Journal of Teaching Writing

Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis

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2016 (31.2)
Indiana Teachers of Writing
ISSN 0735–1259

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WRITING TO READ IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASSROOMS: AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

Karyn W. Tunks and Rebecca M. Giles

In June 2010, the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers announced the completion of a set of nationally-crafted academic standards now known as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Since that time, the standards have been adopted by 45 states, the District of Columbia, and four U.S. territories. According to the CCSS Initiative website, the standards provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them (International Reading Association CCSS Committee 2).

In contrast to the recommendations made by the National Reading Panel in 2000 (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development), the Common Core State Standards emphasize the teaching of writing as well as reading. With an emphasis on writing as a parallel process to reading, this area of the language arts is finally receiving the attention that classroom teachers have always known it deserved based on supporting research over the past three decades. Among other writing skills, the CCSS accentuate the need for students to learn to write about the information they find in texts (International Reading Association CCSS Committee 3), drawing attention to the importance of the writing-reading connection.

The relationship between learning to read and learning to write has been well established (McGinley 226-47; Tierney, et al. 169-209; Trosky and Wood 26, 34-40). Reading and writing are two related processes that, when taught collaboratively, enhance thinking and learning (Tierney 246-60). Reading and writing have been established as parallel processes (Tierney 246-60; Trosky and Wood 26) due to similarities they share (Holt and Vacca 177-81). Both call for establishing a purpose, deriving or creating meaning, activating prior knowledge, and constructing mental images (Taylor, et al. 45). It has been established that children benefit when writing and reading are taught through simultaneous experiences. Simply stated, if reading and writing are integrated through explicit instruction, students make gains in both areas that they are not likely to make if these two significant modes of language are not linked (Kent 109).

The CCSS identify seven English Language Arts Standards in writing for children in kindergarten through second grade (see Appendix). Under these new standards, children are expected to possess such abilities as composing basic explanatory texts by the time they leave kindergarten. Further, it is expected that students' writing should demonstrate increasing sophistication in all aspects of language use, from vocabulary and syntax to the development and organization of ideas as well as addressing increasingly demanding content and sources each year.

The CCSS are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world. To become accomplished writers, children need to be engaged in real-world writing with a purpose. This means intentionally developing reading and writing skills across disciplines throughout the day using authentic experiences where they communicate in print. Authentic and motivating writing experiences are those in which children appreciate that a key purpose of writing is to communicate clearly to an external, sometimes unfamiliar, audience. To meet CCSS, children must devote significant time and effort to writing, producing numerous pieces over short and extended time periods on a regular basis throughout the year. Using writing as a way of offering and

supporting opinions, demonstrating understanding of the topics being studied, and conveying real and imagined experiences and events through adult-supported writing experiences are essential in early childhood classrooms. These early experiences build a necessary foundation for students to be able to exhibit these same skills as independent writers in upper-elementary classrooms.

In this article, we will highlight three strategies identified and recognized for promoting writing in the early grades (Tunks and Giles 4-7) that are consistent with the standards and recommendations made in the CCSS. These strategies are beneficial to emergent literacy learners because they allow children to experience the satisfaction of being an author by publishing their writing as they are still learning skills necessary to be competent readers and writers. By publishing children's writing, they learn there is a purpose for writing and experience the sense of accomplishment of sharing their stories with others.

According to Lucy Calkins (266), publishing is an important phase of the writing process. Calkins is considered one of the pioneers of the workshop approach to teaching writing and is the founding director of Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. The author of the best-seller *The Art of Teaching Writing* explains to readers, "Publication matters and it matters because it inducts us into the writerly life. Publication is then the beginning, not the culmination of the writing process" (Calkins 266). The strategies presented in this article emphasize the publishing phase of the writing process for children who are in the early stages of learning to write. Three strategies are introduced which support children's early writing: taking dictation, translating kid writing, and creating cooperative chronicles.

Dictated Anecdotes

Dictated anecdotes (Tunks and Giles 22-24) is a strategy used to introduce children to the concept that writing is a useful way to record what they have to say. When children observe teachers take dictation as they tell a story, they grasp the concept that text is simply speech written down. Over time, children begin to

understand that when their stories are written down, they can be enjoyed again at a later time or shared with others who were not present when the story was told. Since young children are unaware that written records help people remember and share past experiences (Schickedanz and Casbergue 4), making these basic connections between speech and text are crucial to early reading and writing development.

For young children, who are natural storytellers, writing their anecdotes is an obvious first step in demonstrating why and how people make written records. When children have a story to share about an event they experienced or imagined, their objective is to simply share it in the immediate moment. Because young children's concepts of time and history are limited (Kessen and Mussen 103-26), they don't realize the value of making a record of their stories. Taking dictation facilitates children's awareness of the value of writing. When teachers make a written record of anecdotes they are introducing the concept and purpose of writing. Teachers can capitalize on the everyday occurrence of children sharing stories by saying, "Let's write this down, so we can remember it later," or "share it with someone who isn't here." When children see the teacher recording a story and later witness an audience's reaction to their writing, they have a powerful image of the purpose for writing.

Young children's limited understanding of print, lack of fine motor skills, and short attention span are obstacles they will overcome with time and experience. For children who are just beginning to convey meaning through their writing, this strategy enables them to complete a writing project that is beyond their ability to write independently. For example, they may want a story recorded that includes extensive detail or specific vocabulary. An adult can support these writers by taking down what they say and suggesting the child illustrate various parts of the story to add meaning and visual clues for retelling it.

Recording dictated anecdotes is also a useful strategy when working with learners who have specific language limitations including children with special needs and English Language

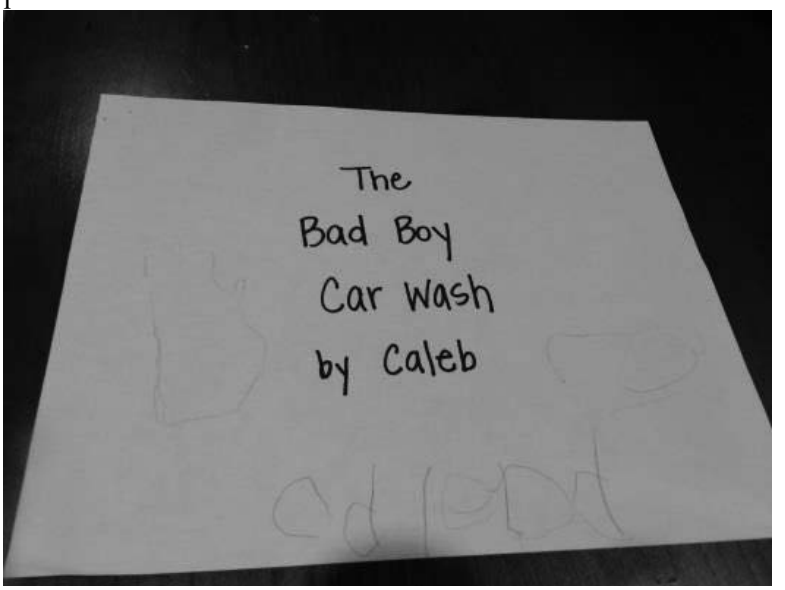
Learners (ELL). Children with special needs, such as visual impairment, hearing loss, learning disabilities, speech and language disorders, impaired motor skills, and mild cognitive delays, benefit from having their oral stories recorded as well. Sharing written records of their stories with others serves as a confidence-builder and an encouraging reminder of what they can do. For children who face language barriers as they are learning to speak a second language, dictating oral anecdotes makes it possible to have their stories and ideas recorded in a new language. As they revisit their stories, they are reinforcing their knowledge of language, vocabulary, and reading content skills.

The following narrative, written by Claire Hardison, a first-year teacher, shows her use of dictated anecdotes with a child with Special Needs.

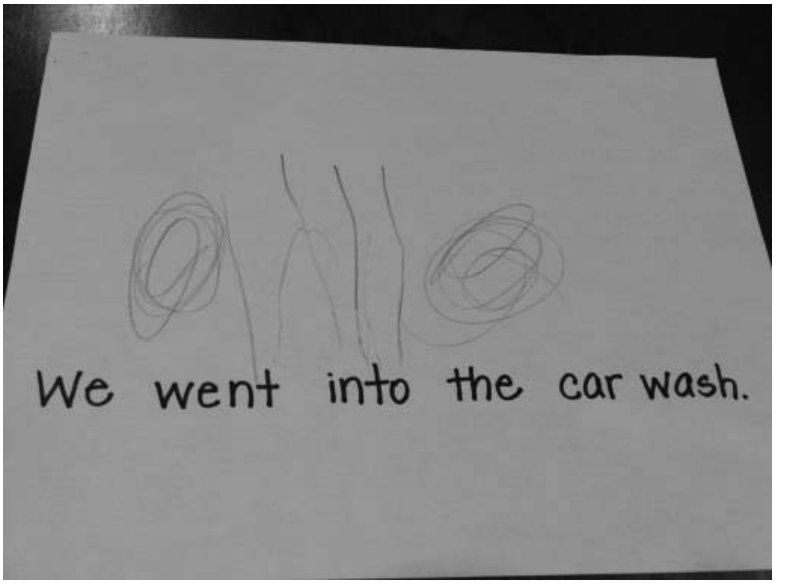
> Jacob is a five-year-old boy who will enter Kindergarten in the fall. He lives with his parents and younger brother who is eighteen months old. Jacob loves anything that is associated with car washes and trains. He often uses blocks and other materials to construct car washes. Jacob also enjoys spending time playing with his train table. He frequently displays compulsive behavior and often becomes fixated or obsesses over his interests. Jacob's abilities are limited in a number of ways. He is easily distracted and has difficulty staying on task. He shows little interest in interacting or playing with others. Limited fine motor skills make it difficult for Jacob to hold and use crayons and pencils.
>
> I talked with Jacob about books and explained that authors are people who write the stories and illustrators add pictures to go with the words. I asked Jacob if he had a story he would like to tell and explained that I would write it down for him. Not surprisingly, Jacob shared a story with me about going through a car wash. Jacob immediately started his story and paused after each sentence. I took dictation on white, unlined paper by writing a sentence at the bottom of each page leaving space at the top of the page for illustrations. I used a

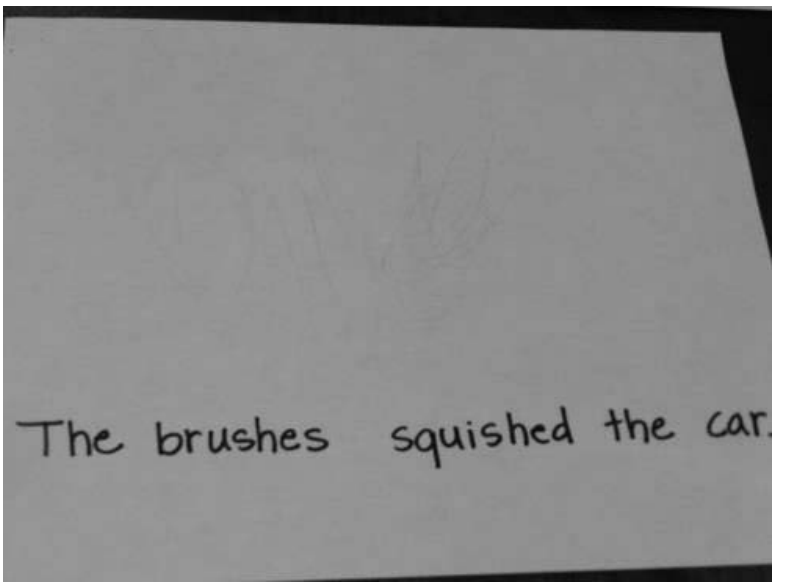
new sheet of paper for each sentence. After writing his story as he told it, I read it back to him and asked if he wanted to change anything. He liked the story as is and had no changes.

Telling and illustrating the story required concentration and focus, and it became apparent that Jacob needed a break from the activity. When we returned to the story, I read it back to him and we discussed what he might draw on each page. Jacob chose to use colored pencils for his illustrations. On every page he traced one of his Hot Wheel cars and on some pages added more features that corresponded with the text. His completed book had seven pages! When he was finished illustrating, I read the story back to him. Then I asked Jacob if he would like to read his story to me. He was excited to read his story and remembered the main ideas for each page as he told it. Later, when Jacob wanted to read his story to his mother, he recalled fewer details of his original story but used the illustrations to make up a new story also about a car wash. His mother was very proud of what he had accomplished and praised his hard work which made Jacob proud.

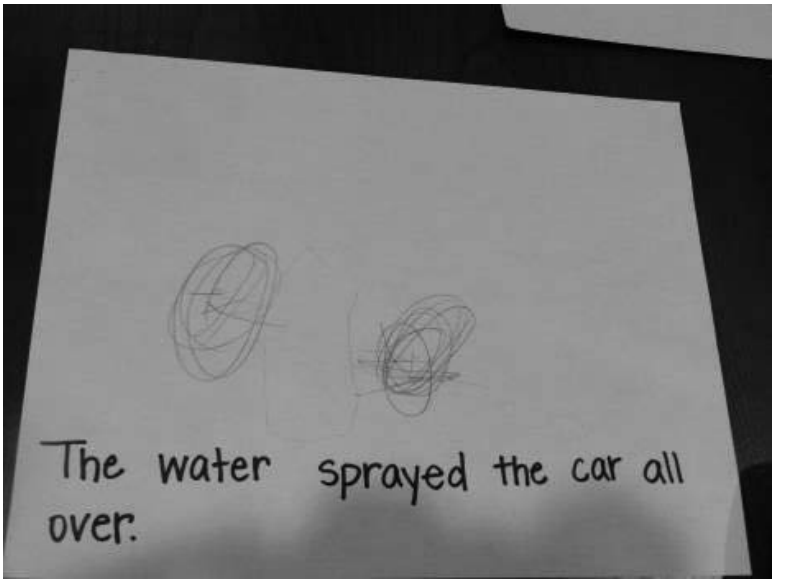


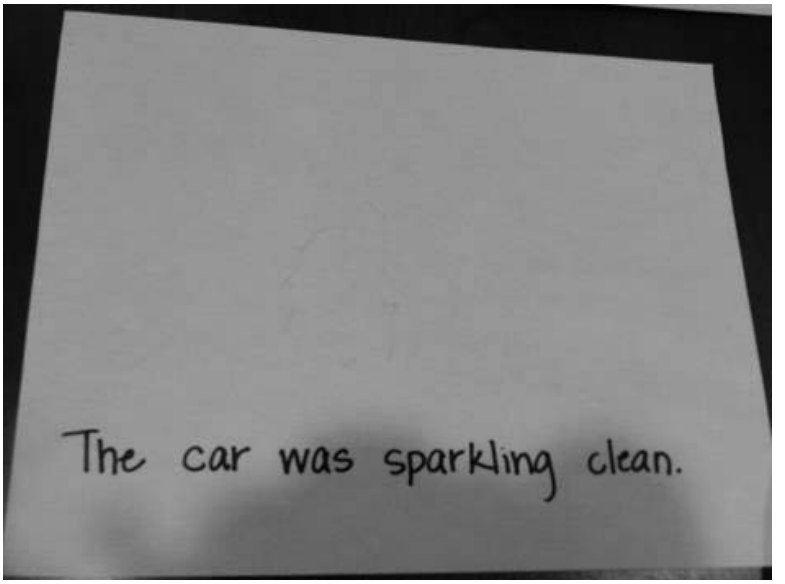
Because Jacob had difficulty holding a pencil, his illustrations are very light and difficult to see. The drawing done in addition to tracing the Hot Wheels cars can be classified as scribbles.



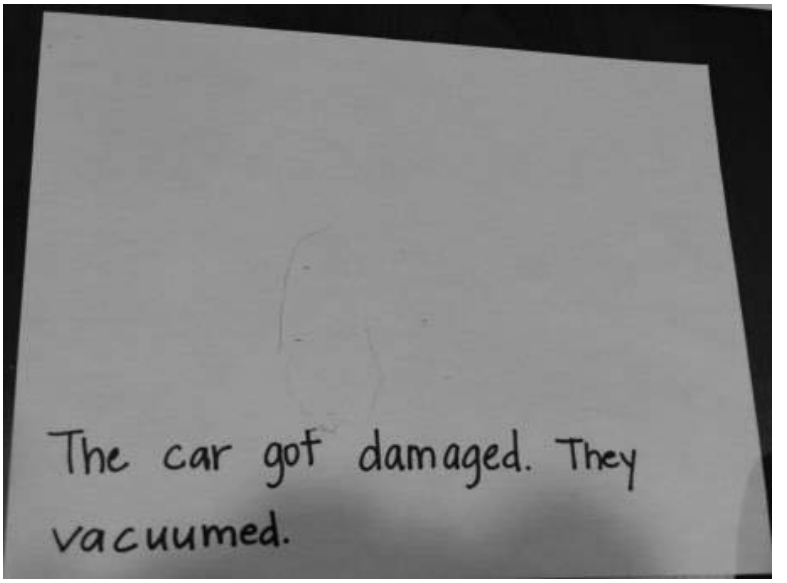


In the middle of the page above is a tracing of the Hot Wheel car with brushes on either side of the car "squishing" it.

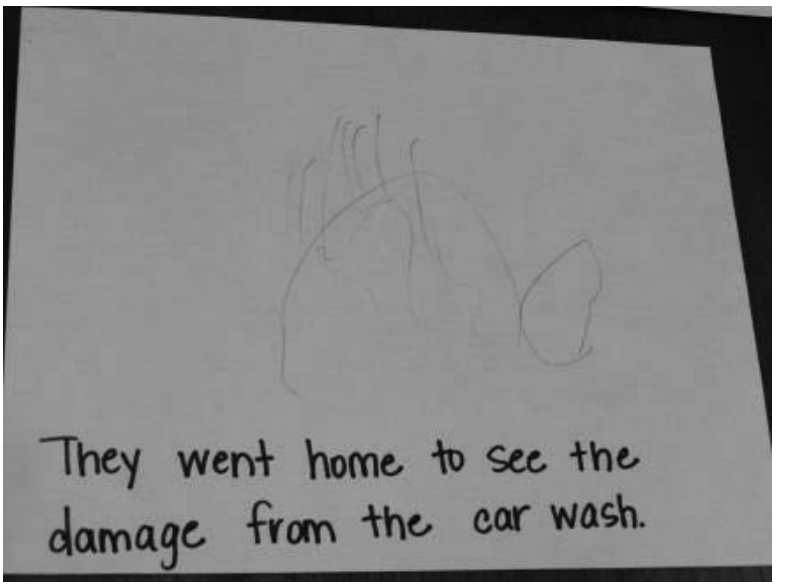




On this page Jacob traced the Hot Wheel car. It is in the center of the page.



The marks on this page are very faint. Jacob traced the Hot Wheel car and scribbled marks on it because it got "damaged" in the car wash.



This is a picture of the house and car in the driveway.

