# NEGOTIATING LINGUISTIC CERTAINTY FOR ESL WRITERS AT THE WRITING CENTER

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## ABSTRACT

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The Writing Center provides an alternative space for learning English writing in an academic context. For ESL writers who have particular concerns with the English language, the one-on-one writing consultation in the Writing Center provides potential opportunities for the L2 writers to resolve their linguistic uncertainty in their L2 writing.

This study examines five cases with multiple consulting sessions in the Writing Center. Based on the theoretical framework of sociocultural perspective and the analyses of Language-related episodes (LREs) in the collaborative dialogues in writing consultations. This study illustrates how L2 learners are engaged in the conversation and scaffolded for language learning during writing consulting.

The results support the concept of collaborative dialogues as language learning occasions (Swain & Lapkin, 1995, 1998, 2002) and highlight the importance of recognizing L2 learners' individual difference in L2 writing development, which affects the effectiveness of interaction and feedback (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994). A model of writing center consultation is created to illustrate the scaffolding processes with different writers and in various contexts based on writing center pedagogy.

For teaching practices in the Writing Center, the findings raise questions about how writing center pedagogy can empower L2 writers on their language control when the

writing consultants have the ultimate control in language and the L2 learners have the inherent uncertainty. While writing center work draws on the advantages of collaborative dialogues and effects better language control for ESL writers based on a sociocultural learning perspective, writing center pedagogy needs to continue reconsidering the needs and beliefs of ESL writers (Blau & Hall, 2002; Powers, 1993). The language issue in ESL writing is not a lower order concern in the writing, but more likely a primary concern for the writer. As also found in this study, when the broader contextual factors such as the focus of writing and writers' beliefs are taken into account, language knowledge and control are not just about linguistic correctness to ESL writer development. In striving to create better writers but not just better writing for any writers, it is crucial for writing centers to continue rethinking their staff training on the topic of language issues with their diverse multilingual clientele who speaks English as a second language.

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife and son,

Rose Shih-Mei Chen and Miles Wanlee Chiu.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

This study investigates writing consulting sessions between writers of English as a second language (ESL) and native English-speaking writing consultants at the writing center. Coming from the field of second language acquisition (SLA) with particular interests in the potential of creating better ESL writers in the university writing center, in this dissertation, I examine second language (L2) writing development through writing consultation. Given that a better control of the language is essential to becoming better writers, this study focuses on the potential effect of writing consultation on language learning for ESL writers in the academic context. The sociocultural foundation for L2 learning and writing center pedagogy provides the theoretical framework for this study. In this chapter and throughout this dissertation, the terms *L2 learners*, *ESL learners*, *L2 writers*, *ESL writers*, *ESL students*, *L2 speakers*, *multilingual speakers*, and *non-native English speakers* are used interchangeably, which shows the different traditional concepts implied by the terminologies among different fields and contexts. This chapter talks about the problem of interest, the theoretical framework, the two disciplinary perspectives on the teaching of L2 writing, and the overall organization of this dissertation.

### The Sense of Uncertainties in L2 Writing

Many L2 speakers communicate in the target language with a certain degree of uncertainty inherent in their every attempt to express complicated ideas or something original. The more sophisticated the thought they want to articulate, the more difficult it is for them to get the idea across in the L2 for linguistic and cultural reasons. Writing in the L2 can be easier than spontaneous speaking and allows more time to formulate and produce ideas. However, that extra time might only cause extra worry and uncertainty to arise during the writing process. In addition,

when communicating in L2 writing, particularly in an academic setting, there could be another layer of hesitation to non-native speakers' expression because of the prescriptive rules of writing itself and the academic conventions of language use. As a non-native English-speaking (NNES) graduate student myself, I do not need research to tell me all the difficulties in writing English as an L2 in an academic setting. Every time I write an English article, I have first-hand experience struggling with expressing myself and my intelligence clearly and faithfully. My own experience of writing for graduate studies was a continuing search process for legitimacy and security in my ESL writing; I was perplexed by the assumptions of what I should know as a graduate student as well as what I shouldn't be expected to know as an international NNES student. With lack of knowledge about graduate school on U.S. campus and senses of uncertainty in ESL production, making it through the graduate program with such high stake writing was almost like navigating through a mine field (or a corn maze) of literacy practices, and I am just one of the hundreds of thousands of international NNES graduate students on U.S. campuses.

To be successful in graduate studies, academic writing skills are essential. Good academic writing skills entail good command of English communication skills and knowledge of academic conventions. International students who speak English as their L2 come to U.S. universities with years of experiences learning English in an exam-based context. They often find themselves in a constant need to improve their English skills; however, living in the U.S. is not equal to immersion in the language environment. Instead, international students are oftentimes left isolated in their own circle of life and separated from the mainstream American students. The only input in the target language they can receive is usually from the classroom discussion or written feedback from the class instructors. As similar observations were reported by Leki (2009), many international students would have to spend much more time reading and

processing texts for their academic success, which keep them at the library on weekend nights. While most of them have only the minimum experience in writing in English that is also exam-oriented, NNES international students are required and expected to produce high quality writing for academic purposes with appropriate disciplinary conventions. Furthermore, academic writing involves not only language performance but also issues of academic conventions in the discipline. For L2 writers to succeed in U.S. graduate programs, these issues could become more problematic when the academic literacy practices of graduate studies are generally not transparent (Casavane & Li, 2008). In his reflection on learning literacy practices of graduate school, Hedgcock (2008) described his "not-so-obvious lessons" (p. 33) that came from his interactions with his professors, collaborations with peer graduate students, communications with editors and reviewers, and all kind of conversations with people in academia. For both native and non-native speakers of English on U.S. campuses, academic literacy is mostly acquired through implicit lessons and immersion in the field. For international students, these implicit lessons might be even more obscure with the language and culture barriers.

As L2 writers often look for resources on campus to improve their writing skills and gain confidence and certainty in their L2 production, university writing centers and the one-on-one peer consultations appear as a potential learning environment for international NNES writers to engage in communication with the target language and also get insights from the experienced writers and readers and fellow students in the university. However, a legitimate question arises as to whether the writing centers work for ESL writers, given that the writing center philosophy and tradition are not based on the needs of ESL writers. As writing center scholars and L2 writing researchers also re-examine writing center work (e.g., Grimm, 1999; Rollins, Smith & Westbrook, 2008; Thonus, 2001, 2004), the idealization of peer consultation is difficult to

practice. Especially for international NNES writers, language issues are higher order rather than lower order concerns for them to become competent writers and English native speaking writing consultants are regarded as experts rather than peers.

**Theoretical Framework**

Research from the field of SLA has investigated how L2 learners acquire language, while writing center theory and pedagogy is concerned with empowering student writers to become successful writers. This study examines the language learning occasions in writing consultations based on the sociocultural perspective on interaction, as writing center pedagogy and peer tutoring fundamentally is influenced by socioculturalism and the idea that knowledge is socially constructed (Bruffee, 1984) through the interaction and dialogues between writers and writing consultants.

From both cognitive and sociocultural approaches to SLA research, interaction between second language (L2) learners and native speakers or higher L2 proficiency interlocutors is essential to L2 learning. Interaction provides an opportunity for L2 learners to engage with the input of target language, which contributes to the development of the target language as well as L2 learners' communicative competence. In an overview of the interaction hypothesis, Gass and Mackey (2007) model the interaction process and point out that L2 learners' exposure to language (input), production of language (output), and feedback on production are essential elements. During conversational interaction, L2 learners' noticing the gap between their interlanguage and the input is regarded as an initial step in L2 development (Mackey, 2006). In contrast to the cognitive approach, the sociocultural perspective on interaction focuses on engagement with the language as the source for participation in the learning process rather than just the input to L2 learners. Language serves as a psychological tool to facilitate L2 learners'

learning activity and change the quality of their performance or their capacity (Swain & Lapkin, 1998). Lantolf (2006) indicates that during the interaction process L2 learners are engaged in a social activity that is mediated through the L2. Learners can internalize the target forms through collaboration with and imitation of the more capable interlocutors. Learning happens in the social interaction where learners and their interlocutors co-construct the knowledge about the L2 (Lantolf, 2000) rather than in the individual cognitive internal processes.

Writing center pedagogy draws from sociocultural approach to learning and emphasizes the one-on-one conversation and negotiation between writers and consultants can create collaborative learning and lead to the writers' better understanding of their own problem solving in writing and their authorial decisions. The sociocultural theory of mind provides the most suitable framework for this study on language learning during the face-to-face writing consultation between L2 writers and writing consultants at the writing center.

**Interaction in SLA and L2 Writing: The Sociocultural Perspective**

Some SLA researchers have claimed that interaction between second language (L2) learners and native speakers or higher L2 proficiency interlocutors is a desirable activity for L2 learners to improve their L2 language skills. In the research of SLA, It has become clear that interaction plays an essential role in L2 development, and researchers have been devoted to inquiring how interaction facilitates the acquisition of the target language (Gass & Mackey, 2006). Through interaction, L2 learners not only can exercise the language knowledge they already have but also can gain new knowledge of the target language demonstrated by the more capable interlocutors.

From the psycholinguistic perspective that focuses on cognitive factors of L2 learning,

noticing the knowledge gap to be filled by input of the target language is key to L2 learning. L2 learners' internal cognitive processes are activated when learners are engaged in interaction. In this approach, interaction involves crucial mechanisms for L2 learners to access comprehensible input that is a necessity for successful acquisition of the target language (Long, 1996; Gass 1997). In the model of the interaction process, Gass and Mackey (2006, 2007) point out that L2 learners' engagement with negotiations with language (input) and feedback on their own L2 production are essential elements to cognitive changes and learning. The opportunities to negotiate meaning and learners' knowledge of the target form and to receive negative feedback (Gass, 1997; Long, 1996) have been the focus of SLA research inquiry. For interested researchers in L2 writing studies, empirical studies have been conducted investigating how different types of corrective written feedback on writing could best induce learning (e.g., Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Qi & Lapkin, 2001; Sachs & Polio, 2007) and how potential writing conferences between learners and instructors or peers might facilitate writing development (e.g., Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Patthey-Chavez & Ferris, 1997). However, the theoretical constructs based on the interactionist approach tend to portray L2 acquisition as individual cognitive engagement with input, output and feedback, as critiqued by Swain (2000), and ignore the socially constructed nature of interaction between peers.

Interaction between learners and members of the target language community is of fundamental interest to researchers who follow the tradition of sociocultural theory. Based on the work of Russian psychologist, Vygotsky, the sociocultural approach views language as a meditational tool for social learning. Through collaborative interaction and conversation, learners are engaged in socially mediated mental processing around the topics or tasks, which can evolve into self-mediated cognitive processing. The self-mediated cognitive functioning would also be

linguistically mediated. As explained by Lantolf (1994), this self linguistic and cognitive mediation is referred to as inner or private speech, which is the result of learners' participation in dialogues with other individuals. The effect of dialogues and the ensued mediation on learning is explicated by the concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD). As described by Lantolf and Thorne (2006) as most frequently referenced definition, ZPD is "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p.266). It is the metaphorical social space where interaction occurs and provides an opportunity for L2 learning and the higher-level performance. Lantolf (2006) indicates that during the interaction process L2 learners are engaged in a social activity that is mediated through the L2. Learners can internalize the target forms through collaboration and imitation. In particular, when working with a higher proficient speaker or a native speaker on their writing, L2 writers have opportunities not only for negotiating with the audience for better written communication but also for the social interaction that contributes to learning and boost L2 development, which is based on the construct of "scaffolding" in general (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Among the SLA researchers who are interested in the sociocultural approach, Swain and her colleague (i.e., Swain & Lapkin, 1995, 1998, 2002; Swain, 2000, 2005, 2006) have been advocating the meditational function of language for L2 development and the concept of collaborative dialogue, particularly in a collaborative writing context. The language-related episodes (LREs) (Swain & Lapkin, 1995, 1998) that occur during collaborative dialogues are instances of negotiation during interaction and provide a window on L2 learners' learning processes. During the dialogues and interaction, learners are making meaning and debating the meaning they make, rather than simply exchanges of input and output for meaning and

comprehension. Talking about language mediates L2 learning and the internalization of linguistic knowledge from other speakers (Lantolf, 2000, 2001; Swain, 2000).

The conversational activities emerging in interaction on L2 writing and LREs examined by Swain and her colleagues through collaborative dialogues have shown potential effectiveness on the learning of L2 and L2 writing. L2 learners' talking about writing is therefore presumably beneficial to L2 learning and writing development, which can be found in the university writing centers. Some writing researchers (e.g., Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005) have suggested the effectiveness of feedback through one-to-one writing conferences. While the writing center conference could resemble the dialogical structure of the idea of collaborative dialogues in SLA, it has its unique conditions of the relationship between writing consultants and clients. It is of interest to researchers to examine the connection and see how writing center pedagogy can factor in the collaborative dialogues. The sociocultural perspective on interaction in second language learning and the concept of LREs provide the theoretical framework for this study, as this study looks at how collaboration and interaction between L2 writers and peer writing consultants lead to learning of language and writing in the writing centers.

**Writing Center Pedagogy as an Alternative for L2 Writing**

L2 learners' writing development involves not only better command of linguistic forms but also better knowledge of the rhetorical context, particularly for academic purposes. As more and more L2 writers are seeking resources at university writing centers, researchers of SLA and L2 writing (Polio & Williams, 2009; Williams & Severino, 2004) have encouraged research outside the traditional L2 classroom and to explore the interactional nature of one-on-one writing consulting sessions. Writing center pedagogy features its one-on-one conversation and interaction for better writing skills. Writing center pedagogy is influenced by the concept that

knowledge is socially constructed through collaboration (Murphy, 2008) and emphasizes a collaborative learning environment where peer readers provide responses to the writing. Through the one-on-one conversation between the writing consultant and the writer, it is meant to provide a "safe" place (Harris, 1995) that encourages writers to talk about their own concerns, questions, or problems with writing, and negotiate with the readers for more effective written communication, that is, better writing. Therefore, writing center pedagogy is student-centered and focuses on the writing processes rather than the writing product, as its philosophy is often manifest in the goal of producing better writers, not better writing (North, 1984). That is to say, the goal of writing center work is to improve and empower writers instead of improving the writing by editing or proofreading the papers. Interaction and discussion between writing consultants and writers are the crucial components in writing center teaching practices, which is based on the belief of collaborative learning. Writing consultants or tutors are expected to avoid the hierarchical relationship with writers and take indirect approach by asking leading questions for writers to be involved with the problem-solving process and come up with solutions to their questions on their own (Brooks, 1991).

Although the writing centers are not developed particularly for L2 learners, writing center pedagogy has strived to work with writers of any level of writing proficiency. For ESL learners, writing centers provide a potential context for them to interact with native or higher proficient English speakers and engage in a face-to-face negotiation of their L2 writing. In this context, writing consulting sessions with ESL writers has two dimensions of interaction. Writing consultants are interacting with not just a writing client but also a language learner. This interaction context might provide a potential environment for L2 learning, but it inevitably brings not only challenges to writing consultants who might not be experienced in working with non-

native speakers but also a dilemma to the writing center practice which treats language issues in writing as lower order concerns. ESL writers come to the writing center with diverse backgrounds in their linguistic, cultural, social, educational, and professional knowledge and expectations (Leki, 2009). They have little or no prior experience with writing centers and the writing consultants are not familiar with the diverse needs from their clients (Bruce, 2009). As there is an increasing contact between writing consultants and multilingual writers in the writing centers, issues surrounding working with non-native speakers in writing consultation have called researchers' attention for specific concerns such as different approaches to read L2 writing (Matsuda & Cox, 2009), avoiding appropriation in responding to L2 writers (Severino, 2009), and questions about plagiarism in multilingual speakers' writing (Bouman, 2009; Gillespie & Lerner, 2008). Specific discussions about working with non-native speakers and intercultural communication have become an essential part in the field of writing center studies and indispensable in writing tutor training and preparation.

**Organization of the Dissertation**

This dissertation consists of six chapters. The first chapter starts with the study's background and its focus and objectives. The second chapter reviews studies of L2 writing research and pedagogy implied by SLA research and introduces writing center pedagogy and the relevant studies on ESL writers in the writing center. Given the comparable concepts of interaction with readers for writing development in both L2 writing research and writing center pedagogy, the study follows previous research's attempt to explore the collaborative dialogues on L2 writing and respond to researchers' call for research into the writing center tutorials with ESL writers. Chapter 2 concludes with a set of research questions that guide the analyses of this study.

Chapter 3 introduces the methodological framework of this study. It first describes the qualitative research tradition and case study in the field of applied linguistics. Then, it introduces the methods of inquiry, which include a description of the research site, participants, data collection, data analysis, and the writing of data analysis.

Chapter 4 presents a dialogical and scaffolding model of writing center consultation and discusses how the components in the model works based on a sociocultural perspective of language learning. It highlights the phenomena of writing consultation as language learning occasions. The implications of the model are discussed against different writing tutoring approaches as well as theories of L2 writing research, particularly from a sociocultural perspective.

Chapter 5 discusses the contextual factors and how they affect the occurrences of LREs in each different dyad of a writing consultant and an ESL writer. While the degree of language concern varies among the different ESL writers who participated in this study, language issues arising in writing consultation involve dialogues on grammar and language knowledge. This chapter discusses how writing consulting protocols work on language issues with the ESL writers and focuses on the examination of the dialogues from the concept of language-related episode (LREs) of SLA.

Chapter 6 concludes and summarizes the major findings of this study and offers pedagogical implications for L2 writing research and writing center pedagogy for ESL writers.

# CHAPTER TWO

## Literature Review

This dissertation explores the concept of interaction for L2 writing development from both SLA and writing center pedagogy perspectives. The literature review has two specific focuses: current L2 writing research on responding to L2 writers' texts for better writing, and current writing center pedagogy based on one-on-one interactive and collaborative model for better writers. This chapter starts with a general background of the two perspectives (cognitive vs. sociocultural) on interaction in SLA and suggests sociocultural approach as the theoretical framework for this study on L2 writers in the writing center context. Then, it covers L2 writing research focusing on the writing product (written feedback) and the learners' engagement in interaction (writing conference, peer response, and collaborative dialogue) from the sociocultural perspective. Finally, it introduces writing center pedagogy, the consulting practice with L2 writers, and the empirical studies on L2 writers and the writing consultation.

This chapter concludes with the research questions that guide the analysis and discussion. The next section reviews the current L2 writing research which focuses on written feedback on language, the linguistic forms.

### Corrective Feedback in L2 Writing

L2 writing is mostly researched from the product-oriented approach (see Polio, 2003 for an exhaustive review on L2 writing text-based research methods) and written feedback is one of the most important pedagogical techniques examined by researchers on L2 writing product, which oftentimes comes as the form of corrective feedback. Corrective feedback that responds to

some linguistic problem is a necessity to induce noticing during interaction (Long, 1996). This concept is a driving force in many L2 writing studies. In L2 writing, learners can receive feedback through two channels: oral and written. In a traditional writing class, L2 learners receive mostly the instructor's written feedback. Written feedback to L2 learners comes in many different types, which are provided by the teachers and intended to help learners to improve their writing and become a better writer. Some teacher feedback is characterized as teacher commentary on students' ideas, organization, content, and language use (Ferris, 1997), while other types of feedback respond to the grammatical errors in learners' writing with or without correct forms provided (Chandler, 2003; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Hendrickson, 1980; Kepner, 1991; Robb, Ross, & Shortreed, 1986).

Different types of error feedback differ in directness and vary in degree of explicitness. According to Ferris and Roberts (2001), learners receive correct forms of their errors in writing in direct feedback from the teacher, and they only need to attend to the errors and correct forms in their revision. Sometimes the direct feedback focuses on a particular category of errors (see Ellis, Sheen, Marukami, & Takashima, 2008 for details). When receiving indirect feedback, the errors are indicated by the teacher, but the correct forms are not provided. Learners have to solve the problems of errors by themselves. Indirect feedback from the teacher ranges from very explicit feedback such as circling or underlying the errors in the texts to less explicit feedback such as coding or describing the errors in that line of text, or just a checkmark in the margin to indicate the students to find, diagnose and correct their problems in the sentences (Chandler, 2003; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Robb et al, 1986). Different types of feedback may take teachers different amount of time and efforts. They are chosen and used by the teachers in class for different reasons and purposes (Chandler, 2003, Leki, 1990). Survey studies show that teachers

and students prefer direct feedback to indirect feedback (Ferris & Roberts, 2001), while earlier researchers have suggested provision of teachers' written comments in favor of indirect feedback (Lalande, 1982; James, 1998; Reid, 1998). Nevertheless, language teachers seem to believe that certain types of feedback are preferable and work better than other types of feedback for their students (Ferris, 1999), and "many teachers and researchers are aware of the problems inherent in 'traditional' methods of composition correction" (Cohen, 1983, p.4).

Another type of feedback, reformulation of the learner's writing, like written recast, is an alternative technique of error correction, which provides native-like expressions of the learner's original sentence for the learners to compare and engage in filling the gap of their interlanguage and target language (Cohen, 1989; Qi & Lapkin, 2001; Sachs & Polio, 2007;Thornbury, 1997). Written feedback provided to L2 learners should allow learners to focus on the target forms, and make cognitive comparisons between their interlanguage and the target language so as to notice the gap, which provides opportunities to improve their current knowledge, as pointed out by Sachs and Polio (2007). However, the promising effect of reformulation on students' improvement of writing remains inconclusive. Sachs and Polio found explicit error correction led to more accurate revisions than reformulation did. They cautioned the external factors of how L2 learners process the feedback need to be considered, such as perceptual salience of error corrections and the amount of time for processing.

Writing teachers' written feedback has been an integral part of composition classroom pedagogy and this practice involves considerations on both teachers' and students' parts (see Goldstein, 2005, for a thorough discussion). In particular, written feedback on grammar error correction is most commonly given to L2 learners in writing classes (Ferris, 1999, 2004). L2 learners generally believe that teachers' correction is helpful for learning, and they have the need

of being corrected in their L2 errors to gain grammar knowledge and produce target-like language. Zhang (1995) indicated that corrective feedback from teachers was welcomed by L2 learners, and Leki (1991) found 70 percent of the learners surveyed in her study wanted their errors to be corrected. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of corrective feedback has been debated among L2 writing researchers. Truscott (1996, 1999, 2007) has claimed that grammar correction is counterproductive and called for the abandonment of corrective feedback. A concern with written feedback practice is its one-way directive from instructors to students, which does not allow L2 learners to negotiate meanings and interact with the readers. Theoretically, different forms of written feedback examined by research would engage L2 learners' noticing and learning; however, without the mechanism of negotiation, another concern with written feedback is how exactly learners perceive the feedback, which is associated with the potential mismatch between intent and interpretation of corrective feedback found in oral interaction (Gass & Mackey, 2006).

Thus, the belief in corrective feedback as an essential element in interaction is accompanied with a fundamental question as to whether correction leads to learning. From the sociocultural perspective, Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) suggested that the corrective procedure and learners' developmental readiness are the crucial factors that determine the effectiveness of any type of corrective feedback given to learners. In their study, they examined three adult ESL learners' tutorials with the researcher with developmental criteria based on learners' error reduction and the concept of learners' ZPD which was operationalized as 12 types of feedback reflecting the developmental stages within ZPD. After analyzing the dialogues between the learners and the researcher during writing tutorials, which could be categorized into different stages in the ZPD. The 12-point regulatory scale of corrective feedback ranging from implicit to

explicit include Level 1: the presence of the tutor as a potential dialogic partner to Level 12: tutor providing examples of the correct pattern. The authors concluded that for corrective feedback to be effective for language learning, it has to be mediated by other individuals and tailored to where in the learners' ZPD the linguistic problem is. They underscored that learning is not something a leaner can do individually, but is a collaborative efforts involving other individuals.

The next two sections review what have come to be termed "collaborative approaches" (Ferris, 2003a, p. 120) in responding to students' writing: teacher-student writing conferencing and peer response.

**Writing Conference: Responding to Content**

One-to-one face-to-face writing conferences between instructors and student writers create opportunities for instructors to provide immediate responses to students' language and content and less likely to be appropriating students' texts. For students, during the interaction, they have chances to ensure their understanding of instructors' responses and also negotiate their intended content and meaning with instructors. Responding to writing through conferencing also allows teachers to provide feedback on content and rhetoric, which is usually largely limited in written feedback. That is to say, L2 learners have the chance to negotiate how to say it correctly with accurate linguistic forms and how to say it effectively with the disciplinary conventions and rhetorical strategies. However, given the potential positive effects of writing conference on responding to L2 learners' writing, as Ferris (2003b) and Bitchener, Young, and Cameron (2005) pointed out, there has been very little empirical research on this writing conference, in spite of the enthusiastic implication for L2 writing research and pedagogy from earlier research (i.e., Zamel, 1985).

As one of the few empirical studies on writing conferences, Goldstein and Conrad (1990) examined the characteristics of ESL students' participation in 20-minute writing conferences with their instructor as well as the relationship between negotiation and their revision in the subsequent draft. They investigated three ESL students' writing samples, conference transcripts with one instructor, and the revisions. They focused on students' revisions of content. The successful revisions were defined by whether a rhetorical problem discussed in the conference was later addressed by the student in the revision. The findings showed that the three students differed greatly in terms of how they interacted with the instructors during the writing conferences. There was great variation in their willingness and ability to nominate topics, to contribute, and to make an effort to set agenda and negotiate meaning. It was also found that the resulting revisions in the following drafts were more likely to be successful when students did negotiate meaning during the conference. They concluded that writing conferences do not always result in successful revisions, and conference dynamics may depend on the teacher's conversing strategies, students' personalities, cultural backgrounds and perceptions of writing conferencing.

Patthey-Chavez and Ferris (1997) addressed the limits of previous research on writing conferences, which included the lack of a systematic way to examine the effects on revision after conferences and the lack of consideration in institutional expectation and students' individual differences. They collected data from students' first drafts, conference transcripts, revisions and first drafts of a new essay assignment from eight students comprised of strong and weak writers; four of them were native English speakers and four of them were non-native English speakers. The study investigated relationships between writing conference discourse and students' revisions and how cultural and individual differences among students would affect writing conferencing and the conferencing effects on students' revisions. Based on the results that all

eight students in the study revised the content of the sections discussed during the conference and the revisions were made in accordance with teacher recommendations, the findings showed that writing conferences were effective on all the students' revision process. There was no mismatch between the teacher's intent and students' understanding of teacher comments or suggestions, though stronger writers' revisions were more sophisticated. The conferences between the weaker writers and the teachers were shorter and more teacher-dominated. The researchers concluded that writing conferences may be a very effective pedagogical tool and the teachers need to adjust their instructional strategies in the writing conferences to students' diverse backgrounds and individual needs.

In spite of the scarcity of research on writing conferences, researchers (e.g., Ferris, 2003a, 2003b) are positive about the effects of writing conferences on L2 learners' comprehension of teacher feedback and their better revisions. Nevertheless, researchers also emphasize that the writing conference dynamics depend greatly on students' individual backgrounds and their perceptions of the writing conferences. As Goldstein and Conrad (1990) warned, ESL students from different cultural backgrounds could have different expectations of teacher-student relationships, which could complicate the interaction during writing conferences. ESL students need to be taught the purpose of writing conferences in order to benefit from the one-to-one interaction. Teachers need to be aware of their own behaviors and avoid controlling the discourse and discouraging ESL students from participating in the conference.

**Peer Response**

As opposed to writing conferences between teachers and students, the use of peer response in the classroom has received more attention from both L1 and L2 writing researchers,

and more writing research has been done on various issues related to peer response. Peer response has the structure of non-hierarchical and presumably equally-powered setting in which students provide feedback on one another's writing without teachers' authority in either language or content. In L2 writing, research has been examining the interaction and feedback between peer writers during peer response, issues including the nature of peer response, language functions of peer utterances, aspects of writing attended by students, effects of peer response on revisions, and group dynamics. As Ferris (2003b) pointed out in her review of peer response, peer response in the field of ESL writing has been well researched over the past 15 years. Nevertheless, most research concerns peer response in either L1 or L2 writing classes, but not mixed groups that consist of native speakers and non-native speakers. Considering the gap in the peer response literature and the fact that more and more ESL students are enrolled in mainstream freshman writing classes where peer response is often a class activity, Zhu (2001) looked into the interaction and feedback in mixed peer response groups in two university freshman composition classes. Adopting a case study approach, Zhu observed three mixed peer response groups, each with one non-native speaker and two or three native speakers, and analyzed students' response sheets on peer writing as well as voice-recording transcripts of peer discussions of six papers. The study investigated three questions: 1) what are the turn-taking behaviors of native and non-native English speakers during peer response? 2) what are the language functions of native and non-native speakers' utterances during peer response? 3) what similarities and/or differences exist concerning native and non-native speakers' comments on different aspects in peer writing? The findings showed both similarities and differences between the native and non-native speakers in their participation and feedback during peer response. Non-native speakers took fewer turns and produced fewer language functions (inform, direct, or elicit) during discussion,

but they were comparable to native speakers when providing comments in writing. The author suggested teachers could help students expand their feedback strategies and teach them to elicit feedback from their peers in such a mixed peer response setting. Particularly for ESL students, being more active participants in peer response would garner more benefits.

Looking at the peer response interaction from the sociocultural perspective, De Guerrero and Villamil (1994) investigated the types of peer interaction and the relationships between peers at revision tasks in the L2 writing classroom. They collected data from 54 intermediate ESL students at 2 revision sessions where they were paired up for both peer revision sessions, and each pair consisted of a writer and a reader for revision sessions. Forty recordings of the revision sessions were categorized into 3 episodes (on-task, about-ask, and off-task) depending on how the dialogues were related to discrete trouble sources in the drafts. On-task episodes were further coded by different cognitive stage of regulations (object-regulated, self-regulated, and other-regulated) depending on learners' ability to solve problems in the text. The peer interaction depending on the relationship between the two peers' cognitive stage of regulations had either symmetrical or asymmetrical interaction during the revision sessions. The results showed a highly complex and dynamic interactive revision process among the peers, and indicated that collaboration between peers was more productive than working alone. In particular, the social dynamics of the dyads is task-related and constantly readjusted as task demands changed peers' cognitive stages of regulation. The findings supported the general assumption that collaborative work on revision is beneficial to L2 writing; The authors, however, cautioned that the asymmetrical interaction where one partner of the dyad is more dominating than the other may be more conducive to learning. This caution questions the idea of a pure symmetric relationship between peers during interaction and raises a question as to how actually peers solve textual

problems in the writing and learn through collaborative dialogues. The authors suggested negotiation in a collaborative dialogue crucial and it should ensure that learners clearly understand and accept the changes proposed by the partner and therefore learn the new knowledge.

