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From Invitation to Isolation in Online First Year Composition:
Instructor Feedback on Student Writing to Foster Students Fully Participating

by

Elizabeth Onufer

A dissertation

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RE: regarding study number IRB-FY2018-136: OWI Feedback Spring 2018

Dear Ms. Onufer:

I agree that this study qualifies as exempt from review under the following guideline: Category 1. Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

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Sincerely,

Ralph Baergen, PhD, MPH, CIP
Human Subjects Chair

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From Invitation to Isolation in Online First Year Composition:
Instructor Feedback on Student Writing to Foster Students Fully Participating
Dissertation Abstract – Idaho State University (2020)

As one of the first classes typically taken in college, first year composition (FYC) serves as a gateway course for many students. When this class is moved into the online environment, questions of digital literacy, prior knowledge, and student differences grow more crucial when all coursework is mediated through technology and students are physically removed from their peers, their instructor, and the college community. These questions are compounded by the growing diversity of college students. Students who are labeled “nontraditional” are becoming the “new normal” at colleges across the country. With an increasingly diverse student body, accessibility and inclusivity are top priorities in the field of online writing instruction (OWI).

As a gateway course, instructors of FYC can foster an inviting environment for students as they enter the academic community. One area in which instructors can foster inclusivity and accessibility is through their feedback on student writing. This direct and individualized interaction with students has the potential to empower them in their writing process, engage their existing literacies, and create an invitation into the college community. Alternatively, instructor feedback can rob students of their agency, devalue their differences, and reinforce institutional power structures of the college. When instructor feedback is mediated through the online course environment, additional considerations arise compared to the face to face class.

The current research in the field of OWI places the focus on *how* instructors respond (frequency, timing, and mode) and the student response to the feedback. One missing piece of the scholarship is *what* language instructors use when they respond. This research project examines instructor feedback from two online FYC courses using critical discourse analysis. The data analysis exposes the micro and macro impacts of instructor feedback in creating inclusive and accessible online

FYC courses. The result of this work is a reflection rubric for instructors to examine their language in feedback to student writing and how it can serve as an invitation into the college community for their students in online FYC.

Key Words: online writing instruction, first year composition, computers and writing, basic writing, feedback on student writing

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Introduction

By the end of March 2020, the number of college students completing classes in an online environment skyrocketed to nearly 100%. As COVID-19 shut down physical campuses across the country, the pressure for effective delivery of online classes became one of the hottest topics in education. While the research and practices for online teaching and learning have been growing exponentially due to a continued increase in demand over the last decade, never has the discussion been so imperative. When I began this dissertation research in 2018, I would have never imagined a global pandemic would create such a sense of urgency to contribute to the field. In fall 2018, approximately 35% of college students were enrolled in at least one online course according to the National Center for Education Statistics. While one-third of all students is a significant number, it pales in comparison to the situation in which we are currently teaching.

In the fall 2020 semester at my institution, College of Eastern Idaho, the number of face-to-face (F2F) and online students has flipped; only one-third of all classes are being held in person. Even that number hangs precariously close to zero, as classes are poised to move online in a moment's notice in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak. College instructors across the country are facing the reality that they must become effective at doing their work in a virtual environment, whether they want to or not. My hope is that this research not only adds to the existing conversation in the field of online writing instruction but also to the moment in which we all find ourselves -- working to best serve our students online in the time of a global pandemic.

One way we serve our students is by providing individualized feedback on student work. In an asynchronous online environment, providing feedback has additional considerations than the F2F practice. In the physical or synchronous classroom, students often have a direct opportunity to ask

questions about feedback. Students have an in-person understanding of the instructor and can read feedback with the lens the instructor's style and tone. On campus, students have immediate access to peers and the writing center. Alternately, comments delivered via a learning management system (LMS) or email in an asynchronous course are from an instructor whom the students may have never met or seen, without the real-time opportunity to ask questions and the resources of the physical college community. This asynchronous online space can differentiate the students' relationships – with the instructor, with technology, with the college community – thus, placing additional pressure on the instructor to craft written feedback that is clear, detailed, and helpful for the online student. The onus falls on the instructor to reflect, rethink, and remake the language used in crafting feedback to student writing. Scott Warnock, a highly influential scholar of online writing instruction, poses, "Digital response technology starts by helping us save keystrokes and time, but as with most of our teaching, it invites a rethinking of conventional response practices, essentially helping us reassess the crucial dialogue we have with students about their writing" (121). When we move our work to an asynchronous online environment, we have an excellent opportunity to rethink our feedback practices in a way that reconsiders the relationships with our online students and how we best serve them.

While effective feedback is crucial for students in all courses, instructor feedback may have greater implications in General Education courses. These are the courses students typically complete early in their college education in preparation for their future work in their major and are considered gateway courses. One of the most common General Education courses is first-year composition (FYC), which is often taken during students' first semester. Instructors of FYC and their approach to student writing can influence the tone set for students' academic careers. Karen Bishop Morris, a scholar in rhetoric and composition with a focus on FYC, writes about "the powerful role writing can play in retaining students and maximizing their capacity to bridge significant gaps in pre-college preparation while laying their foundation for their future civic and professional participation" (15). Feedback to

students in this class can serve as an invitation to their new academic community, empower student agency in their learning, and set the stage for retention and completion. Alternatively, feedback to students in FYC also has the prospect of isolating students from this new community, robbing them of their agency, and building barriers to degree completion. Thus, the way in which we craft feedback to FYC students is more than pointing out comma errors or lack of idea development; this feedback can serve as a gateway for students into their new academic community – one that can move from opening the gate to shutting it.

This gateway can be even more precarious in asynchronous online FYC because students are joining a new academic community without necessarily ever stepping foot on to the physical spaces of the college campus. In an online environment, these students are joining a new community virtually while staying embedded in their existing community. This points to questions about what it means to be literate in academic, home, and virtual community spaces and how they influence each other. The literacy required in each community does not exist in a silo. Cynthia Selfe, a founding scholar of computers and writing, writes, “The real work facing teacher involves transforming our current limited discussions about technological literacy into more fully informed debates acknowledging the complex relationship between technology, literacy, education, power, economic conditions and political goals” (xxii). Stuart Selber argues, though, that we cannot start where we are because the current conversation on computers and writing instruction is “non-dialogic,” assuming technology as natural and missing the crucial examination of existing assumptions, goals, and practices implicit in technology (23). Combine the implicit biases of technology with students’ different literacies and virtual relationships that lack non-verbal communication and writing effective feedback to students becomes that much more challenging. The approach of this dissertation is to study the practice of instructor feedback to student writing in asynchronous online FYC courses as part of a larger conversation – one that examines the influence of digital technologies in the delivery of feedback, the role of FYC as a gateway course in the

students' experiences, and the potential of the instructor's language to be an invitation for students into the new academic community.

Background of Study

I began teaching FYC online in 2015 after two years of teaching the course face to face. Initially, I only taught one section online and had anywhere from 10 to 25 students. I found the practice to be enjoyable, and given the small online class size, I was able to invest a lot of time and energy into individualized feedback. As my online course load grew, I quickly realized the level of intention, time, and energy I was giving to each student in individualized feedback was not feasible. I began searching for best practices to meet the demand and retain effectiveness. Most of the articles I read referenced how to give feedback across different modalities, the frequency and timing of feedback, or the online tools available to expedite the feedback process. While these suggestions helped me grow my toolbox for online teaching, I still felt like something was missing. A premise of my teaching philosophy is to meet every student where they are, and as my online load increased, my ability to serve all students in this way decreased. The time and labor it took to enact this individualized pedagogy in the online environment was exponential compared to the face to face classroom.

Simultaneously, I became aware that the content of my feedback under this full-time online course load was shifting. I recognized my comments were more statements delivered *at* students about what was wrong and what they needed to revise rather than a conversation *with* students about their writing process and choices. An authoritarian teaching style, one that did not align with my teaching philosophy, was emerging in my feedback to students because I felt time constrained and worn out. This was the catalyst for a deeper inquiry into online feedback practices. This study was born of a misalignment between my teaching philosophy and my practices under the pressure of a full-time online course load. I knew I could do better in crafting individualized feedback to serve all my students, and this

research is my contribution to the field, and, more importantly, to all my students on the other side of the screen.

Statement of Problem

Not only is the question of effective student feedback in asynchronous online FYC a personal pedagogical struggle, it is also an imperative component of effective online writing instruction. The Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) states the first principle of OWI Principles and Effective Practices is, “Online writing instruction should be universally inclusive and accessible.” This includes the “needs of learner with physical disabilities, learning disabilities, multilingual backgrounds and learning challenges related to socioeconomic issues” (CCCC). The first principle is to supersede and connect to the fourteen other principles, as stated by CCCC. While this principle aligns with my teaching philosophy, a major problem still exists – how do I write feedback to students that is inclusive and accessible when teaching a full-time online course load? The further advice of best practices from the CCCC suggests that OWI instructors should have a “tolerance for mechanical error in writing, and response and assessment should place low value on mechanical and grammar errors. Evaluation should focus on how well ideas are communicated and secondarily on sentence level errors.” This best practice helps me focus the content my feedback yet does not improve my efficacy on how I craft my comments that are inclusive and accessible.

The call for inclusive and accessible online writing instruction is informed by the recognition that moving FYC into an asynchronous online environment can pose additional challenges for the students who already struggle. As instructors of online FYC, we often assume students have a basic level of literacy in both language and technology. Yet, we rarely examine what those assumptions of basic literacy are and the implications of integrating these literacies into the online learning environment for new college students. Selfe defines technological literacy as the “functional understanding and a complex set of socially and culturally situated values, practices, and skills involved in operating

linguistically within the context of electronic environments, including reading, writing, and communicating” (11). While the anytime, anywhere selling point of online education opens the door for many students who would otherwise not be able to attend due to time or geographic constraints, it simultaneously creates barriers with this complex set of literacy and technological skills and cultural values required in the online class. Linda Stine, a scholar in technology and writing instruction, acknowledges that online learning is “not a natural fit” for basic writing students due to the heavy demand on reading and writing skills, the technological literacy required to navigate and complete the course, the assumption of independence and self-confidence, and the requirement of effective time management (33). Evidence of all these challenges can show up in student writing. Thus, when writing feedback to students, our work is addressing much more than the immediacy of the student writing problems in front of us. To meet the first principle of OWI as defined by the CCCC, this research addresses the problem of crafting feedback to student writing that is inclusive and accessible for all students.

Research Questions

The research questions of this project seek to examine the implied messages and power dynamics of instructor feedback to student writing in asynchronous online FYC. In the current college environment, the online class is taking many new forms with titles and definitions differing across institutions, from interactive web courses to hyflex courses. For this dissertation, the research questions are focused on the asynchronous online class. The asynchronous class requires students to log on to the LMS and complete work, typically on a weekly schedule, but does not require any synchronous meeting times with the instructor or peers. The work of this research project asks:

- Does instructor feedback to student writing serve to invite students into the academic conversation or isolate them from it?
- Is instructor feedback reinforcing the power structures of the academic institution?

The goal of the research is to create a model that assists instructors to craft feedback using language that respects the complexities of online FYC students and creates an inviting and empowering gateway course experience for these students. By examining the micro and macro influences of instructor feedback in two different sections of asynchronous online FYC courses, I offer a model of self-reflection for instructors to use when writing feedback to students.

A deliberate omission in the research questions is the student response to instructor feedback. I do not ask students if they read the instructor feedback, what they do with that feedback, or how the feedback makes them feel. I do not ask students if they feel invited or isolated from the academic community in response to their instructor's feedback. This omission is intentional due to the sociolinguistic approach of my method – critical discourse analysis – and the focus on the instructor's language choice in feedback to contribute to inclusive and accessible instruction. Thus, I do not take up the question or problem of what students do with the feedback. While I value student perspectives, I choose to focus this study on a close analysis of the rhetoric of instructor feedback, thus excluding a reader response approach. Another concern and reason for not including the student voice in this project is that student responses to instructor feedback can be problematic due to subjectivity and timing – issues of grades, personal preferences of instructional style, personality conflicts, and motivation – can all play a role in how a student reads or rates an instructor's feedback. I find critical discourse analysis and the focus on the language of instructor feedback as the optimal framework for this research project to contribute to the field of OWI.

Significance of Study

Since most FYC instructors have suddenly entered the online teaching environment due to COVID-19, the significance of this study is paramount. With sparse training and full course loads, instructors have little opportunity to reflect on and improve their instruction in our current reality. This dissertation offers a simple reflection tool to support instructors in creating more accessible and

inclusive feedback. The tool focuses on the language we use in our feedback to students because so much of our language as writing instructors is naturalized. We use language in ways that may unintentionally be isolating our students in asynchronous online FYC courses.

Our patterns of academic language can seep through our feedback to students without much recognition. We are firmly engrained in our academic community of practice, and our feedback is “common sense” to us. Norman Fairclough, a critical discourse scholar, writes, “The ideologies embedded in discursive practice are most effective when they become naturalized, and achieve the status of ‘common sense’” (87). While this discourse is “naturalized” for us as instructors, the students are not embedded in our discursive practices. Instructor feedback should not be creating confusion or frustration for students. Without the quizzical look of a student in front of us, it can be easy to forget that our feedback is not common sense to students.

Our feedback should be recognized as more than helping students meet a set of learning outcomes and standards of academic writing. The language of our feedback, when recognized as a discursive practice, is imbued with issues of ideology and power structures, thus impacting far more than a student’s thesis statement or MLA formatting. Fairclough explains, “...this stable and established property of ideologies should not be overstated because my reference to ‘transformation’ points to ideological struggle as a dimension of discursive practice, [is] a struggle to reshape discursive practices and the ideologies built into them in the context of restructuring or transformation of relations of domination” (87). One opportunity for transformation in instructor discourse lies in the common occurrence of our feedback to students. Thus, the feedback reflection rubric I propose in chapter 5 is designed to aid in the process of transformation that Fairclough writes about, not as a permanent tool, but rather a starting place until it becomes naturalized. As I drafted this rubric, I thought, “Well, this seems like common sense!” which is what I hope instructors will come to find in practice. But as

Fairclough acknowledges, the ideologies of power and authority are so embedded within our language use that they are nearly impossible to see until pointed out as such.

In addition, the timing and requirement of FYC in the college course sequence makes this research significant. Due to the General Education requirement, FYC is a course that reflects students' wide spectrum of abilities and experiences. The New London Group calls for us to "expand our understanding of literacy to embrace cultural and linguistic diversity..." (61). They write, "As soon as our sights are set on the objective of creating the learning conditions for full social participation the issue of differences becomes critically important. How do we ensure that differences of culture, language, and gender are not barriers to educational success? And what are the implications of these differences for literacy pedagogy?" (New London Group 61). We have the opportunity to welcome students to their new college community in a way that recognizes differences and reduces barriers to success. One of the crucial spaces to embrace diversity and reduce barriers in our literacy pedagogy is in our individual feedback to students in online FYC courses.

The language that we use in our feedback can send a message to students whether we value their existing literacies or diminish them, in turn influencing students' experiences early within their college careers. Juan Guerra, a language and literacy scholar who addresses writing across differences and historically underserved students, explains, "We, as educators in composition and literacy studies, must delve into the intricacies of what it means to live in social spaces where nothing – not our languages, cultures, identities, or citizenship status – ever stands still despite the best efforts of institutional and ideological forces operating to hold us all – especially the disenfranchised among us – in rigidly defined and stratified categories" (2). This research is significant to the conversation that sees and responds to asynchronous online FYC students as part of many social spaces that should be empowered in their writing process. Christa Ehmann and Beth Hewett, scholars in online writing instruction, acknowledge the surveys and studies on student satisfaction in online writing courses yet

call for more specific studies, including “the notion of leveling classroom power” as an important topic for future research (525). When we craft feedback that engages with students from this place of inquiry during their gateway coursework, we can foster a sense of agency in the writing process that will serve students long after FYC.

Conclusion

This dissertation is born of a disappointment in my own work, what I perceive as a failure to create the most accessible and inclusive online writing course due to my authoritarian-style feedback to students. I recognize the disconnect between my feedback practice and my teaching philosophy, yet I am unable to find research that helps me rectify the situation. The current scholarship guides me in best practices for frequency and focus of my comments but not in the linguistic nuances of how I craft individualized feedback that meets all students where they are. By tapping into theories of basic writing, critical pedagogies, technology and literacy, and critical discourse analysis, I integrate ideas from across conversations to inform a way forward – for myself, for my students, and for all instructors who are committed to the first principle of online writing instruction.

CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Online first year composition courses (FYC) are diversifying. But this diversity is not necessarily found in the reading lists or assignments but in the students themselves. Enrollment demographics are shifting in higher education so dramatically that a “new normal” is being established. The U.S. Department of Education reports the “new normal” students comprise 74% of the undergraduate population. These are students who classify as first-generation, hold jobs, have dependents, transfer across institutions, and attend part time (Office of Educational Technology 7). The online student population isn’t just growing numerically, it’s growing more diverse. As a result, students in online FYC have a wider range of literacy skills and digital preparedness.

In online FYC courses, this spectrum of skills and preparedness is coupled with the challenges of the virtual learning environment. Linda Stine explains how students with lower level literacy skills struggle with reading and writing as the primary learning modality in the online course. This learning environment also requires effective time management, independence, and confidence -- attributes that many of the “new normal” students may struggle with, whether due to literacy levels, juggling work, family, and school commitments, or returning to academics after many years (Stine 33). The technical challenges can be just as debilitating. Many students are accessing and completing online FYC on their cell phones. According to the Pew Research Center, access by phone is most common with young adults, minorities, those with no college experience, and those with lower income levels (Griffin and Minter 147). Sheryl Burgstahler, whose research focuses on technology and disabilities, explains this phenomenon, often referred to as the second digital divide, as dividing “people who can make full use of technological tools, services, and resources from those who cannot” (69). While online education is touted for its accessibility – anytime, anywhere opportunity – the experience for the students may

present a different reality. For the “new normal” students, for whom online FYC is often a gateway as one of the first courses taken in college, the challenges in both technology and literacy may be building walls rather than opening doors.

Online writing instruction (OWI) scholars agree that more research is needed for online FYC courses to achieve the goal of accessibility and inclusivity. Leading OWI scholar Beth Hewett acknowledges, “In my view, OWI is in a relatively early developmental stage, making this an ideal time to engage in research that will contribute to the development of our understanding of procedures and processes associated with OWI” (“Generating New Theory”). The field is fumbling to simultaneously keep pace with the exponential demand for online education while still getting its theoretical feet underneath it. The shifting demographic of students in online FYC, the complexities of the online learning environment, and the nascent pedagogy of the field offer an important and timely opportunity to contribute to the praxis of online writing instruction theory and inform the greater field of rhetoric, composition, and writing studies (RCWS). A deepened understanding of what it means to serve the “new normal” student population online is urgently needed, alongside expanding practices to best serve these students in online FYC. This intersection is ripe to be explored and informed by other subfields in RCWS and related fields. Critical pedagogy, computers and writing, new media, Disability Studies, and response to student writing can contribute to the conversation on best practices for accessible and inclusive online FYC.