Translating Kid-Writing

Emergent writers are characterized by a limited but growing understanding of print. They have not grasped an understanding of sound-symbol relationships but begin experimenting with writing by making random marks on paper (Clay 108; Schickedanz 71-80; Sulzby 290-97). As their knowledge of sound-symbol relationships evolves, so do the marks they make on paper. While their spelling is far from conventional, they do begin to use some letters to represent sounds (Sulzby 290-97).

Children's first attempts to communicate through symbols have been described as "kid writing" (Behymer 85-88). These marks have been categorized into different forms of spontaneous writing (Sulzby 290-97). Children's early attempts at symbol-making demonstrate a developing awareness of the purpose for writing. When the effort for experimenting is reinforced, children are more likely to continue experimenting and developing a growing understanding of the purposes of print.

Sulzby identified six different types of kid-writing (see Figure 1) typically used by emergent writers including: scribbles, drawing pictures, letter-like forms, letter strings, conventional spelling, and invented spelling (290-97; Sulzby, Barnhart, and Hieshima 4). The spontaneous forms of writing used by emerging writers are not stages and do not occur in a sequence. Instead, children use different forms under varying circumstances (Sulzby 290-97) and may even combine the different types of kid writing to convey a message (Morrow 265-85). Their choice of kid writing may be determined by the message they want to convey, knowledge of letter sounds, ability to form specific letters, and knowledge of memorized standard spellings. The result is writing that is personally meaningful and can typically be read by the writer even if it is unreadable to others.

Translating kid writing into a conventional form of writing preserves the integrity of the message while enabling others to read it. When teachers respond to children's kid writing with the understanding that it contains a meaningful message, it motivates young writers (Tunks and Giles 57). Teachers can encourage

Scribbles: Unlike the random scribbles found in children's early attempts at drawing, scribble writing most often consists of wavy or loopy horizontal marks resembling cursive handwriting.

Drawing: Drawing used as writing, also known as picture writing, occurs when children draw pictures as a means of written communication. These drawings are intended to convey a specific message and are often "read" by children using the same tone and intonation used when reading a story aloud.

Letter-like forms: Also known as mock writing or mock letters, letter-like forms contain a combination of straight, curved, and intersecting lines giving them the appearance of actual manuscript letters.

Letter strings: Once children have acquired the ability to form at least some letters, like those in their own name, and numbers, these known symbols are strung together in random order to resemble print. While the resulting text is nonphonetic and may contain letter reversals or other errors in formation, accurate spacing and directionality are often displayed.

Conventional spelling–Children will memorize the correct spellings of words that have special meaning for them, such as names and high frequency words like *cat*, *dog*, *mom*, and *dad*, using these conventional spellings in their writing embedded among other forms.

Invented spelling–As children's knowledge of letter's sound-symbol relationship increases, they begin to write words based on the sounds heard when the word is said. Initially, whole words may be represented by only the first or first and last sound heard, but over time, children's phonetic writing reaches a point that while not correctly spelled is readable. For example, "I luv mi famle."

Figure 1: Types of Kid-Writing

children to tell or "read" what they have written. Then, similar to techniques used in taking dictation for oral stories, the teacher serves as a scribe by recording the child's interpretation of their kid writing. This message is typically recorded by "under writing," a technique in which the teacher writes directly under (or above) the child's kid writing. Under writing serves as a translation of kid writing by providing a verbatim record of the child's message. If a child questions why it is necessary for the teacher to rewrite his message, a simple explanation that it helps others to read their kid writing usually suffices. The teacher can explain that in time, with more experience writing, the child's kid writing will resemble that of adults and under writing will no longer be necessary. As their kid writing with accompanying under writing is shared with others who can accurately read the message, children realize they play a critical role in getting their own thoughts on paper.

Creating Cooperative Chronicles

As children participate in many rewarding early writing experiences, their knowledge and abilities increase along with their confidence as authors (Tunks and Giles 66-67). The CCSS acknowledge that some writing skills are more properly defined in terms of specific writing types, like arguments, informative/ explanatory texts, and narratives, while other writing competencies, such as the ability to plan, revise, and edit, are applicable to many types of writing. Once young children move beyond publishing only their initial attempts, or "rough draft writing," creating cooperative chronicles is an effective means of introducing children to revising and editing.

While revising is a daunting task for most writers, it is particularly difficult for young authors who tend to be satisfied with first drafts. As such, young authors' first experiences with revising should occur in a setting that demonstrates it as a necessary and doable part of the writing process. With support and guidance, children soon realize that the most compelling messages are those that have been thoughtfully reworked as opposed to hastily written. Creating cooperative chronicles clearly illustrates the need for

revising while also demonstrating to beginning writers that revision is well within their capabilities (Giles and Tunks 22-24).

As with other group writing strategies (i.e., language experience approach, interactive writing, and shared writing), creating cooperative chronicles capitalizes on the social nature of children and uses the energy of group work as the catalyst for successfully completing a piece of writing. Peers work collaboratively to ask questions, make suggestions, and judge the clarity of the writing. In a group setting, the teacher serves as scribe and support as children contribute and collaborate on a single piece of work. She asks questions and gives them an opportunity to revise by clarifying, reorganizing, or expanding the group piece of writing. Cooperative chronicles possess the unique quality of encompassing the entire writing process, from brainstorming topics and prewriting through completing a polished piece (see Figure 2).

When writing a cooperative chronicle, children actually witness the evolution and improvement of the piece as it is revised and edited. Once decisions regarding topic and format are made, an oral discussion of a shared experience follows. Ideas shared orally are then recorded by the teacher, resulting in the first draft. Whether children's language is written on large chart paper or typed and projected using technology, it is recommended that ample room be left between lines of text for future additions and changes. After reading the first draft together, it is put aside, for an hour or a few days, to give the authors some critical distance. Upon revisiting the piece, the first draft is read and a purpose for revising, such as sequence, content or vocabulary, is identified. As the piece is repeatedly re-read on subsequent visits, children offer further suggestions for change. These suggestions often result in the teacher drawing arrows, inserting words or phrases, and marking through original text. To help children easily identify the modifications from the original text, it is recommended that a different color be used for the text created on each visit. Once children are satisfied with their product, it is titled and published. As with other writing products, cooperative chronicles can be published in a variety of formats, including class books or individually illustrated stories.

The process of creating a cooperative chronicle supports children's early understanding of the writing process and builds confidence as they become independent writers.

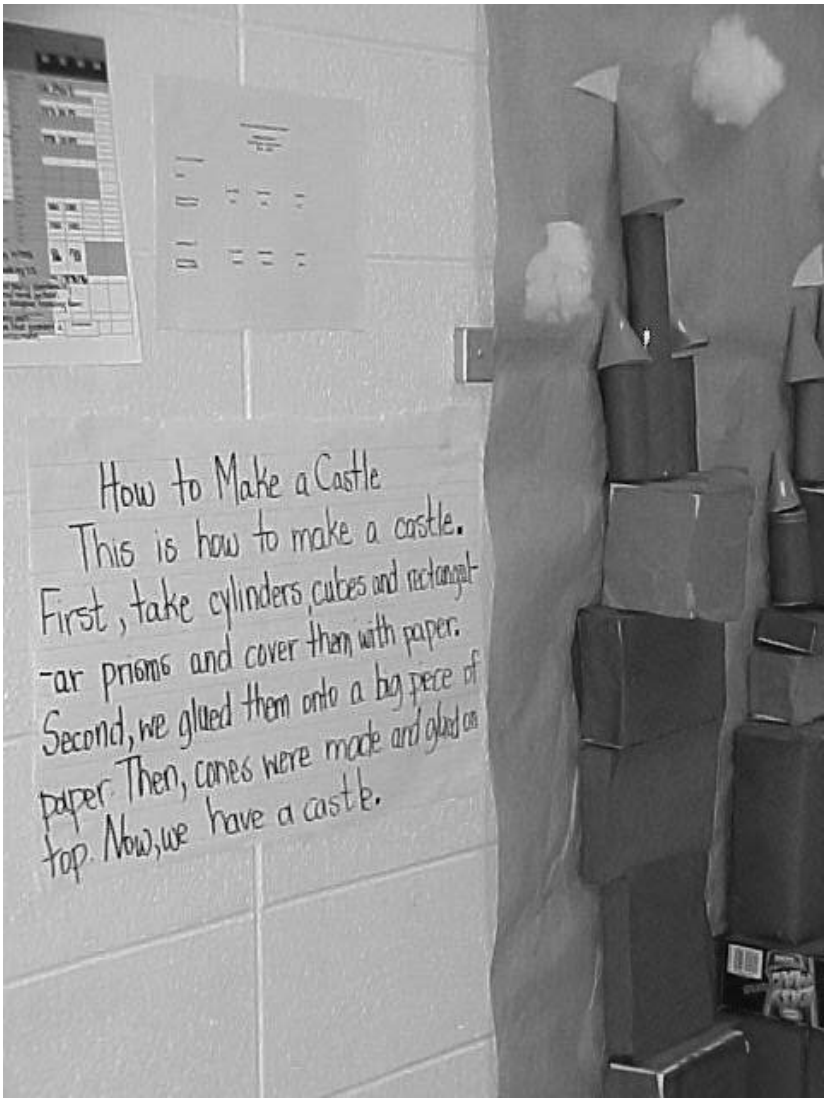


Figure 2: Final Product of a Cooperative Chronicle which the Children Drafted, Revised, and Edited as a Group with Support of their Teacher

The three strategies we have introduced are intended to support early writers as they are developing knowledge and skills on their way to becoming independent writers. Once they possess basic literacy skills learned from these strategies, such as distinguishing print from pictures, recognizing letters, phonemic awareness, and conventional spelling, children are considered independent authors. As independent authors they become less dependent on the strategies and more capable in their ability to choose topics, clarify meaning through revisions, and create a finished piece of writing to share with others.

Conclusion

The emphasis on writing as a parallel process to reading by the Common Core State Standards provides the impetus for early childhood teachers to allocate significant instructional time to adult-supported writing experiences in early childhood classrooms. The strategies described in this article—taking dictation, translating kid writing, and creating cooperative chronicles—support young children's early writing by using scaffolding to extend their current knowledge and abilities as writers. These strategies are beneficial to emergent literacy learners because they allow children to experience the satisfaction of being an author by publishing their writing as they are still learning skills necessary to be competent readers and writers. By publishing their writing, they learn there is a purpose for writing and experience the sense of accomplishment of sharing their stories with others, both of which provide a solid foundation for their future success as writers. Although these strategies support the expectations for student-writers as put forth by CCSS, the benefits extend beyond one specific set of standards and, therefore, will remain useful even as mandated requirements change.

APPENDIX

English Language Arts Standards for Writing (Kindergarten – Second Grade)

Text Types and Purposes

• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.K.1 Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose opinion pieces in which they tell a reader the topic or the name of the book they are writing about and state an opinion or preference about the topic or book (e.g., *My favorite book is…*).

• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.K.2 Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.

• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.K.3 Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to narrate a single event or several loosely linked events, tell about the events in the order in which they occurred, and provide a reaction to what happened.

Production and Distribution of Writing

• (W.K.4 begins in grade 3)

• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.K.5 With guidance and support from adults, respond to questions and suggestions from peers and add details to strengthen writing as needed.

• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.K.6 With guidance and support from adults, explore a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.K.7 Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., explore a number of books by a favorite author and express opinions about them).

• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.K.8 With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

• (W.K.9 begins in grade 4)

Range of Writing

• (W.K.10 begins in grade 3)

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TEACHING TECHNICAL WRITING THROUGH AN ONLINE HELP DESK SIMULATION

Katherine Worboys Izsak and Grace Lee

Instructors have often found that students struggle with assignments in their technical writing courses (Mitchell; Dobrin; Wilson; Mathes), with many noting the difficulty of designing an effective course for technical writing students, when taking into account the fact that the course is skills-centered and effectively without content (Wilson). In particular, some instructors have noted the difficulty of engaging students when drawing solely on the dry, handbook-like readings common in technical writing textbooks. In the past few years, many technical writing instructors have begun to publish pieces that address these struggles, by relating novel and innovative approaches to engaging students in technical writing assignments. Recent scholarship on technical writing instruction has detailed pedagogical approaches using popular novels (Wilson), poetry (Gunn), photography (Hertzberg, Leppek, and Gray), and concept maps (Debopriyo). We seek to add to this growing body of literature on teaching technical writing through innovative measures. In this article, we describe an online simulation of a help desk scenario that we developed to teach principles of technical communication, specifically the technical writing genre of the instruction set.

This article discusses the results of a qualitative evaluation of an iteration of the online, help desk simulation, conducted using Facebook, during an undergraduate technical writing course. Through inductive content analyses of simulation transcripts and written debriefing exercises, as well as data collection during an

informal oral debriefing, we find that the role-playing element of the simulation effectively engaged students through their creation of their own fictional identities and backgrounds. Students engaged with the assignment, created thoughtful fictional identities for themselves, wrote insightful reflections about how their practical experiences during the simulation would impact their future writing and revision processes, and provided immensely positive feedback. We find that this process of creating and interacting with these fictional identities forced students to think critically about their technical writing products and spurred thoughtful approaches to revision of their written documents.

Teaching with Simulations

Simulations are classroom activities in which students play roles that demonstrate core features of a real-world system, process, or environment (Greenblat). Instructors frequently use simulations as teaching tools in physical, health, and social science education (Asal and Blake; McCaughey and Traynor; Kee). They are particularly important tools in the social science classroom, where some have argued that they play the same role that laboratory experiments do for the physical science classroom: they provide an opportunity to learn actively from first-hand experience (Asal and Blake). There is, however, very little published work on the use of simulations in the humanities classroom. One scholar has even gone so far as to argue that instructors from humanities-based disciplines would have to completely rethink their teaching objectives in order to integrate them with the capabilities of simulation and gaming for learning (Kee). A search of scholarship on teaching writing revealed even fewer publications on simulations or game-based learning. Those that did appear were at least a decade old, most dating between the late 1990s and the early 2000s, and focused primarily on second-language classrooms. As a body of literature, they find that the creation of a simulated environment for role-based debate or discussion improved students' attitude, focus, and aptitude when writing about the experience, or when writing in relation to the experience later. (See for instance: Cheng; Halleck; Halleck,

Moder, and Damron; Moder, Seig, and van Den Elzen.) For instance, in a 2002 article, Salies recounted her use of a simulation to teach English writing at a Brazilian university. In an effort to provide her students with tools to write argumentative essays, she developed a simulation on gun control based on a scenario involving real-world events in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in which a 13-year-old boy home alone shoots and kills a burglar. Students role-played community members using role sheets providing specific backgrounds and interests, and they came together in a town hall meeting to discuss neighborhood crime rates. Students debated and negotiated and then, still in character as their community member roles, wrote letters to local newspapers about the shooting incident and gun control. Salies did not conduct a formal evaluation of the simulation but did debrief her students on the experience and found that students were motivated to participate in the simulation and that students developed a range of language abilities during the simulation. She also found that students responded to the simulation as they might to any element of experiential learning, which she argued was key to writing development (Salies).

Experiential learning, in fact, is a key finding in most pedagogical scholarship on the effectiveness of simulations. In particular, instructors evaluating their simulation teaching tools have found that students learn from simulations through their engagement and identification with the scenario and characters. Williams and Williams argue that simulations result in a series of identifications. First, they assert, simulations can result in affective identification, in which a student becomes personally and emotionally invested in the game and its results. They also note that simulations can result in cognitive identification, when players intellectually identify the game with reality. Finally, they note that simulations can result in behavioral identification, when students begin to identify the insights of the game as choices and lessons they have personally lived and have personally accepted (Williams and Williams).

Some scholarship has found that such role identification behaviors are the building blocks for student learning during a simulation (Pearsall, Ellis, and Bell). And other scholarship has

suggested that simulation and gaming environments are especially effective precisely because they allow students to experience new worlds and practice new behaviors in them, thereby developing problem-solving resources and adaptation skills (Gee). Scholars have also found that simulations are most effective when they are carefully constructed to allow multiple opportunities for student identification with their roles. Scholars have argued that an effective simulation must take place in three parts: *preparation*, in which students are introduced to the topic, conduct research on the topic, and read simulation materials; *game play*, in which students undertake the assignment itself; and *debriefing*, in which students engage in guided reflection time after the *game play* stage is over. During the *preparation* stage, students study the subject matter. During the *game play* stage, students have the opportunity to put their learning from the preparation phase into action. Then, during the *debriefing* stage, students internalize the lessons of the simulation (Asal and Blake). Students thus have the opportunity to learn about and shape their characters in their heads, then play their characters, then come back together and think about what they learned from placing themselves into the roles of their characters.

The Simulation

We designed our help desk simulation to capitalize on these opportunities: to provide students with an opportunity to participate in experiential learning related to their writing and to ask them to play roles that would help them work through ideas about how best to write instructions for completing real-world tasks. We designed the simulation to address four primary learning outcomes.

Students will be able to:

- write and revise instruction sets;
- troubleshoot technical instructions;
- communicate, quickly and in written form, with a written document's users/stakeholders; and

- revise their own work and improve the clarity of their instructional command-writing.

Students first discussed writing instruction sets in class. They received the following instructions in an assignment sheet:

> Instruction sets are common technical documents for many disciplines and occupations. Employees read instructions to learn how to assemble a product or complete a procedure. Supervisors write out company policies that often serve as instruction sets. Customers read instructions for using a product. For this assignment, you will develop a set of instructions advising users to perform a specific task.
>
> …Your instruction set must include the following components:
>
> - Introduction or background information, such as:
> - A technical description of the process that the readers will be completing;
> - Relevant technical definitions;
> - Cautions or warnings that apply to the task;
> - Approximate length of time required for the task; and
> - A list of materials needed to complete the task.
> - A list of steps in chronological order, broken into sections with appropriate subheadings (please note that there should be a clear hierarchy of headings and subheadings).
>
> You may also want to consider such components as:
>
> - Diagrams, drawings, photographs, figures, or tables, including necessary captions and labels;

- Troubleshooting tips (i.e., advice on how to rectify problems that might arise when a user is attempting to complete the task); and/or
- Glossary of key terms and definitions.

In addition to the information about the technical aspects and organization of formal instruction sets (see Figure 1), we discussed goals for instruction sets, as laid out in the course textbook, *Technical Communication in the Twenty-First Century* (Dobrin, Weisser, and Keller). Discussion focused on the following goals of a technical instruction set:

- To provide the audience with information in an efficient and simple manner;
- To teach the audience to complete a task;
- To teach the audience to solve a problem; and
- To teach the audience to troubleshoot and generate solutions to problems on their own.

We then discussed appropriate questions to help students develop their instruction sets:

- What is the problem I aim to solve with this instruction set?
- What information sources do I need for my instruction set?
- How should I format my document?
- How can I test the document's usability?
- Who is my audience?
- What is my audience's level of expertise? How much and what kind of technical jargon is appropriate?
- What level of skill will my audience need to complete the task?