**Collaborative Dialogue, LREs, and L2 Writing**

When working with a more capable or a native speaker on their writing, L2 writers have opportunities not only for producing the target language for communication, negotiating with the audience for better written communication but also, from the sociocultural perspective, for social interaction and collaboration which contributes to learning and "scaffolds" L2 development (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Swain (2000) views the use of language or "languaging" within the sociocultural perspective of L2 learning and broadened her concept of "output" beyond the "conduit metaphor" of interaction in L2 learning. She uses "collaborative dialogue" to explicate the form of interaction where language use and language learning can occur at the same time. Even if the interlocutor is not a more competent or native speaker, the dialogue itself provides opportunities for learning. It is social activity and cognitive activity as well for the learners who are engaged in the conversation working toward the common task goal. Learners, through collaborative dialogue, can work together to solve problems, make decisions, or fill the "holes" in their linguistic knowledge by sharing their resources. This is a knowledge-building dialogue that generates new knowledge for the learners or consolidates their existing knowledge, which contributes to language learning (Swain, 2000).

Collaborative dialogue on language learning is examined through language-related episodes (LREs) by Swain and her colleagues (e.g., Lapkin, Swain, & Smith, 2002). An LRE of collaborative dialogue is defined as "any part of a dialogue where students talk about the

language they are producing, question their language use, or correct themselves or others" (Swain & Lapkin, 1998, p.326). LREs could focus on either language or meaning or both at the same time and the types of LREs could be very different from one another (Swain & Lapkin, 1995, 1998), and research has shown that dialogues are the occasions for language learning and enactments of mental processing, particularly for writing tasks (e.g., Swain, 1998; Swain & Lapkin, 1995, 1998, 2002). The concept of LREs was first introduced in a non-dialogical context. Swain and Lapkin (1995) studied the functions of output in language learning and introduced LREs from their think-aloud protocols of their research participants as units of analysis. To examine if L2 learners could become aware of linguistic gaps in their knowledge by producing output and what they did, they examined the students' think-aloud protocols of writing tasks. They defined LREs as "any segment of the protocol in which a learner either spoke about a language problem he/she encountered while writing and solved it either correctly or incorrectly; or simply solved it without having explicitly identified it as a problem" (p.378). Though the LREs were not resulted from conversation and dialogues, they proved to be useful tools to investigate the cognitive functions of producing L2 output.

In their earlier study, Swain and Lapkin (1998) closely analyzed the conversation between two grade 8 French immersion students when they were working together to write down a story. The two students used both L1 and L2 to communicate and solve the problems in their L2 writing. The LREs were classified either lexis-based or form-based, depending on the problems they were solving, which included finding L2 vocabulary, deciding on a better word, or problems concerning spelling, syntax, or discourse meaning. The authors concluded that collaborative dialogue could function both as a means of communication and a cognitive tool. It engages mental processing and provides the occasions for language learning. They also suggest

instructor feedback important on linguistic knowledge co-constructed by the peers during collaborative dialogues.

Swain and Lapkin (2002) have taken the concept of LREs further to include reflection on learners' language use. To investigate what learners would notice when they compare their own L2 writing to a native-speaker's reformulation of it, Swain and Lapkin extended the definition of LRE to include "any part of the dialogue where learners talk about the language produced, and reflect on their language use" (p. 292). They separated LREs based on the linguistic focus into three categories: Lexical, including adverbs, nouns, adjectives, and verbs; Form, including article gender, preposition, sentence structure, spelling, etc.; Discourse, including discourse marker, stylistics, tense sequencing, text structure, etc. The purpose of their study was to examine the combined effects of reformation and collaborative dialogues on L2 learning. The result of a post-test demonstrated the successful combined effects of reformulation as an effective stimulus for students' reflection and "talk it through" between the learners resulting a deeper understanding of the change.

In a recent study on L2 writing development, Brooks and Swain (2009) investigated the types of expertise that emerges through interactive activities between L2 learners in the writing classroom. In their study, two pairs of ESL learners collaborated on composing a story based on a picture, compared their writing to a reformulated version, and then interacted with the reformulator in an augmented stimulated recall (with the researcher's assistance) for noticing the differences in writing. One week later, the learners did a posttest by revising their own original writing. Data were the dialogue produced by the learners during the collaborative writing, noticing tasks, and augmented stimulated recall. Their results basically suggested again that collaborative activity could generate considerable dialogue between peers, which allow different

types of expertise to emerge during the interaction and expand learners' zone of proximal development (ZPD). From a sociocultural theory perspective, the authors argued the collaborative writing activity could result in "good learning" (p. 79) that would contribute to writing development.

Though the construct of LRE has been evolving around different contexts of writing tasks since Swain and Lapkin first introduced it 1995, the core concept lies on its engagement of cognitive activities. This dissertation is built upon the cognitive functions of LREs and examines the dialogues between L2 learners and native English-speaking writing consultant. I utilize the concepts and categories of LRE defined by Swain and Lapkin (1998) as my unit of analysis for writing center consultation with ESL learners.

**Writing Center Pedagogy and Ideology**

As opposed to the traditional instruction in the writing classroom, writing centers create a learning environment for writing outside of the traditionally configured writing classroom. Writing centers are not specifically designed for L2 learning and the concepts of interaction in SLA theory have not been part of the traditional theoretical foundation for writing center pedagogy; however, its pedagogy embraces the non-hierarchical peer conversation and the collaborative learning between peers during writing consulting sessions, which makes the conversation and immediate interaction between L2 writers and native speakers possible, and creates the possibility of L2 learning and L2 writing development. As Ritter (2002) emphasizes in her dissertation research, there is a distinct nature of SLA processes within the interaction in writing consulting sessions, and a mutual relationship between writing centers and L2 learning is possible and necessary.

Since the 1950s and earlier when "writing clinics" and "writing laboratories" were used to imply writing center pedagogy (Moore, 1950, 2008), writing center theory has been evolving to meet different goals and challenges that arise from issues of practice, place, culture, gender, technology, and writing practice (Barnett & Blumner, 2008). It became clear writing centers are moving away from the "fix-it shop" or "editing center" image to a student-centered consulting center. Current writing centers move beyond the subservient role and take a more active role on campus in creating a culture of writing. As North (1984) argued in his classic article about the idea of a writing center, the writing center is a place where writers of all levels can improve their writing skills and benefit from talking about writing. North's 1984 article might have oversimplified writing center work, but it is generally agreed that writing center philosophy is best manifested by North (1984): "Our job is to produce better writers, not better writing" (p. 438). The writing center kind of talk is meant to help writers have better ideas and better control of their own writing. Instead of directly passing down knowledge to writers, writing center pedagogy encourages the kind of talk that is dialogical and collaborative, which aims at leading writers to their own solution of the problems, rather than provide the answers they are asking for. To collaborate with writers, writing consultants determine the writers' needs by asking a series of questions regarding the types of writing, process and problems, and audience and purpose with non-dominating language (Healy, 1995), which also helps get the writers to assume responsibility for the writing.

Bruffee (1984), one of the earlier scholars that did research on writing center pedagogy, maintained that collaborative learning provides a social context where peers who share similar backgrounds, experience, and goals can create a different context in which they can practice the conversations for learning. Writing center consulting practices typically take non-directive

approaches and focus on facilitation of the writing process (Clark, 1988). Writing center consultants view collaboration as empowering because by getting writers to talk about their ideas and their own solutions, it returns ownership of the writing and responsibility for learning to the writers (Harris, 1997). They expect writers to set the agenda and provide responses as readers, and focus on higher order concerns rather than grammatical or mechanical problems (Ryan & Zimmerelli, 2006). The more active students' participation in the conversation is, the more likely the true collaboration between the peers can occur (Harris, 1995; Lunsford, 1991).

Writing centers separate themselves from the traditional writing classroom and pursue a non-hierarchical relationship between writing consultants and writers because the traditional classroom is configured with authority and power that define and constrain relationships between teacher and students (Healy, 1995). However, the idealistic approach is questioned by researchers (e.g., Grimm, 1999; Rollins, Smith & Westbrook, 2008; Thonus, 2001) because students come to the writing center for help with their writing assignments and might see writing consultants as experts and authority figures. On top of the general misunderstanding of writing center work and tutors' roles among students and faculty by whom writing center is perceived as a "clean-up" center (North, 1984), the social and institutional contexts of writing center consultation in reality might not place the peer writing consultants in an equal power relationship with students, which makes the goal of collaborative learning between consultants and students difficult to achieve if students remain passive. In a study on understandings of the writing tutor's role, Thonus (2001) surveyed the perceptions by students, class instructors, and tutors themselves. She found that students and instructors' perceptions of the writing tutors are largely different from the intended role, and the tutors themselves are not even playing out the idealistic characterization in theory and tutor training. She concluded that there is constant negotiation and

redefinition of the tutor's role in each interaction during writing consultation. She expressed the findings were not surprising to writing center personnel, who experience a vast different ideas and expectations of writing center tutorials in their daily practice. Writing centers are aware of the potential asymmetry in power and status and have tried to balance the power structure and see the empowering process as part of the learning process and experience for students to become more confident writers (Harris, 1995; Healy, 1995). As Clark (2001) suggests writing center tutors adopt the concept of directiveness as a continuum rather than an either/or dichotomy and take a more flexible tutoring approach to writers and student populations of various learning styles.

**Writing Center and L2 Writers**

L2 writers come to the writing center with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and also bring different challenges to writing center practice with their preconceptions about writing center tutors. In a survey about ESL students' perceptions of writing center tutors, Harris (1997) found that ESL students expected writing center tutors to provide detailed advice, control the sessions, find problems, and provide solutions. The concept of collaborative learning and collaborative writing in the writing centers could be unfamiliar to international ESL students. Harris suggested writing center tutors discuss the strategies with ESL students so that they will understand and adapt to writing center tutorials. Powers (1993) reviewed the conferencing strategies employed by writing consultants and questioned the standard practice of non-directive approach to working with ESL writers. She found L2 writers did not have native speakers' intuition to edit their writing by reading aloud and L2 writers were genuinely in lack of the rhetorical and language knowledge. She suggested consultants take a more directive approach and explain the different academic discourse and expectations of academic writing for L2 writers.

Instead of struggling with issues of authority and directiveness, writing consultants can play the role of "cultural/rhetorical informants" (1993, p. 42). In fact, as Shamoon and Burns (1995) argue, the more directive tutoring is similarly empowering to the non-directive approach, which displays rhetorical processes in action and "unmarks the systems argumentation at work within a discipline" (p. 237). For L2 writers, a more flexible and sometimes directive approach might be more helpful to gain the tacit knowledge hidden in the academy.

Nevertheless, the consulting approach to L2 writers is generally based on the writing center pedagogy framework of collaboration and Socratic conversing approach. As grammar and linguistic problems are recognized as usually the biggest concerns for L2 writers, the particular language issues with L2 writers are suggested to be subordinate to comprehension of the writing (Harris & Silva, 1993). Tutors' understanding of the cultural and linguistic difference of L2 writers is considered essential and complementary to effective tutoring techniques. Writing tutoring guides (Bruce & Rafoth, 2009; Gillespie & Lerner, 2008) describe behaviors of the intercultural communication with ESL writers in the writing centers and explain how to manage cross-cultural difference with people from different cultures. Differences in linguistic backgrounds are obvious not only in oral communication but also in the ESL writers' text which would take different strategies to read. Besides providing readers' response as a general strategy for consultants in writing consultation, Matsuda and Cox (2009) suggested the writing center consultants different strategies to read and understand ESL writers' writing. They also claimed that it is more helpful for ESL writers to hear the consultant read the paper out loud than ESL writers read the paper themselves. Gillespie and Lerner (2008) also clarified some so-called myths about ESL writers that could have confused and misguided writing consultants, including issues of ESL writers' written language skills, culture-specific rhetorical patterns, individual

needs, and perceptions of good writing, as well as consultants' tutoring techniques with ESL writers. They offered some reminders of how to work with ESL students, which emphasized that writing consulting is teaching the writer, not correcting texts or taking ownership.

**Empirical studies in writing centers and L2 writers.** Scholarship on writing centers is published mostly in the *Writing Center Journal* and the *Writing Lab Newsletter*. The following review focuses on empirical studies by L2 writing researchers published in the *Journal of Second Language Writing*.

In a cross-sectional study, Thonus (2004) compared the differences between tutor interactions with L1 and L2 writers by examining the data cumulated over 4 years. The data consisted of 25 tutorial transcripts and interview transcripts of both the tutor and tutee of 12 tutorials. Findings were reported based on 4 themes. 1) Communicative dominance by tutors: Tutors have turn length longer than tutees and this pattern is even more salient when tutee is an ESL writer. Tutors are less likely to mitigate directives offered to an ESL tutee. There are also shorter negotiation sequences with ESL tutees, and tutors usually take charge of the sessions. 2) Conflicting perceptions of tutor role: L1 writers view the tutor as a figure less authoritative and different from an instructor, while ESL writers perceive the tutor as a figure of authority in writing and English language. 3) Tutor involvement: Tutors engage in less conversation with ESL tutees than their L1 tutees. 4) Uncertainty: Tutors appear more uncertain and inconsistent in their interaction with ESL tutees, compared to the more consistent sessions with L1 tutees. Considering the findings on the tutors' different consulting behaviors with ESL writers, I argued for a more flexible approach to working with non-native speakers.

Little empirical evidence is available on how the writing center empowers writers and improves students' writing skills (Jones, 2001; North, 1984), and there is even less research on

the L2 writers who use the writing centers (Williams & Severino, 2004). One of the few studies reported by Williams (2004) explored L2 writers' revisions after the writing center sessions and looked for the links between the interaction in sessions and the resulting changes in drafts. She reported analyses of 5 writing consulting sessions with ESL writers. The data included consulting session transcripts, writers interview transcripts, writers' and tutors' stimulated recall after sessions, and revised drafts. The findings showed a clear connection between writing consulting and the sentence-level small-scale revisions in L2 writers' subsequent drafts. When tutors' suggestions were more direct and L2 writers participated in the conversation more actively, issues addressed in the sessions were more likely to be revised. However, the resulting revisions did not always lead to higher scores based on a holistic evaluation. The finding echoed Jones' (2001) lament over the difficulty of assessing the effectiveness of writing center pedagogy, also recognizing the difficulty in defining the quality of writing.

Nevertheless, as more and more L2 writers in U.S. universities use the writing centers, research on L2 writers in the writing centers is beginning to increase. In the *Journal of Second Language Writing*, a special issue on writing centers in 2004, Williams and Severino (2004) posed questions on tutorials with L2 writers, differences among L2 writers, and connections between the writing center and SLA, and called for future research. Furthermore, considering the essential role of negotiation and interaction in SLA and their potential to be found during writing consulting sessions at the writing centers, Polio and Williams (2009) suggested research explore the potential interaction for L2 writing development at the writing centers.

**Research Questions**

This study set out to explore writing consulting sessions with ESL writers at the writing

centers and inquired about how ESL writers' language issue in writing could be addressed during writing consultation. With a central inquiry about how the writing center would create better L2 writers, the study focuses on language aspect of writing and the analyses are guided by the following questions: Do writing center consultations create opportunities for LREs? How do the LREs function in writing consultation? How might different dyads of writing consultants and writers affect the occurrence of the LREs or how does the writing center context shape these LREs? How and to what extent do LREs serve the writing center's goals of creating better writers?

# CHAPTER THREE

## A Multiple Case Study

Little is known about how ESL learners benefit from writing center consultation from the perspective of SLA. In order to answer the questions regarding how ESL learners interact with writing center consultants to improve their ESL writing skills and have better knowledge in the English language and academic rhetoric, as well as their perceptions of using the writing center, this study employed a qualitative case study approach to inquiring into the ESL learners who were international graduate students in a major research university in the U.S. I was interested in exploring how L2 learners experienced the challenges in ESL writing and the utilization of external resources to accomplish their academic goals.

As Richards (2003) points out, for research in the field of language learning and teaching, it is particularly appropriate to adopt a person-centered qualitative approach to investigating, considering the complexity of human beings. This chapter describes the methodological framework of this study based on the qualitative multiple case study. I first delineate the institutional context of the participants and the research site. Then I describe the participants including both ESL writers and writing consultants and how they were recruited. Since sampling is a major consideration in case study research (Duff, 2008), I provide an extensive description of each of the participants. Following the description of the participants, I offer a detailed account of the methods of data collection and analysis. The data involve video data of observation of the sessions, and audio data of interviews with participants. I discuss how I prepared, organized, and interpreted the data collected, including the selection of dialogue excerpts and how themes and issues emerged from the process of analysis.

**The Qualitative Approach: A Multiple Case Study**

As an ESL international graduate student myself, I recognize how individual difference in ESL learners might impact how they react to and perceive a new learning environment. In this study, I decided to look at individual cases of L2 writers in order to get the insights and a deep understanding of their experiences in the writing center as graduate students for academic writing. Case study gives detailed examination of a single phenomenon. Yin (2003, as cited by Duff, 2008) defines a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context especially when the boundaries and contexts are not clearly evident" (p. 22). In this study, I was interested in advanced non-native English speaking (NNES) students who saw themselves as ESL learners as well as graduate students writing English for academic purposes in the context of the university writing center consultations. As Duff (2008) indicated a multiple-case design has the potential of producing more compelling evidence of a phenomenon by examining more diverse cases, although there would be resulting trade-offs in depth of analysis between one case and many cases, I included a larger collection of cases in this study in order to see the potential variety and differences among individuals. It is the hope that through an exploratory multiple case study, I can discover the differences among the NNES students who are usually labeled by their first language, gender, academic background, etc. as a homogeneous group in the writing center.

Severino (2004) recommended case study as an appropriate method to conduct writing center research, due to the humanistic training background and research tradition for writing center researchers, and Swain (2005) also suggested "within a sociocultural theory of mind framework, ethnographic and case study approaches would seem to be more valuable" (p.480), this study explored the phenomenon of L2 writers using the writing center with multiple

individual cases of ESL learners, and collected data through observation, interview, and supplemental materials including the learners' writing samples and consultants training materials.

**The Research Site**

Although almost every major university across the U.S. has one or more than one writing center on campus, and they share similar teaching philosophy and writing center pedagogy, no writing centers are the same (Jones, 2001), and each university writing center has its own history and unique context and approach to implementing writing center pedagogy, as each writing consultant has their own personality, style, and strategies in working with writers. This study was undertaken in the Writing Center at a major Midwestern land-grant research university. Established upon the vision of a land-grant university, the Writing Center not only tries to create a culture of writing but also actively reaches out to the communities it serves and welcomes the diverse populations in the communities. Its approach to teaching writing is clearly stated in their mission and philosophy statement:

> The Writing Center has developed a practice we call consultative teaching. A combination of collaborative learning, peer tutoring, service-learning, student research, and jointly-conducted student-faculty research, the practice of consultative teaching recognizes students as knowledgeable individuals with valuable ideas and experiences to contribute to the learning situation, teachers as model students committed to learning for and with their students, and both students and teachers as learners responsible for sharing their developing understandings and talents with one another and with the broader community. ("Our Philosophy," n.d.)

The peer writing consultants working in the Writing Center include graduate and undergraduate students. The writing consultants are trained with writing center pedagogy and also receive bi-

weekly staff training for professional development that includes topics on how to work with international and multilingual students effectively. The Writing Center also defines itself as a research center where research projects led by both graduate and undergraduates are supported. The Writing Center encourages disseminating the research findings in regional or national writing center conferences. The writing consultants are paid to work in the main Writing Center and some other satellite centers on campus such as those in the library and the dorms. Typical writing consulting sessions last for 1 hour with 2 hours being the maximum for a single session in the main center. Students coming to the Writing Center can schedule appointments for writing consultation up to 4 hours a week, every week over the semester. It is very common for frequent users of the Writing Center to work with the same writing consultants on their writing projects over a semester or longer. The university has about 45,000 students on campus, and the Writing Center serves more than 10% of the student population each year.

The Writing Center shares the common goal of creating better writers in the writing centers and encourages a Socratic style of approach to engaging writers in conversations and providing peer response. One common approach the writing consultants are trained to provide peer response is the MAPS model (See appendix A), which includes the aspects of "mode", "audience", "purpose", and "situation" for any writing. The MAPS model acts as a guide to ask questions such as "what is the genre or what kind of paper is it?", "who is your audience?", "what's the purpose of this writing?", or "when is this due?". Based on the MAPS model, Writing Center consultants provide responses and comments as readers after getting the information of the writer's rhetorical context, and they often start with good things first, that is, the part that is obviously well and effectively done by the writer. The same strategies are applied to working with ESL writers. As more recently the university has admitted more and more

international ESL students for both undergraduate and graduate programs, there has been an increasing number of ESL writers that come to the Writing Center for help with their writing assignments. Working with ESL writers of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds has been common yet challenging to the writing consultants at the Writing Center. The Writing Center attends to this issue conscientiously and prepares their writing consultants for working with NNES students through the training course and the staff meetings.

In *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors*, the writing consultation guide used by all the writing consultants in the Writing Center, a section devoted to working with ESL writers focuses on the understanding of ESL writers' difficulty in language as well as the unfamiliar customs and ways of thinking involved in academic writing. The guide's suggestions on working with ESL writers prioritize the issues of tutors' attitude when interacting with ESL writers and their understanding of ESL writers' hailing from different cultural and rhetorical traditions. To show examples of the consulting approaches, some of the suggestions given on the guide are listed below:

1. Take pain to put ESL writers at ease. In some cultures, asking questions is impolite, so encourage writers to ask questions if what you have said is confusing or unclear.
2. If an ESL writer does not understand a comment or explanation, rephrase it in different terms. Do not raise your voice or simply repeat the same words.
3. Expecting an ESL writer to be familiar with English phrases or idioms may sometimes be pointless. Occasionally, you may need to supply an appropriate word or phrase.
4. Plagiarism is not always the deliberate violation of rules that it seems. In our culture, we value originality in writing and regard a piece of writing as belonging to the

person who produced it, so we cite the sources of borrow ideas and words as we write, and we have rules with regard to plagiarism. But not all cultures share our values. In some cultures, using the words of another is a form of flattery, and writers may not understand that they need to document sources clearly. Though you need to explain our culture's rules and customs about citing sources and doing one's own work, be aware that ESL writers may not be knowingly violating the rules.

5. Try not to focus on the mechanical and grammatical errors in the paper. If there is a grammatical problem that impedes the readability of the paper, point to a couple of places where it occurs, and help the write to correct the errors. Then, ask the writer to find similar errors in the paper. This will help the writer to become independent in his or her own editing. (Excerpted from Ryan and Zimmerelli (2006, pp. 61-62))

The language issue, as it is suggested, is treated as lower order concerns for writing consultation. The tutoring guide reassures tutors that they will not be able to explain everything or answer all the questions asked by ESL writers, but they are expected to become familiar with some basic kinds of grammatical and syntactical errors.

In the training course for undergraduate writing consultants, the required readings include more extensive details on cultural issues of ESL writers such as the book, *Listening to the World: Cultural Issues in Academic Writing*, by Helen Fox (1994), which provides depth of understanding of cultural issues that affect students' written texts and teachers' reaction to them. Additional articles from the book, *ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors* are assigned for the consultants in training to think critically about reading ESL writers' texts (Matsuda & Cox, 2009), how to avoid appropriating ESL writers' writing (Severino, 2009), and how to talk about the concepts of plagiarism (Bouman, 2009) with international ESL writers.

The film, *Writing Across Borders*, widely used for writing tutoring training across the country is also used in class or the staff meeting. By watching international students' frustrations and concerns with ESL writing and hearing teachers' and researchers' opinions, it helps the writing consultants think specifically about issues that matter most in their work with NNES international students. The Writing Center also has their own workshop on working with ESL writers in addition to their regular training materials on literacy activities. The workshop focuses the discussions on the common myths about ESL writers and provides some important reminders for working with ESL writers (see Appendix B). It also encourages their writing consultants to use the opportunity to meet people from different cultures and have a different take on the world.

**Participants**

The target research participants were 5 NNES international graduate students who were ESL writers coming to the Writing Center. Five writing consultants were also recruited to participate in this study and worked with the ESL writers for multiple sessions over the semester. As case selection is considered one of the important factors in case study research, in this section, I explains how he recruited the participants, followed by a more detailed description of each participant.

**ESL writers**. The participants in this study included 5 ESL writers as clients to the Writing Center in order to increase the potential variety of participants who share a similar profile as international graduate students. The 5 ESL writers were female NNES international graduate students at the university. All the participants were native speakers of Mandarin Chinese, with age range from 22 to 25. I recruited ESL participants exclusively from Mandarin Chinese speakers mainly because they represented the largest group of international students at the university. According to the university's Office for International Students and Scholars

("About Us", 2010), in Fall 2009, there were 5056 international students, which included 1934 Chinese students and 243 Taiwanese students. Also, as a member of Chinese-speaking community myself, I had the advantage of easier access to those groups and being considered as a fellow graduate student who share their language and experiences. I did not impose gender as a selection criterion for participants, but it turned out all the volunteers were female students, which could contribute to the homogeneity of the participants. As NNES graduate students, they all met the English language proficiency requirement for admission to their graduate programs and did not have to take additional ESL classes. They completed their undergraduate studies in either Taiwan or China and they were all master students in the university at the point of participation. Before participating in this study, they had never been to the Writing Center and had no ideas about writing center pedagogy. Most of them had the minimum experience with English writing for academic purposes in their home countries. Before enrolling in the graduate program, the only preparation for English academic writing was almost the TOFEL writing test.

Recruiting participants from different academic disciplines was to create a more representative sample of international grad students at this university. The participants were recruited through e-mail advertisement posted upon the listserv of Taiwanese students association and Chinese students association of the university. All the participants gave informed consent to be audio- and video-recorded during their participation in the study. They were paid 100 U.S. dollars upon their completion of six visits to the Writing Center in compensation for their time. In terms of demographic background, these ESL participants were representative of the ESL clients in the Writing Center; however, the fact they were recruited and came to the Writing Center for the purpose of research participation set them apart from the regular writing center clients. More details on the setting of collected data will be discussed in the following

section of data collection. Below, Table 1 shows the background information of each ESL writer participant, followed by detailed descriptions of each participant based on their preliminary interviews.

Table 1: ESL writers' background

| Name (pseudonym) | Gender | Master Program | Semester in U.S. Graduate Program | Home Country | Undergraduate Major |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Feng | Female | MBA | 1st semester | China | Marketing |
| Siang | Female | Retailing | 3rd semester | Taiwan | English |
| Wen | Female | Education | 1st semester | Taiwan | Public Administration |
| Jane | Female | TESOL | 1st semester | Taiwan | English |
| Vivian | Female | Counseling | 1st semester | Taiwan | Social Work |

***Feng.*** Feng was a first-semester graduate student of MBA. She had a B.A. in marketing from China. As she described, English education from high school to college in China was very dull yet solid. It was a very rule-based teaching and learning approach. She had to memorize all the rules and vocabulary to be able to pass the exams on which her college degree was contingent. She admitted that kind of education did not guarantee students good English skills. While she was very confident in her knowledge of grammar rules and the vocabulary she had, she was always concerned with the problems of authenticity and native-likeness of her English, which she described as "Chinglish." She stated, "We Chinese speak English is so-called 'Chinglish', which is different from authentic English. Usually it is difficult for American people to understand. Even if they might understand my meaning, it is hard to accept in academic writing" [Translation from Chinese] (Interview, September 18, 2009) She considered Chinglish a failure in English performance, and she always wanted to improve her English to be close to native-like expression. She had English business writing classes in college, but she expressed those rules, models, and formula in writing business English did not help her in academic writing.

She believed that in order to be successful in English writing, it was important for her to know how Americans write, how they decide the word choices, and how Americans conceptualize the arguments. For her writing assignments of graduate courses, she wanted to know what American professors want in order to persuade the professors. She believed the different ways of thinking were what she lacked. To be successful in the U.S., she believed it was crucial to write in a way that was acceptable to Americans. Therefore, she delved into reading extensively including newspapers or magazines, to see how Americans write and make arguments. She thought her problem was not that she could not express herself clearly, but that she was not able to express herself in a professional manner. She felt she had that exact gap to bridge, as she was very confident in her solid foundation of English rules. She thought the Writing Center consultants would be able to explain and help her with that gap at the one-on-one writing consultation. She was eager to upgrade her English writing to a native-like level.

***Siang.*** Siang was a second-year master student in the graduate program of retailing. She had been studying English since she was a fourth grader. She was an English major for her undergraduate study in Taiwan and she knew thesis points in each paragraph as important elements English writing. However, she commented, "That's difficult to me. Pointing out the thesis at the beginning of the article is the most important things, but I often miss that. Or my point made in beginning is not clear to other people"[Translation from Chinese] (Interview, September 15, 2009) She tried to improve her writing by reading extensively and she expressed that preparation for GRE writing tests was very helpful for her to put the thesis up front at the beginning of the paper and stay focused on the arguments. At the time of participating in this study, she was comfortable with the standard American academic writing style and pretty confident in handling all the writing requirements from the graduate courses. She said, "The

guideline for research papers are very explicit and straightforward. I just need to follow the structure of paper, and fill in the sections of the paper"[Translation from Chinese] (Interview, September 15, 2009) She heard of the Writing Center and saw her fellow Taiwanese students coming to the Writing Center for help, but she had never thought of going there herself. She expressed, "I saw them going to the Writing Center every time before turning in the paper. Maybe their English was not very good. They were worried that nobody would understand their sentences. I don't have that kind of problems"[Translation from Chinese] (Interview, September 15, 2009) She added, "I thought the Writing Center might only help people correct grammar, and that would not be helpful for me"[Translation from Chinese] (Interview, September 15, 2009) She was working on her major writing project to fulfill the degree requirement at the point of participation in this study. She hoped participation in this study and going to the Writing Center could prevent her from procrastinating on the project.

***Wen.*** Wen was a master student in the graduate program in Education. She was in her first semester in a U.S. graduate program at the point of participation in this study. Before coming to the graduate program, she did not have formal learning experience in English writing for academic purposes. Her English writing experiences mostly came from practice and preparation for college entrance exam in Taiwan and TOEFL writing test, which were exam-based experiences. She did have some experiences with personal writing through e-mail with her friends and some native English-speaking colleagues whom she knew from in a private English elementary school in Taiwan where she had taught for a couple of years before she came to the U.S.. Her native English-speaking colleagues sometimes corrected her English sentences for her in her e-mail and she felt that helped her improve her English writing. To learn to writing in English, she always imitated the model papers from reference books for exams. She kept this

habit even when she was writing application letters for U.S. graduate schools. She explained, "I use the same strategies as I did for TOEFL exams. I keep the structure of model papers, and I put my ideas into the structure"[Translation from Chinese] (Interview, September 18, 2009). English writing was considered one of the most important skills she wanted to improve for her graduate study. She explained, "I think I have a lot of ideas, but my English really confines my communication"[Translation from Chinese] (Interview, September 18, 2009). She added, "If I have 80% of good idea about a topic, I can only give 30% in writing, not more than half of my real idea"[Translation from Chinese] (Interview, September 18, 2009). She tried to read more to write better. She said, "I found myself picking up some expressions and sentence structures from the readings. I guess I can improve my writing by reading a lot"[Translation from Chinese] (Interview, September 18, 2009).

