recall session that she was rushed for time in this conference. She had arrived late for her meeting, an unusual occurrence for her. She also said, "And I write. They should be writing, I'm very aware of that. It's better if they were



writing but it would take forever.” Her point seems to be that if the students wrote they would be collaborating on the wording. Second, Meier was responding to a comment that Escobar had made earlier in the conference that she interpreted as a request for help with his topic sentences. I had read the comment similarly during my preparations for his recall session. When I asked him about it, Escobar said that he did not need help with topic sentences and had not intended for his question to be read as a request. Thus, his lack of response in this excerpt may be related both to Meier not leaving him much opportunity to respond and to his desire to move onto more pressing concerns.

**Observation as engagement.** Whereas the previous examples illustrated sequences that began and ended like extended requests, this final example (Excerpt 8) demonstrates how a request can set up a demonstration of a participants’ knowledge rather than a collaborative sequence. In this sequence, Ken Leighton discusses APA citation formatting with Julia Kelli. Like Meier, Leighton had been conducting writing conferences for more than 20 years. Kelli, on the other hand, was both a young freshman and had never experienced a writing conference, a peer review session, or a writing center tutorial. During her recall, she noted that she was nervous for this first meeting with her teacher.

The difference between an extended request pattern and this sequence’s pattern occurs for two reasons. First, both Kelli and Leighton demonstrate, or in Kelli’s case, attempt to demonstrate, that they know how to format APA citations (see lines 2-8). Second, as soon as Kelli demonstrates that she cannot successfully produce the correct APA citation pattern, Leighton takes the floor, and the paper, from Kelli and demonstrates it for her (see lines 13-19). This sequence is quoted at length because



25 First thing we've got to do is get that th- the date [in/ right/]

26 JK<sup>(S)</sup>: [yeah.] (1.0)

27 KL<sup>(T)</sup>: Okay.

28 => Now.

29 I- is he a physiology professor/ (1.6)

30 >So you see,< (.7) you- the way you said it, "according to Professor

31 Jacobs of physiology," (.8)

32 JK<sup>(S)</sup>: uhm-[hmm.

33 KL<sup>(T)</sup>: [>What does< that >mean/< (1.2)

34 ((Leighton glances at Kelli. Looking at the draft, she doesn't seem to

35 notice the glance. She shrugs her shoulders as he begins the next

36 utterance.))

37 => Is he a physiology professor/ (.5)

38 JK<sup>(S)</sup>: <Yeah.>

39 KL<sup>(T)</sup>: <Well.> Okay.

40 JK<sup>(S)</sup>: @@@[@]

41 KL<sup>(T)</sup>: [Now.] (.6)

42 => >eh- eh- eh- eh- You- wouldn't want to say he's a professor of

43 physiology and he's gonna (going to) comment on psychotherapy. (.)

44 JK<sup>(S)</sup>: Okay

45 KL<sup>(T)</sup>: What's physiology/

46 JK<sup>(S)</sup>: It- it's different.

47 KL<sup>(T)</sup>: Yeah, what is it/

48 JK<sup>(S)</sup>: I don't know. @@@[@@][°@ °]

49 ((Kelli sits up as she starts to laugh.))

50 KL<sup>(T)</sup>: [Oh>] [that might] [be a problem.

51 JK<sup>(S)</sup>: [@@@@@]

52 KL<sup>(T)</sup>: Physiology is the study of the human body. (.)

53 JK<sup>(S)</sup>: Ye@h. (.4)

54 KL<sup>(T)</sup>: Now that's- see [that's not quite gonna (going to)] fit,

55 JK<sup>(S)</sup>: [(This one's diff')][rent)

56 KL<sup>(T)</sup>: [See/]

57 JK<sup>(S)</sup>: @@@[@@]

58 KL<sup>(T)</sup>: [Okay].

59 “According to Professor Jacobs”=

60 JK<sup>(S)</sup>: => =Or it might have- it might of (might’ve) just auto corrected (.) [to be  
61 honest, but]

62 KL<sup>(T)</sup>: [Okay. [Okay.  
63 Okay.]

64 “Ac[cording to Professor Jacobs-]

65 JK<sup>(S)</sup>: [@@@@[[@]

66 KL<sup>(T)</sup>: => [and so it’s] a date,  
67 “Psychotherapy involves cognitive thought processes, and digging  
68 deep emotionally to find permanent solution.”  
69 ((Leighton reads Kelli’s paper.))  
70 (1.7)  
71 ((Leighton writing?))  
72 “To find either a permanent,” okay “a permanent solution.” (.7)  
73 => Now, Jacob’s twelve doesn’t go there.  
74 JK<sup>(S)</sup>: It doesn’t. (.4)  
75 ((Leighton crosses out words on Kelli’s draft.))  
76 => °Just the [page. °]  
77 KL<sup>(T)</sup> [Just the twelve] do[es  
78 JK<sup>(S)</sup>: [Oh just] twelve.  
79 KL<sup>(T)</sup>: => See the date goes here. (.)  
80 JK<sup>(S)</sup>: Okay/  
81 KL<sup>(T)</sup>: So that would be the year,  
82 JK<sup>(S)</sup>: um-[hm]  
83 KL<sup>(T)</sup>: [ri]ght/ (.) [sniff]  
84 So down here, you’ve already said, (.) “Jacobs, (.4) the year, (.5) and  
85 here’s the page number. (.)  
86 JK<sup>(S)</sup>: °uhm-[hmm. °  
87 KL<sup>(T)</sup>: => [So now you’ve got all three of the required elements, (.9)  
88 Right/ (.4)

89 JK<sup>(S)</sup>: um-[hmm]  
90 KL<sup>(T)</sup>: [They're all] available,  
91 All right/ (.4)

As has been true of the other excerpts in this chapter, this excerpt shows a shift from a student demonstrating her knowledge to the teacher showing her how to address a problem. The request “will you fix it for me?” (line 10) was likely to result in a demonstration of either participant’s knowledge about APA citations rather than a collaborative workshopping sequence where they addressed the issue together. As the sequence progresses and Leighton continues reading Kelli’s draft, the sequence shifts from a demonstration of citation formatting to a discussion of proper attribution and quality of sources. In this sense, this sequence demonstrates how one topic can blend into another. It also demonstrates how a teacher’s relying on observation for large sequences during a conference can create resistance in the learner.

The sequence in Excerpt 8 begins with identifying the problem “got a little reference problem here” (line 3). Kelli recognizes the problem and simultaneously suggests that she knows how to fix it: “**Ah:::!** I thought I fixed all those” (line 5). Leighton’s request “Will you fix it for me?” (line 10) asks Kelli to demonstrate her knowledge of APA citation formatting protocols. While this utterance presents a common interrogative request (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989), Kelli is under no illusion that Leighton really needs her to fix the citation “for him.” Although Kelli observed in her recall that “Will you fix it for me?” sounds like a request, she noted that the need to fix it was “obviously just for my paper.” She explained that the benefit of fixing the citation benefited her by improving her paper. Returning to Searle’s definition of a request, that fulfilling the utterance benefits the speaker, Kelli did not see fixing the citation as helping

Leighton. So even though the “me” in Leighton’s utterance, “Will you fix it for me/,” suggests that he would benefit from the action, Kelli did not perceive Leighton as the actual beneficiary of the corrected citation.

During his recall session, however, Leighton identified “Will you fix it for me/” a request even as he marked it as a teaching moment: “Of course it’s a request. . . . if the student ever catches on to [a] thing, I’ll always try to get them to do the fixing.” Thus, while both Kelli and Leighton recognize the form of “will you help me/” as a request strategy, only Leighton viewed it as an actual request. At the same time, since Kelli starts to make changes to her citation (line 13), her response suggests that despite the artificialness of the scenario, she orients to the requestive form and responds to it as if it were an actual request for help.

In addition to responding to the linguistic form, she may be eager to show Leighton that she knows how to format citations correctly. During her recall, she told me that she already knew how to fix the APA citations. Her turns during this sequence suggest, however, that she did not know the process as well as she thought she did. After repeating Jacobs’ name (line 14), she identifies the next part of the citation as “parenthesis Jacobs” (line 15) although parentheses and the year should follow the author’s name. Leighton immediately recognizes that Kelli is struggling (lines 16 and 18), slides the draft away from her (line 19), and starts showing the correct APA citation style (lines 23-25). In essence, since Kelli is not able to demonstrate the correct APA citation formatting, Leighton withdraws his request for her to fix the citation.

An interrupting sequence where Leighton asks Kelli to clarify Jacobs’, the source author’s, credentials (lines 30-58) interrupts the progression in providing the APA

citation in this sentence that they had been working on. This interruption matches Leighton's pattern of addressing issues as they emerge while reading the paper. The author-date style was the first issue. The author's credentials are the second to emerge. To return to the citation-correcting focus, Leighton repeats the opening phrase of Kelli's sentence: "according to Professor Jacobs" (line 64), he notes the need for a date (line 66), and proceeds through addressing the problem. Once again, some elements of the extended request pattern exist, but the absence of co-constructed moments suggest a pattern other than extended requesting.

This topical chain sequence is a telling sequence. Rather than having Kelli co-create the corrections with him, Leighton demonstrates his knowledge. Even had Kelli produced the format correctly, she would have demonstrated her knowledge of the rule as she worked through the sentence. Rather than co-creating content, Kelli and Leighton discuss applying a pre-established rule that Kelli needs to re-produce in her paper. Moreover, the sequence contains few question-answer sequences related to fixing the citations in the sentence that Kelli and Leighton were examining. Leighton applied the correct formatting as soon as Kelli demonstrated that she did not know how to format APA citations accurately. This pattern occurs despite the sequence beginning with Leighton's request "will you help me/" and ending with a sentence containing an appropriate APA-style citation. It doesn't act like an extended request sequence in the same way as the Saylor-Meier or Seymour-Meier sequences (Excerpts 4 and 5) where a sentence is the ultimate product largely because Kelli's utterances do not contribute to fulfilling the request that the citation match APA style.

Moreover, as noted, the request itself has a hint of artificiality. Clearly Leighton did not need help: he already knew how to use APA citations. Such request forms occur frequently in teaching situations, creating an invitation for the student to demonstrate her knowledge for the teacher. Even if Kelli had been able to correctly format the citations in the sentence, her doing so would have set up a demonstration of what she knew rather than a request sequence. Thus, the interaction was set up initially as a demonstration. Such demonstrations may begin with a request (or request-like utterance), but an extended request pattern is not needed to fulfill the request. This sequence demonstrates the dynamic of “I’ll show you” rather than “let’s work on this together.”

### **Discussion**

What emerges from this analysis is that, unlike making airline reservations (S.-H. Lee, 2009), which produce extended request sequences regularly, extended requests are not a consistent or core pattern in writing conferences. Instead, both typical two-part adjacency pair and extended request patterns co-occur in writing conferences. When extended requests do occur, they exhibit features that differ from both S.-H. Lee’s extended requests and topical chains (see Table 6).

The findings of this study and the examples presented in this chapter are significant for teaching and learning in the context of writing conferences because extended requests in teacher-student writing conferences are strongly correlated with co-creating content and require a joint-construction orientation from both parties. Co-creating the request in writing conference situations seems to be a critical criterion in determining whether a sequence becomes an extended request or simply deals with a similar topic. Such a connection is important because it provides a way to determine the



Table 6

*Vertical Venn Diagram: Comparison of Features in Interactions Commencing With a Request*

Feature	Extended Request (Reservation)	Extended Request (Writing Conference)	Topical Sequence (Writing Conference)
Creating or displaying knowledge	Both participants need to co-create the knowledge because both bring knowledge needed to fulfill the request.	Both participants need to co-create the knowledge because both bring knowledge needed to fulfill the request.	Either the teacher or the student (but often the teacher) displays knowledge about a writing problem being discussed. The teacher or student takes over the process.
Necessity of cooperation	The customer and agent have to work together to get the customer when and when she or he wants to go: a commodity is produced.	The teacher and student have to work together to produce a sentence: a skill, an educational outcome, is developed or enhanced.	The knowledge that the participant displays is a skill, but this skill is not overtly improved during the interaction.
Frequency in which conditions are met	The conditions related to producing extended requests occur in every interaction that involves making an airline reservation.	The conditions for creating an extended request in a writing conference may occur but depend on other factors beyond the content of the interaction itself.	Some conditions for creating an extended request are present but are disrupted or are missing.
Recognition of completed request	Both agent and customer can identify the completed product.	Both teacher and student can identify the new content and its place in the paper.	One interlocutor (generally the student) does not recognize what the interlocutors have co-produced fulfilling the request (as relevant to their paper).
Evaluation of the request	Evaluation is not a typical feature in airline reservation encounters.	One of the participants evaluates the co-produced material.	A teacher may produce a comprehension request to gauge the student's understanding of the content presented or discussed.

extent to which teachers who wish to enact a social constructivist pedagogy (Bruffee, 1984; Spivey, 1997) are doing so.

In other words, the patterns that teachers and students produce while working together to solve writing problems during the writing conference demonstrate whether they are actually co-producing content or knowledge or whether one or the other participant is displaying knowledge. The presence of extended request sequences is evidence that both parties' insights are needed to enable the student to improve his or her draft. When one person's input is primary, the interaction seems to shift away from co-creating content and, particularly in writing conferences, developing the student's revising skills and toward displaying knowledge that is already present. When this happens, either party may be trying to move the discussion to other topics or the co-creating process has been circumvented, preventing students' active participation in their own learning. If the former, the strategy of enacting topic sequences without extended requests patterns provides a basis for what is already known to save time for addressing other concepts. If the latter, the teaching process itself is circumvented, potentially negatively affecting students' abilities to revise their papers later.

At some points in the conference, creating knowledge does not seem to be the intended purpose of an interaction. When demonstrating or displaying knowledge seems the primary focus of the sequence, the interaction, although it contains requests, shifts from an extended request pattern to the looser structure of a topical sequence. In these cases, the interaction may still begin with a request, usually by the teacher. However, the pattern shifts when the student does not contribute to building the request whether

through the student's reluctance to do so or the teacher's failure to provide sufficient thinking time (pauses) that allow the student to contribute.

The sequences that occur in Meier's interaction with Escobar (Excerpt 6) or in Leighton's interaction with Kelli (Excerpt 8) suggest that displays of knowledge produce different patterns than those that engage students in co-producing knowledge. In cases where knowledge is displayed, the interaction shifts into demonstrating a skill. As in Kelli's case, this demonstration can be performed by the teacher or the student, but the skill itself is seen as a given—one either has it or they don't. Sometimes, demonstrating the skill is foundational for co-creating other material or moving to the next sequence. Regardless, even if a sequence contains patterns similar to those in extended requests, it will not maintain that pattern if one participant does all the work.

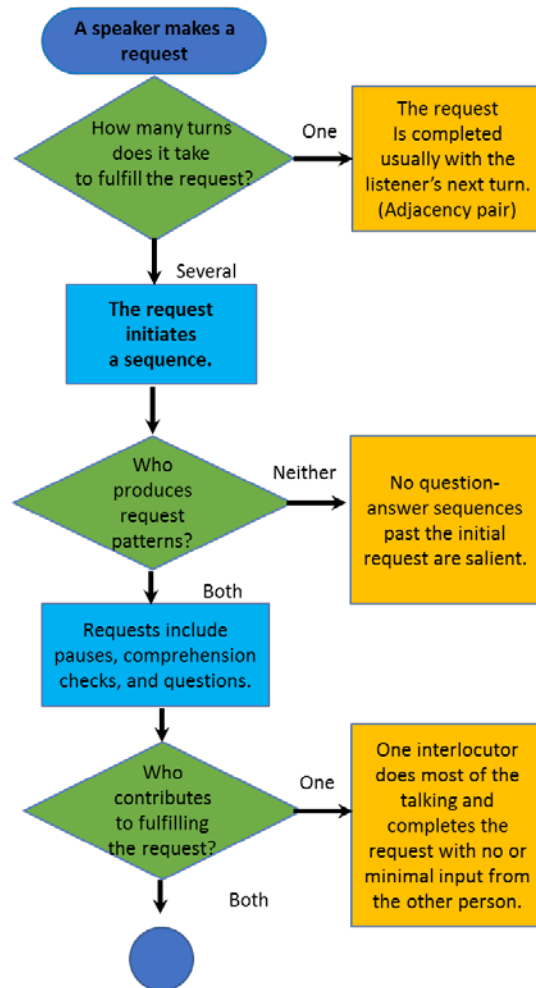
Key differences between the extended requests and topical sequences also may relate to the purpose of the encounter and the outcomes that come from finalizing a request. Unlike a service encounter where the customer potentially already knows the available options for an airline reservation or at least has pre-defined options (S.-H. Lee, 2009), writers have a wide range of wording options to choose from that are not already displayed in easy view of the teacher or the writer, even if the draft provides some possibilities. Moreover, the outcome produced in service encounters is a purchased commodity; the outcome produced in educational encounters is a skill. In the writing conference segments in this chapter, the extended requests resulted in co-created topic sentences. Thus, educational outcomes differ substantially from business encounters, which affects the frequency of and shape of extended requests in writing conferences. In Escobar's case, even though the sentence was developed during the writing conference,

Escobar's lack of participation in creating it suggested that Meier was showing him what he could do. Displaying a skill, in other words, produces a different sequential pattern than co-creating content and developing or refining a skill.

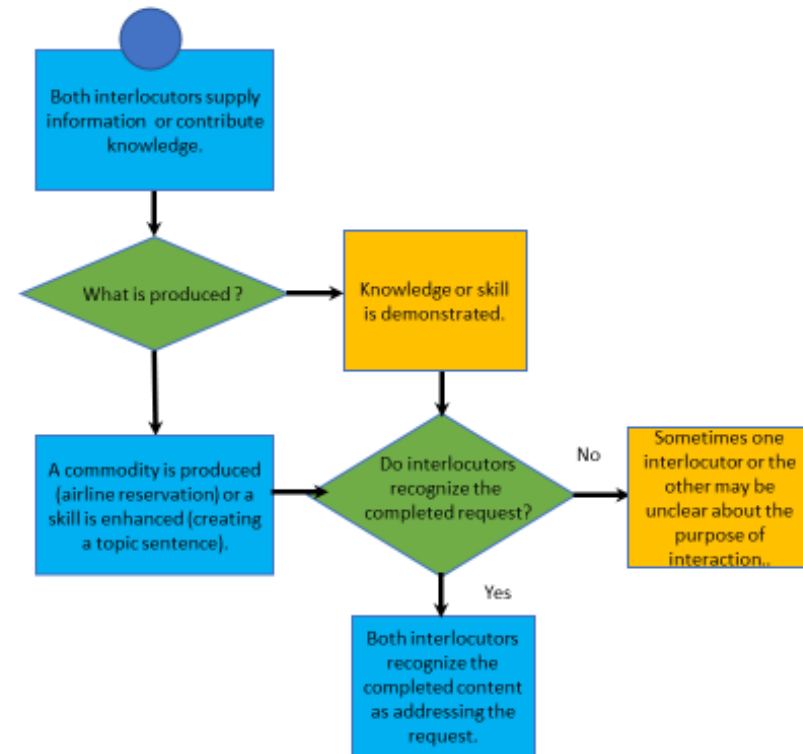
When extended requesting occurs, its use, largely coordinated by teachers, invites students to develop the kind of procedural writing knowledge that teachers already possess by guiding students to co-create a sentence with them. After identifying that the sentence is needed, the instructor begins a sequence, generally including features that S.-H. Lee (2009) identified, designed to supply the missing sentence. (The blue boxes in Figure 6 demonstrate this flow). Several request forms, including various forms of silence, combine to create an interactional sequence that creates, piece by piece, a new sentence for the student's paper. Such an approach acts as a guide for the student writer to create or modify a sentence that meets the teacher's criteria for the writing assignment and allows the teacher and student to co-create the sentence. Consequently, when used to create sentences or other content in writing conference situations, extended requests illustrate one way that teachers enact a scaffolding approach with their students and co-create knowledge for the student's paper.

The teacher's role in establishing the extended request sequence relates to another key difference between extended requesting during service encounters and during writing conferences: the difference between the roles of customer and agent, and the roles of student and teacher. S.-H. Lee (2009) noted that the knowledge difference between customers and agents influences how much they can contribute to fulfilling the customer's request:

### Identifying an Extended Request



### Identifying an Extended Request continued



If all criteria from the blue boxes are present, the sequence is likely an extended request. If the sequence's characteristics divert into the yellow boxes, the sequence is likely related topically but no longer meets the criteria of an extended request.

Figure 6. A flowchart for identifying extended requests in writing conferences.

Although it is customers who are making a request and have a desired outcome, their capacity can be commonly limited to glossing the desired outcome.

Customers know what they want, but not all the exact specifics of what they want and how to get what they want. Agents, on the other hand, know exactly what customers can get and how customers can get what they want. Given this asymmetry of knowledge, agents are empowered to direct courses of action in interaction and to do so in institutionally relevant ways. (p. 1259)

While the “asymmetry of knowledge” (p. 1259) is a feature of this particular service encounter, it seems a stretch to replace “teachers” with “agents” and accurately say “[teachers], on the other hand, know exactly what [students] can get and how [students] can get what they want.” In fact, such a bold statement would be inconsistent with writing conference pedagogy, which endeavors to help students acquire the procedural knowledge that their teachers already possess. Even though teachers possess a lot of knowledge, they do not have access to all of it. In writing conference situations, teachers often have more knowledge about, including experience with, how to craft academic sentences, but students have more content knowledge related to their papers and the ideas that they contain. The power differential is still there, but in some ways each person’s knowledge balances with the knowledge the other person lacks.