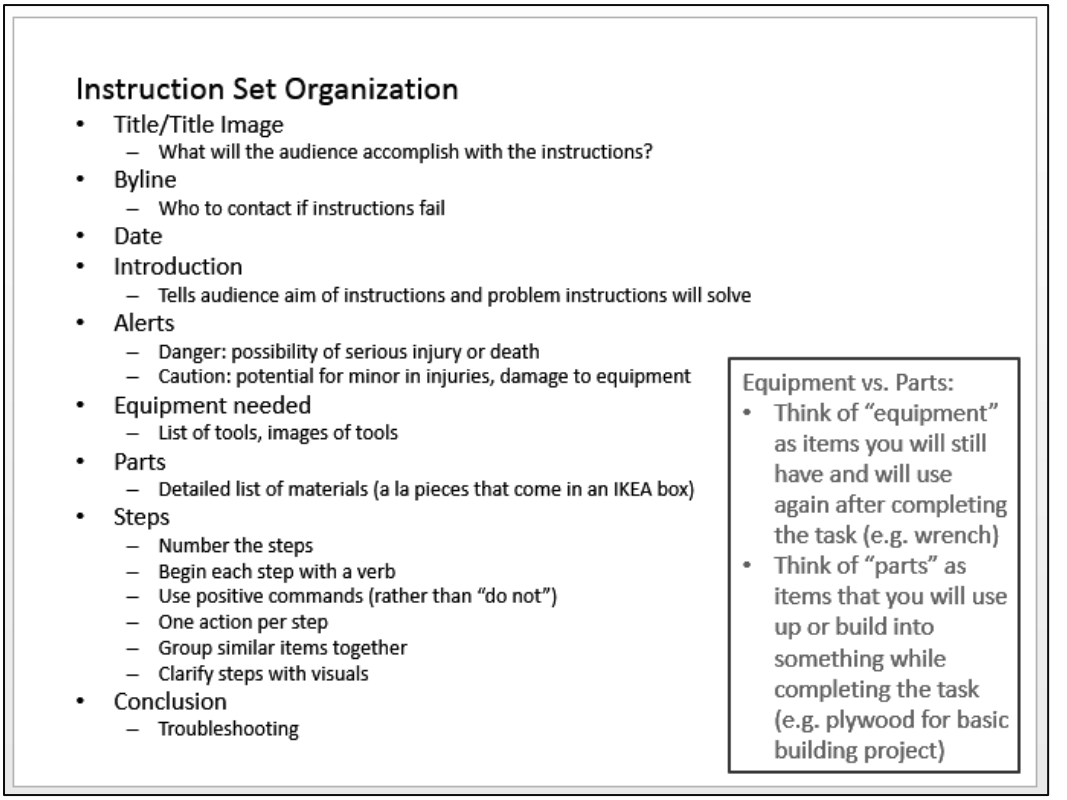

Figure 1: PowerPoint Slide from Class Discussion on Organizing Instruction Sets

The class next moved to the simulation of a help desk environment. We selected a help desk environment as the setting of the simulation in part because help desk support is a key employment avenue for students trained in technical communication (Albers). The setting was also an interesting option because help desk employees are often the arbiters and interpreters of technical communication documents; in fact, corporate research agenda often evaluate the effectiveness of a technical document based on quantity of calls to a help desk (Spilka). Prior to the simulation, students received the following instructions:

On [date], we will hold an online class, in which you will spend 20 minutes in a simulated "help desk" situation, answering questions from two of your classmates online about your instruction set. Many technical writers take positions working at help desks or work closely with help desk teams to write technical documents like instruction sets—in fact, a primary duty of a technical writer can be to reduce calls from confused users to the help desk. Further articulating the process represented within your instruction set will also help you think about how you might revise the document to improve clarity and style.

Homework Assignment. You will be placed into a group of three. On Monday, [date], you will send your instruction set to the other two members of your group, and you will receive their instruction sets. Before class begins on Wednesday, [date], you will develop five questions on each instruction set at places where you might or where you predict another user might arrive at a problem—a place where the user cannot proceed to the next task on the list without technical assistance. You will generate ten questions total, five for each of your group mates' instruction sets.

Class Time–Simulation. You will participate in this simulation virtually, from anywhere, via Facebook… At the beginning of class on [date], you will log into Facebook and open a secret group I will have created, called "Help Desk Simulation–Group X," where X is your designated group number.

You will role-play a help desk support person and two help desk callers over the course of the next 60 minutes. We will work in three 20-minute segments, in which you will play the help desk support person for one 20-minute section and help desk callers for your group mates in the other two sections. If you have been designated as receiving inquiries in the first

segment of the simulation, you will enter the group and wait for questions to appear in your newsfeed. You may need to periodically refresh your screen, but you should receive notifications in the upper-right corner whenever someone has made a new post. As a help desk support person, you will respond to each question as quickly and accurately as possible. At the end of 20 minutes, you will transition to the role of help desk caller.

As a help desk caller, you will log in to the same Facebook group and post one question at a time, waiting for answers to each question before posting either a follow-up question or a new question. As a caller, you should ask spontaneously developed, follow-up questions at any point in which the support person's answers do not meet your needs or expectations. You may also post feedback—positive or negative—to your support person. It is your job to challenge the help desk support person to write clear, direct, and concise responses to your questions.

Class Time–[Written Debriefing]. During the final 15 minutes of class time, you will write free responses to three reflective questions and send them to me via email:

- What did you learn about writing instruction sets during this exercise?
- What did you learn about your specific instruction set during this exercise?
- What did you learn about the communication skills required for help desk support in this exercise?

Each free response should be two to three paragraphs.

Evaluation Methods

In order to evaluate the success of the simulation, we asked whether students who engaged in the assignment developed their technical writing awareness and capabilities:

> **Reflective Question 1:** Did students refine their instructional command-writing capabilities?
> **Reflective Question 2:** Did students report insights into their own instruction sets and thoughts on revisions?

We tested the help desk simulation assignment in an upper-level, undergraduate, honors class on technical writing at the University of Maryland. The class consisted of 20 students, broken down as follows:

- 11 men, 9 women;
- 3 juniors, 17 seniors;
- 7 students with GPAs between 3.0 and 3.49, 13 with GPAs over 3.5; and
- 2 students from the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources; 1 from the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences; 7 from the College of Chemical, Mathematical, and Natural Sciences; 9 from the School of Engineering; and 1 from the School of Public Health.

We chose to use a written reflection process to allow for textual content analysis after the fact (see below for further discussion of content analysis methodologies). We developed the reflection questions above to allow students to consider how their practical experiences in the simulation—different types of acts, emotions, relationships, strategies, and feelings they may have experienced, the importance of reflecting upon which is discussed further in Petranek, Corey, and Black (1992)—would impact their writing and revision choices. Students received instructions to engage in the written debriefing exercise via Facebook and submitted responses via Facebook Messenger.

We then drew on qualitative content analysis to analyze the simulation itself and the written debriefing exercises. Content analysis is a flexible method for analyzing data from texts (Cavanagh). It has a long history of use in communication, journalism, sociology, psychology, and business (Neundorf), and it can include a range of analytical techniques, including impressionistic, intuitive, and interpretive analyses, as well as systematic, quantitative analyses of texts (Rosengren). Scholars use the method to become immersed in their textual data, and the method aims to characterize a text according to a series of concepts or categories describing it. Elo and Kyngäs describe two approaches to qualitative content analysis—the inductive and deductive methods. The inductive approach to content analysis requires the scholar to code the data according to keywords found in the text, develop coding sheets, group the data, categorize the groupings, and then abstract the categories for interpretation. The deductive approach requires the scholar to begin with the development of an analysis matrix, then to gather data according to that content, then to group the data, categorize the groupings, and abstract the categories for interpretation (Elo and Kyngäs). Hsieh and Shannon describe qualitative content analysis in a similar manner, but they offer three approaches rather than two. In conventional content analysis, the study begins with observation; the scholar defines codes directly from the data during his/her analysis of it. Directed content analysis starts with theory; the scholar defines codes from theory or relevant research findings. In turn, summative content analysis begins with keywords—the scholar develops a list of keywords for the coding protocol based on his/her research interests (Hsieh and Shannon).

We began by coding the transcripts of the simulation itself. We conducted an inductive, conventional content analysis (Elo and Kyngäs; Hsieh and Shannon) of the transcript data, allowing coding themes to emerge as we analyzed the simulation transcripts, focusing on building a typology of the questions that drove interaction within the simulation. We then conducted an inductive, conventional content analysis of students' free responses to the

post-simulation written debriefing questions. Again, we allowed coding themes to emerge as we analyzed the free response transcripts (Elo and Kyngäs; Hsieh and Shannon). Finally, we conducted a spontaneous, oral debriefing in the class meeting immediately following the simulation and collected data on student contributions.

Findings

Simulation Results

Once students had indicated topics for their instruction sets, we organized them into groups of three students each, based on subject matter. Seven groups participated in the simulation:

- Group 1–Animals (individual subjects: turtle mark-and-recapture studies; veterinary technician skills; cannula implantation in rats);
- Group 2–Psychology and Wellbeing (parenting; meditation; sleep health);
- Group 3–Health Care (cardiopulmonary resuscitation; first aid; asthma treatment and prevention);
- Group 4–Computer Technology (using Excel; building motherboards; 3D printing);
- Group 5–Studying, Teaching, and Learning (sight-reading for piano, drawing molecular diagrams; studying for an exam in Anatomy and Physiology);
- Group 6–Sports and Games (baseball, poker); and
- Group 7–Miscellaneous (solar panels; MDMA [the drug commonly known as ecstasy] use; theatre rigging technology).

Students submitted their draft versions of their instruction sets electronically to us and to the members of their help desk simulation groups (see Figures 2 and 3). Students then had two

nights to draft questions for one another to pose during the help desk simulation.

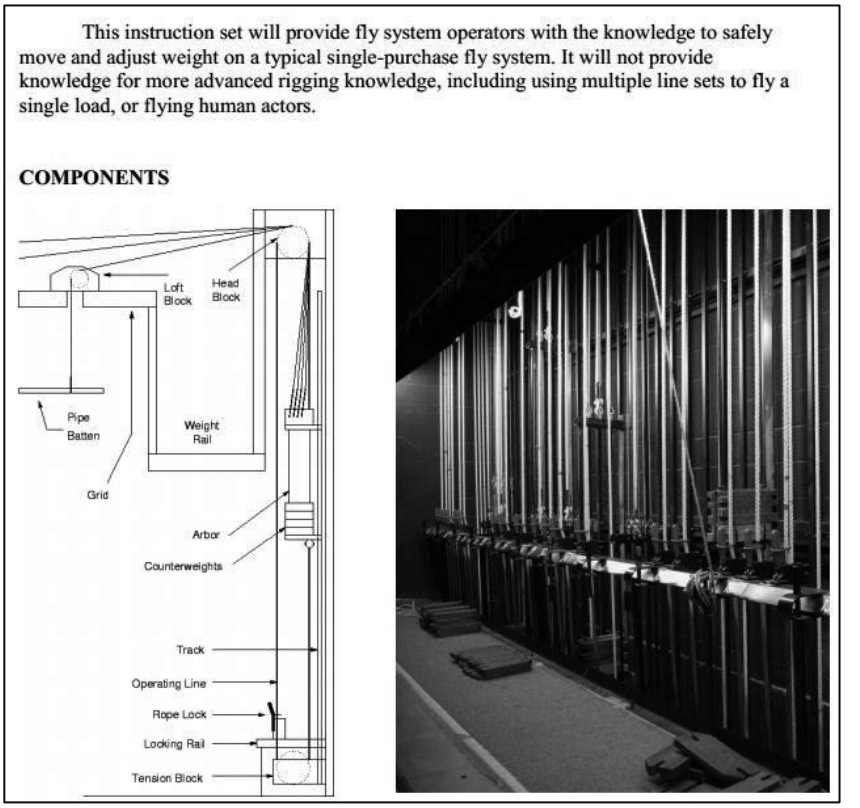

Figure 2: Excerpt of an Instruction Set Draft on Theater Rigging Systems

Each student played the role of the help desk support person for 20 minutes each, fielding questions from two other students simultaneously (see Figure 4). Students received and responded to questions using the Newsfeed function of a locked, "Secret" Facebook group. During his or her 20 minutes as help desk support person, each student fielded between three and eight questions from each questioner, receiving and responding to between six and fifteen questions in total. The entire simulation resulted in a bank of 210 questions.

Instructions

Pre-pitch:

1. Get into the crouching position, with feet shoulder width apart and knees spread away from your body.
2. Call the pitch that the pitcher will throw. *(Tip 1: Skip this step if your team does not require the catcher to call the pitch)*
3. Place your throwing hand behind your back and open glove in front of you, indicating where you want the pitcher to throw the ball.
4. Watch the pitcher as he winds up, while remaining aware of the base runner. *(Tip 2: The base runner should always be in the periphery of your vision and you should be listening to hear if the first baseman gives you any indication that the base runner steals.)*

During the pitch (assuming the runner steals):

5. Move the foot that is on the same side as your throwing arm (right handed thrower will move his right foot) behind you 45 degrees towards your spine. *(Tip 3: Your body should be partially turned towards either first base or third base, depending on whether you are right-handed or left-handed respectively)*
6. Elevate in your crouch. You should elevate to half-way out of your crouch as soon as you complete step 5.
7. Catch the ball. *(Tip 4: This step should not be overlooked, as dropping the ball will make it extremely difficult to catch the stealing base runner)*

Figure 3: Excerpt of an Instruction Set Draft on Baseball (Throwing out a Runner Attempting to Steal Second Base)

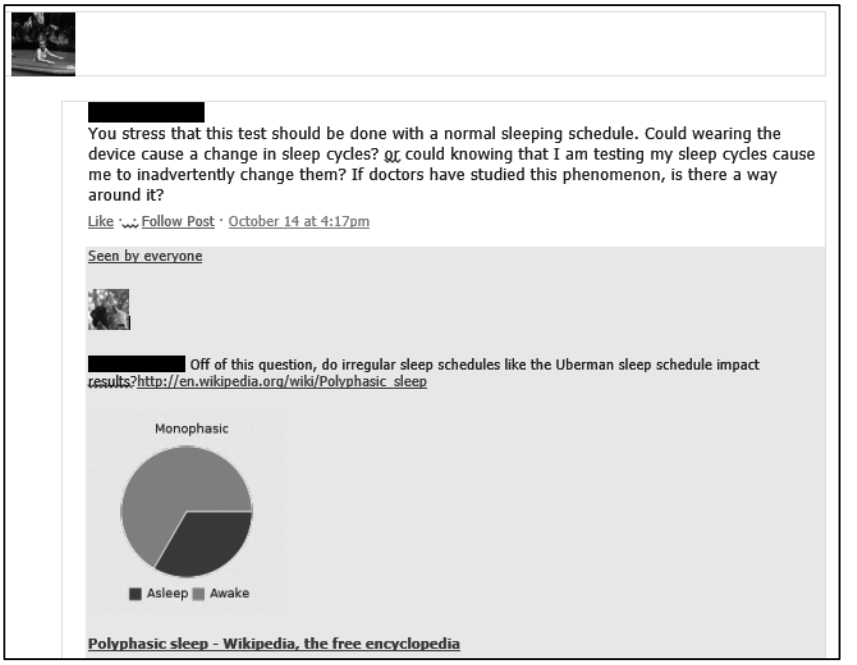

Figure 4: Questions Posed by Two Role-Players in the Psychology and Well-Being Help Desk Simulation Facebook Group

After a careful review of simulation transcripts, we identified ten distinct categories of questions that students generated when playing the role of help desk caller. We labeled these question categories as follows:

1. I need something clarified/defined. (DE)
    a. Example (re: asthma treatment): *What is a spacer and what are its implications for an asthmatic?*
2. I made an error. (ER)
    a. Example (re: MDMA testing): *If the reader puts more than 1-2 drops on the substance being tested, is the test void?*
3. I am afraid to take the next step. (FE)
    a. Example (re: turtle mark-and-recapture studies): *I am having trouble measuring the depths of my notch. Will the turtle give me any indication if I am starting to hurt it?*
4. I am unsure of how to measure results. (ME)
    a. Example (re: sleep health): *Is there a meter that can gauge this? Or do I have to estimate it?*
5. The results are not as I expected. (RE)
    a. Example (re: cannula implantation in rats): *I thought I drilled the hole straight, but the screw isn't stabilizing.*
6. I am requesting additional information. (RFI)
    a. Example (re: building a computer motherboard): *This looks really expensive. Is there any way to get parts for cheaper? Can I trust eBay for parts?*
7. I am looking for additional resources on the topic. (RS)
    a. Example (re: sight-reading for pianists): *You noted that pianists should purchase a sight-reading method book to improve sight-reading capabilities. What can such a book provide that your instruction set cannot?*
8. I am unsure of the sequence of steps in the procedure. (SE)
    a. Example (re: CPR): *At what stage of choking would it be appropriate to call for medical assistance? If the victim is coughing should I call? Or should I wait until they stop breathing?*

9. I encountered an unexpected complication. (UC)
    a. Example (re: turtle mark-and-recapture studies): *A snapping turtle seems to have its foot caught in the net. What method would you recommend to get it out without hurting the turtle, or the researcher?*
10. I am unable to perform a step correctly. (UN)
    a. Example (re: MDMA testing): *My company wants me to test bottles of unknown pills we found in the closet for MDMA, but they are requiring me to buy the reagents through our official company chemical supplier. What volume of the reagents should I buy? I cannot find the volume of the reagents you recommend.*

As illustrated in Figure 5, the largest number of questions, at 36%, fell into the category of requests for more information—information above and beyond the scope of the instruction set, but for which the instruction set had piqued questioner interest. Students also asked large numbers of definitional questions or requested points of clarification regarding terminology in the instruction sets (19%). In addition, students engaged in significant creative work, asking a number of questions in which they had (fictionally) reached an unexpected complication in their efforts to complete the instructions, or in which they had (fictionally) made an error that they were unable to correct on their own, or in which they were simply afraid to take the next (fictional) step in the instructions without confirmation and/or support from the help desk (see Figure 6). (Please note that while some students may have followed their instructions in reality, most were forced to place themselves in hypothetical situations, such as the students reading the instruction set on trapping turtles. These students created hypothetical scenarios in which they had run into unexpected complications, which they fictionalized themselves, while attempting to complete the instructions.)