The specific focus on online FYC is important because of its timing in students’ academic careers as a general education requirement and a gateway class. Chris Anson writes about gateways as “both transition points and checkpoints – thresholds that promise a welcome transformation, new state of being, or a journey onwards, and borders that block, reject, and turn away” (1). FYC is a critical time for instructors to invite, support, nurture, empower, appreciate, and recognize students’ literacies and differences. Writing classes offer this invitation not inherent in many other classes. Marilyn Valentino

writes, “As writing teachers, we often serve on the front lines as students’ first point of contact and often most personal college experience” (164). In a face-to-face (F2F) class, this contact is through daily interactions and class discussions, but online FYC classes do not offer that physical opportunity. While virtual synchronous meetings are growing in popularity, the majority of contact between instructor and student in the online class is still through asynchronous written communication. Charles Bazerman, in his contribution to *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies*, acknowledges the challenges in communicating through writing compared to F2F interactions: “With writing we have fewer here-and-now clues about what the situation is, who our audiences are, and how we want to respond” (35). As students begin their college career, these instructor-student relationships are critical, but forming these connections through the written medium adds a challenge not encountered in face to face FYC courses.

Writing as the primary mode of interaction and relationship points to the crucial role of language in online FYC. While written communication in an online class may often be thought of as final essay drafts, this mode of communication is also the primary method for instructor feedback, whether it be on a formal assessment or response to a draft or discussion post. Because responding to students is such common practice for writing instructors, Kathleen Blake Yancey points out that the language used can often go unnoticed. Yet, given the student demographic, the timing of the FYC, and the online environment, the ubiquity of feedback practice has the potential to build relationships and break down the barriers for students. Alternatively, as scholars like Hewett, Burgstahler, Anson, Stine, Bazerman, and Griffin and Minter assert, written instructor feedback also has the ability to reinforce institutional power structures and isolate the very students it invites in through its anytime, anywhere online access. The OWI scholarship on response to student writing reflects a pedagogy that focuses more on how instructors are responding, such as oral and video feedback, or asynchronous vs synchronous, rather than the impact of the language the instructors are using in their feedback (Hewett). The next step in

research to strengthen feedback to students is to move beyond the methods by which we give feedback and start to examine the language of our feedback as a social practice that has the power to invite students into academic discourse and the ability to build relationships rather than build walls.

In addition to the challenge of language choices when providing feedback, the online environment creates another layer of challenge – the implicit biases of technology. Faculty in English departments often do not even “see” the forces at work with technology as noted by Cynthia Selfe and Richard Selfe. Faculty in the humanities often ignore the power dynamics behind and underneath technology, happy to leave that to the instructional technology experts. The computers that instructors rely on have been tools isolated from their teaching, as Cynthia Selfe acknowledged in 1999. In the halls of English departments, she points out that scholars keep their computers separate from their work. Technology, Selfe explains, is the “...backdrop of our professional lives. When we don’t have to pay attention to machines, we are free to focus on the teaching and study of language, the stuff of real intellectual and social concern” (*Technology* 22). Our comfort zone as literacy educators, she asserts, is based on the traditional notions of print. Over the last three decades, this bias of technology within English departments has changed very little. When FYC was migrated online and scholars scrambled to keep pace, the implicit biases of technology were, and continue to be, rarely addressed. Selfe argues that addressing these implicit biases is necessary: “By paying attention to the unfamiliar subject of technology –in sustained and critical ways, and from our own perspective as humanists – we may learn some important lessons about how to go about making change in literacy instruction” (135). Confronting the challenges of integrating technology and literacy can support the change in how online literacy instruction is approached.

The needs of the “new normal” student population can be addressed by integrating research from a number of subdisciplines in RCWS, including basic writing, critical pedagogy, and computers and writing, as well as the related fields of Disability Studies and Critical Race Studies. Placing these scholarly

communities in conversation with each other offers a lens into online literacy that no single discipline can accomplish. This literature review brings together often isolated conversations to inform the nascent field of online writing instruction. Online FYC is the thread that pulls this scholarship together as the most common entry point for students into academic discourse communities. Combining the scholarship from across fields and disciplines with the central focus of FYC highlights the complex layers of literacy, language, and difference. These complexities only multiply as writing and instructor-student relationships become mediated by digital technology. By integrating these texts into a single conversation, this dissertation explores a way to serve all students in online writing instruction – one that will require a heightened awareness of technology, a new approach to difference, and a deeper understanding of the influence of daily language.

The Landscape of Literacies in the “New Normal”

Once defined as the ability to read and write, literacy in the 21st century refers to a much more complex set of skills needed to participate in today’s society. The traditional notion of literacy – singular -- has now become multiple literacies: academic, digital, cultural, multimodal, to name a few, as scholars like Stuart Selber, Cynthia Selfe and Richard Selfe, and Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis explore. The narrative of digital technology since the mid-1990s directly impacts how literacy is defined, valued, and taught today. The tools (laptops, tablets, phones), the infrastructure (high speed internet), and the systems (search engines, social media, email, websites) have altered the who, what, when, where, how and why of literacy, as Cynthia Selfe and Kathleen Blake Yancey identify. Due to advances in technology, new ways of communicating are emerging, which require a new set of skills for reading and writing. To participate fully in society today, students must be able to communicate across different mediums and cultures. In her 2004 CCCC Chair’s Address, Kathleen Blake Yancey states it rather simply: “Literacy today is in the midst of a tectonic change” (298). The shift in relationships, the growing number of tools available, and the increasing proliferation of networks of people and technologies are changing and

expanding the definition of literacy. As a result, the literacies students need have drastically shifted, in turn requiring instructors to examine these literacies and the language of the feedback they provide to engage students in improving their writing.

The expanding definition of literacies is, in part, a response to today's communication and technology that fosters a global citizenship. Communicating effectively now requires bridging different dialects, languages, and cultures as people relate across a wide range of differences. In the New London Group's article "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures," the scholars call for a "civic pluralism" to be taught as way to "arbitrate differences" (69). This civic pluralism requires being proficient in multiple literacies to navigate a "multiplicity of communication channels and media" and engage in cultural and linguistic diversity (New London Group 64). Updating the original call by the New London Group, Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis write, "Old logics of literacy and teaching are profoundly challenged by this new media environment" (8). The authors portray learners in the old model of literacy as "agents of reproduction of received, sanctioned and authoritative representational forms," simply following conventions without question or creativity. In contrast, learners in new multiliteracies are agents in a meaning-making process, which creates "a more productive, relevant, innovative, creative and even perhaps emancipatory, pedagogy" (Cope and Kalantzis 10). Acknowledging this new landscape of literacies is crucial to recognizing what students bring to FYC and understanding the literacies needed to succeed in today's world. As students shift into positions of meaning-making, instructors must approach feedback from a place that promotes this production rather than reinforcing the old model of reproduction.

Simultaneously, as the definition of literacy expands so, too, does the conversation about serving all students. A heightened awareness of who our students are and what their literacies and backgrounds are becomes central to literacy pedagogy. Addressing diversity in online FYC can, in part, be informed by the work of scholars such as Min-Zhan Lu and Mike Rose, who represent this diversity as

non-white (Lu) and first-generation and “remedial” (Rose). The work of these scholars offers insight into the layers of literacy instruction that reflect the power of language in institutional structures of class, race, and ability. Min-Zhan Lu shares her experience of language as struggle as a result of learning English, Chinese, and Shanghai dialect as a child. She wrestled to make sense of the identities, authority, and environments embedded in each language. The politics and consequences of language were highlighted for Lu through issues of class, consciousness, and the ability to code switch. Mike Rose, a former basic writer and first-generation college graduate, explores the challenges of literacy, class, and skills through his metaphor of the boundary. While the word can imply marginalization, Rose turns the metaphor of lives on the boundary to be “both a site of possibility and vulnerability” (*Lives on the Boundary*, 147). Rose shares the narratives and profiles of students he worked with over the years highlighting the effects of the remedial label on students who viewed it as a confirmation for their already low sense of self-worth in academics. Issues of identity – such as ethnicity, class, race, age, language, and prior education -- enter the conversation in a way that moves literacy from simply trying to improve a student’s writing skills to one that closely correlates language to politics, control, accessibility, and inclusivity. As these marginalized students enter the academic college community, a crucial site of engagement between student and instructor in online FYC is through feedback, a place where instructors have the opportunity to make this “boundary” one of possibility by recognizing the implicit power structures within language and respecting the identities embedded within literacies.

These identities, influenced by individual backgrounds, literacies, and differences, can isolate some students in the spaces of borderlands. This dynamic can be especially apparent in FYC as “new normal” students enter a foreign academic culture, one that can become even more alienating in the online environment. Gloria Anzaldúa explains, “Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy”

(17). Just as many have labeled the academic environment as an alien world to underprepared and minoritized students, Anzaldúa defines, “Living on the border and in margins, keeping intact one’s shifting and multiple identity and integrity, is like trying to swim in a new element, an ‘alien’ element” (17). In an online writing course, students are trying to learn to swim in a new element, one where the language is different and their identities are coming into contact with others. She explains the pain of “crossing over” that occurs with “every increment of consciousness...every time she makes ‘sense’ of something, she has to ‘cross over,’ kicking a hole out of old boundaries of the self” (Anzaldúa 70- 71). Students are making “sense” of new knowledge and ways of knowing in the online writing course. Paolo Freire explains a parallel process as “conscientization” (*Politics* 106). He writes, “One of the points in conscientization is to provoke recognition in the world, not as a ‘given’ world, but as a world dynamically ‘in the making’” (*Politics* 106). Ira Shor highlights the traditional view of students as objects to be manipulated rather than “active, critical subjects” (97). He posits for students to engage in a process of self-discovery that promotes democratic participation in the classroom. Anzaldúa reminds us this is a complex and difficult process, and Freire emphasizes this work as continual. As instructors engaging and relating to students in this complex and difficult process, our communication and language must account for this “crossing over” and the dynamic space of the borderland.

Broader implications of literacy in FYC are exposed and addressed at the intersection of basic writing (BW) and critical pedagogy. Remediation for basic writers in college English has taken many forms, from non-credit courses to co-requisite models, all which create additional barriers for students whether it be additional class time, assignments, or tuition. Ira Shor argues that basic writing is a “language policy for containment, control, and capital growth” that reinforces the exclusions of the academe by placing another gate below the existing gate of freshmen composition (*Critical Teaching*, 92). With the recent shift for the integration of basic writers into credit-level courses, often called a co-requisite model, some teacher-scholars see barriers and opportunities. Deborah Mutnick and Steve

Lamos believe, “At its best, BW provides access to higher education for masses of people who would otherwise never go to college; at its worst, it perpetuates ‘academic apartheid,’ a reification of racial, cultural, and linguistic stereotypes that is buttressed by the uncritical usage of placement mechanisms and standardized test scores” (32). In the college academic environment, the social and political constructions of Standard Academic English (SAE) are prioritized, leaving those without the SAE literacy to be deemed remedial despite potential knowledge of other literacies (Mutnick and Lamos).

Early models in meeting the needs of “new” types of students included theories of approximation and initiation, made popular by the first generation of basic writing scholars like Mina Shaughnessy and David Bartholomae. Reflecting on original BW theory, scholar Juan Guerra writes, “Until very recently, the inclination has been to focus on the demystification of academic language to make it easier for students to adapt to an array of academic discourses that grant little opportunity for the integration of the linguistic practices or lived experiences students bring with them” (37). The focus in basic writing was for students to reach a level of proficiency in SAE, regardless of the language complexities they faced or the literacies they already had.

The struggle of acquiring the new literacies required in FYC often materializes in student writing in ways that instructors label as errors. Mike Rose argues that students make errors when they do not understand the discourse and need practice with the unfamiliar vocabulary and process of inquiry. Rather than labeling these students as having problems with literacy, he identifies the issue as problems with critical literacy – the ability to frame arguments, analyze another argument, synthesize points of view, and apply theories in a new context. In wrestling with these new ways of thinking, reading, and writing, students make more errors, which should be viewed as “signs of growth,” not remedial skills (188).

While these errors can be viewed as indicating growth, students struggling with these new literacies can also be seen as wrestling with differences and power. Joseph Harris reinforces the idea of

errors as indicators of growth, identifying the process of basic writers as “growth, initiation, and struggle” and deepens the understanding of the student experience through the idea of contact zones. Contact zones were originally defined by Mary Louise Pratt as the “social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power” (34). Harris calls for a contact zone that is more than the word “contact” suggests, arguing, “We need [...] to learn not only how to articulate our differences but how to bring them into useful relation with each other” (36). To highlight and value these differences in the classroom first requires an examination of the “micropolitics of the classroom” (Harris 36). Harris points to a central piece of this conversation – the questioning of who gets heard in the classroom environment and why. He states this contact zone “calls instead for attention to the details of the classroom work, to how teachers set up and respond to what students have to say” (Harris 36). In the context of online FYC, no theory exists to guide the praxis of how teachers construct their classrooms and respond to student writing except for what teachers import from face-to-face settings. As a virtual “contact zone,” online FYC is a primary location to foster the articulation of differences in useful relation and develop a model of instructor feedback focused on growth.

As a diverse group of students work to fit within the confines of SAE in the academic environment and expectations of FYC, this contact zone is embedded in the very language used in the reading and writing of the class. Many of these students are trying to adopt what critical discourse scholar Norman Fairclough labels as “discursive change.” Like many basic writing scholars, Fairclough identifies that “Change involves forms of transgression, crossing boundaries, such as putting together existing conventions in new combinations, or drawing upon conventions in situations which usually preclude them. Change leaves traces in texts in the forms of the co-occurrence of contradictory or inconsistent elements – mixtures of formal and informal styles, markers of authority and familiarity...” (*Discourse* 96-97). These tangled traces of old and new literacies are marked over and over by

instructors as convention errors, resulting in recommendations for a visit with a writing tutor, low scores on rubrics, and continued remediation. Instructors believe, or hope, that with time and practice, the old literacy application and evidence of discursive change will transform into new literacy habits to fit the norms of SAE.

This leads many students who are deemed “deficient” to adopt a monolingual approach, abandoning experience and knowledge in order to fit a more accepted “mold.” Guerra defines this as “transcultural repositioning,” and posits that many students do this on a daily basis. This is “the rhetorical ability many disenfranchised students have learned to enact intuitively but must learn to regulate self-reflectively to productively move back and forth across different languages and dialects, different social classes, different cultural and artistic forms, different ways of seeing and thinking about the increasingly fluid and hybridized world emerging all around us” (Guerra 13). Instructors who prioritize and praise this SAE “mold” through their feedback are reinforcing the monolingual approach, discounting the richness and possibility of students’ literacies and the possibility for students to act as agents of meaning-making.

The work of adapting to this monolingual approach to fit within the academic environment is more than just a rhetorical toolbox that students fill in order to meet the discourse requirements in online FYC. What may appear as students assimilating or “repositioning” to the academic environment contains complex layers of identity and power. Fairclough defines discourse as “language as a form of social practice” (20). Thus, when students write and instructors respond, they are engaging in a form of social practice with all its implicit rules of culture, identity, and power. By viewing the student writing – instructor feedback cycle as discourse, an opportunity exists to go beyond reinforcing SAE conventions. Min-Zhan Lu and Bruce Horner identify a “translingual approach” in which “reading and writing are understood as social, economic, geo-political, and cultural as well as linguistic transactions across asymmetrical relations of power” (5). This approach can expose FYC courses as more than just the major

reading and writing assignments; a translingual approach sees language as the outcome of the daily “doing” of language by people (Lu and Horner 14). When language is viewed as part of the power relations within the larger institutional and social structures, the daily acts of literacy, from a student email to a discussion board post, suddenly comprise more than a question or response, placing language at the micro level of linguistic exercise and the macro level of a social practice (Lu and Horner 6). By acknowledging the implicit power dynamics of a monolingual approach and its impact on marginalized students, instructors have the opportunity to respond to student writing with language that recognizes students’ literacies and identities and moves them towards growth of their 21st century literacy skills.

The Instructor’s Role in Valuing and Engaging Literacies and Differences

FYC instructors can utilize errors and differences in student writing as a means to identify their students’ literacies. Gail Hawisher et al. argue, “We fail to build on the literacies that students already have – and we fail to learn about these literacies or why they seem so important to so many students. We also fail, as we deny the value of these new literacies, to recognize ourselves as illiterate in some spheres” (676). Literacy is not singularly defined or a skill set that can be assessed through a monolingual lens. Hawisher et al. write, “We can understand literacy as a set of practices and values only when we properly situate our studies within the context of a particular historical period, a particular cultural milieu, and a specific cluster of material conditions” (646). In this context, literacy has its own cultural ecology, including life spans of literacies, ways and locations that people access and practice these literacies, and family transmission of literacy values and practices (Hawisher et al. 644). The differences between these literacies and SAE are not traditionally valued in FYC. As a result, instructors do not often recognize nor value students’ existing literacies and, thus, do not connect or build on these existing literacy practices.

To tap into the students’ existing literacies requires an instructor to shift perspectives on authority, values, and community in FYC. A model of rhetorical dexterity offers a framework for this

shift. In *The Way Literacy Lives: Rhetorical Dexterity and Basic Writing Instruction*, Shannon Carter explains rhetorical dexterity as that which “enables students to understand how definitions of literacy are shaped by communities, how literacy, power, and language are linked and how their myriad experiences with language (in and out of school) are connected to writing” (98). Carter calls for a position that requires more than just initiation -- the practice of reinforcing the dominant model through the replication of academic discourse – and moves towards a “people centered literacy” (40). Writing needs to be viewed as “generating the writer’s place within the world” (Carter 40). She calls for expanding definitions of literacies to view the activities as “communities of practice” (Carter 21). This pedagogy of rhetorical dexterity asks students to “read, understand, manipulate, and negotiate the cultural and linguistic codes of a new community of practice based on a relatively accurate assessment of another, more familiar one” (Carter 14). In this model, instructors are called to engage students’ differences and prior knowledge in a way that empowers students’ choices and values their voices.

Creating space for students’ differences and agency deepens the conversation about literacies in a way that accounts for the active power of language. Lu and Horner offer an approach to differences in literacies through a translingual perspective that considers the implicit power dynamics of language. They view language as co-constitutive, not as something pre-existing and static, and place “attention on languaging: how we do language and why” (Lu & Horner 4). The translingual approach accounts for all the dynamics of language, including the social, political, economic and cultural transactions embedded in language use. Within this view of language, the instructor’s response to student writing is co-constitutive and includes the dynamic complexities of language.