Each of the writing conference segments demonstrated an aspect of this power differential. In the extended request segments, Meier demonstrated that she understood the mechanics of creating a topic sentence. Yet she deferred to her students’ papers and the students themselves for conveying ideas related to the content. Thus, while she had a form in mind, the content was the student’s. Even in Escobar’s case where she developed

the sentence by herself, she drew language from his paper. Where Escobar's conference failed to maintain the extended request pattern was in Meier's creating the sentence for Escobar instead of allowing him to work to fit his ideas into the pattern that she wanted him to learn. Kelli's conference, by contrast, demonstrates a focus on knowledge that Leighton, her teacher, already had and wanted her to have. Since the knowledge was independent of her content, Kelli's expertise was not as needed.

In extended request sequences in this study's writing conferences, the teacher made the request and engaged the student in co-creating the request with her or him. This pattern contrasts with S.-H. Lee's (2009) context where customers make the request and agents help deliver it in airline reservations. In this sense, students already know, or come to understand, the importance of having topic sentences while being unsure about how to produce them effectively. While teachers can produce these sentences on their own, which occasionally occurs (as in Escobar and Meier's conference), the desired outcome for writing conference extends beyond having a topic sentence in the paper. The ideal intended outcome is for students both to understand how to produce their own topic sentences or content and to be able to do so later on their own. Thus, extended requests in writing conferences become a method, one of many, that teachers use to engage students in evaluating and improving their own writing and re-writing processes.

That extended requesting showed up rarely in the writing conferences that I examined suggests that both students and teachers either need more instruction on how to make this pattern work or they need more time to enact the pattern. For example, in Saylor's case, the teacher does most of the sentence building. The pattern still holds because Saylor eventually contributed with Meier's prompting. The labored back-and-

forth suggests that Saylor did not recognize her role in co-constructing the sentence, she was avoiding that role, or she could not produce responses fast enough to contribute to the formation of the sentence. In this case, Meier had the time to extract contributions from Saylor. Had Saylor known that she should contribute more, she might have done so sooner. Conversely, had Meier had more time, she might have employed more pauses and lapses to encourage Escobar to contribute. Waiting for students to contribute takes time. A lack of time in his conference may explain why the excerpt from Escobar's conference differs from those of his fellow classmates.

An intriguing difference between extended requests in service encounters and both extended requests and topical sequences in writing conferences is the presence (or absence) of evaluative utterances. S.-H. Lee's (2009) segments do not include utterances where the customer or the agent evaluate the just-completed reservation. In writing conferences, such evaluation is common for both extended requests and topical sequences. In extended requests, either the teacher or the student often evaluates the co-produced material. For instance, in Seymour's conference (Excerpt 4), Meier asked Seymour to comment on the just-produced sentence with the question, "Yes, something like that/" (line 34). Seymour's "yes" indicates that she approves. The rising intonation on "that" suggests that Meier wanted Seymour's approval for the sentence, which Seymour offered as a backchanneled "yeah" (line 35). Even the topical sequences have this feature. Leighton concluded the citation-reviewing segment with Kelli by saying, "So now you've got all three of the required elements" (line 86), which he followed with the comprehension request "Right/" (line 87). Kelli minimally acknowledged her



understanding with “um-hmm” (line 88). Such consistent evaluative utterances orient both student and teacher to the teaching-learning nature of the interaction.

### **Conclusion**

The findings presented in this chapter suggest two implications and a suggestion for future research. First, students may not be aware of how much they need to contribute to a writing conference. No one needs to tell customers that they need to work with the agent to process their reservation: the context of the interaction implies that need. A writing conference is different. Students often do not know how much they should contribute. Several students who were new to writing conferences, including Saylor, mentioned during their recalls that they came to the conference to hear their teachers’ advice and these students were following their teachers’ lead. While Saylor eventually contributed language to the sentence-building sequence in her conference, might she have done so sooner had she been explicitly instructed to do so? Second, teachers’ and students’ perceptions of time play a role in how they respond to each other’s requests. This pattern suggests that if teachers want students to co-create material, teachers need to be more patient with longer pauses or lapses or use more direct request types to signal that they desire that involvement. Exploring that implication in detail is beyond the scope of this chapter, suggesting the need for further research. Nevertheless, both implications suggest the need to examine the effects that various interactional patterns have on student engagement and on learning outcomes. Particularly as they relate to social constructivist pedagogies, such research has the potential to provide insights into how teachers and students can enact the range of patterns this analysis identified more effectively.

## CHAPTER SIX

### REQUESTS BY READERS AND WRITERS

Chapter 6 was written as a stand-alone article. It focuses on the roles that students and teachers assume when making requests. It argues that requests can be misunderstood when these roles are misunderstood. One implication of this misunderstanding is that students struggle to convey their role as learners which reduces the ability of the writing conference to improve students' writing and revising abilities.

#### **Introduction**

The previous chapters have explored two forms of requests that occur in teacher-student writing conferences: pauses and extended requests. Both teachers and students recognized pauses and various utterances within extended request sequences as requests. However, the requests that they identified did not overlap completely. Since the core research question of my dissertation is determining how teachers' and students' requests are formed, received, and interpreted during teacher-student writing conferences, this chapter examines the relationships among the following research sub-questions:

- Which utterances do participants identify as their own or as the other participant's requests?
- How does each participant recognize and interpret the other participant's requests?
- What forms do teachers' and students' requests take?

Specifically, I seek to determine if a relationship exists between how teachers and students make requests and the extent to which each identifies the other's requests. As I explore in more detail in the literature review section below, identifying requests also

involves recognizing the roles that teachers and students adopt during the writing conference. This layered approach to analysis is necessary because teachers and students can make requests as teachers or readers, as students or writers, or even both simultaneously (W. B. Horner, 1979). Identifying and analyzing requests requires accounting for such switching or overlapping roles. An examination of requests identified by either or both teachers and students suggests that requests by students enacting a writerly role are recognized as requests by both teachers and students more frequently than requests by teachers who enact a readerly role. In terms of teaching writing, this chapter's findings have implications for how students establish and convey their roles as learners and writers.

### **Literature Review**

One difficulty in identifying and evaluating requests involves determining the beneficiary of the request. According to Searle (1969), an utterance is a request when the speaker asks the listener to perform an action that benefits the speaker. Thus, determining whether an utterance is a request involves, in part, determining which participant benefits from the proposed action. Yet determining who benefits requires identifying the speaker's and listener's relative roles. For instance, the same utterance could be classified as a request if the participants generally have equal status (e.g., writer and reader), as an order if the speaker outranks the listener (e.g., boss/employee, or teacher/student), or as a suggestion if the listener determines that the proposed action benefits the listener instead of the speaker. Orders and suggestions, like requests, fall under the broader category of directives. Given the close relationships among various directives, classifying a given utterance as a request is complicated in everyday conversation.

## **Applying Text-Act Theory**

Writing conferences are based around revision, which involves balancing the roles of reader and writer. W. B. Horner's (1979) text-act theory offers a way to discuss how the roles that participants adopt influence how they discuss a text. Specifically, the findings presented in this section, connected with W. B. Horner's text-act theory, suggest a relationship between participants' roles and how they make and interpret requests. Thus, it is important to understand the various roles that teachers and students adopt during a writing conference, understanding that, at times, the roles may overlap.

The difficulty of identifying requests increases when reading texts, both published and student texts, is thrown into the mix. To handle these difficulties, W. B. Horner (1979) developed "text-act theory," a derivative of Searle's (1969) speech act theory, that acknowledges the need to account for more than one "speaker" or "listener." In W. B. Horner's (1979) text-act theory, speakers become writers and listeners become readers. Unlike speech act theory, which revolves around a single speaker and a single listener, "text-act theory" acknowledges that reading a text involves accounting for multiple roles simultaneously: a "writer in the context," a "voice within the text" [generally for literature], a "context reader," a "reader within the text," and a "text-act reader" present in every individual reading" (p. 166). W. B. Horner explains how text-act theory works in a published text using a letter to the editor as an example. She explains that the writer in context is the original author of the text. The text reader is the intended reader of the letter (i.e., the editor of the newspaper). The context readers are the intended readers of that particular newspaper. Text-act readers are the readers reading a text at a particular moment. The day the letter is published, text-act readers and context readers may be

similar. Since text-act readers often transcend the immediate “context of time and place” (p. 169), readers who find the letter to the editor online and read it ten years later are also text-act readers since they would read and interpret the letter with their own historical and personal experiences that differ from the letter’s original published context. Thus, W. B. Horner (1979) argues that written texts always have two contexts: a historical context and a current-reading context. Furthermore, the people who read texts are always individual “text-act readers” because, even when reading at the same time, they bring their own unique set of experiences to that reading.

Since W. B. Horner’s (1979) theory focuses on reading published texts, the multiple roles of writer and reader are further complicated when student writing is the text. Published texts are somewhat easier to read than student texts, from a text-act theory perspective, in that they have already been through multiple revisions and edits. Reading them involves understanding their ideas, determining and analyzing their rhetorical strategies, and determining how to synthesize their ideas into the reader’s research. Saying this process is easier than reading student texts does not imply, however, that the process is easy.

As W. B. Horner (1979) acknowledges, but only briefly mentions, reading for the purpose of revision complicates her theory. She notes, “In revision, there exists the peculiar situation where the writer and the text-act reader are one and the same person” (p. 169). As W. B. Horner observes, time can create the distance needed for the reader to effectively analyze the writer’s draft. Her point also suggests the value of having writing conferences. Similar to published texts, reading student texts involves understanding the writer’s ideas and analyzing the effectiveness of rhetorical strategies. Yet an additional

layer of work makes reading student texts more difficult. Like any work in progress, student texts may have incomplete analysis, missing or hidden claims, clumsy turns of phrase, or logical or grammatical errors. Since those ideas are still in the refining process, the focus when reading them shifts from analyzing purposeful rhetorical strategies to analyzing, evaluating, and revising less effective strategies. Thus, determining the shifting roles of reader and writer is integral in determining how requests are recognized, interpreted, and acted upon. As these roles are co-created, I discuss specific roles and how they relate to requests in the next section.

### **Co-Creating Interactions**

While W. B. Horner's (1979) text-act theory is a useful heuristic for identifying the roles that participants assume while reading students drafts, it is important to remember that teacher-student writing conferences differ from written feedback because they are oral interactions. Thus, analyzing writing conferences involves re-introducing speech act theory into the equation. Not only do the participants enact various writer and reader roles as they examine the student's draft, they also attune to the spoken dimensions of their interactions. In this sense, participants need to be aware of how the various roles of reader and writer interact with their roles of speaker and listener.

In fact, the roles that teachers and students assume during a writing conference likely affect which utterances they interpret as requests or as something else. A core theme in conversation analysis research and social-constructivist theory is that participants co-create their interactions (Bruffee, 1984; Gumperz, 1982, 1992; Sacks et al., 1974; Spivey, 1997). The co-constructed nature of interaction is true of all interactions, but writing conferences balance multiple demands as participants' roles can

shift widely during the same 15- to 30-minute interaction (DeMott, 2006; Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015; Waring, 2016). For instance, as Carter et al. (2016) note, a teacher may attempt to enact a reader role (i.e., focusing on audience concerns or organization). If the student insists on enacting a student role (i.e., focusing on the minimum number of changes to receive a specific grade), then the teacher will have difficulty maintaining a reader role and will shift into a teacher role. Moreover, W. B. Horner's (1979) text-act theory helps to connect DeMott's (2006) and Mackiewicz and Thompson's (2015) findings in writing conference and writing tutorial situations, respectively, that their participants enacted various roles during scaffolding situations. These findings, connected with text-act theory, suggest a relationship between participants' roles and how they make and interpret requests. Thus, it is important to understand the various roles that teachers and students can adopt during a writing conference, understanding that, at times, the roles may overlap.

**Teacher roles.** Moreover, additional roles beyond writer and reader roles are involved when reading student texts. W. B. Horner's (1979) text-act theory, when applied to works in progress and connected to other talk-about-writing research, suggests the following roles when teacher read students' texts: teacher (Carter et al., 2016), evaluator (DeMott, 2006; W. B. Horner, 1979), or reader (W. B. Horner, 1979). Specifically, teachers may enact a teacher-evaluator role at one moment when identifying problem areas in a text and an audience-reader role at another when enjoying students' insights or turns of phrase (DeMott, 2006; W. B. Horner, 1979). As a text-act reader, the teacher can guide the student's text-act reading. As a rhetorical reader, a teacher could suggest changes that would require more work for the writer (the student). Teachers ask questions

throughout the conference, and sometimes these questions suggest changes. Since any changes ultimately benefit the reader's reading experience, the teacher may view such utterances as requests. Yet, if a student perceives the teacher's current role as a teacher-evaluator, she may view the utterance as an order. If the same utterance is perceived through a teacher-coach lens, the request may be viewed as a suggestion. Thus, both participants need to acknowledge shifts in roles for the listener to perceive a speaker's request as intended.

**Student roles.** Just as teachers enact multiple roles, students can assume multiple roles including reader (W. B. Horner, 1979; Spivey, 1997), student (Carter et al., 2016; W. B. Horner, 1979), or writer (Carter et al., 2016; W. B. Horner, 1979). As a reader, a student can analyze elements of the text to determine how they work to convey her meaning and may shift into a writer role to suggest her own revisions. As a student, she may be more concerned about her grade. Again, from moment to moment, these roles can shift, even within a speaker's turn.

**Roles' effect on conferences.** How speakers envision their roles potentially impacts when and how they ask questions and the extent to which they engage in co-creating knowledge during the writing conference. For instance, a teacher (Speaker A) may act as an audience for the text. In this readerly role, Speaker A may focus on how rhetorical aspects of the text—its purpose, the match of the language to the audience, the depth of examples, or the organization of the piece—contribute to the text's readability. While reading as a reader, Speaker A may notice a problem with these areas and shift into an evaluator role. Once the issue is identified, Speaker A may shift into a teacher role that provides instruction as to how to address the identified issue. In discussing these



roles, it is possible for Speaker A to react to how the text is written (reader) while encouraging the student-writer (Speaker B) to make changes. Meanwhile, Speaker B may focus either on the discussion's effect on the paper's grade (a student role) or on improving the paper's quality (a writer role). At times, Speaker B may assume a readerly role with Speaker A to identify potential changes to the text. If Speaker B is more concerned about the potential grade on the paper (a student role), he may see any proposed change, regardless of the teacher's assumed role, as a suggestion. In such a role, Speaker B may perceive a proposed change as action that benefits his grade through improving the paper. Thus, the utterance benefits the listener, becoming a suggestion. At any moment during the writing conference, both the teacher and the student need to recognize each other's roles in order to interpret either speaker's utterances accurately.

### **Data and Methodology**

The data for this chapter comes from audio- and video-recorded writing conferences and stimulated recall sessions from four teachers and up to four willing students from their intermediate writing classes at an open-enrollment university in the Intermountain West. Using equipment that I provided and set up, teachers recorded their first scheduled writing conference of the semester with students who had previously consented to participate in the study. These conferences, scheduled from 15 or 30 minutes, ranged from 7 to 40 minutes long.

After examining student participants' Background Surveys that identified their previous experiences in talk-about-writing situations, motivation levels coming into their writing class, and language backgrounds, I asked selected students, representing a range of backgrounds (related to languages spoken or written, confidence and motivation

levels, and prior writing conference experience) to meet with me for a stimulated recall session. In these recall sessions, the participant and I reviewed the video recording of his or her writing conference. When either the participant or I noticed a request, we stopped the recording, identified the request, and noted what was happening at the time of the conference and discussed any context needed to understand the request. Requests were defined by the participants. During the instructions prior to watching the conference together, the participants and I discussed their definition of requests with my encouraging participants to provide their own definition. Participants' spoken definitions tended to reflect Searle's (1969) definition of a request—an utterance where the speaker asks the listener to do something that benefits the speaker. Nevertheless, not all of the utterances that the participants identified as requests would fit patterns or sentence structures noted by previous scholars (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Trosborg, 1994; Vilar Beltrán & Martínez-Flor, 2008) while others that these scholars would label as requests were rejected as requests by some participants.

For these recall sessions, I attempted to meet with participants within a week of the writing conference. While that one-week window occurred for half of the recall sessions, the others occurred between two weeks and a month later. The longest gap between the conference and the recall session was four weeks. At the end of the semester-long study period, I had collected twelve teacher- and student-recall sets that included the original writing conference, the stimulated recall with the student, and the stimulated recall with the teacher. Most of these students also provided their final drafts, although two students' data sets lack either the conference draft or the final draft.

Both the writing conference and stimulated recall recordings were transcribed. I further formatted writing conference transcripts using conversation analysis protocols (see Appendix F for the transcription key), divided them into intonation units, and noted topic sequences. Teacher- and student-identified requests were identified through the recall sessions and highlighted on the Word transcripts: yellow when both identified a request, blue for student-identified requests, and green for teacher-identified requests. Pauses were timed for utterances identified as requests and those immediately around them. Once imported into NVivo, requests in the writing conferences were coded for the participant that identified them and for the roles that the participants assumed at the time: teacher or reader (for teachers) and student or writer (for students).

All four full-time faculty involved in this study, two men and two women, had taught writing for at least fourteen years and had used a writing conference approach for most of that time. Of the three teachers featured in this chapter, Caitlin Meier and Ken Leighton had used writing conferences the longest at 24 and 30 years, respectively. Emily Forest was not far behind them with 20 years of experience using writing conferences. Leighton and Meier were tenured while Forest was full-time but not tenured. The twelve students who completed recall sessions along with their teachers were evenly divided among men and women; they ranged in age from 18 to 29, though most fell in the 18-21 year-old age bracket; seven had never had a writing conference while the other five had had minimal or some experience with writing conferences; six students were bilingual, but only three had learned English after their first language.

This chapter focuses its analysis on the requests made by two instructors (Caitlin Meier and Kenneth Leighton) and two students (Peter Hale and Tim Drake). Hale and

Drake are neither Meier’s nor Leighton’s students. Table 7 provides a complete list of the teacher-student dyads.

Table 7

*Teacher-Student Writing Conference Dyads for Completed Student and Teacher Recalls*

Student	Teacher
Tim Drake	Emily Forest
Peter Hale	Emily Forest
Rachel Westbrook	Emily Forest
Julia Kelli	Ken Leighton
Austin Bancraft	Ken Leighton
Yeti Grant	Ken Leighton
Rachel Seymour	Caitlin Meier
Kimberly Saylor	Caitlin Meier
Romeo Escobar	Caitlin Meier
Tonya Medina	Malcolm Reynolds
Suzanne Adkins	Malcolm Reynolds
Eddie Michaels	Malcolm Reynolds

*Note.* All names are pseudonyms.

Both Hale’s and Drake’s data was chosen for further analysis in this chapter because, of the twelve writing conferences analyzed, Hale and Drake were the only students who specifically requested general feedback on their writing. Both Drake and Hale were students in Emily Forest’s Honors section of Intermediate Writing. Both indicated a high degree of confidence in their writing and motivation to improve their writing (see Appendix G). Although both noted on their Background Surveys that they had not had a writing conference prior to the study semester, Drake updated his response during his recall after remembering a “forgettable” writing conference. Hale’s and Drake’s data comes from their writing conferences with their teacher (Forest), their recall

sessions, and Forest's recall sessions of both students' writing conferences. The section titled "Writer's Requests" provides the analysis of their requests about their writing.

Meier's and Leighton's recalls were chosen for further analysis because both explicitly mentioned taking on the persona of the audience and personifying the paper on some level. Since their doing so aligns with roles that participants may assume during writing conferences (DeMott, 2006; Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015; Waring, 2016), examining the recall sessions where Meier and Leighton mentioned assuming these personas and the writing conference segments related to those sections of the recalls became worthy of further review. Moreover, since the recognition and uptake of requests by both participants is part of this dissertation study's research questions, I also examined the students' recall sessions for the same point in the writing conference. Thus, the data from the Meier and Leighton comes from their recall sessions, which each covered three students and the writing conferences of those same students.

Although the analysis focuses on Meier and Leighton, it is important to understand their students' backgrounds. Their students varied widely in their confidence levels. Both Kelli (Leighton) and Saylor (Meier) rated their conference as low, Bancraft (Leighton) rated his as high, and Seymour (Meier), Escobar (Meier), and Grant (Leighton) rated their confidence as average. Despite this variety in their confidence levels, most of the six had high or very high motivation to improve their writing. Only Grant rated his as average. Similarly, all six students recorded English as their first language. Only Escobar and Bancraft had learned another language, Spanish and Japanese respectively. The section titled "Readers' Requests" provides the analysis for Meier's and Leighton's reader requests.

## **Analysis**

The analysis focuses on requests during the writing conferences that teachers, students, or both identified during the stimulated recall sessions. The first subsection analyzes students' requests when they seem to engage in the role of writer. The second subsection analyzes teachers' requests when they seem to suggest, through their recall sessions, that they engage in the role of reader.