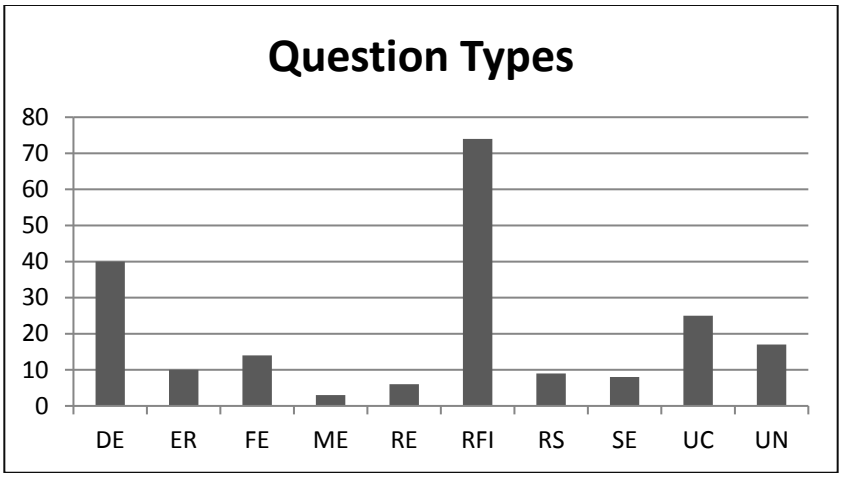

Figure 5: Number of Question Types Coded in Content Analysis of Simulation Transcripts

Questions ranged from 20 to almost 400 characters. Examples of longer questions include:

- (Re: veterinary technical skills): *While attempting a jugular blood draw, the dog jerked suddenly and unexpectedly, which resulted in quite a bit of bleeding. We were not able to get the blood sample, but are concerned with the volume of blood being lost. What should we do?*
- (Re: turtle mark-and-recapture studies): *We found a perfect spot to set up the first trap; it has good depth, few plants, and is not too muddy. There is, however, a bit of a current. Is it okay to set up a trap in moving water, or does it have to be stagnant?*
- (Re: sleep health): *You stress that this test should be done with a normal sleeping schedule. Could wearing the device cause a change in sleep cycles? [Or] could knowing that I am testing my sleep cycles cause me to inadvertently change them? If doctors have studied this phenomenon, is there a way around it?*

Examples of some of the shorter questions include:

- (Re: CPR): *What do I do if I don't have a CPR mask?*
- (Re: 3-D printing): *What program do I use to open my design file?*
- (Re: building a computer motherboard): *What are SATA cables, and what does the acronym stand for?*
- (Re: theater rigging): *How do I know when to move the baton up or down?*

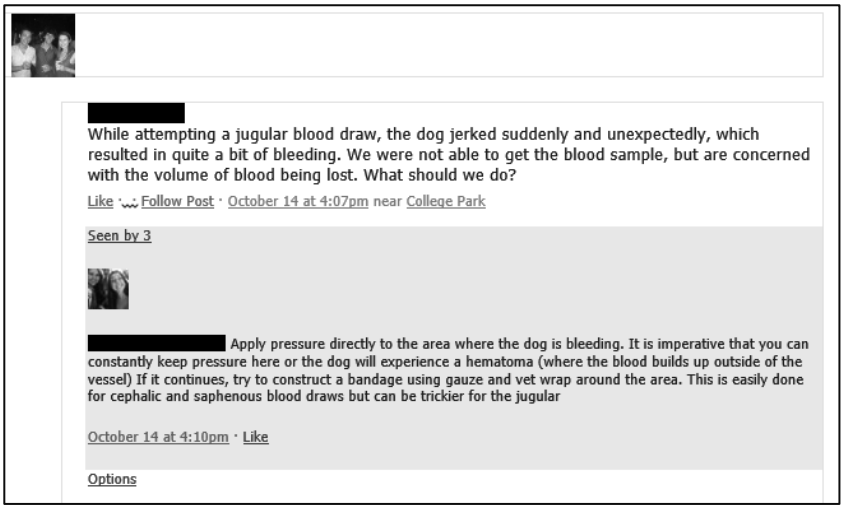

Figure 6: Interaction between Two Role-Players in the Animals Help Desk Simulation Facebook Group

Students answered every question asked, with responses ranging from seven to nearly 700 characters. Some of the longer responses include the following examples:

- (Re: cannula implant surgery in rats): *With the forceps, apply gentle pressure to the areas around the suture and around the base of the screw. If the bone is structurally sound, it will not give way and you can proceed with the surgery. However, if the bone does give way, the surgery cannot be completed and it is suggested that the animal be euthanized. Keeping the animal*

alive would induce a great deal of pain, and it is best that the animal not suffer.

- (Re: CPR): *[If] you are an untrained bystander and you are alone, the AHA recommends you first call emergency medical response and second, perform hands-only CPR. If you are not alone, a second bystander may locate and use the AED as the newer models are designed to be easy to use for an untrained bystander. If for any reason you are uncomfortable using an AED, hands-only CPR has been proven to be very effective in supporting circulation until emergency medical personnel arrive.*
- (Re: asthma treatment): *A nebulizer is a device that administers medicine to the user through a process called a nebulizer treatment, also known as a breathing treatment, aerosol treatment, or med neb. A plastic tube connects the three main parts of the nebulizer: machine, medicine container, and mouthpiece/mask. When used, the compressed air travels through the tubing to the medicine container and converts the liquid medicine to aerosolized mist, which is carried to the mouthpiece/mask through the tubing. This medicine penetrates the airways and relieves breathing problems more quickly than metered dose inhalers.*

Shorter answers include some of the following examples:

- (Re: using Excel): *Paste the new code 1 line after your other code but before "End Sub."*
- (Re: MDMA testing): *Each reagent should be able to conduct 50 + tests.*

After an hour of role-playing one help desk support person and two help desk callers, the students concluded the simulation. We held two debriefing exercises: a reflective writing assignment and an oral debriefing of student experiences.

Written Debriefing

In the written debriefing exercise, students responded to questions about what they had learned about writing instruction sets, about their own specific instruction sets, and about the communication skills required for supplying help desk support (see Figure 7). Upon review of the transcripts of these reflections, we identified a series of themes emerging from student responses. Students reported learning lessons relating to the following instruction-writing capabilities: audience accommodation; author credibility and intellectual preparation; scenario-based instruction and troubleshooting; and visual aids and data visualization.

Figure 7: Submission of a Written Debriefing Response via Facebook Messenger

Audience Accommodation

Nearly all students—80% of those participating—noted in their reflections that the simulation had demonstrated to them the importance of working to first analyze and then actively accommodate their specific audiences' needs when writing instructional literature. On this topic, many students commented on the need to write instructions for the least-experienced user or the lowest common denominator of user. One student noted, "Every step needs to be written assuming the person will have no familiarity with the process…" Another student noted that the inability to predict each user's background meant that a writer must carefully define all technical terms in a document and use those terms carefully and precisely. Other students focused on the importance of being able to break complex concepts into simple, easy-to-follow explanations. And while most students noted this idea that an instruction set should target a lowest common denominator of user, students also keyed in to the idea that even those users will experience and utilize a document in ways different from one another. Several students noted that they had prepared for questions in areas where they expected novice users to experience problems but found questions ranging across a wider swath of topics than they were expecting. One student astutely summed up the issue: "[I] realized that even when [my instructions are] tailored [for] a basic audience, people reading [them] are likely to have a very varied range of experiences and problems."

Along similar lines, several students noted that the simulation forced them to accommodate multiple audiences through both the initial written instructions and the task of helping more than one user in real-time. One student noted the difficulty of jumping between questions and between different levels of user experience and understanding. Others noted that this element of forced multiple audience accommodation was good training for them in not just instruction-writing, but in communication generally. One student noted, "I learned that help desk support requires a quick, agile form of communication that adapts itself to the requests of the person needing help." Another student noted that the quick-

thinking he had to utilize in the simulation will help when interacting with his engineering colleagues on technical projects in the future. Another student noted that the simulation had shown her that it is important to be able to communicate an explanation in multiple ways depending on her audience: "I learned that I need to have multiple ways of voicing the same idea because that same idea may 'click' for different people in different ways." One student summed up the idea concisely: "I now realize that I have to put myself in the audience's shoes to effectively communicate with them."

Author Credibility and Intellectual Preparation

Three-quarters of students noted the substantial degree of intellectual preparation required to effectively write and troubleshoot instructions and to establish credibility and/or authority as the technical writer behind a set of instructions. Students were concerned with appearing as experts to their users and with providing responses that appeared to be thorough and complete. One student indicated, "It is absolutely critical that the help desk supporter is able to deliver a helpful, accurate, and clear response to the recipient so that the recipient is able to absorb the new knowledge the first time it is mentioned. Otherwise, readers will be confused and question the credibility of the writer." Students also indicated the difficulty in researching and understanding the process they were writing about so completely that they would be able to anticipate, understand, and respond to all callers' questions—numerous students commented on the need to develop clear expertise in the subject on which they would be answering questions, and some noted the importance of trying to anticipate frequently asked questions. One student stated, "I realized that I probably should have prepared more and brainstormed possible questions." Another student noted surprise at the wide variety of topics that drew questions during the simulation—not just the ones for which he had prepared.

Scenario-Based Instruction and Troubleshooting

Nearly half of participants discussed the importance of incorporating scenario-based instructions and/or troubleshooting real-world scenarios to write effective instructions. One student noted that many of the questions s/he received "were not about specific procedures but more about 'what if' situations." Another student noted that the interactive and role-playing nature of the simulation had been particularly helpful for him/her in considering hypothetical scenarios in which a user might need to improvise or deviate from the instructions as written. One student, writing instructions on parenting techniques, wrote, "…since these instructions depend heavily on how the child reacts… it is important that I devote [space to a] troubleshooting section." On this point, students also reflected on the importance of providing justification for instructional commands, or scenario-based background or context to help users understand why they need to follow the commands. One student wrote, "I learned that I need to explain myself better in the introduction as to why this instruction set is important." Another noted the need to give "each step a context [to help] clarify [that the] step was present and necessary." And another noted, "I should add [an] overview of the task, so the reader knows in the beginning exactly where the text is going." One student was even so explicit as to say, "I learned that anytime something is stated or defined in an instruction set, the author should elaborate on WHY the statement is true" (emphasis: the authors').

Visual Aids and Data Visualization

Just over half of the participating students noted that the simulation had convinced them of the importance of offering visual aids and/or data visualizations in their instructions. Perhaps more importantly, many students noted that they learned lessons about how to effectively incorporate images into their documents. Several students noted that their customers struggled to interpret images when the writer had not offered a text-based explanation of the

image. Other students noticed the importance of carefully and concisely labeling images. Overall, students expressed thoughtful support for the importance of incorporating visual media in technical documents but also expressed frustration at the difficulty of doing so effectively: "Images and diagrams would be helpful, but it is difficult to find images that would assist the user."

Oral Debriefing

In the first in-person class session following the simulation, we held an informal oral debriefing of the simulation. Because we had held a highly structured written debriefing exercise, we chose not to structure the oral debriefing; instead, we allowed students to raise whatever points they wished, so that we might determine the elements of the simulation that had been most interesting to them, without a prompt from us.

The students were enthusiastic about the activity; a number of students indicated that they felt the experience had helped them to refine and improve their instruction sets significantly. Several students noted that the simulation had helped them more than the traditional peer-review workshops we had used for other class assignments. Students generally displayed a high level of excitement about how the simulation had proceeded and what they had learned, and many called the simulation "fun."

Students noted that they felt they had faithfully adopted their roles as customers, and that doing so had helped them understand the context in which a real customer might feel compelled to seek expert technical assistance. Several students spoke at length about their processes for generating the fictional situations they used to shape their questions. One student noted that she had developed her question set for the exercise by "pretending that [she] was a little kid asking, 'but, what if?'" Many of the participants indicated they had felt challenged by and had enjoyed the work of creating fictional roles for themselves in order to challenge their classmates and their classmates' documents based on a variety of situations.

Several students noted that this vigor with which their classmates assumed fictional roles challenged them to think substantively about

audience accommodation in their writing. A few students noted that the experience of talking to a fictional customer made them aware of the importance of justifying the advice they were giving to their customers, providing details supporting the reasoning behind their commands both to satisfy customer curiosity and to reassure customers nervous to complete a step in the instructions. Students noted that this experience reinforced for them the disparity between their own knowledge of the subject matter in their documents and their readers' knowledge of the subject matter. Several students noted that the experience helped them realize how careful a writer must be when making assumptions about an audience's background and motivation for reading for a document.

Students concluded that the role-playing aspect of the simulation had helped them to think more critically about their documents than other editing and peer review processes. Students noted in particular that the process of responding to simulated customer demands and their fictionalized scenarios forced them to think about attending to hypothetical scenarios in their documents. Many students noted that they would add Frequently Asked Question sections to their documents and Troubleshooting sections in which they addressed potential real-world implementation problems.

The informal oral debriefing thus yielded many of the same themes as the structured written debriefing, but it also specifically highlighted student response to the creative process of developing their fictional identities and responding to the fictional identities of others. Students indicated that this creative process forced them to think critically about how they were interacting with potential users of their documents and to critically assess how they could revise and improve their written documents.

Discussion

This pedagogical experiment was particularly notable within the context of existing literature on teaching with role-playing simulations. Specifically, the students' participation in the simulation and their reflection on the experience indicated that they were able to effectively create robust fictional roles for

themselves—a turtle researcher, a computer engineer, a parent with a special-needs child—and to remove themselves from their own personal identities sufficiently enough to identify with these roles they had created. Using these fictional roles, students asked one another difficult questions with multiple follow-up queries.

In comparison to traditional peer review exercises we conducted on other class assignments, one student noted about the simulation, "It was a much better way to peer-review my document." Other students agreed with the statement. Their feedback seemed to suggest that the simulation had been a more active learning experience—requiring dialogue between peer-reviewer (customer) and author (help desk expert), as well as critical thinking about the needs of the document's users. In particular, this element of active learning and of engaging with an audience member appeared to be a key issue for students, who first and foremost, wrote about the lessons they had learned related to audience accommodation during the simulation. The simulation also appeared to place a time pressure element on students—they had 20 minutes total to answer 10 questions, and the questions came in concurrently from two "customers"—which required students to think quickly and spontaneously, perhaps helping to foster their identification with the fictional roles they were playing. The results of our content analysis also suggest that this classroom exercise was particularly effective in developing the kind of multi-layered identification with roles discussed by Williams and Williams (2010), beginning with the affective identification students established when they created their fictional characters and their needs, extending through the cognitive identification that students established when they immersed themselves into the fictional worlds they had created, through behavioral identification, which students established when they internalized the technical communication lessons they learned while playing their roles. In sum: students engaged with the assignment, preparing thoughtful questions for one another; students created fictional identities for themselves and remained in character when questioning one another; students wrote thoughtful written debriefing reflections

about how their practical experiences during the simulation would impact their future writing and revision processes; students indicated enthusiasm for revising their instruction sets based on their experiences during the simulation; and students were eager to reflect orally on the experience, providing immensely positive feedback. These revelations support the idea that this role-playing-based interaction gave students new ideas about their technical writing products and that experiential learning focused on role-playing can play an important role in the writing classroom.

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USING AUDIO FEEDBACK TO FACILITATE STUDENT REVISING

Cody Lyon

I first came across an article about using audio feedback when I began teaching ESL writing classes sometime around 2012. I was immediately interested in the idea of recording my verbal suggestions for students' essay writing, and soon after that I began to experiment with audio feedback in a few of my writing classes. As I slowly started to incorporate it into my teaching repertoire, I found that my students usually reacted very positively: they enjoyed listening to it, they understood my comments, and they found it helpful to their essay revisions. So this cycle continued for a while—I researched more about audio feedback, and I continued to use it in my classes more often while keeping lines of dialogue open with my students because I was interested in what they thought about it.

In the fall of 2013, after receiving IRB approval, I designed a classroom research project aimed at collecting survey data on my university students' perceptions of audio feedback as a method to help them with their essay revisions. A total of 21 students from three different classes volunteered to complete the survey, representing both native-English speakers and second language learners. The research setting described here was within a large public university in the Western United States.

Brief Review of Literature

The literature in this section is divided into three categories. First is research done primarily on *written feedback* and how students perceive the quality of feedback they receive from teachers. Next, similar studies into student perceptions of *audio feedback* will be reviewed. Finally, studies that have compared students' perceptions of audio vs. written feedback will be considered.

Studies on Written Feedback

One of the primary themes that research on written feedback has revealed is the claim made by students that teachers' feedback on students' writing needs to be more specific (Bardine; Bardine, Bardine, and Deegan; Jonsson; Nicol; Sommers; Underwood and Tregidgo; Weaver)—*does that sound like an echo of the same thing we continually claim about our students' writing?* Reasons for a lack of specific comments include a teacher's misperception that his comments are in fact specific enough (Bardine; Bardine, Bardine, and Deegan) and the very realistic issue of not having enough time to write thorough comments on each paper (Weaver). The lack of specificity in our comments on students' papers oftentimes results in students not being able to make use of the comments on future revisions, rendering our comments a waste of time and energy.

A study done in 1999 by Bryan Bardine analyzed 12 high school students' perceptions of the written comments they had received from their writing teacher. Students reported that they "want comments that are thorough and well explained" (Bardine 243). However, in interviews students vocalized their dissatisfaction with the written comments they actually receive. While students were likely expected to revise their papers throughout the writing class, "the problem is that they are unable to revise because the comments themselves are not giving enough information to help for future writing" (244). This creates an obvious conundrum in our current era of process approaches to composition.

A more recent study by Nancy Sommers in 2006 studied 400 Harvard students over the course of their entire four-year span as undergraduates. These students "were asked as juniors to offer one piece of advice to improve writing instruction at Harvard. Overwhelmingly—almost 90 percent—they responded: urge faculty to give more specific comments" (251). A number of other themes emerged from Sommers' research including students' belief that "the opportunity to engage with an instructor through feedback" (251) ranked as one of their most favorable experiences as undergraduate writers. Students also reported that feedback on their writing was oftentimes the *only* actual writing instruction that

they received, which underscores the importance of providing feedback that students can make use of. In light of this research, one of Sommers' arguments is that

> feedback plays a leading role in undergraduate writing development when, but only when, students and teachers create a partnership through feedback—a transaction in which teachers engage with their students by treating them as apprentice scholars, offering honest critique paired with instruction. (250)

This research highlights the overwhelming significance of teachers' feedback on students' writing. Sommers reported that the one issue that students brought up in every single interview conducted was the powerful impact that feedback had on their writing process, including both "its absence or presence" (251) as a resource.

Audio Feedback

Studies of audio feedback as the sole feedback method in a class (both online and traditional classroom format) show contrasting results when compared to studies of written feedback in regards to students' perceptions of the feedback method: students often report strong preferences for audio feedback because of the ability to readily comprehend it—along with its benefit of strengthening teacher-student relationships (Martini and DiBattista; Merry and Orsmond; Oomen-Early et al.).

Tanya Martini and David DiBattista's 2014 study sought to examine students' perspectives on the knowledge gleaned from audio feedback comments received on a written paper and the transferability of what students learned towards a future essay on a different topic. From the 47 students who completed the survey, students reported that they thought the audio comments were "detailed and easy to understand" (3), similar to other audio feedback research, but the unique part of this study is that students also reported that they felt they could generalize what they had

learned from the audio comments and transfer it to a future writing assignment. This means that audio feedback has the potential to help students in the short-term of revising a particular paper as well as the long-term of becoming a stronger writer overall, being able to take lessons learned from one assignment and apply them towards other assignments with differing circumstances.