She also relied on her professor catching errors in her papers for her, which were "the things I could fix myself, but I never noticed those errors"[Translation from Chinese] (Interview, September 18, 2009). as she expressed. She was not confident in her English writing skills at all, but she realized it would take some time for writing skills to improve. At this point, she only wanted to have an error-free paper to turn in for grades, and eventually, she hoped to be able to fully express her thoughts in English writing and able to express her ideas in a variety of expressions, not just in one formulaic way. She thought it was unrealistic to set a goal of writing like a native English speaker. She expressed, "I am not worried if my writing is not like native speakers' writing. But I hope I can express myself with a variety of expressions"[Translation from Chinese] (Interview, September 18, 2009). She thought she could improve her writing if someone kept helping her to catch the errors that she always missed, and gradually she would be able to do that by herself. As to her understanding of the Writing Center, she said "After the

student orientation at our department, I believe they would fix my papers. I can have someone look at my paper and correct the errors in my paper"[Translation from Chinese] (Interview, September 18, 2009). For her goal of English writing, she said "I hope I don't need to show my paper to other people after 2-years of studying here. I don't want to keep worrying about mistakes in my paper"[Translation from Chinese] (Interview, September 18, 2009).

***Jane.*** Jane was a graduate student of TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) program. She was an English major in college in Taiwan and received formal English writing instructions. She had a very good command of English and strategies for writing. She said, "Revision is a good strategy. Oftentimes you find something wrong or weird in your writing after a couple days later when you read it again. Revising it again and again will make the paper better"[Translation from Chinese] (Interview, September 14, 2009). She considered writing as part of her professional skills. She explained, "Writing is equally important to speaking. I will be an English expert. So if I can speak well but can't write well, that does not look very good for me as an English profession." She was aware of her own writing processes. She wanted to have better rhetorical skills and more vocabulary for her writing. She expressed, "When I was in college, my teacher commented that my writing is clear and has good structure and good grammar, but just very boring and not lively and interesting to read"[Translation from Chinese] (Interview, September 14, 2009). She learned about the Writing Center from her class instructor. As she knew grammar would be an issue for professors in the U.S., she expected the Writing Center consultants to catch grammatical errors she missed on. She explained, "The professor said she wanted to look at the content of the paper, but not correct grammatical errors in the paper"[Translation from Chinese] (Interview, September 14, 2009). Though she had never heard of writing centers in Taiwan before, she thought writing consultants were super experts in

both English language and writing. As to her expectation of the Writing Center, she said, "I hope they would help me to understand how to produce native-like sentences"[Translation from Chinese] (Interview, September 14, 2009). She hopes to get rid of L2 writer's features in her English writing.

***Vivian.*** Vivian was in her first semester in the graduate program. She had no English academic writing experience before she came to the U.S. for graduate program. The only English writing learning experience was in high school, which only emphasized correct grammar and sentences. As to how she prepared for TOEFL and GRE writing tests, she explained, "That was a pretty lame method to prepare, but everybody seems to do that. We read a lot of model essays and practiced on our "one-fit-all" model to respond to prompts."

She expressed she had zero degree of confidence in her writing ability. She recognized that her problem in writing was that her ideas were always conceptualized in Chinese. She said, "When I think of English, it's always a single word but not a sentence. So when I am creating an English sentence, I am almost like translating from Chinese to English word by word" [Translation from Chinese] (Interview, September 17, 2009). Therefore, she knew there were many problems in her English sentences, structures, and word choices as well. She learned about writing centers in U.S. universities through friends and other sources before coming to the U.S.. Her professor suggested she could go to the Writing Center after she expressed her serious concerns with her language issues in her writing. She therefore expected the Writing Center could help her correct grammatical errors and check her APA style before she could turn in the paper. She also thought it was necessary to have other people look at her paper before she could turn it in to the professor. She explained, "So just to make sure the paper is on the right track in responding the assignment and the writing was understandable"[Translation from Chinese]

(Interview, September 17, 2009). She also expected the Writing Center could teach her some writing skills as well. She said, "Since many American undergraduate students go to the writing center too. I believe they must also teach writing skills but not only language"[Translation from Chinese] (Interview, September 17, 2009).

**Writing consultants.** Five writing consultants were involved in this study. The writing consultants were either graduate writing consultants or undergraduate writing consultants. They were exclusively native speakers of English because this study intended to explore the interaction between L2 learners and native speakers of the target language. They were recruited through the regular appointment scheduling process. The ESL writers participants scheduled their appointment and selected the writing consultant they preferred to work with based on the available times and the bio-statement of each writing consultant on the website. The writing consultants selected by the ESL writers were all female native English-speaking American students and varied in their writing consulting experiences at writing centers, which was not a surprising result, given that most of the writing consultants in the Writing Center were majors in English literature or writing and rhetoric where the female are the majority. After the appointments were made, I approached those selected consultants and inquired about their willingness to participate in this study and work with the same client for at most six sessions throughout the semester. I got positive responses from all the writing consultants. They all gave their informed consent and agreed to be audio- and video-recorded during the consulting sessions and the post-session interviews. Their participation in this study was also their actual working schedules which were paid by the Writing Center. Table 2 shows the background of each participating writing consultant below, followed by more detailed descriptions of each writing consultant based on their preliminary interviews.

Table 2: Consultants background

| Name (pseudonym) | Gender | Major | Year | Consulting experience |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ann* | Female | Writing & Rhetoric | 2nd year doctoral | 3 years |
| Ellen* | Female | Writing & Rhetoric | 2nd year doctoral | 7 years |
| Julie | Female | English | Senior | 3 Years |
| Diana | Female | Professional Writing | Senior | 6 months |
| Kate | Female | Professional Writing | Senior | 1 Year |

*Graduate writing consultant

***Ann.*** The writing consultant, Ann, was a graduate writing consultant at the Writing Center. She was in her second year in the doctoral program. In her previous university, she took the writing tutor training course (Writing Center Practicum) and worked as a writing consultant for two years. As a writing consultant, she believed her job was to create both better writers and better writing, and writers are more important than writing. She explained, "I see part of my job is to advocate what writing is and what writing can do in course work here in the university. I feel like being an ambassador"(Interview, October 6, 2009). In working with writers, she considered her strength as being able to see the big picture of the writing. She said, "I have a tendency to focus on organization most. Like I am really interested in the big picture. That's what I like to do, and that's what my strength is." She added, "Other people are good at other things. So if they want to work on grammar, they can schedule appointment with Ellen"(Interview, October 6, 2009).

She did not have much experience working with ESL writers before she started working at the Writing Center in the current university one year before. She said, "That was rare that I didn't really understand the variety of concerns, or the difference in working with students who didn't speak English as their native language. When I came here, it was really difficult last fall." She was fielded with ESL writers of different backgrounds and challenged by their diverse needs and concerns. She consulted her supervisors, developed her strategies, and recognized her own

strength in working with non-native speakers of English. She tended to read the paper aloud for ESL writers, and she focused on the organization and structure first to get the big picture. When it came to grammar issue, she said, "Grammar can mean everything… but my philosophy is '2 or 3 things and that's what we do.'" She added, "Whereas with grammar, I mean, I was born here. I speak this language. That's all I know. I don't how it works. I am in a linguistics class right now. They are telling me no one knows how it works. That's the point." Specific things she would do, as she expressed, "I try to give support and reassurance. Because they don't hear their writing is good a lot. So I tell them the opposite." She added, "A lot of people tell them they can't write, and that's not true. So, I try to be supportive and tell them how I see the connection between their writing and the assignment guideline." She also found it difficult to be in between students and teachers when the teachers have different perspectives on writing assignments. She expressed, "It's hard to be that intermediate between the students and teachers. The students would say, 'thank you, that's nice', but my teacher doesn't care"(Interview, October 6, 2009).

***Ellen.*** Ellen had substantial experience working as a writing consultant with seven straight years working in university writing centers. She had had a lot of experience working with ESL writers since she started working in a university writing center. She once won the ECWCA[1] Tutor of the Year. She was very familiar with composition theories and writing center pedagogy and she did not really go on minimalist or non-directive tutoring or always a directive approach. She thought that every student had particular needs, and that if she knew a way to meet those needs, then she considered that was her responsibility to share that information. She said, "If I recognize that a sentence completely doesn't make sense. I'm not going to say, 'Can you see anything wrong with this sentence?'"(Interview, September 24, 2009). Instead of asking

[1] East-Central Writing Centers Association

a leading question, she explained, “I already have an answer. Why don't I just say, ‘this sentence is really confusing for me.’ ‘This is why. Can we think of a way, uh, to sort of ease that?’” She thought the more knowledge she had about writing, the better she could help clients. Particularly, for ESL students, taking a little bit more direct and being transparent could be more beneficial than a non-directive which could be just confusing. Ellen explained, “I am not holding on to one method because I am told writing center work should be. If they need me to give them some model sentences, I will. If they need me to tell them what to do, saying they are totally lost, I will.” She added, “If I am afraid someone might say I am too directive, I might not offer... I don't care. I believe that's the best option I can offer, I will do it”(Interview, September 24, 2009).

Recognizing all the ESL writers were different, Ellen believed keeping that conversation was crucial. She said, “I think one of the biggest way I can help is first remaining patient, and focused on understanding the client. Sometimes the frustration is just being able to have the conversation”(Interview, September 24, 2009). She was never shy away from explaining grammar to ESL writers when they really wanted to hear explanations, but she tended to address grammar issues when they inhibited meanings and became higher order concerns of the paper. She said, “Their biggest need is understand how writing works here.” Ellen thought for ESL writers to become successful for academic writing was to understand how writing and language actually worked here and what U.S. audience expected.

***Julie.*** Julie, was an undergraduate writing consultant with three years of experience at the Writing Center. She had a plenty of experience working with non-native speakers of English at the Writing Center. Her writing consulting philosophy conforms to writing center tenet to create better writers, not better writing. This belief applied to both native and non-native students she had worked with. She thought working with ESL writers is a “tricky balance” between directive

approach and non-directive approach. She was cautious about being too directive, but she also believed being non-directive on language could be confusing to ESL students. For ESL writers' common concerns with grammar, Julie tended to explain the rules directly and explicitly in the hope that the ESL writers could pick up how to use those rules in writing. She believed that, "ESL students they learned the rules. They have the knowledge, but when it comes to writing, they don't use it right away. It takes a while for them to catch on. So, just kind of bring it up…"(Interview, September 23, 2009). She took a more directive approach to guide ESL writers to come up with their own language in writing. She thought it was very important to focus on content and see if the ESL writers responded to the assignments and answered the questions, rather than just grammar even if that was what the ESL clients were asking for.

As far as what she thought important to keep in mind when working with ESL students, she believed encouragement was what they needed the most because she found many professors were hard on ESL students' grammar. Full understanding of the requirement of each writing assignment and the writing conventions of academia were also the knowledge ESL writers needed to have. In particular, she emphasized the idea of why plagiarism is such as big issue in the U.S. and explained to ESL students good writing was "not about who can use the best technical language," knowing that ESL students were often concerned with language usage.

***Diana.*** Diana, was an undergraduate writing consultant, who had just taken the training course a semester before. She considered herself as a writing consultant who always tried to make the client happy by helping with their needs they identified, but also there was a balance in which she had to make judgment calls on what is more important and beneficial for the client. For working with ESL writers, she believed the key to hold on to was just discuss with the ESL writers and have them talk about their questions or the problems in their writing. She felt

frustrated when she could not explain to clients, but she felt even more frustrated when the ESL clients did not even care about what was wrong with their papers. She said, “the most frustrating sessions are those where client really doesn't care about learning how to better their writing, and they just want to fix this one paper, fix this one sentence, and fix this word, fix this phrase”(Interview, September 23, 2009). She added, “those are the situations where I am no longer a consultant. I am a proofreader.” Diana described her consulting philosophy as “enabling client.” Particularly for ESL writers, she tried to enable the client to understand English and better master their own language. She believed it was essential to enable ESL writers to not only understand, but also be motivated to understand, and enable them to find other resources for understanding as well.

***Kate.*** Kate was a senior students majoring in professional writing. She had worked in the Writing Center for about one year after she took the writing consultant training course. She had enjoyed working as a writing consultant. She saw writing as exploration where people are trying to figure out what is going on. She believed in collaboration between consultant and client, and she liked help people find what it is that they are trying to say, while she was cautious about putting words into clients’ mouth. She felt excited when the conversation resulted in collaboration of ideas between her and the client. She said, “The two of you are constructing more clearly the picture that you were going for in the first place. I think that's really cool, that you can find out together”(Interview, September 18, 2009). For working with ESL writers, she thought grammar issues had been overemphasized on ESL writers, and people were a lot better than they realized. She felt nervous when ESL clients really just wanted to fix grammar in the paper because there was always something else that needed to be addressed such as if the writer answered the question. When working with ESL writers, she felt it was important to make sure

both consultant and client were on the same page in communication, and nothing was lost in translation.

**The Dyads**

Each ESL writer participant was paired up with the same writing consultant for the duration of this study after the client made her first appointment with the writing consultant by herself. The combination of the dyad is considered part of the context for each of the ESL cases of interest in this study. Table 3 summarizes the combinations of the dyads.

Table 3: The dyads

| Dyad | ESL Writer | Writing Consultant/ Experience |
|---|---|---|
| Pair 1 | Wen | Ann (graduate; 3 years) |
| Pair 2 | Feng | Diana (undergraduate; 6 months) |
| Pair 3 | Siang | Julie (undergraduate; 3 years) |
| Pair 4 | Jane | Ellen (graduate; 7 years) |
| Pair 5 | Vivian | Kate (undergraduate; 1 year) |

**Data Collection**

Data for this study were collected from 3 main sources: interviews (pre- and post-session) with the ESL writers, interviews (post-session) with the writing consultants, and videotapes of writing consulting sessions. ESL writers' writing samples and the training materials for the Writing Center consultants were also collected and analyzed as supplemental sources of information. This study set out to investigate the writing consulting sessions in a natural setting, though it should be noted that the ESL writers came to the writing consulting session in participation in this study, and that was not entirely the normal situations when ESL writers visited the Writing Center, as explained in the following sub-section.

**The sessions.** The ESL writers came to the writing consulting appointments with their real writing assignments for their graduate courses. They had their own questions and concerns

with their writing and they worked together with the writing consultants. The writing consultants worked with the participants just like in regular appointments with any client within their busy schedule at the Writing Center. There was no external constraint imposed upon the sessions. The conversation and interaction between the participants and writing consultants during the consulting sessions were therefore authentic.

However, the ESL participants came to the writing consulting sessions for participation in this study, rather than the regular reasons for most ESL writers to come to the Writing Center; therefore, the ESL participants in this study might not be entirely representative of the regular clients. Their needs for writing consultation could be different. For example, they might bring in their papers that had already been submitted for grades and they just wanted to have something to work on; or they might bring in materials that were not required by the instructors such as presentation scripts and Powerpoint slides. Another concern about the naturalness of the writing consulting sessions was related to their being observed and recorded. As in any data collection process where researchers are present, there was a potential influence on the natural setting of writing consulting sessions when the video camera was running and I was sitting across from the participants to take notes of the session activities. However, the concern of the presence of an observer in this study would be minimal because I was a colleague with all the writing consultants and he had one-on-one interviews with each ESL participant in Chinese before the sessions started. The familiarity between all the participants and me would alleviate the awkwardness and intrusiveness by my observing the interactions and listening to their conversations.

***Preliminary interviews.*** Before the writing consulting sessions were arranged, a preliminary interview at the beginning of the study was conducted with each participant

regarding their demographic information and their experiences as an ESL writer or a writing consultant. The preliminary interview was a semi-structured interview with a list of guiding questions (see Appendix C) for each participant, whereas the topics remained flexible throughout the interview. While there was a list of questions to be covered, the interview began with fairly open questions. As Richards (2009) suggested, it is a good idea to start with an open-ended question, as the interviewer-respondent relationship established at the outset will affect how the following exchanges go.

For ESL participants, it started with an informal self-introduction of the ESL participants. I asked questions about their demographic backgrounds, their experiences in learning English and writing in English, and why there were interested in participating in this study. Interviews with the ESL writers were conducted mainly in Chinese with me in order to elicit more and in-depth information than the ESL-speaking participants could normally do. For writing consultants, I asked questions regarding their backgrounds as a writing consultant and their experiences in working with ESL writers in the writing centers. The purpose of the interview was made clear to participants that I was trying to get to know more about them as a fellow graduate student and interested in knowing about their backgrounds and experiences. The participants were free to talk as much as they liked and as far as they thought I might be interested in knowing about their background, experience, and expectation of participating in the study. With a semi-structured interview, I, as the interviewer, also had freedom to digress on the listed questions and probed for more information (Richards, 2003).

***Session observation and recording***. After the preliminary interview, the ESL participants started coming to the Writing Center for their scheduled appointments for writing consultation sessions. With permission and signed informed consents from both the ESL writers and writing

consultants, the writing consulting sessions were video-taped. During the sessions, I sat across from the consultant and ESL writer and took notes of their interaction and conversation. I also had a copy of the ESL writer's paper that he could make marks on. The notes were later used for additional questions during the post-session interview with the consultant and client.

Table 4 shows the schedule of consulting appointments of each ESL participant and their writing consultants. Each session lasted for about 50 minutes. A total of 22 hours were observed and recorded. Two ESL writers, Jane and Vivian, only completed four appointments because of their difficulty in scheduling appointments approaching the end of the semester. They decided to discontinue their participation in this study after they missed a couple of appointments and were not able to keep their commitments to this research.

Table 4: Schedule of sessions and interviews for each pair of ESL writer and writing consultant

| Pair (writer/ consultant) | Preliminary Interview | 1st Session | 2nd Session | 3rd Session | 4th Session | 5th Session | 6th Session |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Wen<br>Ann | 9-18-09<br>10-6-09 | 10-6-09 | 10-13-09 | 10-20-09 | 12-1-09 | 12-8-09 | 12-15-09 |
| Feng<br>Diana | 9-18-09<br>9-23-09 | 10-1-09 | 10-29-09 | 11-12-09 | 11-19-09 | 12-3-09 | 12-10-09 |
| Siang<br>Julie | 9-15-09<br>9-23-09 | 9-30-09 | 10-7-09 | 10-14-09 | 11-4-09 | 11-11-09 | 12-2-09 |
| Jane<br>Ellen | 9-14-09<br>9-24-09 | 9-24-09 | 10-1-09 | 10-15-09 | 11-19-09 | N/A* | N/A* |
| Vivian<br>Kate | 9-17-09<br>9-18-09 | 9-18-09 | 9-25-09 | 10-2-09 | 11-13-09 | N/A* | N/A* |

* Appointments were not available because of schedule difficulty

***Pre- and post-session interviews.*** At each consulting session to be observed, pre- and post-session interviews were conducted with the participants. The interview was also conducted in a semi-structured fashion with some guiding questions (see Appendix D). Pre-session questions were asked of the ESL participants about the particular writing assignment they brought in and their goals and expectations of the writing consulting session. Immediately after

the session, post-session interviews were conducted with the writing consultant and the ESL writer separately, depending on their availability to be the first. Some post-session interviews with the ESL writers were arranged and conducted later the same day if they were not able to stay after the session in the Writing Center. During the post-session interviews, the session videotapes and writing samples as well as my field notes were used as stimuli for additional interview questions. Participants could view the videos during the post-session interviews if necessary, and both the participants and I were able to freely stop the video clips to ask questions or recall and comment on the activities during the sessions (also see Appendix D for basic questions for post-session interview). The participants' responses at interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for qualitative analysis. Follow-up communication (through e-mail or phone) based on their responses was arranged whenever necessary for more information or clarification.

Originally, a group interview at the end of the study was attempted in order to collect more information or thoughts from the participants than those could be possibly collected in one-on-one settings (Duff, 2008). However, the group interview was not successfully arranged due to the participants' difficult schedules around the end of the semester.

***Writing samples***. ESL participants' papers and assignment sheets related to the writing assignments that the participants brought in to their consulting sessions were collected before the sessions to triangulate participants' verbal accounts. The types of writing samples varied among the participants and each session, which included summary, case report, annotated bibliography, autobiography, self-reflection paper, memo, presentation scripts, research proposal, and thesis. They could be as short as one page and as long as twenty pages.

Table 5: Writing samples collected from participants

| Wen | Fang | Siang | Jane | Vivian |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| -annotated bibliography<br>-project memo<br>-research paper<br>-meeting agenda | -case analysis report<br>-project memo<br>-PowerPoint slides | -research paper<br>-case brief<br>-ad analysis | -response paper<br>-research proposal<br>-outline<br>-presentation scripts | -autobiography<br>-self analysis |

***Training materials.*** The training materials for Writing Center consultants were collected and examined to get a better picture of the writing consultants' perspectives and expectations for the writing consulting sessions and the goal of the Writing Center. The materials included writing center tutoring handbooks, the bi-weekly staff meeting handouts, and the WRA 395 course materials which were designed to train the writing consultants. The training materials covered the topics of ideas of literacy activities, writing processes, the fundamental writing center philosophies, different practices of writing center pedagogy for the accommodations of different teaching conditions such as time, space, and people; writing consultants were constantly prompted to reflect upon and rethink their own consulting style and strategies. The staff meetings emphasize the writing center work as student-centered and writer-driven rather than writing-driven sessions. Many professional development workshops focus on how to work with clients of different profiles (see Appendix C).

**Data Transcription**

All the audio and video data were transcribed and translated for analysis and report. Translation of the Chinese data was done by me for the purpose of reporting the results. To facilitate the data analysis, four transcribers with valid training for human subject projection were hired to expedite the final data transcription. The transcription work was all done with the transcription software, *InqScribe*: A very convenient software to take notes, transcribe, analyze,

and subtitle digital video and audio (http://www.inqscribe.com/). The raw transcriptions were completed by the transcribers without a particular notation system. The raw transcriptions done in *InqScribe* came with the time codes that indicate and locate the utterances in the videos. I later processed the transcription of the selected sequences which focused on language issues based on the following transcription conventions in order to visually and realistically represent the utterances in the dialogues between the dyads. Interview audio data were transcribed with fewer notations for the sake of readability of the verbal reports.

Table 6:Transcription conventions (Adapted from Richards (2003, p.173))

| | |
|---|---|
| (1.0) | Pause of about 1 second (the number indicates the length of pause) |
| (…) | Silence between turns |
| (.) | Micropause in the same turn |
| [ ] | Overlap |
| [[ | Speakers start at the same time |
| = | Latched utterances |
| CAPS | Emphasis |
| : | Sound stretching |
| (( )) | Other details or additional information by the researcher |
| { } | Annotation of negotiation mechanisms of the model |

**Data Analysis and Triangulation**

Data from different sources (i.e., ESL students' verbal accounts, writing consultants' verbal accounts, writing samples and session videotapes, and the Writing Center training materials) were used to triangulate the results and pinpoint the common interesting themes. The data analysis process was recursive and inductive to the selected themes or categories. I tried to look for the threads among the massive amount of data collected throughout the duration of this study. The analysis steps started with the on-site observation and reading field notes of the earlier sessions, then examining the notes with focus on the occurrence of LREs, sorting out the data with a preliminary model, and then creating the categories. As certain recurring themes were

identified and more theoretical categories and constructs were reflected on the interview data, member checking with the participants in order to make sure of the researcher's analysis of the data was employed to enhance the credibility of interpretations (Duff, 2008). The entire data analysis process included the analyses on interview data and video data.

**Interview data: Categorical content analysis.** The interview data were transcribed, and translated if in Chinese, for in-depth analyses based on the approach of categorical content analysis. Following a general tradition in qualitative research inquiry, interview data analyses were inductive and ongoing along the data collection processes (Duff, 2008). That is, the themes identified based on earlier interviews had influenced what was asked in later interviews. Based on the approach to developing an analysis on transcriptions by Richards (2003), I identified some salient patterns at each data collection period. I first tagged the pieces of data of each participant by some bigger umbrella categories such as "positive perceptions", "negative perceptions", "client's goals", "grammar/language", "assignments", etc. Then, I tried to see the connections among the categories among the participants; recurring categories and themes therefore emerged from the collected data. ESL writers' verbal reports were compared to writing consultants' responses and my own interpretations on the themes or topics of interest to this study for the purpose of data triangulation.

**Video data: Discourse analysis.** Discourse analyses of the interaction and dialogues between the pair of writing consultants and ESL writers were the focus of this study. In particular, the aspects of dialogues of interest to this study primarily were related to language learning occasions which were defined by LREs and consultants' consulting strategies with ESL writers. For consulting strategies, the identifiable boundaries lay on questions initiated by writing consultant and their responses to ESL writers' requests. For example, when either the writing

consultant or ESL writer initiated (or responded to) an utterance for questions, requesting help, comprehension check, clarification request, topic shifts, or providing choices, the part of conversation was separated as a discrete episode. To analyze those interactional data and understand how language is used in the dialogues, discourse analysis should be employed to gain that understanding, which is often used in case study (Lazaraton, 2009). A preliminary interaction model was created based on the session video data analysis and was revised as more categories emerged and were identified as components of the negotiation models.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## A Model of Writing Center Consultation

Talk and one-on-one conversation on writing is the fundamental concept of writing center pedagogy. As opposed to written comments and feedback, writing center consultation makes it possible for synchronous negotiation on L2 writing to happen between the L2 writer and the reader. Negotiation is the most important concept of learning shared by SLA theories and writing center philosophy. Negotiation often arising from communication breakdown during interaction can not only help L2 learners to notice the gap in their language knowledge, but also more importantly, from a sociocultural point of view, allow L2 learners to talk about their language use and problems and benefit from the collaborative dialogues (Swain & Lapkin, 1995, 1998, 2002). Within the social interaction between the speakers, negotiation creates the metaphoric space for the higher proficient speaker to scaffold learning and development for the other interlocutor (Lantolf, 2006; Lantolf & Thorne, 2007; Brooks & Swain, 2009). Influenced by the socioculturalism, writing center pedagogy values the negotiation between peers and the opportunity for collaborative learning for writer development. It is the goal that through negotiation and collaboration, writing consultants help writers to see the problems they cannot see by themselves and then come up with acceptable solutions by discussing the issues and concerns with each other during the consulting sessions. It is the belief that instead of directly passing on knowledge to writers without negotiation, the collaboration in writing consultation is empowering to writers by engaging them in solving the problems by themselves and returning ownership of the writing and responsibility for learning to the writers (Harris, 1997).

Writing consultations involve not only the essential negotiation of authority, ownership, and agenda between the consultant and client but also constant negotiation of writing, that is, the

language and meaning. For ESL writers in particular, negotiation of language occurs more often than other aspects of ESL writing, and the language concerns are usually made explicit by ESL writers during consulting sessions (Harris & Silva, 1993). It is therefore of particular interest to this study to investigate the negotiation of language in writing consultation with ESL writers.

In the following sections of this chapter, I first describe and visualize the scaffolding processes that happen in the collaboration between the writing consultants and ESL writers in the pedagogical context of the Writing Center. Then, I discuss how the negotiation of language unfolds and functions in different dyads. Based on the perspective of collaborative dialogues for language learning (Swain & Lapkin, 1995, 1998), I also account for the occurrence of LREs and language learning occasions in writing consultation based on the concepts of the two types of LREs: form-based and lexis-based (Swain & Lapkin, 1998). The discussions focus on how the dialogues between the ESL writers and writing consultants create language learning within the framework of sociocultural theory of learning.

**A Schema of Scaffolding Language Learning**

In the Writing Center, the writing consultants received training to work with multilingual writers. Though they clearly knew that ESL writers have particular concerns with language and grammar issues in their writing, the writing consultants avoided directly telling the writers what they should do with their language choice; instead, rather than directly tell the writers what to do or fix the problem, the consultants usually but not always employed a non-directive approach to engaging ESL writers in conversation and focused on the content first and the language issues least. This conferencing approach reflects writing center philosophy in encouraging writers to keep their own language and also represents the traditional writing tutoring strategies (Powers, 1993) as well as the MAPS model of the Writing Center.

This study confirms that the writing consultants take a dialogical approach to drawing the ESL writers into the negotiation in order to lead the ESL writers to see the language problem and work collaboratively with them to reach a solution. Negotiating an agreement on an issue is the driving force of their dialogue. Therefore, during the writing consulting session, when some issues or questions stand out to the writing consultant, they would direct writers' attention to the problem by providing a comment, suggesting a change, requesting a change or asking questions for clarification as a jumping-off point to start negotiations with the clients. The negotiation and interaction between the writing consultant and client depends on the topic, consultant's strategies, and clients' responses. The following subsections focus on how a typical negotiation episode unfolds in writing consultation and how the related negotiation mechanisms in the scaffolding process work to empower ESL writers and reassure their linguistic uncertainty in their writing. Figure 1 is a schema that illustrates how negotiation of language is initiated and proceeds with a battery of negotiation components. I first describe the general negotiation process based on the model and then breaks it down into components with examples from excerpts of dialogues. By attempting to visualize and describe the writing consulting processes, I am by no means able to fully capture the non-linear, dynamic, and complex processes of negotiation between writing consultants and the ESL writers. The writing consultation model proposed in this chapter is limited to the textual transcription of the conversation data collected in this research with a focus on language issues.

**The Negotiation Processes**

In order to empower the ESL writers, the basic tenet of writing consultation is to negotiate with writers for them to see the questions and come up with their own solutions or make their own decisions on issues of their writing. In sociocultural terms, writing consultants

mean to engage the ESL writers in working in their ZPD; that is, during the negotiation and give-and-take processes, the ESL writers show their knowledge base and receive assistance from the writing consultant to solve the language problem and are potentially able to apply the knowledge independently or further their learning. From a sociocultural perspective of language learning, as mentioned by Swain (2006)[2], the dialogues that learners engage in enact on an outer plane of a dialogue that can be internalized by the learners later when they engage in a problem-solving activity independently (D. Friedman, personal communication, October 16, 2010).

However, in actual writing center consultation, each and every consulting session is different because of the contextual factors in the session that needs to be considered. The contextual factors include the writing assignment, time constraints, the focus of the session, the goal of the session, language proficiency of the ESL writer, the familiarity between the consultant and client, as well as personal and professional background and experiences of both the consultant and the ESL client. Examples and more discussion on how a particular context factors in a consulting session will be examined in Chapter Five. The discussion below is based on a typical session and focuses on the dialogues and negotiation process of language in a writing consulting session.