These layers of transactions point to the daily use of language as creating and sending implicit messages of power on every level, from individual to institutional. James Paul Gee, critical discourse scholar, acknowledges writers as active designers and builders. Gee explains writers “are making things in the world, acting on others and on the world, and simultaneously reproducing social order,

institutions and cultures” (195). When instructors act as writers of student feedback, they are actively designing and building expectations and reinforcing social order with the intention of improving student writing. Gee labels this as “response design” or “designing not just for who we take our readers to be or who we want them to be, but designing for what we want them to do in the world in response to what we have written” (195). With the amount of written feedback that instructors provide in online FYC, the opportunities to “act on others” appear frequently.

Pairing concepts of languaging and response design provides instructors a framework to shift their approach to errors in student writing, thus empowering student agency and differences. By acknowledging students’ existing literacies and knowledge, “errors” may be viewed as the writer’s exploration and negotiation of language or the expression of cultural ideas and values not available in SAE (Lu and Horner 22). If instructors assume errors are just that, they erase the student’s agency as a writer and the possibility of intentional expression and negotiation through language. Leaning on the work of Alastair Pennycook, Lu and Horner apply the metaphor of sedimentation, explaining that through the daily doing of language when similarities build up (sediment) they appear as “rules.” The example provided is grammar as a series of observed repetitions in language use (Horner and Lu 14). What appears as an error may also be recognized as a recontextualization. These changes in language through recontextualization reshape words and meanings depending on the context, what Lu and Horner label “fertile mimesis.” An example is the colonized using the colonizer’s language and reshaping words and meanings (Lu and Horner 15). Fertile mimesis and recontextualization offer a lens to see the “logic and legitimacy” of students’ choices. Student language choices are respected rather than being labeled as basic, immature, or lazy (Lu and Horner 8). Identifying student examples of this “recontextualization” can empower and engage students in their own knowledge making and their own enacting of self through writing.

Understanding the layers of surface-level errors in student writing highlights the complexities of language choice far beyond the misspelled word or awkward sentence structure. If language is an inherent part of identity, then the role of identity continues to be an integral part of the literacy conversation. Juan Guerra defines, “Identity is a sociocultural, multi-faceted, situated, contingent and ideological practice” (76). He references Stephanie Kerschbaum’s markers of difference; identity is formed in relation to another, which means it is a rhetorical act that shifts the paradigm from learning *about* others to learning *with* others (Guerra 75). Guerra asserts that students would use multiple identity markers if given the opportunity, but our institutional confines of academic discourse and English-only practices prevent students from engaging the rhetoric and discourse they use in their own communities of belonging (74). As Gloria Anzaldua writes, “I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself” (83). By implying that the SAE conventions as the “correct” ones through our feedback in FYC courses, we are implicitly cutting students off from their community of belonging rather than forming a bridge that connects and values identities.

Navigating these different communities of belonging, especially when a student is joining an academic community for the first time in FYC, is an opportunity for a greater awareness of daily language use. Lu and Horner state, “A translingual approach thus defines agency operating in terms of the need and ability of individual writers to respond to potential tensions between past, present, and future, the possible and desired, rather than focusing merely on what the dominant has defined as the exigent, feasible, appropriate, and stable ‘context’” (6). Writers respond to the varying contexts and communities through what Guerra acknowledges as the multiplicity of identities that writers engage as they move through different communities. These identities are not fixed but rather fluid, hybrid and changing. Guerra argues, “Each of us not only possess a multiplicity and culturally-accented identities; we also invoke hybrid, or what I prefer to call translingual/transcultural identities as we move across the varied communities of belonging that we occupy at any given moment and that are themselves

continuously changing” (100). He sees these forces as the “emergent identities students perform” as “citizens in the making” (Guerra 97). This is the daily “doing” of language that contributes to the larger work of preparing students to participate fully in their world. Exploring literacies through the perspectives of identity, power, language, community, and daily action opens the conversation and understanding of the individual experiences of a diverse student demographic as they enter the academic environment.

FYC instructors who recognize, connect with, and assess students’ diverse abilities can create a course that fosters inclusivity and meets the CCCC’s first principle of OWI – for online writing instruction to be accessible and inclusive. Jay Dolmage writes, “Without a more universal perspective, without a recognition of the power of rhetorical and physical spaces and without the most inclusive view, we cannot have the most inclusive world” (180). Creating the “most inclusive world” requires acknowledging and empowering differences. Stephanie Kerschbaum discusses the challenge of addressing differences in *Toward a New Rhetoric of Difference*. She writes, “Because writing classrooms, especially FYC courses, reach students with a broad range of backgrounds, interests, and experiences, those classrooms also represent an ever-shifting terrain upon which differences of all kinds play out” (Kerschbaum 56). That “ever-shifting terrain” changes from year to year, class to class, and college to college. The instructor’s role is to be aware of and respond to these broad and varying ranges of students without a broad brush stroke of SAE that can isolate students in online FYC courses.

Understanding the individual differences of every student in FYC is a Herculean task. With upwards of 125 students for a full-time FYC instructor, this poses an enormous barrier. One solution may be found in the teaching theory of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Born in the disability rights movement, the goal of universal design is to create materials, activities, and assessments for the widest range of possible abilities, rather than the “average or normal” user. Danielle Nielsen, who studies UDL and FYC, acknowledges that “learning styles, comfort levels with writing and English language skills,

disabilities, and family responsibilities impact all students, leaving us to wonder how best to facilitate student success” (3). Her response is a model of FYC that integrates the principles of UDL. The theory and practice of universal design positions itself as a model to accommodate the wide range of students’ differences.

Yet accommodating student differences and creating inclusivity cannot be approached solely through the lens of UDL activities and assessments. The barriers to reaching all students must take into account the instructor’s barriers, as well. Many instructors have become so accustomed to the culture of inquiry that it has become invisible, particularly those who serve as teacher-scholars. Mike Rose explains that scholars take a clear issue and turn it into a problem, looking past easily identified solutions. Rose explains, “University professors have for so long been socialized into this critical stance that they don’t realize how unsettling it can be to students who don’t share their unusual background” (*Lives* 189). When instructors migrate this stance to online FYC courses without awareness, students can be stranded in a culture of inquiry they do not understand and have no bridge to come to know. As part of the culture of inquiry, the language of academia also contributes to the barriers. Ira Shor writes, “Weapons available to the teacher include the special terminology of the discipline, the use of obscurely conceptual language, and the sophisticated wording based in ridicule, sarcasm, irony, parody, and innuendo” (30). Using academic language creates a paradigm of power. In *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Freedom of Practice*, bell hooks argues that modes of communication create a model of “intellectual class hierarchy where only work deemed truly theoretical is work that is highly abstract, jargonistic, difficult to read, and containing obscure references” (64). She points out the “theory is not inherently healing, liberatory, or revolutionary” (61). In a traditional approach to teaching and responding to students, the enculturated language of the instructor reinforces the boundaries of the academic institution.

Another barrier instructors face in creating an accessible and inclusive environment is the illusion that they know their students. What instructors think they know about students is often disparate from their actual knowledge of students. Kerschbaum points out that teachers don't know as much about their students as they think they do or that instructors identify too closely with students because of a shared "difference" (1-2). Current belief systems view differences as fixed, not accounting for the differences in difference (Kerschbaum 8). An online environment where differences are often invisible or not disclosed can create an even greater barrier in understanding and accounting for all students.

Acknowledging the differences within differences creates a rich environment for students to be put in direct relation to one another. Focusing on their diverse experiences, knowledge, and ways of knowing, the students can create a space for negotiation by posing differences in relationship to one another. Kerschbaum applies the concept of the contact zone in marking differences. Rather than a type of "multicultural bazaar," she states, "Teachers and students alike are always confronted with otherness and that process of marking difference can help us recognize ways that we take up and respond to our own and others' positions" (80). To create a meaningful space that places students' differences in direct relation, Joseph Harris argues for a contact zone centered on the student writing in the course, rather than the traditional focus on the reading list. Online FYC is ripe for creating this environment – where engagement is almost entirely through written communication, the way differences are marked is grounded in literacy and language.

Valuing differences is the basis for valuing students. Kerschbaum proposes a framework of marking difference that recognizes difference as dynamic, relational, and emergent (57). She argues that paying attention to these markers and identifiers helps "mediate between broad conceptual tools for talking about difference and the unique qualities of individual moments of interaction" (Kerschbaum 7). In her model of a new rhetoric of difference, Kerschbaum "aims to encourage heightened awareness of

systematic patterns of ignoring, suppressing, and denying difference as well as recognizing, highlighting and orienting to difference” (15). To accomplish this, instructors must “cultivate awareness of new details, interpret and reinterpret those details and contextualize them within specific moments of writing, teaching, and learning” (15). This will require instructors to learn *with* their students, rather than *about* their students, in what she labels the “process of coming-to-know” students (57). Marking difference means instructors develop the awareness and care of students’ differences as always changing, always emerging, and always grounded in relationship.

A complementary approach to difference is the theory of intersectionality. This 21st century critical theory, explored by scholar-activists Patricia Collins and Sirma Bilge, offers “a more expansive lens for addressing the complexities of educational equity” by exploring the intersection of race, class, and gender studies and moving towards a practice that embraces the complexities of a both/and paradigm (7, 36, 188). Because identities formed by race, class, and gender cannot be isolated, they are *both* intertwined *and* mutually constructed. The multiple factors gain power and meaning through their relationship to each other (Collins and Bilge 194). Collins and Bilge call for a synergistic relationship between students and teachers, one where they are working in concert so that they become more than the sum of the parts (33). As a critical praxis, intersectionality “explicitly challenge[s] the status quo and aim[s] to transform power relations” (Collins and Bilge 33). In the traditional role of teacher, foregrounding student voices and differences can be a challenge. From the view of intersectionality, Collins and Bilge argue that “faculty and students routinely overlook the power relations that make their scholarship and classroom practices possible and legitimate” (33). The roles of instructor as the authority and students as submissive are an institutional standard and expectation from both students and instructors that is difficult to break down.

Breaking down these institutional norms is the call of many critical pedagogy theorists like Ira Shor and bell hooks. Shor called for the instructor’s “withering away,” while bell hooks echoes the idea

of deconstructing the professor as the one responsible for the class dynamic. She focuses on student contributions as the resources of the course, which is accomplished through a genuine interest “in hearing one another’s voice, in recognizing one another’s presence” (hooks 8). This, she argues, will require professors to transgress the “seriousness” and decorum of institutional status quo to embrace excitement, spontaneity, and flexibility and interact with students as individuals based on their needs (hooks 7). In this classroom environment, the teachers “confront the limitation of their own training and knowledge, as well as possible loss of ‘authority’” (hooks 30). These are the conditions that allow a democratic classroom to form, one “where everyone feels a responsibility to contribute is a central goal of transformative pedagogy” (39). Centering student work, abandoning exclusive/total authority, and encouraging democracy begins to highlight online FYC as a place where all students are invited, empowered, and valued.

Integrating Literacies, Technology and Differences in Online Writing Instruction

One of the sites of college with the most potential for democracy is the online class, allowing students to pursue higher education regardless of geographic location and/or schedule confines. The opportunities for valuing differences, implementing Universal Design for Learning, fostering student-centered contact zones, and exploring languaging through the online class space are tremendous. But with these opportunities, additional layers of complexity surface with the invisible effects of digital technology and the impact of new media.

Exploring the complex relationships between technology, writing, and differences is crucial to the progress of OWI theories and practices. In the 2017 report, The Office of Education Technology released the National Education Technology Plan with the “assertion that technology must serve the needs of a diverse group of students seeking access to high-quality postsecondary learning experiences, especially those students from diverse socioeconomic and racial backgrounds, students with disabilities, first-generation students, and working learners at varying life stages” (4). As instructors migrate their

FYC courses to the online environment, attention to these underlying tensions and complexities is paramount. Selfe reflects, “The real work facing teachers involves transforming our current limited discussions about technological literacy into more fully informed debates acknowledging the complex relationship between technology, literacy, education, power, economic conditions, and political goals” (xxii). Without acknowledging these implicit forces of digital technology simultaneously with student differences and diverse literacies, the barriers to student success will only continue to grow.

In order to build online FYC courses that account for the diversity of the students and the complexities of the online environment, we must acknowledge the inherent power dynamics of technology and make decisions that empower all students to succeed. Stuart Selber reminds us that, “Although computers have the potential to assist the progress of positive change, they have just as much potential to help ensure the status quo” (233). The invisibility of technology is the core of Stuart Selber’s postcritical stance – a call to deepen the understanding of literacy and technology. He explains the “post” of the theory as the computers’ presence as the fiber of education. As such, instructors must learn to use them in ways that align with their values. The “critical” component identifies the need to be aware of the ways in which technology is being used in “inequitable and counterproductive” ways (Selber 8). The current understanding of technology as “neutral” reduces the conversation to “computer literacy” and misses the existing assumptions, goals, and practices (Selber 23). He argues that computers can harness the power of potential as much as they can maintain the status quo. Kevin DePew and Heather Lettner - Rust argue, “By paying attention to the power relations that interfaces mediate (and are designed to mediate) those who design online courses, as well as those institutional bodies that influence their design, can make deliberate decisions about the instructor’s role, the students’ roles and their relationship for each class” (179). Selber views this as more than “deliberate decisions” and calls for a sweeping change across current models of technology, pedagogy, curriculum, and institutions. He calls not on technology alone as the saving grace for progressive instructors but “rather that teachers

who are committed to a progressive agenda for education must pay attention to far more than technology” (233). Selber argues the discourse cannot move forward within the current framework.

A new framework for online FYC is a great opportunity to build bridges for the “new normal” students. Aligned with the work of Shor and hooks’ call for empowering students in the classroom and Lu and Horner and Guerra’s approach to student agency, Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis identify the role of the student as the creator as critical in the 21st century. Cope and Kalantzis acknowledge, “We are in the midst of a profound shift in the balance of agency, in which as workers, citizens, and persons, we are more and more required to be users, players, creators, and discerning consumers rather than the spectators, delegates, audiences, or quiescent consumers of an earlier modernity” (8). This shifting agency requires students to have more than just computer skills to participate. Selber identifies three digital literacy categories: functional, critical, and rhetorical (25). Functional literacy focuses on the student as a user and the computer as tool, preparing for entry into the workforce. Critical literacy asks students to question technology and view computers as “cultural artifacts,” thus placing students in a role of critic. Lastly, rhetorical literacy empowers “students as producers of technology.” The computer is, thus, “hypertextual media” and the student engages in reflective practices (Selber 25). He believes, “Students who are not adequately exposed to all three literacy categories will find it difficult to participate fully and meaningfully in technological activities” (Selber 24). Given that online FYC requires students to participate in reading and writing mediated entirely by technology, understanding the multiple literacies for the course, and beyond, creates great opportunities for students to view themselves as questioners, creators, and critics – what could be considered cultural and social imperatives in today’s world. J. Elizabeth Clark calls for an education that “engages students in the interactivity, collaboration, ownership, authority and malleability of texts” (28). Since online FYC requires students to both consume and create texts, the course is an excellent environment to build these 21st century skills.

The call for multiple literacies points to a call for a new approach to literacy instruction and, thus, online writing instruction. Jessie L. Moore et al. enter the pedagogical conversation by integrating the concept of new media. While new media's definition is still debated among scholars, at its foundation, new media requires users to be active producers. Users are no longer passive consumers as in the traditions of mass media, such as radio and television. The authors argue, "Based on the flexible – and sometimes ambiguous – ways students use composing technologies, we believe that traditional composition and rhetoric pedagogies aren't appropriate for teaching students how to invent, draft, arrange, revise, and deliver texts today" (Moore et al. 3). Today, texts such as emails, comments, and any customization of the text's interface – interactive technology -- are classified as new media. This interactive technology changes the role of the writer and reader in fundamental ways. Collin Brooke explains, "Traditional criticism of text is grounded in shared experience of that text. New media is influenced by the lack of shared experience and becomes part of the infrastructure of the text" (11). With this new theory, Brooke argues that the rhetoric of new media focuses on preparing writers "to make their own choices" rather than analyzing choices already made by others (15). The approach to new media deepens the call from basic writing scholars to empower students, the capacity of the translanguaging lens to engage existing literacies, and the new rhetoric of difference to recognize individual experiences.

The integration of technology and writing impacts more than just how students are composing; the tools are redefining the rules of communication today. Doug Hesse, in his contribution to *Passions, Pedagogies, and 21st Century Technology*, explains, "Computers, and more importantly computer networks, permit and invite writing to come in smaller chunks never designed to be free-standing in the way that articles and essays have been for the past four centuries" (40) Sarah J. Sloane also makes the comparison of traditional rhetoric using the tools of paper and ink to the virtual communication environment, writing that "One value of new communicative technologies is that they throw old

rhetorics, messages, genres, forms, and the models of reading and writing them into sharp relief, they make newly visible the materials, habits and contexts of paper-based composing processes” (64).

Technology influences every aspect of 21st century life and profoundly alters the way people read and write their worlds. The technology and its tools are not only shaping the new literacies required to participate but also the very rules for participation. As FYC instructors communicate with students through feedback, they must consider these evolving literacies and rules for which they are preparing their students.

Even the variety of tools themselves need to be examined and accounted for in online FYC. Students are using different tools to access and participate in the course, such as Google Docs instead of Microsoft Word or a smartphone in lieu of a laptop. The implications of these differences in tools impact everything from the composing process to class inequities. Findings from the 2016 report by the Pew Research Center identify the concerns of the “digital divide” that began to arise in the 1990s. This conversation has moved from *who has access* to *what kind of access people have*. This new question accounts for issues of broadband internet, digital readiness, and digital literacy with mobile devices. The differences in access and preparation create a divide with emerging evidence. Research is reflecting strong correlations between socio-economic and race and ethnicity demographics that result in a widening gap of access (Horrigan 7). The Pew Research Center study by Monica Anderson and Madhumitha Kumar reflects that lower-income Americans only have internet access through smartphones, less access to broadband at home, and do not use the internet for work, compared to those with higher incomes who have laptop and tablet access, high speed internet at home and use the internet for work. Selfe reminds us that “Teachers need to understand as much as possible about the broad cultural link between technology and literacy and how this formation has come to determine not only official definitions of literacy but also the lived experiences of individuals and families” (21). As online courses offer greater access to students who would not otherwise be able to pursue a college

education, the physical access points to the course must be taken into consideration as part of the greater conversation on technology and literacy.