### **Identifying Writers' Requests**

Hale's and Drake's requests for additional feedback and more critiques of their writing are among the utterances that both the students and their teacher identified as requests. The requests to be analyzed in this section occur toward the end of their writing conferences. As shown in Table 8 on the next page, Forest identified 12 utterances as requests while Hale identified 23 utterances as requests. They jointly identified 11 utterances as requests. Thus, the section under "Number of requests identified by," particularly the columns "Teacher," "Both," and "Student" should be viewed as a Venn diagram where the Both column represents the number of requests jointly identified by both the student and the teacher. In other words, of the 12 requests that Forest identified, Hale identified eleven of them as requests. Meanwhile, of the 23 utterances that Hale identified as requests, Forest identified eleven of them as requests. The total number of requests is calculated by adding the requests identified by the teacher and the student and subtracting the ones that they both identified. Drake and Forest's writing conference reveals a smaller number of total requests than Hale and Forest's conference. Yet similar to the pattern noted in the Hale-Forest conference, Drake identifies more requests than Forest: 12 to her 9. They jointly identify 6 of these utterances as requests.

Table 8

*Utterances Identified as Requests by Student, Teacher, or Both*

Teacher	Number of requests identified by <sup>a</sup>				% of both identified by		% participant identified to total identified <sup>c</sup>		
	Teacher	<b>Both<sup>b</sup></b>	Student	Total	Teacher	Student	Teacher to total	Student to total	Both to total
Hale (Forest)	12	<b>11</b>	23	24	92%	48%	4%	50%	46%
Drake (Forest)	9	<b>6</b>	12	15	67%	50%	20%	40%	40%

*Note.* <sup>a</sup>“Number of requests identified” records where a participant identified an utterance as a request during a writing conference regardless of whether the request was made by the Teacher or by the Student.

<sup>b</sup>“Both” refers to utterances that both Teacher and Student identified as a request during their writing conference. The Teacher, Both, and Student columns should be considered like a Venn diagram. The number of requests identified separately by each person overlaps in the Both column.

<sup>c</sup>The closer the percentages are to zero in the “Teacher to total” and the “Student to total” columns, the more the requests align between teachers and students.

Rather than requesting help on specific aspects of the paper that they have been discussing with their instructor, they ask for more general advice about how to move their writing to “the next level.” As mentioned earlier, they acknowledge and demonstrate confidence in their writing. At the same time, they understand that they need to learn more about writing and develop even greater facility with handling the demands of academic writing. However, they seem unclear about how to identify new benchmarks for writing at that next level.

The ways that they asked for this feedback differ, and these differences have effects on how the teacher responds. This became clear when analyzing the format of the first request that the teacher co-identifies and comparing it to the format of the follow-up

request, the utterance that the teacher did not identify as a request. I begin with Hale's requests.

**Hale's requests.** Excerpt 1 shows the sequence that includes Hale's related requests. This request comes toward the middle of the conference after Hale and Forest have reviewed the written comments that Forest has already made on his paper. In other conferences, finishing the review of the comments led to ending the conference. In Hale's case, he uses the transition point to begin a new topic sequence. The requests that both identified are marked in yellow and with B=> while requests that Forest identifies are in green and T=> and that Hale identifies are in blue and S=>.

(1) "One thing to improve"

Hale-Forest Conference

PH<sup>(S)</sup>: Peter Hale (student)    EF<sup>(T)</sup>: Emily Forest (teacher)

B=> teacher- and student-identified request

T=> teacher-identified request

S=> student-identified request

12:08

- 1 PH<sup>(S)</sup>:    B=> Um, if there is one thing that I can- need to improve the most in my  
2 writing, what would you say it is/  
3 besides submitting my philosophy paper accidentally [@@@@@].
- 4 EF<sup>(T)</sup>:        Oh, not a problem.  
5 That happens. (.7)  
6 And I do that very same thing.  
7 No. No.  
8 Um, (1.9) °I don't know if I can (1.5) pin down° (.7)  
9 Because (.4) >you have< (.4) more strengths:: °than weaknesses°
- 10            S=> So (.9) uh:: >let me think about that for a while<
- 11 PH<sup>(S)</sup>:        Okay.
- 12 EF<sup>(T)</sup>:        Because I don't know that I can come up with an answer on the spot.  
13 You just, have very strong skills,  
14 So I'll think about it.



15 PH<sup>(S)</sup>:            Okay.

16 12:48

17 EF<sup>(T)</sup>:     B=>  Would you remind me that I'm supposed to be thinking about it/

18            S=>  @@ (3.2)

Three aspects of Hale's request are intriguing: his use of the words "one" and "improve" (line 1), the phrase "what would you say it is/" (line 2), and his tag "besides submitting my philosophy paper accidentally" (line 3). By emphasizing "one" and coupling it with "improve," Hale suggests that he is looking for a reasonable or realistic number of changes to focus on. Doing so could suggest either a student or a writer role. Minimizing the amount of work needed might be associated with students (Yoder & Saylor, 2002), but writers also need to maximize their time since they cannot work on everything at once. In the recall, Forest said that she viewed Hale's request as a student wanting to improve his grade. Hale's question "What would you say it is/" positions Forest as a writing expert, someone qualified to provide a response.

After putting Hale at ease over the incorrect submission (lines 4-7), Forest's response suggests both that she interprets his utterance correctly as a request and her difficulty in fulfilling it (lines 8-10). Specifically, she buys time for an answer. The stuttering of "um" followed by a lengthy pause of 1.9 seconds, the under-the-breath quality of "I don't know if I can (1.5) pin down" interrupted by another long pause (1.5 seconds) and concluding with a significant pause (.7 seconds) are subtle cues that she is not sure what to say and suggest that she is taking time to consider his request. Furthermore, the content of her utterance on line 9 linguistically emphasizes his "strengths" by both emphasizing the word "strengths" and uttering "than weaknesses" in an undertone. By line 10, she explicitly requests more time to come up with an answer.

Hale immediately agrees (line 11), and Forest further explains why she needs more time (lines 12-13). She concludes this turn by making a declarative statement, instead of a request, “So I’ll think about it” (line 14) that both acknowledges that she has processed Hale’s acceptance of her request and commits herself to fulfill his. After Hale’s second “okay” acknowledges his agreement with the plan (line 15), Forest immediately asks Hale, “Would you remind me that I’m supposed to be thinking about it/” (line 17)—another request that both identified.

Why is she having such difficulty responding to this request? The answer may lie in the way the request is phrased. Hale asks for only “one” way to “improve.” Given that Forest notes that he has “more strengths than weaknesses,” identifying one area to improve might be considered relatively easy. Hale may have thought that reducing his expectations to “one” would be better than asking, “How can I improve?” or “What can I do to improve?” Both suggest a list more than a single, highly-ranked task. It is also important to note, when considering this request, that Hale received 93/100 on his paper. The changes that Forest and Hale have discussed about his paper have related to using sources, finding research, and perhaps narrowing his focus. Since Forest did not mention those items, it is possible that she sees those items as paper-specific rather than as areas that this writer needs to focus on generally.

Forest’s difficulty in answering the question may stem, then, from the form the question takes as well as the role she believes Hale has adopted. By asking for a specific item to work on, Hale asks his teacher to immediately reflect on the writing that they are currently discussing, as well as any previous assignments, and distill all the feedback to a single suggestion. While it is likely that Hale was trying to minimize the difficulty of

request, the irony is that the form of his request actually increased Forest's difficulty in answering it. Forest's difficulty is alluded to by Connors and Lunsford (1993). They argue that sheer number of students with whom teachers interact prevents them from having the time to know their students' work and distinguish it sufficiently from other students to supply the help that they need. Forest's response to Hale suggests that part of the reason that she could not respond to his request was because she did not know what to say. Although she asked for more time, even asking him to remind her to give him more specific feedback, she was unable to provide a definitive answer in this sequence.

About a minute and a half after the sequence in Excerpt 1 ends, Hale returns to his request (Excerpt 2). This time rather than asking the teacher to provide a short list of items he can work on, he responds to her closing question "And, uh, any other questions about anything?" with both a rationale for his previous request for help with his writing and a new request: "Give me your tougher feedback."

(2) "Tougher feedback"

Hale-Forest (numbering continues from Excerpt 1)

PH<sup>(S)</sup>: Peter Hale (student) EF<sup>(T)</sup>: Emily Forest (teacher)

B=> teacher- and student-identified request

T=> teacher-identified request

S=> student-identified request

15:27

55 EF<sup>(T)</sup>: And, uh, any other questions about anything/

56 PH<sup>(S)</sup>: No.

57 And I think like ( ) while I want an A in this class, the most important  
58 goal is like getting better writing

59 So if you ever have like- you can like

60 S=> Give me your tougher feedback.

61 EF<sup>(T)</sup>: okay

62 PH<sup>(S)</sup>: More like suggestions and stuff.

63 Because ( ) it- like- that is why I'm taking [this class.]

64 EF<sup>(T)</sup>: [Good.]

65 PH<sup>(S)</sup>: Even though it's a GE requirement,

66 EF<sup>(T)</sup>: good.

67 PH<sup>(S)</sup>: Like it's so important to me to have, like, the [good writing] skills

68 EF<sup>(T)</sup>: [°good°.]

69 yes.

70 PH<sup>(S)</sup>: because that's like (.7) part of what's gonna (going to) be in my career,

71 EF<sup>(T)</sup>: yes.

72 PH<sup>(S)</sup>: That's like what I want,

73 And it's important, like when you're reading, (.9)

74 when you're doing other things to like have those skills

75 EF<sup>(T)</sup>: °That's true.°

76 PH<sup>(S)</sup>: I just (.7) want to.

77 [That- that's like the most important part for me.]

78 EF<sup>(T)</sup>: [I am- I am going to break] out the whip,

79 and I am going to make your life miserable.

80 PH<sup>(S)</sup>: @@@ I mean you don't have to fail me, but

81 EF<sup>(T)</sup>: (unclear)@@@

82 PH<sup>(S)</sup>: (unclear)@@

83 EF<sup>(T)</sup>: No, I'm kidding.

84 I'm kidding.

85 I will definitely be harder on you.

86 PH<sup>(S)</sup>: Okay.

87 EF<sup>(T)</sup>: @@@@

88 I'm kind of a pushover.

89 So it's going to be hard for me to be hard on you.

90 But I will.

While Forest noted in the recall that she did not recognize Hale's utterance requesting "tougher feedback" (line 60) as a request, her response after Hale finishes

providing a rationale for wanting the “tougher feedback” (lines 57- 74) suggests that she did. She jokingly responds, “I am- I am going to break out the whip, and I am going to make your life miserable” (lines 78-79). The implication in her response is that she intends to grant the tougher feedback that Hale desires. Yet in the recall, which occurred about a month after this conference, Forest noted that Hale had not reminded her about his request nor asked again for additional feedback. Forest concluded that he was not serious. While possible, it is also plausible that her hesitancy in responding suggested to Hale that Forest either did not know his writing well enough to respond or that she did not have the time to respond.

**Drake’s requests.** Drake also requests advice about his writing, but his request produces more uptake and discussion from Forest. Like Hale, Drake repeats his request, but he does so within the same sequence rather than in a subsequent one.

Excerpt 3 provides the sequence where Drake makes his initial request and the repeated follow-up request. This particular sequence comes about halfway through Forest and Drake’s writing conference. Forest had spent the first half of the conference reviewing how to fix some spelling errors and find DOIs or URLs for sources—the extent of her concerns with his paper. Earlier in the conference, she had mentioned that he had received a solid A (94 percent) on the Midterm Researched Argument. Throughout the conference, she demonstrates her confidence that he can successfully complete the Researched Argument paper. This context is important since the sequence where Drake asks about his writing contrasts with his demonstrated writing proficiency that has been the focus of the conference prior to Excerpt 3.

Drake's initial request is noted on line 1. He begins with a preparatory move (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989): "And that was another thing I wanted to ask you on" (line 1) before he gets to his point: "how is my writing?" (line 2).

(3) "How is my writing?"

Drake-Forest

TD<sup>(S)</sup>: Tim Drake (student) EF<sup>(T)</sup>: Emily Forest (teacher)

B=> teacher- and student-identified request

T=> teacher-identified request

S=> student-identified request

09:19

- 1 TD<sup>(S)</sup>: S=> And that was another thing I wanted to ask you on is like <how,>  
2 B=> how is my writing/ (.6)  
3 I feel like, (.5) 'cause (because) personally, like I feel like (.) um, like my  
4 senior year of high school (.5) and first year of college, (.5) I was- I was  
5 a pretty good writer.  
6 I'm not gonna lie.  
7 EF<sup>(T)</sup>: Well, good.  
8 [Good.  
9 TD<sup>(S)</sup>: [Yeah. But then] uh, coming into (.5) and even like my Shakespeare  
10 class, I feel like I wrote really well.  
11 And then (.5) doing these, I don't know if it's just like you pushing us,  
12 which like is your kind of job, ya know.  
13 But I feel like I'm not doing as well (.) or like growing. (.4)  
14 ((On "growing" Drake lifts his hand, horizontal and parallel to the  
15 floor, from his stomach to above his head.))  
16 I feel like I'm like downgrading my writing.  
17 ((As he starts "I feel" his hand lowers. On "downgrading" he abruptly  
18 stops where he had begun the hand motion for "growing.))  
19 S=> So, I mean, do you, like (.5) do you think my writing is okay/  
20 Is it=  
21 EF<sup>(T)</sup>: You got a 94 out of 100.  
22 That's pretty good.  
23 TD<sup>(S)</sup>: @@ Yeah, okay. All right, yeah.  
24 That is pretty good.

He pauses briefly, long enough for Forest to take the floor (line 2). When an immediate response is not forthcoming, he quickly moves to an explanation of his request (lines 3-18) before allowing Forest to respond (line 21). In this explanation, Drake notes how his writing was good in high school and even as he began college, noting, “I was a pretty good writer. I’m not gonna lie” (lines 4-6). The phrase “I’m not gonna lie” suggests that he may view his positive evaluation of his writing as bragging. As he nears the end of his turn, his statements about his prior facility with writing become important as background information and as the contrast that gives rise to his request.

As he arrives at the core of his argument, highlighted with hand gestures, his concern becomes evident: he is concerned about maintaining his confidence in writing. In fact, his words and hand gestures through his explanation mark the shift from high confidence to diminishing confidence. As he moves to talking about his current experience with writing, he marks the shift with “But then” (line 9); he attempts at an explanation for the changed confidence, “I don’t know if it’s just like you pushing us” (line 11); and concludes with negative assessments of writing: “not doing as well” and “[not] . . . growing” (line 13) to “I feel like I’m like downgrading my writing” (line 16). Drake’s use of “I don’t know if” (line 11) is important because it takes the form of an epistemic downgrade (I. Park, 2015). As I. Park notes, an epistemic downgrade positions the speaker as less knowledgeable. It is a way of asking for general help when the speaker does not know what specific help he needs.

This particular section from lines 13-18 is noteworthy because the words “growing” and “downgrading” are accompanied by hand gestures. “Growing” starts around his navel and reaches his forehead where “downgrading” returns to the position

where “growing” started. Not only does the wording suggest his diminished confidence, his hand gestures suggest that his writing quality is not only diminishing, it is reverting to what it was before starting Forest’s class. The form of the epistemic downgrade from earlier in his turn combined with the contrast between “growing” and “diminishing” together convey his concern about having feelings about his writing that he has not experienced before and, thus, does not quite understand.

Having reached the end of his rationale behind the request, he repeats it. In fact, while the questions are similarly themed, they are not the same question. The first question is an open-ended question: “how is my writing?” (line 2). The repeated version is a simpler, polar question: “So, I mean, do you, like (.5) do you think my writing is okay?” (line 19). Certainly, the emphasis on “is” (line 2) suggests that he wants an evaluation of his writing. But that evaluative concern is more apparent in the restated request with the words “do you think” and “okay.” The entire sequence, which is dominated by Drake’s turns, is designed to show that his confidence has taken something of a hit. By identifying the concern beneath the request, he indicates that he wants Forest to confirm or refute, preferably refute, his feeling that his writing has resulted in poorer writing outcomes (the source of his diminishing confidence).

Forest’s response is telling. First, she demonstrates some initial shock at the lack of confidence displayed by the request by pointing to the score on the paper that they have been discussing: “You got a 94 out of 100” (line 21). Drake acknowledges that that is a good score (line 23-24). When I first read Forest’s response, I thought that she was dismissing the validity of the question. Certainly, focusing on grades when the student seems to be asking for a more in-depth discussion seems to reflect a fixed mindset rather



than the growth mindset (Dweck, 2000, 2008; Schubert, 2017) that the student seems to be channeling. If the sequence had ended here, I perhaps would have been justified in that response.

The sequence, however, does not end. Where Forest had difficulty responding to Hale's request, she engages Drake in a discussion seeking to tease out the nature of his diminishing confidence. Rather than leaving the discussion after noting his high score, Forest alludes to the explanation that Drake has provided (Excerpt 4, line 27).

(4) "A different type of writing"

Drake-Forest Conference (numbering continued from Excerpt 3)

TD<sup>(S)</sup>: Tim Drake (student)    EF<sup>(T)</sup>: Emily Forest (teacher)

10:06

- 27 EF<sup>(T)</sup>:    =>    So, it's a different, maybe a different type of writing.
- 28 TD<sup>(S)</sup>:            Okay.
- 29 EF<sup>(T)</sup>:    =>    So, it's- have you done a lot of research based writing or was it more  
30            opinion based or reflective writing/
- 31 TD<sup>(S)</sup>:            It was a lot of opinion and reflective.
- 32 EF<sup>(T)</sup>:            More reading response.
- 33 TD<sup>(S)</sup>:            Mm-hm, yeah. Reading response. Yeah.
- 34 EF<sup>(T)</sup>:            And what's great is some of the basic skills still transfer.
- 35 TD<sup>(S)</sup>:            Okay.
- 36 EF<sup>(T)</sup>:            'Cause you've got good writing skills.
- 37 TD<sup>(S)</sup>:            Thank you.
- 38 EF<sup>(T)</sup>:            Um, I think research based writing um, ( ) you'll still-you're gonna go  
39            into MD, aren't ya/
- 40 TD<sup>(S)</sup>:            Mm-hm, yeah.
- 41                    But I'm majoring in English.
- 42 EF<sup>(T)</sup>:            So, medical school, you're gonna need research-based writing.
- 43 TD<sup>(S)</sup>:            Oh yeah.
- 44 EF<sup>(T)</sup>:    =>    So, I think that'll be helpful to you and I think you've got strong skills.

- 45 TD<sup>(S)</sup>:           Okay. Cool.  
 46 EF<sup>(T)</sup>:           Yeah.  
 47 TD<sup>(S)</sup>:           Thank you.

Rather than confirming his explanation as a “downgrade” in his skills, she offers an alternative explanation for his reduced confidence and perceived lack of skill: “So, it’s a different, maybe a different type of writing” (line 27). She then suggests three potential genres of writing as types of writing he may have engaged in: research, opinion-based, and reflective writing. When Drake acknowledges that his prior writing assignments have focused on opinion and reflective writing (line 31 and 33), Forest notes that many skills that he acquired during that time will “transfer” (line 34).

In the next sequence (Excerpt 5), she focuses on the writing process as a new paradigm for Drake to consider. Specifically, Forest maintains the floor in this part of the sequence to focus on writing as a process.

(5) “Believer in the process”

Drake-Forest (numbering continued from Excerpt 4)

TD<sup>(S)</sup>: Tim Drake (student)   EF<sup>(T)</sup>: Emily Forest (teacher)

10:57

- 50 EF<sup>(T)</sup>:   => I don’t think anybody (.6) gets it (.8) perfect the first time.  
 51           => I- I’m a believer in the process and so, sure.  
 52           We can go over these sentences and polish ‘em and say “what did I  
 53           really mean to say there/”  
 54           => The fact that we do that doesn’t mean you don’t have writing skills.  
 55 TD<sup>(S)</sup>:   Right. (.8)  
 56 EF<sup>(T)</sup>:   => The best authors (.4) will say (.5) they rewrite extensively.  
 57           ((Forest lightly pounds the desk for emphasis three times.))  
 58 TD<sup>(S)</sup>:   Right.  
 59 EF<sup>(T)</sup>:   So, (.6) I think that’s the sign of a good writer is that you’re able to  
 60           do the rewriting.  
 61           Not that it comes out perfect the first time.

Forest emphasizes “any” (line 50) to clarify that writing requires work and rewriting for all. She states her mindset about revision as a “believer in the process” (line 51). The fact that she uses the terminology of writing instructors suggests that she is trying to help Drake see writing as more than a final paper or even a final score on the paper. After giving an example of the kind of work that can be done (lines 52-53), her contrasting emphases on “do” and “don’t” in the next line enable her to bolster Drake’s confidence. He is still a good writer. In fact, she redefines what it means to be a good writer when she says, “The best authors (.4) will say (.5) they rewrite extensively” (line 56). In other words, what makes someone a good writer is not that they get it right the first time but that they work at the writing, often for long periods of time, until it works. In fact, Forest reiterates the ideas connected to this point in a summary statement: “So, (.6) I think that’s the sign of a good writer is that you’re able to do the rewriting. Not that it comes out perfect the first time” (lines 59-61). By responding to Drake’s request about his writing confidence, Forest seems attuned to the potential damage that a growing lack of confidence could cause in a good writer. Furthermore, she seems to identify the source of the diminished confidence as a misunderstanding of how good writing is obtained. In essence, she takes the time to respond to the emotional appeal underlying Drake’s request. Whether Forest intended to or not, she recognized Drake’s request as more of an affective request than a discourse request (Black, 1998). Perhaps partially in response to this sequence, Drake rated how well his teacher understood his requests between a 5 and a 6 (on a 6-point scale).