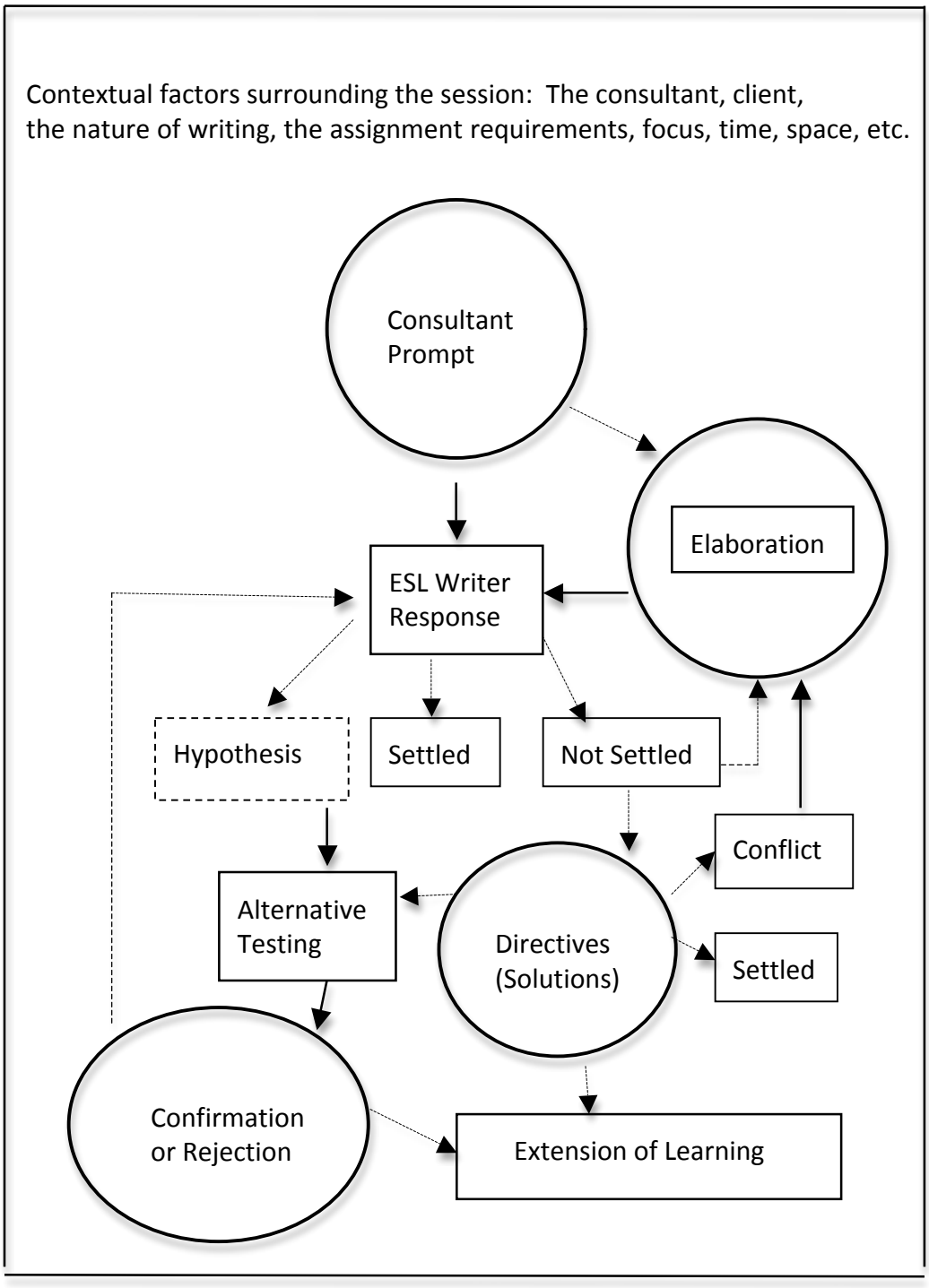
When a negotiation is initiated by the writing consultant, it is usually started with a comment, request, or question on the language in the text, which functions as a prompt and is usually interpreted by the ESL writer as indicating some kind of problem and triggers a response from the ESL writer regarding the language use, as illustrated in Figure 1 below. Figure 1 illustrates the potential processes for negotiation of language in writing consultation. The rounded boxes represent writing consultants' responses, and the rectangles represents the ESL

[2] I thank Debra Friedman for pointing this out to me.

writers' responses in the dialogues. The solid arrows indicate the reaction that will happen and the broken arrows indicate what may or may not happen. All the components do not always come into play in a single negotiation episode, depending on the topics as well as the ESL writers' knowledge and responses.

The request or question triggers the ESL writers' responses that can be either sufficient or insufficient to settle the issue. Based on the writer's existing knowledge, the response can be a solution to the problem noticed by the writer or a hypothesis based on rules in the ESL writer's mind intended to solve the problem. Sometimes, though, the writer's response will indicate their lack of knowledge to comprehend the consultant's comment, to recognize the problem, or to propose a hypothesis on their own. In the case when the ESL writer's response is insufficient to settle the issue, it would lead to the consultant's another question or elaboration of her first comment to get to the heart of the matter, which is usually the actual intention that writing consultant has in the first place. In the other case when the ESL writer's response is sufficient to settle the issue, it is mostly likely the ESL writer fixes the problem by him or herself and the potential issue is settled. In their responses to the consultant's prompt, the ESL writers try to fix the problem or answer the writing consultant's question. If the ESL writer's answer is not what the consultant expects nor acceptable, instead of giving an answer or suggestion, the consultants would usually elaborate on their question or explain the issue in a different way to make sure the ESL writer see the point and be able to think upon the questions and, therefore, form a hypothesis or generate an alternative and try out their own solutions. Though ultimately the writing consultant has the authority in language and has the power over the ESL writer, it is the consultant's goal to have the ESL writer solve her or his own problem in the writing; however,

Figure 1: Scaffolding Model of Language in Writing Consultation



the solutions or alternatives brought up by the ESL writer can still be hypothesis-based and the alternative testing needs to be confirmed or rejected by the writing consultant. When the alternative solution works, the writing consultant provides positive feedback as positive reinforcement of the solution and confirms the ESL writer's alternatives, which has the potential/function to reassure learners' linguistic uncertainty. If the alternative does not work based on the consultant's judgment, the writing consultant would try to prompt the writer to come up with other solutions. In some cases when it is obvious or the consultant concludes that the ESL writer simply do not have the knowledge to draw on, the writing consultant would explain the rules or provide model language use or some explicit suggestions for the ESL writer's use and reference. There are occasions when the ESL writer's hypothesis or alternative-testing is confirmed or when they learn new knowledge from the writing consultant, they would pursue their understanding further and ask related questions. In sociocultural terms, that is when L2 learners are operating beyond their ZPD, and the development only occurs after "good learning" (Brooks & Swain, 2009).

The following examples, Excerpt #1 and #2, can only represent few of many possible scenarios, but the reader can get a sense of how those mechanisms work during a negotiation. In Excerpt #1, Vivian the ESL, writer, was working on a self-analysis assignment about her goal to become a professional counselor. After reading aloud the paper, the writing consultant, Kate, initiates the negotiation by giving her comments on some language issues. In the following subsections, I break down the components of the model and discuss how the major mechanism works in the negotiation.

(Passage discussed in Excerpt #1, Vivian, Self-analysis, CEP862, September 15, 2009)

*To be a professional counselor, I need to increase the ability to self-evaluation, self-awareness*

*and self-identify. In the assignment, I use BASIC-ID as a self-analysis model to assess myself.* [underline added]

Excerpt #1:Vivian and Kate, Session 1, September 18, 2009

1. **Kate**: So, the only issue I have here is one of agreement in consistency with what you're saying
2. (1.0)
3. **Vivian**: um uh
4. (1.0)
5. **Kate**: Cuz you talk about *self-evaluation*, that's like a thing, it's a noun... *self-awareness*, that's a thing, and then *self-identify*, that's a verb, that's something you do. And you're saying that it's your ability to, and it's probably, *whose ability*? It's yours, rather than just the general

   (1.0)
6. **Vivian**: (.) my

   (1.0)
7. **Kate**: Right, right, exactly.
8. **Kate**: So, your ability to do certain things.
9. **Vivian**: So, it should be a verb, right? So it change to *self-evaluate* and *self*

   (1.0)
10. **Kate**: In this case it's to be self aware(.) cuz we don't have *self aware* as kind of a verb on its own, so to be(.) to *be self aware* and *to self identify*.
11. **Vivian**: Oh! ((marking on the text))

12. **Kate**: No no, "*self evaluate*" is fine, you had it exactly right, but "*self aware*" is different from the other two.
13. **Vivian**: So, to be self-aware

    (1.0)
14. **Kate**: Right, it's its own special case where it doesn't have its own kind of verb
15. **Vivian**: So it's not the

    (1.0)
16. **Kate**: It's a quality that you can have, like being self aware(.) you can be self aware, but self aware is not something you actually can (.) self awareness(.) it's not an action. Being aware is more of a passive thing. You can evaluate something, that's more active, but you can be aware of something else.
17. **Vivian**: So, it should be "be." So this word becomes adjective?
18. **Kate**: yup, exactly.
19. **Vivian**: And this word is still a verb?
20. **Kate**: That's fine, cuz it's already a verb on its own. That makes it all consistent with what you're saying and with each other. And then you talked about (.) and again

    **(**1.0)
21. **Vivian**: Oh, so this is ((strength)).(.) because I mean(.)now I understand(.)Last week, seems something like I use end ((and)), and you say both sides should be the same, right?
22. **Kate**: There should be some agreement or

    **(**1.0)
23. **Vivian**: So, I keep reading? (Excerpt #1,Vivian and Kate, Session 2, September 25, 2009)

**Consultant prompt**. To get a negotiation started, writing consultants usually ask a question or make a comment on the text, which can draw the ESL writers' attention and have the writers think upon the issue and come up with a solution or provide either more information about their decision-making or the intended meaning. Before the consultants would ask a more specific question or provide a further suggestion, they take the non-directive approach to engaging the ESL writer in the conversation and create collaborative learning opportunities for the ESL writers. From Excerpt #1, the writing consultant, Kate, saw a grammatical error (*to self-evaluation, self-awareness*) in the sentence. Segments of the excerpt are repeated below for discussion:

1. **Kate**: So, the only issue I have here is one of agreement in consistency with what you're saying
2. (…)
3. **Vivian**: um uh
4. (…)

Here, instead of specifically pointing out the mistake or giving a suggestion to change, Kate first made a comment about the errors in order to get Vivian to see the problem and do something about the error (Line 1). Kate indirectly pointed out the issue and put it in general terms and waited for Vivian to respond, as she paused and did not continue to say more (Line 2). However, Vivian was only back-channeling with "um uh" (Line 3), which suggests that she was not able to recognize Kate's issue here. Vivian did not respond to a particular issue and seemed to be expecting Kate to provide more information, as she paused and did not continue the Line (Line 4). Vivian's response, whether sufficient or not, helps Kate to determine how to provide further

comments or suggestions. In the consulting context, the writing consultant's first comment with a potential illocutionary force for Vivian to do something about the issue serves as a probing device for Kate to gauge the ESL writer's, Vivian, knowledge base and the range of her potential ZPD. In this segment, Kate's comment is operating beyond Vivian's ZPD and at this point Vivian is not working in her ZPD yet.

**Elaboration:** Writing consultants' comments or questions do not always go through and make sense to clients for some reasons. Especially with ESL writers, it can be the instruction or the topic that is difficult to the writers to follow. Therefore, to engage the ESL writers and make negotiation a two-way conversation, writing consultants would try to repeat their original questions or comments in a different way so that the ESL writers may understand. By elaborating on their comments and questions, writing consultants could make sure they and the clients are on the same page to reach some agreement on the subject matter. Elaboration in this model is a very complicated mechanism. Elaboration based on the response to the earlier comment can be a further question, a more detailed comment, or a recast of what is said earlier. It is mostly done by the writing consultant, but sometimes it can be done by the ESL writer to explain intended meanings during a negotiation process. Elaboration provides more direct, explicit and relevant comments, which helps the ESL writer to understand the issue; therefore the writer is more likely to do something to solve the problem. In other words, it is part of scaffolding. In the example from Excerpt # 1, Kate elaborated on what she means in her first comment (Line 5).

5. **Kate**: Cuz you talk about *self-evaluation*, that's like a thing, it's a noun... *self-awareness*, that's a thing, and then *self-identify*, that's a verb, that's something you do. And you're saying that it's your ability to, and it's probably, *whose ability*? It's yours, rather than just the general

6. **Vivian**: (.) my(...)
7. **Kate**: Right, right, exactly.
8. **Kate**: So, your ability to do certain things.

Kate elaborates on her comment and explicitly points out what she means by "*one of agreement in consistency*". She provides the information in grammatical terms "*noun*" and "*verb*" and explained those terms by "*a thing*" and "*something you do*" for Vivian to see the problem. Kate also points out another part that is confusing in the text (*the ability*) for Vivian to see the problem. This is not the primary problem of agreement in consistency and Kate's elaboration on the issue with "*the ability"* already gives the solution here (Line 5). Vivian responds "my…" as the solution and Kate gives an immediate positive feedback (Line 7) on Vivian's response. Once the secondary problem is resolved, Kate then returns to the issue of agreement in consistency in Line 8. While Kate's first comment on the grammatical errors is not responded to by Vivian yet, she completes the elaboration to Vivian by saying "your ability to do certain things" (Line 8). By emphasizing the infinitive structure, "*to do certain things*," Kate makes the syntactic structure more explicit for Vivian to change the nouns to verbs and solve the agreement in consistency problem. After elaboration, it is the hope that the ESL writer can perceive the consultant's comment and do something that she is not able to do by herself earlier. In a sense, elaboration, whether it is in the form of question, explanation, or request, is scaffolding the partner in the process of collaboration process.

**Hypothesis and alternative testing.** When a negotiation between the writing consultant and the ESL writer proceeds toward an agreement, it is expected that the ESL writer comes up with a solution or hypothesis to fix her problem. The negotiation process is usually meant to help the ESL writer see the problems she fails to monitor in her L2 production process, that is, while

writing. With the writing consultant's help by comments and elaboration, the ESL writer can see the problem and draw on the writing consultant's explanation or her own existing knowledge to solve the problem by trying different alternatives. When the ESL writer generates alternatives to fix the problem, the alternatives or hypotheses can be right or wrong. The writing consultant assesses the alternatives and either confirms or rejects the hypotheses. Continuing in Line 9, Vivian forms a hypothesis about the word choice, the form of the word, based on Kate's explanation and tests her alternative solutions to the problems:

9. **Vivian**: So, it should be a verb, right? So it change to *self-evaluate* and *self* (…)
10. **Kate**: In this case it's to be self aware... cuz we don't have *self aware* as kind of a verb on its own, so to be... to *be self aware* and *to self identify*.
11. **Vivian**: Oh! ((marking on the text))
12. **Kate**: No no, "*self evaluate*" is fine, you had it exactly right, but "*self aware*" is different from the other two

After Kate's elaboration on the structure, Vivian perceives Kate's comment and generates a hypothesis by asking "*it should be a verb, right?*" (Line 9). Though she is not quite sure about the rule, Vivian goes ahead to change "*self-evaluation*" to "*self-evaluate*" and tries to Line "*self-awareness*" into a verb. As Vivian changes "*self-evaluation*" to "*self-evaluate*" and pauses on "*self*" without being able to complete the word (Line 9), Kate could perceive Vivian's struggle with repairing "*self-awareness*". Kate provides the answer to Vivian, along with more information and explanations on the rule without providing any immediate feedback on Vivian's alternative "*self-evaluate*" to "*self-evaluation*" (Line 10). Then, in response to Kate's answer and explanation, Vivian generates a new hypothesis and overextends the rule Kate just explains on

"*self-aware*" and generates another alternative by changing the word in the text (Line 11). It is not clear what word Vivian is changing, but Kate, in Line 12, rejects the alternative and gives a positive feedback to confirms Vivian's first hypothesis-testing on her self-repair on "*self-evaluation*". Based on Kate's comment ("No no, "*self evaluate*" is fine") we can assume that Vivian was overextending the rule and changing *self-evaluate*.Then, Kate goes on to provide further explanation on "*self aware*". In this segment of the excerpt, it shows that the ESL writer's generating alternatives entails a hypothesis and alternatives testing, which need to be confirmed or rejected in order to reassure the ESL writer's understanding of rules and eliminate the sense of uncertainty in L2 production. The negotiation opportunity makes the ESL writers want to explore more about their knowledge and hypotheses on language use. In this example, it shows that even when the ESL writer becomes able to see the problem and try to repair the problem with alternatives, the "assisted" self-correction can be still a hypothesis being tested. That is when the subsequent component of negotiation, confirmation/rejection, comes in to verify or problematize the ESL writer's hypothesis and alternative being tested in attempt to fix the writing problem.

**Confirmation/rejection.** As also discussed earlier in Line 12, when the ESL writer's alternative for self-correction is generated, the writing consultant assesses the alternative and either confirms or rejects it. The consultant's confirmation or rejection plays a crucial role in the negotiation process to reassure the uncertainty of the ESL writer's hypothesis-testing and solidify her knowledge. On one hand, the consultant's confirmation of the hypothesis-testing can provide positive reinforcement to the client's learning during the collaborative process, which also settles the negotiation. On the other hand, the consultant's rejection of the hypothesis-testing helps the client to rethink her hypothesis and her understanding. Also, since the client generates hypotheses in response to the consultant's comments or elaborations, either a rejected or a

confirmed hypothesis can also play a role that helps the writing consultant to gauge and calibrate the client's knowledge base, which can lead to a more comprehensible explanation and digestible information to the ESL writer. That is, when the consultant realizes the ESL writer has a wrong idea of particular language use, she can provide more relevant information. In this example of Excerpt #1, continued with Line 13, Vivian states her understanding of Kate's explanation of "*to be self-aware*" and Kate reassures it immediately at Line 14 with more information on the rule.

13. **Vivian**: So, to be self-aware (...)
14. **Kate**: Right, it's its own special case where it doesn't have its own kind of verb
15. **Vivian**: So it's not the (...)
16. **Kate**: It's a quality that you can have, like being self aware... you can be self aware, but self aware is not something you actually can... self awareness... it's not an action. Being aware is more of a passive thing. You can evaluate something, that's more active, but you can be aware of something else.
17. **Vivian**: So, it should be "*be*". So this word becomes adjective?
18. **Kate**: yup, exactly.

In Line 16, Kate goes on to provide more explicit explanations on "self aware" and the difference between "*self aware*" and "*self awareness*" (Line 16), so that this explanation provides the basis for Vivian to generate a new hypothesis: "So, it should be '*be*.' So this word becomes adjective?" (Line 17). Kate, in Line 18, gives an immediate confirmation to settle the negotiation and also solidify Vivian's learning of the rule.

**Extension of learning**. The ESL writer's knowledge confirmed in the one-on-one

collaborative learning setting can create the state of learning that can be taken to a further developmental stage when the ESL writer tries to extend the knowledge to a different example or context. Continued in Line 19, Vivian extends her first confirmed knowledge (learning) to another example "*self-identify*" after the earlier problem with "self awareness" is resolved. In this sample (Line 19), Vivian states "*And this word is still a verb?*" It can be that Vivian extends her first confirmed hypothesis of "*this should be a verb*" to "*self-identify*", or it can be that Vivian is distinguishing her understandings of "*this should be a verb*" and "*this word becomes adjective*." In either case, this is an example of extension of learning, where the learner takes the initiative to promote further language learning. Kate gives a positive response to Vivian's extension of learning and wraps up the issue by referring back to the original comment on "consistency", saying, "*That makes it all consistent with what you're saying and with each other*", and she then moves on to another issue (Line 20).

19. **Vivian**: And this word ((*self-identify*)) is still a verb?
20. **Kate**: That's fine, cuz it's already a verb on its own. That makes it all consistent with what you're saying and with each other. And then you talked about (.) and again (...)

(Excerpt #1,Vivian and Kate, Session 2, September 25, 2009)

Dialogues in the one-on-one writing consultation provide the opportunity for the ESL writers to draw on their own linguistic knowledge and, with the writing consultants' assistance, benefit from the collaborative learning. There are instances when the ESL writer does not have enough knowledge to come up with a solution, particularly on lexical knowledge, or the writing

consultant's comment can not be elaborated on further. One example in the Excerpt #1 is in Line 10. Kate becomes directive and provides the answer ("*self-aware*") to Vivian when she does not elaborate further for Vivian to come up with the correct alternative. In those cases, the writing consultants provide directives such as model language or rules to the ESL writers, which are explained further below.

**Directives**. During the collaborative learning setting, the writing consultants provide directives in the forms of correction, suggestion of language, or explanation of rules when they realize the client is really lacking in knowledge, which helps to create a language knowledge base for the ESL writer, that is, it provides scaffolding. As much as writing consultants are cautious about "writing for the client," they sometimes provide explicit suggestions on linguistic forms or vocabulary. Based on a non-directive tradition, the writing consultants' directives usually come as hedges or are framed as questions or suggestions that allow for additional possibilities and more liberty on the ESL writer. Directives can have less room for negotiation and usually settle an issue. Sometimes, though, the ESL writer might be able to apply the knowledge to completing a correction or an acceptable alternative, where that alternative-testing can be confirmed and reassured by the consultant. Below is an illustrative example. In Excerpt # 2, on the same assignment, Vivian described herself in the texts, "*My outlook is typical Asian appearance.*"

Excerpt #2: Vivian and Kate, Session2, September 25, 2009

1. **Kate**: When I think of *outlook*, I think of someone's way of looking at the world (.) but are you talking about the way other people see you?
2. **Vivian**: Ah, yeah, I used the wrong word.

3. **Kate**: *Typical Asian appearance*, I mean, you can say that your appearance is typically Asian, is that of a typical Asian?

   (...)

4. **Vivian**: Um, so, definitely I am a typical Asian appearance.
5. **Kate**: I would say "in appearance".
6. **Vivian**: In appearance?
7. **Kate**: Because otherwise, that would say that an appearance, that is all you are, rather than having an appearance, saying that "I am a typical Asian appearance" would mean like, that it's not like a person, it's just the exterior.
8. **Vivian**: So, to correct it, I can say "in appearance, I am a typical Asian"?
9. **Kate**: Yes! Exactly, that is a very good way of putting it.

Kate points out the language issue with "*outlook*", provided comments on it, and asked for a clarification (Line 1). Kate comments on the use of "outlook" from her being a reader's perspective. She states what she thinks when she sees the word as a reader and does not say the author is wrong about language. Rather than being didactic and giving direct correction, Kate points out the error of language in a less directive way and frames it as a question for confirmation, "but are you talking about the way other people see you?" Kate's comment on "*outlook*" and the question help Vivian realize her word choice delivers a different message from her intention to the reader (Line 2); however, her recognition of a wrong word is not accompanied by an attempt to self-correction or generative alternatives, while Kate does not supply an alternative either. In Line 3, Kate goes on to comment on another issue with "*typical Asian appearance*". She recasts the phrase "typical Asian appearance" as "a typical Asian" in her

question when she provides the alternatives (i.e., typically Asian; a typical Asian) for Vivian to think upon (Line 3). Vivian responds to Kate's question and tries to self-repair the phrase by rephrasing it as "I am a typical Asian appearance" (Line 4). Kate denies Vivian's alternative implicitly by providing a directive "in appearance" (Line 5). She also hedges the directive with the use of a modal verb "would" in her statement by saying "I would say 'in appearance'." Vivian repeats the alternative "in appearance" with uncertainty as she raises her intonation as a question (Line6), and Kate elaborates on her suggestion (Line 7). After Kate's elaboration, Vivian seems then able to understand the issue and why Kate suggests "in appearance." She corrects the phrase based on her understanding of the issue and Kate's suggestion (Line 8). In this case, Vivian is applying her newly acquired knowledge in her ZPD and potentially expands the range of her ZPD, though not an extension of learning to a new context. Vivian creates her own solution rather than simply takes what Kate says, and her self-correction is confirmed immediately by Kate (Line 9). The directive shown in this excerpt ("in appearance") requests the consultant's elaboration and provision of alternatives for the ESL writer and leads to the writer's alternative-testing and learning. From the perspective of ZPD on the dialogues in writing center consultation, the L2 learners are operating in their ZPD when they are able to notice or solve problems with the consultant's assistance; once the ESL writers are able to perform autonomous self-correction on the assisted self-correction, it is the higher developmental stage for the ESL writers.

As shown in the previous examples of the dialogues in a writing consulting session, the negotiation process and mechanism involve different components in the model. A negotiation process does not always go through all the mechanism, depending on the issue, how it is initiated, and the ESL writer's knowledge base. This proposed model illustrates the potential processes of

negotiation of language in writing consultations with ESL writers based on writing center pedagogy. In Appendix E, I include dialogue examples from different dyads that are accountable by the model. In different contexts, and when contextual factors are taken into account, the negotiation process can be dynamic and recursive. In the following sections, I talk about the implications of this scaffolding model by comparing the schema to writing center pedagogy and different consulting approaches.

## The Scaffolding Model and Writing Center Pedagogy

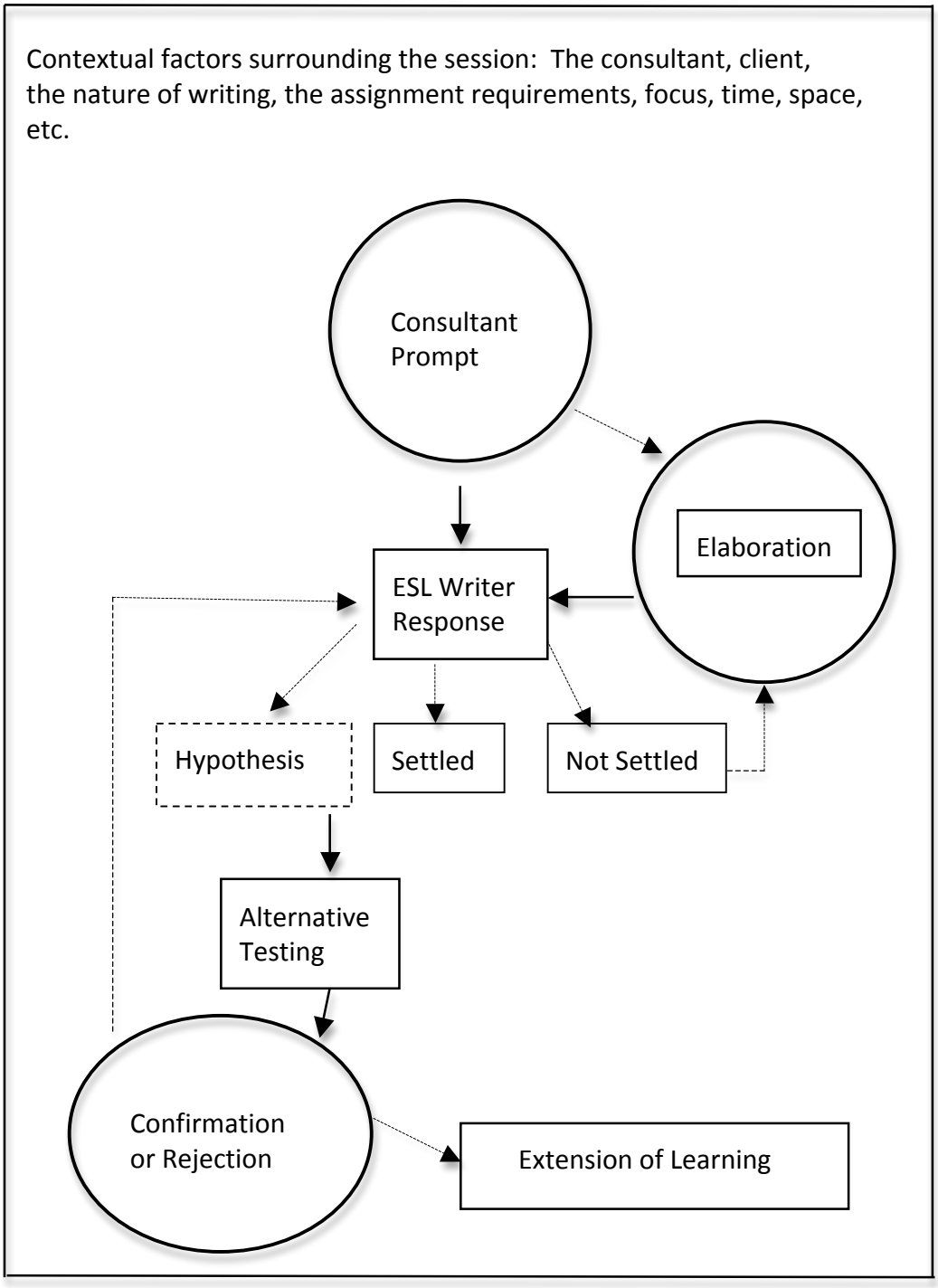
The scaffolding model based on writing center pedagogy encompasses a variety of pedagogical approaches and tutoring practices, ranging from the minimalist to directive tutoring. The continuum of directiveness is represented by different combination of the components in the scaffolding models, which shows the different consulting practices and the different focus of tutoring at some point of a session.

**Minimalist tutoring**. Minimalist and the hands-off approach have continued to exist as one of the fundamental or orthodox tutoring practices in many writing centers since North (1984) expressed his influential idea of a writing center as "not a fix-it shop" and Brooks' (1991) advocating making the student do all the work in a writing consulting session, although they have been critiqued and revised by writing center scholars (Shamoon & Burns, 1995).