In 2015, Stephen Merry and Paul Orsmond's UK study with 15 university students in a biology program showed that students valued audio feedback for its personal and high quality method of providing feedback. As a result of their study, the authors concluded that "students perceive and implement audio file feedback in different and more meaningful ways than written feedback" (7). For example, students from the study reported that their audio feedback had the advantage of allowing them to pause or revisit different sections of the feedback—while simultaneously revising their papers—and actually engaging with the feedback by using their instructor's voice and tone to better interpret the meaning and significance behind the comments.

Audio vs. Written Feedback

Studies that have pitted written vs. audio feedback against each other by offering both feedback methods to students in classes have had mixed results. Some studies show students' strong preferences for audio over written feedback (Cavanaugh and Song; Ice et al. "Using Asynchronous Audio Feedback"; Sipple) while others have shown that students actually prefer a combination of both written and audio feedback (Ice et al. "An Analysis of Students' Perceptions"; Olesova et al.) or a preference for audio over written feedback (Morra and Asís).

Ice et al.'s 2007 case study used audio feedback with students in seven different online university classes. Results showed students' strong preferences for audio feedback "with no negative perceptions of the technique" (18). For instructors, they also valued the audio feedback for its ability to increase students' overall comprehension of course content (19). The reasons that students gave for their preference of audio feedback were categorized under

four themes. First, it was felt that nuance could better be conveyed through audio feedback. Second, students felt more involved in the course and felt a sense of community. Third, students reported that content was better learned through audio feedback. And finally, students felt that their instructors actually cared more about them as a result of receiving the audio feedback. Data analysis also revealed that students were "three times more likely to apply content" (3) they had learned from audio feedback in comparison to written feedback; this result is similar to Martini and DiBattista's 2014 study where students reported that they were able to transfer what they had learned from their audio feedback to future writing assignments.

One study with mixed results was done in 2013 by Jeffrey Bilbro, Christina Iluzada, and David Clark. Their research with 74 undergraduate composition students gave students first written, then audio, and finally their own choice of the two feedback methods. A series of surveys conducted throughout the course showed that students' preferences for feedback correlated with their motivation and engagement in the course. Those students who displayed higher motivation and engagement chose audio feedback as the preferred method. For example, results revealed that "students who were most unsatisfied with their written comments were the ones who most often elected to receive written feedback again when they had the choice" (59). A correlation was found between a small number of students who continually disagreed with survey questions about enjoying their English writing class and their growing decline for choosing audio feedback—"on each successive questionnaire an increasing portion of those students who were not enjoying the class elected to receive written feedback when given the choice on the third questionnaire" (59). This means that audio feedback is not preferred by all students, and preferences may change throughout a course. The authors suggested that offering students a choice of feedback methods in a writing course—or a combination of methods—may be a good way of providing students the best form of feedback based on varying needs and preferences.

Similar studies of audio vs. written feedback have been done with ESL students. Olesova et al.'s 2011 study included 39 non-native English speaking students in various online English classes. Overall, students reported a preference for both types of feedback; however, results also reported that audio feedback contributed to students' sense of community and belonging in the class. Another study done in 2009 at an undergraduate college in Argentina included 89 participating students split into different groups that received either audio, written, or no feedback at all. Audio feedback "was chosen by almost 100% of the students who experienced this type of feedback in the study and could thus compare it with the more familiar written type" (Morra and Asís 77). This was in comparison to 88% of students who had received only written feedback who reported a positive experience with that feedback method.

Procedures

Twenty-one of my own writing students in one developmental composition (n=16) and two upper-level ESL classes (n=5) participated in this study. The developmental class consisted of resident students who spoke English as their first language. The two ESL classes were made up entirely of international students from various countries who all shared English as their second language. Both the developmental and ESL classes, while serving different student populations, were designed to prepare students for college-level writing and ultimately transition them into first-year writing courses.

All participating students were required to complete three major essay assignments—each consisting of a required rough and final draft version—during the course. Audio feedback was given on the students' rough draft essays for all three assignments with the goal of making suggestions to help students revise and submit their required final draft of each essay. The feedback was given in the form of a small audio file from the *sound recorder* that is built into most Windows computers and is located under the starting menu bar.

The feedback process consisted of reading through a student's paper while taking notes about mostly content-related issues. Surface-level issues such as grammar and spelling were marked directly on the paper in a manner that highlighted recurring or major errors. However, my main effort during the feedback process was on the content of the student's paper. After the initial read-through, I would start the audio recording and talk my way through the various content issues I saw in the paper while briefly noting any surface-level error patterns that I marked on the student's paper.

Surveys were administered to students towards the end of the class, after having received audio feedback for three different essay assignments in the class. An administrative assistant from the university came into the class to supervise the survey procedure with the class while I remained outside the room until the entire procedure was completed.

Results

All 21 of the participating students agreed or strongly agreed that they preferred audio feedback (see Figure 1). This was a very simple and one-sided response by students. While other survey questions revealed differing or opposing opinions, it was clear from this first question that students had positive experiences with audio feedback.

Further survey questions (see Figure 2) revealed that only two students preferred written *instead of* audio feedback, and only one student *did not* feel that audio feedback had helped him/her improve as a writer. Students' satisfaction with written feedback—as a method they were familiar with from past writing classes—was reported as significantly lower than their satisfaction with audio feedback.

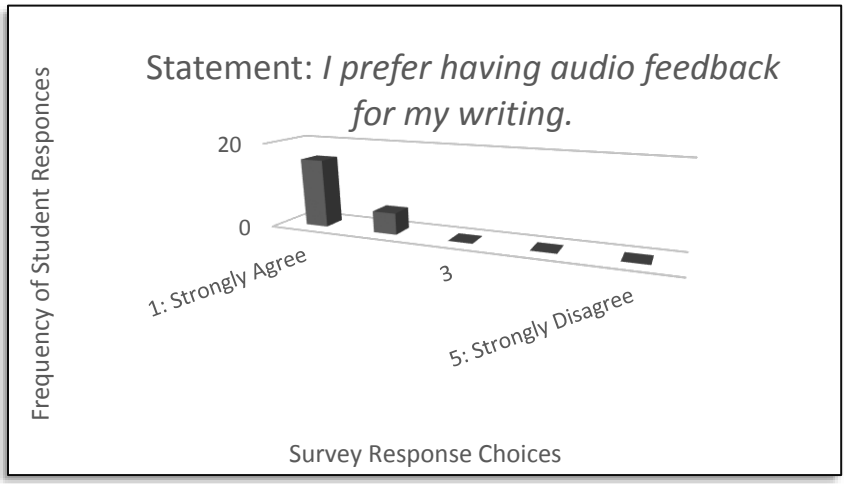

Figure 1: Sample Student Survey Responses

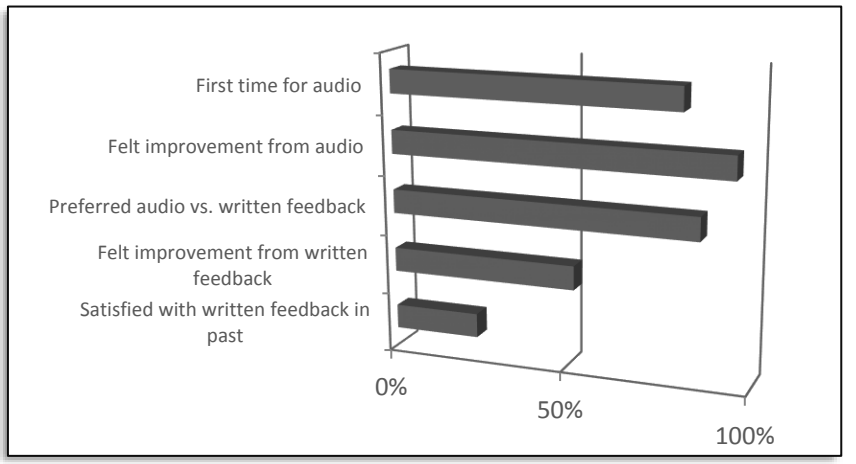

Figure 2: Survey Results

Even though about half of the students felt that written feedback had been helpful to them, only a little less than a quarter of the students actually liked written feedback (see Figure 3). With audio feedback, the feelings of satisfaction and usefulness were much more closely represented: students liked the experience *and* felt it was useful.

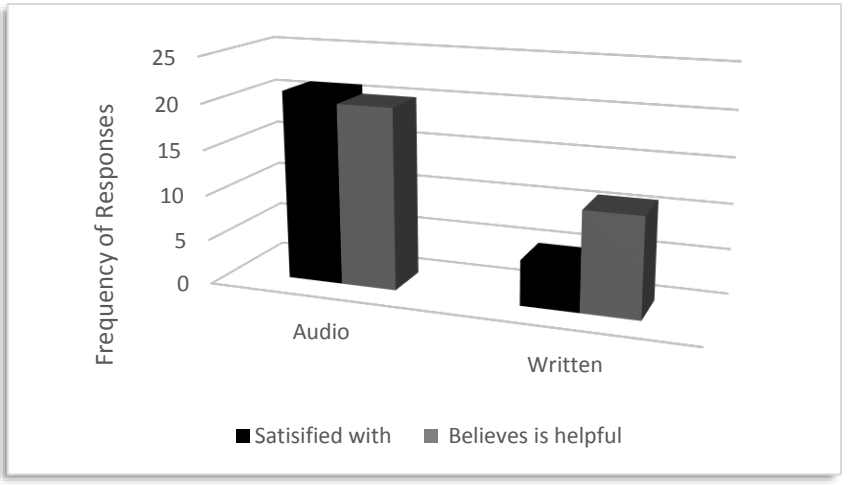

Figure 3: Student Perceptions of Audio and Written Feedback

The responses about written feedback seem to indicate that students don't think very highly of it while their belief in its usefulness as a form of feedback is also considerably low, especially when compared side-by-side to their feelings about audio feedback.

Discussion

Three themes that appeared predominantly among students' qualitative survey responses were 1) students' ability to easily understand the comments given through audio feedback, 2) the personal connection between students and teacher that audio feedback creates, and 3) the ease in which students could use audio feedback to work on essay revisions.

High Comprehensibility

The high comprehensibility of audio feedback was one of the most frequently made comments among students in this study and highlights the power of the spoken word in conveying the complex and nuanced messages that writing teachers send to their students. Students reported that audio feedback grabs their attention and enables them to make sense of the comments about their writing

with more clarity than they have been used to with written comments. As one student mentioned, *"Reading is boring and no one gets the exact same meaning out of it but with audio you can have a more clear idea of whats going on."* As that comment highlights, a student reading a written comment may be able to interpret it in several different ways, but the verbal commentary from a teacher can better explain the kind of complex ideas that are inherent in a teacher's comments aimed at coaching a student to revise his/her paper.

From my perspective as the teacher, I agree with the student's comment from above because I can better explain myself and address the nuances embedded within my comments by speaking about them. Comments that I write on paper will take more time and effort to articulate while becoming increasingly illegible as I speed through comments in anticipation of the next essay at the top of a large stack.

General frustration with written comments was a common complaint by students when mentioning the advantages they experienced with audio feedback. One student claimed that audio feedback is a more efficient method to deliver feedback: *"He's able to give me a wider and better review of my paper in those 5 minutes of audio feedback compared to other teachers that might write a paragraph reviewing my paper. It gives more information and it's faster to use."* This student highlights one of the great *potentials* for audio feedback, which is its capability to deliver highly comprehensible commentary in a shorter amount of time than it takes to write down comments on a student's essay. The real trick here is time management, though. I've wasted a lot of unnecessary time in the recording preparation phase by previewing each essay, arranging all of my ideas thoroughly on paper, and then finally making a lengthy recording to address each issue. That kind of approach is likely to take much longer than extensive written feedback, and it was one of the reasons I went away from using audio feedback for a time. Now, I've found that I can quickly read through an essay to get a feel for what I want to focus my comments on—making *very brief* notes here and there when necessary, and then I begin recording as I focus on

different areas while giving specific comments related to the student's content. This is a similar sequence that many of us take for written feedback; at the end of the recording, once I have a better overall picture of the essay, I can make some final summative advice similar to what we might annotate at the end of our written feedback. If I don't strictly follow this pattern, I will waste a lot of time, and then the audio feedback process becomes more of a time-consuming burden than an effective teaching tool for me.

Overall, students' comments about the clarity of the feedback I gave them in my study are reflective of other studies where students also reported the ability to readily comprehend audio feedback. According to Martini and DiBattista's study with audio feedback, "Positive student comments focused predominantly on the high level of specificity of the audio feedback, which allowed them to clearly understand both the strengths and weaknesses of the paper" (3). In this way, we can think of audio feedback as the *specificity-antidote* to written feedback.

Personal Connection

Students in this study described audio feedback as a kind of personalized response to their writing that shows them that they've been taken seriously as writers. This benefit to students becomes even more significant in a class with around 20 students and one teacher, where the amount of individual teacher-to-student time may be very low or none at all. The following student comment describes audio feedback as a stand-in for a live teacher-student conference: *"I feel like I'm actually having a conversation with my professor not just reading."* That comment highlights the communicative nature of audio feedback: even though it's a one-way conversation directed at the student, the concise and personalized comments are something students reported to be very valuable.

The personalized nature of audio feedback is something I highly value as a teacher as well. When I am recording feedback, I feel as though I am connecting personally to students—speaking directly to them about their writing in a way that I am better able to keep

up with my thoughts and maintain a positive coaching attitude, rather than falling into the monotonous humdrum of writing down comments on paper.

I remember a workshop day I had in a first-year writing class a few semesters ago, and as I was making my rounds and briefly meeting with students about their papers, I recall having distinct recollections of what students had written; as I had just finished giving audio feedback to this class of 21 students a few days before, I felt I had genuinely connected with them during the recording of their feedback. Had I not been aware that this kind of experience had been likewise reported by students in other audio feedback studies, I might not have taken the experience very seriously. One student in this current study reported that, "a*udio-feedback is much better than written feedback. It has strong emotion on the essay. Also I think it will bring the teacher more close to students."* Once you've made individual connections with several students, the sense of community can become very apparent in a classroom. Also, this student's reference to the "strong emotion" is something that can get lost in our written feedback. When I am talking into the recorder about a student's essay, I easily get excited about interesting parts in the essay, and I feel enthusiastic about helping the student improve his/her writing—this emotion very easily comes across in an audio recording. Also, when I get to a part that frustrates me—maybe because of what I see as lazy or poor writing—I am better able to turn my frustration into a constructive form of advice, something that I could not as easily do through written feedback; I would likely come off in a negative tone that might end up being useless or even counter-productive to the student I am trying to help.

Finally, audio feedback can be used to accomplish what might normally take place with written feedback and face-to-face conferencing combined. I think this student was a bit too excited that s/he didn't have to make a separate trip to my office to discuss their essay: *"I love how I got to converse about my essay without having to schedule an appointment!"* But in reality, this student has a good point. Even though I value one-on-one conferencing with students, I also

see the value of audio feedback as an alternative method. With audio feedback, there is potential to save a lot of time and cut out the need for setting up individual conferences with each student.

The benefit of audio feedback in helping to create a sense of classroom community and closer relationships between students and teachers has been found in studies with audio feedback in online environments (Oomen-Early et al.). But traditional classroom environments have shown this benefit as well. According to Sipple's 2007 study of audio vs. written feedback with 33 university writing students in traditional classroom settings, results showed that, "Audio commentary strengthened their perceived bond with the professor, whereas handwritten commentary sometimes damaged the bond" (24). The lack of clarity that students have mentioned about written feedback may be a contributing factor to a breakdown in student-teacher bonds. Because audio feedback does not require the same amount of interpretation on the part of students, the tone and message of audio feedback have less chance of being misinterpreted in a negative way by students.

Conducive to Revisions

Students in my study received their audio feedback as formative comments and suggestions aimed at helping them to revise and resubmit their essays as required final drafts. As the teacher who is giving students these audio feedback files, the usefulness of my feedback to students' revisions is a top priority. Above other advantages—even if students easily understood it and benefit from an enhanced sense of community, if students did not actually use my comments to revise their papers, the entire feedback process, of any kind, would be a waste of time. One particular benefit that students report, as the following student comment makes mention of, is the fact that audio feedback is separate from the physical essay itself, making it easier for students to listen to their comments while simultaneously revising their essays: *"The audio-feedback was great I was able to listen to his comments while looking at the paper. Oppose to having to read his comments and switch back and forth between comments and essay."* And the following student—while possibly admitting to

have hired some kind of *an editor* for their paper—also points out the advantages of having audio feedback during their revisions: *"I can listen and look over my paper while making notes. I can pause it and not have to worry about the editor loosing focus on my paper."* Both of these comments bring to the forefront audio feedback's ability to engage with students and their texts in ways that streamline the students' revising process by allowing them to listen to a teacher's comments at the same time that they begin revising their essay, making effective use of their time by combining both activities.

Finally, students often mention the diverse nature of audio feedback. As the teacher commenting on a student's paper, because I am not physically restricted to writing out my comments, it's much easier for me to explore various ideas for how students can apply the suggestions I give them about their paper, depending on their own preferences as a writer. This student comment highlights the *flexible* nature of audio feedback: *"In the feedback he gave us different examples and different ideas to add and I was able to choose one that fit me and my writing."* The flexibility of audio feedback also reinforces students' ownership of their writing. By offering multiple suggestions for how students can improve their writing, I communicate to students that *they* have the ultimate say about what choice to make for their revisions, thus giving them a significant sense of control over their writing.

A UK study done in 2013 with audio feedback showed that students valued audio feedback for "the ability to re-access and listen again and its ability to facilitate feed-forward learning." (Carruthers and McCarron 105). This *feed-forward* learning refers to a transferable kind of feedback that was designed to increase students' overall abilities as writers at the same time as helping them use their feedback to prepare for future writing assignments. A similar kind of feed-forward learning was reflected in student comments in my study in how they were able to apply their audio comments to a revised draft of their writing.

Drawbacks

Using audio feedback is not always as positive an experience for instructors as it often is for students. From my own experience, the drawbacks for a teacher looking to use audio feedback are primarily due to issues of practicality, time efficiency, and addressing lower order concerns in students' writing.

I suppose the practicality of using audio feedback depends on a few factors. Firstly, someone has to have a basic understanding of how to use computer technology in order to record and send audio comments to their students. For me, that wasn't much of an issue; not because I consider myself in any way tech-savvy, but because I used probably the simplest technology available. To record my feedback I used the built-in sound recorder installed on my computer, which has no more functions than start, stop, and save. Once recorded, I attached the file to an email or electronic message on our class webpage and sent it directly to each student. Done. Now, there are other high-tech options for audio feedback, some that even integrate the ability to annotate comments and record audio commentary, but those options likely require more specialized technology skills. The bottom line is that audio feedback is highly accessible to a very wide range of writing teachers, including those with high and low levels of tech-proficiency.

The more complicated part for me was in finding a suitable place to record the audio feedback. Because I share an office in a large department, I have to schedule certain times when I know I won't be disturbed. But that's never for sure with the possibility of pop-in visits by colleagues or students. As a result, I would often try to do my recordings in one of two places: a small cell-like room available for use from our university library, or the semi-quiet confines of my office at home. They both worked relatively well with the former lacking any windows and requiring me to carry along my laptop, while the latter meant that the audio feedback sent to my students might include the sounds of overexcited toddlers playing and screaming in the background.