With the reality that many students are accessing and completing their online FYC courses from mobile phones, the question around instructor and student experiences arises. June Griffin and Deborah Minter address the constraints of students completing online writing courses on mobile devices. They assert, “Such changes may strain OWI even more acutely because it is more difficult for students and instructors to recognize they are having different experiences when they cannot see what the other sees” (144). The authors are referring to “such changes” as the access to the learning management system (LMS) across a number of devices. Yet, the authors offer a powerful metaphor; the literacy changes precipitated by technology make it difficult for students and teachers to recognize they are having different experiences. Understanding one another’s experiences and seeing from another person’s viewpoint align with Kerschbaum’s new rhetoric of difference and critical pedagogy to value and empower students. In these differences, instructors who are willing to cede some of their traditional authority have a great occasion to learn from their students’ experiences with technology and literacies and empower students in their engagement and composition.

The migration of face-to-face FYC to the online environment is equally ripe with opportunities and challenges that ultimately impact student access to an inclusive environment. Instructors who design their online FYC with the same pedagogy as their face-to-face classroom can easily perpetuate the classic notion of Paolo Friere’s banking model of education, one where the instructor deposits knowledge into the students. Yet, the online environment offers an incredible opportunity to decenter the teacher and empower student engagement. There is no “front of the room” or whiteboard. Rather the online space is one that can be designed from a democratic perspective. DePew et al. believe, “Teachers have the capacity to learn from students if only they are willing to concede absolute authority and give students the opportunity to explain how they are engaging with the course material” (177). The

material and the students' engagement can be the center of online FYC. Utilizing the rhetoric of new media offers a model in which students learn to value their own voices and engagement. Collin Brooke explains, "One of the defining missions of rhet/comp is its insistence on the social, cultural, and contextual position of the writer, the participation of readers and audiences in the construction of meaning and the necessary imprecision of language – all positions that refute the traditional notion of the author/inventor" (62). The progressive agenda will require instructors to start learning with students, calling back to the critical pedagogy of Freire, Shor, and hooks. Decentering instructor authority necessitates diffusing the power structure of the academic environment so the instructor can be a co-learner. This type of learning environment, explain Donnie Sackey et al., "dismantles the deficit model of learning that can sometimes color formal learning spaces by creating an open discourse of inquiry where facilitators are engaged in the same learning tasks as participants" (123). When designing and teaching the online FYC, instructors can navigate the dramatic shifts in technology and literacy by working alongside their students.

For both students and instructors, the amount of writing that occurs in online FYC is exponential in comparison to the F2F course. Virtually every student communication is through written text, from emailing the instructor with a question to responding to writing in a peer review. The efficacy of this online writing environment is promising if approached with an understanding of its complexities. In *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies*, Asao Inoue states, "The writing our students engage in and submit to be judged in some fashion contains the shadows of the labor done, traces of work, references to a body in motion, as well as to places and scenes of writing that produced drafts. Because of this, when we read students writing, we read all of these things simultaneously. We read more than words, more than our students" (88). These layers, in the midst of the sheer volume of writing produced in the online course, can easily become invisible. All of the writing – high stakes, low stakes, formal, informal --

students produce can be understood as labor, bodies, and scenes in ways to be considered in instructor response and assessment of the writing.

While all these opportunities for efficacy are embedded in the environment of online writing instruction, the lack of research and theory makes it difficult for online FYC instructors to meet the CCCC's first principle of inclusive and accessible online writing instruction. The reminders of critical pedagogy scholars are particularly relevant in online FYC where access has been touted as a great benefit. Scholars like Mike Rose, bell hooks, Ira Shor, and Gloria Anzaldua remind instructors of the institutional and pedagogical failures of past initiatives to serve all students. Even instructors with the best of intentions, as Inoue points out, fail some of their students.

The foundations of critical pedagogy in conversation with methods for teaching writing online opens a wide door, one that calls for a transformation and not solely a migration. To meet the goal of reaching all students in online FYC, the complexities of technology and literacies must be accounted for alongside instructors' understanding and awareness of differences. The work ahead for online writing instructors should reflect what Collins and Bilge identify as the creative tension between inquiry and praxis, one that is marked by the self-reflexive space in between (191). To break down the barriers, to build bridges for every student, online FYC instructors must draw on the students themselves by creating a space that enables, empowers, and embraces all differences.

The implications of teaching writing become more complex at this daily intersection of students' lives, identities, and languages, especially as colleges recruit to increase diversity in student demographics. Simultaneously, online offerings are increasing to meet the needs of the new normal student population, thus filling online FYC course rosters with adult learners, first-generation students, part-time students, and students with significant disparities in income, literacy skills, and digital preparedness. One of the greatest opportunities instructors have to break down barriers, engage student literacies, and acknowledge differences is through individual feedback to student writing.

This dissertation works to add to the much-needed scholarship on instructor feedback to student writing in online FYC. Through this research, I seek to answer the questions: In what ways do instructor feedback invite students into the academic community or isolate them from it? How does instructor feedback reinforce the power structures of the academic institution? To examine the *what* of instructor response in online FYC courses requires an analysis of the language of the feedback. Is the language serving to break down or reinforce barriers of the FYC students in what is considered a gateway course to higher education? Analyzing the language of instructor feedback with the lens of accessibility and inclusivity will, in part, offer an additional lens to answer Selfe's call for a pedagogy that closes the gap of inequalities in technology and literacy. In the end, the work will offer a model for analysis that instructors can use for self-reflection. The pedagogical application of this dissertation will both contribute to the overall OWI conversation, as well as provide frameworks and insights for providing feedback that is aimed to build bridges rather than walls for our online FYC students.

CHAPTER 3 – METHODS

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to closely examine instructor feedback to student writing to better understand how the instructor's language may be building bridges or erecting walls for students in online FYC courses. More specifically, the methods of this research project are designed to answer these questions:

- Does instructor feedback to student writing serve to invite students into the academic conversation or isolate them from it?
- Is instructor feedback reinforcing the power structures of the academic institution?

To achieve this, my research method blends the perspective of critical pedagogical theorists with the approach of critical discourse analysis.

The ultimate goal of the research is to create a model for analysis that instructors can use for self-reflection when writing student feedback. As an online FYC instructor myself, I understand that writing feedback is such a common practice that the importance and impact of this language can get lost in its everyday occurrence. This is the very reason the practice must be examined more closely. But the examination is only the first step. As Cynthia Lewis posits, "Critique can make us mindful of how texts work to reproduce inequity and injustice, but it cannot do very much to move forward transforming these conditions" (377). By creating a reflective practice that can be integrated by online FYC instructors, the pedagogical application will contribute to advancing OWI praxis that helps invite students into the academic community. At the individual professional level, this research project furthers my own practice as a teacher-scholar, deepens my commitment to promoting student success in online writing courses, and further develops the learner-centered pedagogies I employ.

To understand the potential effects of instructor feedback on students in online FYC, the practice should be analyzed as discourse. Norman Fairclough writes, “Discourse is a place where relations of power are exercised and enacted” (*Language and Power* 43). In online courses, the primary form of communication is writing, thus online FYC courses are an excellent location of research for the micro analysis of language choices and the macro analysis of social practices. In *Discourse and Practice*, Theo van Leeuwen argues, “All texts, all representations of the world and what is going on in it, however abstract, should be interpreted as representations of social practice” (5). In a course grounded almost entirely in written text, the power of instructor feedback in online FYC extends beyond the comments on standard academic English conventions and thesis statements and becomes a form of social practice, one that can either reinforce the authority of the institution and isolate students or break down the walls and invite students into the academic community.

Critical Discourse Analysis

To examine the social practice of instructor feedback and its inherent power structures in online FYC courses, I will use critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the research method. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer succinctly define CDA as “being fundamentally interested in analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language” (10). The core of CDA aligns with Cynthia Selfe’s call to further research themes of authority, identity, inequities, and ideology in online classes. Feedback from instructors on student writing enacts authority based on the power structure of the student-teacher relationship. The extent to which these relationships are reinforced may be examined through the close analysis of the language of feedback. Analyzing instructors’ comments utilizing CDA exposes patterns of practice that lean towards inviting FYC students into the academic conversation or alienating them from it.

Critical discourse analysis pairs theory with method. As a branch of critical language study, the goal of CDA is to raise awareness of how language works to reinforce power structures through

seemingly ordinary interactions (Fairclough, *Language and Power* 4). The method puts ordinary language under the microscope to expose the greater theory that language reinforces relationships of power and ideology. With the lens of CDA, feedback on student writing is more than comments attached to a work. This feedback can be viewed as a “discursive event” and, as such, is “simultaneously a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice, and an instance of social practice” (Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* 4). Fairclough offers a theory of critical language study that examines assumptions of ordinary interactions, like doctor-patient or teacher-student, as a means to reinforce power structures and “ideological assumptions embedded in particular conventions” (*Discourse and Social Change* 4). Feedback on student writing is a convention of online FYC. Within this common practice resides the complex relationships of power, identity, and language.

The method of CDA provides a set of tools to analyze language as it is used in the world. Because language is doing, James Paul Gee explains discourse analysis as “the study of language at use in the world, not just to say things, but also to do things” (1). This double duty of language as both saying and doing is embedded in the nature of everyday communication. Fairclough points out that the conventions of ordinary interactions can serve as “a means of legitimizing existing social relations and differences of power, simply through the recurrence of ordinary, familiar ways of behaving which take these relations and power differences for granted” (*Language and Power* 2). The field was born from a linguistics focus on language structure and grammar and created to fill the gap of understanding convention as products of social relations and places of power (Gee 2).

Within this CDA framework that views ordinary interactions as reinforcing larger power structures, language is seen as both a social process and a part of society (Fairclough, *Language and Power* 20). Within the understanding of the social process, Fairclough breaks down three levels of social organization: the social situation, the social institution, and society (*Language and Power* 25). These components allow discourse to be viewed at both the micro (social situation) and macro levels (society).

In the analysis of feedback on student writing, the social situation is the student-teacher relationship and the larger picture is whether or not the student “fits” into the academic society. Fairclough argues, “Discourses do not just reflect or represent social entities and relations, they construct or ‘constitute’ them” (*Discourse and Social Change* 3). Using CDA as the method for analyzing instructor feedback exposes how the discourse constructs or reinforces power and identity in online FYC.

With the lens on both the macro and micro levels, the focus of CDA is on natural language, action and interaction. CDA examines the power structures enacted both inside the text and outside in the greater context. David Machin states, “Institutions and individuals often draw on discourses and practices without thinking, because they appear common sense and taken for granted. But through analysis of the language which realizes these discourses, we can reveal the extent to which they support particular ideologies” (lecture 1). The practice of providing feedback on student writing is one of the texts and contexts that can occur “without thinking.” Due to the volume of feedback writing instructors provide, much of this practice for experienced teachers is routine and repetitive.

The research to date in OWI misses the pairing of micro (the text) and macro (the context) in the scope of identity and power. Thus far, the research on teacher feedback has primarily focused on identifying the types of comments (mechanical, global, rhetorical, positive, negative) rather than the nature of these comments (Kang and Dykema 8). By narrowing the lens on the actual language and structure of the feedback, the patterns of ideology and power can be exposed and, thus, lead to greater awareness and new practices to craft feedback that builds bridges rather than walls for online FYC students.

Within the field of rhetoric and composition/writing studies (RCWS), critical discourse analysis is starting to be recognized as an appropriate yet underutilized method. Thomas Huckin et al write, “Critical discourse analysis provides insight into the ways in which power in the classroom is created and circulated in specific instances of discourse” (115). Viewing feedback as one part of the power dynamic

in the classroom points to a practice that unpacks the language of feedback to analyze its impact as a greater social practice. Huckin et al argue for CDA's use in composition and rhetoric for four main reasons: 1) CDA adds to the interdisciplinary nature of the field; 2) CDA helps in "interrogating power and ideology" through specific moments of discourse; 3) CDA "matches writing studies' scholarly goal to understand the impacts of writing as a cultural practice and to examine the contexts of such practices, historically, materially, politically," and 4) CDA expands traditional modes of analysis and criticism to integrate contexts, power dynamics and social interactions and their roles in process and text production (110). Cynthia Lewis also argues for CDA "in the service of exploring compelling questions about literacy teaching and learning, with the ultimate goal of supporting dialogic classrooms in which students can have opportunities to make and remake themselves as literacy learners" (378). She posits that CDA is useful for "precision in analyzing how power works in texts" and "how these everyday texts are constituted in social structures and institutional power" (Lewis 374). This approach to the conversation of inequity points towards the number one principle of online writing instruction as defined by the CCCC OWI Committee: "Online writing instruction should be universally inclusive and accessible." These recent calls for CDA to be integrated as a method within RCWS align not only with the call for online FYC courses to serve as a gateway but also with the critical pedagogies and the OWI principle for accessible and inclusive online writing instruction.

Instructor feedback analyzed through the lens of CDA helps further the conversation and practices at the intersection of RCWS, critical pedagogy, and OWI. The methods of CDA can offer a systematic and rigorous approach to textual analysis and a framework for exposing issues of social justice and abuse of power (Huckin et al 123). Leaning on inductive and abductive reasoning, a founding principle of CDA, the research conducted and data collected define the emerging hypothesis and theory to answer the questions: Is instructor feedback reinforcing the power structures of the academic institution? Do these comments serve to invite students into the academic conversation or isolate them

from it? It is only once we begin to understand the impacts at the micro level of feedback that we can begin to examine the macro level implications of an OWI pedagogy that is inclusive and accessible.

Setting and Context

The data collection for this research project occurred during the Spring 2018 semester at a then-large state university in the Mountain West in two different online course sections of FYC, numbered ENGL 1101 at this institution. All degree-seeking students at the university are required to complete ENGL 1101, Writing and Rhetoric I. The catalog description of this course states:

Course in which students read, analyze and write expository essays for a variety of purposes consistent with expectations for college-level writing in standard edited English. Partially satisfies Objective 1 of the General Education Requirements.

In 2018, this course was offered both in person and asynchronously online. This research specifically focuses on online sections of ENGL 1101. At the time of this research, instructors did not have access to a course shell or template, so every section of ENGL 1101 online was created by the individual instructor. The university's English department does not have standardized assessments or rubrics for the course.

The learning objectives for the course, as defined by the university are:

- Learn fundamental academic essay-writing skills, including consideration of audience and purpose, thesis development, unity and organization, support of claims through examples, and a variety of rhetorical strategies. Students will also learn basic research and documentation methods.
- Explore the writing process, including idea generating, drafting, revising, and editing.
- Learn conventions of standard written English.
- Read, analyze, and evaluate a variety of peer and published texts as the basis for expanding academic literacy.

- Engage effectively in collaborative activities, including peer editing groups and student-teacher conferences.

The means of evaluation are defined by the university as:

- Produce assignments of finished, edited prose in a variety of forms for different audiences and purposes. At least one assignment will involve basic documentation of several sources.
- Produce additional informal writing, such as essay proposals and revision plans, drafts, journal entries, summary and paraphrase, to demonstrate their engagement with the writing process.
- Demonstrate familiarity with conventions of standard written English in exercises and/or their own writing.
- Analytically respond to peer and published text to demonstrate their engagement with, and understanding of, rhetorical reading.
- Demonstrate their ability to collaborate effectively through group processes and conferences.

In addition, ENGL 1101 courses must meet the State Board of Education's ways of knowing for written communication. The ways of knowing are:

- Use flexible writing process strategies to generate, develop, revise, edit, and proofread texts.
- Adopt strategies and genre that are appropriate to the rhetorical situation.
- Use inquiry-based strategies to conduct research that explores multiple and diverse ideas and perspectives, appropriate to the rhetorical context.
- Use rhetorically appropriate strategies to evaluate, represent, and respond to the ideas and research of others.
- Address readers' biases and assumptions with well-developed evidence-based reasoning.

- Use appropriate conventions for integrating, citing, and documenting source material as well as for surface-level language and style.
- Read, interpret, and communicate key concepts in writing and rhetoric.

Participants and Data Collection

The participants in this research project are two full-time English instructors at the university. These instructors are not tenured or in tenure-track positions. Both instructors hold a Master's of Arts degree in English from large state universities and have ten-plus years of college teaching experience. Both instructors had previously taught online sections of ENGL 1101 for the university where the research takes place.

There were a number of differences between the two online sections of FYC. Instructor A is an Associate Lecturer in English and taught the online course for the university's English department. A total of twenty students were enrolled in this section. Instructor B, a Clinical Senior Instructor, taught one online section of ENGL 1101 for the university's technical education college, which offers professional-technical education within the university setting. A total of four students were enrolled in Instructor B's course. One of these students dropped the course during the semester, leaving a final enrollment of three students.

The difference in the academic settings of the participants was intentional to highlight the differences in feedback for students in the traditional university setting compared to the feedback for students in a technical education program. The technical education college serves students as a two-year technical college preparing students to enter specific careers, such as auto mechanics, welding, nursing, and law enforcement. This two-year technical program is umbrellaed under the university. Students in Instructor B's class plan to matriculate with a technical certificate or associates degree of applied science. Many of these students are not required to take a second English course to complete their program. The students in the traditional university track of Instructor A's class are required to take

at least one more composition course to earn a bachelor's degree. By analyzing the feedback from two types of programs, questions can be posed about whether language and power dynamics of instructors are (or should be) posed differently when students have different academic goals.

Instructor A required students to write four essays during the semester. Instructor B required three essays. Both instructors provided written feedback on rough drafts and final drafts. For the scope of this research project, only the summative feedback, the comments on the final draft, were collected. Instructor A provided final draft feedback using the comment function in the Word document of the students' essays. Both marginal comments within the Word document and final comments at the end of the essay were provided. Instructor B provided feedback on the final draft through the Turnitin platform. Feedback was provided in paragraph format at the end of the document. Marginal comments were included in footnote style with numbers in the text correlating to the comment at the bottom of the document.

The feedback on final drafts was examined because it is tied to the highest stakes assignments for the students. It is important to note that this feedback was only one type of feedback the students received. Both Instructor A and B provided feedback in discussion boards and individual student emails as well.

Data was collected through email attachments sent directly to me by the two participating instructors. Instructors sent the final student essays with their feedback throughout the Spring 2018 semester. The instructors redacted the students' names and labeled the students' essays with a lettering system. The lettering system was kept consistent by the instructors, assigning the same students the same letters across the data. Students in the research were not made aware of this research project. No student writing was analyzed, only the instructors' comments on the writing. This research project was granted IRB exemption in November 2017 by the university under the category 1 guideline: Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational

practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

This research project analyzes the comments on the students' first and final essays of the semester. The purpose for focusing on feedback on the first and final essays feedback is to create a subset of data within the research question – Is there a difference between the language of feedback on the first essay versus the final essay?