Comparing Drake’s and Hale’s sequences suggests that the way a request is made affects not so much whether the request is recognized but how effectively it can be

granted. Forest recognizes and is willing to grant both requests, even though she notes that both students are great students. She has no worries about their ability to do well when writing for her class. While her response to Hale may seem dismissive, it seems more likely, given her response to Drake, that she actually did not know what to say. Had Hale reminded her later in the semester of his request, ideally with some time for her to respond, I believe that she would have found a way to address his request. Drake's request, however, focused more on helping him maintain a strong confidence level. Given that he was already a good writer, on some level it seems that Forest recognized in Drake's request a plea for validation, an acknowledgement that the "downgrading" he felt in his skills was a temporary feeling in response to new intellectual demands. This is a potentially dangerous moment for Drake. Examples appear even in this data set of strong writers who lack confidence in their own skills. Potentially seeking to prevent Drake from becoming a strong writer who lacks confidence, Forest spends time having a discussion that is intended to give Drake enough confidence to wait for his evaluation of his skill set to return to prior levels.

Despite understanding the requests themselves, Forest acknowledged, in both the conference and more explicitly later in the recall, that she was not sure how to respond to Drake's and Hale's requests. Specifically, she was not convinced that their requests for writing instruction were legitimate. Instead, she interpreted their requests as grade-related inquires ("why did I lose 5-7 percentage points?") rather than as legitimate concerns for improving their writing. Forest also mentioned that the honors students have "learned to do school," and they are more interested in keeping up their good grades. Given the experiences that Forest mentioned in her recall session of students asking why they lost

seven out of a hundred points, I can appreciate her skepticism. At the same time, my recalls with both Drake and Hale suggest that their requests were sincere.

The key aspect of these requests is that the initial request of a writer asking for help with his writing is recognized during the conference and in the recall of it by both students and teachers. Whether the students adopted a student role or a writer role, the teacher recognized the student participant's manner of asking as a request. Because the request asks for information that the teacher has and providing that information comes at the cost of the teacher's time, these requests feel "real" since the stakes are real for the person asking. This finding suggests that the legitimacy of the role is integral in determining whether utterances are recognized as requests. *Writer* and *student* are legitimate roles for students. Each student wrote his or her own paper, making each a *writer*. Each student also performs the student functions of completing coursework and attending required meetings with their teacher, making each a *student*. If the student switches between these roles during the conference, even within utterances during the same turn, this would be no different than me switching between a teacher role when grading papers and a spousal role when my husband walks into the room. I inhabit both roles, so both would be real.

### **Identifying Readers' Requests**

This contrast between real roles and assumed roles becomes important in the analysis of teacher's requests. In their respective recalls, both Meier and Leighton note that their suggestions for improvements to the papers were requests in that they acted as the paper's voice. Referring to Searle's definition of a request from the perspective of the paper acting as the speaker, the teacher (acting as the paper's voice) asks that the student

listener make a change to the paper that will benefit the paper. In other words, when teachers act as the paper's voice, they present concerns that would benefit the paper. As Meier noted in her recall when reviewing her conference with Escobar: "This goes back to my overall approach that I try to convey to them it's not what I want in the paper, it's what the paper wants. Like this paragraph wants it."

**Meier's requests.** Meier's recall comments were associated with the section where she and Escobar are working on a topic sentence (see Excerpt 6). As background, Escobar's conference with Meier was his first-ever writing conference experience although he had had peer reviews in the past. Escobar had noted an average confidence level on his background survey. Although Meier evaluated Escobar's writing skills as excellent, she had perceived his relatively low confidence in class. In fact, she had noted in the recall that one of her goals in her conference with Escobar was to help him recognize himself as a good writer.

In the excerpt below, the utterances that Meier identified as requests are marked (T=>). In his recall, Escobar did not identify specific utterances as requests. Rather he identified the entire sequence as a request. In fact, it is not until the end of the sequence when Meier asks for his evaluation of the completed sentence that he co-identifies the comprehension request as a request (B=>).



Then, she identifies a concern during the first part of her request, “What we should do is check how the paragraph begins” (line 7). She continues her turn by asking Escobar to consider whether that concluding point aligns with the beginning point (lines 8-9).

What is important to note about this phrasing is that Meier uses the word *we* to position Escobar and herself as partners in revising the paper. In her recall, Meier pointed out that using *we* is a conscious choice.

It’s something I decided at some point, I decided to do more of, to use the *we* rather than putting sort of like—creating this implication that it’s the students fault or something like that and then *we* makes it more sort of a, “Let’s do this together, I’m thinking with you.” (Meier recall with Escobar)

The co-revision of the student writer’s text is clearly important. She does not want the student to feel inferior in the process (“like it’s the student’s fault”). Rather she wants the writer to retain authorship over the paper. At the same time, as the writing expert, she can guide student writers to improvements that they could not make alone. Later in this same sequence in the recall, she points to the theoretical underpinnings of her use of *we*, noting, “. . . I think this comes from that point I learned in graduate school, writing is a social act or something like that” (Meier recall with Escobar).

Connecting Meier’s perspective that “writing is a social act” with her stated approach that she wants to convey “what the paper wants,” Meier’s use of *we* takes on more significance. “We” not only positions her teacher role as working with the student, it also aligns with the text-act reader who is working with the writer. Together, reader and writer can clarify what the paper needs to convey the writer’s ideas clearly and meaningfully. If, as Meier says, “any good paper would want this,” Meier also uses *we* to



position herself as the paper's voice and to ask, as if she were the paper, for the writer to give the paper the structure, tone, and syntax needed to meet the reader's needs and the writer's purpose. In this sense, *we* can encompass the roles of teacher, reader, and paper (from the teacher's side) as well as writer and student (from the student's side), so that all of those roles are working simultaneously to create positive changes to the student's paper.

As noted, Escobar recognized the request embedded in this section. However, he did not identify each individual request in this section as Meier did. Instead, he noted the synopsis of the request saying,

That was a huge request that she had. The problem with that is also just going back to former knowledge of formatting a paragraph. I never really knew that we should start and end with the same topic in a paragraph. That was what she was requesting of me, was going through and fixing that. Tie in the beginning to the very end using the same, you know, topic and for this paragraph it was the brain and will power. (Escobar recall of Escobar-Meier conference)

What he either did not recognize or did not find meaningful enough during the recall session to pause and note were the individual utterances that made up the request. Instead, he recognized the request to "tie the beginning to the very end" as the full request that is not fully stated until the end of the sequence. In this sense, aspects of this sequence act like the extended requests discussed in Chapter 5: the gloss of the request is hinted at in the opening question, "The question is, the way you started here, is that the same point that we have at the end/" (lines 8-9). However, rather than completely writing a sentence as she had done earlier in the conference, Meier makes more comprehension

requests such as “You see what I’m asking/” (line 10) and “See/” (line 19) to make sure that he is following along.

These comprehension requests, particularly the first one, contribute to Escobar’s continued engagement with the discussion. Although Escobar answers most of these comprehension requests with a typical affirmative answer (Artman, 2007), the first one follows a slightly different pattern. The first comprehension request in this sequence is a full-sentence: “You see what I’m asking/” (line 10). Meier’s question is framed to ask for the student’s input. Following Escobar’s affirmative answer, Meier follows with another question. That is, once the student confirms that he understands the concern that Meier has identified in lines 8-9 (line 11), she solicits his involvement in developing an approach to correcting the issue that she has identified: “What do you think/” (line 12). Each request that Meier identified in her recall had either a rhetorical purpose to make a change in the paper or to coordinate the work of the writing conference. Thus, as noted in previous extended request sequences, several requests are embedded in developing content.

What is also apparent, at least in this case, is that the comprehension request here does not end the sequence. It begins the building process by allowing the student to acknowledge that he understands the issue being addressed. Moreover, the question “what do you think/” could have multiple meanings. While the question could be interpreted as a request to add content, he did not do that here. Instead, he interpreted the question as a request to articulate the shape of the issue—to put the problem that Meier has identified in his own words. Having established that common ground, the teacher encourages the student to develop wording that will address the issue.

She concludes the sequence by jotting down some notes and saying, “you know what to put in here” (line 39, not included in Excerpt 6). So even though the extended request does not produce a full sentence, in this interaction, the entire sequence helps Escobar to understand that he needs to tie the end to the beginning and shows him how to do it while leaving the details of doing it up to him. In this sense, the sequence creates a revision request and scaffolds instruction to enable Escobar to successfully perform the request.

What Meier’s and Escobar’s individual recall sessions suggest is that students may be more oriented to requests associated with making changes to the paper rather than with individual utterances that request action during the conference. In other words, the turn-by-turn sequencing is not consciously as important as the end-goal. In fact, the word *we* may be the core reason that the entire sequence is read as a request rather than as an order or a suggestion. When the student recognizes that the teacher wants the paragraph to be linked together, he is also recognizing that the paper needs such linking and the reader needs that structure as well. While Escobar never mentions understanding *we* as key aspect of the interaction, on some level he seems to have oriented to it. In this way, acting simultaneously as voice for the paper and as a reader, she creates a sequence that allows her to identify the problem, check that the student also recognizes the problem, and jointly develop a solution to the problem.

**Leighton’s requests.** Not all students, however, see a teacher’s requests for change as requests. One sequence in Julia Kelli’s conference with her teacher Ken Leighton is particularly interesting in this regard. In order to understand this sequence, it is important to note that, during his recall, Leighton talked about his role as the paper’s

voice in language similar to Meier's, although neither knew that the other was participating in this study. A couple of examples will illustrate this coordination. Discussing his responses to Julia Kelli's paper, Leighton notes, "[T]he whole idea is, she's telling me, through the paper itself and through her comments, where the center of her concerns are" (Leighton recall of Kelli). Furthermore, Leighton notes that he perceives the student's needs through the paper, and he confirmed that he views that perception as "[the paper] making the request." He also states his role as reader, "I'm just responding like an audience, I'm doing my best to respond like an audience. The question is coming from the paper. . . ." When I asked, "What I hear you saying is that you're making a request as a reader to this writer," he confirmed that that was his intention. As these comments illustrate, Leighton views his role in the writing conference as being an audience for the student's paper and allowing them to see and hear the reactions that a reader would have to what they have written.

Moreover, rather than viewing himself as the paper's voice, he responds to the text as if the paper itself, as a personification of the writer, is making the request. Thus, where Meier tries to assume the paper's voice from a reader perspective, Leighton listens to writer's requests as they manifest in the paper. Excerpt 7, where Leighton pauses at an APA citation error, helps illustrate this point.

(7) "Fix it for me"

Kelli-Leighton Conference

JK<sup>(S)</sup>: Julia Kelli (student)      KL<sup>(T)</sup>: Dr. Ken Leighton (teacher)

B=> teacher- and student-identified request

T=> teacher-identified request

S=> student-identified request

07:55

- 1 KL<sup>(T)</sup>: "According to Professor Jacobs of psych- physiology, (2.1)  
2 What/ (1.4)  
3 T=> "corrding (unclear)" got a little reference problem here.  
4 JK<sup>(S)</sup>: T=> Oh I didn't –  
5 T=> **Ah:::!** I [thought I] fixed all those,  
6 KL<sup>(T)</sup>: T=> [(see you)]  
7 JK<sup>(S)</sup>: T=> But I didn't. (.)  
8 KL<sup>(T)</sup>: >Didya- [(unclear) can you-]<  
9 JK<sup>(S)</sup>: [I did][n't]  
10 KL<sup>(T)</sup>: T=> >[Will you] fix it for me/  
11 ((Leighton slides Kelli's paper toward her.))  
12 >Help me- help me, so-<  
13 JK<sup>(S)</sup>: Like I need to put (.5)  
14 Well, I've- "Professor Jacobs."  
15 Then I have to do parenthesis Jacobs, (.8) what[ever.

The initial utterance in this sequence identifies the problem: Kelli has a citation error (line 3). Kelli recognizes the problem with an exclamation of frustration at herself for not catching it before coming to the conference (lines 4-5). Leighton begins to form his request in line 8 as it overlaps with Kelli's acknowledgement that at least one citation error remains (line 9). Leighton asks Kelli to demonstrate that she knows how to format the citation correctly by using a typical request form: "Will you fix it for me?" (line 10). The interrogative pattern looks similar to other utterances that participants in other studies have identified as requests (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). Yet Kelli in her recall did not identify this as a request. When asked if she saw Leighton's question as a request, she said, "Um, yes – not really but – but yeah, but it's like something he – that would be good for me to do." When I asked, "Did you really feel like he needed you to fix it for him?" she said no. Her rationale for saying no suggests that she did not understand that Leighton



19 ((Leighton slides the paper back in front of himself.))  
 20 JK<sup>(S)</sup>: ['Cause (because) like- (.)  
 21 KL<sup>(T)</sup>: O[kay,]  
 22 JK<sup>(S)</sup>: [yeah.]  
 23 KL<sup>(T)</sup>: "According to Professor Jacobs."  
 24 ((Leighton leans in to write on Kelli's draft.))  
 25 => First thing we've got to do is get that th- the date [in/ right/]  
 26 JK<sup>(S)</sup>: [yeah.] (1.0)  
 27 KL<sup>(T)</sup>: Okay.  
 28 Now.  
 29 I- is he a physiology professor/ (1.6)  
 30 => >So you see,< (.7) you- the way you said it, "according to Professor  
 31 Jacobs of physiology," (.8)  
 32 JK<sup>(S)</sup>: uhm-[hmm].  
 33 KL<sup>(T)</sup>: [>What does< that >mean/< (1.2)

As the sequence continues, Leighton shifts from first-person singular ("for me," line 10) to first-person plural ("we," line 25) to second person ("you," line 30). Once Kelli runs into trouble modifying the citation, Leighton stops her with "Well now wait a minute" (line 18). The command form has an implied *you*. While neither Kelli nor Leighton identified this utterance specifically as a request, Kelli does stop her citation-correction efforts at this point. However, his next turn, Leighton says, "First thing we've got to do is get . . . the date [in/ right/]" (line 25). His use of the word *we* suggests that both reader and writer need the date as part of an accurate citation. The reader needs it to know the relative timeliness of the source; the writer needs it to demonstrate that she is giving the reader needed information. Such shifting may make it difficult for the student to interpret the teacher's role accurately long enough to adopt a compatible corresponding role.

As the sequence in Excerpt 8 continues, Leighton returns to the second-person to identify a problem with the contextual information that Kelli has provided about Jacobs (the source she is citing): “>So you see,< (.7) you- the way you said it” (line 30). An extended discussion ensues about the difference between physiology and psychology (not included in this chapter) concluding with Kelli saying, “=Or it might have- it might of (might’ve) just auto corrected (.) [to be honest.” Given that *you*, as Meier noted can be more accusatory than *we*, it is not surprising after nearly 30 lines of discussion on the topic that Kelli would want to deflect attention from her writing to her word-processing program. What this sequence suggests is that the structure of requests, including the pronouns used to present them, matter in how students perceive their own roles and their teachers’ roles and whether they interpret questions that the teacher perceives as requests as “real” requests.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Examining the linguistic structures of requests that teachers or students or both identified as requests suggests that a request’s form signals the roles each participant assumes, and the roles provide a basis for orienting to that utterance as a request or another directive. When interpreted using text-act theory (W. B. Horner, 1979), these linguistic structures provide a way to discuss how teachers’ assumed roles may or may not be read accurately by their students. For instance, while teachers may assume the role of the paper’s voice or a reader during a writing conference and, in doing so, make requests on the behalf of either, students do not necessarily recognize these requests as legitimate. Thus, a teacher’s asking for changes could be interpreted linguistically in



several ways: as an order, as a suggestion, or as a request. The interpretation seems to depend on how the listener interprets the teacher's role.

Both Meier and Leighton wanted to be viewed as readers. Students, however, may not perceive these role shifts. Teachers' pauses while reading a text suggest the effect on readers when key sentences are missing or when any number of other miscues in a text occur. In this sense, teachers' pauses when reading suggest their orientation to the text as audience. Students, however, may or may not recognize the meaning behind those pauses. In other words, while students may perceive that the teacher has assumed the role of reader and uses requests to identify what the reader or paper needs, other students may assign the teacher a different role that leads to students' concluding that the teacher's utterance is a suggestion. For instance, while the teacher may enact a reader role, the student may ascribe a teacher role to the instructor. Thus, students can recognize request forms, as Kelli does, when Leighton says, "Will you fix it for me?" while not perceiving the utterance as a serious request. In fact, Leighton acknowledges that he enacted a teaching strategy in that moment to encourage Kelli to demonstrate what she knew. To him, that did not make it less of a request. Significantly, Kelli still grants the request. The request form itself acts as a ruse in that it almost compels Kelli to "fix" the non-standard APA formatting that Leighton stumbled over while reading it. In this sense, the request facilitates the conference more than it facilitates revision later.

### **Interpreting Writers' Requests**

Understanding both Hale and Drake's writerly identities helps explain how they identified requests in their conferences. Significantly, Drake identified very little that his teacher Forest asked as requests. Even standard agenda-setting items that other students

identified as requests (“Did you read the comments/” for instance), he identified simply as questions. In other places where Forest made suggestions such as “you might explore [an aspect of the paper] in greater . . . detail if you wanted,” Drake dismissed them as irrelevant because “I’m not re-doing this paper.” Unlike most students in his class who were revising their Midterm Researched Argument papers to add additional pages and sources to produce the Final Researched Argument paper, Drake intended to research and develop an entire new argument for the final paper. So secure was he in his confidence as a writer, a confidence confirmed by his teacher, that he approached the entire conference with the focus on becoming a better writer.

In presenting his requests intended to receive help improve his writing skills, Drake switches between low-epistemic and high-epistemic forms. Forest, his teacher, recognizes both. High-achieving students use high epistemic forms to signal that they know what they need (I. Park, 2015). However, Drake’s use of a low-epistemic form does not match the high achievement that he has demonstrated. Forest might expect low-epistemic forms from struggling students. The same style from a high-achieving student makes her question his motivations: hence, her astonishment. In fact, even during the recall session, she noted that, although she responded as if the request were legitimate, she didn’t know what to say. Even then, she interpreted his request for writing help as a grade request. Yet she responded, and part of her response was a long sequence offering an alternate definition of good writing. Drake’s use of both forms suggests that high-achieving students may switch between forms. It seems, in this case, that Drake intuitively knew how to use the requestive forms that would accomplish his purposes.

Although students in an honors class might be concerned about their grades, both Drake and Hale also mentioned a sincere desire to improve their writing. A focus on process and improvement suggests a focus on learning (Weimer, 2013). In this sense, the role of learner (Weimer, 2013) is another potential role, a role not anticipated by W. B. Horner (1979) or others who have studied the roles that teachers and students adopt during writing conferences (DeMott, 2006; Jacobs & Karliner, 1977; Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015; Strauss & Xiang, 2006). Hale, in particular, noted that the grade merely indicated areas where improvement was warranted. Rather than being concerned about making up seven percentage points, he wanted to understand what cost him those points so he could improve those areas on the next paper. Perhaps we teachers do students a disservice when we view students' requests for general instructions for writing improvement solely as a desire for a higher grade. In fact, as Hale noted, it is also possible that they want to improve their skill, viewing scores below 100% as a sign that they lack knowledge or skill in an area.

The question becomes, then, how can students convey their writer or learner identity in a way that teachers will believe that students are truly asking for help with their writing? If we want our students to develop growth mindsets (Dweck, 2008; Schubert, 2017) or see learning as the goal of education (Weimer, 2013), then we as writing instructors need to see a focus on writing development as a legitimate request. Forest acknowledged that she does not give a 100 percent score because it would suggest that "the paper is ready to be published tonight." In this sense, any differential in grade could be considered ripe for insight on ways to improve writing. But her prior experience suggests why she is suspicious of the question. She noted in one recall that a student

asked her after class “why did I get a 93?” The grade was the focus, so the request did not feel like a request for writing help. Thus, it is not surprising that she would view two A-students’ requests for help with their writing suspiciously. Yet, even when the requests’ vocabulary focused on writing, it seems that Forest distrusted the question. This raises the question: what could these students have done (or what can any student do) to frame their requests in a way that is perceived as legitimate by the teacher? In other words, if we want students to demonstrate writer roles, perhaps we need to take requests phrased as learning-centered as legitimate and grant those requests. As demonstrated in this data set, the relative number of students asking for such help is quite low.