The minimalist approach means to minimize writing consultants' intervention or control of the negotiation components involved in the conversation with writers. The consultant refrains from editing the texts for the writer or telling the writer what to write in the paper. The hands-off tutoring style, as reflected Figure 2, does not suggest writing consultant supply directives. Most of the engagements focus on the consultant's questions or elaboration of the questions that

prompt the writer's response and attempt to fix the problem or come up with alternatives to resolve the issues. By engaging in the conversation and trying to find and correct the problem by themselves, the writers are likely to learn to self-edit their papers and become better writers. The

Figure 2: Negotiation process in the context of minimalist tutoring

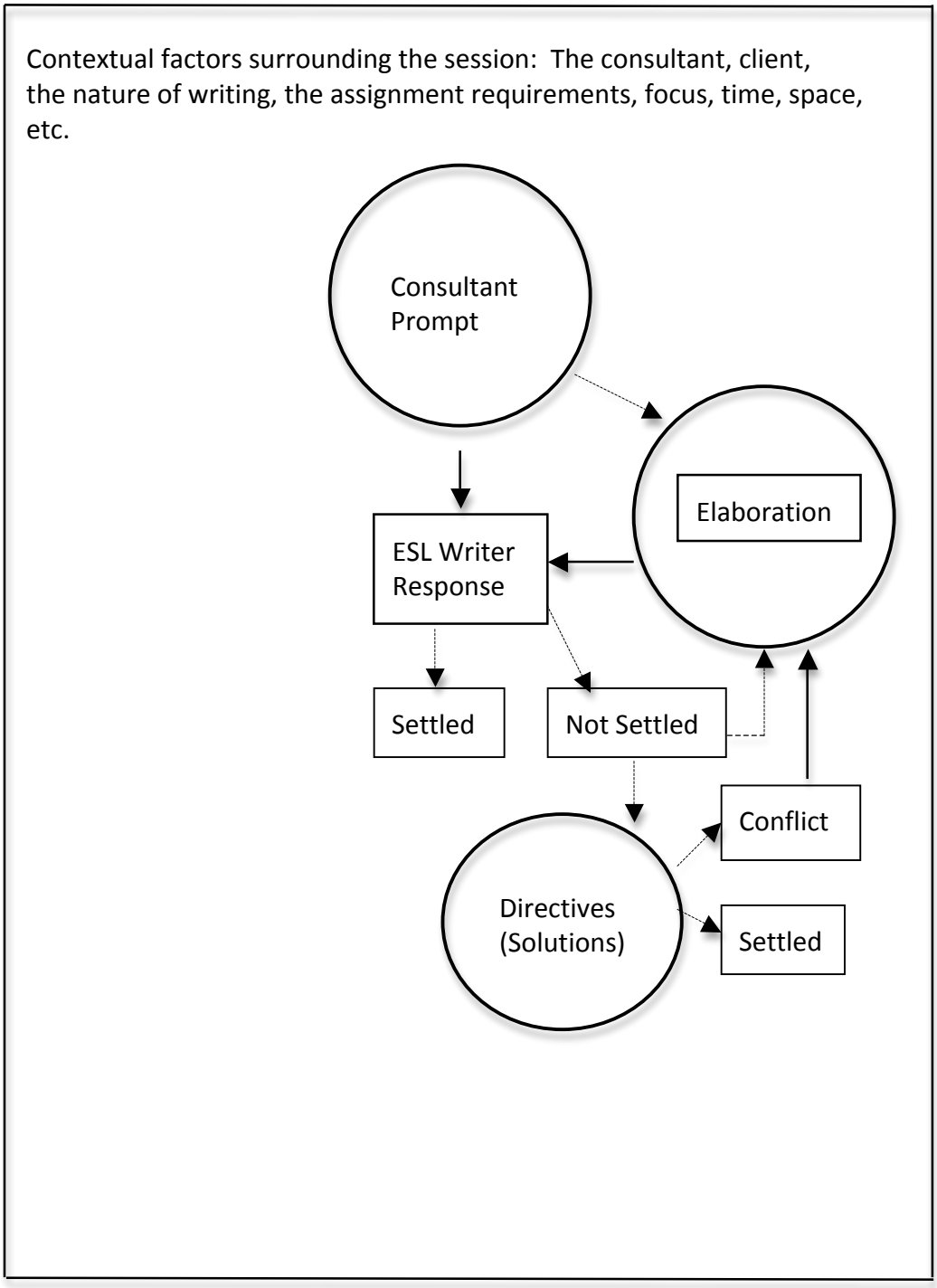


writer may leave the writing center with an imperfect paper, but he or she is more likely to learn more (Brooks, 1991), which is also represented in Figure 2. When the writer's hypothesis or alternative testing is confirmed and validated by the writing consultant, he or she has is attaining new knowledge and can possibly extend the learning to development. Though the writers are likely to become less dependent from the consultant in the context of minimalist tutoring, however, the missing component of "directives" in the process is equal to missing opportunities for more elaboration and interaction between the writer and consultant. As discussed in earlier sections, supplying directives and solutions to writers does not only settle the issue, but also offers the opportunities for further elaboration and for the writers to test alternatives, as well as the potential for the L2 writer's extension of learning. Next section discusses how directive tutoring alone works in the model.

**Directive Tutoring.** Directive tutoring is a reaction to the hands-off approach and is based on "the articulation of rhetorical processes in order to make literate disciplinary practice plain enough to be imitated, practiced, mastered, and questioned" (Shamoon & Burns, 1995, p. 146). The writing consultant identifies the problematic portions of the writer's text and provides correct or better solutions, which the writer is not capable of doing on his or her own. With the consultant's demonstration, the student, striving to become a proficient writer, can learn the knowledge, observe and emulate the process and strategy, question, and critique the writing consultant's suggestion or solutions. As also represented in Figure 3, directives can settle the issue, result in conflict that leads to more elaboration, or lead to an extension of learning for the writer. In the case of responding to ESL writers in a writing consulting session, writing center scholars advocate the more directive approaches to addressing ESL writers' particular concerns

with language and unfamiliarity with rhetorical patterns (Blau & Hall, 2002; Gillespie & Lerner, 2008; Harris & Silva, 1993;Powers, 1993). Nevertheless, the writing consultants' directives come with a risk of appropriating the ESL writer's original ideas and voices if not imposing

Figure 3: Negotiation process in the context of directive and guilt-free tutoring

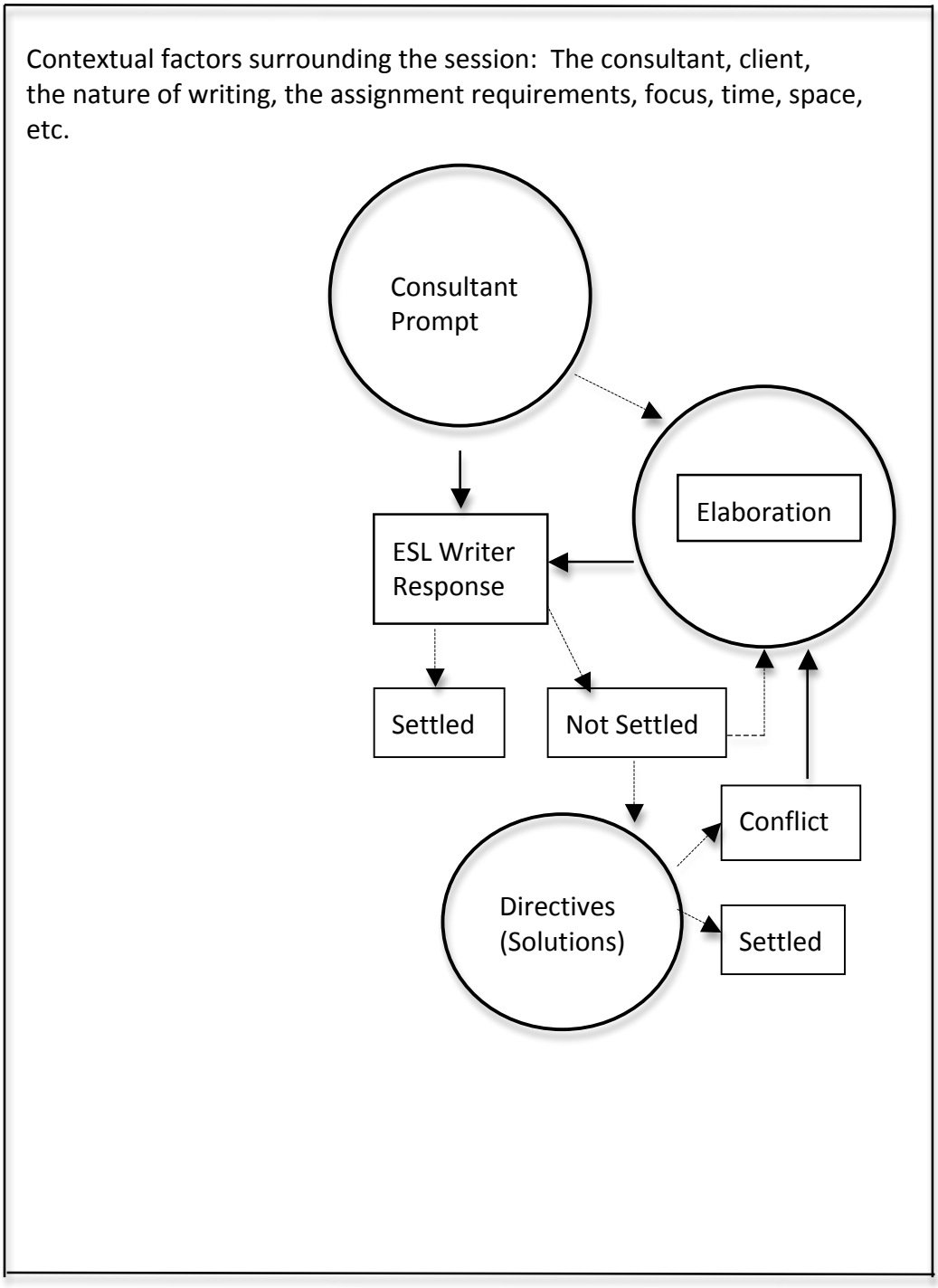


different ideas and voices to the writers. The conflict created by directive tutoring is not a desirable process for collaboration between the consultant and writer. Also, the missing opportunity for the writer's hypothesis generating and testing during the negotiation process implies less cognitive engagements for the writing during the consulting session.

**Directiveness as a continuum.** One approach does not fit all students and all situations, and not work for an entire session. In a single session, the consultant takes more than one approaches and sometimes plays more than one roles in working with the client to become a better writer. Being directive or not at a session is not one simple decision to make but depends on each issue that comes out of the writing and writer. The idea of directiveness as a continuum (Clark, 2001) is reflected upon the model and its components. A session can involve more than just directive or non-directive episodes and include all the negotiation mechanism during the process. As discussed based on the model, the elaboration mechanism allows the writing consultant to calibrate and recalibrate the best place to take a directive measure to settle the issue. There involves different degree of directiveness in the elaboration process, which functions in a recursive and interactive fashion during the consulting dyad's dialogues. As highlighted in Figure 4, a less sufficient response from ESL writer can fail to settle the issue and leads to either consultant's more explicit elaboration or directive comments, where directives might result in a conflict with writer's intended meaning and recur to more elaboration. This schema lends support to Clark (2001), who advocates directiveness in writing center consultation is not an absolute concept and there is a continuum of directiveness in writing center pedagogy. The model shows that the writing consultant's directiveness in consultation is more fluid than a fixed point in the continuum of directiveness within a negotiation episode. The dynamic process is also

attributed to how active the ESL writers are and how much knowledge the ESL writers have on a particular negotiation topic such as the verb forms and "agreement in consistency" in Excerpt #1.

Figure 4: Directiveness as a continuum throughout elaboration



## The Scaffolding Model and L2 Writing Research

The scaffolding model represents the conversation between writing consultants and L2 writers, which illustrates the schema of the increasing level of support from the writing consultants, based on the sociocultural theory of mind and collaborative dialogues for language learning. More examples are presented and discussed in Chapter Five for each dyad of this study. This section here focuses on the implication of the model in comparison with sociocultural constructs in previous studies of L2 writing research.

**Collaborative dialogues and LREs.** Based on a sociocultural theoretical perspective of learning, Swain and Lapkin (1995,1998, 2002) view dialogues between L2 learners as a tool in cognitive activity rather than merely exchanges of messages. They point out that collaborative dialogues engage L2 learners in mental processing and noticing their language output problem or knowledge gap. In their studies, collaborative dialogues and LREs function as an enactment of mental processes that mediate L2 learning: (a) generating alternatives (or hypothesis generation), (b) assessing alternatives (or hypothesis testing), and (c) applying rules or extending knowledge to new L2 context (Swain & Lapkin, 1998, p. 329). Given the different contexts between Swain and Lapkin's studies and this study (as discussed in Chapter Two), the dialogues inducing to the ESL writer's cognitive engagements that mediate L2 learning demonstrate similar and different functions, as depicted in the model.

In Swain and Lapkin's studies, L2 learners generate alternatives or hypotheses when problems arise while trying to produce correct L2 output for writing tasks. A learner's question or pushed output serves as hypotheses or alternatives and the other learner's responses serve to confirm or disconfirm the hypotheses or alternatives. The L2 learners use their own existing

knowledge to generate and assess alternatives and to create new knowledge as "joint construction of knowledge" (Swain & Lapkin, 1998, p. 330). The roles of L2 learners in collaborative writing are not fixed and either one of the dyad can be the role of expert to confirm or disconfirm a hypothesis, as the learners draw on their individual expertise and background to contribute to the co-construction of text. By co-constructing new knowledge, the L2 learners benefit from each other's scaffolded help with their own language learning. The L2 learners can either learn new knowledge or consolidate their existing knowledge. However, as Swain & Lapkin (1998) points out, L2 learners might experience "cognitive overload" (p. 331) during the complicated mental processes due to limited processing capacity and fall back on old knowledge or the higher frequent forms. Also, the agreement between two L2 learners after a wavering between alternatives is not always correct. Swain and Lapkin suggest teacher feedback be necessary to eliminate any remaining uncertainty or the wrong forms before the students can correctly extend the knowledge to new L2 contexts.

Based on the same sociocultural theoretical orientation toward viewing dialogues as a cognitive tool, the scaffolding schema of writing consultation shares similar functions of alternatives generating and testing, confirmation, as well as opportunities for extension of learning or application of knowledge in a new context. The ESL writers are also able to correct their own errors by themselves or question their own existing knowledge during the dialogical interaction with writing consultants. In writing consultation, the writing consultant plays a more explicit role of expert in assessing alternatives or hypotheses generated by L2 learners, since the writing consultant is considered an expert in both writing and the English language to the ESL writers. Therefore, alternatives generated by consultant are perceived by L2 learners as directives, while directives are also given to L2 learners in a more explicit manner, even though writing

consultants always tries to hedge their directives and maintain their peer relationship with the writers. For example, in Excerpt #2, the consultant provides an alternative by saying, "I would say 'in appearance'" in response to the L2 writer's alternative testing, "I am a typical Asian appearance." The L2 learner in the next Line adopts the consultant's alternative and tests a modified alternative, "in appearance, I am a typical Asian" which is immediately confirmed and accepted by the consultant. The agreement between the writing consultant and client is less likely to be wrong, though it can still be possible that the forms or knowledge agreed upon are inappropriate or incorrect for the L2 writer's writing.

In extending the knowledge confirmed by writing consultants to new L2 contexts such as different sentences or different intended meanings, the writing consultant still has the authority to monitor the development and provide crucial feedback functioning as "teacher feedback." In Swain and Lapkin's collaborative writing tasks, the L2 learners are not able to benefit from crucial feedback provided by a language authority for language development, but rely solely on learners' knowledge. That being said, it should be noted that, from sociocultural perspective of L2 learning, the dialogues themselves are the sources for language development, not the outside input.

**Sociocultural perspective of corrective feedback.** The issue of corrective feedback in L2 writing development is outside the scope of the major interests in this study; however, the nature of collaborative dialogues between writing consultants and L2 writers involve a notable amount of corrective feedback and focus on linguistic forms. In this study, the ESL writers are cognitively active in understanding comments and feedback on their writing, as seen in the excerpts when the ESL writers respond to the comments by attempting to fix the problems, elaborating their thought, noticing their problems, generating hypotheses, and even extending

their learning. The dialogues and collaborating process in the writing consultations allow the ESL writers to talk back and engage themselves in understanding and digesting the knowledge. The traditional written feedback lacks the opportunities for the learners to respond or ask for clarification and assurance in order to learn and develop. As researchers (e.g., Sachs & Polio, 2007) have pointed out, a factor in the controversy of written corrective feedback research is learners' noticing of the gap and understanding of feedback, which is hard to control by the experimental research design. From a sociocultural perspective, how individuals react to and use corrective feedback to change their interlanguage is more of the concern of language learning (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994).

In the scaffolding model of writing consultation, the writing consultant detects language problem and ask questions or provide comments for the L2 writer to resolve the issues before she issues directives, or corrective feedback, to resolve the language issue. The dialogical setting itself creates a context for L2 learners perceiving corrective feedback that is different from receiving written corrective feedback. L2 writers are cognitively active when working with writing consultants on their writing. Aljaafreh and Lantolf explain that "in a social configuration in which the tutor assumed the role of dialogic partner, the learner's orientation toward the task of finding errors in her essay changed" (1994, p. 472), which is labeled Level 1 in their regulatory scale. In the writing consulting context, the consultants' comments come with an illocutionary force for clients to do something with the issue being commented on. The L2 writers respond to the comments by thinking upon the issue and coming up with a solution or providing either more information about their decision-making or the intended meaning. There are mutual expectations derived from the consulting context that the L2 writers are expected to receive and respond to consultants' comments or questions on their writing. Aljaafreh and

Lantolf's also recognize the social contextual factor and describe the dialogic setting itself "represents the minimal form of otherderived help available to the leaner in the activity of error correction" (p.471), which can trigger learners' attempts at self-correction, or, in the model's terms, alternatives generating and testing.

To correct the language or resolve the issue, the model's elaboration process for writing consultants to calibrate L2 writer's knowledge base in order to provide an appropriate directive resembles the "narrowing strategy" in Aljaafreh and Lantolf's study when the tutor and learner are engaged in the collaborative correction. For example, in Excerpt #1,the writing consultant's initial comment, "*agreement in consistency*," in a more general term is to indicate that something is wrong is a segment, which is Level 3 in Aljaahfreh and Lantolf's regulatory scale. When the writing consultant elaborates on the initial comment and points out phrases "self-evaluation," "self-awareness," and "self-identify" in grammatical terms, "*noun*" and "*verb*," it is to narrow down the location of the error, indicate the nature of the error, and identify the error, which are labeled Levels 5, 6, and 7 in Aljaahfreh and Lantolf's regulatory scale. The tutor strategically increases the explicitness of corrective feedback, depending on the learner's response within the collaborative frame, which represents the range of the learner's ZPD. Aljaahfreh and Lantolf's regulatory scale focuses on the graduated nature of corrective feedback from implicit to explicit, while the scaffolding model of this study tries to reflect the recursive and non-linear nature of interaction during the scaffolding process. This study agrees on what Aljaafreh and Lantolf emphasizes, that effective corrective feedback and occurrence of language development depend on other individuals' mediation and dialogical co-construction of learners' ZPD. Corrective feedback provided in a learner's ZPD is relevant and can be used to change their interlanguage system for further development. In the scaffolding model, the extension of learning can only

happen after the learning occurs in the learner's ZPD, which Brooks & Swain (2009) call "good learning" from a sociocultural perspective of language development.

# CHAPTER FIVE

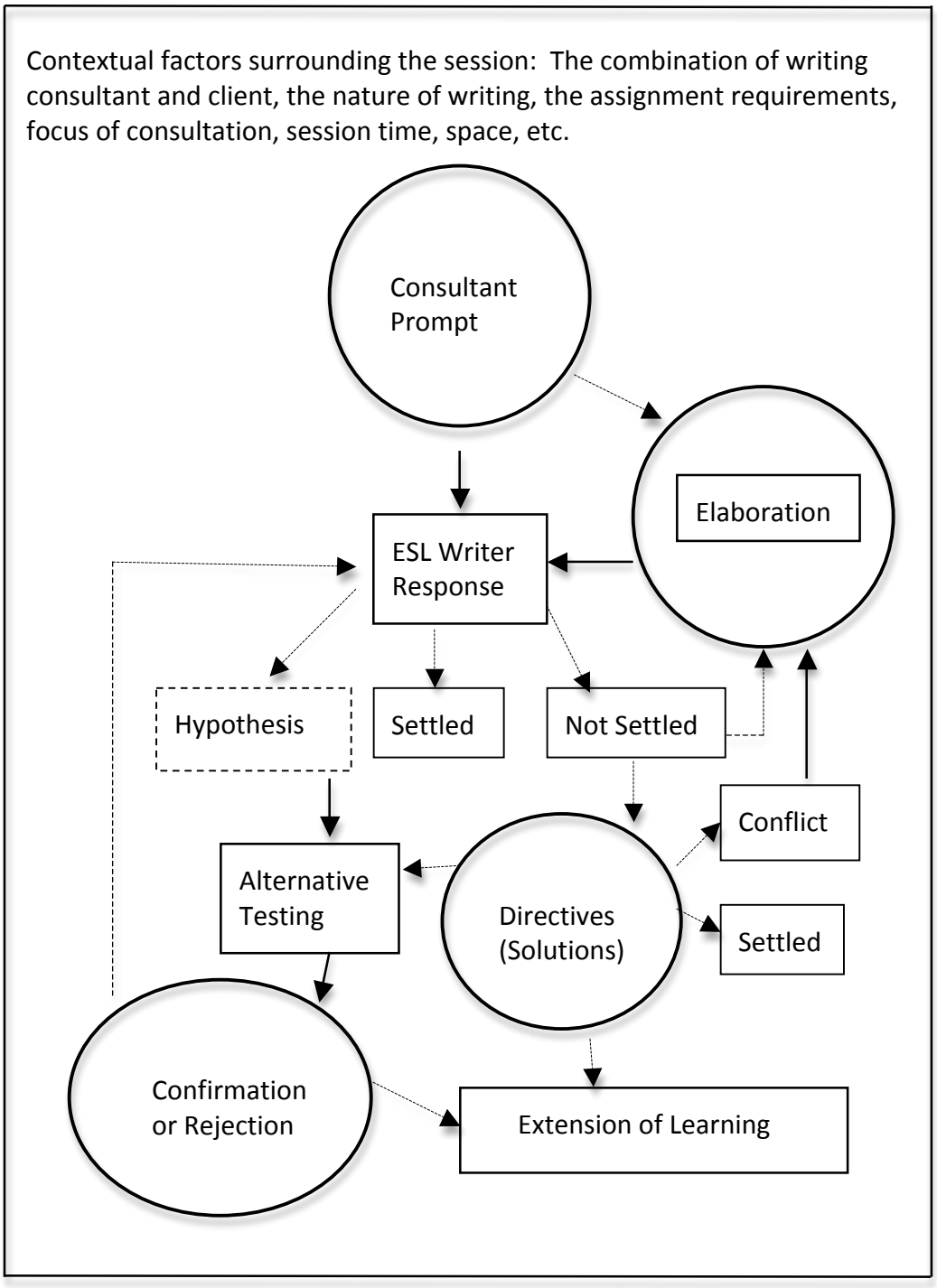
## LREs and Different Consulting Dyads

The process of a writing consulting session in a consultant-client dyad takes account of the contextual factors such as the focus of the session, the writing assignment in question, the consultant's experience, and the client's expectation. For negotiations of language with ESL writers, the consulting session still depends on the ESL writer's overall concern with language issues, the types of topics for negotiations of language, and the ESL writer's knowledge, experience, and personality. When we look at the LREs in different dyads, we are also considering those different contextual factors. The contextual factors come all together to add another layer to the dynamic of the consulting session and how LREs occur in the dyad, as highlighted in Figure 5.

The ESL writer's engagement in negotiating language is therefore co-influenced by how different consultants might have different practices of negotiation of language during writing consultations, which, likewise, could be affected by their professional background, experience with ESL writers, and personal consulting style. In this study, the dialogues between the ESL learners and native English-speaking writing consultants within writing consultation have resulted in plentiful negotiations of language issues including grammatical rules, lexical choices and other linguistic features. From the perspective of SLA, ESL writers' engagement in languaging and collaborative dialogues and functions of LREs may have positive effects on their L2 learning (Swain, 2006). This chapter focuses on examples of LREs in each different consulting dyad and addresses how the broader contexts factor in the negotiation of languages.

The following sections provide broader pictures of the dynamic in each dyad's interaction. I first describe the ESL writers' general expectations and perceptions of the Writing Center. Then, by

Figure 5: Contextual factors surrounding Language-Related Episodes



each dyad, I examine examples of LREs that occur in different dyads and discuss how the ESL writers' perceptions of the Writing Center and the writing consultant's interpretation and practice of writing center pedagogy create negotiation and learning of language for the different ESL writers.

**The Writing Center and ESL writers**

The ESL writers came to the Writing Center for the first time without much knowledge of how the writing center works. They might not even have specific questions in mind to ask consultants, but they had usually particular concerns about the understandability of their papers. The sense of uncertainty came from either their L2 production or the requirements of writing assignments. Before they came to the Writing Center, based on their own anticipation or even some misconception of writing center work, they expected writing consultants would help them identify and fix the problems, which did not always conform to writing center work. They would be surprised to be asked so many questions about their writing, often times beyond texts. The biggest surprise to the ESL writers in this study was their papers were not really "fixed" in the consulting sessions; instead, they got more work to do by themselves to make their papers more understandable. As one ESL writer, Vivian, expressed, "I felt I got more work to do after coming to the Writing Center. Every time I spent a few more hours after the appointment with Kate" (Vivian, Post-session interview, Session 2, September 25, 2009). The "unfixed" paper could be overwhelming if the writer did not expect more work on revision. Another participant, Siang said, "I didn't expect to change so much stuff in my paper… I have to think about those. I am not sure if I will revise all of them" (Siang, Post-session interview, Session 1, September 30, 2009).

Sometimes, the writer might expect to submit the paper after the session and not have time for revision. Another ESL writer, Wen, said, "I don't know. This paper is due before class today. In two hours. I wish I could have come earlier. Well, I might not change too much of the structure. But I am glad I came by and heard her comments" (Wen, Post-session interview, Session 2, October 13, 2009). Another ESL writer, Jane, expressed her delight in knowing how the Writing Center worked. She said, "it was fun to just talk. I feel I can learn a lot of knowledge from the writing consultant about academic writing in the U.S." (Jane, Post-session interview, Session 1, September 24, 2009). All the surprises and mismatches between their expectations and writing center work could actually give the ESL writers a better idea about how to use the Writing Center since they would have to continue to come back for the sake of participation in this study. Regardless of the potential mismatch between their initial expectations and writing center work, the ESL writers had the language concern that they were aware of or repeated by professors when they come to the Writing Center. In addition, after they come to the writing center, their unspoken concerns with the academic writing were also revealed in the consultations. Being engaged in the consultations, they became familiar and more comfortable with writing center approaches and learned to collaborate with the writing consultations throughout the duration of this study.

**The Different Dyads and LREs**

Each ESL writer brought with them to the writing consulting sessions their individual characteristics and diverse needs. The writing consultants in this study represented the Writing Center to the ESL writers and their personal styles affected how the ESL writers would perceive writing consultations and participate in the sessions. The following sections present those

different contextual factors in each of the consultation dyads and discuss the variety of LREs in their dialogues.

**Dyad #1: Wen and Ann.** The interaction between Wen and Ann during the writing consulting sessions tended to focus on the communication purpose of writing and the big picture of the writing assignment, rather than grammar or sentential level concerns. Ann had expressed in the preliminary interview that that her strength was looking at the bigger picture and her weakness was explaining grammar. Ann's understanding of Wen's paper organization and meanings could largely alleviate Wen's concerns with erroneous sentences. When Wen came to the Writing Center for the first time, she did not really know what to expect from the writing consultant, but she had the fundamental concerns with errors and mistakes in her writing. She said in the preliminary interview, "there must be some mistakes a native speaker can find in my writing" [Translation from Chinese] (Preliminary interview, September 18, 2009). She was very pleased to hear that her paper actually made sense to an American doctoral student who was not even in her field. She expressed, "if a native English speaker like Ann told me she could totally understand what I was trying to say in the paper and saw how my content development worked, I wouldn't be too concerned with the grammar issues" [Translation from Chinese] (Wen, Post-session interview, Session 1, October 6, 2009). She had more than once expressed, "I felt good that my writing was understandable!" For Ann, she felt she could communicate with Wen and exercise her strength on paper organization and content development, which she expressed in the post session interview:

> [U]m, she seemed like a really nice person, and she seemed easy to communicate with, like she was, um, like interested and willing, you know, she wasn't... she didn't come in here with a very firm idea, like, "this is what I want and this is

> what you're going to do for me," so it was lot easier, it wasn't like, when you work with someone who has this very strict idea in their head of like, what the Writing Center's for, and then you need to kind of bend that idea a little bit without being like, you know, it wasn't like that. I think she seemed like, just a really, like relaxed and easy to talk to person, so, so it's nice. (Ann, Post-session interview, October 6, 2009)

The interaction between Wen and Ann had been very successful and positive. Wen had been very comfortable with Ann's approach and she was receptive to Ann's idea. Ann was able to impart the ideas of organization and audience to Wen. Though Wen had her concern with grammatical errors in her papers, she also adapted to working with Ann. At her third session with Ann, she brought in an atypical assignment without as many texts as her research paper, but she knew she could get some helpful comments. She explained in the post-session interview:

> When I brought this in, I knew it might not be an appropriate type of paper [annotated bibliography] to discuss. But anyway, I'd like to have a reader's opinions on my paper every time before I Line it in. I'd like to see how it flows or any mistakes to be corrected. Like she just told me the connection between the two paragraphs was not clear. She also explained to me the typical format of an annotated bibliography. My professor did not really tell us that. [Translation from Chinese] (Wen, Post-session interview, Session 3, October 20, 2009).

At later sessions, Wen also brought in different types of assignments such as meeting agenda. Language concerns became less the main focus in her questions for Ann. LREs became almost noticeably absent in this dyad.

***LREs in Wen and Ann***. Language concerns with writing had been expressed by Wen in

her preliminary interview as well as during the writing consultations with Ann, though she agreed on the communicative purpose of writing. She thought there must be some grammatical errors to be fixed in her paper regardless how the content was. Ann, the writing consultant, had her approach to dealing with the language issues and grammar concerns by keeping language and grammar as lower order concerns in the consultation. She admitted she was not very good at engaging the conversation about grammar and inclined to focusing on other "bigger" issues such as content and organization. The negotiation of language between Wen and Ann was mostly meaning-driven; that is, the issue was not addressed until the meaning became unclear to Ann, the reader. In Wen and Ann's sessions, there were occasions where they had to negotiate the meaning for correct language use. In the following example (Excerpt #3), Wen brought in a team-project memo assignment. She explained the purpose of the project in her writing.

(Passage discussed in Excerpt #3, Team project memo, EAD813, December 15, 2009)

*The purpose of this project is to create an Inquiry-Driven Improvement Team in Maple Elementary School. Team members are going to have 6 meetings at the end of the semester and each meeting takes about 1 hour to complete certain improvement work. This project covers the agendas of six meetings and required resources for each meeting. In each meeting, team members are going to investigate each strategy of Inquiry-Driven Improvement. By completing this project, we expect to develop the future classroom observation protocol and the rough improvement system in Maple Elementary School.*

Excerpt #4: Wen and Ann, Session 6, December 15, 2009

1. **Ann**: Seems pretty straightforward. There are a couple tiny things in here (.) So there was um – "*one hour to complete certain improvement work*." The word "*certain*" seems weird to me here (.){Consultant comment; prompt}

Like, you mean specific kinds of improvement work? (.) Because "*certain*" has two meanings, it can be like a specific thing, or it can be like that's definitely - like "*I'm certain*." {Elaboration}

2. **Wen**: OH, have to do it, something like that. {ESL writer response}
3. **Ann**: Right, right.
4. **Wen**: Here I mean we have the task. There is some task for the team members. {Elaboration}
5. **Ann**: Okay, well here you could probably just say "the improvement work" or "specific improvement work" if you wanted *the* (…) {Directives: suggestions}
6. **Wen**: "*The*." That will be good.

(The excerpt continues below)

Ann pointed out "a couple tiny things" of language issue that could confuse the meaning, although she did not explicitly say those tiny things would impede comprehension. She asked a clarification question and elaborated on the issue of the word *certain* (Line 1), by specifically asking Wen what she meant by the word. Here, Ann provided two alternatives for Wen's consideration: "it can be like a specific thing, or it can be like that's definitely." Based on Ann's explanation of the meanings of the word *certain*, Wen responded and tried to clarify the potential confusion in her use of *certain* by saying, "have to do it" (Line 2). Ann responded, "right, right" (Line 3), which acknowledged Wen's response and allowed Wen to continue and explain further her intended meaning with the phrase *certain improvement work* (Line 4). Wen's elaboration on her intended meaning with the use of *certain* corresponded to Ann's first meaning of "certain" being "a specific thing," which helped Ann provide explicit suggestions of language that could be more precise. In Line 5, following the non-directive consulting approach, Ann also use

multiple hedges in her directives by saying "you could probably just say" (Line 5). Wen was able to decide on a solution to resolve the issue with Ann's help with the alternatives (Line 6). Wen and Ann collaborated on clarifying the meaning and Ann's suggestions "scaffolded" Wen's process of self-correction. As the dialogue continued, Ann again pointed out a language issue with the phrase *rough improvement system* that confused her.