Due to the discrepancy in the two class sizes and the amount of data produced from Instructor A's course, the data is further reduced to include the comments on all four students in Instructor B's section and four samples from Instructor A's class. To randomize the selection from this larger course section, the essays labeled A, G, M, and Z were selected.

Data Analysis

To complete the data analysis of the instructor feedback, I use select tools from critical discourse analysis. As a field, CDA does not have a set of specific and static tools to be applied across analysis. Since CDA posits itself as a set of tools to analyze language as it is used in the world, then it is generally accepted within the field that the tools must be adapted to the specific contexts. Gee states there is no singular "agreed upon body of content for discourse analysis" (2). Gee recommends asking a specific question of the data to define the analysis. He writes, "Each question makes the reader look quite closely at the details of the language in an oral or written communication. Each question also makes the reader connect these details to what speakers or writers mean, intend, and seek to do and accomplish in the world by the way in which they have used language" (Gee 2). I posed a single question of the data: does the language of instructor feedback lean towards inviting students into the academic conversation or isolating them from it? Lewis states the service of the analysis must be grounded in research questions that are related to a critical framework, one that reflects "social structures and

power relations connected to texts, readers, and contexts” (374). Given the crucial timing of online FYC in a student’s postsecondary education and the power structures of the institution and teacher-student relationship, the research question embodies the social structures and power relations through both text and context.

Critical discourse analysis uses the tools of close reading to highlight areas where language choice reinforces power structures. To look closely at the details of the language, as Gee suggests, my method is akin to that of rhetorical analysis informed by the framework and principles of critical discourse analysis. The CDA toolbox I use for this analysis include a close reading for presupposition, naming reference, modality, and agency. Each of these component tools asks specific questions of the text:

1. Presupposition asks, “What is the feedback assuming the student already knows?”
2. Naming reference is an analytical tool that examines how the student is named in the feedback – personal or impersonal, individual or collective, and pronoun use.
3. Modality looks for the degree of certainty, and thus authority, in the comment.
4. Agency is analyzed through transitivity. Who is the actor in the context of the comments?

Who is receiving the action?

Using this varied set of tools and specific questions, CDA offers greater insights into how instructor feedback sets a tone for students in online FYC courses that invites or isolates.

To analyze the data with the set of defined tools, I created tables for each instructor listing the comments made that fell within the scope of one of the components. The tables are organized by each component (presupposition, naming reference, etc) for each instructor and columns are separated for feedback on the first and final essays. In my first step, I created detailed tables with the specific textual evidence for each use of one of the components. For example, any time a comment from Instructor A included terminology related to an SAE convention (example: coordinating conjunction), I listed this

term in the presupposition table. These detailed tables with the textual evidence are included in the appendices. In my second step, I counted the frequency of each component used by each instructor on the first and final essays. This frequency of use informed the overarching data analysis. By using the rate of frequency, I was able to detect patterns in the instructor feedback that aimed to contribute to the answers of the research question.

The frequency and patterns of specific language use in instructor feedback exposed through this data collection and analysis, alone, are not enough to fully explore the questions I have posed. To offer a picture that examines both the micro level of feedback language in conjunction with the macro level of language and power, the data analysis is placed into conversation with the theories of critical pedagogy, online writing instruction, and technology and new media. Using the framework and tools of critical discourse analysis, I place the practice of instructor feedback, as evidenced in the data collected, in conversation with the theories that highlight how instructors' language choices in feedback may be isolating or inviting to students in online FYC courses.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to define critical discourse analysis and identify this method as an effective one for this research project that blends principles of OWI and critical pedagogy. I provided the details of the setting and context of this research, as well as the description of the participants and data collection. Finally, I described the specific tools of critical discourse analysis that I used to perform the analysis. Through this data collection and analysis, I was able to detect the patterns in feedback on student writing in online FYC courses to answer the question: does instructor feedback build walls or bridges for FYC students? The answer to this question is examined in chapter 4. The exploration leads to a reflective practice introduced in chapter 5, one that is aimed at analyzing the language of instructor feedback to help inform and create more accessible and inclusive practices in online FYC courses.

CHAPTER 4 – DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

Acknowledging that language works on both the micro and macro levels -- the daily doing, as well as the power reinforcing -- the data analysis of this research project is designed to answer:

- Does instructor feedback to student writing serve to invite students into the academic conversation or isolate them from it?
- Is instructor feedback reinforcing the power structures of the academic institution?

The goal of the research is to examine the micro effect on the individual students – are we building a wall or a bridge? -- and the macro outcomes of the power structures of the academic institution. The resulting information and insights garnered can inform a framework of self-reflection for online FYC instructors to use when writing feedback on student writing.

Crafting feedback on student writing is a common occurrence for instructors of online FYC, just as it is for face-to-face (f2f) instructors. Many of these online instructors also teach or have taught the f2f section of the course, including the participants in this research who were simultaneously teaching f2f sections of ENGL 1101 when this data was gathered. The differences between online FYC from its f2f counterpart need to be recognized when approaching feedback to students; these differences include the lack of the in-person classroom relationship students develop with the instructor and the limited opportunity for one-on-one conferencing with the instructor. Despite these differences and ensuing shifts in strategies, Beth Hewett explains the same singular question remains for writing instructors online and in person – “Does what I do help students?” (*The Online Writing Conference* 16). At the heart of this question are the micro concerns of improved grammar and idea development, but also the macro outcome of inviting students into the academic community.

To dig deeper into these questions, I used critical discourse analysis (CDA) to take a close look at the data – the sample of feedback as provided by two different online FYC instructors. By examining existing feedback practices in online writing instruction, specifically FYC courses that serve as a gateway course to college, the data analysis exposes how these practices can impact the first principle of OWI to create a universally inclusive and accessible course. In this examination, common feedback practices are analyzed at both the micro and macro levels. David Machin explains, “We may be aware of *what* speakers, or text producers are doing but not exactly *how* they do it. It is how language can be used to subtly convey ideas and values that CDA can draw out. And through this we can often get a much clearer idea of what is actually being conveyed” (“Language, Media, and Manipulation”). To analyze the “how” of instructor feedback and examine the subtleties of language choice, four components of critical discourse analysis frame this analysis: presupposition, naming references, modals, and agency. Each component is analyzed by individual instructor and its frequency of use on the students’ first and final essays. Then, these component findings are viewed as a whole to offer a picture of the greater impact of the subtleties in the language of instructor feedback on student writing.

Presupposition

In linguistics, presupposition is the knowledge that is assumed to be shared between people in a communication situation. Presupposition asks, “What is the feedback assuming the reader already knows?” In the context of instructor feedback to student writing, the language used by the instructor in the comments presupposes that the FYC student will know the vocabulary. For instructors who are steeped in their discipline, the terminology is familiar and common. Yet for new college students, some who may have not been in school for many years, the terminology of SAE and academic writing may be foreign. For this research project, SAE refers to the terminology of conventions and grammar, such as fragment, comma splice, and coordinating conjunction. The terminology of academic writing is considered the terms that relate to essay components, organization or idea development, such as thesis,

transitions, logical fallacy, or rhetorical modes. When knowledge of SAE and academic writing is assumed incorrectly, this presupposition may lead to misunderstanding, confusion, and exclusion—to building a wall rather than a bridge.

Instructors may assume that students entering the online FYC course have sufficient prior knowledge to begin the work of the class, whether that is inferred through a standardized test score or prerequisite classes. Susan Ambrose et al. explore the issues of students' prior knowledge in their first principle of learning: "Students' prior knowledge can help or hinder learning" (13). The authors explain, "...we [instructors] overestimate students' prior knowledge and thus build new knowledge on a shaky foundation. Or, we find that our students are bringing prior knowledge to bear that is not appropriate to the context and which is distorting their comprehension" (Ambrose et al. 13). When instructors teach with an inaccurate assumption of prior knowledge, students can encounter a wall from the first day of class.

Issues of inaccurate or incomplete prior knowledge continue to impact students' abilities to gain new knowledge in FYC courses (Ambrose et al.). This means that even concepts and terminology explicitly taught in FYC courses cannot be assumed in the communication situation. Ambrose et al. explain, "When learning new material, students may draw on knowledge (from everyday contexts, from incomplete analogies, and from their own cultural or linguistic backgrounds) that is inappropriate for the context, and which can distort their interpretation of new material or impede new learning" (13). When teaching new concepts in FYC, students who have inaccurate prior knowledge will have a more difficult time retaining the new terms or concepts. When prior knowledge is not effectively activated, the information simply does not "stick" (Ambrose et al.) Thus, even for terms or concepts taught within the unit or course, instructors cannot presuppose the students have accurate knowledge of them when writing feedback.

In the online course, gaining an understanding of students' prior knowledge may be even more challenging as the student – teacher interactions are mediated by digital technologies and may be less frequent than F2F classes. As a result, when drafting feedback, instructors may make comments that assume the student's prior knowledge is accurate, appropriate, and at the expected level for FYC. In critical discourse analysis, Fairclough explains, "Texts set up positions for interpreting subjects that are 'capable' of making sense of them, and 'capable' of making the connections and inferences, in accordance with relevant interpretative principles, necessary to generate coherent readings. These connections and inferences may rest upon assumptions of the ideological sort" (*Fragments* 84). These assumptions, when inaccurate, can isolate students from the academic conversation and reinforce the instructor as the authority.

In the data collected for this research, the presuppositions used by the two instructors from the first and final essays show similarities in frequency, albeit differences in the types of terms used (see appendix A). Instructor A used almost exactly the same number of SAE and academic writing terms on the first essay compared to the final essay (see table 1). On the first essay, Instructor A presupposed 24 terms across the four essays analyzed. These terms included references to mechanics, such as coordinating conjunction and split infinitive, as well as writing terminology like transitions and clarity. Given that students had just begun the online FYC course, Instructor A's use of presuppositions on the first essay reflects the possibility that they were commenting based on an assumption of the students' prior knowledge. On the final essay that number remained almost consistent at 25 terms. This highlights that Instructor A was assuming just as much knowledge of SAE and academic vocabulary on the first essay than the last. Similarly, Instructor B presupposed 22 terms on the first essay while that number dropped to 20 terms for the final essay (see table 2). (Since instructor B had one less final essay, this does equate to slightly higher presupposition on the final essay.) This is an ironic finding given that one of the learning outcomes for ENGL 1101 is to "learn conventions of standard written English." If

instructors were explicit in teaching this outcome then students' prior knowledge of the terminology of standard written English would be greater on the final essay at the end of the course.

Some instructors may argue that using and building this SAE and academic writing vocabulary is essential for students to integrate into the academic world. In online FYC courses, without the support of a physical campus, students are trying to practice within a new academic community while literally embodied in another home community – socially, economically, culturally. Thus, students have a virtual presence in a college community and a physical presence in their home community, yet the online writing instructor only knows the view of the academic community. This can pose a great challenge when trying to integrate the two communities and tap into students' existing literacies and prior knowledge. Ambrose et al. write, "As we teach, we often try to enhance our students' understanding of the course content by connecting it to their knowledge and experiences from earlier in the same course, from previous courses, or from everyday life" (12). From the perspective of integrating knowledge and experience from students' everyday lives, Guerra highlights the problem with traditional teaching models to meet that goal. He writes, "Until very recently, the inclination has been to focus on the demystification of academic language to make it easier for students to adapt to an array of academic discourses that grant little opportunity for the integration of the linguistic practices or lived experiences students bring with them" (Guerra 37). Examining the SAE and academic writing terms used by both instructor A and B on the first essay, the focus is on the practices of the academic community. Terms like semicolon and rhetorical modes are not commonly used outside the academic context. Yet, these students are using language and writing in various forms in their home communities, from text messages and emails to social media posts and job applications. With the focus solely on the academic use of language, the students' writing experiences, which may have been successful until this point, have not been integrated. This prioritization of a "correct way" could have an isolating effect on students who are moving back and forth between communities of practice in a virtual space.

When viewing feedback through a lens of usability, presupposition can pose a major barrier to students. Miller-Cochran and Rodrigo state, “Usability is concerned with anticipating users’ needs and expectations, as well as designing texts, documents, systems, platforms, spaces, software – and many other things – with a purpose in mind that is appropriate to and tailored for that audience of users” (1). If the instructor is tailoring the text (feedback) to the assumption of students’ prior knowledge, this can be isolating for any student who does not have that foundation. Because online writing instructors are not in the same location as their students, instructors can miss important clues that are visible during FYC face to face practices, such as observing peer reviews, hosting writing workshops, or conferencing in person. Usability studies emphasize the importance of focusing on real-world users in their home environments, which can often be missed or misconstrued when that home environment is vastly different in online FYC for the instructor and every single student. According to Burgstahler’s principles of usability, feedback must be perceivable – info that the user can understand – and robust – context that can be interpreted reliably by a wide variety of users (72).

Another challenging point for online FYC students who are entering the academic community is that the practices across the community are not consistent. As students work to become part of the college community, the experience can be confusing and disorienting because the instructors’ practices are so different (Carter 22). Some instructors may prioritize grammar and conventions, as evidenced by the focus of Instructor A’s feedback, who has close to 30% more comments on grammar than writing practices. Other instructors may prioritize academic writing practices as shown through Instructor B’s feedback. On the final essay, Instructor B wrote one comment referencing mechanics and nineteen comments about academic writing practices. Although the two instructors of this research were in two different instructional contexts (bachelor’s track and technical track), both instructors were using the same learning outcomes. Despite differences in the college programs, both instructors were charged with the same course, yet reflect different priorities for what makes strong writing in FYC.

Instructor A's comments focused primarily on grammar mistakes and the presuppositions were terms associated with the knowledge of SAE (see table 1). Instructor A's comments on the students' first essays included eight words related to SAE conventions. In one comment, the instructor did include the definition for the term "coordinating conjunction" and a reference to a resource for more information. Instructor A also used language that presupposed the students have a knowledge of idea development in the context of the academic essay, such as "fallacious logic" or "arguable assertion."

On the final essay, Instructor A's comments included the same, plus additional grammatical terms. The instructor referred to ten words related to SAE conventions. Instructor A's comments on the final essays showed a marked increase in terms related to organization and writing development. The comments also included a component not found on the first essay (which was a descriptive essay) that implies knowledge of citation rules. The terms used were "parenthetical citation, dropped quotation, and integration of source material."

Table 1: Presupposition Use by Instructor A

Instructor A PRESUPPOSITION	Examples in feedback	First essay frequency	Final essay frequency
Grammar/conventions	coordinating conjunction, possessive apostrophe, split infinitive, semicolon	8	10
Idea development/organization	Transitions, clarity, fallacious logic, academic argument, arguable assertion	5	8

In sharp contrast, Instructor B's comments focused primarily on writing development and organization (see table 2). The first essay only made reference to a few grammar terms of SAE. For the term "tense shift", the instructor included an explanation in the comment. For parallelism, conjunctions, and unparallel sentence construction, the instructor made a direct reference to a resource for the student to find more information.

Instructor B's comments on the first essay presupposed a knowledge of rhetorical terms, idea development, organization, and structure. The volume of terms used in Instructor B's final comments was similar to the expectation of presupposed knowledge as the first essay. There was only one grammar reference when the instructor noted "pronoun confusion".

Table 2: Presupposition Use by Instructor B

Instructor B PRESUPPOSITION	Examples in feedback	First essay frequency	Final essay frequency
Grammar/conventions	parallelism, tense shift, conjunctions, unparallel sentence constructions	5	1
Idea development/organization	Rhetorical modes, sophisticated transitions, controlling ideas, framed in the intro	17	19

These academic language practices are deeper than just conventions or idea development. As Machin and Mayr explain, "Presupposition is one skillful way by which authors are able to imply meanings without overtly stating them, or present things as taken for granted and stable when in fact they may be contestable and ideological" (136). The feedback on grammar and conventions takes for granted and sets expectations of the students' prior knowledge as they enter online FYC. Sujo de Montes presents a constructivist online teaching pedagogy that calls for instructors to acquire skills to make explicit what is implicit in people's words, actions, and expectations (269). She explains that educators must analyze their own biases and assumptions when interacting with students (Sujo de Montes 269). Furthermore, instructor feedback on idea development and organization can be viewed as ideological of the instructor and academic institution. Because feedback on writing is subjective, the ideals of proper development and organization are not stable. For example, some students learn to write an announcement-style thesis from an instructor, such as "In this essay, I will..." yet in Instructor B's class, this student receives the feedback that this is "artless" writing. As writing instructors, the

feedback to students may be representing not only implied knowledge but also ideologically influenced, contestable ideals.

These presuppositions not only assume a level of stable knowledge by the student in areas that are not always stable, the comments also make these assumptions within the norms of English and the culture of academic discourse. Lu and Horner acknowledge, “Reading and writing are understood as social, economic, geo-political, and cultural, as well as linguistic transactions across asymmetrical relations of power” (4). The language students use in their writing may be a choice to express cultural ideas and values not available in SAE (Lu and Horner 22). When instructors mark these student choices as errors, what may be the student’s exploration and negotiation of language, instructors are erasing student agency.

Presupposition in feedback to student writing can be harmful in a number of ways. First, the language of the academic community can build a wall in online FYC. Students are already physically isolated from the community in a virtual class and the use of academic terminology may distance them further from a community into which they are trying to integrate. Wolsey explains, “Writers exploring new territory and unfamiliar concepts rely on a certain extent upon interaction with the mentor or expert to adjust and refine essential learning, products, and cognitive processes” (320). This interaction can be more challenging in a virtual environment and create frustration around learning essential concepts that instructors assumed was part of the student’s prior knowledge. Second, the use of specialized vocabulary places the instructor in a position of power; not only does the instructor have the power to point to the writing moves made by students as acceptable (or not) within the academic community and naming those moves with specialized vocabulary, they also hold the power to assign the grade. Lastly, presupposition does not account for the students’ existing literacies and the prior knowledge they *do* have. Identifying students’ writing moves solely with the language of the academic community does not leave space or agency to account for the conventions of the students’ home

communities. Guerra argues that a pedagogical framework that “inculcates” students to shift from home to academic discourses must be abandoned (x). He calls for a writing instruction framework that recognizes the value in “linguistic, cultural, and semiotic resources our students use in all their communities of belonging” (Guerra x). These issues with instructors presupposing knowledge of the academic community point to a need to build awareness, reflection, and practice that can use feedback as instruction instead of “inculcation,” dismantle the power structure of the instructor as the authority, and ask and empower students as agents to integrate their existing literacies and prior knowledge.

Naming Reference

Naming reference is an analytical tool that examines how the subject is named in the feedback – personal or impersonal, individual or collective, and pronoun. The instructor’s rhetorical choice of naming reference can reflect how they are positioning the student in the academic social order, as well as who holds the authority in the writing situation. Machin states, “We have a range of naming choices that we can make when we wish to refer to a person. These allow us to place people in the social world. These choices can allow us to highlight certain aspects we wish to draw attention to and silences others” (“Language, Media, and Manipulation”). Naming reference in feedback to students -- the simple use of pronouns, personal or impersonal, and individual and collective -- can send an implicit message to student writers about their place in the social world of the academic community and the authority they have over their own writing.