### **Interpreting Readers’ Requests**

As difficult as it is for teachers to understand students’ roles, students may have more difficulty recognizing teachers’ roles. This may be the answer to why, when both Meier and Leighton have a similar frame of reference to their role as the reader and voice of the reader or the paper, Escobar recognizes Meier’s requests for change while Kelli sees Leighton’s as suggestions. One possibility is that the students’ relative confidence with writing suggests how they view the teacher’s request. Kelli, who is less confident as a writer, seems to view feedback as “that’d be a good idea if I did that.” At the same time, she seems unaware of the effect doing so could have on the reader. In some respects, she does not perceive the audience’s or paper’s needs. She only sees suggestions in terms of how they could improve her grade on the paper. In this sense, her student view clouds her ability to see the other roles the teacher is adopting and that her teacher views in a request orientation. With this potential mindset, Kelli might have had the same reaction to Meier’s manner of speaking. Escobar, who is slightly more confident as a writer but

whose strong writing skills have been noted by this teacher throughout the conference, seems more inclined to orient himself to potential changes as requests—they benefit the reader or the paper more than they benefit him as the writer.

Alternatively, the manner of speaking influences the reactions. Although Leighton orients himself as a reader of the text, he tends to use *you*-focused language more often (see Table 9). In fact, the numbers in the table are somewhat deceiving. The raw numbers seem to show that Meier and Leighton use the word *we* at nearly the same rate. However, Leighton’s conferences are nearly twice as long as Meier’s. While hers range from 15-20 minutes, his ranged from 30-40 minutes. Thus, he uses *you* much more frequently than she does.

Table 9

*Leighton and Meier Pronoun (You and We) Comparison*

Conference (Teacher-Student)	Number of pronouns per conference			
	<i>You</i> (Less <i>you know</i> )		<i>We</i> (including contractions)	
	15 min. conference	30 min. conference	15 min. conference	30 min. conference
Leighton-Kelli	124.5	<b>249</b>	24.5	<b>49</b>
Meier-Escobar	<b>78</b>	166	<b>41</b>	82

*Note.* Leighton’s conference was 30 minutes. Meier’s was 15 minutes. Their raw numbers are in bold. The number of pronouns per conference has been adjusted for ease of comparison.

Another possible explanation is the difference in the students’ ages. Escobar is slightly older than Kelli, so he may have had more experiences that enable him to recognize when speakers enact a different role than their status would suggest, such as a teacher acting as a reader or as the paper’s voice. Leighton, in fact, voiced a concern throughout his recall sessions about how several of his students’ youth impeded their ability for deeper thought. Further study is required to determine whether his concerns

can be documented. Nevertheless, the possibility remains that students with different ages and life experiences may perceive requests differently.

An important implication inherent in the process of analyzing the requests that students and teachers both recognize is noting the requests that one recognized while the other did not. Recognizing that miscommunication occurs suggests that perceiving requests goes beyond the forms that requests take. Even when the form is recognized and acted on as such (Leighton's "will you fix it for me?"), it is important to recognize when the form is being acted upon more than the actual intent behind it. In other words, "will you fix it for me?" sounds like a request; it even looks like a request. But students may not perceive the teacher's request for a student to demonstrate his or her ability as a true request since the teacher does not really need the student to fix the citation for him. In other words, teachers see those teaching moments as requests, but students may not. However, if the student were to perceive that the request comes from a reader or from the paper, "will you fix it for me?" might act in more typical request fashion. Fulfilling the requested action benefits the reader or it benefits the paper (as a personified entity) through the writer's work.

What is lost if students' view their teacher's requests as suggestions rather than requests? Suggestions, by their nature, are more easily dismissed than requests. Since a suggestion benefits the listener, the listener's dismissing it inconveniences only the listener. Requests, on the other hand, benefit the speaker. A fulfilled request in a writing conference is intended to improve the writing, which improves the paper and the reader's experience. While not every request can or should be acted upon (either in writing or in

life), recognizing the intended beneficiary of proposed revisions presents the possibility of making students' more rhetorically aware of their writing's impact.

Thus, it may be helpful, especially for new writers or those who struggle with a lack of motivation or confidence, for teachers to explicitly state the persona they enact during writing conferences. Escobar may not have needed that explicit statement, but Kelli may have understood Leighton's rhetorical moves in the conference more effectively had he said, "I am reading your paper as a reader." This suggests that it may be helpful to ask students about their prior writing conference experience either as part of a Get-to-Know-You form as part of the first week of class activities or to ask them about their prior experiences during the first writing conference. If they have had writing conferences before, they may intuitively grasp the various roles that they and their teachers can enact. If they are new to writing conferences, showing them how adopting a writer role enables the teacher to adopt a readerly role may provide a framework that makes the revision work of the conference more explicitly rhetorical: We are not trying to help "students" with "their papers"; we are trying to help writers reach their readers. Moreover, such an orientation may involve using inclusive language, like *we*, to encourage students to join us in revising their texts. As partners or co-text-act readers, we may be able to accomplish more if we request students' cooperation in making changes rather than simply requesting that they make changes.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### EYEING CHANGE: CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Seventeen years ago, Lindemann (2001) argued for the need to examine the linguistic aspects of writing conferences, writing, “As writing teachers, . . . we have a professional need to know considerably more about language than our experiences as language users provide” (p. 60). She believed that teachers should know enough about linguistics to understand how words and syntax work together to create meaning. Although Lindemann’s argument centers on helping students improve their written work, her argument also applies to spoken language. It is important for writing teachers to recognize how their wording and their manner of speaking helps or hinders their students’ participation in and understanding of their writing.

Thus, Chapter 7 focuses on this study’s implications. Specifically, when writing conferences succeed, they are transformative experiences guiding students toward successful revision. When they are less successful, they may reinforce students’ lack of confidence in their writing. Thus, in this chapter, I argue that teachers’ awareness of request patterns within writing conferences allows them to be more intentional in how they create requests and respond to their students’ requests. This knowledge allows teachers to recognize miscommunication earlier in writing conferences so it can be addressed while students are still in the conference. This chapter also discusses the limitations of the study and offers suggestions for future research.

In the rest of this chapter, I review the key findings from this dissertation study in order to illustrate how writing instructors’ can gain a greater understanding of how they make requests and how they interpret students’ requests during their writing conferences.



These understandings and interpretations can be used to develop intentional behaviors to improve the co-constructed aspects of teaching and learning during writing conferences. Specifically, this study's examination of requests found that pauses, extended requests, and the roles that teachers and students assume during the writing conference relate to the ways requests facilitate or impede the content by which co-constructed meaning is achieved. Moreover, this study's method of combining conversation analysis methods with stimulated recall methods developed in second-language research (Gass & Mackey, 2000, 2017) provides a way to illustrate how teachers develop and maintain scaffolded approaches that allow them to engage students in co-creating content. Additionally, that method provides a useful gauge for determining when teachers and students understand each other's requests and when they do not. Determining where and how missed or misunderstood requests occur, and how those misunderstandings affect scaffolding, is part of the pragmatic knowledge this dissertation study provides.

The participants for this study included four teachers who each taught an Intermediate Writing course at Rocky Mountain University. These teachers along with willing students in one of their classes consented to have their writing conferences audio and video recorded. Based on consenting students' Background Surveys, I chose six to twelve students to have their writing conferences recorded. I aimed for a stratified sample from each class of students with little or no writing conference experience, those with and without second language experience, and those with high and low levels of confidence in and motivation to improve their writing. I met with three to six students from each class for a stimulated recall as a hedge against attrition. I selected four students' writing conferences per teacher to review with their teachers.

In addition to recording writing conferences and stimulated recalls, I collected students' rough drafts, the notes recorded on the rough drafts during the writing conference, and final drafts of the papers that students and teachers discussed during the writing conferences. By the end of the study, I had a complete data sets for two or three students for each teacher who participated (see Appendix I).

All writing conferences and recall sessions were transcribed. The stimulated recall sessions provided the means to mark the utterances that either the teacher or the student identified as requests. I formatted the identified requests using Conversation Analysis conventions (see Appendix F for the transcription key). I then used NVivo to code the requests as teacher-identified or student-identified, for request type, and for the roles that students or teachers assumed during the writing conference. I review these results and offer conclusions and implications in this chapter.

### **Summary of Major Findings**

The findings from my study fall into three main areas: purpose of requests, types of requests, and recognition of requests.

#### **Purpose of Requests**

Requests occur throughout the conference, not only at the beginning and ending of sessions. As a result, requests fulfill a range of purposes:

- Requests are used to facilitate the writing conference.
- Requests are used to suggest changes to the paper. These divide into two types: requests for revision work after the conference and requests to enact changes to the paper during the conference.
- Requests are intended to confirm changes (comprehension requests).

## **Types of Requests**

In addition to their purposes, requests assume standard forms. Some of these forms have been noted in previous studies on writing center tutorials or writing conference such as comprehension requests (Artman, 2007), high-epistemic requests such as “I want to (wanna) do X” (I. Park, 2015), and low-epistemic requests such as “I don’t know . . .” or “I don’t feel like . . .” (I. Park, 2015). The presence of these requests in this study suggests that teachers and students use the same types of requests often enough in other situations that similar requests appear in writing conferences. This study focused on two requests that have not been addressed in prior studies on writing conferences:

- Extended requests (S.-H. Lee, 2009) incorporate other request forms into a long sequence that encourages students and teachers to co-create material for the students’ papers (see Chapter 5). In my study, these occurred often in Caitlin Meier’s writing conferences and rarely in the other three instructors’ conferences. They are one way that scaffolding occurs in writing conferences.
- Pauses or gaps (Sacks et al., 1974) located at non-standard stopping points signal to the listener that they are expected to contribute the next word or phrase (see Chapter 4). Pauses often act as hints (Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015; Weizman, 1989).

## **Recognizing Requests**

The extent to which students and teachers recognize each other’s requests is another core finding of this study:

- Teachers and students differed in which utterances they identified as requests both in terms of raw numbers and in terms of utterances that they jointly identified as requests.
- Teachers and students jointly recognize only a small fraction (26%) of the total requests that either recognize individually.
- The roles that students and teachers take in the writing conference as writers and readers, respectively, influence which utterances they recognize and act upon as requests:
  - Teachers tend to recognize and respond easily to writer requests (student taking on a writer's role).
  - Students tend to miss reader requests (teacher taking on a reader's role) about half the time.

### **Research Questions Revisited**

The main research question for this dissertation, how are teachers' and students' requests formed, received, and interpreted during teacher-student writing conferences? involved three sub-questions related to how teachers and students identify their own and each other's requests, how they formulate their requests, and how listeners interpret the mechanisms of presenting requests. Below is a summary of key findings and implications related to these sub-questions.

#### **Research Sub-Question 1: Which Utterances Do Participants Identify as Their Own or as the Other Participant's Requests?**

While other studies have looked at the forms that requests take in writing conferences (I. Park, 2012a, 2015; Thonus, 2002), those studies have largely focused on

the participant who makes the requests. This study took a different approach. In addition to noting which participant made the request, this study also asked participants to identify requests in subsequent stimulated recalls. By comparing the requests that were recognized to those that were not, I aimed to discover if analyzing requests could help explain why teachers and students may have felt that a conference was unsuccessful or that the communication during the conference was not completely understood by one or both parties.

The aggregate results of comparing teachers' identified requests with students' identified requests suggest that teachers and students in this study agreed on only a fraction of the same utterances as requests (see Table 10). Representing ten writing conferences where both the student and the teacher completed a recall session of either the entire writing conference or the same sections of the writing conference, Table 10 shows aggregate totals for all the identified requests in all ten writing conferences as well as separate totals for each teacher's writing conferences. Figure 7 illustrates how to read the section of the table titled "Number of requests identified by." Specifically, during their separate recall sessions, teachers and students identified the requests that they noticed during the writing conference. Overall, teachers identified more utterances as requests than their students. Yet, both the teachers and the students jointly identified some utterances as request. Thus, the overlapping portion of the Venn diagram represents the column labeled "both" in Table 10.

As Table 10 shows, thirty-five percent of teachers' requests included those jointly identified by their students. Students were slightly better at identifying the same requests as their teachers, with 50% of their requests being jointly identified by their teachers.

Table 10

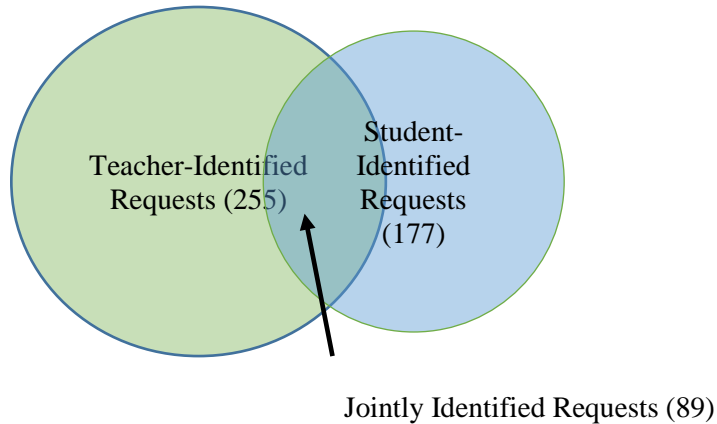
*Utterances Identified as Requests During Teacher-Student Conferences*

Teacher	Number of requests identified by <sup>a</sup>				% of both identified by		% participant identified to total identified <sup>c</sup>		
	Teacher	<b>Both<sup>b</sup></b>	Student	Total	Teacher	Student	Teacher to total	Student to total	Both to total
Forest	33	<b>18</b>	42	57	55%	43%	26%	42%	32%
Leighton	61	<b>5</b>	11	67	8%	45%	84%	9%	7%
Meier	133	<b>49</b>	74	158	37%	66%	53%	16%	31%
Reynolds	28	<b>17</b>	50	61	61%	34%	18%	54%	28%
<b>Total</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>343</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>26%</b>

<sup>a</sup>The column titled “Number of requests identified” records where a participant identified an utterance as a request during a writing conference regardless of whether the request was made by the Teacher or by the Student.

<sup>b</sup>The column labelled “Both” refers to utterances that both Teacher and Student identified as a request during their writing conference.

<sup>c</sup>The closer the percentages are to zero in the “Teacher to total” and the “Student to total” columns, the more the requests align between teachers and students.



*Figure 7.* Venn diagram illustrating the overlap of teacher-identified and student-identified requests. This figure helps explain the relationship of the Both column to the Teacher and Student columns in Table 10.

However, when the total number of requests is divided by teachers only, students only, or jointly identified, teachers and students in this study jointly identified only 26% of the same utterances as requests. It is important to note that a higher percentage of jointly identified requests reflects greater alignment between teachers and students. Thus, 48% of the requests that teachers identified were not identified by the students. The 26% agreement indicates a significant potential for miscommunication and misunderstanding.

**Addressing missed requests.** Given my experiences with writing conferences, I was aware that miscommunication in writing conferences is not unusual. Therefore, I expected some discrepancy between the utterances that students and teachers identified as requests. Nevertheless, the amount of difference surprised me. This data suggests that approximately a quarter of the time the participants in this study did not recognize that the speaker was asking the listener to do something for the speaker. Despite this low number, few participants (either teachers or students) noted during their recall sessions any miscommunication in their writing conferences. This finding suggests that unrecognized miscommunication occurs to a large extent in misapprehending requests. In fact, when asked, most participants said that they could not point to an instance of miscommunication during the writing conference. Thus, comparing the identified requests to participants' perceptions of how well those requests were understood during the writing conference contradicted their perceptions of what occurred during the writing conference. The fact that some requests are not recognized as requests means that these linguistic miscues interfere with the work of the conference and hinder students' ability to effectively revise their papers.

This conclusion is supported by looking at specific instances in the data where teachers and students did not identify the same utterances as requests. For instance, as discussed in detail in Chapter 4, Kimberly Saylor did not recognize Meier's pauses as requests when they first started building a topic sentence together. While missing requests creates the conditions for miscommunication, miscommunication seems to have been avoided in Saylor's writing conference because Meier used other requests in addition to pauses to solicit Saylor's involvement. Thus, despite the initial misunderstanding, Meier and Saylor both rated this conference as "very successful." They were also within a point on how they rated how well each participant understood the other's requests.

**Missed and unasked requests.** Not all writing conferences' misunderstandings were resolved during the writing conference. For instance, Tonya Medina not only acknowledged that miscommunication occurred in her writing conference but also expressed frustration that her requests were not understood or adequately addressed. Unlike the Saylor-Meier conference, both Reynolds, her teacher, and Medina rated their requests a relatively low "somewhat understood." Their perceptions of the conference's success differed more than most other students. Medina rated the conference as "slightly unsuccessful" where her teacher rated it between "slightly successful" and "successful." The ultimate difference is that Medina found the conference unsuccessful where her teacher rated it successful on some level.

Medina demonstrated less confidence in her writing from the beginning, and this seemed to affect the conference trajectory. She began her conference with a low-epistemic request (I. Park, 2015), "I don't feel like my review is great." Medina's main



concern, according to both her Goal Sheet and our discussion during her stimulated recall, was that her review sounded too much like a summary. About three minutes into her writing conference, she made this concern explicit, saying, “Um (.8) >but I was having a really hard< <time> focusing on a specific- specific <scene> without going into (. ) summarizing the movie.” During his recall, Reynolds noted he also understood Medina’s concern as finding a balance between summarizing and reviewing the movie. Despite this alignment on this key request, Medina still felt that Reynolds did not understand her request. For example, she misunderstood why Reynolds had her brainstorm key moments in the movie. She admitted during her recall that she still did not understand how to include key moments without shifting too much toward summary.

Rather than asking for clarification after Reynolds’ comprehension requests, Medina said, “That makes perfect sense.” Thinking that she understood, Reynolds moved to the next point. When I asked Medina what made her feel misunderstood, she offered three possible reasons: she did not “explain [her]self very well,” she did “not express . . . [her]self in the correct way,” or her pronunciation or her accent led to misunderstandings. In fact, I had not noticed her accent during our recall session. All these reasons reduced her willingness to speak, “so [she held] back from asking questions.” In other words, she attributed misunderstandings that occurred in the writing conference to her manner of speaking that prevented her from talking. Her comments suggest that she believed that the failure to communicate with her teacher must rest with her. That attitude points to “English-Only” beliefs in our culture that suggest that multilingual speakers must conform to English-only norms (B. Horner, NeCamp, & Donahue, 2011).

During the recall, Medina realized that failing to ask her questions or make her requests prevented opportunities to correct misunderstandings during the writing conference. In essence, her approach of not asking clarifying questions impeded the use of the very mechanisms that Saylor and Meier used to correct the misunderstanding in their conference. Medina acknowledged, furthermore, that because of her discomfort, she tended to say that her teachers' statements made sense when they did not. She also refrained from making requests for fear that her teacher would either not understand the question or evaluate it as "stupid." Unfortunately, not asking questions for fear of being misunderstood resulted in the very misunderstanding that she was trying to avoid.

Toward the end of this section of the recall, she acknowledged that sending signals that implied that she understood when she really did not was not working. When I asked if she planned to change her approach, she said that she was "working on . . . putting myself more out there" and being willing to say, "No, it doesn't make sense. . . . Would you mind re-explaining that to me?" In this sense, it seems that talking about her approach within the writing conference may have helped her discover some ways that she can change her approach and improve the outcomes in future writing conferences. Medina's conference with Reynolds exemplifies the kind of miscommunication that can occur when requests are not perceived, whether the miscommunication occurs on the student end or the teacher's.

These examples illustrate the consequences of missing requests that the other person is making. A student missing a teacher's requests can interfere with the student's ability to effectively produce changes in their papers. A teacher missing a student's request can leave the student's questions about how to address problems in their papers

unanswered. In subsequent sections, I explore the requests in more detail to determine whose requests are not perceived.

**Missing requests in the recalls.** Another alternative for explaining the discrepancy between the total number of requests and the number of jointly identified requests is that recognizing requests happens subconsciously. Consequently, attempting to identify the requests in the writing conferences proved difficult for both students and teachers. It is possible that teachers, students, or both identified some utterances as requests that could more accurately be termed suggestions or questions. Still other utterances that I tagged as requests while preparing for the recall sessions were not identified by either party. For instance, in Rachelle Westbrook's conference with Emily Forest, Westbrook responds to Forest's request to set the agenda "Did you have questions right off that you wanted to ask about?" with a request of her own "Help me with my thesis." Yet neither Westbrook nor Forest identified Westbrook's response to Forest's question as a request in their stimulated recall sessions. Although they did not identify it in the recall session, the fact that the writing conference focuses on helping Westbrook craft a more effective thesis suggests that both did recognize Westbrook's utterance as a request since the rest of the conference focuses on addressing that concern. Consequently, the data presented here suggests that some requests may be more salient than others, or the quick movement from one to the other resulted in Westbrook's request as response to Forest's request as simply not being addressed. In other words, both linguistic and observational reasons exist for why some requests were not identified.

Nevertheless, given that writing instructors already sense that misunderstandings and missed opportunities occur during writing conferences, this data provides a way to

empirically show that those misunderstandings occur. As my father often says, “I know you think you know what I said, but I’m not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant.” This phenomenon certainly appears to be happening at some level in this data.