Honestly, I'm still not sure about how time-efficient audio feedback really is in relation to written feedback. Some studies with

audio feedback have shown different results ranging from no significant time savings from audio feedback (Carruthers and McCarron; Martini and DiBattista) to significant time savings compared to written feedback (Ice, et al. "Using Asynchronous Audio Feedback"; Lunt and Curran). In Lunt and Curran's 2010 research that used audio comments with a group of 60 university students in the UK, comparing the time it took to *talk* with audio feedback with writing out comments for students showed that "one-minute of audio is equal to six minutes of writing" (761). By that math, I could complete 10 audio comments in just 10 minutes compared to an hour that it would take to write out those same comments. My own experience *does not* coincide with those kinds of time savings though. Even though I did my best to streamline the entire process, I felt that audio feedback took up much more of my time due to previewing, preparing, and finally recording my comments; I felt I needed time to formulate my response before actually recording. Perhaps I would be able to make audio feedback into a time-saving method by cutting down even more on the amount of prep-time that takes place before recording the audio feedback. In short, I believe that audio feedback has great *potential* for time-efficiency, while maximizing the other advantages it can offer—but this requires sticking to a very regimented feedback routine.

A final drawback of audio feedback is that it's not very conducive to addressing lower order concerns. Issues such as grammar and punctuation are easier to address with annotations directly on a piece of paper. Because of that, I often use a mix of written and audio feedback where my audio recordings primarily address content-related themes, while at the same time I address sentence-level errors on the student's physical essay.

Conclusion

Students in this study overwhelmingly preferred having audio over written feedback for their writing. Reasons for these preferences were primarily because students felt that audio feedback was easier to understand, created a personal connection

between students and me, and helped them in making revisions to their writing. However, the results from this study are small and can't be taken to generalize that audio feedback works well for all students—because it doesn't (Bilbro, Iluzada, and Clark; Carruthers and McCarron; Ice et al. "An Analysis of Students' Perceptions"; Olesova et al.). To that end, one option for writing instructors to consider in choosing how to respond to students' writing is "to offer students a taste of different types of feedback for them to choose from, thus responding to students' individual needs" (Morra and Asís 78). This is something that I have had success with in recent writing classes, and I think that students value the ability to choose from various feedback methods. Before I give students these options, I always have a small class discussion to go over the basics of each type of feedback in order to give students the most information possible before they decide what feedback they want, and my students can always change their feedback preferences in future essays.

Additionally, there may be a significant novelty factor with audio feedback—for better or worse—that catches students' attention because it is usually the first time they have ever received personalized audio commentary about their writing from a teacher. This could mean that while initial use of audio feedback may prove successful with students, continued use may lose its original spark of interest as students begin to view it as just another form of feedback on their writing.

Be that as it may, the way we choose to communicate our feedback to students is one of the most important parts of the writing process (Straub) and may have effects on students' emotions and self-efficacy (Treglia). In other words, students should receive feedback that is conducive to positive revisions of their writing (Underwood and Tregidgo), and audio feedback has shown that it definitely *can* provide that kind of feedback for students.

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REVIEW ESSAY

THE CONTENT OF COMPOSITION: THRESHOLD CONCEPTS AND TRANSFER IN WRITING PROGRAMS

Sara Wilder

Adler-Kassner, Linda, and Elizabeth Wardle. ***Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies.*** **Logan: Utah State University Press, 2015. 256 pages. ISBN 978-0-87421-989-0.**

Carillo, Ellen C. ***Securing a Place for Reading in Composition: The Importance of Teaching for Transfer.*** **Logan: Utah State University Press, 2014. 224 pages. ISBN 978-0-87421-959-3.**

Yancey, Kathleen Blake, Liane Robertson, and Kara Taczak. ***Writing Across Contexts: Transfer, Composition, and Sites of Writing.*** **Logan: Utah State University Press, 2014. 215 pages. ISBN 978-0-87421-937-1.**

Five years ago, as a newcomer to rhetoric and composition, I began my graduate education simply trying to get a sense of what composition was. What were the key questions and methodologies in the field? What was the relationship between studying and teaching writing? How did other scholars in the field define it? In short, what was—as Kathleen Blake Yancey calls it in her introduction to *Naming What We Know*—the "content of composition?" (xviii). What were

the "questions, kinds of evidence, and materials" that define the discipline? (Yancey xviii). Now, after five years learning about and conducting research in the field, some of these questions continue for me, but they have become more pointed and more nuanced: Given what I now know about writing and the teaching of writing, how do I develop my composition courses to facilitate my students' learning? How do I, as a writing center administrator, support tutors as they continue to develop their practice as both tutors and writers? How might I make sense of my own learning as a writer and doctoral student in rhetoric and composition?

In this essay, I review three texts that help me to answer those questions. Together, they articulate disciplinary knowledge in the field of composition and point to how teachers of writing can deploy that knowledge, particularly in the composition classroom. Each of the above texts, Adler-Kassner and Wardle's *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts in Writing Studies*, Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak's *Writing Across Contexts: Transfer, Composition, and Sites of Writing*, and Carillo's *Securing a Place for Reading in Composition: The Importance of Teaching for Transfer*, takes up in some way the question of the "content of composition." They ask readers to consider how naming the disciplinary knowledge of the field can help composition teacher-scholars to articulate our work for a variety of audiences and to help students develop their writing knowledge and practice.

Though they all address the "content" question in some way, each book takes a different approach and focus in response to different exigencies. Adler-Kassner and Wardle broadly map the field's key concepts, while Carillo and Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak focus more narrowly on the content of first-year composition courses. The broadest reaching, Adler-Kassner and Wardle's collection defines the *threshold concepts* of writing studies, articulating the field's knowledge of writing and learning to write and explores how those concepts might be put into action across courses and programs. More narrowly focused, Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak's *Writing Across Contexts* focuses on the theory and efficacy of a first-year composition curriculum designed to encourage successful transfer. *Writing Across Contexts* points to how the disciplinary knowledge mapped out in

Naming might be deployed explicitly in the composition classroom and, further, why teaching writing as both a practice and a subject of study can help first-year writing students as they continue to write beyond the composition classroom. Carillo is also interested in transfer of learning but turns to the role of reading in composition scholarship and curricula, emphasizing its importance alongside writing in the act of composing meaning. Carillo's *Securing a Place for Reading in Composition* raises questions about what might be missing—or at least not explicitly articulated—in *Naming*'s map of writing studies. Her argument for securing a place for reading in composition scholarship and classrooms points to one means of continuing to develop curricula like that addressed in *Writing Across Contexts*.

Threshold Concepts and the Importance of "Naming What We Know"

Taking up the challenge of naming the disciplinary knowledge of writing studies, the first part of Adler-Kassner and Wardle's collection is comprised of an encyclopedia-like list of threshold concepts in writing studies. Part II then focuses on these concepts in action within specific sites of writing instruction. Threshold concepts, as Adler-Kassner and Wardle define them, are "concepts critical for continued learning and participation in an area or within a community of practice" and so they provide a framework for mapping the disciplinary knowledge of the field (2). Threshold concepts are generally transformative and, once understood, are not forgotten, leading to paradigm shifts in the learner's way of thinking. They tend to involve counterintuitive knowledge, making them particularly difficult or "troublesome" for learners (Adler-Kassner and Wardle 2). Because of the nature of writing studies, Adler-Kassner and Wardle argue that threshold concepts can speak "both to and beyond our disciplinary community" (3). That is, threshold concepts are foundational for participation in the discipline of writing studies, but threshold concepts from writing studies can also help writers and teachers writing outside of the discipline. While Part I

articulates threshold concepts of writing studies, Part II begins the work of helping readers understand how they might use, teach, and talk about threshold concepts for various audiences—from first-year students to writing tutors to faculty and administrators. As the editors put it:

> Ultimately, then, the argument here is that our field knows a lot about its subject of study. We know much about how writers write and learn to write, and how best to assess writing. Yet we continue to lose the battle over discussions of writing to stakeholders who have money, power, and influence but little related expertise. If we want to actively and positively impact the lives of writers and writing teachers, we must do a better job of clearly stating what our field knows and helping others understand how to use that knowledge as they set policy, create programs, design and fund assessments, and so on. (Adler-Kassner and Wardle 7)

Through its encyclopedia-like entries, *Naming* begins the work of clearly stating what we, writing studies scholars and teachers, know, or at least what we know for now (8). The threshold concepts are key touchstones of disciplinary knowledge and are grouped into one "metaconcept" and five organizing threshold concepts. Wardle and Adler-Kassner first explain the "metaconcept" that Writing is an Activity and a Subject of Study—a crucial concept for the book itself, laying out as it does the threshold concepts of writing studies both for scholars and for writers (15). Their entry on this metaconcept sets up the general structure for most of the other entries: They explain the concept, its significance to the field, and why understanding the concept is often troublesome for learners. Part I then continues with Concept 1: Writing is a Social and Rhetorical Activity; Concept 2: Writing Speaks to Situations through Recognizable Forms; Concept 3: Writing Enacts and Creates Identities and Ideologies; Concept 4: All Writers Have More to Learn; and Concept 5: Writing is (Also Always) a Cognitive Activity. Each of these organizing concepts contains between five and ten

threshold concepts, each explained by a prominent scholar in the field and each containing cross-references to other threshold concepts.

The entries on each threshold concept in Part I are themselves a valuable conceptual map of the field, yet it is Part II that shows the richness of the concepts as they are put into action across different programs and sites of writing. Part II is divided into two subsections: "Using Threshold Concepts in Program and Curricular Design" and "Enacting Threshold Concepts of Writing across the University." The scholars contributing chapters to the subsection on program design explore threshold concepts in comparison to learning outcomes (Estrem), as a framework for first-year composition (Downs and Robertson), as tools for planning writing and rhetoric majors (Scott and Wardle), and as concepts in rhetoric and composition doctoral education (Taczak and Yancey). The final section of the book looks beyond particular programs and curricula to consider threshold concepts at the crossroads of educational and writing theory in assessment practices, in the writing center, faculty development and outreach, and writing across the curriculum.

The chapters in Part II were particularly compelling in the way they used threshold concepts to reframe student learning and program design. Because threshold concepts are troublesome, it takes time and repeated experience with them for learners to fully understand them, to cross the threshold. In her chapter on using threshold concepts as a framework for developing Communication in the Disciplines (CID) courses with faculty from across campus, Heidi Estrem explains that threshold concepts offered faculty a framework for understanding student learning not only through learning outcomes—snapshots at the end of a direct process—but also throughout the long, messy learning process itself. The threshold concepts framework, she writes, reminds us that learning to write is "like scrambling across rocky terrain: learners make progress, slip back, try again, get a little higher, slip back again" (Estrem 93). The chapters in Part II take readers through the process of identifying the threshold concepts that students are asked to learn in a particular course or program, and show how teaching those

threshold concepts requires both explicit attention to the concepts and opportunities for students to experience the concepts for themselves. Using threshold concepts in first-year writing courses or tutor-education courses, for example, can help students "scramble across the rocky terrain" by helping orient them to that terrain even as they struggle through it. For teachers and tutors, understanding learning about writing not as a series of outcomes that are met or not met in a particular course, but as stumbling through and sometimes slipping away from thresholds puts the first-year course or single writing tutorial into perspective as only singular moments in which students can begin to build theories of writing that help them across writing situations. Students will continue to grapple with these concepts in other spaces, perhaps in later writing classes or in the writing center.

During a meeting with a group of tutors in my writing center, I shared the first two threshold concept entries: 1.0 Writing is a Social and Rhetorical Activity and 1.1 Writing is a Knowledge-Making Activity (Adler-Kassner and Wardle 17-20). After reading the entries, we talked about how threshold concepts like these are enacted in writing center practice, which relies on conversations between readers and writers, and considered how we might more explicitly talk about these concepts with clients. One tutor pointed out that sometimes, often in frustrating sessions, it seemed to her as though clients might have entirely different conceptions of writing. Tutors' observations were similar to those of Rebecca Nowacek and Bradley Hughes, who contribute a chapter in *Naming* on threshold concepts in the writing center. Nowacek and Hughes argue for using threshold concepts as a framework for tutor education because they help articulate the key concepts upon which writing centers are built, namely that Writing is a Knowledge Making Activity; Learning to Write Effectively Requires Different Kinds of Practice, Time, and Effort; and Revision is Central to Developing Writing (Nowacek and Hughes 174). One of the advantages of using threshold concepts as a framework for tutor education that I found particularly compelling was that "it can help tutors view their conferences not in terms of the idiosyncratic 'deficits' of individual writers (or particular

demographics of writers) but in terms of processes of learning that challenge *many* individuals at *many* different stages of their academic careers" (178). This is a crucial shift for many tutors, who, rather than being discouraged during frustrating or difficult sessions, might think more productively about how to help their clients as learners just starting to grapple with particular threshold concepts. Even in that first conversation I had with tutors about threshold concepts, we were able to start reframing the task that tutors and their clients undertake.

Beyond the writing center, the essays in Part II of *Naming What We Know* also helped me to understand how threshold concepts might be useful as a framework in the composition classroom. In their chapter, Doug Downs and Liane Robertson argue for teaching threshold concepts in FYC courses that aspire to two major goals: "(1) for students to examine and ideally reconsider prior knowledge about writing in light of new experiences and knowledge offered by their FYC course(s) and (2) for the course itself to serve as a general education course, teaching transferable knowledge of and about writing" (105). They make connections between the threshold concepts laid out in the book with their respective FYC courses, Downs' "Writing about Writing" course and Robertson's "Teaching for Transfer" course, detailed in Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak. Although both Downs and Robertson explain that they have only recently begun explicitly considering threshold concepts as the framework for their FYC courses, both affirm that these concepts have already *implicitly* been part of the "declarative content" of their composition courses (Downs and Robertson 106). Their chapter explains how threshold concepts make up the content of their composition courses, and provides direction for teachers of first-year writing who may be considering including threshold concepts in their course.

Downs and Robertson identify the threshold concepts that their first-year students, given their prior knowledge of and experience with writing, are most likely to struggle with and offer suggestions about how to construct a FYC course that will help students master these concepts. Ultimately, they argue that threshold concepts like

these provide a framework through which students can re-imagine prior knowledge to transform their current perceptions of writing and then transfer this new knowledge to future writing tasks. Essentially, as Downs and Robertson write, to learn threshold concepts is to experience paradigm shifts, and so learning them requires a "series of experiences and data points that create strong dissonance with prior knowledge… only with a critical mass of dissonance-inducing learning and experiences will there come the 'aha!' moment that constitutes crossing the threshold into the new concepts" (116). Also critical to this process is "explicit, extensive reflection on what's being learned" (116). To help students through the process, Downs and Robertson offer three suggestions to approach teaching threshold concepts in FYC: Provide research-based explanations via writing studies scholarship and ask students to do primary research; use metaphors and analogies to help students understand the concepts; and use writing assignments to set up opportunities for students to experience the concepts firsthand. For example, students who are assigned readings from writing studies about ways of knowing and writing tasks that require them to conduct primary research will encounter the threshold concept that Writing is a Knowledge-Making Activity. The key part of this process seems to me that students need opportunities not only to experience the threshold concept, but also to name it and reflect on how it coincides with or differs from their previous writing experiences.

Downs and Robertson's chapter on FYC, like the other chapters in Part II, offers a rich starting point for using threshold concepts, but it also left me with questions about how students and teachers might experience such a course. Reading *Writing Across Contexts* gave a much more in-depth look at how students engage with threshold concepts in writing studies. By reviewing the literature on transfer of learning and presenting research on how curriculum design affects student transfer, *Writing Across Contexts* expands on just how students can benefit from an approach that makes key writing studies concepts the declarative content of the course.

Threshold Concepts in the Teaching for Transfer Course

Writing Across Contexts, although not explicitly framed in terms of threshold concepts, develops a fuller illustration of the affordances of a first-year composition course taking writing studies as its content. Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak argue for a curriculum they call Teaching for Transfer (TFT) grounded in scholarship on transfer both in and beyond writing studies. The heart of the book is their study of students' development of writing knowledge and successful transfer during and following the TFT course when compared to two other FYC courses, one based on an Expressivist model and the other a media and cultural studies course. They find the TFT course more successfully helped students transfer as they moved into new writing situations. *Writing Across Contexts* provides readers with a strong theoretical foundation for understanding the TFT course and illustrates for instructors the assignments and readings that will help students continue to develop frameworks for writing. It developed more fully for me the links between transfer and threshold concepts that are identified but not as fleshed out in *Naming What We Know*.

Writing Across Contexts begins with a nuanced review of the literature on transfer, layering definitions of transfer, empirical studies of students' transfer of writing knowledge and practice, and the role of students' prior knowledge in this process. Through these layers, the authors build the foundation of a course that understands students' transfer from course-to-course, even assignment-to-assignment, as "boundary-crossing" (33), which requires assistance of a travel guide or passport to help them navigate their way. For Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak this passport comes in the form of a set of key terms about writing—terms that are also scattered throughout the threshold concepts in *Naming*. They write, however,

> We can't simply give students frameworks, and if we could such giving would be futile given that transfer … is a dynamic rather than static process, a process of using, adapting, and repurposing the old for success in the new. The value of such frameworks, we believe, is more in the nature of a Bakhtinian

> exercise: students need to *participate* with us in creating their own frameworks for facilitating transfer. (33)

The TFT course detailed in *Writing Across Contexts* requires students to develop theories of writing using key terms (for example, *rhetorical situation*, *audience*, and *genre*) and readings from writing studies, thereby "creating their own frameworks for facilitating transfer." In taking this approach, *Writing Across Contexts* reaffirms the emphasis in *Naming What We Know* on what threshold concepts in the field allow us and our students to do. In assigning students to read about, define, and use key terms from the field to create theories of writing, the TFT course encourages students to engage directly with the threshold concepts of the field. As Downs and Robertson explained in their chapter on FYC in *Naming*, it is through repeated experience and explicit reflection on what they are learning that students cross the threshold into a new concept, or as Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak might put it, remix their previous conceptions of writing with the new knowledge offered them in the composition course.

Writing Across Contexts is particularly compelling paired with *Naming What We Know* because it both provides a more detailed description of a FYC course that asks students to engage with threshold concepts and shares the results of a comparative study between the TFT curriculum and two other curricular approaches. Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak's findings that the TFT course—which follows through on many of the principles outlined in *Naming What We Know*—facilitates student transfer and their reflections on the study are particularly valuable for teachers and researchers interested in teaching for transfer using threshold concepts.