Naming references can create an explicit marker of difference. Kerschbaum explains that markers of difference “make visible the dynamism, the relationality, and the emergence of difference to mediate between broad conceptual tools for talking about difference and the unique qualities of individual moments of interaction” (7). Responding to student writing is a dynamic, relational process where the instructor is identifying places of both alignment and difference between the expectations of academic writing (broad conceptual tools) and the individual ideas of the student. The language of

instructor feedback makes these differences visible. Kerschbaum argues for difference as relation – a shift from learning *about* others to learning *with* others (75). When instructors use naming references in feedback, they have an opportunity to bridge the broad conceptual differences with the individual writing situation to learn with the student rather than about the student; thus, naming references can act as a tool to build a bridge for online FYC students.

Naming reference also situates the student in a social order as dictated by the instructor through the visible process of feedback. The authority of the instructor can be reinforced through naming references that place students in a lower social order. In instances where the feedback is speaking *about* the student writing rather than *with* the student writing, instructors are not acknowledging the students' differences and existing literacies. Students have literacies in their existing communities of practice, which in turn inform their identities. Integrating their existing literacies and identity from their home community into the academic community is complex. Guerra notes, "Identity is a sociocultural, multi-faceted, situated, contingent, and ideological practice" (76). Through naming, the instructor is choosing how they are acting on that student identity in both the situated practice of online FYC and the ideological practices of SAE and the academic community. These writing situations are more than exercises and assessments in SAE because writing itself is a form of expressing identity. From a posthumanist perspective on reflection in writing, Boyle explains, "Writing is both a problem and a possibility, not only something that sustains reflection of a prior self but a practice that enacts a self" (537). When using naming references in feedback, instructors are writing to that problem and possibility and the complexities of student identity.

The choices of naming reference in the instructor feedback collected for this research project vary from first person singular to third person collective (see appendix B). Instructor A uses a spectrum of naming references in the feedback on both the first and final essays (see table 3).

Table 3: Naming Reference Use by Instructor A

Instructor A – NAMING REFERENCE	Examples in feedback	First essay frequency	Final essay frequency
2 nd person	you	14	20
Understood you		4	8
1 st person collective, personal	we/us	4	2
1 st person singular	I	1	1
3 rd person, collective	MLA, academics	6	2

The most frequently used naming references in Instructor A’s feedback are second person and the understood you. The choice of “you” as the subject of most of the feedback can actually work in ways that invite or isolate, depending on the content and tone of the sentence. Examples where “you” may be viewed as impersonal and isolating include: “When you edit and revise, check each sentence for clarity of meaning.” This statement assumes the student has not edited or revised for clarity and understands what the instructor means by “clarity of meaning.” Another example is, “You can read about coordinating conjunctions in the comma handout.” This comment assumes the student has not read the comma handout rather than considering the student may have not understood or learned effectively from a handout. In both these statements, the instructor is using second person to state “you do these things...” By making these second person statements, the instructor is assuming the student has not completed certain activities when the student’s experience may actually be misunderstanding or not learning in the form provided. These types of isolating comments do not engage with the student in a way that shows a curiosity to find the root of the problem or a willingness to provide additional community support. Alternatively, examples of “you” that are inviting include: “You shine in the area of descriptive detail.” Or, “You choose and use sources well and your claims are well developed.” These

comments reflect the students' strengths and knowledge of the academic practices. In this way, the instructor is showing the student that they belong and are participating correctly.

While the second person "you" can contribute to building a wall or a bridge for students, the use of the understood you appears uniformly isolating. In these instances, every comment is an imperative for the student to do something different in their writing, such as "Use a comma" or "Proofread carefully." By using this second person pronoun, the student is being set apart from the academic community whose rules are being enforced upon them rather than being written with them. By setting the student apart with the naming reference "you," the student and their writing are not being recognized for their integration of existing literacies. The instructor is not learning *with* the student, rather the differences are being marked *about* the student. Interestingly, the frequency of the understood you doubles in the feedback on the final essay.

Another isolating naming reference is the use of third person collective. By referencing "MLA" and "academics" as the third person collective, the student is not included as part of that community who apply these rules. These naming references are used more frequently in the first essay than the final essay. The naming references in the final essay feedback point towards more individual student difference than power in an academic community.

Instructor A's limited use of first person as the naming reference also reflects this same authority in the collective academic community rather than an individual. Only using the first person singular one time on the first and final essays, they rarely identify themselves as the authority. The naming reference of "we" or "us" points to an academic community that they are a part of, putting the authority in the community of practice rather than themselves as the instructor. This choice reinforces the power of the institution over the individual.

Instructor B uses similar naming references, although at much different rates (see table 4). The rate at which these naming references are used also vary greatly between the first and final essay. The

discrepancy in part can be accounted for by the missing final essay from student D, so the data sample for Instructor B's final essay is three rather than four essays.

Table 4: Naming Reference Use by Instructor B

Instructor B – NAMING REFERENCE	Examples in feedback	First essay frequency	Final essay frequency
2 nd person	You	33	10
Understood you		3	1
1 st person collective, personal	We/us	26	16
1 st person singular	I	18	6
3 rd person, collective	Readers, audience, strong writers	4	0
3 rd person, individual student name	Student name	1	1

Instructor B's comments show a strong use of the second person pronoun, you, especially in the first essay. This can work to either build a bridge or a wall depending on the content and tone. Examples of building bridges through Instructor B's feedback include: "You've got a clear sense of how you can best communicate your ideas." Or, "You've done a good job removing the content that carried us beyond the scope of cause/effect." Yet this pronoun can also act as an isolating agent, setting the students apart from the social order in which they are trying to engage. Examples of building walls in the feedback from Instructor B include: "You will confuse your readers by switching from one tense to another within the same sentence or paragraph." Or, "You should have a compelling reason for not putting sourcework in your own words." Because the second person pronoun is speaking directly to the student, the content and tone can be read by students as a personal response to them and their ability. This potential for the second person as the naming reference to serve as an invite or an outcast points to great awareness and intention required when used by instructors.

The much smaller frequency of the understood you reflects less frequent use of imperative sentence structure. In contrast to Instructor A, Instructor B does not frequently write feedback in the form of a command to the student. This infrequent use of the imperative aligns with the overall priorities of the instructor's feedback. Whereas Instructor A offered feedback primarily focused on grammar and conventions, easily communicated as a grammar command, Instructor B's comments prioritized more nuanced writing concerns that are not easily delivered as an imperative, such as idea development and organization.

The third person collective is used infrequently, showing distance from an outside authority and academic community. This is an interesting finding in Instructor B's feedback as their students are enrolled in the College of Technology and will be entering a variety of communities, from diesel technology to paralegal. When compared to Instructor A's students who are on a bachelor's track, this lack of emphasis on a single institutional authority can be seen as inviting students on all paths.

Instructor A does use the student name in one essay on both the first and final feedback. This use of third person singular and individual reflects an integration of the student into the conversation. By referencing this student by name in the context of the feedback, the instructor is making their comments both personal and individual to the student writer, a move that reflects writing with the student rather than about the student.

Instructor B frequently uses first person, specifically in the first essay. The first person collective ("we") is used at the greatest rate in the first and final essays. In CDA, the pronoun "we" is considered vague, and, as Machin and Mayr explain, "can be used by text producers to make vague statements and conceal power relations" (84). This naming reference could mean the instructor and their academic community, or "we" could mean the readers of the essay. "We" could also reference the community of practice the student is joining, or "we" could reference the people in the online FYC course.

First person singular is also used frequently by Instructor A. The instructor does reference their own authority often through the use of first person singular in the first essay feedback. This establishes the instructor's position in this writing situation as the authority, placing the student lower on the social order. In the first essay, this use of first person individual naming reference may have an isolating effect, where the instructor is serving as the authority in the writing situation rather than trying to learn with the student through the feedback process.

Naming reference in feedback has the potential to work in either capacity – building bridges or building walls. Instructor feedback can serve to reinforce the social order of the academic community and the power of the institution through the use of the understood you and third person collective. Alternatively, instructors can use naming references to respect student differences, identities, and enacting of self. Wolsey asserts, "Ownership of the paper must remain the author's (Dornan, Rosen & Wilson 2013); the professor should not overshadow the student, assume a stance that isn't courteous, or fail to honor the learning that can take place" (323). As Instructor B illustrates, comments that specifically reference the individual writer in a way that respects their choices can act as an invitation, whether this is the third person use of the student's name or the second person pronoun. Understanding that naming references in feedback can serve as a marker of difference on students' literacies and identities is critical to creating a writing environment that is inviting students to join the new community of practice while respecting the knowledge and practices of the ones from which they are coming. In his call for a rhetoric of new media, Brooke explains, new media prepares writers to "make their own choices" rather than analyzing choices already made by other writers (15). With awareness, intention, and reflection, instructors can use naming references to help break down the institutional power structures and invite online FYC students into their new community.

Modals

The use of modals, a common tool in academic writing, is a rhetorical strategy to cushion the impact of a statement. Modals express the writer's degree of certainty, and thus authority, in the statement, including the modal verbs can, may, must, should, and would. Fairclough defines, "Modality concerns the extent to which producers commit themselves to, or conversely distance themselves from, propositions" (*Discourse and Social Change* 142). Modals can be written either subjectively or objectively. In the subjective form, the subject of the modal is identified, making a direct, explicit link between the writer and degree of certainty. One example of a modal in the subjective form is, "Many of us would prefer...." In the objective modal, the subject is implied, as in this example: "It might be a good idea if you could...." Fairclough states, "In the case of objective modality, it may not be clear whose perspective is being represented—whether, for example, the speaker is projecting her own perspective as a universal one, or acting as a vehicle for the perspective of some other individual or group" (*Discourse and Social Change* 159). Modals are common in instructor feedback to student writing and can send a message about the instructor's level of certainty and authority, as well as the student writers' options, abilities, or obligations.

Modals that express less certainty may leave the space and possibility for students to explore their options as writers. Comments that use modal verbs such as "could" or "might" offer feedback as one perspective, such as "Your readers could probably relate to the assumption..." compared to the authority of "should" or "must," such as, "Proper nouns should always be capitalized." The modality of language that creates an invitation is exemplified in posthuman practice. Boyle states, "The central ethic for a rhetoric framed as a posthuman practice is to exercise the humble, open-ended claim that we do not yet know what a (writing) body can do; after which, we attempt to find out, repeatedly" (552). If the modals used in the instructor feedback are "humble" and "open ended," then students are being invited into the process, to work over and over to recognize and integrate existing literacies into their new

community of practice. Sackey et al. promote the online classroom as a space for dislodging deficit models of learning where students are seen as being deficient and need the instructor to become proficient. They write, "Using online spaces as a lens to construct a learning environment can also help to bridge the gap or diffuse the power dynamics between student and teacher [...] it dismantles the deficit model of learning that can sometimes color formal learning space by creating an open discourse of inquiry whose facilitators are engaging in the same learning tasks as participants" (Sackey et al. 123). In writing feedback to students, the instructor has the opportunity to engage in the learning task as the authentic reader rather than the assessor. Creating that space through the use of modals can create an environment where students value the skills and literacies that they do have. Horner explains this as part of the translingual approach that sees "difference in language not as a barrier to overcome or as a problem to manage, but as a resource" (303). Through the lens of critical discourse analysis, Gee recognizes the necessity for greater fluidity in our thinking, tools, culture, and critique to create a new knowledge world with the people who we are, are becoming, and want to be. The use of modals by instructors in their feedback can foster these opportunities and allows students to see their writing process as part of an open discourse and their differences as resources.

Modals also help foster an inviting environment in online FYC by accounting for the daily doing of language. Lu and Horner lean on Pennycook's sedimentation theory to explain the effect of daily language use. When similarities occur in language on a daily basis, these similarities build up like sediment and begin to appear as language rules. This sedimentation reflects language as flexible and dynamic rather than a static system and structures (Lu and Horner 14). By using modals that express less certainty than more, instructors may account for this dynamic system. Hedging feedback as something a student "could" or "might," as opposed to "should" or "must," leaves space for the student to make their own choices in the daily doing of language.

Instructor A's use of modals was fairly limited in the feedback to the first essay and even less on the final essay (see table 5). The instructor uses modals that expressed less certainty than more certainty, mostly using "could" and "would," such as "That would help..." More modals were objective and did not attribute the rule or recommendation to a person or organization. When analyzing the modal use in conjunction with the naming reference pattern, Instructor A leans towards a style of feedback that is more impersonal and focused on the collective rules than the personal and individualized. Given this instructor's students are on the bachelor track, the academic rules may be prioritized as students are entering a community of practice with the standardized writing expectations of MLA and APA.

Table 5: Modal Use by Instructor A

Instructor A - MODALS	Examples in feedback	First essay frequency	Final essay frequency
Subjective	Your readers <i>could</i> , Many of us <i>would</i> prefer, We <i>try</i> to avoid...	5	4
Objective	A colon <i>would</i> work well, That <i>would</i> help, It <i>would</i> demonstrate	7	6

Instructor B also used few modals throughout their feedback, and, like Instructor A, used fewer modals on the final essay feedback (see table 6). The modals used were also more often objective but were also more certain than Instructor A. One example is "That will serve you well..." Modals such as "will" and "can" express higher degrees of certainty and, thus, authority. This also aligns with the patterns of Instructor B's naming references, which included many first-person pronouns to highlight their and the academic community's authority.

Table 6: Modal Use by Instructor B

Instructor B - MODALS	Examples in feedback	First essay frequency	Final essay frequency
Subjective	I <i>would</i> encourage you, As we <i>might</i> expect in an analysis, I <i>think</i> our first step,	4	2
Objective	That <i>will</i> serve you well, This essay <i>seems</i> more, It <i>might</i> be a good idea, If you <i>can</i> employ	9	5

The limited use of modals in the data collection from these two instructors is an interesting pattern in the feedback to student writing. Given how frequently modalities are used in academic writing, one might expect this same level of use in the instructors' comments. Machin and Mayr explain that modals are used to express a message without being too overt about it; a message is delivered in a polite and softened way. They write, "Since language is about concealing as well as revealing, to deceive as well as inform, there are components of grammar that will help facilitate this without being too obvious" (Machin and Mayr 186). My analysis is that instructors are not primarily attempting to hedge their feedback but rather write in an obvious manner that is direct and informative.

By remaining humble and open-ended, the instructor's use of modals in feedback can help students create a writing toolbox to use at their disposal and discretion based on context. When instructors present feedback as options and possibilities, students are empowered to make choices in their writing rather than fit into a standard mold of writing and rules from the authority. This type of feedback would include modals that are less certain such as would, could, and might, as well as subjective modals that make an explicit link between the subject and the possibilities. One example would be, "As your reader, I might need more details to visualize this scene." Guerra, leaning on the work of philosopher Louis Althusser, writes, "At the heart of our efforts is a desire to arm our students

with an orientation -- a new set of dispositions – toward language that will give them the ability to respond critically and self-reflectively to the competing ideologies that hail and interpolate them (Althusser 115) as they make decisions about how to use their repertoire of languages and dialects at their disposal” (26). Modals offer an opportunity to foster a “people-centered literacy” as defined by Carter (39 – 40). Since writing can be viewed as generating the writer’s place in the world, the concept of “initiating” student writers is only teaching to replicate and reinforce the dominant forces of oppression (Carter 39 – 40). With the perspective of the traditional notion of literacy shifting to multiliteracies, Cope et al. explain language as “dynamic processes of transformation rather than processes of reproduction” (10). Instructors have the opportunity to engage with students as equal agents in the meaning-making process, which creates “a more productive, relevant, innovative, creative, and, even perhaps, emancipatory pedagogy” (Cope et al. 10). By leaving room for uncertainty, differences, and the dynamic nature of language through the use of modals, the student writer is granted the choice to decide for themselves how they will use their education (Carter 124).

Agency

In critical discourse analysis, the concept of agency examines the connection between the action and agent and asks, “Who has control?” Agency can be analyzed through transitivity: Who is the actor in the context of the comments? Who is receiving the action? Is agency deleted entirely? Machin and Mayr state, “A transitivity analysis of clause structure shows us who is mainly given a subject (agent/participant) or object (affected/patient) position” (104). Because language is both the daily doing and a place of power, this subject/object relationship is as much an ideological statement as it is linguistic choice (Machin and Mayr 104). In feedback to student writing, positioning the student, or the instructor, or the institution in the place of power can have an impact on the perceived invitation into or isolation from the academic community.

At its best, agency in feedback to student writing can value student differences, empower students' language choices, and build a bridge between existing literacies and the students' new academic community. At its worst, when the instructor or institution is the agent in the feedback, students are isolated from their writing, their process, and their connection to existing literacies and identity. Wolsey points out this tension: "A problem that students and professors face is the dichotomy between evaluating work and encouraging continued growth" (322). Instructors hold a dual role where they are required to help students grow as writers and simultaneously assess that writing. Depew et al. explain the outcome of instructor as evaluator when approached from a banking model of education: "Instructors do not provide students with strategies for becoming independent learners, rather they perpetuate their own authority, as well as the state's authority, by convincing students to value the outcomes they prescribe, as well as the success that will result from achieving these outcomes" (177). In contrast, a model of growth would reflect students who are granted full agency over their writing and process. Lu and Horner explain agency as "...operating in terms of the need and ability of individual writers to respond to potential tensions between past, present, and future, the possible and the desired, rather than focusing on merely on what the dominant has defined as the exigent feasible appropriate and stable context" (6). When writing is viewed through the lens of these tensions, as both what is now and what can become, students have the opportunity to build agency through their instructor's comments.

To analyze the agency in the data for this research project, I have identified three agents used across the feedback from the instructors: student as agent, reader as agent, and instructor/ institution as agent (see appendix D). When the agent was the student, the subject was "you" or the student's first name. If the reader was positioned as the agent, the subject was "readers" or "your readers" or "we." Although, "we" was identified earlier as a vague reference, there are comments in which the context was clearly about the reader's perception. In other cases, "we" is identified as the institution based on

the context which references authority. Other instances of the instructor or institution as agent used “I” or “MLA” or “academics” as the subject of the comment.

Instructor A’s feedback on the first essay is almost equal in the number of references to the student as agent and the instructor/institution as agent (see table 7). These numbers may reflect a tension between who ultimately has the control in the writing process – the student or the instructor/institution. Interestingly, in the final essay feedback, the student is positioned as agent twice as many times. This number highlights a transition to the student being more often in control of their writing and the process. On this final essay feedback, the number of comments with the instructor/institution as agent is about the same, but the high volume of student as agent comments can eclipse any perceived stronger authority of the instructor.