### **Research Sub-Question 2: What Forms Do Teachers’ and Students’ Requests Take?**

By focusing on requests, I found that previously identified requests such as high-epistemic (“I wanna talk about”) and low-epistemic (“I don’t know + if/wh- complement) requests (I. Park, 2015), comprehension requests such as “Does that make sense?” (Artman, 2007), and extended requests (S.-H. Lee, 2009) occur in writing conferences. Additionally, while pauses have been noted as a turn-taking mechanism (Sacks et al., 1974), I found that they also function as requests in writing conferences.

**High-epistemic and low-epistemic requests.** I. Park (2015) identified high- and low-epistemic requests in writing center tutorials. These also occur in the teacher-student writing conferences in this study. As I. Park posited, students with a high degree of self-efficacy about their writing use high-epistemic requests. This characteristic of students making high-epistemic requests held true in this study. The examples that follow of high-epistemic requests came from Peter Hale and Tim Drake, students in Forest’s Honors section of Intermediate Writing. In addition to being Honors’ students, both men had received A grades on the midterm papers that they reviewed with Forest. They also had demonstrated a high degree of confidence in their writing on the Background Survey, within the writing conference, and later during their recall sessions. “Give me your tougher feedback” (Hale in Hale-Forest Conference) and “I just wanted to look over . . . specifics in . . . the actual essay that you wrote” (Drake in Drake-Forest Conference) are

high-epistemic requests. The command form that Hale used (“give me X”) and the “I want to (wanna) X” form that Drake used are consistent with the high-epistemic requests that writers in I. Park’s (2015) study employed.

Other students used low-epistemic forms also consistent with I. Park’s (2015) research. For instance, Medina noted, “I don’t feel my review is great” (Medina-Reynolds conference). As I. Park noted, the “I don’t feel/know X” construction sets up a concern with the paper but does not identify the specific aspect of paper that the student wanted to address. Identifying what is “not great” is left to the teacher. Rachel Seymour used a similar construction in the following request: “And I- I didn’t know really what to put <in between>” (Seymour-Meier Conference). The pattern of “I don’t know X” in addition to the halting manner of getting to that point both point to the student’s lack of knowledge about how to proceed. In this sense, these constructions are Hints (Weizman, 1989) in that the teacher has to figure out what specific request the student is making. Teachers tended to identify this pattern as a request.

**Comprehension requests.** Another request previously identified in the research occurred frequently in the conferences: the comprehension request (Artman, 2007). In addition to occurring at the end of sequences, I found that comprehension requests also occurred during sequences. For instance, one-word comprehension requests such as “see?” or “right?” occurred throughout sequences to check for understanding or to encourage students to notice emerging patterns. Longer comprehension requests such as “Does that make sense?” or “You agree?” tended to occur at the end of the sequence as a way to evaluate co-created material, confirm that the co-created material worked for the student, and to verify the student’s understanding. Occasionally, students used

comprehension requests to make sure that the teacher understood a request or a comment. But students' use of comprehension request occurred less often than teachers'.

**Pauses.** As noted earlier, pauses typically have acted as a turn-taking mechanism (Sacks et al., 1974). They maintain that purpose in writing conferences, but at times, they take on an added purpose of requesting that the student take the floor to add wording to the section of the draft that the teacher and student are working on. Like comprehension requests, students occasionally use this pattern, but it teachers used them frequently.

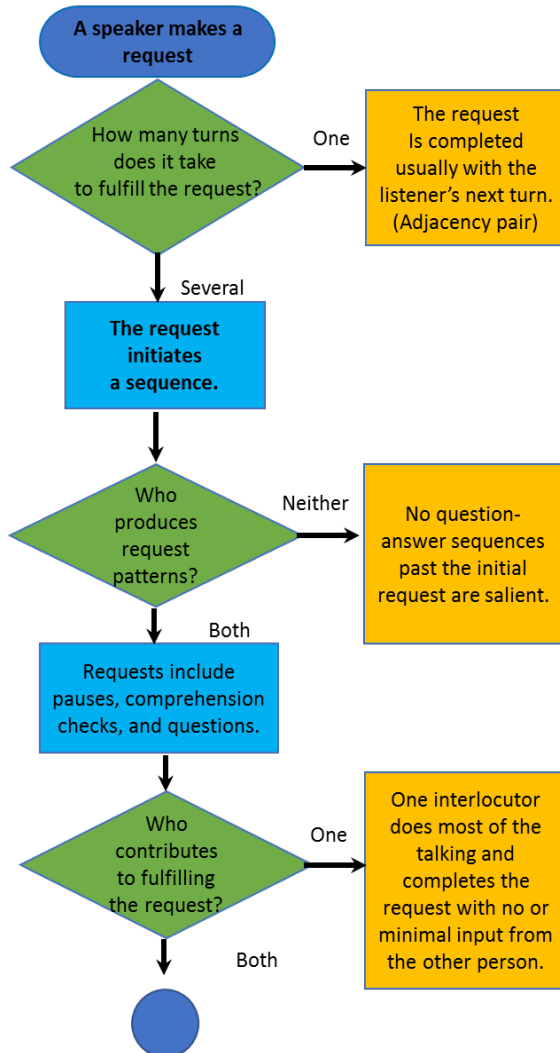
When pauses occur at strategic points in atypical places in a sentence, these pauses act as a signal for the listener to contribute. Teachers in this study, Meier in particular, actively used pauses to request that students pay attention to specific aspects of their papers and to encourage them to contribute ways to address those concerns. While the speaker's, usually the teacher's, emphasis on certain words often preceded pauses, teachers and students identified the pause itself as the most salient feature of these interactions, according to their recall sessions. For example, the following phrases that Meier says to Seymour illustrate this point: “Just shopping (.7) °in itself,° Just the internet in itself. (.7).” Although emphasis occurs on “just” in both phrases, both the student and the teacher stopped the recording because of the pauses. The pauses were an essential element of the interactions where they occurred because they enabled students to notice the issue that their teachers were highlighting, and the pauses gave students time to develop a response. Thus, pauses are important request forms when teachers try to solicit students' input in developing content and revising the draft.

**Extended requests.** Likewise, sequential structures fulfill a similar requestive purpose. Heritage (2004) noted that sequence organization is a key aspect of CA work.

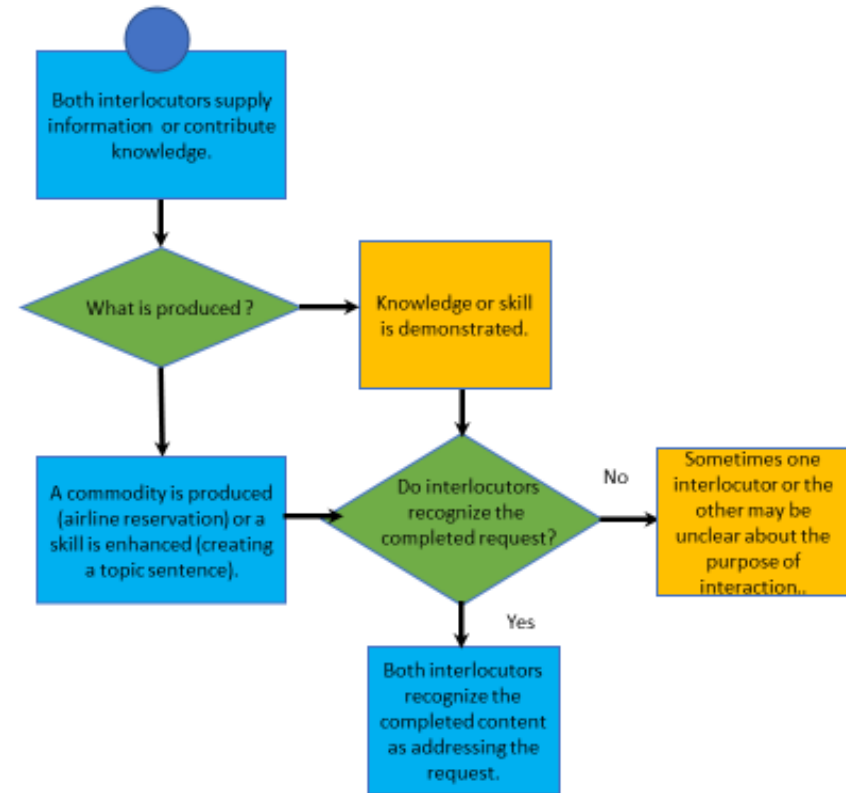
When examining sentence-creation sequences particularly in Meier's conferences, I noticed that requests occur at the beginning, middle, and end of the sequence. Some of the request patterns noted previously in this section help set up the sequence. High-epistemic requests by the teacher often began these sequences, particularly with a request such as Meier's request to Saylor: "This [the last sentence of her paragraph] is our point. (.4) So let's- we'll write the first one [topic sentence] together." As extended requests require both teachers and students to contribute (see Figure 8), both teachers and students make requests during the sequence. For example, after Meier pauses to get Seymour to notice the problem with "shopping" and the "Internet," Seymour suggests the word "excessive" with rising intonation. The use of rising intonation signals that not only is Seymour fulfilling Meier's request for language to qualify her statements, but she is countering with a request of her own for Meier to confirm that that wording will work.

Thus, this study offers a specific conversational mechanism that occurs when scaffolding seems to be working. A pattern of extended requests within writing conferences enables teachers and students to work on the paper together. It orients the student to their need to contribute to the revision process, a key aspect of scaffolding approaches. Scaffolding has frequently been studied in writing conference and writing center tutorial interactions (DeMott, 2006; Ewert, 2009; Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015; Sperling, 1990; Strauss & Xiang, 2006; Weissberg, 2006). Conversational interactions require contributions from both participants because they co-construct the interaction (Bruffee, 1984; Gumperz, 1982, 1992; Sacks et al., 1974; Spivey, 1997). Thus, it is also possible that Leighton's way of conducting the conferences (while doing most of the talking so he could "show them what to do")

### Identifying an Extended Request



### Identifying an Extended Request continued



If all criteria from the blue boxes are present, the sequence is likely an extended request. If the sequence's characteristics divert into the yellow boxes, the sequence is likely related topically but no longer meets the criteria of an extended request.

Figure 8. A flowchart for identifying extended requests in writing conferences.



contributed to students perceiving less of his requests as requests. Meanwhile, students who take a “show me” approach, like Michaels, also prevent co-created knowledge from developing. A lack of extended request patterns may not necessarily be a problem in all conferences, but their consistent absence suggests that either the teacher is doing too much for the student or the student is not participating enough. Either reason can prevent students from remembering what they did during the writing conference, impeding their ability to activate that learning later when it is time for them to revise.

### **Research Sub-Question 3: How Does Each Participant Recognize and Interpret the Other Participant’s Requests?**

Request patterns, as noted earlier, are not consistently and jointly recognized by teachers and students. By examining what students and teachers said about why they recognized or did not recognize various utterances as requests, I was able to determine some reasons for the lack of alignment.

The roles that the participants enacted were one way that influenced how they made requests and whether or not the other participant recognized them. W. B. Horner’s (1979) text-act theory provided a useful framework for recognizing how the reading process impacted the ways in which teachers and students conveyed their requests. Specifically, W. B. Horner (1979) observed that a student or teacher assuming the role of a writer or reader, respectively, resulted in different types of utterances than those of a student or a teacher. W. B. Horner noted that teachers can enact a reader role while students can enact a writer role that is intended to replace or overlay their primary roles of teacher and student, respectively.

**Readers' requests.** Reader requests are requests that speakers make when responding to a text as a member of the audience. Usually the teacher takes on this role. Some reader-based requests reflected the reader's desire to better understand the writer's point. For example, Kelli heard Leighton's instruction "Change writer-based to reader-based" (Flower, 1994) as a suggestion. When asked whether it was a request during her stimulated recall, she said that she did not view that instruction as a request. Specifically, she explained, "It is up to me. . . [I] don't think of it that way [the suggestion as a request]." But her teacher Dr. Leighton said that he saw, "Everything [every suggestion] as a request." While Kelli recognized that "[he is] asking me to do something, . . . it is up to me" what to do. While Rachel Seymour, a student in Meier's class, noted a similar pattern in her writing conference, she identified some of Meier's suggestions as requests. Like Kelli, Seymour noted that her teacher "gives [her] the power" to make her own changes. At the same time, Seymour identified those suggestions as tinged with request implications. The underlying request was to make a change even though the actual change was up to her—and she "liked having that power." These examples illustrate how illocutionary force varies for different listeners. Some listeners perceive that they are asked to make a change while others do not.

**The "paper's voice."** Another reader-focused role that emerged in this study was assuming "the paper's voice." Both Meier and Leighton adopted this role at various times during their writing conferences. During the stimulated recalls, they emphatically denied that their advice on how to improve students' papers was what "they" wanted. Rather, using almost identical language to Leighton, Meier said, "It [her suggestions for change] is what the paper wants." In this sense, Meier and Leighton saw their suggestions for

changes as requests because they acted as the paper's voice, and the paper was requesting the changes. Leighton said that he saw all of his suggestions as requests where Meier viewed only some of her suggestions as requests. Thus, according to Meier and Leighton, the writing conference was an opportunity for the student to hear the paper's voice and recognize its needs.

Most students, however, did not pick up on this shift. While they recognized the teacher's suggestions as potential changes to the paper, if students saw these suggested changes as requests at all (and most did not), they viewed them as mild requests at best. For example, Meier asked Seymour, "How do we know about the nurse?" Seymour immediately responded, "**Oh!** I meant to put in." In this sense, Seymour recognizes that contextual information is missing from her paper. By asking Seymour about that missing link, Meier becomes the voice for the paper.

Students tend not to recognize reader requests as often for two reasons. First, many students expect teachers to "tell them what to do." They see proposed changes as either suggestions because a change benefits the writer or they see them as orders because the teacher is telling the student what to do. Second, students misunderstand reader requests because they perceive them literally. Thus, when teachers ask students to explain further, some students provide an oral explanation. Doing so indicates a misunderstanding about where the request should be enacted. While the teacher wants the explanation in the paper, these students' oral explanations indicate that they understood the request to be fulfilled verbally and immediately.

**Writers' needs.** While students struggled to recognize teachers' reader-based requests, teachers seemed to have no problem in identifying students' writer-based

requests. Writer-based requests occur when the student makes a request about his or her writing. These are general “how is my writing?” questions, requests for more extensive feedback, or requests for help with specific aspects of writing. Examples of these requests include the following:

- “Give me your tougher feedback.” (Hale in the Hale-Forest conference)
- “Do you think my writing is okay?” (Drake in the Drake-Forest conference)
- “Does the topic sentence have to be the first sentence (.) in the paragraph?” (Seymour in the Seymour-Meier conference)
- “And I- I didn’t know really what to put <in between> (.5) . . .” (Seymour in the Seymour-Meier conference)

Where teachers struggled was in responding to students’ requests for help with their writing more generally. First, as Forest voiced in her recall, teachers assume that students are concerned with grades instead of becoming better writers. For instance, when Drake asked, “So, I mean, do you, like (.5) do you think my writing is okay?” Forest’s initial response to him was, “You got a 94 out of 100.” The student noted that he really was concerned about his writing because, as he noted prior to this question, he had felt like his writing’s quality and effectiveness had declined since entering the class. Forest recognized the question as a request during the recall. While laughing, she stopped the tape while saying “This kid just got a 94.” But she also said, “I didn’t know what to say in two sentences . . . because he just got- he got an A, and he’s gotten an A on every blessed assignment, and so he’s a really good writer.” Her response suggests that responding to such requests by students who are already meeting expectations can be

difficult. Thus, recognizing the request is one matter. Adequately responding to it is another.

**Students' experiences.** It is also possible that students' relative (in)experience with writing conferences played a role in how frequently they identified utterances as requests. As noted earlier, Kelli dismissed Leighton's suggestions as being requests while Seymour acknowledged that several of Meier's suggestions acted as request. The explanation for two students viewing similar patterns differently could relate to their relative experience with writing conferences. Kelli's writing conference with Leighton was her first writing conference. Seymour, on the other hand, had had writing conferences in the past. Additionally, the relatively young ages of Leighton's students could have played a role. The student-identified requests for Leighton's conferences were from Kelli and Yeti, both of whom were among the youngest participants in the study.

Such differences among students with different experiences illustrates one of the ways in which writing conferences are weird speech events. In addition to people writing while they or others are talking, writing conferences are a speech event where the teacher, who also has the most power, also has the most familiarity with the speech event. Thus, students with more experience having writing conferences seem more likely to recognize teacher requests while students without that experience seem to miss more of their teachers' request cues.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

This section reviews the strengths of this study and concludes by noting how its limitations can be overcome in future research.

## **Strengths of the Study**

This section notes three key strengths of this study: the diversity of participants, the quantity of data, and the research design. Future studies can build on these strengths.

**Diverse participants' voices.** One gap that this study sought to address was the lack of student voices and the need to examine the effect linguistic diversity had on teacher-student communication in the writing conference. To address this gap, this study sought for, and obtained, a diverse participant pool of both teachers and students, including several English L2 students. By collecting data from four teachers and multiple students within each class, a range of writing conference styles was collected. Conducting recall sessions with both students and teachers resulted at least sixteen different perspectives on writing conference interactions. Moreover, both student and teacher voices were equally valued in soliciting those perspectives. Thus, a key concern of adding student voices to this study was realized.

**Research design.** Combining conversational analysis with stimulated recalls produced results that one method alone could not. Painstaking analysis of the transcripts resulted in finding pauses that act as requests and extended requests, two patterns that have not been discussed in previous writing conference studies. While pauses have been marked in other studies' transcripts, the stimulated recall sessions alerted me to the pause's function as a request. By itself, noting pauses in the transcripts would not have signaled their function.

Thus, the stimulated recall (Gass & Mackey, 2000, 2017) method produced surprising insights and increased the amount of context available for analysis. Hearing teachers talk about their desire to have students work with them on revising when they

stopped the tape to discuss requests suggested that the full sequence rather than individual requests needed to be examined. Moreover, comparing teacher-identified requests to student-identified requests, made possible by the stimulated recalls, created evidence to illustrate that miscommunication occurred in writing conferences. Without the stimulated recalls, I also would not have picked up on Medina's concern that the request with which she entered the conference was not adequately addressed. While much of the conference centers on addressing that request, she still left the writing conference confused about how to proceed. My experience as a composition instructor suggests that Medina's disappointment may be more common than instructors admit.

**Defining background broadly.** While recording students' and teachers' communicative backgrounds is also a part of the research design, it deserves emphasis. In addition to valuing participants' language experiences, this study broadens the concept of communicative background to include participants' prior experience with writing conferences, students' motivation to write, and students' confidence in writing. Having this data provided ways to interpret the data that the writing conference recordings and even the stimulated recall sessions did not provide. That background information helped to interpret seemingly contradictory findings, such as why Kelli and Saylor interpreted the same pattern differently. Significantly, this broadened approach to participants' background suggested that writing conference experience is as important as other aspects of students' communicative backgrounds including language.

**Value of findings.** The amount of data (see Appendices G, H, I, and J) and the level of analysis are sufficiently robust to suggest that researchers can build on these methods and findings for future research while instructors can apply the discussion of

these findings to improving their own writing conferences. Specifically, the findings from this study suggest that the more positive their associations of the work that is accomplished during the conference interactions, the more likely students' confidence in their writing and their motivation will increase. While I can't prove that yet, the evidence from the fourteen teacher-student pairs in this study suggests that it could be a possibility, and one worth exploring in the future.

### **Limitations of the Study**

I note two key limitations of this study: the differences in the teachers' writing assignments and their timeframe for holding the conferences and the timeframe for collecting the Perception Surveys.

**Differences in conferencing timing and assignment prompts.** One limitation of this study is that the timing of the conferences and the writing assignment differed for each teacher. Heading into data collection, I assumed that teachers would have the first writing conference of the semester within the first four to six weeks of the semester. Thus, I also assumed that the papers' genres discussed during the writing conferences would be similar across sections. This was not the case. These genre differences among the papers likely influenced the topics that were discussed and how they were discussed during the writing conferences. Those differences may have impacted the number and types of requests that were made.

I also did not anticipate that the way that teachers prepared for the conference would influence the comments that occurred during the writing conference. While three instructors worked on drafts that they read for the first time during the writing



conference, Forest had commented on the drafts before her students came to the writing conference. Thus, fewer co-constructed interactions occurred during her conferences.

**Timing for collecting perception surveys.** Another limitation of this study was the timing of collecting the Perception Surveys. Collecting the Perception Survey during the recall session was intended to save time during the writing conferences. However, since I only collected the perception surveys from students who did the stimulated recall, I lost some potential data. Teachers also had trouble recalling, even after watching the conference again, their immediate perceptions on the success of the conference and how well the student understood their requests. Furthermore, watching the video provided them an outsider perspective that they had not had as a participant. Despite my instructions to not consider the conference from the perspective of the recall, I suspect that both the temporal distance from the actual event and noticing aspects of their students' reactions on the video recording that they did not, or could not, notice at the time factored into their responses. For instance, Meier noted at one point during the recall of her conference with Escobar, "Now that I'm seeing this, I don't think he understood me." Students may have been influenced by the same factors. For instance, I still wonder whether Medina was as frustrated when she left her conference as she was when we met to discuss it. It is also possible that her frustration increased or decreased during that time.

### **Future Research**

In this section, I suggest ways future researchers might build upon my study of requests in meaningful ways. I also propose additional studies based on findings that

were just emerging and that I did not have time to fully explore before publishing this dissertation.