7. **Ann**: Okay, cool. The only other thing that I wasn't sure about was down here you mentioned "*by completing this project we expect to develop a future classroom observation protocol and the rough improvement system*." (.){Consultant Comment; prompt} So "*rough improvement system*" was something I wasn't familiar with. Is that a terminology you use in class? {Elaboration}
8. **Wen**: Just like (.) now in our school there is no material or there is no such system to maintain our school. {ESL writer's response}
9. **Ann**: So there's no improvement system right now.{Comment: confirmation request}
10. **Wen**: That's right, there is no improvement system. {ESL writer's response}
    And after this project we will create a rough one, and then we will just keep doing it.{Elaboration}
11. **Ann**: So I think you would probably want to use the word "*a*" instead of "*the*." {Directive: suggestion}
    Because "*the*" makes it refer to like, there was some sort of specific criterion for it. {Elaboration}
    Okay (…) So that makes perfect sense to me.{Confirmation}
    ( Excerpt #3, Wen and Ann, Session 6, December 15, 2009)

Ann commented on the confusing sentence and went on to elaborate her comment and ask a clarification question "Is that a terminology you use in class?" (Line 7). Wen responded to Ann's question (Line8) and Ann made a confirmation request (Line 9). Wen and Ann were negotiating the meaning confused by the language. In responding to Ann's questions, Wen elaborated on her intention and made the meaning clearer. In Line 10, she clarified her meaning (*a* vs. *the*) in her explanation by saying "we will create a rough one." Wen's elaboration on her meaning helped Ann understand the meaning and provide an explicit directive, which she framed as a suggestion by hedging the statement " So I think you would probably want to use the word 'a' instead of 'the'" with the modal "would" and adverb "probably." Ann went on to provide more information about how she got confused by the article *the* and reassured Wen of the solution *a* (Line 11).

Ann tended to focus on the language issues that affected meanings, which were mostly about word choices or lexical issues. During their sessions, though Ann avoided talking about grammar, the (scaffolding) context of dialogical interaction created collaborative learning opportunity for the writer's linguistic knowledge. The LREs in Wen and Ann's dialogues are mostly lexis-based LREs, where there is "communication breakdown" by confusing lexical choices from the ESL writer, Wen. Through the LREs, Wen became able to see the potential confusion in her language choices and, with Ann's response and comments, she could clarify it for the reader.

Sometimes, though, language concern could be brought up by the ESL writer, Wen. Even though Wen might not have a specific question to ask about her language concern, she still had the language concern with her writing. At an earlier session, when Wen had an opportunity to express her concern with her paper, she indicated her fundamental concern with grammar, as seen in Line 5 of the exchange below. Ann repeated her own approach to addressing language

issue with Wen without attempting to explicitly explain rules for the identified grammatical errors. This example shows how an occasion of language issue might not be developed as an LRE in this dyad.

(Passage discussed in Excerpt #4, Wen, reading response, EAD813, October 6, 2009)

*But workers can also be haled back by an unsupportive environment. Rare of them are able to spend enough time and effort in schooling.*

Excerpt #4: Wen and Ann, Session 1, October 6, 2009

1. **Wen**: I think I will just go home and keep doing that.
2. **Ann**: Okay.
3. **Wen**: Yeah. This assignment will be due tomorrow, but, yeah. So I have to finish it, and yeah::
4. **Ann**: Okay, okay.
5. **Wen**: And I want to know(.) is there any grammar mistake I need to correct?
6. **Ann**: There were just little things with the word form in the prepositions, but nothing that really affected meaning, like, I think you're, you know, it's for the most part working really well. (.) There was, I think you meant "held back" here. {comment; directive}
7. **Wen**: Held.
8. **Ann**: Which is like that.((Ann wrote down the word “held” on the paper.)) {Elaboration}
9. **Wen**: Okay.
10. **Ann**: Um, so sometimes that happens when the wrong word is, you know, because they sound so similar. So that was something that stood out to me. Every once in a while the word you use was kind of funny, but I think we talked about a few of those already. And

a lot of times when I read, um, for non-native speakers, I'll change things when I'm reading, because it's easier for me. {Elaboration}

11. **Wen**: Oh.

When Ann pointed out a language problem in Line 6 by saying "I think you meant 'held back'," there was an opportunity for an LRE to develop. Ann elaborated on her comment by literally writing down the word to show Wen. However, as soon as Wen repeated the alternative proposed by Ann in Line 7, Ann confirmed the correction and did not pursue the language-related discussion further to uncover Wen's misuse of the word or her linguistic knowledge. Instead, Ann elaborated on her understanding of Wen's mistake (Line 10) and she shared her own theory of how errors are made by L2 learners and mitigated Wen's misuse of the word "*haled*" and excused one of Wen's errors in Line 10 by saying "because they sound so similar." Here the brief exchanges on "held" shows the beginning level of Wen's ZPD on this word, but Ann did not focus on expanding the ZPD by scaffolding Wen's knowledge. Ann's directive resolved the issue fairly quickly and focus on how she, a native English speaker, might perceive the such a mistake in a non-native speaker's writing.

Ann's approach was apparently in compliance with what was specified in *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors*, "Take pain to put ESL writers at ease" and "Try not to focus on the mechanical and grammatical errors in the paper." In addition to remaining patient with ESL writers and being lenient on ESL writers' grammatical errors, it appeared that the writing consultant, Ann, had her own theory on SLA, which might be also the driving force of her approach to dealing with ESL language issues.

12. **Ann**: and we can't always talk about it, because (…)

13. **Wen**: Mhm::

14. **Ann**: I don't always know how to explain it, so (.) just by hearing it, like the repetition, might be helpful, because like you said=
15. **Wen**: [Mhm::]
16. **Ann**: [=you learn] by mimicking
17. **Wen**: Yeah.

Ann repeated her own theory of SLA and referred back to Wen's earlier saying "learning by imitating," and Wen agreed. Instead of engaging in a potential LRE that would be beneficial for Wen's language learning, the dyad seemed to be co-constructing and solidifying Ann's "folk theory" of SLA. Ann's hypothesis was hereby supported by an L2 learner's experience.

18. **Ann**: So I'm just going to read it the way that makes more sense to me
19. **Wen**: Okay.
20. **Ann**: So every once in a while (.) you probably heard, I saw you writing, like, if I changed the wording, so I'll do that with like, prepositions or words that I'm like, I have to pause or something, so, um, that might be useful sometimes (.) Sometimes I write it. If you read, I'll write it.
21. **Wen**: Oh.
22. **Ann**: Um, because they're not things we can really talk about (.) things that are useful to you. Because here we like to give you things that help your writing skills, you know, that you can take and practice yourself.
23. **Wen**: Mhm::

In Line 22, Ann also invoked writing center pedagogy and spoke for the Writing Center by saying "here we like to give you things that help your writing skills." She imparted the goal of creating better writers to Wen when addressing Wen's concern with grammar in her paper,

which made her approach to dealing with grammar very transparent to Wen. Ann explained why she was not able to explain rules and why she should not do that either, as is also evident in the continued dialogue below.

24. **Ann**: And so with these things, like, when there's not a written rule (.) and I don't know the rule. You know, I don't know why, so I can't explain why I'm using the "*of*" instead of the word "*in*" I can just say, "*that* one sounds funny and *this* one sounds good."
25. **Wen**: Okay.
26. **Ann**: And so (.) in those kind of situations, it's not really useful for me, you know(.) to go through your paper and change them all, because you're not gonna learn anything from that.
27. **Wen**: Oh. (Excerpt #4,Wen and Ann, Session 1, October 6, 2009)

It is clear to see that Ann's practice of writing center pedagogy focuses on ideas and content as higher-order concerns rather than language and grammatical rules. Wen was receptive to the ideology, and she felt more confident in her writing as she learned that some grammatical errors could be minor issues in her papers. In the post-session interview, Wen expressed, "I know it's hard for native speakers to explain grammar sometimes, but their understanding of my paper is more important for me" (Post-session interview, October 6, 2009). The consultant's philosophy and the client's expectation of the consultation appeared to work out very well, though LREs did not occur very often to this dyad in such a context.

**Dyad # 2: Feng and Diana.** While Feng was an extreme rule-based learner and wanted explanation for everything and Diana thought that was her job as a writing consultant to work with clients on their needs, their consultation often got stuck in rules explanations. Feng had learned English by rules for the last 15 years. She wanted the rules to be explained and felt more

comfortable only if she knew the rules. She was very pleased to see the writing consultant, Diana, was trying to explain rules to her instead of just saying "that's how native speakers write." She expressed, "Diana was very nice and I enjoyed the discussion with her. Though she couldn't explained everything to me, but I felt she really tried" [Translation from Chinese] (Feng, Post-session interview, Session 1, October 1, 2009). She was happy with how Diana explained the rules by giving more examples and contexts for language uses. "She is American and it's natural she doesn't know the rules, but her explanation helped me to understand the concepts somehow" [Translation from Chinese] (Feng, Post-session interview, Session 1, October 1, 2009). For Diana, she was under the pressure to explain the rules and to use the technical terms to talk about grammar, as expressed in the interviews, Excerpt #5:

Excerpt # 5: Scott and Diana, Post-session interview, Session 1, October 1, 2009

1. **Diana**: Yeah. I feel a little nervous, a little under pressure about that. Because I don't want her to think negatively of me. And you know, I want my client to be happy; it's my job.
2. **Scott**: What's the most challenging part for you?
3. **Diana**: Feeling like an idiot! When people have questions that I can't answer, I write them down. I've never had a client ask me so many questions that I can't answer! I guess I'm not used to examining parts of speech so closely.
4. **Scott**: Do you think those things really matter for her writing skills?
5. **Diana**: I mean, I think that's the way she understands writing, and I think that's the way either she forms sentences or forms sentences. I think her understanding of the English language is very much based on parts of speech, so in order to effectively work with her, (.) I need to brush up on my parts of speech.

Feng had overall focus on language issues and grammatical rules. While Diana always tried to oblige her request, sometimes she was not able to provide a satisfactory answer. Below is a typical example, Excerpt # 6. Diana tried to clarify the problems before providing suggestions. Diana was not able to explain her suggestion to Feng in terms of grammar (Line 7).

(Passage discussed in Excerpt #6, Feng, case report, PIM881, November 19, 2009)

*... three types: fans (highly loyal to one or a couple of singers), music lovers (frequent buying music products, but not especially admiring specific singers), and occasional visitors at music stores.*

Excerpt# 6: Feng and Diana, Session 4, November 19, 2009

1. **Diana**: Ok, so here, you say fans who are highly loyal to one or a couple of the singers. Essentially, that's what you're saying, right? And music lovers who are frequent buying music products." I might say "frequent buyers"(.) {Consultant prompt; directive}
2. **Feng**: If we use "we are," I think(.) {ESL writer response}
3. **Diana**: Because in your parenthesis, you're essentially saying fans who are highly loyal to one or two singers, and then(.) {Elaboration}
4. **Feng**: I just want to compare buying and admiring. {Elaboration}
5. **Diana**: I would say "frequent buyers of music products, but not especially admiring". and then(.) {Directive}
6. **Feng**: Can use "admiring"? {Hypothesis testing}

7. **Diana**: Yeah. " (.)especially admiring of specific singers." Because in this context... I don't know how to explain that. I'm sorry(.) Yeah, the gerunds always screw me up. Yeah, I'm sorry. I don't know why. {Directive}
8. **Feng**: It's ok.

In this case, Feng did not pursue further the explanation from Diana. She later explained in the post-session interview that she thought "admiring" was a present participle, but not a gerund. Despite that Diana was not always able to provide grammatical rules to her, Feng had benefitted from Diana's consultation and get an "American student's" opinion. She later brought in different projects including Powerpoint slides and an assignment sheet to discuss with Diana without focusing on language or grammar issues. In the case when Feng had problems working on a team project with other American students, she did not understand why her work and suggestions were denied by her American teammates. She hoped Diana would help her figure out maybe some of the cultural rhetoric things that Feng believed existed. At the consulting session, instead of bringing in the project report, she brought in the PowerPoint slides of her team work and only asked questions about how her ideas could fit in American way of thinking. Feng expressed, "I know Diana is the perfect person to give me some insights into American understanding of my presentation" (Post- session interview, December 3, 2009). Feng had her own agenda not on grammar but on a broader issue, and Diana collaborated with her on that. Following is an excerpt of the session:

Excerpt# 7: Feng and Diana, Session 5, December 3, 2009

1. **Feng**: I think the most difficult part for me is how to compile this information. We collect enough information, but before discussing with you, I don't know how to bring it this way and why they disagree with me. Now I found a (.) I guess this structure is better than their imagination.
2. **Feng**: Do have any other comments?
3. **Diana**: There was one thing. One very very small, arbitrary thing. Right here. There's an apostrophe there. One very tiny thing. Yeah, that was the only thing I noticed.
4. **Feng**: I guess our professor maybe found it, too. He just didn't mention it when we did the presentation. Or maybe he realized that, too.
5. **Diana**: But yeah, it looks good.
6. **Diana**: Are you the only girl in the group?
7. **Feng**: Yeah.
8. **Diana**: I'm sorry!
9. **Feng**: Thank you very much. I have much more confidence in writing this paper.

For the writing consultant, Diana, she was a bit surprised that Feng did not focus on grammar issue at all, though she was pleased to see Feng looking at broader issues and happy to collaborate with her, as she responded in the interview:

Excerpt # 8: Scott and Diana, Post-session interview, Session 5, December 3, 2009

1. **Scott**: So what did you think of today's session.
2. **Diana**: It was fine. It was weird, it was different. It wasn't really like... writing, you know, and she didn't really have a... I feel like we didn't really... do anything (.)
3. **Diana**: Yeah, I feel like we accomplished what we wanted to accomplish.

Feng and Diana was an interesting dyad. Both of them were sincere to work with each other. Diana tried her best to put Feng at ease during the session, while Feng was very active in participating and trying to get the best out of the sessions. Therefore, in this context, their LREs were long and winding before they could reach an agreement and resolve a language issue.

***LREs in Feng and Diana***. Feng, the ESL writer, admitted she was a strong rule-based learner. She wanted to know all the rules and explanation. When it came to vocabulary, she wanted to get rid of her "Chinglish" and still have authentic and "beautiful" words in English, those beyond her current level. In her consultation with Diana, she had an overall focus on grammar and language. Diana, a less experienced undergraduate writing consultant, took the general non-directive approach and tried to work with Feng on her concern with language and her interest in learning the rules. LREs appeared in abundance in their collaborative dialogues. Sometimes, though, there were cases when the language issue was not settled because of lack of linguistic knowledge or certainty on both sides of the consulting dyad; nevertheless, the function of "noticing" in LREs was evident, as seen in the following example, Excerpt #9. Feng was working on a case report about marketing strategies. Diana brought up the grammar issues in the text and tried to get Feng's attention to the errors. Feng was actively engaged in the conversation and uncovered some problems of her understanding of the rules that might have gone unnoticed.

(Passage discussed in Excerpt #9, Feng, case report, PIM 881, October 1, 2009)

*Sally needs to consider that her 10% investment on the average outstanding accounts receivable may fluctuates. Depending on the market she may earns less or more*.

Excerpt #9: Feng and Diana, Session 1, October 1, 2009

1. **Diana**: There are a few things. um (.) the first thing I notice is your verb conjugations. In there, you say "*may fluctuates*" and here "*she may earns*" um. And that and you just have *something accounts* may fluctuate right? (.) {Consultant prompt: clarification question}
2. **Feng**: Oh, is that outstanding receivable? Ah, this is one of my big problems (…) ((nodding)) {ESL writer response}
3. **Diana**: OK, is this "on the average outstanding receivable account"? {Comment: confirmation request}
4. **Feng**: um. Um.
5. **Diana**: OK, then you have to move receivable between outstanding and account. {Directives: rules}
6. **Feng**: Ah, in fact, that is a term in accounting. It's accounts receivable, but I don't know how the adjective (…) Oh wait a minute, I know you mean…whether it's single ((singular)) or plus ((plural))? {Elaboration: ESL writer response}
7. **Diana**: yeah.

(The excerpt continues below)

Starting in Line 1, after Feng read aloud the paper, Diana explicitly pointed out the parts in the sentence that she thought ungrammatical, that is, *may fluctuates* and *may earns*, and then asked a clarification question. In her question, "you just have something accounts may fluctuate right?" she recast the ungrammatical forms "may fluctuate" but Feng, in Line 2, did not notice the correction of language but responded to the question, "something accounts may fluctuate, right?" This question made Feng perceive *accounts receivable* as a problem and prompted her long-time question about the rule of combining adjective and noun in English. She explained later in the post-session interview that she always knew adjective comes before noun but she had been

confused by seeing some instances when noun comes before adjective. Based on Feng's response that expressed her "big problems," Diana made a confirmation request on her understanding of Feng's problem, "Is this on the average outstanding receivable account?" (Line 3). At that point, Feng confirmed in Line 4, and Diana provided a directive rule (Line 5). The issue could have been settled if Diana's statement was correct. However, that was special terminology, in Line 6, Feng remembered *accounts receivable* as an accounting term. Diana's directive came into conflict with not just Feng's use of the word but the field of accounting's use of the word. Feng rejected Diana's alternative, but she tried to figure out what was wrong with the fragment *accounts receivable may fluctuates* that Diana was questioning about, as she said "but I don't know how the adjective (…)" (Line 6). Then, Feng seemed to attribute the problem to a question of whether the subject "accounts" is singular or plural, saying "I know you mean…whether it's single or plus?" At this turn, Feng seems to be trying to figure out what the problem is, not generating hypotheses about how to solve it.. Apparently, Diana was not sure what Feng's focus was when Diana responded "Yeah" without answering or commenting on Feng's question (Line 7).

8. **Feng**: OH! (.) maybe you are right. Maybe this one ((accounts)) is noun and this one ((receivable)) is adjective, so I have two adjectives based on this noun… {Elaboration; hypothesis}
9. **Diana**: Right, exactly. So, accounts *may fluctuate*. And depending on the market she may, this will just be she *may earn* {Confirmation; Directives}

(The excerpt continues below)

Feng continued in Line 8 to figure out the syntactic relationship between noun and adjective in

this sentence and came up with a hypothesis that would make sense to Diana's earlier explanation of the rule, "you have to move receivable between outstanding and account." Feng was still preoccupied with the Diana's question on *accounts receivable may fluctuates* and her question about combining noun and adjective in a phrase, though she knew accounts receivable was an accounting term. In Line 9, Diana quickly gave confirmation on Feng's hypothesis of "two adjectives based on this noun", and re-directed Feng's attention back to the verb forms by providing directive changes on the other issue *may fluctuate* and *may earns*, which would potentially settle all the issues in the sentence (Line 9). That is, so far it looks as if this problem is being discussed as if it were a subject-verb agreement problem. In Lines 8 and 9, Feng was still trying to figure out what Diana's problem was with her sentence but did not quite focus on the problem with *may fluctuates*, which seemed the main problem Diana was looking at. Diana's directive change to *may fluctuate* and *may earn* triggered another long-time question that Feng had about the part of speech of "may" and Feng further explored the rule. The following exchanges show how Feng and Diana negotiated their knowledge and understanding of "may" as a modal verb.

10. **Feng**: Um(.) how to judge is this kind of adverb or it's kind of verb ((modal verb))? {ESL writer response: question}
11. **Diana**: Honestly I don't know. {Consultant response: unsatisfactory}
12. **Feng**: Just like must or need or could, something like that? {Elaboration}
13. **Diana**: Yeah, *she could earn*, *she might earn*, *she will earn*, any of those, yeah, that's a very good analogy. {Consultant response}
14. **Feng**: Yeah, is that (.) I think it's kind of tricky for me, because *may* (.) I have two types of understanding. First, I think it's kind of adverb. The other is verb ((modal verb)) just

like *must*, *might*, *should*. (.) So in this situation, I am not sure about it's first or second. How do I judge? {Elaboration: question}

15. **Diana**: Well, 'might' or 'could'... those are going to be followed by another verb, right? So you would put these *'she might earn*,' *'she may earn*,' or *'she could earn*.' Do you see what I'm saying?{Response; elaboration}

(The excerpt continues below)

Diana gave direct corrections "may fluctuate" and "may earn" to settle the issue, but in 10, Feng applied her existing knowledge and initiated the question about the part of speech of "may." So here it is Feng who takes the lead and initiates an expansion of the current LRE. From Lines 10 to 15, Feng actively elaborated on her understandings of "may" and was very explicit and firm about the usage of "may" as either a modal verb or an adverb. However, Diana did not know how to explain the part of speech of "may", as she explicitly admitted it in Line 11. Diana seemed not able to understand what Feng was trying to explain, as she responded in Line 13, "Yeah, *she could earn*, *she might earn*, *she will earn*, any of those, yeah, that's a very good analogy." At this point, Feng was trying to get assistance from Diana to fill the gap of her knowledge, though her understanding of "may" as being either a modal verb or adverb was wrong. It is interesting that Feng was scaffolding Diana to understand the question, while Diana tried to work with Feng by giving examples of the usage of a modal verb.[3] In fact, Feng did not perceive her *may fluctuates* and *may earns* as being grammatically wrong because in her mind she had a wrong rule about the part of speech of "may". She thought "may" could be both modal verb or adverb; if *may* was be an adverb in this case, these verb forms would be correct. Therefore, she was not able to follow Diana's earlier comment on *may fluctuates* and *may earns*

[3] A reader calls this "the blind leading the blind."

immediately. From the perspective of sociocultural theory of mind, by interaction with Diana, Feng extended her knowledge to a different context and a new level of discussion, as she started commenting on her own knowledge of the modal verb, "may," and revealed her confusion of the usage. Unfortunately so far she did not receive necessary assistance from the other speaker to move forward her knowledge. The conversation continues as follows:

16. **Feng**: Sorry, I didn't catch up with you. But in this situation, the sentence has another word, just like this: "*she may earns*," so I think this is adverb so I use this.{Elaboration}
17. **Diana**: Gotcha. I'm with you. I understand.{Response}
18. **Feng**: But I totally confused about which situation. Maybe professor think *"may"* here is a verb, so no 's.' {Elaboration}
19. **Diana**: In that context, I don't know(.) In this context, I see what you mean about the adverb thing. I'm just thinking, do adverbs always come before or after? The answer is, 'she carefully watches,' 'she watches carefully.' Either way works. I think that's something that I'm going to have to look up and tell you later. {Response/Elaboration}

(Excerpt #9, Feng and Diana, Session 1, October 1, 2009)

Feng stated the false rule explicitly and firmly (Line 14 and 16), which made Diana confused and ambivalent about the usage and she finally "gotcha" (Line 17) and seemed able to understand Feng's explanation.. In Line 19, Diana tried to understand the false rule and ended up thinking of something different, as she said "I'm just thinking, do adverbs always come before or after?" (Line 19). Not being able to explain the rules and answer Feng's question, Diana offered that she would look for the answers and temporarily put the issue aside. It is not unusual for writing consultants to seek external resource in order to provide better assistance or tools. This example

demonstrates a negotiation on language issue between the writing consultant and the ESL writer, where the writing consultant does not have enough technical knowledge of grammar to end the negotiation with an agreement with the writer and could potentially create confusion for the ESL writers who keep rigid rules in mind. Nevertheless, the Writing Center's dialogical approach in writing consultation allows the ESL writer to explore and attest her own grammar knowledge and collaborate with writing consultant on discovering knowledge. In this case, though it was false knowledge and the extension of knowledge was not successfully assisted and confirmed positively by the consultant, the extension of discussion leading to later learning of correct knowledge about "may" could be another form of "development" for Feng. However, the writing consultant's disadvantage in lacking the technical knowledge of grammar might have contributed to keeping the conversation and discussion going, which, from LREs' perspective, continues the enactment of mental processing for the ESL writer. This episode also resembles the LREs between peer L2 learners in Swain and Lapkin's studies (1995, 1998, 2002), where both sides can talk about their understanding of the linguistic forms and usage and, therefore, have the opportunities to notice their knowledge gaps. Later in the post-session interview, Feng commented on this particular issue and looked up the word in the dictionary. That was when she realized she had been using "may" wrongly for her last 15 years since high school. In the post-session interview, Feng explained, "I could literally remember when I learn this rule in junior high school. Maybe it was wrong when I mistakenly learned it, but I never thought it was wrong! It's so strange" ( Post-session interview, October 1, 2009). Although this particular LRE did not directly lead to a resolution of Feng's problem, it did indirectly lead to Feng's reformulating a false hypothesis. In that sense, this could show the how dialogues may cause learners to "question their language use" even when they do not supply the correct form. It is also worth

noting that Feng herself took the initiative to check on this question rather than waiting for Diana's answer.

Below is an example in which Diana provides explicit suggestions while Feng is negotiating better phrases to express her original meaning. In Excerpt #10, Feng, the ESL writer, brought in a case report assignment. It was a one-page essay, in which she discussed the market of music industry.

(Passage discussed in Excerpt#10, Feng, case report, PIM881, November 19, 2009)

*Whitney Houston confronts with competition from the other three "queens", younger famous domestic singers, rushing-in new singers, and other influential singers from other countries.* [underline added]

Excerpt #10, Feng and Diana, Session 4, November 19, 2009

1. **Diana**: Um, I might just say "competes with the other three," because *confront* is a term that's like... it sounds there's going to be a fight or something. {Directive}
2. **Feng**: In fact,(.) I just want to describe a picture or a scenario where Whitney Houston has been a star for a long time, but this market attract two of the new entrants, (.) so just like she is protect her kingdom and other invader. Just like this picture. Can you imagine that? {ESL writer Elaboration}

   (1.0)
3. **Feng**: So, can I still say *confront with* 'cuz she just receive lots of challenges about her status, about her (...) {hypothesis testing}
4. **Diana**: It wouldn't be *confronts with.* {Rejection} It would be... you could say, "has withstood competition from the other three queens." {Directive; alternative generating}And I would separate with a comma there (…) {Directives}

During this episode, Diana provides a directive to change "confront with" to "competes with the other three" (Line 1) thought she frames it as a suggestion by saying, "I might just say…" and provides her reason for making the suggestion. Here Diana is also providing a reader's perspective of what the phrase means to her. However, Diana's directive creates some kind of conflict with Feng's own understanding. Feng argues that it is what she means from the author's standpoint. In Line 2, Feng is not completely sure why "confront with" is not appropriate in this context. She defends her word choices by explaining the particular concept she tries to express and the picture she is depicting, as she says, "just like she is protect her kingdom and other invader. Just like this picture. Can you imagine that?" She pauses after asking the question to see if Diana can understand her intent. Diana did not comment on Feng's explanation but Feng's explanation of fighting against "other invader" might make Diana provide another alternative phrase "withstood", which is a directive framed as a suggestion "you could say, "has withstood'…." This is a nice example of how the writer can negotiate with the reader and make the consultant change her mind. Also, it is notable that it's Diana who is generating alternatives and Feng is confirming or rejecting the alternatives. As the dialogue continues, Diana provides another directive after she makes sure of what Feng is trying to say.

5. **Diana**: And then, *rushing in new singers*, is that just kind of whoever is popular during that time? {Prompt: clarification request}
6. **Feng**: Yeah, when I write this sentence, I am really (.) uncertain about that, because just like, how to say it (.) a swarm of people, like that, because this is a fabulous people, and a lot of people want to join it, so sometimes they just rush in and rush out. I just want to say this(...) {Elaboration}

7. **Diana**: You're talking about people who are popular for a short period of time? {Elaboration; Clarification question}
8. **Feng**: Yeah.
9. **Diana**: You could say female singers experience their 15 minutes of fame. Have you heard of the term, "15 minutes of fame"? {Directive; alternative generating}
10. **Feng**: Yeah.
11. **Diana**: And I would put that in quotes, their "15 minutes of fame." {Directive}
12. **Diana**: Then you say, "*and other*" (.) So in this case, the comma is actually going to go inside the quotes. {Directive}
13. **Feng**: Ok. (Excerpt #10, Feng and Diana, Session 4, November 19, 2009)

In Line 5, Diana points out the phrase, "*rushing in new singers",* that is confusing to her and asks for a clarification. Feng expresses her uncertainty of producing the phrase "rushing in new singers" and explains what she wants to say (Line 6). Feng expresses the specific idea of what she wants to describe but simply does not have the language knowledge to get her idea across. Instead of giving a directive without knowing what Feng really tries to say, Diana asks a clarification question for Feng to talk. Diana brings up the issue without being directive and Feng does not need to defend her meaning. Diana provides her suggestion by asking, "Have you heard of the term, '15 minutes of fame'?" (Line 9). The directive, "15 minutes of fame", here does not create a conflict with Feng's intention in her writing. As Feng commented in the post-session interview, "I feel that is a good one. It captures the meaning as well as the variation of forms in my Chinese expression. I can't think of this English expression myself!" (Post-session interview, November 19, 2009).

In the LREs of Feng and Diana, Feng is engaged in a lot of elaboration of her meaning beyond her sentences, which helps Diana to figure out appropriate directives or generate alternatives for Feng. The two-way negotiation between the writer and consultant is more explicit in this dyad. It is also noticeable that it is Diana who generates more alternatives but not Feng. In their cases, oftentimes, Diana provides alternatives for Feng to determine which language choice is more appropriate, more close to her intended meaning and connotation. For example, the alternative, "15 minutes of fame," provided by Diana in the last excerpt is accepted by Feng, while the other case with "compete with" is rejected by Feng. In lexis-based LREs, the ESL writer can become the one who determines the acceptance of alternatives. From the perspective of ZPD, Feng is receiving assistance from Diana to evaluating her language choices in her writing that represent her true intentions.