In the first essay, about half of Instructor A’s comments position the reader as agent when compared to the two other types of agents (student and instructor/institution). This number is even lower in the final essay feedback. This lack of focus on the reader’s power may demonstrate that the reader does not serve as an important role as the student or the instructor/institution. This is a distinction worth further exploration to tease apart the role of reader versus the role of instructor/institution. As opposed to the naming references where the reader reference was vague – “we” or “us” - here the instructor clearly identifies “your reader” who seems to be set apart from themselves or the institution.

Table 7: Agency Use by Instructor A

Instructor A – AGENCY	Examples in feedback	First essay frequency	Final essay frequency
Student as agent	You shine in the area of, When you edit and revise, You stay focused, You end up with a run on	10	20

Table 7 (continued)

Reader as agent	Your readers would wonder, Your readers would allow, Your readers would assume	4	1
instructor/ Institution as agent	MLA spells, MLA format requires, Another place academics like a comma, We need a transition	8	6

Instructor B also positions agency with the student and the instructor/institution heavily in the first essay (see table 8). This, again, may create tension over who has control – the student or the instructor/institution. Students might infer this is a shared role of control, which does not serve to fully invite them into their own writing and writing process. By the final essay, the numbers shift to a much smaller role of student agency and a reduced but still larger role in the agency of the instructor/institution.

The same trend, at a smaller rate, is visible with the reader as agent. Just as with Instructor A, the role of the reader is minimized in Instructor B's feedback and even further reduced in the final essay. This may create confusion for students who wonder, who is the reader? How is the reader different than the instructor/institution? And why is the reader's agency not prioritized when audience is a main concern in the writing process? These questions and lack of clarity in the difference between the reader and the instructor could work to further isolate the student from the academic community.

Table 8: Agency Use by Instructor B

Instructor B – AGENCY	Examples in feedback	First essay frequency	Final essay frequency
Student as agent	As you work on these elements, You have big fat paragraphs, Your voice draws readers in, You establish clear main ideas	20	4
Reader as agent	We keep focused in the meaning, We appreciate hearing these examples, Readers expect you to use, Readers generally expect...	9	3
Instructor/Institution as agent	I don't buy it, I'd again recommend, We see some struggles here, We won't accept outright, I've highlighted my favorite line	27	13

After an analysis of agency in the data – the types of agents and the frequency of use in instructor feedback – I question how minimizing the students' and readers' agency meets the goals of online FYC. Returning to the learning outcomes of these specific sections of ENGL 1101, two of the three writing-specific outcomes are about the student learning to use “fundamental academic essay-writing skills” and “conventions of standard written English.” Only one of the outcomes empowers the student and her agency in writing – “explore the writing process.” In the State's ways of knowing for written communications, the role of the reader is specifically referenced: “Address readers' biases and assumptions with well-developed evidence-based reasoning.” Two of the outcomes focus on students fitting in within the confines of the institution's authority to use “appropriate conventions” and “read, interpret, and communicate key concepts in writing and rhetoric.” The other four outcomes for FYC

empower the student to make choices through using flexible writing process strategies and inquiry-based strategies, as well as adopting strategies and genres for the writing situation. When looking at the agency in the feedback from instructors alongside the outcomes for FYC, there is a clear need in the instructors' feedback to shift agency to the student to meet the course and State outcomes.

Perhaps, the expression of agency exhibited in instructor feedback is tied to the tension between instructor as assessor and instructor as reader. Peggy O'Neil explains, "Through our assessment of texts, we convey what we value as readers. These values are closely linked to conventions about language and power relationships" (157). As observed through the agency in the comments in this analysis, the instructors responded more often as the institution than the reader, thus reinforcing the power relationship embedded within SAE rules of language. This is little surprise given the institutional and state learning outcomes along with the means of evaluation defined by the university that create the framework for the course. Nowhere in these explicit, prescribed outcomes and evaluations is space made for students' differences, identities, or existing literacies. Asao Inoue poses the question: "How does a teacher not only do no harm through his writing assessments, but promote social justice and equality?" (3). Inoue outlines his own process of "antiracist writing assessment" that works to dismantle this close relationship between evaluation and institutional power. He writes, "I cared most about students laboring with words and judgment in meaningful ways than forming them in particular ways in ideal products" (Inoue 292). Shifting the focus away from the "ideal product" as defined by the institution is a challenge when instructors are held to learning outcomes and means of evaluation that prioritize these products and their inherent power. Instructors may be working within the confines of institutional power relationships as much as the students are, and the choice of agency in the feedback (the micro choice in the daily doing of language) is the powerful byproduct of these power relationships (the macro outcome of language use). How can learning outcomes be framed that create space for student differences, identities, and existing literacies, and thus empower both student and instructor to

engage in ways as more authentic writers and readers not completely confined by institutional control? The effect of institutional power embedded in learning outcomes and its influence on instructor feedback are interesting questions for future research.

Not only are these students and instructors working in the confines of institutional requirements, they are also doing this in an online environment, which adds additional challenges. These identity markers and their value can become even more camouflaged within online FYC courses. Selfe explains that literacy practices “reveal a complex set of cultural beliefs and values that influence – and are influenced by – collective, individual, and historical understandings of what it means to read, write, make meaning, and communicate via computers and within on-line environments” (12). While CDA as a method poses only a few questions of how agency is used, the data collected for this project in conjunction with the institution’s defined learning outcomes and the online learning environment points to much greater complexities around the concept of agency worthy of further exploration.

Conclusion

Splicing apart these CDA components of instructor feedback offers greater insight not only into how instructor feedback utilizes specific language tools and their impact, but also into how these tools work together to create an overarching tone and effect that can invite or isolate students as they enter a new academic community in the gateway course of FYC. The participants in this research were responding to student writing within the scope of the institutional and state learning outcomes. Neither instructor had the explicit goal to craft feedback that “invites” students into the academic community, nor do I believe that either instructor was intentionally working to isolate students or reinforce institutional power structures. Yet, when the lens of critical discourse analysis was applied to this data, the potential outcome of instructor feedback was exposed in new ways. Analyzing presupposition, naming references, modals, and agency, explicitly highlights how instructor feedback practices can serve as inviting or isolating for students into their new academic community. Ensuring the feedback is acting

as an invitation is an essential component to meeting the first principle of online writing instruction to be “universally inclusive and accessible.”

The feedback analyzed offers ideas about what may work well to empower students in their writing process as they enter the new academic community and simultaneously illustrates how power is taken away in this process and community. Cope et al. write about literacy for citizenship, stating that it requires a “pedagogy for active citizenship, centered on learners as agents in their own knowledge processes, capable of contributing their own as well as negotiating the differences between one community and the next” (7). When students use these comments from the instructor, how do students know when to assume control or when to acquiesce? Guerra questions the concept of appropriateness as crucial to students’ decisions about genre, audience, or set of goals. He questions the expectation of appropriateness, stating that it “does not mean we should all behave appropriately all of the time [...] knowing when to do one thing (resist) or the other (accommodate) is what the approach to language difference that I am proposing here is all about” (32). Feedback that accounts for student choices, comments that give space for students to decide when to resist or accommodate, can be accomplished through the instructor’s appropriate and insightful use of presuppositions, naming reference, modals, and agency. Rendahl and Breuch assert, “We need to balance considerations of learning environments with considerations of the humanity of students, their individual characteristics, and their abilities to make choices” (303). To move the online FYC conversation forward, instructors can integrate the approach of critical discourse analysis and the context of critical pedagogies to craft feedback to student writing that creates the accessible and inclusive classroom.

With this overt lens of how language works in feedback, instructors have an opportunity to craft feedback that legitimizes student choices in the writing process, connects students to their existing literacies and identities, and empowers students to become the meaning makers of their own writing. Van Leeuwen writes, “Contextually specific legitimation of these social practices, answers to the spoken

or unspoken questions ‘Why should we do this?’ or ‘Why should we do this in this way?’ All of language is legitimization” (103). Utilizing the components of CDA and the process of reflection, I offer a model in chapter 5 for instructors to grow their awareness and intention of their feedback practices through the use of a reflective rubric.

CHAPTER 5 – PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

Online FYC more readily affords instructors access to different modalities to provide feedback, including audio, video, and comments in typed documents. Yet even when online instructors can tap into the benefits of multimodal feedback, the content of the comments often remains based on traditional physical spaces and texts. Anson acknowledges, “Contextual factors that influence teachers’ responses continue to do so within the traditional parameters of typed/handwritten papers turned in for (usually handwritten) response or assessment” (264). A FYC instructor from 25 years ago would still know how to respond to a paper today despite all the technological advances. The pedagogical conversations today around feedback to student writing should account for the implications of digital technology on learning, as well as the new normal student and the impact these comments have in online FYC.

Moving this conversation forward necessitates taking a closer look at the foundation of our feedback practices. Our ideas and practices of response to writing require an updated lens with the migration of FYC to the online environment and the new normal student using digital technology to complete the course. Should students receive feedback on grammar and SAE conventions when they are composing on computers with spell and grammar check functions? As evidenced in Instructor A’s feedback, some instructors choose to prioritize these components. While the word processing program may not catch every error, and a student can choose to ignore the auto-generated feedback, the majority of errors have already been noted for the student. Should Instructor A be focusing most of the marginal comments on these errors? Instructor B’s feedback largely noted idea development issues. They left lengthy feedback in paragraph format at the end of the students’ essays with few marginal notes. Did the affordance of typing feedback encourage the instructor to write more and, perhaps,

overwhelm the student with end comments? These types of questions need to inform how instructors craft feedback in online FYC with a deeper awareness of digital technology in composing, the new normal student, and the role of online FYC as a gateway course. To return to the foundation of how, why, and what feedback instructors write to students, I propose a feedback reflection rubric that utilizes critical discourse analysis to frame components that can improve the way instructors respond to students to ensure an inviting environment for all students in online FYC.

For online writing instructors, the act of responding to student writing is a daily practice, whether it is a student question or a file of essays to be graded. Engaging in this consistent activity, our responses can become fairly rote, lacking the intention, thoughtfulness, and reflection due to the sheer volume and repetition of comments written. With the demands of this task, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that when we read, reflect and evaluate student writing, we are witnessing the students' daily "doing" of language, which has all the layers of identity, social practice, and power folded within it. Fairclough argues, "In producing their world, members' practices are shaped in ways of which they are usually unaware by social structures, relations of power, and the nature of the social practice they are engaged in whose stakes always go beyond producing meanings...Members' practice has outcomes and effects upon social structures, social relations, and social struggles around them, of which again they are usually unaware" (*Discourse* 72-73). Given our vantage point on the instructor side of the online course, not only are our responses mediated through the interface, but the sheer load and commonness of our daily practice can create a lack of awareness that has effects on our students that go far beyond improving sentence structure or writing a stronger thesis statement. While this research project focuses on the daily practice of feedback to student essays, a future research project could examine the daily use of feedback in other types of communication with students, such as email responses or comments on discussion boards.

An online FYC pedagogy that incorporates better feedback to student writing is one that has the capacity to produce stronger students, stronger writers, and, ultimately, stronger citizens. Cope et al. call for literacy for the lifeworld. This literate person needs to have “the capacity to navigate from one domain of social activity to another, who is resilient in their capacity to articulate and enact their own identities and who can find ways of entering into dialogue with and learn new and unfamiliar social languages” (Cope and Kalantzis 9). As such, students must learn to engage with feedback as part of the writing process and be encouraged as agents of their own writing so that they have the capacity and skills to engage across communities. Casey Boyle, whose scholarship explores rhetoric as a posthuman practice, writes, “Rhetoric as the site for developing one’s agency to participate in a society of ‘free exchange’ of discourse....bases its operations on reflective practice as a means to identify and negotiate social and cultural relations primarily as a way of increasing one’s agency to negotiate human subjectivity and power” (535). These relations are endemic to language and essential in language exchange. Additionally, hooks argues that “shifting how we think about language and how we use it necessarily alters how we know what we know” (174). The micro level reflection proposed here addresses the how we use language in our comments to empower students, and simultaneously engages at the macro level where language choices encourage students becoming citizens in the world.

When we write comments that are pushing students to normalize SAE, whether it’s grammar conventions, idea development, organization, or academic terminology, we must be aware that this learning process is more than a sum of its parts. Language, in addition to being a social practice, is also an epistemological practice, as hooks noted. Thomas Skeen, whose scholarship focuses on rhetoric, technology, and teaching writing, explains, “Rhetoric is an active form of knowledge-making and knowledge control rather than a latent one” (92). Using the work of Bruce Herzberg, Skeen defines, “discourses consists of ‘rules’ that ‘determine what can be said at a given moment in that formation or ... what can be said that has truth-value, what can be said that has consequences for social practices,

what can be said that counts as meaningful” (qtd in Skeen 92). When we apply the “rules” of SAE in our response to student writing from this discursive perspective, we are implicitly making judgments about what has “truth-value” and what “counts as meaningful.” Yet the students’ work offers great insight into their knowledge and ways of knowing. Casey Boyle, using the work of Robert Yagelski, states, “...writing is both a problem and a possibility, not only something that sustains reflections of a prior self, but a practice that enacts a self” (537). Too often, I fear, we respond with our academic rhetoric that devalues this student knowledge and self-identity and, instead, creates an environment of discourse as knowledge control and, ultimately, a class environment that is more isolating than inviting. To accomplish the work of developing a greater understanding of our students’ complex lives and its impact on online writing instruction pedagogy and praxis, we must turn a critical eye to our own language use in the context of our communication in the online FYC course.

Reflective Practice in Crafting Feedback to Online FYC Students

Given the impact that instructor feedback can have not just on improving student writing but on creating an inclusive and accessible online FYC course, a concise and insight-generating reflection process can help instructors craft more inviting feedback. Utilizing critical discourse analysis can offer a specific framework for a reflective practice. Lewis promotes, “Using CDA in the service of exploring compelling questions about the literacy teaching and learning with the ultimate goal of supporting dialogic classrooms in which students can have opportunities to make and remake themselves as literacy learners” (378). By applying concepts of CDA, instructors can foster a learning environment that empowers students in their own literacy practice. Boyle posits, “A chief tenet then for a posthuman practice is that any individual is not an essential subject or object compelled to adapt to external factors, but that individuals emerge from and with and as practice... To put it simply, practice makes practice” (541). When students write, they are emerging as producers and citizens in the new academic community. As instructors, we have the opportunity to individualize literacy instruction to the students’

emergent practice and growth in the process. Feedback is a place where the instructors come into direct contact with the differences and existing literacies of students and have the opportunity to learn with these students in their practice.

Learning with these students in online FYC, as compared to F2F courses, presents a major difference -- instructors are communicating with students who they most likely have never met in person. This virtual communication situation can require extra thought and reflection to ensure the feedback is understood, inviting, and helpful. Stine explores how teachers decide to “talk” to students online. She cautions that without the immediacy and the dialogue of F2F feedback, instructors must consider their words carefully; a long message can miss the point, and a short message can be dismissive. Instructors must find the right balance of feedback that individualizes students’ learning, engages the instructor as part of the student process, and empowers students as agents of their own writing. Selber writes, “The key is for teachers to develop a disciplinary approach that is not too prescriptive, one that is generative and directive while acknowledging the fact that every specific instructional situation may very well call for a unique solution, or at least one that accounts for local social forces and material conditions” (23). To accomplish this approach, in part, instructors can be supported by the specific and holistic tool proposed here to reflect on how they are crafting feedback, a tool that will help them become “resilient inquirers” as Zitlow identifies as the teacher role. This reflective practice helps instructors to position themselves in this type of role, as Dickson identifies teacher as collaborator, teacher as learner, and teacher as co-researcher (36). The feedback reflection rubric (see Appendix E for complete rubric) is based on components of critical discourse analysis that integrates theory of critical pedagogies and online writing instruction into a single practical tool.

Presupposition

Presupposition, or assuming students know the academic terminology, in instructor feedback can be an isolating experience for students. Through the use of this component in the reflection rubric (see table 9), instructors can question and reflect on what assumptions they are making about students' prior knowledge. Our academic vocabulary is, most likely, not part of our students' communities of practice. While students may read about and be assessed on these terms in generic ways, as soon as the term is applied to their specific situation, the term is no longer grounded in the same context by which they learned it. So, even if these terms are taught and used in the class, whether through the textbook reading or practice in class activities, the terminology in individual student feedback may still be confusing. In addition, for students with inaccurate prior knowledge, the new knowledge from the unit may not have "stuck" (Ambrose et al.).

The research to help students acquire new knowledge effectively suggests that instructors, in part, teach with multiple examples and contexts and "deliberately activate relevant prior knowledge to strengthen appropriate associations" (Ambrose et al. 23). By defining and explaining terminology in individual feedback, instructors can both offer the terms in multiple contexts and create the correct association between prior knowledge and new information. With this reinforcement of a term or concept in feedback, instructors can create an accessible and inclusive environment for students, one that connects the students' work specifically to the academic community by creating an explicit and defined link of their writing to this new vocabulary.

Table 9: Presupposition Reflection Rubric

Component	Reflection Question	Answer	Examples	Response
Presupposition	What vocabulary am I assuming the student knows?	Terms related to grammar, idea development, organization	Transitions, thesis, comma rules, possessive	I should consider adding definitions to the comment and using specific examples from the student's writing to show concept and application.
		All terms used are fully explained	The thesis, your main idea of the whole essay...; When you transition, switching from one idea to the next....; Your topic sentence in the 3 rd par.	I've done excellent work integrating direct instruction into feedback to individualize comments for each student in context.

If instructors are presupposing knowledge of terms in the feedback then they are missing an important component of writing process. Marilyn Cooper writes, "In postmodern electronic conversations in writing classes, we in some ways witness the revenge of our advocacy of process, and the trick, if it is one, in using them productively is to continue the process of discussing and reflecting that they begin rather than regarding them as isolated events" (158). Feedback should be part of an ongoing writing instruction practice, not an isolated, culminating event. In the virtual medium, feedback can be misconstrued as solely a place of assessment, in part because it lacks the ongoing in-person relationship and its form as electronic comments may encourage a one-way communication. Rather, our comments should be an individualized continuation of the discussion that occurred in the whole class context. Even for terms taught within the unit, redefining these terms can be another opportunity to reinforce and personal instruction. Instructors can utilize feedback as an opportunity to frame

vocabulary in the student's specific writing context and connect academic concepts to the existing literacies students exhibit in their writing.