### **Future Research on Requests**

The following suggestions offer ways to address some limitations of this study.

**Perception Survey.** Collecting the perception surveys immediately after each writing conference would eliminate the question as to how much time influenced the participants' perceptions. It could also allow for assessing perception after some time had passed, allowing a way to compare perception immediately after the conference and after the student had attempted to do some revision or after the teacher had reviewed the final version of the paper.

**Background Survey.** The Background Survey (Appendix B) was a useful instrument for gathering information about students' confidence levels, motivation levels, and prior experience with writing conferences. It also confirmed that a good number of students at Rocky Mountain University have L2 backgrounds, confirming Jordan's (2012) point that multilingualism is more common at the university level than previously thought. Yet the Background Survey was not fine-tuned enough to distinguish bilingual English L1 student participants who had learned an additional language after English from English L2 students who had learned one or more national languages before learning English.

Making changes to the Background Survey would facilitate finding students who were still learning to speak and write comfortably in English. Those students are underrepresented in studies of mainstream classrooms (Ferris et al., 2011; Liu, 2009; Matsuda et al., 2013), so finding a way to identify those students and recognize their

willingness to participate will be important to ensuring that students with those language backgrounds are included in future studies. While this study included student participants who had second language experience, the number of English L2 users was less than anticipated. Since religious service that takes students outside of the U.S. is common in the Rocky Mountain University area, future research could explore both how such students adapt to English being their primary language again and how the new-to-them language affects the ways in which they read and write in English.

Modifying the Background Survey to address when students learned various languages would help pinpoint future participants with more accuracy and ensure that the selected participants more closely aligned with the research design. Thus, future researchers might revise the survey so that students could list the languages in the order in which they had learned them. They could also include the possibility to list concurrently learned languages to account for situations like Suzanne Adkins, who had learned English and French simultaneously. Such a re-design would also take the guesswork out of scheduling recall sessions and arranging the conferences. With a limited amount of time and resources to record conferences and perform recall sessions, identifying student participants with an English L2 background before scheduling the conferences and stimulated recall sessions may improve the data collection.

**Additional participants.** Re-doing this study with participants with different backgrounds from the ones in this study could produce different results. For instance, all the instructors were full-time instructors who had dedicated office space for having the conferences, ensuring the privacy of the student participants. Given concerns about adjunct instructors' working conditions and the effects that such conditions have on

student learning (Cox, Dougherty, Kahn, LaFrance, & Lynch-Binieck, 2016; Palmquist et al., 2011), including adjunct instructors in future writing conference research is prudent.

Recruiting more bilingual students would also be valuable. While the collected data contains a rich variety in students' experiential backgrounds included some bilingual students including English L2 students, additional perspectives on how teachers adapt instruction for multilingual students for whom English is a recently acquired language would be valuable in future research. Specifically, while some recall questions for students asked for information about their language background, soon after collecting data, I realized that the recall script for teachers did not include a question asking if they noticed any L2 markers in their students. Without that question, it was difficult to determine if teachers noticed or oriented to any linguistic needs of their students and whether that orientation caused them to adapt their instruction during the writing conference. This lack of data prevented me from addressing a key gap noticed in prior research. Future research could address this question by asking teachers about their perceptions of the students' background and experiences as well as any adaptations that teachers have made to their practice as a result of those perceptions.

While soliciting participants, I also encountered many dual enrollment minors, students enrolled in high school while taking college credit. This study was not set up to collect data from these students, severely limiting the number of potential participants available in Leighton's class. While few of these minors had second language backgrounds, their presence in the writing classroom suggests that more research needs to be done on how these students experience writing conferences and how their instructors adapt instruction to them. For instance, Leighton frequently expressed concern that the

“young ones” were not prepared or ready to write with the depth or complexity that college-level writing required. His attitude toward the younger students’ preparation and readiness seemed to affect his interactions with them. Since Rocky Mountain University has many students concurrently enrolled in its charter high school, future studies could examine how younger students make and interpret requests in writing conferences. In fact, both adjunct instructors and dual-enrollment students who are under-18 should be included in any study about writing conferences as their experiences are missing from the current literature on writing conferences.

On a related note, analyzing writing conferences between teachers and students closer in age to each could provide valuable data on how (inter)generational similarity or difference influences speech acts within a writing conference. For instance, Leighton frequently referred to his dual-enrollment students, some of whom were under 18, as “the young ones.” Discovering how 18-year-old students use and interpret requests with a 24-year-old, or younger, instructor, could help determine if teacher-talk accounts for how often requests are understood or if generational factors may be in play.

### **Future Research on Writing Conferences**

In addition to future research on requests, some patterns that emerged during this study suggest avenues for future research including research on how time is referenced during writing conferences, the function of praise in writing conferences, and the ways social constructivist pedagogy is enacted in writing conferences.

**References to time.** A theme that emerged during several stimulated recall sessions was how time is referenced and addressed during writing conferences. For instance, during their recall sessions Meier, Leighton, and Reynolds mentioned time as a

factor in how they conference and for how long. Additionally, every writing conference included some reference to time. For example, Drake asked Forest, “How much time do I have left?” about midway through their writing conference. While technically this question is a pre-request in that it established a pre-condition needed for Drake to make his actual request, the reference to time suggests that analyzing this data as well as other writing conferences collected during this study or other studies (Carter et al., 2015b, 2016; C. Lee et al., 2013) could prove insightful for determining how orientations to time or pressures related to conference timing influence the type of requests that are made or the extent to which they are addressed.

Further research, in fact, should examine how time is indexed throughout the writing conference. Raymond and White’s (2017) taxonomy of time references, developed through conversation analysis of everyday and institutional contexts would provide a useful starting point for that research. This research is important because the ways that the writing process is discussed during the writing conference may be tied to the ways time is referenced. Thus, looking at time in relation to process could provide insights into how the writing process itself is indexed during writing conferences, including the ways in which teachers scaffold instruction to demonstrate principles related to the writing process.

**Praise.** While questions have been noted as a request type in other studies (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; I. Park, 2012a; Thonus, 2002), Meier occasionally used questions rhetorically to encourage students to notice aspects of their paper that were effective so that she could praise them. For instance, toward the end of Seymour’s writing conference (around 18:00), she asks Seymour, “And then (.) do you think this is a good transition?”

As Seymour demonstrates, students have trouble interpreting how to respond to this request. They recognized that a request had been made for their input, but given the nature of the conference as a time to discuss “problems” with their papers, students struggled with what to say. Seymour said, “I like it,” and before she could finish, Meier had started talking, confirming that the transition was effective. Meier noted during her recall that she tried to find ways to praise her students’ writing, and she was particularly conscious of doing so for students, like Saylor, who demonstrated low confidence in their writing. Additionally, Bancraft noted during his recall that he wished that Leighton had provided some places where he had done well in his paper. He acknowledged that the conference was a time for “fixing” the paper, but he still wanted some idea on where he was doing well. To the extent that both teachers and students orient to “fixing the paper,” examining the ways in which praise as compared to criticism emerges in the writing conference is worth exploring to see how praise influences students’ levels of confidence.

### **Pedagogical Insights**

A key pedagogical insight from this study is that scaffolding is created and maintained through requests. The concept of scaffolding instruction is not new to teaching writing, whether that teaching occurs within the classroom or during writing conferences. In fact, previous studies (DeMott, 2006; Ewert, 2009; Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015; Weissberg, 2006) have noted ways in which writing conferences include scaffolding. Like Mackiewicz and Thompson’s (2015) study, this dissertation explains some of the mechanisms by which scaffolding is enacted turn-by-turn. Pauses and extended requests, specifically, are among those mechanisms. By using strategically placed silence within a writing conference, teachers in this study encouraged students to

contribute to the discussion of their own papers. When those pauses were included in longer sequences that co-create content for the paper, such as extended requests, students and teachers were partners in enabling the paper to meet the assignment and genre requirements.

In fact, Meier's students whose conferences contained scaffolding through pauses and extended requests tended to revise those sections of their papers consistent with the discussion in the writing conference. For example, Meier's writing conference with Escobar contained pauses that acted as requests, extended requests, and other requests. His final paper demonstrates the success of the scaffolded approach that Meier used with him. Early requests that led to co-constructed patterns produced the exact wording for sections of his paper. For example, adding the suffix "ness" to "conscious" occurred after a pause acting as a request. Somewhat later, Escobar and Meier co-created a topic sentence for his second paragraph using the extended request pattern. Meier used later requests to help Escobar notice problems in his text and develop ideas for how to address those. For instance, Meier suggested that Escobar add an additional sentence prior to an example. Rather than writing the sentence as they had done with the topic sentence, Meier provided the wording needed to start the sentence. Then she encouraged Escobar to identify the general concept for that sentence, but she told him, "You can do this on your own." In this sense, she used requests strategically to scaffold instruction for Escobar—from co-constructed full sentences early in the conference to co-constructed concepts later in the conference that provided enough information that he could finish drafting on his own. It seems that co-creation produced a strong sense of alignment on changes that should occur and perhaps a willingness to attempt revisions on their own later.



As a practical matter, I found that teachers may encourage students to talk if teachers assume a note-taking role. Most of the teachers in this study took notes for their students, but what teachers took notes on varied. Meier and Reynolds tended to write down their students' ideas. Leighton tended to use his writing to reinforce class instruction. To the extent that the writing conference enables students to apply writing instruction to their own papers, those notes seem to empower students. By encouraging students to talk through their ideas and validating those ideas by writing them down, teachers both scaffold instruction and enable students to remember their insights so that they can apply them to later revision.

Another key pedagogical insight is that misunderstandings can and do occur during writing conferences, but they can be mitigated. In fact, comparing collaboration and miscommunication suggests that misunderstanding is the natural effect of failed collaboration. While insufficient data exists in this sample to say how widespread such miscommunication is, the lack of alignment between the requests identified by teachers and the requests identified by students provides empirical support for the anecdotal evidence teachers and students offer, "I don't think that student (or my teacher) understood what I meant." While such an insight seems unsurprising, knowing why it occurs and developing strategies for mitigating misunderstanding and miscommunication is critical in improving writing conferences for the benefit of student learning.

### **Reviving the Conversation**

Given the frequent use of writing conferences and a strong research tradition from the 1970s through the 1990s (Carnicelli, 1980; Jacobs & Karliner, 1977; Melnick, 1984; Sperling, 1990; Walker & Elias, 1987) and more recent research in the early 2000s

(Artman, 2007; DeMott, 2006; Ewert, 2009; Haneda, 2004; Liu, 2009; Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015; Strauss & Xiang, 2006), research on writing conferences may seem unnecessary. However, given the changing demographics of college students including more dual enrollment students (Payne, 2016) and various pressures, including economic ones, on institutions of higher education (Welch & Scott, 2016), such research is more necessary than ever.

Moreover, writing conferences, as this study has illustrated, are weird speech events. They involve people writing while either person in the conversation is talking and people asking for things without normal politeness markers such as “please” or “thank you.” Additionally, the teacher, the person with the most power, also has the most familiarity with the speech event.

Thus, it is vital for writing instructors to reflect on and analyze whether their own approaches to conferencing as well as those passed down from their peers and mentors is still effective. For instance, the mantra to not give the answers to students or a reliance on a Socratic method that can at times feel manipulative presents a misinterpretation of how to socially construct knowledge. If the real power of social constructivism lies in scaffolding, as I believe it does, then discovering how to change writing conference practice to encourage scaffolding and passing that knowledge on to those who conduct writing conferences is critically important for guiding students toward effective writing.

This study focused solely on the requests that teachers and students make of each other during teacher-student writing conferences. In doing so, it demonstrated that pauses and extended requests are associated with scaffolding. However, while pausing shows up frequently, extended requests occur less so. In this sense, the relative absence of this

pattern may help explain DeMott's (2006) finding that scaffolding within actual writing conferences does not reflect theoretical principles for how scaffolding should unfold. Thus, this research is valuable in revisiting this area of practice to determine what is happening to identify avenues for change.

Moreover, while more recent research on writing center tutorials (Godbee, 2012; Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015; I. Park, 2015) offers valuable insights that can inform both employing and studying writing conferences, the two situations are sufficiently distinct to justify a sustained focus on writing conferences. As Black (1998) has observed, "Conferencing is something we do, but unexamined, it remains something we do not understand and thus cannot improve" (p. 5). Such research on writing center tutorials offers a way to begin a deeper analysis of teacher-student writing conferences. While some examination of writing conferences has occurred, as this study demonstrates, students' and teachers' differing backgrounds in languages spoken, their writing conference experiences, their confidence, and their motivation to write affect the communication that occurs during the writing conference. Moreover, those experiences are constantly changing. As both students' and teachers' backgrounds change, the way that they interact during the writing conference is likely to change as well. In sum, this study demonstrates that much can still be learned about writing conferences to reduce miscommunication and bring about more co-constructed learning.

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## Appendix A

### IRB Approval



Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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Institutional Review Board for the  
Protection of Human Subjects  
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December 7, 2016

Angie McKinnon Carter  
363 South 1410 East  
Provo, Utah

Dear Ms. Carter:

Your proposed modifications to your previously approved research project, "With an Eye Toward Change: Examining Requests in Teacher-Student Writing Conferences," (Log No. 16-246) have been reviewed by the IRB and are approved. In accordance with 45CFR46.101 and IUP Policy, your project is exempt from continuing review in addition to the approval of your request for changes. This approval does not supersede or obviate compliance with any other University requirements, including, but not limited to, enrollment, degree completion deadlines, topic approval, and conduct of university-affiliated activities.

You should read all of this letter, as it contains important information about conducting your study.

Now that your project has been approved by the IRB, there are elements of the Federal Regulations to which you must attend. IUP adheres to these regulations strictly:

1. You must conduct your study exactly as it was approved by the IRB.
2. Any additions or changes in procedures must be approved by the IRB before they are implemented.
3. You must notify the IRB promptly of any events that affect the safety or well-being of subjects.
4. You must notify the IRB promptly of any modifications of your study or other responses that are necessitated by any events reported in items 2 or 3.

The IRB may review or audit your project at random or for cause. In accordance with IUP Policy and Federal Regulation (45CFR46.113), the Board may suspend or terminate your project if your project has not been conducted as approved or if other difficulties are detected.

While not under the purview of the IRB, researchers are responsible for adhering to US copyright law when using existing scales, survey items, or other works in

IRB to Angie McKinnon Carter, December 7, 2016

the conduct of research. Information regarding copyright law and compliance at IUP, including links to sample permission request letters, can be found at <http://www.iup.edu/page.aspx?id=165526>.

I wish you success as you pursue this important endeavor.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Roberts, Ph.D.  
Chairperson, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects  
Professor of Criminology

JLR:jeb

Cc: Dr. Ben Rafoth, Dissertation Advisor

## Appendix B

### Background Survey

Please answer the following questions. There are no right or wrong answers. If you feel uncomfortable answering any question, you may leave it blank. If you need more space, please use the back of this page.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_\_

Age (Circle one):            18-21            22-25            26-29            30+

Languages you speak \_\_\_\_\_

(If English is the only language that you speak, please include it here.)

Languages you write \_\_\_\_\_

(If English is the only language that you speak, please include it here.)

How often have you had writing conferences with a teacher before this semester?

Frequently	Some	Minimal	Never
I have had writing conferences more than six times.	I have had four or five writing conferences.	I have had one or two writing conferences in the last couple of years.	The writing conference with my teacher will be the first one this year.

Have you talked with other people (other than your teacher) about any of your writing assignments in the past? Circle the correct response.

A fellow student		A tutor in a writing center	
Yes	No	Yes	No

1. \_\_\_\_\_ On a scale of 1-5 (5 being high), rate how confident you feel as a writer.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ On a scale of 1-5, rate how motivated you feel to improve your writing.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ On a scale of 1-5, rate your comfort level in using a word processing program (such as Microsoft Word).
4. \_\_\_\_\_ On a scale of 1-5, rate your comfort level in using UVU's library databases.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ On a scale of 1-5, rate your ability to check your own paper for spelling and punctuation errors.

† Adapted from "Turning Student Groups into Effective Teams." By B. Oakley, R. M. Felde, R. Brent, & I. Elhadj, 2004. *Journal of Student Centered Learning*, 2(1), p. 24.

## Appendix C

### Pre-Conference Teacher Interview Protocol

Teacher interviews will cover more generally what they usually ask students to do during the first conference and generally how they plan to individualize instruction within the conference

Thank you for meeting with me and being willing to participate in this study.

1. How long have you been teaching writing?
2. How long have you used writing conferences when teaching writing?
3. What is the purpose of a writing conference generally? Why do you hold writing conferences with your students?
4. What do you typically expect from writing conferences on the first writing assignment?
5. What typically do you request that students do during the conference?

I am interested in understanding requests.

6. Can you tell me what requests students typically make during a writing conference?
7. What requests do students tend to ask you during writing conferences for the first paper?
8. Beyond students verbally asking for help, what other cues do you receive from students that signal that they need help?
9. How do you tend to respond to typical requests for help and why?
10. How do you address those issues?

#### Background

11. Do you have experience in learning a language other than English? If so, please describe your experience?
12. How frequently do you work with culturally or linguistically diverse students?

## Appendix D

### Stimulated Recall Interview Script (Students)

Adapted from Gass and Mackey (2000)

During the stimulated recall interview, I will replay portions of the teacher-student writing conference in a session to last no longer than 90 minutes although it may be shorter (see Seidman, 2006). During the interview that follows the stimulated recall of the conference, I will ask participants to review their goals for the conferences going into the writing conference, whether those goals changed after the initial interview or during or after the conference, and I will review their responses to the Background Survey.

#### **Stimulated Recall Protocol**

Engage in small talk before turning on the recorders.

Start the audio and video recording.

Read the following after turning on recorders:

Thank you for coming and for continuing to participate in this study. This entire session should last 60 minutes to 90 minutes. The recall session will include watching the videotape of your writing conference. This part of the session will last about 30-45 minutes depending on how many times we stop the tape and how much we talk about what we see.

When we have finished reviewing the videotape of your writing conference, we will take a 10-minute break. When we come back from the break, I have some questions about the Background Survey that you completed when you signed the consent form.

Your participation in this part of the study is voluntary. You can choose not to answer questions or to end your participation at any time. Just let me know.

Before we start reviewing the videotape of your conference, I have a couple of questions to get you thinking about the conference. After that I will explain how we will review the tape.

**Part I (Post-Conference Perception Survey)<sup>9</sup>**

- First, how would you rate the success of your writing conference with your teacher?

6	5	4	3	2	1
Very successful	Successful	Slightly successful	Slightly unsuccessful	Not successful	Not at all successful

[Present this if the student seems unsure about what success means. Success could include meeting the goals that you set for the conference, covering particular points in the paper that you wanted to discuss, receiving or transmitting a better understanding about the purpose of the paper or about how to meet its requirements, and so on.]

- Why did you give it that rating?

You said that your goals were \_\_\_\_\_.

Why did you have those particular goals for this writing conference?

- (Or if the goal statement is missing or unclear.) What did you want to accomplish during the conference? Or what goal or outcome did you have for your paper or the conference before meeting with your teacher?

- Second, how would you rate how well your teacher understood your requests?

6	5	4	3	2	1
Completely understood	Mostly understood	Somewhat understood	Slightly misunderstood	Mostly Misunderstood	Completely misunderstood

For instance, if you felt like your teacher gave unusual responses to most of your questions, you might circle #2.

- Why did you give this rating?

<sup>9</sup> Adapted from Dörnyei (2003, pp. 29, 36–37), Mackiewicz & Thompson (2015, p. 47) and Walker & Elias (1987)



## Part II (Stimulated Recall)

We are now going to watch the videotape of your writing conference with your teacher. We are looking for times when either your teacher wants you to do something or when you want your teacher to do something. Either one of us can stop the tape when we hear or see something that suggests either you or the teacher wants the other to do something or say something. These requests for someone to do something or say something can be implied or direct. [During the recall sessions, the researcher had to define requests more specifically for several students.] I am particularly interested in times during the conference when, at the time, you felt that you wanted the teacher to do something or you felt like the teacher wanted you to do something. Either of us can stop the tape when we hear or see those moments.

When the recording stops, I will ask you to describe what the request was and what you were thinking at that moment during the conference. Please respond in terms of what you were thinking then, during the conference, and not what you think about the conference now.

We can either both use the touchscreen mouse or you can use the wireless mouse. Which would you prefer to use?

Just play around with the controls for a minute. Stop, start, and rewind to get familiar with the feel of the mouse. Are you ready? Okay, let's go.

I may ask questions such as the following:

- What, if anything, did your teacher request that you do?
  - At the time, what were you thinking when your teacher requested \_\_\_\_\_?
  - If you misunderstood the teacher, what was happening at that moment that caused you to miss, misinterpret, or misunderstand the teacher's request?
  
- What, if anything, did you request of or from your teacher during the conference?
- What were you thinking when you asked this question (or made this request) at this point in the writing conference?
  
- Was [a place in the recording] a place where you requested help with this goal?
  - At the time, how well did your teacher understand what you asked at this moment?
  - What did you do next when your request was understood (misunderstood)?
  - At the time, did you realize that your request had been misunderstood?