Chapters three and four of *Writing Across Contexts* present and discuss the study of the TFT course in comparison to the expressivist and media and cultural studies FYC courses. For this study, the authors analyzed the content of each course and, through student and teacher interviews and analysis of student texts, followed students throughout their courses and beyond each course, analyzing transfer from assignment to assignment and beyond into writing tasks during the next semester. The major findings suggested that students in all

courses used prior knowledge and experience as they approached various writing tasks. However, only the TFT curriculum provided students a language (in the set of key terms and students' theories of writing) with which they could reflect on and rework prior knowledge and apply it in practice from site to site (99). For example, Clay, a student in the TFT course, hit a "turning point" in completing a major assignment—a composition-in-three-genres—which helped him to understand "how contextual writing is, which helped him to clarify the concepts, such as rhetorical situation, that he'd worked with earlier in the term" (93). By the end of the term, Clay observed in an interview that "what he learned in FYC were not strategies, but *ways of thinking* about how to write in any situation" (93, emphasis in original). Through experiencing and reflecting on the contextual nature of writing, Clay was able to successfully apply concepts like genre and audience to assignments in other courses, such as a meteorology essay he wrote the next semester. He found that through reflective writing he was able to make connections between his theory of writing, the key concepts he was introduced to in the course, and his experiences writing both inside and outside the course. In contrast, students in the other courses did not have a framework for understanding the different writing tasks they faced and so were less successful in their approaches to these tasks. Glen, a student in the Expressivist course, did try to use some of what he had learned in his FYC course for analytical writing in a later humanities course, but the more personal, expressive writing valued in his FYC course was inappropriate for the new assignment. Though Glen did attempt to transfer his knowledge, the writing knowledge from his FYC course was not appropriate for the humanities course. Glen did not have a passport or framework with which he could understand the differences between the two contexts. The TFT course, in contrast, facilitated successful student transfer because it gave students the opportunity to develop their frameworks for writing in order to leverage their writing knowledge and experience as they moved into new writing tasks.

Although the authors did not design their study with an explicit focus on students' prior knowledge, the study findings indicated that

prior knowledge and experience played an important role in student transfer. In part, this had to do with how students identified as writers. Even students in the TFT course who identified strongly as successful writers were less willing to try out new strategies and concepts and so were less likely to develop their theories of writing using new writing knowledge from the class. Yancey, Robertson, and Tazcak found that students in the TFT course used their prior knowledge to develop their frameworks in three different ways: 1) *assemblage*, grafting bits and pieces of new knowledge onto old frameworks; 2) *remix*, reworking and integrating prior knowledge and practice with new knowledge as they approach new tasks; and 3) *a critical incident or failure* that motivates students to rethink practices and understanding of writing. The TFT course aims to help students remix their writing knowledge and practice through reflection on both the *how* and the *what* of writing. As the authors write in the final chapter, the TFT course assumes that

> *specific ideas* in the form of key terms for composition are critical to students' writing development, and that weaving these terms throughout writing assignments and the accompanying (intentionally designed and integrated) reflection assignments begins to equip students to move appropriately into new writing contexts. (131)

The content of composition presented to students is specific knowledge about writing, grounded in key terms—for example, that writing occurs in a rhetorical situation. When students explicitly reflect on this specific content or writing knowledge, they are better equipped to think about and understand new writing tasks.

As I came to the end of *Writing Across Contexts*, I had several questions, one about how teachers without expertise in writing studies would teach such a course and a second about the different kinds of prior knowledge students bring with them into the first-year composition classroom. At the end of the book, Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak themselves raise questions like mine, asking, among other questions, "How do we engage instructors in teaching this

more explicit and content-driven course?" (147). Coming from a program in which many instructors are strongly committed to teaching writing courses with a particular theme, I was less than sure how my fellow GTAs with concentrations in literature or creative writing would feel about teaching the content of composition in the way that a TFT course does and how they would equip themselves to do so. However, the threshold concepts in *Naming* offer a framework that could help acquaint new teachers with writing studies in a way that is accessible in a limited time frame. Further, introducing teachers to these concepts not simply as key concepts, as the TFT course does, but as *threshold* concepts, could prompt them to think about student learning as Estrem described it, like "scrambling over rocky terrain." In their chapter in *Naming*, Adler-Kassner and Majewski articulate the benefit of the threshold concepts framework in working with other faculty as helping those faculty to think about the threshold concepts of their own discipline, the many forms of writing across the university, and how students learn to write in different disciplines (186). Their suggestion for using the threshold concepts with faculty from across the university strike me as appropriate within composition programs as well, particularly those drawing teachers from different areas of study within English. The threshold concepts framework is one potential means of helping new teachers think about teaching for transfer in a writing classroom.

My second question stemmed from a small point made by Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak about prior knowledge that is often absent from first-year students' previous experience. They identify one key area of absent prior knowledge as the reading of nonfiction texts. Though students are often asked to read fiction and maybe poetry in their high school English courses, few are asked to read nonfiction, particularly research-driven articles, in their high school curricula. But reading nonfiction texts, including research articles, is a key part of many college composition courses. How then, does a TFT course—or any course that takes writing studies as its content—help students learn to read effectively for their work in that course and in their later studies? Reading Carillo's *Securing a Place for Reading in Composition* convinced me that because reading is important to

writing, to the act of composing meaning, a first-year composition course should make reading part of the content of composition. Carillo points out that reading has dropped out of composition scholarship for some time and so also out of professional development opportunities for composition instructors, making it especially difficult for first-year composition teachers to confidently teach reading. Her book points to how including frameworks for reading alongside or as part of frameworks for writing in FYC can help address the gap students face in their prior knowledge of reading.

Frameworks for Composition: Mindful Reading, TFT, and Threshold Concepts

In *Securing a Place for Reading in Composition*, Ellen Carillo argues for a renewed conversation about reading in composition by reviewing the history of reading studies within composition and reporting the results of a national survey of first-year composition teachers regarding the role of reading in their curricula. Carillo's argument is based on the idea that reading and writing are connected in that "both practices of writing and reading involve the construction—or *composition*—of meaning" (5, emphasis in original). She defines reading not as an act of decoding or scanning the words on the page but as an active, "deliberate intellectual practice that helps us make sense of—interpret—that which surrounds us" (6). Carillo shows us, however, that although reading and writing are counterparts in the construction of meaning, reading is no longer an explicit focus of our scholarship and our curricula. Her book takes on the challenge of returning to composition's history of reading scholarship, the problems of composition's engagement with reading, particularly in scholarship of the 1980s and1990s, and the valuable ideas that might be drawn from this scholarship to renew attention to reading in composition. Carillo's argument prompted me to look for places where *Naming What We Know* and *Writing Across Contexts* address reading explicitly or implicitly and to think about how the field's knowledge of writing

also includes knowledge of reading. Reading is present in both texts, but Carillo points to the importance of making it an explicit part of the content of first-year composition.

In her second chapter, Carillo reports on a national survey of first-year composition instructors about the role of reading in their composition courses. She found that many of them did teach some form of reading to their classes, particularly "rhetorical analysis" or "rhetorical reading" which asks students to read model texts and analyze their features in order to imitate them in their own writing (Carillo 34). Carillo also reports that of the students she surveyed, many indicated that their motivation to read increased because of the relationship they understood between their reading of models and their writing tasks (38). For these teachers and students, imitation and models are a bridge between reading and writing. At the same time, many instructors felt unsure about teaching reading. This is unsurprising, Carillo argues, because compositionists have not made reading a focus of scholarship or teaching since the 1980s and '90s.

In chapters 3 and 4, Carillo examines the history of reading in composition, with an eye toward understanding how reading dropped out of focus in the field and instead became relegated to high school or remedial education. Chapter 3 focuses on the historical contexts for composition's current relationship with reading—teachers feel unprepared to teach reading—beginning in the nineteenth century. Chapter 4 delves more deeply into reading in composition scholarship from the 1980s and 1990s. In doing so, Carillo points to the limitations in the scholarship that may have played a part in the shift away from reading. She finds that these lay in slippages between "reading" as a verb and "readings" as a noun. The focus of scholarship tended to be not on *how* students read but *what* students were to read. As composition distanced itself from literature, it also distanced itself from reading, which was relegated either to K-12 education or literature, in part, Carillo argues, because of these slippages in the scholarship.

We can see at some points in *Naming* and *Writing Across Contexts*, as well, that attention to how students read has become less of a focus, with more emphasis devoted to what students should be

reading. For example, Downs and Robertson advocate for students reading accessible, research-based composition scholarship in first-year composition. But, as *Writing Across Contexts* points out, many students have little to no experience reading such articles. This is not to say, however, that reading doesn't appear at all as part of the content of FYC in either of these texts. One of Downs' learning goals for students is that they "build [their] ability to collaborate in communities of writers and readers," a goal grounded in the threshold concept that Genre is Enacted by Writers and Readers (Downs and Robertson 114). Making sure that students are explicitly theorizing reading and writing together, encountering them as connected practices, seems to be the important point for extending the approaches to FYC outlined in *Naming* and *Writing Across Contexts*.

Carillo points to several threads in earlier composition scholarship valuable for students and teachers attempting this work. First, reading is an "active, dynamic practice of constructing meaning" (Carillo 92). Second, reading and writing are connected practices and so must both be theorized, investigated, and explored. Third, reading is a complex practice, and so different theories of reading lead to different approaches to reading and the teaching of it. These definitions of reading lead Carillo to argue for a revival of reading scholarship as a connected practice to writing. Having established the history of reading in composition, Carillo turns to an argument for re-animating discussions of reading, particularly in light of recent scholarship on transfer. She reviews interdisciplinary work on transfer of learning, drawing special attention to the role that metacognition plays in supporting students as they transfer. In her initial survey of writing instructors, Carillo found that many of them hoped that the "rhetorical reading" they asked of their students would prepare students to read effectively in other classes. However, not many of them explicitly foregrounded for students how rhetorical reading is useful beyond FYC. Carillo advocates giving students a "mindful reading framework" (117), not unlike the threshold concepts and key words frameworks, that would give them a language to recognize and name abstract or general reading principles and so transfer reading knowledge and practice along with writing.

Chapter 6 outlines Carillo's mindful reading framework, meant to help students "create knowledge about reading and about themselves as readers" (110). Mindful reading is not another type of reading (like "close reading" or "rhetorical reading"), but instead is framework with which students can recognize when they are reading in a particular way and when that strategy may not be working for them. Ultimately, Carillo argues that FYC courses should introduce students to a range of reading types within this metacognitive framework of mindful reading. One of the limitations of Carillo's argument for mindful reading as a means of teaching for transfer is that it is fairly untested, particularly in comparison to the extensive research on the TFT course in Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak. In her Epilogue, Carillo calls for further study of transfer of reading knowledge. Studying student transfer of reading knowledge through a similar methodology to Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak's would help continue to develop and refine the mindful reading framework Carillo proposes. Further, attending to students' prior knowledge of reading and its role in their development of a mindful reading framework—or perhaps a framework for composition—would further refine our understanding of student transfer in composition.

Both Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak and Carillo argue effectively that we cannot just expect transfer of reading and writing practices to happen; we must actively teach for transfer by designing curricula that foster transfer. Carillo's "mindful reading" framework—although less fully developed in her final chapters than the TFT curriculum in Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak—offers students a "guide" or "passport" by helping them to understand why they are reading in particular situations. We are left with the question then, of how to incorporate reading more explicitly in a TFT writing course. What keywords would serve this end with reading? What threshold concepts are invoked in a "mindful reading" framework?

Because reading and writing are connected processes, we can see reading bound up, sometimes explicitly sometimes implicitly, in such threshold concepts as Concepts 1.0 Writing is a Social and Rhetorical Activity, 1.2 Writing Addresses, Invokes, and/or Creates Audiences, 1.3 Writing Expresses and Shares Meaning to Be

Reconstructed by the Reader, 1.4 Words Get Their Meanings from Other Words, 2.2 Genres are Enacted by Writers and Readers, 4.1 Text is An Object Outside of Oneself That Can Be Improved and Developed, among others. In helping students recognize that, just as with writing, different kinds of reading are required of different texts and purposes, we are helping them become better composers of meaning. If we are teaching writing studies, we are also teaching reading studies. That is, the processes are connected, and helping students to see those connections will help them be motivated in learning. For Carillo, the content of composition ought to include reading alongside writing, particularly as we begin to define what we know and what we can offer to discussions about writing and writers, using frameworks like threshold concepts.

At the outset of this essay, I articulated several questions about how I could develop my teaching in the composition classroom and the writing center to better support students' and tutors' learning, particularly as they moved into other writing contexts. If the instructors who were interviewed and surveyed in *Writing Across Contexts* and *Securing a Place for Reading* are any indication, I'm not alone in asking these questions. The instructors appearing in both texts expressed hope that students would successfully transfer writing and reading knowledge gained in FYC to their later coursework, but their curricula did not necessarily aid in this goal. What these texts indicate is that teaching for transfer is possible if we help students develop frameworks for composing using the fields' knowledge about writing and reading. Building such a framework is made easier by explicitly naming key concepts and asking students to grapple with them, even as they experience them. *Naming What We Know* offers teachers and tutors a place to start in articulating for ourselves the threshold concepts of composition and in working with students to help them develop theories of reading and writing that they can carry with them beyond the composition classroom.

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Reviewed by William Duffy

How important is the distinction between theory and practice in the teaching of writing, really? If in a conference presentation I were to propose a particular theory for understanding the ways students relate to their writing in social media, for instance, but I did so without also discussing how to put these ideas to use in one's teaching, does that render the theory useless? Conversely, if I were to outline a particular writing assignment in that same presentation, but I did so without explaining how it fits within a particular pedagogical framework, does that render the assignment (or at least my understanding of it) unsound? These may come across as impertinent questions, especially for those who view theory and practice as separate sides of the same coin, but the debate over these concepts and their importance in the work of rhetoric and composition instruction is one that has been conspicuously underway in our field at least since 1990 when Maxine Hairston took to task the "very badly written, convoluted, and pretentious" articles in *College English*, ones that "are as opaque and dull as anything in *PMLA* or *Critical Inquiry*" (695). Hairston's is an early shot in what Sidney Dobrin would dub composition's "own version of the 'theory wars'" (164), which arguably came to a head in the early 2000s with the introduction of postprocess theory and the suggestion that writing can't actually be taught. It's no surprise that from that moment forward the idea of proposing a "post" anything in composition studies has been a fairly hard sell.

But in *After Pedagogy*, Paul Lynch offers a compelling argument for thinking about teaching in an era of postpedagogy, a term that in his use points to the growing body of scholarship in rhetoric and writing studies that in one way or another shrugs off our field's so-called pedagogical imperative. Pointing to the likes of Diane Davis, Byron Hawk, Cynthia Haynes, Thomas Rickert, Victor

Vitanza, and Lynn Worsham, among others, as examples of scholars engaged in postpedgaogical writing studies, Lynch suggests this scholarship has merit even though he grants that much of it demonstrates what experienced teachers implicitly know, "that pedagogy does not often survive contact with the classroom" (xv). Even though Lynch dismisses the theory-practice binary as untenable, his project is nevertheless built on the tension this binary produces, which is to say even though the conceptual divide separating theory from practice might be false, many of us still regularly ask what Lynch calls the Monday Morning Question, "the question that asks, 'This theory (or idea, or philosophy) you're proposing is great and everything, but what am I supposed to do with it when the students show up on Monday morning?'" (xi). Rather than set aside this question while letting multiple definitions of theory and practice "displace one another," as John Schilb once advised (96), Lynch opts instead to approach the question by rethinking its timing. We have grown accustomed to imagining pedagogy as something that gets worked out *before* we enter the classroom, but such inquiry is often more valuable *afterward*; after, that is (and as the book's subtitle reads), the experience of teaching.

Beginning with a reflection on Quintilian's distrust of systematic pedagogy, Lynch uses Chapter 1 to review the constraints writing teachers are increasingly up against when the efficacy of teaching has become a possibility difficult to grasp. Many writing instructors now feel adrift, that is, because postpedagogical and similar antifoundational philosophies have all but forced us to question what counts as composition's teachable knowledge. But Lynch is nevertheless hopeful, especially in his attempt to come to terms with the uncertainty that results when we realize teaching is much too particular of an activity to be treated systematically, but also too complex of an activity to be reduced to "recipe-swapping," a phrase he borrows from Ann Berthoff (17). Lynch's solution is found in revitalizing the concept of lore, Stephen North's term for the ad hoc accumulation of beliefs and practices that, according to North, constitute the

everyday knowledge of "Practitioners," those in composition studies for whom teaching is their primary responsibility. Even though the idea of lore has always had pejorative overtones because it supposedly points to knowledge that lacks rigor and theoretical grounding, Lynch recognizes the actual practice of teaching offers composition instructors something that cannot be otherwise learned: *experience*. Taking up John Dewey's pragmatic understanding of experience as "the everyday world and the methodological reflection that infuses that everyday world with meaning," Lynch sees an opening "to make a method of lore" and "to talk and write about teaching after pedagogy" (18). Here is where Lynch's book really gets its footing, especially as an extended meditation on how a pragmatic approach to experience can help us to develop habits of reflection that mediate pedagogy with practice.

In Chapter 2, Lynch steps back to review two strains of composition scholarship that have contributed to the rise of postpedagogical writing studies, postprocess theory and the third sophistic school. Using a detailed discussion of Thomas Kent's work to sketch a history of postprocess, Lynch offers a judicious overview of the key ideas that led postprocess advocates to shirk the articulation of best practices (or how-to approaches, e.g., the Monday Morning Question) to emphasize the paralogic and thus non-codifiable nature of communicative interaction, including writing. That is, understanding writing as paralogic (as something that resists instrumental control, i.e., its effects can only be guessed at before the fact) many postprocess theorists, including Kent, have argued that writing can't be taught. Even though this claim was delivered more often than not for its rhetorical effect, many critics interpreted it as an outright rejection of pedagogy altogether. But as Lynch explains, "postprocess theorists essentially argue that process pedagogy lacks *phronesis*—the kind of practical wisdom associated with situational thinking" (33). While postprocess was questioned by compositionists who thought it threatened the viability of teaching, it did contribute to the intellectual project associated with composition's third sophistic

school, which is rooted in a concern about "composition's will-to-control" (38). The third sophistic school is unlike postprocess, however, because the latter focuses on interpretation and what Kent calls hermeneutic guesswork, the process through which we make sense of one another's utterances. "Rather than paralogic interpretation," Lynch explains, "third sophistic is more interested in paralogic invention, which will not manage utterances already made but rather produce utterances not yet made or even imagined" (38). Third sophistic theory is notable for its style, which is often playful, recursive, and fragmented, especially in the work of Victor Vitanza whom Lynch points to as its founder. More importantly, however, the third sophistic is the school that has most clearly articulated the postpedagogical claim that rejects teaching. As Lynch writes, Vitanza argues "that if something can be known, it should not be taught, since teaching it would inevitably require reducing it" (i.e., limit the potential for invention), a claim that "directly addresses composition's investment in pedagogy" (41). While it should go without saying, this kind of talk makes teachers uncomfortable. For Lynch, though, postprocess and third sophistic theory point to ideas we need to at least partially grant. What these approaches lack, and what Lynch turns to in Chapter 3, is a postpedagogical method that can account for our unique experiences.