**Dyad #3: Siang and Julie.** Siang first came to the Writing Center with a mindset that writing consultants would only proofread her paper and correct grammatical errors rather than comment on her content. She was confident in her writing and did not expect a consultation session to be long. While Siang was very confident in her English writing and did not expect Julie to comment on her content, Julie felt frustrated with Siang's being defensive against her suggestions on clarity issues. Julie was a very experienced writing consultant and was also confident in what she was doing with clients. In the interaction between Siang and Julie, one negotiating pattern that stood out was the constant negotiation for mutual trust and credibility. However, over a couple of sessions, Siang was gradually changing her perceptions of how writing consultation worked and how she could benefit from talking about her paper with Julie. Siang found Julie read more carefully than the professor, and also came to realize that just by reading it aloud again and explaining her authorial purpose to Julie could really give her a better

idea about her own argument. At one earlier session, when Julie pointed out her logical fallacy and some content problems that she did not anticipate or the parts that her professor did not even comment on, she was resistant to and doubtful about Julie's comments. However, three weeks after, she accepted her suggestion and made the revision. The other examples below also show how Siang changed her attitude toward working with Julie. At Session 2, tension arose when Julie asked for a clarification on a term that Siang considered "common sense" in her field. Represented in Excerpt #11, Julie was confused by the texts "part-check" (Line 1), and did not even understand what "check" was referring to after Siang explained it (Line 5). Siang, at Lines 8 and 9, implied it was a common sense in their field and Julie did not have to worry about it. (Passage discussed in Excerpt # 11, Siang, case report, RET861, October 7, 2009)

*…figuring out a strategy to manage its most recognizable part-check because of its pervasiveness.*

Excerpt # 11: Siang and Julie, Session 2, October 7, 2009

1. **Julie**: What do you mean by "part check"? {Prompt; clarification question}
2. **Siang**: Right here I want to say the most recognizable---and here is a dash---because this, the most recognizable part is check. Before I use comma here... two commas here.{Elaboration}
3. **Julie**: If you're going to use this dash, you need to use the longer n dash, and then, you need to have it following after. {Directive}
4. **Siang**: You mean two dashes? {Clarification}
5. **Julie**: Yeah, so just like you would have two commas, if you were to use commas, you would two dashes. So the most recognizable part---which is check---... And which check are you talking about? {Elaboration; Clarification}

6. **Siang**: Burberry's check; their logo.
7. **Julie**: Oh, the houndstooth Check logo? 'Cuz when you just say "check," we think of just... {Elaboration; Clarification}
8. **Siang**: Because Burberry call its logo check, so we use check in this case. {Elaboration}
9. **Julie**: What if you were to say: it's most recognized, dash, it's logo, check, dash... {Directive: suggestion}
10. **Siang**: I think when we refer to check, everybody knows that's Burberry's logo, so... {Elaboration}
11. **Julie**: Well, I mean, I didn't know that, so that was confusing because it's like, a check... you're writing for money... check, you're doing a check for some process... checking something, you know... I was confused, so I mean I think you could fix that easily by saying "it's logo, check," or something like that. That would just clear it up for me. Another thing was that "in order not to make core customers feel strained..." This "not to make" sounded a little awkward. Can you think of any other way you could say it, perhaps? {Elaboration; clarification request}

Julie was very frustrated by Siang's response, as she had been trying to gain credibility in her eyes. She expressed her little impatience with that in the post-session interview:

> To be honest, annoyed. She did have the edge, like, everybody knows this; you're stupid if you don't. But the thing is, yeah, I know Burberry is the houndstooth, design. It's their trademark; it's their look or whatever, but it's not clear in the context of the sentence, what she's talking about. Especially the way she had it. It looked like the word was supposed to be a compound noun or... I don't remember where it... "part check." Yeah, it looked like "part check" had to be one word, and

> I had to really think because it's not clear enough to where it needs to be, so... All I could do was suggest maybe you could do this. (Julie, Post-session interview, Session 2, October 7, 2009)

A few sessions later, Siang's attitude had changed as she was gradually adapting to working with Julie. In another similar example, Excerpt #12, when Julie was commenting on another common term in Siang's field (Lines 1, 3). Siang did not confront Julie again but appeared receptive to the suggestion of considering the word choice for readers (Line 8).

(Passage discussed in Excerp#12, Siang, HED891, November 11, 2009)

*If so, wouldn't it be conflicting because they don't hold the same expectation for their brick and mortar channel?*

Excerpt #12: Siang and Julie, Session 5, November 11, 2009

1. **Julie**: And also, this was a bit confusing, "the brick and mortar channels." I wasn't sure what you meant the channels to mean. {Prompt}
2. **Siang**: Just means they're brick and mortar channel. {Elaboration}
3. **Julie**: I guess I've just never heard the word channel used for stores or anything related to retail. {Elaboration}
4. **Siang**: It's just a... how to say that... Means a place where they sell similar products. {Elaboration}
5. **Julie**: I mean, is that a common word they use, because I've never heard that before. {Elaboration}
6. **Siang**: Yeah, I think we use online channel or traditional channel. {Elaboration}
7. **Julie**: Hmm...
8. **Siang**: Yeah, maybe we can just say brick and mortar stores. {Alternative accepted}

9. **Julie**: Yeah. channel just threw me off, but...

As seen from this episode, Julie appeared as directive as she could be, while Siang was also trying to explain her language choices. However, Siang became more active in asking questions and getting Julie's comments. As in Line 4, she tried to keep explaining but changed to ask for an alternative from Julie. She tried to avoid arguments with Julie. Siang explained in the post-session interview, "I already know her style. She just wants me to be clear about everything, even though those are really just common sense in our field. I don't need to argue with her" (Siang, Post-session interview, November 11, 2009). There was much less tension during their later sessions. As Julie also sensed the change, she was pleased to see the progress in their sessions. Julie commented in the post-session interview:

> … I mean, with returning clients it's kind of weird because you get more comfortable with each other, but it depends on the person, too. Sometimes you have really good returning clients, and sometimes you have like... that kind of returning clients. And it's not that she's bad at all, and it's not horrible to work with her. I feel like we are getting more comfortable with each other, and maybe she's believing me a little more. I mean, that's the nice thing about having a repeat client. You get to know each other, and you find the best way to explain things to them. (Julie, Post-session interview, November 11, 2009)

Both of the client, Siang, and the consultant, Julie, were confident in doing their own part of the deal during the consultation. Siang was confident in her writing and her project, while Julie knew what she was doing. Neither of them were really dominating over the other at the beginning, and their were negotiating not only the quality of the writing but also their interaction

and collaboration. Their interaction became more collaborative as they got more familiar with each other. In this context, the LREs deriving from their consultations were more direct and oftentimes directive on Julie's part, and language issues could be resolved by just a few exchanges of dialogues.

***LREs in Siang and Julie.*** In Siang and Julie's sessions, the language issues were always brought up by the writing consultant, Julie. Julie tended to focus on the content mostly but she was aware of the matter of linguistic accuracy being particularly important to most ESL writers. The client, Siang, who was pretty confident in her English writing and grammar, would engage herself in the discussion of the language issue when it was brought up by Julie, but she never had a specific question about grammar to ask Julie. In Excerpt #13, it was a session when Siang was working on a short assignment: summary and implication. Julie pointed out the ungrammatical parts of the paragraph after discussing the content.

(Passage discussed in Excerpt #13, Siang, case brief, HED891, October 07, 2009)

*It may make consumers think of Louis Vuitton's Journey campaign <u>on 2008</u>, thus it would to some degree lose its distinctiveness. However, <u>if</u> one really looks into the Louis Vuitton campaign he will find that the focus of this campaign <u>is</u> not on the travel product category. The reason why I <u>select</u> travel products is that this category is consistent with Burberry's functionality feature.*[underline added]

Excerpt #13: Siang and Julie, Session 2, 2009

1. **Julie**: Ok, and then (1.0) "*on 2008*." "*On*" is the wrong preposition to use here. {Consultant prompt; Directive}
2. **Siang**: In 2008. {ESL Writer Response}
3. **Julie**: Yup. In 2008. Exactly. (.) {Confirmation}

And then you have this *if* phrase. Whenever you have an "if" clause, you just have a comma at the end of it. And you have a few tense things. "Focus of this campaign..." It already happened, so this "*is*" should be past tense. {Confirmation; Directives: Rules}

4. **Siang**: *Was* not. {ESL Writer Response}
5. **Julie**: Yeah, "*was not on the travel product category*." (.) {Confirmation}
   and then you say "*the reason why I select the travel products*" (.) So, it would be either (1.0) the possibility "why I would select travel products" or future tense or past tense why you already decided. {Comment; Directives: suggestions}
6. **Siang**: But I think I already pick up this product for me to enter.{Elaboration}
7. **Julie**: Yeah, so then it should be in past tense.{Directive: Rule}
8. **Siang**: "I have selected." {Response}
   But what if now I'm just doing this explanation? Can I use past tense? {Extension of learning}
9. **Julie**: Yeah, 'cuz you still had the decision already. {Directive: Explanation}
   Since you already made the decision then it's ok to use past tense. {Confirmation}

(Excerpt #13, Siang and Julie, Session 2, 2009)

In Line 1, Julie pointed out *on* as a wrong preposition in the sentence. Siang was able to apply her own knowledge and corrected it immediately without further discussion (Line 2), followed by Julie's confirmation of her self-repair (Line 3). In Line 3, Julie explicitly gave the directive rules of "if" clause. Then, she continued to point out the tense issue in the sentence. Again, Siang was able to follow and notice the errors by correcting it herself immediately (Line 4). For those mistakes that looked straightforward to Julie, she did not elaborate on her comments but

provided directives to Siang and confirmations of Siang's correction. For the problems with more possible solutions, Julie would take a relatively less directive approach and provided elaboration with suggestions. It was also writing center pedagogy that the consultants avoided appropriating the client's writing by giving directives if they were not sure what the writer intended to say. As seen in Line 5, Julie pointed out an inconsistency in tense and provided options for Siang to fix the sentence. In Line 6, instead of fixing her sentence, Siang elaborated on her intention with the sentence and chose one of Julie's alternatives, which led to a more specific directive from Julie to use past tense (Line 7). The issue was settled as Siang responded in the correct form. Siang ddid not use past tense as Julie suggested, but present perfect (which is quite correct, and probably more appropriate). Immediately after the issue was resolved, Siang went on to extend the knowledge and wanted to clarify her understanding of the usage in a particular context; she said, "But what if now I'm just doing this explanation? Can I use past tense?" (Line 8). Apparently, Siang understood the rule of using past tense but she was not sure about the contexts for the appropriate tense. Siang was not sure if it was applicable in this case. At this point, Siang was not yet working beyond her ZPD, and Julie did another round of elaborating on the rule and how it worked in the situation, and then confirmed Siang's clarification request (Line 9). From sociocultural viewpoint, Siang's development was occurring when she extended her knowledge and Julie played an important role to assist the extension of learning.

In Julie and Siang's sessions, Siang never initiated a specific question about grammar in her writing, but she would be very engaged in discussing the rule and her usage of language when Julie asked. For Siang, the collaborative learning of language in writing consultation was often clarifying and furthering her understanding of grammar. In this Excerpt #6, during those

form-based LREs, Julie induced Siang to notice the wrong forms and correct her own language. Siang was able to come up with her own alternatives (i.e., "*in* 2008" and " *was* not" ) to be assessed by Julie immediately after noticing the errors. Though Julie had all the answers, she did not generate alternatives for Siang. By directing Siang's attention to the erroneous forms, Julie's engagement in LREs with Siang might have helped reduce the cognitive overload (Swain & Lapkin, 1998, p. 331) in Siang's mental processing with the language and meaning at the same time.

**Dyad #4: Vivian and Kate.** Vivian was not confident in her English writing at all, and she had a strong desire to improve her English writing skills. As manifested in the preliminary interview with her, she expressed, "I know that I really want to improve my English skills and the Writing Center provides great resources for me to learn English writing and expressions" (Preliminary interview, September 17, 2009). She would sometimes bring in the paper that was already submitted. Her goal with the Writing Center was to improve her English writing skills but not just to work on a particular writing assignment for class. Kate could recognize Vivian's desire to learn the English language and grammar. She tried to accommodate to Vivian's needs in improving English skills from a very basic level. Kate explained:

> I think most of the time. Because that's what she's here for, and because the timing of our sessions... I take a lot of time to let her work through the different ways because I don't want to be directly, "this is what needs to be said." I want her to figure out how she would say it, and then if what she comes out with still has tweaking, I'll say that. When I here say what's going on; she understands it, I think "yes! mission accomplished." (post-session, November 13, 2009)

Between Kate and Vivian, they seemed to have a mutual understanding of the goal of their

sessions, and even though the overall focus in their session was on language and grammar, the dyad could collaborate with each other. Vivian was very pleased to have Kate as her writing consultant. She expressed, "I really appreciate how she would be so patient and try so hard to help me with my sentences and grammar. She is very nice. I am very lucky to meet her" (Post-session interview, October 2, 2009). Kate also followed the tutor guide and tried her best to put Vivian at ease; however, she was not shy away from talking about grammar when the ESL client wanted to focus on language. He was happy to work with Vivian and see her improving over the sessions. She said:

> I like our sessions. I like being able to talk. I like grammar. I like talking about it. Not every little thing, but... I think every week working with her, it seems like there's a lot more learning involved. It's not like the client that I see once because they need to have every article perfect for that deadline in an hour. (post-session, November 13, 2009).

LREs in their sessions are mostly form-based, and Kate goes through a lot of scaffolding to assist Vivian to come up with her own language choices.

***LREs in Vivian and Kate.*** Grammar was the major issue in Vivian and Kate's sessions. Vivian realized linguistic accuracy was one of the main problems in her writing, and she really wanted to gain better knowledge about the English language and more confidence in her writing. She was very interested in discussing language and grammar issues with Kate during writing consultations. As shown in the examples in the last chapter, Excerpts # 1 and 2, Kate mainly followed the non-directive approach to interact with Vivian on either higher order or lower order concerns throughout all their sessions, though sometimes she could be directive in providing solutions or answers. Kate's approach to dealing with grammar was asking questions and leading

Vivian to notice the problem. Kate tended to have Vivian come up with her own solutions or her own understanding of the reasons for grammar or word choices. Responding as a reader, Kate inquired about Vivian's authorial purpose, her intention of the sentences, and her decision-making of the word choices, even on some obvious mistakes. She gave Vivian every chance to talk about her writing, language and ideas. Though sometimes Kate tried to lead Vivian to a possible solution Kate herself had in mind, Vivian might just come up her own solution different from what Kate was trying to lead to. The following excerpt shows an example that Vivian understood Kate's explanation but ended up with her own solution which received a confirmation from Kate.

(Passage discussed in Excerpt # 14,Vivian, Self-analysis, CEP862, September 18, 2009)

*As a Christian, I obey most of the teaching form* [from] *Bible. In contemporary society, some people might see me as a conservative of morality. Most of my relatives and friends are Christians.* [underline added]

Excerpt # 14: Vivian and Kate, Session 1, September 18, 2009

1. **Kate**: So, (.) I think things I want to start with, is parts that you just read,(.) when you talk about the fact that you are a Christian(.) {Consultant Comment}

   So, "contemporary society, some people might see me as a conservative of morality," and that's kind of... conservative being an adjective, rather than, so (.) "*a*", usually tells us a "*a*" and then something is a noun (...) {Elaboration}
2. **Vivian**: Just, uh, you don't need "*of*" right? {ESL writer response (unsatisfactory)}
3. **Kate**: You can say you have kind of conservative morality{Directives: suggestion} because then "*have*" gives us the verb, and tells us this is the thing; morality is the noun that you have, and conservative is describing it. {Elaboration}

4. **Vivian**: Or, I can say, people might see me as a conservative person. {Self-repair}
5. **Kate**: There you go! That's a perfect way of putting it. {Confirmation}

In this example, this is a form-based LRE that focuses on form rather than meaning, where there is no "communication breakdown" in Vivian's written message. Kate provides comments just to draw Vivian's attention to the error and tries to get Vivian to see the problem and fix it. In Line 1, Kate commented on the syntactic relationship of Vivian's sentence "some people might see me as a conservative of morality" and saw "conservative" as an adjective. Though it was not clear why Kate would suggest a different part of speech for "conservative" in the sentence, Vivian saw the issue with "conservative being an adjective" that Kate was hinting at, as she responded "you don't need 'of' right?" (Line 2). In this LRE, Vivian demonstrated her mental processing of hypothesis generating. In her response, after Kate stated "conservative being an adjective," Vivian was applying her syntactic knowledge about combining adjective and noun. Vivian's response was not satisfactory to Kate to settle the issue, which led to Kate's directive about the issue, as Kate said "You can say you have kind of conservative morality" (Line 3). At this point when Kate became directive in giving the answer, she still framed it as a suggestion, "you can say" and offered Vivian an alternative to consider and assess. Kate went on to elaborate the details of the functions of each word: "*have* gives us the verb… morality is the noun that you have, and conservative is describing it." What is interesting in this example is that Vivian ignored Kate's explicit suggestion "you have conservative morality" and instead, she used her own knowledge and Kate's elaboration of the words which characterizes conservative as an adjective and came up with her own solution "I am a conservative person" for her own writing (Line 4) which was confirmed and accepted as a "perfect way" by Kate (Line 5). This excerpt

from Vivian and Kate's session shows that the collaborative learning opportunity is created in the dialogical interaction, which provides the space for Vivian to accomplish the linguistic correction that she was not able to do by herself. In this case, even though the writing consultant, Kate, was directive (Line 3) and her explanation of *conservative* as an adjective could be potentially confusing, the collaborative learning space created by Kate allowed Vivian to draw on her own understanding of Kate's comment, her knowledge of grammar, and her intention in the writing and come up with a solution to self-repair the problem and then got confirmed by Kate. This example also demonstrates the goal of writing center work in making the writers fix the problems with their own language (North, 1984), whereas the writing consultant can just provide the reader's opinion and reassurance of the solution.

**Dyad #5: Jane and Ellen.** Jane was confident in her English skills. Though she did not know what to expect from the writing consultant. She came to the Writing Center with a very open mind to learn as she was new to the US university. She was not very concerned with her writing, so for the sake of coming to the Writing Center to participate in this study, she would bring in incomplete drafts or just outlines of her papers. The writing consultant, Ellen, was a very experienced writing consultant and was able to address and open to any kind of topics a client would concern. Their sessions were successful, though Jane dropped out of this study after 4 sessions because of her busy schedule around the end of the semester. Jane expressed more than once in the post-session interviews that it was interesting to her another American graduate student's, like Ellen's, experiences with writing for academic papers. She said in the last interview, "in our graduate program, the professors expect students to write good writing, but they don't teach us anything about writing" (Post-session interview, November 19, 2009). Ellen also enjoyed working with Jane. She stated:

> Um, she's really engaged and really wants to improve and seems pretty active, um, and really wants to improve conceptually, and so that makes it really easy to interactive with her and talk about some of those issues. Um, also her fluency with English, of course, uh, is helpful, in that it's not a huge... any small errors are typical for anybody and none of it gets in the way of comprehension, and so we can really focus on some of the bigger ideas, which I would anyway, but it's... we can focus almost exclusively on those larger concerns…. I didn't find it to be especially difficult. Of course, how to talk about some of the content was, because I'm not familiar with it, but I think that I could grasp enough, so that it was clear for her, and that she was able to add insights for me, and so we were able to collaborate on understanding what's going on within the text, what are these claims being made, and then how to talk about them. Yeah, she's a lot of fun to work with. (Post-session interview, November 19, 2009).

The dyad was able to collaborate with each other and enjoy their sessions together. There were some occasions when language issues came up and they engaged in LREs during their dialogues.

***LREs in Jane and Ellen.*** For the dyad of Jane and Ellen, grammar or language problem had not really been an issue that stood out in their consultation, since Jane had a very good command of English. Nevertheless, grammar or language issues could still arise in their dialogues once in a while. Ellen did not bring up any questions or issues with Jane's language until they went through the content and organization. Sometimes when the grammar got in the way of Ellen's understanding of the content and in a sense became higher order concern, Ellen would bring it up. Ellen would take a relatively directive approach to language issues when necessary, as she explained in the preliminary interview, "if I am afraid someone might say I am

too directive, I might not offer... I don't care. I believe that's the best option I can offer, I will do it." In the following example, Excerpt #15, Jane brought in an assignment on book review. After they talked about the organization and how to write an effective book review, the writing consultant, Ellen, commented on the grammar issue that might affect its meaning.

(Passage discussed in Excerpt #15, Jane, Book review, LLT807, November 19, 2009)

*Before they start to make the poster, they have to fill in a chart and answer some related questions in a written form. They <u>will</u> be presenting their posters to their classmates in front of class.*

Excerpt #15, Jane and Ellen, Session 4, November 19, 2009

1. **Ellen**: That's just sort of noting to myself as I was reading it to try to make sense of the differences of noticing. ((pointing to the marks on the paper))
2. **Jane**: [Mmm.]
3. **Ellen**: [Um.] oh, some of the words I put squares around are things like *they will be presenting their posters* implies that this is going to happen, uh, {Consultant Prompt} but it's a hypothetical, so assuming that this teacher uses this book, and assuming they have the students do this project, then the students would present their posters. {Elaboration; Directive}
4. **Jane**: Oh... so should I use "would"?((looking at the margin note Ellen made)) {ESL student response: clarification question}
5. **Ellen**: Mhm:: ((nodding)) {Confirmation}
6. **Jane**: Okay. So you mean when we're assuming that they're doing something, then we should use "would be"? {Response: Confirmation request}

7. **Ellen**: When you're assuming but it's not for sure that it's going to happen, it's a hypothetical situation that might happen in the future. {Response: Elaboration}
8. **Jane**: [Mhmm.]
9. **Ellen**:[or]
10. **Ellen**:it might happen right now=
11. **Jane**: [Mhmm.]
12. **Ellen**:=[but] you don't know if it's exactly happening in this way somewhere, then yeah (.), you use "would." {Elaboration; Confirmation}
13. **Jane**: Okay. (Excerpt #15, Jane and Ellen, Session 4, November 19, 2009)

Ellen pointed to the marks she made on the paper and some margin notes to Jane, as shown in Line 1. In Line 3, Ellen explained why she had the issue with *they will be presenting their posters* in this context and put squares around that sentence. She did not directly say Jane should use "would" instead of "will" but she had the word "would" written on the margin. In her elaboration, she did "recast" the wrong form, as she said, "then the students would present their posters." She put her directive in a relatively indirect and implicit way. In this case, the writing consultant had also provided the alternative in a written form and a recast that the writer could see and consider. In Line 4, Jane looked at the word "would" on the margin and ask a clarification question on Ellen's suggestion, as she said "Oh... so should I use 'would'?" Ellen responded positively in Line 5. The issue was settled here, while in Line 6, Jane went on to elaborate on her understanding of the rule Ellen just explained and requested a confirmation of her understanding of the usage in a hypothetical context, saying, "Okay. So you mean when we're assuming that they're doing something, then we should use 'would be'?" This is not a hypothesis generating or testing on the part of Jane, because Ellen stated the rule. Before Ellen

provided a confirmation, she elaborated on the nuance of context and the meaning in a hypothetical situation in general and then confirmed Jane's question (Line 7, 9, and 12). In this case, the sentence *they will be presenting their posters* was not ungrammatical but it caused confusion with the nuance of different meanings between "will" and "would" in that context. Jane was able to manage the grammatical accuracy at the sentence level, but she missed the discourse level and the context of a situation she was describing. In this form-based LRE, they were focusing on the consultant's alternative "would" instead of the ESL client's language use of "will"; in other words, the L2 learner, Jane, was processing Ellen's language and noticing her own knowledge gap. During this collaborative dialogue with Ellen, Jane's understanding of the grammar was taken to another context and arguably a higher level; that is, a sentence can be grammatically correct, but contextually confusing or inappropriate. From the sociocultural perspective of learning, that is the ZPD of grammar learning for an advanced L2 learner like Jane, which could be ignored easily if Jane did not have a chance to ask for clarification and request confirmation.

When Ellen was not sure about the language use in Jane's writing, she would hedge her prompt for Jane to change by asking questions instead of directly suggesting a change. In the same session, at another rare example that talks about mechanics, Jane appeared very receptive to Ellen's question even on the disciplinary terminology, as shown in Excerpt #16 below.

(Passage discussed in Excerpt #16, Jane, Book review, LLT807, November 19, 2009)

*In the lessons, there are a large number of structure drill activities, such as chain drills, listening blank-filling activities, <u>oral cloze activities</u>, and so on.*

(Excerpt #11, Jane and Ellen, Session 4, November 19, 2009)

1. **Ellen**: Okay. Um, now... you mention close activities down here, too ((pointing to the text)), and is it really *cloze* with a *z* or is it *close*? I just didn't recognize the word. {Prompt}
2. **Jane**: It should be a *z*. {Response}
3. **Ellen**: Okay, yeah, if it's a specific kind of term, I just wasn't sure if that's really the spelling of the term. {Elaboration}
4. **Jane**: Oh (...)
5. **Ellen**: If it is, then that's fine. {Confirmation}
6. **Jane**: Yeah, I think I should check it. {Response}
7. **Ellen**: Okay, yeah, just go ahead and double check it. I just didn't recognize it, so I was just wondering. (Excerpt #16, Jane and Ellen, Session 4, November 19, 2009)

Ellen brought up the question when she was not sure about the terminology as well as the spelling (Line 1). Jane responded and appeared very confident about the spelling of the word "cloze" of cloze activities, as she said in Line 2, "It should be a z." Ellen elaborated her concern with the language use in Line 3 and the issue seemed to be resolved, and she reassured Jane of the resolution of the question in Line 5. However, Jane seemed to take the question seriously and appeared receptive to Ellen's suggestion of "being sure of the spelling of the term", as she said in Line 6, "Yeah, I think I should check it." It was interesting to see Jane's response to Ellen's question because it was clear that Jane knew "cloze activities" in language testing and especially when she was writing a book review on foreign language pedagogy. From the perspective of ZPD, this dialogue seemed to be operating below Jane's ZPD because she was already able to produce correct form by herself, thus it did not contribute to her language development. Now with Ellen's "assistance" she appeared uncertain of her knowledge. This could raise a question

about how the ESL writer perceives "directiveness" of a writing consultant's response (Clark, 2001). Or it could be because of the overall positive and friendly interaction between Ellen and Jane in their consulting sessions, so Jane tried to accommodate instead of confronting with Ellen's ignorance. In the post-session interview, Jane expressed that it was understandable that Ellen might not know the terminology in the field of language testing and teaching. So she did not really worry about that, since "that was not very important" she said (Interview, November 19, 2009). Jane appeared confident in her language and was on the same page with Ellen about putting language issue as lower order concerns.

**The Different Dynamics in the Writing Consultations**

Different consulting dyads have different dynamics and focuses in the consultations and negotiations of language. In general, they all follow writing center protocols to engage conversation between the writing consultants and the ESL writers. In each pair though, negotiations of language can have different profiles contributed by the consultant's strategies, knowledge, and preference, as well as the ESL writer's ability and interests in language learning. For example, in the dyad of Ann and Wen, detailed discussion on language issues or grammatical rules are almost absent from their sessions. Ann strategically avoids explaining the prescriptive rules of the English language and provides a reader's perspective on Wen's writing to reassure Wen's concern of understandability in her writing. However, in the dyad of Kate and Vivian, the entire sessions are almost devoted to building Vivian's language knowledge and sentence-level writing skills, as shown in Excerpts #1, #2, and # 14. They would spend an extensive amount of the session on a sentence like "the ability to self-evaluation, self-awareness, and self-identify", or "my outlook is typical Asian appearance." Similarly, in the dyad of Diana

and Feng, Feng's desire to understand each rule behind her mistakes and her interests in learning different alternatives make Diana engaged in extensive discussions on the usage of "may" and alternatives to "confront with" and "rushing-in," which is also contributed by Diana's lack of technical knowledge to explain the rules well and her sincerity to oblige Feng's needs. The kinds of detailed discussions on language might not happen to the dyads of Siang and Julie or Jane and Ellen, since Julie and Ellen are very experienced and can be very directive in resolving the language issues, and also their ESL clients, Siang and Jane, happen to be well versed in the rules of English language as well. Nevertheless, from a sociocultural perspective of the dialogues, it is the conversation and interaction in the dyads that create learning. In each dyad, functions of LREs are observable in the ESL learner's response to the writing consultants' initiations of language issues with or without communication breakdown in the ESL writing.

In this study, each dyad of participants has its unique combination of the ESL writer and writing consultant. Each writing consultant has her different background and experience in working with ESL writers, while each ESL writer has her different experience and concern with their English writing. The individual differences on both sides of the dyad co-construct the discourse for negotiation of language. As shown from the previous examples in this chapter, the contextual factors in each dyad and each session affect how the consultations focus and how the dialogues unfold. Though there might be a conflict of expectation between the ESL writers and writing consultants in the beginning, the ESL writers in this study were open to learning what could happen in the Writing Center. With a multiple sessions with the writing consultants, the ESL writers became not only familiar with writing center pedagogy but also the particular writing consultant's style and strength. Though they were relatively open and receptive to writing consultant's comments and suggestions, they had started taking a more active role in the

setting the agenda and initiating topics during the consulting sessions. In particular, as the writing consultants used non-dominating language and encouraged ESL writers to be more active in collaboration, the ESL writers could eventually see the points of writing consultation and adapted to writing center pedagogy. For example, instead of correcting the error for the writer, the consultant, Ann, in Excerpt #4, would say "here you could probably just say 'the improvement work'" after she asked for clarification and information from the ESL writer, Wen about her intention in the sentence. The changing dynamics in the dyad over multiple sessions also affect how LREs are initiated and unfold in the sessions, as the ESL writers adapt to writing center pedagogy. For example, Feng, the rule-based language learner, has changed her focus to academic rhetorical and discourse knowledge rather than language choices, and Siang appeared more active in discussing different language choices with the consultant, Julie, and engaged in more LREs. On the other hand, while the LREs seemed to help the ESL writers deal with specific issues in specific contexts, there is no evidence that they had internalized these dialogues and had become more competent writers in terms of language control. This may be attributed to the language learner-expert context of writing consultation for LREs. In this context, learners are engaged in less metal processing because the target language (i.e., their writing) is already produced and they are situated to rely on the writing consultants who will critique the language products or even provide alternatives. The advantage of LREs on language learning and the enactment of mental processing (Swain & Lapkin, 1995, 1998) may not be fully obtained by language learners. Though the collaborative dialogues between an ESL writer and a native English speaking writing consultant would less likely to result in false knowledge of the target language, the different dynamics and contexts might not be the best for the occurrences of LREs and language learning.