- What did you understand at the time about why the teacher misunderstood you?
  
- At the time of the conference, was there a place in the conference when you felt like you and the teacher were not understanding each other? Please tell me more.
- At this point you look “lost, confused, angry, frustrated or surprised” (Black, 1998, p. 166). What was happening then that caused you to react in this way?
- Did you notice any moments when the teacher seemed lost, confused, angry, frustrated, or surprised at one of your requests?
  
- Was there anything that you wanted to request of the teacher that you didn’t ask? Why?
  
- Was there anything that you requested that you felt the teacher did not understand or misunderstood?
  
- Was there anything that the teacher requested of you that you did not understand?
  
- Did the teacher tell you his or her goals for your conference? If so, how did that influence what you requested of the teacher during the conference?

We will now take a 10-minute break. When we come back, I will ask you some questions about the Background Survey that you completed earlier in the semester.

### Part III--Interview Protocol (Reviewing the Background Survey)

1. On the Background Survey, you wrote that you had *frequent, some, minimal, or no experience* with writing conferences.
  - a. Please tell me about your previous experiences talking with a teacher about a paper.
  - b. If you had no experience with a writing conference, how did you know what to do or say in this conference?
  
2. You gave yourself a \_\_\_\_ out of 5 for your motivation to improve your writing.
  - a. What does motivation for writing mean to you?
  - b. Can you explain why you gave yourself a \_\_\_\_ out of 5?
  - c. Would you still give yourself a \_\_\_\_? If not, what rating would you give yourself now?
  - d. Can you tell me more?
  
3. You gave yourself a \_\_\_\_ out of 5 for being confident as a writer?
  - a. What does confidence in writing look like for you?
  - b. Can you explain that?
  - c. Do you see confidence as different than ability? Why or why not? If it's different, how would you rate your writing ability?
  - d. Would you still give yourself a \_\_\_\_? If not, what rating would you give yourself now?
  - e. Can you tell me more?
  
4. I have a few questions that are more personal about your language background. Feel free to tell me that you don't want to answer a question, and I'll move to the next one.
  - a. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your proficiency in writing (name of language here)? Why?
  - b. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your proficiency in writing English? Why?
  - c. Do you feel like your teacher misunderstands you because you speak or write \_\_\_\_\_?
  - d. Can you tell me more?
  - e. I have a stack of five notecards with the following options to help you identify reasons why that misunderstanding occurs. Please put these in order with the #1 reason at the top according to why you think your teacher misunderstands you. You can also throw out any cards that do not apply to your situation. (Options from Matsuda, Saenkhum, and Accardi, 2013).
    - i. Pronunciation/Accent
    - ii. Bias

- iii. Vocabulary
- iv. Fluency
- v. Grammar

5. You gave yourself a \_\_\_\_ out of 5 for your ability to check your own paper for grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors.
  - a. Can you explain why you gave yourself a \_\_\_\_ out of 5?
  - b. Would you still give yourself a \_\_\_\_?
  - c. Can you tell me more?
  
6. Based on what we've talked about so far, how confident do you feel about having a conversation with your teacher about your writing? Please explain.
  - a. What have you been told about your writing in the past and by whom? How has that affected your desire to write and your ability to write this semester?
  - b. What makes you feel understood?
  - c. What makes you feel misunderstood?

## Appendix E

### Stimulated Recall Interview Script (Teachers)

During the stimulated recall interview, replay portions of the 15-minute conference in a stimulated recall session to last no longer than 90 minutes although it can be shorter (see Seidman, 2006). During this interview, in addition to the stimulated recall of the conference, ask participants to review their goals for the conferences going into it, whether those goals changed after the initial interview or during or after the conference, and how successful they perceive the conference now.

#### **Stimulated Recall Protocol**

Thank you for coming. This entire session should last no more than [30, 60] 90 minutes. [The length depends on time frame the teacher selected.] The recall session will include watching the videotape of your writing conferences with [one, two] three of your students. After watching each conference, we will take a 10-minute break. When we have finished reviewing the videotapes of writing conferences, we will finish the session for the day. Your participation in this part of the study is voluntary, and you can choose not to answer questions or to end your participation at any time.

I am going to replay the videotape from your writing conference with \_\_\_\_\_ (name of student). Either one of us can stop the tape when you ask the student to do something or the student asks you to do something. Before we start, I would like both of us to practice pausing the recording and using the remote to get to the segment we want to discuss.

Start the audio and video recording.

Before we review the videotape of your conference, I have a couple of questions to get you thinking about the conference. You can answer these questions after reviewing the conferences if you'd like.

**Part I (Post-Conference Perception Survey)<sup>10</sup>**

- First, how would you rate the success of your writing conference with \_\_\_\_\_ (student’s name) on a scale of 1-6?

6	5	4	3	2	1
Very successful	Successful	Slightly successful	Slightly unsuccessful	Not successful	Not at all successful

*[Present this if the teacher seems unsure about what success means. Success could include meeting the goals that you set for the conference, covering particular points in the paper that you wanted to discuss, receiving or transmitting a better understanding about the purpose of the paper or about how to meet its requirements, and so on.]*

- Why did you give it that rating?
- You said that your goals were \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Why did you have those particular goals for this student’s writing conference?
  - (Or if the goal statement is missing or unclear.) What did you want to accomplish during the conference? Or what goal or outcome did you have for this student and his/her paper before you met with him/her?

Second, how would you rate how well the student understood your requests?

6	5	4	3	2	1
Completely understood	Mostly understood	Somewhat understood	Slightly misunderstood	Mostly Misunderstood	Completely misunderstood

For instance, if you felt like the student gave unusual responses to most of your questions, you might circle #2.

- Why did you give this rating?

<sup>10</sup> Adapted from Dörnyei (2003, pp. 29, 36–37), Mackiewicz & Thompson (2015, p. 47) and Walker & Elias (1987)

## Part II (Stimulated Recall)

I am now going to replay the videotape from your writing conference with \_\_\_\_\_ (student's name). Either one of us can stop the tape when you request that the student do something or when the student requests something of you. By *request* I mean a question or statement that lets you know that the speaker wants the listener to do or say something for him or her.

Before we start, I would like both of us to practice pausing the recording and using the remote to get to the segment we want to discuss.

When the recording stops, I will ask you to describe what you were thinking at that moment during the conference. Please respond in terms of what you were thinking during the conference and not what you think about it now.

I may ask you questions such as the following while we review the tape: [Note: Not all of these questions will be asked. Which questions are asked will depend on what emerges when reviewing the conference.]

1. At this point you look “lost, confused, angry, frustrated or surprised” (Black, 1998, p. 166). What was happening then that caused you to react in this way?
  - a. “Were there times when you were lost, confused, angry, frustrated or surprised” Black, 1998, p. 166) at a request, a misunderstood request, or a missed request? If so, what were you thinking in these moments?
2. Did you notice any moments when the student seemed lost, confused, angry, frustrated, or surprised at a request?
  - a. What were you thinking in those moments?
  - b. What did you do next?
3. What, if anything, did the student request that you do or help him or her with during the conference?
  - a. At the time, what were you thinking when the student asked you that?
  - b. What was happening at the time that led to your interpretation of what the student asked?
  - c. What did you do next? Why?
4. Was there [a place in the recording] where you made a request of the student based on your stated goals for the conference?
  - a. Why were you asking that [referring to a request] at this point in the writing conference?
  - b. At the time, what did you think about the student's response to your request?
  - c. What did you do next?
  - d. If you felt misunderstood, what was happening at that time that caused the misunderstanding to happen?

5. What else, if anything, did you request that the student do?
  - a. Why were you asking that [referring to a request] at this point in the writing conference?
  - b. How well did you feel like the student understood what you were asking?
  - c. If the student misunderstood you, what was happening at that moment that caused him/her to miss, misinterpret, or misunderstand your request?
  - d. Why were you asking that [referring to a request] at this point in the writing conference?
6. At the time of the conference, was there a place in the conference when you felt like you and the student were not understanding each other? Please tell me more.
7. Was there anything that you wanted to ask the student to do that you didn't request? Why?
8. Was there anything that you requested that you felt the student did not understand or misunderstood?
9. Was there anything that the student requested of you that you did not understand?
10. Did the student tell you his or her goals for the conference? If so, how did that influence what you requested of the student?

We will now take a 10-minute break (or end the session for now). When we come back, I will ask you the preliminary questions about the success of the conference with \_\_\_\_\_ (next student). We will then do the recall session for that student.

Continue the session starting again with Part I.



## Appendix F

### Transcription Key

Symbol	Example	Gloss
[ ]	Saylor: °changing your° whole [( <i>language</i> ).] Meier: [Yeah,]	Overlapped or simultaneous speech by two or more people speaking at the same time.
=	Meier: “Physical and [mental] habits,”= Saylor: [mental] Meier: =exactly,	Latched speech. No break (or beat) between words or lines.
(1.0)	Meier: “One (.5) important (2.1) point (2.4) Gawande (.7) makes,” (2.0)	Time of pause in tenths of seconds from .4 and up
(.)	Reynolds: It’s like (.) <b>oh</b> , <u>that’s</u> <u>shocking</u>	Pauses of less than .4 seconds. Noticeable, but not timed.
-	Medina: I don’t- like the- my first paper	Cut-off
:	Reynolds: T- (.9) it’s “suspenseful;” “edge- of-their- <u>se</u> :at,” (1.1)	Elongation of the prior sound.
.	Medina: This is a movie summary.	Final, falling tone
,	Reynolds: um:, (2.5) uh >“scary,” “sexy,” “entertaining,” < “mysterious,” (.) “extremely thrilling,” (1.2)	Even, continuing tone
/	Meier: how about you say/	Rising tone (as for a question)
“ ”	Forest: So, you had excellent organization and evidence and just I just said, you spelled “adolescence.”	For quotation quality of speech. As when a speaker sounds like she is repeating someone else’s words, exact dialogue from a previous experience, including earlier in the recording, or reading from the student’s paper or a source text.
mm- hmm (yes); uh- uh (no)	Medina: [mm-hmm.]	Backchannel, in lowercase (made when the person does not have the floor)
Okay. Right.	Medina: Okay.	Minimal response (capitalized) The capitalization indicates that the person has the floor.
<u>Word</u>	Reynolds: like “it’s a movie that” um, “breaks <u>barriers</u> of the typical <u>love</u> story::” (.7)	Part or all of a word that is stressed. Part of word that is underscored has more stress than the rest of word that is not underlined.

Symbol	Example	Gloss
<b>Word</b>	Meier: [ <b>Oh</b> ] [I see.]	Indicates stress via increased loudness or changes in pitch, often over several words. Used to indicate an exclamation or emphatic statement.
°word°	Medina: I'm not sure °that makes sense.°	Words softer than the surrounding speech
<>	Drake: Um, (1.1) but (.6) not like dive <way too deep>.	The enclosed speech is slower than the surrounding speech.
<>	Reynolds: um:, (2.5) uh >"scary," "sexy," "entertaining," <"mysterious," (.) "extremely thrilling," (1.2)	The enclosed speech is spoken faster than the surrounding speech.
(unclear)	Meier: Yes, [do it. Do it] Saylor: [(unclear)]	Indicates the transcriber did not hear or understand what was said. An empty parentheses in the speaker column indicates that the transcriber could not identify the speaker.
(word)	Saylor: °changing your° whole [(language).]	The transcriber's best guess about what the speaker said but should be considered tentative.
(( ))	(((Meier glances at Saylor and pauses writing)))	Description of non-verbal behavior or sounds
@	Forest: But even when you have problems with commitment- Drake: Yeah. @@@@	Laughter. Each pulse of laughter is one @ symbol.
<sup>1</sup>	<sup>1</sup> The idea of writing questions at the top of drafts is a suggestion that Marie made earlier in the recording.	Footnotes provide longer contextual descriptions of prior information. This could be information from earlier in the conference, or it could refer to a prior event.

Adapted from Du Bois, et al. (1993), Jefferson (2004), and Gilewicz and Thonus (2003).

## Appendix G

### Student Demographic Information

This table lists students who recorded a writing conference. The first two pages include students whose teachers completed a recall. All names are pseudonyms.

Student name	Teacher name	Gender	Age	Languages		Conference frequency	Peer review	Writing center
				Spoken	Written			
Tim Drake	Forest	M	18-21	English Vietnamese	English	Never	Yes	No
Peter Hale	Forest	M	18-21	Chinese, Mandarin	English Chinese	Never	Yes	Yes
Rachel Westbrook	Forest	F	18-21	English	English	Minimal	Yes	-
Yeti Grant	Leighton	M	18-21	English	English	Some	Yes	No
Julia Kelli	Leighton	F	18-21	English	English	Never	No	No
Austin Bancraft	Leighton	M	22-25	English Japanese	English	Never	No	No
Gerardo Espinoza	Leighton	M	18-21	Spanish English Chinese	English	Some	-	-
Rachel Seymour	Meier	F	18-21	English	English	Minimal	Yes	No
Kimberly Saylor	Meier	F	22-25	English	English	Never	Yes	No
Romeo Escobar	Meier	M	18-21	English Spanish	English Spanish	Never	Yes	No
Tonya Medina	Reynolds	F	22-25	Spanish English	Spanish English	Never	-	Yes
Suzanne Adkins	Reynolds	F	18-21	English French	English French (limited)	Minimal	Yes	No
Eddie Michaels	Reynolds	M	26-29	English	English	Never	Yes	-
Daniel Belmonte	Reynolds	M	22-25	English Spanish	English Spanish	Never	No	No

Student name	Writing confidence	Motivated to improve writing	Editing comfort	L1	L2	Student Recall	Teacher Recall
Tim Drake	4	5	4	Vietnamese	English	Yes	Yes
Peter Hale	4	5	3	English	Chinese	Yes	Yes
Rachel Westbrook	3	5	4	English	N/A	Yes	Yes
Yeti Grant	3	3	2	English	N/A	Yes	Yes
Julia Kelli	2	3	2	English	N/A	Yes	Yes
Austin Bancraft	4	4	4	English	Japanese	Yes	Yes
Gerardo Espinoza	2	5	2	-	-	No	Yes
Rachel Seymour	3	4	3	English	N/A	Yes	Yes
Kimberly Saylor	2	5	4	English	N/A	Yes	Yes
Romeo Escobar	3	4	4	English	Spanish	Yes	Yes
Tonya Medina	4	5	4	Spanish	English	Yes	Yes
Suzanne Adkins	4	5	4	French	English	Yes	Yes
Eddie Michaels	3	5	3	English	N/A	Yes	Yes
Daniel Belmonte	3	4	4	English	Spanish	Yes	Yes

Writing confidence, motivated to improve writing, and editing comfort are Likert rating scales of 1-5 with 5 being high (5=very high, 4=high, 3=average, 2=low, 1= very low).

The following two pages include students whose teacher did not complete a recall, even if the student completed one.

Student name	Teacher name	Gender	Age	Languages		Conference frequency	Peer review	Writing center
				Spoken	Written			
Jane Lythgoe	Forest	F	18-21	English basic Arabic	English inter- mediate Arabic	Never	Yes	No
Nicole Hutson	Forest	F	18-21	English	English	Minimal	Yes	-
Jeffrey Anderson	Forest	M	18-21	English Spanish	English Spanish	Never	No	-
Kaleb Litster	Meier	M	18-21	English	English	Never	Yes	No
Lex (Leigh) Bean	Meier	F	18-21	English	English	Minimal	Yes	No
Lennon Anson	Meier	F	18-21	English	English	Minimal	Yes	No
Liza McNee	Meier	F	18-21	English	English	Never	Yes	Yes
Emma Cantrell	Meier	F	18-21	English Spanish	English Spanish	Never	Yes	No
Clark Kent Pender	Meier	M	26-29	English Spanish	English Spanish	Some	Yes	-
Jacob Nelson	Meier	M	18-21	English Spanish	English Spanish	Minimal	Yes	Yes
Keaton Jamison	Meier	M	22-25	English Spanish	English Spanish	Minimal	No	No
Aspen Woods	Reynolds	F	22-25	English	English	Minimal	Yes	No
Morgan Berry	Reynolds	F	22-25	English	English	Minimal	Yes	No
Brent Warren	Reynolds	M	22-25	English	English	Never	No	No
Jimmy John	Reynolds	M	22-25	English Spanish	English Spanish	Never	Yes	-

Student Name	Writing confidence	Motivated to improve writing	Editing comfort	L1	L2	Student Recall	Teacher Recall
Jane Lythgoe	4	5	4.5	English	Arabic	Yes	No
Nicole Hutson	3	4	4	English	N/A	Yes	No
Jeffrey Anderson	3	4	1	-	-	No	No
Kaleb Litster	4	4	4	English	N/A	Yes	No
Lex (Leigh) Bean	4	5	5	-	-	No	No
Lennon Anson	3	5	3	-	-	No	No
Liza McNee	2	5	3	-	-	No	No
Emma Cantrell	2	4	3	-	-	No	No
Clark Kent Pender	4	5	3	-	-	No	No
Jacob Nelson	3	4	3	-	-	No	No
Keaton Jamison	2	3	3	-	-	No	No
Aspen Woods	3.5	5	4	-	-	Yes	No
Morgan Berry	3	4	4	-	-	Yes	No
Brent Warren	3	3	4	-	-	Yes	No
Jimmy John	4	4	4	-	-	No	No

## Appendix H

### Teacher Demographic Information

This table provides background information for the teacher participants. All names are pseudonyms.

Teacher name	Rank	Number of Years		Conference(s)		Languages		Genre of paper at first conference	Student participants
		Teaching	Confer-encing	Per term	Length	Fluent	Additional attempted		
Emily Forest	Full-time, non-tenured	27	20	2	Varies (10-15 min)	English	French Spanish	Researched Argument	Tim Drake Peter Hale Rachel Westbrook
Ken Leighton	Tenured	nearly 30	nearly 30	2	varies (10 or 30 min)	English French	Latin	Researched Argument	Yeti Grant Julia Kelli Austin Bancraft
Caitlin Meier	Tenured	24	24	4	15-20 min.	German Russian English	None	Summary	Rachel Seymour Kimberly Saylor Romeo Escobar
Malcolm Reynolds	Tenure-track	14	13	3	10-15 min.	English	German	Analysis	Tonya Medina Suzanne Adkins Eddie Michaels Daniel Belmonte

## Appendix I

### Data Collection by Student-Teacher Dyads

Complete data sets are marked with an asterisk next to the student's pseudonym.

All names are pseudonyms.

Student	Teacher	Conf goals	RD conf	Conf	Final draft	Recall	
						Student	Teacher
Tim Drake*	Forest	-	1	1	1	1	1
Peter Hale*	Forest	1	1	1	1	1	1
Rachelle Westbrook	Forest	-	1	1	-	1	1
Austin Bancraft*	Leighton	1	1	1	1	1	1
Yeti Grant*	Leighton	1	1	1	1	1	1
Julia Kelli	Leighton	1	1	1	-	1	1
Gerardo Espinoza	Leighton	1	1	1	-	-	1
Rachel Seymour*	Meier	1	1	1	1	1	1
Kimberly Saylor*	Meier	1	1	1	1	1	1
Romeo Escobar*	Meier	1	1	1	1	1	1
Tonya Medina*	Reynolds	1	1	1	1	1	1
Suzanne Adkins*	Reynolds	1	1	1	1	1	1
Daniel Belmonte*	Reynolds	1	1	1	1	1	1
Eddie Michaels	Reynolds	1	-	1	1	1	1

*Note.* Conf means conference. RD means rough draft.



## Appendix J

### Perception Survey: Conference Success and Requests Understood

The following table records the participants' ratings for how well their requests were understood and how successful they perceived their conferences to be. The ratings are based on 6-point Likert scales. See the Stimulated Recall for Students and Teachers (Appendices D and E respectively) for each number's description.

Name	Teacher	Student Ratings		Teacher Ratings	
		Conference Success <sup>a</sup>	Requests Understood <sup>b</sup>	Conference Success <sup>c</sup>	Requests Understood <sup>d</sup>
Tim Drake	Forest	4	5.5 (5-6)	4	4.5 (4-5)
Peter Hale	Forest	5	5	4	5
Rachelle Westbrook	Forest	6	6	4	4
Austin Bancraft	Leighton	5	5	6 (5-6)	6
Yeti Grant	Leighton	4	6	4	4
Julia Kelli	Leighton	4	6	5 (5-6)	5
Gerardo Espinoza	Leighton	-	-	5	3
Rachel Seymour	Meier	6	6	6	5
Kimberly Saylor	Meier	6	6	6	5
Romeo Escobar	Meier	5	6	6	5
Tonya Medina	Reynolds	3	4	5 (4-5)	4
Suzanne Adkins	Reynolds	6	5	5	5
Daniel Belmonte	Reynolds	5	4.5 (4-5)	5	5
Eddie Michaels	Reynolds	6	5	5	4

*Note.* The questions used to determine the conference's success or how well the requests were understood correspond to the superscript letters.

<sup>a</sup>How would you rate the success of your writing conference with your teacher on a scale of 1 to 6?

<sup>b</sup>How would you rate how well your teacher understood your requests?

<sup>c</sup>How would you rate the success of your writing conference with the student on a scale of 1 to 6?

<sup>d</sup>How would you rate how well the student understood your requests?