If nothing else, Lynch has a knack for weaving together composition's critical vocabulary in ways that render such theoretical complexity approachable, even inviting. As a case in point, he begins Chapter 3 by considering how his interest in pedagogy can be illuminated using the classical notions of *techne* and *tuche*. The former term refers to intelligent practice, the knowledge that aligns skill with prediction much like the way an experienced painter can will her brush to depict a particular image. *Tuche*, however, refers to the unpredictable. As Lynch writes, it "is what happens when you are making other plans. A carpenter may build a house well enough to withstand a storm but not the earthquake that collapses it" (60). Accordingly, if we treat pedagogy as a *techne*, a kind of knowledge with predictive powers,

what happens to pedagogy in the wake of *tuche*, those moments when our experience calls into question the very possibility of such knowledge itself? The remainder of Chapter 3 tackles the idea of experience, which Lynch sees as the mediating principle that allows us to approach pedagogy as a *techne* while remaining attuned to the unpredictable dimensions of teaching. "If pedagogy is a *techne*," he suggests, "experience is simultaneously its occasion and its material. Skills, strategies, and techniques may not be easily portable, but experience—both the teacher's and the learner's—cannot help but be portable, for it carries us as much as we carry it" (64). What follows is a clear and careful review of Dewey's philosophy of experience, which includes discussion of how this early-twentieth century philosopher of education proposed a method for using reflection to cultivate uncertainty, the attitude necessary for welcoming moments of disruption as opportunities for growth.

To a skeptical reader, all of this may sound well and good while nevertheless coming across as somewhat impossible. As Lynch himself puts it, the basic requirement for grasping Dewey's version of postpedagogy "is easy to understand but more difficult to implement: How does one expect the unexpected?" (98). Lynch's answer comes in Chapter 4, the book's final chapter, in which he outlines the practice of pedagogical casuistry. While it has classical roots, casuistry is a case-based method for ethical reasoning that was popularized by the Jesuits in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In brief, casuistry relies on situational thinking about established rules and maxims. When a case arises that requires deliberation, we can (and should) use our established knowledge to the extent that it aligns with the facts of the particular case at hand. But we must be prepared to revise these rules, at least temporarily, if there are extenuating circumstances that make the case unique. As Lynch summarizes after giving a hypothetical example, "there is a principle that normally should not be violated, yet there is a particular case that defies deductive application of the principle. The result is that what seems unjust suddenly seems just under the given circumstances" (107). When

it comes to teaching, then, we should foster pedagogical maxims that can guide our pedagogy while allowing us to remain flexible to contingency. In other words, we should develop rules of thumb—"*A lesson should never work three times*" is one hypothetical example Lynch offers (136)—that can help us make experience intelligible, that can help us identify the reasons why Lesson A, for instance, went over swimmingly in my 8am section of first-year writing, but not in my 10am section. In this way, what Lynch offers is a proposal for adapting the tradition of casuistry into a practical method for fostering the uncertainty that Dewey insists gives experience its value. In its most basic sense, it is a call to turn our classroom experiences into cases, ones that we can use to reflect upon and revise our pedagogy on the ad hoc basis that such experience demands.

As it should be clear by now, Lynch neither embraces nor rejects the postpedagogical arguments that challenge us to stop asking after the classroom. Like the pragmatist philosophy he embraces, Lynch finds generative value in mediating the potentials for invention that postpedagogy celebrates alongside the very real limitations that make postpedagogy impractical. Indeed, by offering Dewey's theory of experience, Lynch helps to identify a deliberate method for systematically acknowledging the theories that inform how we approach the work of teaching while allowing us to check these theories—and revise them if necessary—in the wake of further experience. In the end, I'm a fan of this book and recommend it to compositionists who, like me, are weary of arguments that presume we can directly connect our theories to our practices. But it will also appeal to those who are suspicious of the third sophistic claim that teaching is ultimately an impossible task. To be sure, our pedagogies can and often do go wrong. But this is why we need a robust philosophy of experience, because, and as Lynch notes, "the pedagogical moment is too complex to be either accurately predicted or exploited" (xix). The trick is to figure out how to put this experience to use, and Lynch is a helpful guide.

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Reviewed by Majed Alharbi

Exchanging information, conveying messages, and expressing feelings are core parts of human communication, which is never barren of bits and pieces of ourselves. On a daily basis, we use language to identify others and ourselves, align ourselves with them, or distance ourselves from them by underlining our differences (Fina et al. 355). In this sense, the voice we embed in our codes plays a major role in constructing and negotiating our identities as language users and/or language learners and teachers. Moreover, our teaching pedagogies and practices are influenced by our life histories and our view of the world around us. Each practice we preach represents an encounter, possibly a struggle, between our multiple past experiences and the demands of a new environment. Hence, teaching is not some neutral activity which we just learn like a physical skill; rather, it encapsulates every fiber of our multifaceted being as teachers.

Teacher Identity and the Struggle for Recognition is mainly a collection of identity-focused academic works. Edited by Patrick M. Jenlink, the book takes a close look at the nature of teacher identity and recognizes it as a social, cultural, and political construct. Jenlink deftly paves our way into the book with an introduction, takes us through a compilation of professional works that substantiate his focal point—the critical importance of teacher's identity in education and the need for its acknowledgment—and leaves us with his thoughtful reflection on the issue in the final part of the book. By offering the differing perspectives on teacher identity articulated by the contributors, Jenlink sheds light on the daily identity struggles teachers encounter in U.S. schools, universities, and other educational institutions, and suggests relevant preparations for teacher education programs.

This well-organized book is divided into six parts, written by 36 authors, including Jean Moule, Ken Winograd, Belinda Bustos Flores, and Ellen Riojas Clark. The writers investigate the concept of teachers' identities and how schooling systems help shape and recognize or dismiss their different selves. Each part of this book is comprised of several chapters, which respectively address the following points:

1. "The Meaning of Identity–Understanding Teacher Identity in a Diverse Society"
2. "Pedagogical Considerations in Shaping Teacher Identity—Raising Identity Awareness"
3. "Identity Formation—Writing and Reading Teacher Identity"
4. "Contextualizing Teacher Identity—Situating the Self"
5. "Being, Becoming a Teacher—Reflections on Teacher Identity"

In every chapter, the authors reinforce the importance of recognizing teacher identity as a critical factor for both pre-service and in-service teachers. This book is designed to resolve the complexities behind making teachers' cultural differences invisible. Questioning educational systems that assume that teachers' cultural differences threaten public education in the U.S. today, the text argues that these differences naturally mirror an increasingly diverse society and thus should not be silenced. The upcoming discussion overviews each part to provide a content summary of the chapters it includes.

The introduction contends that some teachers struggle every day due to their invisibility to other privileged teachers by asking such questions as, "What makes an individual invisible?" and, "What forces reduce teacher's existence in the workplace?" The editor relates this phenomenon to Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*: He suggests that this literary classic reveals the subtleties of invisibility and how, for instance, teachers' skin color can render them invisible in educational settings. Invisibility in our school system

today, the editor argues, is similar to the one Ellison handles in his work—a status that is a result of "a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom [one] come[s] in contact. A matter of the construction of their inner eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality" (qtd. in Jenlink 3). The editor then asserts that understanding the genesis of invisibilities can help educators challenge the struggle of recognition that afflict the school system today (xvii). Teachers' invisibilities and the struggle for recognition are derived from a variety of social, economic, racial, sexual, and ideological factors. The failure to see teachers as mere humans, who naturally appreciate recognition, can compound their struggle to welcomingly foster students' identities in such a complex, diverse society. With considerable passion, Jenlink calls for an on-going action for a pedagogy of recognition and a culture of visibility. This change can only happen through examining aspects of the schooling systems that insidiously perpetuate invisibility and unequal relationships, questioning the suited pedagogical practices, and problematizing the culture of domination, subordination, and misrecognition.

The first part of this book consists of five chapters revolving around the concept of teacher identity. Contextualizing teacher identity and examining it through different perspectives, the authors emphasize that the meaning of identity is varied as different philosophers, psychologists, and theorists have posited different definitions of it. "The meaning of identity is critical to the shaping and developing of the teacher self," (77) the editor suggests; the voices teachers hold in school can either lead to teachers' recognition or their absence.

The first two chapters of Part I are worthy of more detailing here, for they provide the ABCs of the teacher identity situation. The first of those chapters lays out a framework that is significant for our understanding of teacher identity transformation, and the second affords us a different angle on the issue—one that takes into consideration the different stands of school systems and their influence on teacher identity.

In the first chapter, "The Metamorphosis of Teacher Identity: An Intersection of Ethnic-Consciousness, Self-Conceptualization, and Belief Systems," Ellen Riojas Clark and Belinda Bustos Flores provide an analogical model for the process of teacher identity formation and performance. This model encourages teachers to reflect critically on their pedagogical practice and take necessary actions to strengthen their own sense of cultural and ethnic consciousness. Clark and Flores acknowledge the major role that ethnic and cultural factors play in today's diverse classroom and their influence on teachers' perception of these multicultural/racial students and of themselves in relation to the hierarchal social and cultural structure (3). Thus, by attempting to figure out questions like "Who am I?" and "Who am I in relation to a multicultural/translingual society?" teachers can next develop the awareness needed to help their students identify themselves among other members of society. Drawing on the recognition theory that highlights the importance of psychological affiliation, equality, equity, and social esteem, Clark and Flores argue that teachers' identity formation is molded through the intersectionality of racial and cultural ideologies as well as the larger educational and political systems (6).

In the second chapter, "Guardian of the Status Quo or Agent of Change? An Exploration of the Role of Identity in the School," the authors, Lorraine S. Gilpin and Delores D. Liston, propose that studying identity and the status quo in the schooling system can promote teacher-student agencies as social advocates and catalysts of change. In this chapter, the authors take up the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policy that promises to give every child an equal opportunity for learning and growing. Gilpin and Liston question the purported inclusivity in this policy: Not only do we need to admit all stripes of society to school, but we also need to adapt school systems into more diversity-acknowledging safe houses for both teachers and students. They also problematize the role of school systems, whether as guardians of orthodox practices or as impellers of change, in cases of identity acknowledgement or disenfranchisement. By providing ample examples in the chapter,

the authors demonstrate how positive or negative actions can liberate or enslave students from situated, socially-constructed concepts (such as patriarchy, classism, homophobia, and sexism), which may accordingly impact their overall academic performance and—most significantly—reshape their socialization ideologies. In order to harbor a productive, practical education that truly leaves no child behind, schooling systems should validate both teachers' and students' backgrounds and linguistic resources.

"Pedagogical Consideration in Shaping Teacher Identity" is the second and, in my opinion, the most important part of the book. It includes nine chapters that address different perspectives on understanding pedagogy and its role in teacher identity. The authors contend that teaching practices are pedagogically important in carving teacher identity—concentrating on how they can affect teaching and teachers. Furthermore, Jenlink states clearly that the first priority for teachers is to understand pedagogy and then the role it plays in a teacher's identity; understanding these notions are the sine qua non of any teacher's professional practice. Inspired by Mariolina Salvatori's interpretation of pedagogy in *Pedagogy: Disturbing History*, Jenlink highlights that while the meaning of pedagogy has been looked at as the reproduction of the teacher's knowledge, it should always be considered as interlocking with the theory and practice that constantly deconstruct power hierarchies in the classroom and in the world around students. Thus, in order to reach this understanding, teachers, both preservice and in-service, should know who they are and be critical about the type of pedagogy they utilize in the classroom, for it eventually will reflect on them and their students.

One of the most important chapters in this section is Chapter Six, "New Teachers as Cultural Workers: Cultivating a Wide-Awake Consciousness." In this chapter, Rosalie M. Romana draws the idea of teachers as cultural workers from Paulo Freire's work, which encourages educators to help their students think democratically and critically. This pedagogy can be enacted through giving students more agency to question knowledge that they receive in the classroom and the situated practices in their societies.

Such practices will not only raise students' awareness but also transform their lives and the world around them. The concept of teachers as cultural workers can promote emancipatory teacher practices and empower students to be agents of change in society. Therefore, Romana urges teacher education programs to expose new teachers, through practicum courses, to students with different cultural, social, and linguistic backgrounds. Romana also believes in the benefit of international students' teaching experiences in helping new teachers to comprehend culturally different pedagogies, their own identities as teachers, and their diverse classrooms.

Part three of the book covers several issues related to sexual orientation as an indomitable aspect of teacher identity. The authors believe that this aspect can, to a certain degree, affect the recognition or dismissal of teacher identity in the context of education. The authors investigate this aspect of teacher identity critically, for it pertains undoubtedly to social tensions, cultural mores, and political ideologies, all of which are constantly affecting teachers, students, and agendas of education. For instance, sexual orientation and gender-related issues were rarely addressed in identity politics and public discourse, which undoubtedly affected how teachers and teacher preparation programs perceived such controversial topics. Jenlink reminds readers in this section that the marginalization of such discourse in teacher identity is in tandem with Elision's *Invisible Man* in which teachers with non-traditional sexual orientations are labeled as "Others." Hence, Jenlink proposes that teacher preparation programs must critically embrace the diversity of teachers' sexual orientations and genders and must deconstruct the ideology of domination that perpetuates gender and sexual hierarchy in the profession.

Part four, interestingly, maps out the dynamic nature of identity and the process of its formation. The constant looping nature of identity reveals that teacher identity is created and constructed/negotiated over the course of time. Jenlink emphasizes that, "teacher identity in a student develops over time through his/her educational experience" (44). In other words, the

process which teachers go through in education shapes their perception of their world—reading the "world" as students and reading the "world" as teachers contribute greatly to the process of identity formation. Furthermore, the integration of literature-based strategies, as mentioned in this section, underscores the importance of giving new teachers a sense of complexity about their identity as teachers.

"Contextualizing Teacher Identity—Situating the Teacher Self," in my opinion, is the second most important part of this book. This section is rich with academically informed discussions that reinforce the need for recognizing teacher identity in practice and considering it as an essential factor in understanding student identity. In these chapters, the authors contend that teacher identity does not form in a vacuum; it is rather molded by multiple variables, including previous histories, life experiences, and self-reflections. Therefore, it is essential for teacher education programs to include experience-based, interactive training with ample opportunities for self-observation and self-reflection, leading to self-development and realization. Historical, cultural, racial, and linguistic elements in the teacher's background construct the sinews of identity formation; thus, they should be acknowledged by the self and the other. Eventually, this milieu of recognition and visibility will enhance students' ability to unabashedly form their own identities.

These processes of contextualizing teacher identity are essential in elucidating the dynamics of teacher subjectivities, which are shaped and reshaped over a lifetime. Thereby, teachers, especially those from cultural minorities, should know the social and racial intricacies that shape one's identity, for these can aid them in raising students' awareness in a dynamic, diverse society. This also can aid students to critically question why certain people are given much voice while others are not, which in turn will reflect on their identities. These critical questions can promote equality and justice, not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom. In other words, with sufficient awareness, teachers can transform not only their classroom practices but the lives of others.

For instance, in Chapter Sixteen, "The Challenge to Care: Personal Reflections of a Black Woman Teacher Educator's Struggle to Establish Legitimacy in the Classroom," Marlene Munn Joseph, a Black female university professor, reflects on her teaching experience in a white-dominant classroom, where she teaches a multicultural course. Munn Joseph integrates care and authority as an overarching framework in her classroom teaching practice to raise many questions pertinent to race, gender, and class. In the process, she seeks to answer questions that are related to her professional Black female identity. Munn Joseph finds herself in situations where she does not know how to raise questions to predominantly white, middle-class students to see others. Her goal in such a class is to expose her students to a tapestry of cultural shades from around the world so that they are prepared to teach in diverse classrooms themselves.

Munn Joseph highlights that, while authority and care might typically be misused in the classroom, she tries to draw on them in order to evoke students' reflections on and reactions to the broader scene of social and political practices. She confesses that at first, in some classroom discussions, some students did not respect her and were not willing to see others' positions of struggle. However, later on, with healthy dialogues, her students started to view these questions around social justice, even when they challenged previously held beliefs about other minority groups, as boosters of their personalities and future behavior. Although some conversations in the classroom were charged, Munn Joseph feels that she finds pleasure in her agency as she takes the chance to address discourses of conflict and issues of oppression and exclusion in society (195). Simultaneously, she believes that this experiment has helped her as an educator to see the classroom discourse as a remedy for the deficit attitude towards future minority children, who might be unfairly labeled as underachievers. With such a vision, Munn Joseph advocates teaching as a life-changing career that not only nurtures teachers' lives but also fosters social justice and equity in society.

The gist of the last part in this book is indicated in the title, "Being, Becoming a Teacher—Reflection on Teacher Identity." Here, the authors reflect on the complex nature of identity and provide pedagogical implications and considerations for teachers in service. Repeatedly, the authors assert that teacher identity is multi-layered, dynamic, and ever-shifting; hence, it, unfortunately, is erased sometimes by ideological, cultural, and political forces.

In all, the volume succeeds in its sound and diversified theoretical perspectives as it focuses exclusively on teacher identity issues. As such, it will be a valuable reference for readers in teacher education programs, sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, and TESOL. This beautifully written, deeply insightful edited collection makes a tremendous contribution to the field of teacher education and identity research. It reads well and has applicable suggestions for teachers, policymakers, and graduate students interested in conducting qualitative studies and in transforming teaching environments. In other words, it sketches out teachers' identities holistically: It analyzes teachers as both professionals and individuals inside and outside the classroom, and it calls for teachers' recognition in academia. Moreover, Jenlink exposes readers to a topography of identity that can help educators, policymakers, and researchers alike to understand the varied issues of identity and to do the work necessary to acknowledge teacher/educator identity.

In addition, the book is an invaluable resource for ESL/EFL teacher trainers as the implications of the studies show that a one-size-fits-all type of pedagogical training may not be effective; the trainee's socio-cultural, political, and personal contexts need to be considered in order for teachers to yield best practices. I strongly recommend this book as a textbook for graduate courses in education, applied linguistics, and sociology since it contains excellent updated bibliographical references about identity research.

Conferring visibility upon the identities of our teachers and students will require more than catchy slogans and ideographs: It will take a critical eye and conscious educational measures.

Acknowledging the problem is the first step for resolving it; therefore, it is incumbent upon teachers and educators to understand the dynamics through which supposedly multicultural education is still tacitly pushing some identities to the foreground and others, to the background. This edited collection clearly takes an ethical stance on how teachers should interact transnationally and engage constructively with linguistic and cultural differences in schools. *Teacher Identity and the Struggle for Recognition: Meeting the Challenges of a Diverse Society* makes a timely and valuable contribution to the current discourses, especially as the tapestry of rhetorics is increasingly expanding in the U.S. to address the identities of immigrant students and teachers.

I have only two quibbles with this book, the first of which is that the editor should have set the context for readers by defining the concept of identity and some of its basic aspects. The second shortcoming is that the works of acknowledged identity researchers, such as Norton's *Identity and Language Learning: Gender, Ethnicity, and Educational Change* and Gee's *Identity as an Analytic Lens for Research in Education*, are overlooked. However, these shortcomings do not affect the overall quality of Jenlink's book, which is definitely a contemporary contender in the field.

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