# CHAPTER SIX

## Conclusion

Talk is the most important concept in writing center pedagogy (North, 1984). While writing centers encourage focus on the content and suggest language issues as lower order concerns even with ESL writers, the tradition of a non-directive conferencing approach in writing center talk works for the ESL writers to negotiate solutions to the language issues and engage themselves in language learning. The question-and-answer conversation allows the ESL writers to discover their own language knowledge and the limits of that knowledge, and reveals their authorial purposes in their language and mistakes. From the sociocultural perspective of language learning, negotiation of language in the writing consultation provides the metaphoric space where the ESL writers are scaffolded in their ZPD with "good learning" of language knowledge and are more likely to move on to a higher stage of language development. Negotiation of language in the writing consultation is a complicated and recursive process in scaffolding the ESL writers' language knowledge. During the processes, the writing consultant probes into the ESL writers' knowledge base in order to provide appropriate feedback. It is a give-and-take process that involves an initial comment, elaboration, and directives on the side of the writing consultant, and the ESL writer's response and comprehension during the interaction. For example, in Excerpt #1, Kate is pointing out the "agreement in consistency" issue which does not make sense to Vivian; her response leads to Kate's more explicit explanation, "*self-evaluation*, that's like a thing, it's a noun... *self-awareness*, that's a thing, and then *self-identify*, that's a verb, that's something you do." Kate probes into Vivian's knowledge with different degrees of explicitness in her response so that these comments become effective to Vivian's learning. Sometimes, the ESL writers do have enough knowledge. Once the writing consultant

helps the ESL writers notice the errors, the ESL writers can demonstrate their knowledge by providing correct forms themselves. For example, in Excerpt # 13, Siang corrects the errors immediately with ease when the errors (i.e., "*on* 2008") are pointed out by Julie. As a result, a language issue can either engage numerous turns between the dyads or be resolved immediately. It may also have something to do with how directive the writing consultant is in addressing a particular language issue. In the example of the error "*on* 2008" Julie was explicit and directive, saying, " '*On'* is the wrong preposition to use here" instead of pointing out the error in a less explicit or directive way. In this case, Siang was actively engaged in the dialogue and self-correct the error. Each L2 learner has her own knowledge base for a particular language issue and has different degrees of readiness for new knowledge as shown in their responses to the comments. When L2 writing researchers explore different types of feedback (e.g., Chandler, 2003; Ferris & Roberts, 2001) and are trying to figure out "how explicit does it need to be" (Ferris & Robers, 2001) for teachers to provide corrective feedback, the question might be how explicit and relevant the feedback sounds to the L2 learners. As Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) suggest, feedback on learners' errors will only be relevant and appropriate for learners' learning and development when it is given in learners' ZPD. So, in Excerpt # 13, the explicit pointing out of the preposition problem, "*on* 2008," was given within Siang's ZPD, and she had the knowledge to self-correct, but perhaps did not have the ability to notice the problem herself; in Excerpt #1, the initial formulation of the problem, "agreement in consistency," was beyond Vivian's ZPD, and she could not identify the problem even after Kate had indicated that a problem existed. To co-construct in learners' ZPD, the writing consultant tries to gauge the ESL writer's knowledge and involves a recursive calibrating process that repeats elaboration and elicitation of writer's responses. As shown in both the scaffolding model (Figure 1) and

examples of elaboration during negotiations, the consultants elaborate on their comments and questions in order to prompt the ESL writers to form a hypothesis or alternative and fix the problems. The recursive calibrating process is to locate the best place to provide directives (corrective or suggestive) that are relevant and make sense to the ESL writers. Therefore, during a negotiation, the writing consultants are actively adapting their approach with different degrees of directiveness. That is to say, at a negotiation point, the writing consultants usually start non-directive and implicit, especially with the issue of many possible solutions, and gradually increase their directiveness and explicitness along the way as they are gauging the writers' knowledge by their responses to comments and elaborations.

The value of the dialogue between the writing consultants and ESL writers lies in the fact that the ESL writers are able to respond to the feedback especially on the problems that could trigger more than one response from the ESL writers. For example, in the case of Feng and Diana, Feng had more than one light bulb in her mind that went off in response to Diana's comment on *accounts receivable may fluctuates* in her writing, which triggered her knowledge about the rule of combing adjective/noun phrase and the parts of speech of "may" and even singular/plural problem of "accounts" in that context. She was able to explore those issues in the collaborative dialogues even though she did not get immediate satisfaction from the consultant in that case. Written feedback in that case, though, would only create the potential confusion to Feng but not lead her to talk and question her understanding of the rule, let alone noticing her knowledge gap. In addition to the advantage of collaborative dialogues, the ESL writer can talk about their language use, the writing they produce, and reveal their writer's voice in their writing. As seen in Excerpt #3, Feng has a particular picture to describe and her particular voice to sound in her confusing and awkward word choices (i.e., "confronting" and "rushing in new singers"),

which are based on her Chinese phrases in mind. Through dialogues and her elaboration, the writing consultant is able to "notice" the writer's voice and help the ESL writer to translate to her English voice.

The peer relationship between the ESL writers and writing consultants can also add to the effects of negotiation of language in writing consultations. Unlike instructor-student writing conference where the instructors sometimes tend to control the conversation and inadvertently discourage learners from participating (Goldstein & Conrad, 1990) and peer-response where the students are not as strategic and skillful at providing comments (Zhu, 2001), writing consultations between the ESL writers and writing consultants have the benefits of peer response that allows learners to talk and participate and the advantage of writing consultants' ability to provide confirmations or directives to the ESL writers. In this study, the ESL writers have expressed how they felt comfortable talking with the writing consultants about their writing and asking for their helps with their questions and errors in their writing. For example, Feng expressed in the interview after her first session, "Diana was very nice and I enjoyed the discussion with her. Though she couldn't explained everything to me, but I felt she really tried" [Translation from Chinese] (Feng, Post-session interview, Session 1, October 1, 2009). As previous studies in L2 writing and writing center research (De Guerrero & Villamil, 1994; Harris, 1995; Lunsford, 1991; Zhu, 2001;) found, the more active the ESL students are in negotiating, the more they benefit from peer response. In particular, their true understanding and acceptance of suggestions on the issue can create learning. From the sociocultural perspective, the collaborative learning after negotiation with the writing consultant is the crucial step to extending learning toward further development. It is arguable that the format of peer relationship between the writing consultants and the ESL writers add to the possibility of

hypothesis-testing and extension of learning when the ESL writers feel safe from being judged and become active in exploring the knowledge during the collaboration process in the writing consultations.

On the other hand, in terms of how the conversation and negotiation unfold between the writing consulting consultants and ESL writers, the fact that writing consultants are more knowledgeable in writing and have authority in language create a hierarchical relationship within the dyads and a special context for LREs. As shown from the data of this study, the negotiations of language are mostly initiated by the writing consultants and the ESL writers appear passive in bringing up specific questions. It seems that the writing consultants dominate the conversation and control the agenda, which bears some resemblance to Thonus's (2004) findings of writing consultations with ESL writers. In fact, the context of writing consultation is configured in a way that negotiations of language are expected to be initiated by the writing consultants after the ESL clients' reading aloud the texts. As a standard procedure would start with the client reading aloud and paper and then the consultant take the initiative to engage the client by prompting a conversation. The clients are therefore situated in a relatively passive position to start the session. The ESL learners might also prefer to rely on the consultants rather than on themselves in monitoring or catching the errors, which were also proving to be the case in the their initial expectations of writing consultation revealed in the ESL participants' preliminary interviews that the ESL writers all expected the writing center consultants would just correct their errors in their writing as most writing instructors did to them.

The LREs generated in the writing center context are different from the LREs in Swain and her colleague's studies. Within dialogues between the writing consultant and ESL writer, the negotiations of language focus on the writing already produced by the ESL writer instead of the

language the learner is producing in the dialogue. The dialogue helps the ESL writers to "re-monitor" the language produced and notice the errors they failed to monitor in the writing process. The ESL learners can generate alternatives or hypotheses that can be confirmed and reassured by the writing consultant who has the native speaker's authority in language. When the writing consultant provides alternatives, they are for the ESL learners to assess the meaning rather than the correctness of the form, since the writing consultant is less likely to provide a wrong form even if she cannot explain why. There is usually no communication breakdown when the interlocutors are engaged in form-based LREs, while lexis-based LREs usually arise out of unclear meaning in the ESL writer's language choices. In form-based LREs, the writing consultant's being direct on language issue is inevitably directive since there is no much room for negotiation of linguistic forms, particularly when the consultant is a native English speaker. In another word, when it comes to language issue, there is a hierarchical or asymmetric relationship between the ESL writer and consultant in their negotiation. Consultants' comments become authoritative and directive no matter how the consultants try to hedge their comments or trivialize the problems; however, that is how the ESL writer's sense of linguistic uncertainty is reassured. In lexis-based LREs, though, the ESL writers are more likely to negotiate the desirable forms or come up with their own language or structure choices to faithfully express their meanings. For example, in Excerpt #2, Vivian came up with "in appearance, I am a typical Asian" to replace the phrase "my outlook is typical Asian appearance" after their discussion, instead of simply adopting Kate's earlier suggestion of "your appearance is typically Asian."

In addition to the contextual factors of writing consultation, the different dynamic in each different dyad adds to a different profile of LREs in the dialogues. When the writing consultant is reluctant to talk about language issues, like Ann, or when the ESL writer has a very good

command of English, like Jane, LREs occur less frequently during writing consultations. However, when the ESL writer, like Feng, is very interested in language learning and actively initiating topics, the LREs can be rich and extensive during the dialogues. The LREs show how the ESL writers become active in discussing their language problems and draw on their existing knowledge of language and grammar and even when topics are first initiated and addressed by the writing consultants.

Negotiation of language might not be regarded as the main focus of writing consultation in the writing center, but it is not contradictory to writing center pedagogy. The processes of negotiation of language conform to the concept of collaborative learning and sociocultural approach to language learning and development. Throughout the collaborative dialogues, the ESL writers benefit from the processes of negotiating the forms and meaning in their texts. Even though the writing consultants are not L2 learners, the LREs in writing consultation present occasions for L2 learning. The LREs with writing consultants have the functions of mental processing for L2 writers as well as the advantage to reassure the linguistic uncertainty for L2 writers.

**Summary**

This study explores the potential interaction for L2 writing development at the writing centers and focuses on how the collaborative interaction in writing consultation alleviates ESL writers' linguistic uncertainty and improve their language control for their writing. In seeking answers to my research questions about if writing center consultations create opportunities for LREs and how the LREs function in the writing consultants and serve the writing center's goals of creating better writers, the results show potentially positive effects on L2 learning and also

indicate some potential caveats for the roles writing consultant play during the interaction. Writing center talk is dialogical and collaborative, which engages a recursive scaffolding process of probing the ESL writers' knowledge base and calibrating consultants' feedback into the writers' ZPD. The dialogues in writing consultation are occasions for LREs and language learning for the ESL writers. The LREs in writing consultations are enactments of the writers' mental processing of comprehending comments, exercising existing knowledge, generating hypotheses or alternatives, and extending their learning, which may solidify their language knowledge or boosting their language development. During the dialogues, the writing consultants play an active role in the LREs and facilitate the ESL writers' language learning by providing alternative forms and confirming the writers' hypotheses. Though the contextual force of writing consultation and the different dynamic in each dyad affect how LREs occur and function during the interaction between consultants and clients, the collaborative dialogues in writing consultation create the potential opportunities for the ESL writers to become aware of their language problems, tap into their existing knowledge, reveal their writer's voice in their language choices, and receive relevant feedback on their writing from the writing consultants. From sociocultural perspective on SLA, the ESL writers are prompted and operating in their ZPD with learning for further development of language during the writing consultations.

The vital role of language in writing is undeniable. Language issues might be regarded as a lower order concern for content development or organization in a piece of writing, but they can be higher order concerns in creating better L2 writers. L2 writers come to writing consulting sessions with various degree of uncertainty in their L2 and needs for help with linguistic issues. For L2 writers, a good control of language does not only ensure the correctness of linguistic forms but also is related to a faithful representation of original ideas as well as their intent of

voice and style in their writing. As evident in the ESL writer, Feng's, case, her concerns with her *Chinglish* are not only translating the ideas or finding the counterparts in meanings, but also the equivalent tone, voice, style, and equal sophistication of language use in her English. The sense of linguistic uncertainty increases as the writers feel more attached to the writing in communicating their meanings and feelings, rather than artificial texting. L2 writers need to control the language in order to control their writing as a writer, rather than just a language learner.

Writing center pedagogy provides an ideal setting for L2 writers to re-examine their knowledge of language; nevertheless, language learning appears to be a by-product rather than the main focus of writing center work for working with ESL writers. The Writing Center should continue rethinking their approach to working with ESL writers and recognize the significance of language knowledge and language control for L2 writers in their writing. Though writing center pedagogy and the dialogical approach allow negotiation of language to happen in the writing consultation, which effects language learning in a sociocultural framework, it is ideal and necessary for writing consultants to receive more training in the rules of English grammar to avoid unnecessary confusion since the writing consultant has the inevitable authority in language. For example, in the case of Feng and Diana on their discussion of the usage of "may" or "account receivable," it would have been more reassuring to Feng if Diana was able to explain the rules to Feng after she revealed her knowledge base and misconception of English grammar. Sometimes, consultants' being certain and directive on the language problems instead of being hesitant can only reassure L2 writers' linguistic uncertainty with their language use. This research has shown that being directive can be an essential part of the negotiation process and it scaffolds the ESL writers by providing appropriate and relevant assistance after negotiation and

elaboration of ideas. As also indicated in this research, the concept of directiveness has proved to be fluid rather than a fixed approach in the negotiation processes. In this sense, providing directives can be collaborative rather than controlling in consultation. In scaffolding writers' language learning, the writing consultants can stay rested without the fear of appropriating the writing or the accusation of imposing instructions to the writers.

On the other hand, even when the consultants are not able to explain everything, it can still be beneficial to keep the conversation on language issues going instead of avoiding the topics. As shown in Feng and Diana's session (Excerpt #5), Diana's ignorance of the grammar points and her genuineness to work with Feng on the issues allow Feng to engage in mental processing on the language issues and reveal her untested hypotheses or misconception about English grammar. A quick fix of grammar for the writing is turned into a 20-minute discussion and self-exploration for the writer. In order to create better writers, the value of dialogues and one-on-one writing conference have been suggested by previous studies (e.g, Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Powers, 1993; Williams, 2004) and supported by this study. Although it is labor-intensive and logistically difficult in writing teaching practices, as Ferris (1997, 2003a) admitted, L2 writing research should be encouraged to explore the potential effects and practical benefits for L2 writing development. After all, teaching L2 writing is a long-term investment in creating successful and confident L2 writers, particular in the academic setting.

The results of analyses on the LREs in the writing consultations show that the Writing Center has a great potential to be an excellent environment for learning English as second language (ESL) for academic purposes, as evident from a vast array of LREs. The interaction of writing tutorials can be best described and analyzed from the sociocultural perspective of language learning (Lantolf, 2006). Writing center pedagogy and its goal to empower writers are

evident in writing consultants' non-directive tutoring strategies and the circular scaffolding processes, but this study would suggest being more directive can be equally empowering for ESL writers whose simply lack the knowledge. Directives may also help to clarify the ESL writers' intentions in meaning and language choices, which reveal the writers' voice hidden in their first language and their desire to have their English voice in their ESL writing.

This study contributes to current L2 writing research and writing center pedagogy for ESL writers. It supports the concept of collaborative dialogues as language learning occasions. The functions of LREs in collaborative dialogues are evident even though the format might vary in different context. This study sheds light on how writing center pedagogy works for ESL writers and empowers their language control in ESL writing. The focus on language issue in writing consultation helps to assure L2 writers' sense of uncertainty in L2 writing and also help the ESL writers to find their English voices in their ESL writers.

In addition, the implications of this study highlight the importance of recognizing L2 learners' individual difference in L2 writing development (e.g., their language knowledge, learning experience of formal L2 writing, and their comfort level of talking about their L2 writing), which affects the effectiveness of interaction and feedback. Writing centers also need to continue rethinking their writing consulting or tutorial training on the topic of language issues with their diverse multilingual clientele who speaks English as a second language, as language knowledge and control are not just about linguistic correctness to ESL writers.

**Final Reflections**

As an L2 writer and writing center consultant myself, writing this dissertation, to a certain extent, really is telling my own ESL writing experience in an academic context and my

appreciation of writing center philosophy. Being categorized as a "nonresident alien" in this country, I speak English as my non-native language and oftentimes it is accompanied by a great sense of uncertainty out of the need of communication with foreigners. Writing English as an L2 for communication could be even more stressful for me, given the non-verbal resources and paralinguistic clues are not available and accurate word choices are the only sources for successful and effective communication. There is a conscious gap between my ideas and my language. Therefore, I have the first hand "empirical experience" of the unspoken communicative anxiety and the linguistic uncertainty in my writing. All the times, I draw on my knowledge and try to faithfully represent the ideas in English by attempting the risk of awkward usage for native English speakers to get the insights into my creative mind and a diverse intelligence; however, the inherent linguistic uncertainty does not always get reassured during the conversation.

Writing this dissertation itself is a process where I experience uncertainty and reassurance in my ESL writing. In this dissertation, I attempt to investigate how writing center consultants help to reassure ESL writers' uncertainty in language use in the writing. I argue that "elaboration" is the pivotal component for both the clients and writing consultants to locate the source of uncertainty, while "directives" can be the desirable eliminators to the linguistic uncertainty. In describing the elaborating process and eliminating the language problems during the writing consultation, I use "calibrating" and "re-calibrating" to describe the recursive processes of targeting the source of uncertainty or the writer's real problem (e.g., lack of knowledge, misunderstanding of rules, gap between intention and outcome, etc.). I attempted to use the word "calibrating" to describe the negotiation and dialogues in writing consultations because I found the similarity between the elaboration process of issuing a directive to resolve the language issue

and the targeting process of launching a Patriot Missile (PAC 2)[4] to destroy the suspected target. To launch a Patriot Missile, it takes a series of carefully executed steps to launch the missile in order to destroy the target. Before launching a missile, the radar antenna on the ground scans the skies for incoming targets, detects and locks onto a potential target, determines the trajectory, speed and heading of the incoming target, and provides information to identify the target. The PAC-2 missile does not directly "hit the target" but when the missile is at the point of closest approach to the identified target, its fragmentation bomb explodes and eliminates the target. It takes the radar and operators' careful calculation to illuminate the target and the precise recalibration of the missile's heading and speed to destroy the target. Missing the target is consequential and can backfire on the air defense system by revealing the location of the unit. The cost of a misfire can be disastrous. It is almost just like the writing center consultation on language issue that involves dialogues and negotiation before the writing consultant can correctly issue a directive and resolve the language problem. A "misfire" of directives is also consequential and may ruin the good intentions of corrective feedback. Being directive on comments is taking a great risk of being offensive to the writer, which is often masked by the power structure between the writer and the commenter. For example, my creativity in writing this dissertation is not always appreciated by my readers. In one of my earlier drafts, I tried to do word play with the phrase "It takes two to tango" by stating "It takes two to 'tangle'" in an attempt to indicate the fact that the interaction in writing consulting session is complicated and does not follow the prescribed protocol or footwork; however, a committee member did not get the joke at all and directly corrected the "L2 error." As an author trying to be creative with dull

[4] PAC-2 is the older generation than PAC-3, which relies on re-calculation of the ground radar to destroy the target with its fragmentation bomb. For details on how Patriot Missiles work, go to http://www.howstuffworks.com/patriot-missile.htm by Marshall Brain (2010).

dissertation work, I felt as underwhelmed as the reader might have been, given that creativity and style are very subjective. I deliberated and experienced the same contemplation and equal uncertainty in my attempts to use "calibrating" and "it takes two to tangle" and, however, ended up with two different outcomes. My "calibrating" has been validated and recognized as a good word choice; my "tangle" proved to be a target of corrective feedback. Under a fixed and disadvantaged power relationship with my readers, I only took "calibrating" as a little success in my original and creative writing, while "tangle" was just another unnoticed and mistaken effort in my ESL writing.

Meanwhile, working as a writing center consultant as well as an educator of writing and rhetoric, I am well aware of how a directive approach is more of a double-edged knife with masked power behind it and should be used with great caution. It can be effective in teaching writing and reassuring to learners; however, it can be imposing or intruding as well. Providing directives should be considerate and relevant, rather than a negligent use of power. Especially when working with advanced ESL writers, to eliminate their uncertainty in their L2 writing efforts comes with no room for guess work on both the writer's and consultant's parts. It is essential for L2 writers to perceive their own writing problems linguistically and/or rhetorically, and it is equally important for the consultant or instructor to understand the nature of the errors beyond the face value. An "error" can be more complicated and significant if taken from a sociocultural perspective on language learning, not to mention the intercultural perspectives of communication, rhetoric, and discourse. It is through the conversation between the writer and consultant that both of them can gain insights into their perceptions and understanding of each other. Writing center talk makes teaching and learning writing a transparent process and the scaffolding process with the changing level of assistance is only possible in a one-on-one setting.

This dissertation does not try to provide “hard evidence” for the effectiveness of writing center pedagogy. Nevertheless, through the qualitative analysis of how writing consultations work in the process of forming students’ competencies in writing based on the theoretical framework of socioculturalism, the findings of this study might suffice for the effectiveness of writing consultation for language learning and writing development from a summative assessment approach.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### MAPS - A Tool for Reviewing Writing

This heuristic can help you to ask intelligent questions as an editor of your own writing, or the writing of a peer.

| Aspect | Questions | Example answer |
|---|---|---|
| Mode | What type of writing is this? | |
| | When this type of writing is considered "excellent" what characteristics does it have? | |
| Audience | Who will read this writing? | |
| | What expectations will the audience have for this piece? What prior knowledge do they have? | |
| Purpose | What will this writing do? | |
| | How will the writing accomplish this purpose? | |
| Situation | What are the external constraints and possibilities for the **writing**? | |
| | What are the **writer's** preferences? | |

## APPENDIX B

Workshop materials for working ESL writers

### Failures in ESL Writing Consultations: Theirs or Ours?

The Michigan State University Writing Center

**Myths**

1. *ESL writers come to the writing center (WC) to get their grammar checked.*
2. *They are expected to know about American English writing conventions.*
3. *They are supposed to understand what we do as consultants.*
4. *They come to the WC voluntarily, but refuse to participate in the conversation.*
5. *They tend to be less enthused and less willing to talk about their papers.*
6. *They are reluctant to cut parts.*
7. *They wait for consultants to make suggestions or to do most/all of the work.*
8. *Their language is so bad that we can't figure out what's going on to help.*
9. *Those with almost insurmountable language barriers are hard to help indirectly.*
10. *It's challenging to work with ESL writers.*

**Problem Discussion**

**SCENARIO ONE**

An ESL student with "poor" language skills asks you to "check" his/her paper. He/she refuses to read it out loud, nor does he/she want you to read it out loud. The client simply wants you to check for grammar problems, but does not want any discussion about the assignment.

**SCENARIO TWO**

The consultant speaks quite fast throughout the session. Also, when identifying and communicating changes that need to be made to the paper, the consultant uses indirect speech. Indirect speech requires the ESL writer to judge the importance of your suggestion-- something he/she may find difficult to do. In this scenario, the ESL client often responds with nodding, but doesn't respond much more than that because the speaking speed and indirect speech used by the consultant are making it difficult for the client to understand him/her.

**SCENARIO THREE**

The client does not recognize his/her problems with plagiarism. When the consultant brings these problems to the client's attention, he/she does not adequately emphasize the seriousness of the issue, nor does this consultant offer the client skills or references for overcoming these plagiarism problems. As a result, the client does not take the issue of plagiarism in his/her paper seriously and cannot resolve the problems by himself/ herself.

**Reminders**

1. *Start a session by asking about the assignment and the class.*
2. *Clarify the ESL writer's needs.*
3. *Talk about the writer's approach to the assignment.*
4. *Make sure the writer has understood what you are explaining.*
5. *Learn some strategies for effective communication with non-native speakers.*
6. *Be ready to explain some common grammatical problems.*
7. *Be flexible between the two ends of the direct-indirect continuum.*
8. *Be aware of client needs that may extend beyond the scope of writing.*
9. *Be aware of cultural differences like rhetorical structure or intellectual property.*
10. *Be patient.*

*** Working with an ESL writer in the writing center is a great way to meet a person from a different culture with a different take on the world.**

## APPENDIX C

Preliminary interview guiding questions

**ESL students:**

1. Learning experience of English writing
    a. When did you start learning to write in English?
    b. What did/do you do to improve your writing skills?
2. Perceptions of writing in English
    a. How important do you think English writing is for you?
    b. Are you confident of writing in English? What's your experience with it?
3. Writing strategies
    a. Could describe your typical writing process? How do you start it?
    b. Do you have any particular writing strategies or preferences for writing?
4. About the Writing Center
    a. Have you ever heard of the writing center before you participate in this study?
    b. What do you think they do at the writing center?
    c. What would you expect to get from the writing center sessions?

**Writing Consultants:**

1. How many years have you worked as a writing consultant?
2. What is your tutoring philosophy?
3. What is your experience working with ESL writers?
4. How do you help them with their writing? What do you think they need?

## APPENDIX D

Pre-and post-session interview guiding questions

**ESL Writers: Pre-session interview**

1. The writing assignment/task
    a. How do you plan to complete this particular writing assignment or task?
    b. Do you feel any difficulty about this particular assignment?
2. Expectations of the writing consultation
    a. What do you expect from the writing consultation at the Writing Center?
    b. What do you intend to address in your paper at the consulting session?
    c. What do you expect the consultant to help you with your concerns with your writing?

**ESL students: Post-session interview questions:**

1. Opener: How did the session go?
2. Processes:

    a. How comfortable did you feel at the session?
    b. What could be the problems with the consultation process, if there were any?
    c. How well you thought you communicated and negotiated with the consultant?

3. Results:

    a. How were all your concerns addressed during the consulting session?
        1. What about this particular issue you were concerned with before the session?
    b. What part of the session (consultant's comments) did you find most satisfying?
    c. What part of the session (consultant's comments) did you find least satisfying?

4. Interaction with the consultant

    a. Have you experienced any difficulty in communicating with the consultant?
    b. What will you do to improve your writing skills with that specific suggestion or comment from the consultant?

5. Comments on the session video

    c. Would you like to comment on any part of the session when you work with the consultant on your writing?
    d. What do you think about the consultant's comments or suggestions?

**Writing Consultants: Post-session interview questions:**

1. How did the session go?
2. In your opinion, what expectations did the ESL client have when s/he came to this session? How did these compare with your own expectations or goals for the session?
3. How did the session go well? How would you evaluate this session? What was the most successful part? What was the most difficult or challenging part for you during this session?
4. Are you able to identify a pattern of writing problems of the ESL writers? What are they, if any?
5. From your perspective, what is challenging to the ESL students on that writing task or assignment?
6. What is your impression of the client's evaluation of this session? Did you feel the client was satisfied with this consulting session?

## APPENDIX E

Examples of dialogues from other dyads

**Example 1: Feng and Diana, Session 4, November 19, 2009**
(Passage discussed in Example 1, Feng, case report, PIM881, November 19, 2009)
*Music market has been faced with unprecedented racial changes. New play media, younger audience, fleeting genres updating, and soaring competition devour the market shares of the four pop queens: Marie Carey, Madonna, Janet Jackson, and Whitney Houston. Among them, Whitney endures the biggest strike. She has the longest empty period, and her latest album "I Look to You" sells far behind other three female singers' performance.*

1. **Diana**: You start with music market, but because market is a noun, and you talk about one specific market, so it would be "*the*" music market. {Consultant comment; Directive (settled)}
2. **Diana**: Ok, you say "*unprecedented racial changes*," but then you don't go on to talk about race (.) {Consultant prompt}
3. **Feng**: Uh (2.0) ((reading the text)) can I say the play media... the speed of the other... I mean, the play media because before this decade, we seldom use digital medium, so I want to say(.) {ESL writer response; Elaboration}
4. **Diana**: Um, I would say new media technology {Directive}
5. **Feng**: Ok. yeah. {ESL writer response (settled)}
6. **Diana**: Or new audio media technology.(.) Or you could just say new media technology 'cuz it's not just exclusive to audio (.) like video is also applicable to this, as well. {Elaboration}
7. **Diana:**And then, what do you mean by "*fleeting genres updating*"? {Consultant prompt; clarification request}
8. **Feng**: I mean, very fast. The updating speed is very high. {ESL writer response}
9. **Diana**: What are they updating? {Elaboration (Clarification)}
10. **Feng**: I mean, for example, before Madonna, we have pop, and Madonna brings pop dance or dance pop. And this is what I mean. {Elaboration}
11. **Diana**: Ok. Like the development of new genres over time? {Elaboration (Clarification)}
12. **Feng**: Yeah, I think they're updating, or this change is much faster than before. Maybe in the last decade in three or five years we can see a new genre, but these days we, every one or two years, we can see new genre appear. So how to (.) fleeting is not the main thing I want to say? {ESL writer response}
13. **Diana**: Fleeting is like running away really quickly. {Directive (rule explanation)}
14. **Feng**: So I just can say speedy? {Alternative testing}
15. **Diana**: I might say, like (1.0) I'm trying to think of a word that (1.0) 'cuz it's not updating; it's more like evolution of a genre. But that's (.) {Directive (solution)}
16. **Feng**: Yeah, I guess evolution is the meaning. {ESL writer response}
17. **Diana**: The evolving pop genre? Or the quickly evolving pop genre? {Alternatives}
18. **Feng**: Yeah (.) {ESL writer response; confirmation}
19. **Diana**: Or you could say quickly changing? A quickly changing pop genre? {Elaboration; Alternatives}

20. **Feng**: In fact (.), about this genre, I feel confused about it, because sometimes I can see pop, R&B, reggae, are compared, so I think pop is different from (1.0) pop means including all this, so pop is opposite to classic,(.) so I don't know how to define it because I can see the confusing point if I use pop in my article. {Elaboration}
21. **Diana**: Yeah, these are all pop singers. Um, I think R&B is different from pop, and reggae is different from pop, but you might find rap and R&B and pop on a top 40s station. Do you listen to the radio down here? I think 97.5 plays pop, and rap, and R&B, but pop is stuff that, like, girls listen to (.) I mean(.) {Directives (explanation)}
22. **Feng**: I understand what you say. {ESL writer response; settled}

(Feng and Diana, Session 4, November 19, 2009)

**Example 2: Siang and Julie, Session 1, September 30, 2009**

(Passage discussed in Excerpt #7, Siang, research paper, RET861, September 30, 2009)
*As a result, it is reasonable to assume that Greater China must be an important market for Japanese companies. <u>And</u> coupled with different relationships between Japan, will consumers in these two Chinese <u>culture societies</u> form their intentions differently toward Japanese products?*

1. **Julie**: Okay, so, and with really formal papers, we don't start sentences out with "*and*," "*but*," or "*because*." So I'm wondering if you can find a different word you can use there. {Directive (rule explanation); Consultant prompt}
2. (1.0)
3. **Julie**: So "must be an important market for Japanese companies coupled with different relationships between Japan "(.) {Consultant prompt}
4. **Siang**: I need a new transitional word or I just leave out the "*and"*? {Hypothesis}
5. **Julie**: You could do both. I mean, there are words that substitute "and" easily like "additionally," "in addition." Yeah, so you could say, "In addition" ((Julie quickly read over the sentence)) {Directives (solution)}
6. **Julie**: I'm wondering, too, if here, just like the historical backgrounds you used an adjective, I wonder if it should be "cultural societies?" {Consultant prompt}
7. **Siang**: Um (1.0) the two China's cultural society, I mean is Taiwan and China. Maybe it's not clear to make people know this mean Taiwan and China. The two Chinese cultural societies (.) {Elaboration}
8. **Julie**: These two Chinese (1.0) what if you say something like these two Chinese culture-based societies? {Alternative testing}
9. **Siang**: Two Chinese culture based societies? {ESL writer response}
10. **Julie**: Yeah, because Taiwan is not exactly Chinese culture alone, but it's based on Chinese culture {Elaboration}
11. **Siang**: Yeah, but China is Chinese cultural society, so (.) {ESL writer response}
12. **Julie**: What about if you had this past tense: Chinese cultured society? You could do something like that, and that would get across the idea of Taiwan being a Chinese-cultured society, as well as China. {Elaboration; Alternatives}
13. **Siang**: um.((nodding)) {Confirmation}

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