Naming Reference

The choice of naming reference in feedback (see table 10) may show the instructor as speaking *about* the student rather than *with* the student. With the limited personal contact between students and instructor in online FYC courses, the feedback can easily become more impersonal or focused on the writing. Buckely states, "The online teaching of writing allows the focus to be on the writing and not the writer" (185). Yet, the focus on writing is simply reflecting the practice of process rather than the person in charge of that process – the student. As writing instructors, even online, we have a great opportunity to work with our students. Kerschbaum calls teachers to learn *with* rather than *about* students. She writes, "Ultimately, difference is never fully knowable, and teachers should not aim to know their students as much as willingly participate with them in processes of coming-to-know one another in the writing classroom" (Kerschbaum 59). When feedback is impersonal or collective, instructors are missing out on an important component that can make students feel invited – the process of "coming-to-know one another."

When feedback is written *at* students, the instructor is reverting to the banking model of education. These types of comments act as "deposits" of instructor knowledge into the student, thus reinforcing power structures of the academic institution and the authority of the instructor. The impersonal naming reference reflects a focus on the writing as either fitting in to the academic community or not rather than prioritizing the student and their process. This comes at a great cost of developing a direct, human approach – one where the naming reference is personal and individualized and inviting the student into the academic community.

Table 10: Naming Reference Reflection Rubric

Component	Reflection Question	Answer	Examples	Response
Naming Reference	What type of naming reference am I using?	Impersonal, collective	We, understood you, you (singular) as part of directive	I might need to revise pronoun use to be clear, specific, and personal for this individual student.
		Personal, individual	Student's name, I, you (singular) that is not directive	Good job, I have crafted an inviting comment!

In this reflective component, crafting feedback necessitates taking the time to personalize comments through the naming reference. The focus of the naming reference should be on the student, as the person who engaged in the process, which can be accomplished by using the student's name. The engagement of the instructor can be shown through the use of first person singular, working with the student as a real, authentic reader, not a generic or collective audience. The singular second person pronoun "you" can also be inviting when not written as a directive. The use of personal and individual naming references shows the instructor's offer to work with the student as part of this new academic community and to respect differences and existing literacies through individual engagement and inquiry in "coming-to-know" the students.

Modals

Considering modal verbs (see table 11) is an approach to feedback for instructors to remain curious and open to the students' choices in their writing. Our feedback should be focused on facilitating the student's writing process. Sackey et al. write about facilitation as moves "that create an environment of safety and inquiry that allow learning to take place" (116). The comments written are the instructor's rhetorical moves aimed at engaging in and deepening that student's process and understanding. The use of modals in feedback can foster that sense of inquiry opposed to authority.

DePew explains, “Teachers have the capacity to learn from students if only they are willing to concede absolute authority and give students the opportunity to explain how they are engaging with the course material” (177). By crafting comments that create possibility and options for students to consider, the instructor is not dictating the way it needs to be done. Writing feedback that is open to possibilities reflects a continuation of learning and process – for both the student and instructor -- rather than an end product. This engagement of student and instructor working together fosters an invitation into the academic community.

Table 11: Modal Reflection Rubric

Component	Reflection Question	Answer	Examples	Response
Modal Verbs	Am I expressing certainty or possibility in my use of modal verbs?	Certainty	Will, must, should	I could revise my modal verbs to create space for student choice.
		Possibility	Could, might, may	I appreciate my approach to allow the student to make the choice! I have offered a humble and open-ended comment.

Expressing certainty in feedback to student writing -- using modal verbs like will, must, or should -- reinforce the hierarchy of the institution and the authority of the instructor. This expression of certainty can act as a gate that shuts students out rather than invites them in to the community. By using modal verbs that show possibility, including could, might, or may, instructors can reflect their openness of the students’ choices and differences. Modal verbs of possibility are an invitation for students to integrate their existing literacies and reflect an instructor who honors the process of working *with* students.

Agency

Fostering student agency in the online FYC course can create implicit tensions for instructors. The ENGL 1101 learning outcomes, as defined by the university and State Board of Education are in conflict with empowering students to tap into their differences and integrate existing literacies; the authority resides in the instructor to teach and assess the required academic essay writing skills and conventions of standard written English. Amy Rupiper Taggart and Mary Laughlin explore the effect of this hierarchy in the research completed using student surveys on instructor feedback. They found, “At issue here is student recognition and perception of decision-making agency in the classroom, and the ways the instructor – most often framed as the instructor’s agenda, desire, or ‘wants’ – seems, at times, to embody hierarchy for students” (Taggart and Laughlin 4). This hierarchy, Taggart and Laughlin conclude, has a negative impact on students trusting their own writing and process (4). Yet, these institutional forces do exist and cannot be ignored or necessarily rectified by the instructor. The New London Group calls for a pedagogy “that does not involve writing over existing subjectivities with the language of the dominant culture” (72). The goal is “to develop an epistemology of pluralism that provides access without people having to erase or leave behind different subjectivities” (New London Group 72). One way for instructors to work towards an “epistemology of pluralism,” even within the confines of the institution’s ENGL 1101 learning outcomes, is to be thoughtful and intentional about agency in their feedback to student writing (see table 12).

Table 12: Agency Reflection Rubric

Component	Reflection Question	Answer	Examples	Response
Agency	Who is the actor in my comments?	Instructor / Institution	I, MLA, academics	I may want to rewrite the comment so the student is the actor.
		Student	You, student name	I've done a nice job! I empower the student as the agent.

By using a reflective process on agency, instructors can work towards a pluralism in their feedback, ensuring they are not erasing or leaving behind students' subjectivities. Inoue argues, "Healthy writing assessment ecologies have at their core dialogue about what students and teachers know, how students and teachers judge language differently, so that students are also agents in the ecology, not simply subjects to be measured" (84). Framing students as the actors in their writing process creates an inviting environment that is inclusive and accessible for all students.

Closing

Through close examination and reflection on instructor feedback to student writing in online FYC, there is great potential to contribute to an online writing instruction pedagogy that recognizes, honors, and empowers students of all backgrounds, experiences, and languages and embraces the complexities of their lives in the context of their academic work. The New London Group states, "Literacy educators and students must see themselves as active participants in social change, as learners and students who can be active designers – makers – of social futures" (64). As instructors, our daily interactions with students are the sites where we can enact social change that embraces the potential of all students. Boyle explains through a posthumanist lens, "The central ethic for a rhetoric framed as posthuman practice is to exercise the humble, open-ended claim that we do not yet know what a

(writing) body can do; after which, we attempt to find out, repeatedly” (552). This repetition, framed as our daily doing of language, can move from a sense of commonness in the routine of feedback to curiosity about individual students as a “coming-to-know” process. Gee explains that since language is used to build activities, identities and institutions, often in ways that go unnoticed, language appears to be separate from context. The common occurrence of feedback can easily go unnoticed as a powerful practice.

Examining the discourse of instructor feedback is the starting place for a much greater conversation. Gee argues, “Nonetheless, these activities, identities and institutions have to be continuously and actively rebuilt in the here and now. If we do not rebuild them again and again, they will cease to exist. If we start rebuilding them in different ways, which modify them, then they change. This is what accounts for change and transformation” (91). The potential for change lies in the same components – in particular, instructor feedback -- that are more often used as means of control. Fairclough explains, “Discursive practice is constitutive in both conventional and creative ways. It contributes to reproducing society (social identities, social relationships, systems of knowledge and belief) as it is, yet also contributes to transforming society” (*Discourse* 65). This possibility to transform needs to be at the foundation of our discussion of serving the new normal students in the online learning environment.

In our work as teacher-scholars in the online environment, we are called to combine our expertise in language, our commitment to knowledge and experience, and our service to all students in ways that break down the barriers of higher education for all students. Guerra calls us to “...dive into the intricacies of what it means to live in social spaces where nothing – not our languages, cultures, identities, or citizenship status -- ever stands still despite the best efforts of institutional and ideological forces operating to hold us all – especially the disenfranchised among us – in rigidly defined and stratified categories” (2). Embracing the complexities of student lives and the intersections at which they

stand when entering higher education is an important part of breaking down those categories that reinforce the power structures. Guerra affirms, “At the heart of our efforts is a desire to arm our students with an orientation – a new set of dispositions – toward language that will give them the ability to respond critically and self-reflectively ... as they make decisions about how to use the repertoire of languages and dialects at their disposal” (Guerra 26). This is both the theory and the practice of empowering students who are “citizens in the making” and whom teachers can help equip to embrace their complex identities and participate fully in their worlds.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Presupposition Use by Instructors

INSTRUCTOR A - PRESUPPOSITION	First essay	Final essay
Student A	MLA essay format Long introductory elements Root sentence Coordinating conjunction Transitions Comma splice Run on sentence Colon Possessive apostrophe	Coordinating conjunction Possessive apostrophe Introductory material Semicolon Dropped quotation
Student G	Coordinating conjunction MLA essay format Long introductory elements Root sentence Proper nouns Run on sentence Organizational patterns Edited prose	MLA Transitional statements Transition Parenthetical citation Subject Verb Possessive apostrophe Fragment Fallacious logic Academic argument
Student M	Possessive apostrophe Comma splice MLA	MLA Proper nouns Arguable assertion Parenthetical citation Transitions thesis
Student Z	MLA Fragmented sentence Past tense Clarity of meaning thesis	Infinitive form of the verb Noun Split infinitive Overgeneralize Best to qualify claims

Appendix A (continued)

INSTRUCTOR B - PRESUPPOSITION	First essay	Final essay
Student A	Expository writing Analytical component Challenging of assumptions Valuing of complexity Explicit discussion Complex and nuanced definition Unity at paragraph level Unifying idea Underdeveloped points Reverse outline Conventions of standard, edited English Higher order, critical thinking elements Thesis Claim Citation Topic sentence Explicit definitions	Appropriate style Attention to clarity Component parts of cause/effect relationship Analysis Thesis statement Post/reverse outline Controlling idea Unity at the paragraph level
Student B	Voice Unity on a clear thesis Faulty parallelism Subject verb	Engaging style Solid arc Component parts Drilling down Cause/effect relationship Integrating sources Paraphrased Summarized
Student C	Thesis Structure Organization Controlling ideas Unity Style Varying sentence constructions Authoritative voice Sophisticated transitions Sense of coherence Coherence building devices Analogy Verb tenses Quantitative growth Qualitative growth Rhetorical modes Claim	Component part Thesis Development Analysis Announcement language Pronoun confusion Awkward phrasing coherence

	oversimplification	
Student D	Structure Development Former Latter Thesis Writing process Poorly placed commas Conjunctions Unparallel sentence constructions	n/a

Appendix B: Naming Reference Use by Instructors

INSTRUCTOR A - NAMING REFERENCE	First essay	Final essay
Student A	Your introductory paragraph Your purpose Your readers.... Many of us.... MLA spells numbers We use hyphens A comma rule I hope you can remember... Another place academics like a comma... [You] Think about transitions... When you edit and revise your essays When we want to express excess... We need a transition... [You] Don't connect two sentences [You] Use a comma You end up with a run on sentence You shine... [You] Take my suggestions... (MLA capitalizes [You] Use a comma [You] Proofread carefully You identify Do you think this source [You] Use commas A comma belongs after... [You] Work to integrate Your use of narrative You do identify You assume your readers....
Student G	This is a good introductory... In academic writing... Your essay your readers MLA essay format requires... This will make your purpose Your academic audience Yours is an interesting description Students describe....	Your readers You can condense In academic writing, we try to avoid.. Your academic readers You have already begun... [You] Proofread carefully You appear to... We try to avoid...
Student M	MLA requires... To help yourself... You could have shown us.... When you wrote this essay... What you have...	MLA requires [You] Capitalize proper nouns You lead up to this.... [You] Proofread carefully The final comment I will make... Your period belongs... Your argument... You list...
Student Z	MLA italicizes	When you edit...

	These constructions should be... Your readers You choose When you edit...	[You] Be very careful not to... It is best qualify... You appeal to.... Your audience You have written Your peers... You choose
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INSTRUCTOR B - NAMING REFERENCE	First essay	Final essay
Student A	You've got a clear sense How you can best communicate Your ideas We see the same ideas Another strength I see here is Your ability to pull varied That will serve you well We don't get much more by way of... We're mostly skimming the surface What we don't see is In each case we should use Wherein we really find disagreement Another element I'd like you to Clear to the audience When we jump from one point Difficult for the audience Gives you a false sense of development You have big fat paragraphs You have merely combined You should be able to I'm not suggesting that I'm suggesting that you As you work on these elements Student name, be aware, too You've got a pretty solid We ger clear writing That's a great strength to have working for you Elements I discussed above [You] avoid this announcement thesis You've stated this applies... You'd need to cite the study We're getting these examples	We again see writing Your audience This revision has moved us in the right direction You've done a good job Content that carried us beyond We didn't move further enough What we'd call "component parts" As we might expect in an analysis Doesn't constitute clear support for your thesis I'd again recommend When you write Requires you to distill Preparing you to make I don't buy it We need these cited Every study I've encountered We're dropping bac into this We do still need to keep going In my feedback on your draft I suggested...

	We're not getting the...	
Student B	<p>As with your draft Your voice draws readers in Speaking to us We appreciate that we're hearing Experience you share with it We get to see the contrast I see the strength Your willingness You've made good decisions Elements that led our focus Leaving room for you to really develop what we refer to when we use the term... We also see some struggle It's tough for me to know What I can know is that based on other writing I've seen from you Your habits as a writer I think our first step I can get a sense where we lost To what extent I should be involved [You] watch out for.... We have three items</p>	<p>We continue to see your prowess We get very competent writing I've highlighted my favorite line We also get a very solid When you discussed We got to learn of... We tend to get a lot of sourcework You should have a compelling You fall into a number of the annoyances</p>
Student C	<p>[You did] Really nice job We keep wholly focused... The essay also has a... You follow that road map Your overall structure You establish clear main ideas Keep your focus We also see a strong command That serves you well Your style I'll add that Since your first draft Your audience You've shown a willingness I'd like to see you continuing.. We see in this draft We make assumptions [You] Get in the habit of As you revise I'd like to see you working on...</p>	<p>[You have] Very strong revisions here We get a much better sense The strongest section, I would say, Your thorough definition You then very directly put that In order for us to appreciate... We do start to lose some of that focus I've marked one of those Really excellent work here, student name</p>

	<p>You have a very solid sense</p> <p>The more your transitions</p> <p>You will confuse your readers</p> <p>Readers expect you to use...</p> <p>For us to appreciate your claim</p> <p>The rhetorical modes we've discussed</p> <p>We won't accept outright....</p>	
<p>Student D</p>	<p>We have some clear thoughts...</p> <p>When we look at the essay</p> <p>As you follow that road map, we have some help...</p> <p>Your ability</p> <p>For us to relate to</p> <p>I don't seem much revision since your draft</p> <p>Should inform how you move forward</p> <p>Our next project</p> <p>I'll also add a few notes</p> <p>The structure we choose</p> <p>To do what we want it to do</p> <p>You want to communicate</p> <p>Your definition</p> <p>How can we appreciate your examples</p> <p>As you share, we can understand</p> <p>We fall a bit short...</p> <p>We have little – maybe no-revision here</p> <p>I'd encourage you to</p> <p>Strong writers and weak writers</p> <p>If you can employ</p> <p>I'm confident you'll see...</p> <p>Your strengths</p> <p>Your weaknesses</p>	<p>n/a</p>

Appendix C: Modal Use by Instructors

INSTRUCTOR A - MODALS	First essay	Final essay
Student A	Your readers <i>could</i> probably relate <i>Many</i> of us <i>would</i> prefer A comma rule I <i>hope</i> you can remember <i>Think</i> about transitions A colon <i>would</i> work well Plan to spend a <i>little more</i> time editing and revising Take my <i>suggestions</i> into <i>serious consideration</i>	Do you think this source <i>might</i> be biased? <i>Work</i> to integrate quotations
Student G	One of the organizational patterns <i>could</i> be used to systematically describe That <i>would</i> help you to meet It <i>would</i> demonstrate	In academic writing, we <i>try</i> to avoid <i>Try</i> to group ideas together Your readers <i>would</i> assume ... You <i>appear</i> to have oversimplified a complex problem. We <i>try</i> to avoid such fallacies
Student M	A good title <i>would</i> be an indication... You <i>could have</i> shown us	none
Student Z	Your readers <i>would</i> wonder why you choose past tense	<i>It is best</i> to qualify claims You have written a problem and solution argument that is <i>likely</i> to persuade <i>many</i> of your peers

INSTRUCTOR B - MODALS	First essay	Final essay
Student A	That <i>will</i> serve you well in a <i>great deal</i> of expository writing It is from these scenarios we <i>would</i> see a more complex and nuanced definition	...as we <i>might</i> expect in an analysis This story about Sawyer <i>seems like</i> it <i>would</i> be a good example
Student B	This essay <i>seems</i> more the product of a misstep of <i>some</i> kind I <i>think</i> our first step moving forward is...	Drilling down into the different aspects of "how" <i>would</i> have felt more like... That <i>would</i> have involved studying...

		It <i>would</i> be a good idea
Student C	<p>We see a few places where we make assumptions that <i>will</i> ultimately get challenged...</p> <p>You <i>will</i> confuse your readers...</p> <p>You <i>seem</i> to be discussing...</p> <p>This transition signals a shift in idea but <i>could</i> be stronger...</p> <p>Which of the rhetorical modes <i>might</i> help to support your claim</p>	<p>The strongest section, I <i>would</i> say,</p> <p>Some paragraphs <i>seem</i> to be skirting...</p>
Student D	<p>Better <i>would</i> be to explain what...</p> <p><i>I'd</i> encourage you to be thinking about writing as <i>more</i> of a process</p> <p>It <i>might</i> be a good idea to revisit...</p> <p>If you <i>can</i> employ a more robust writing process</p>	n/a

Appendix D: Agency Use by Instructors

INSTRUCTOR A- AGENCY- Action by author	First essay	Final essay
Student A	You can read about coordinating conjunctions [You] think about transitions between ideas [You] use a comma... [You] spell numbers under 100 You end up with a run on sentence You shine in the area of descriptive detail	[You] use a comma... [You] proofread carefully You identify a significant problem. [You] work to integrate quotations Your use of narrative form is interesting... You do identify a significant problem...
Student G	[You] use a comma	You can condense information [You] proofread carefully [You] try to group ideas together You appear to have oversimplified a complex problem
Student M	You could have shown us how it was...	[You] capitalize proper nouns You lead up to this... [You] proofread carefully Your period belongs to the right... Your argument is fairly well developed...
Student Z	When you edit and revise, check each sentence for clarity. You stay focused...	When you edit and revise, check each sentence for clarity. [You] be very careful not to overgeneralize... You have written a problem-solution argument You choose and use sources well... Your claims are well developed...

INSTRUCTOR A- TRANSIVITY - Action by reader	First essay	Final essay
Student A	Your readers could probably relate	none
Student G	I have some experience with the space you describe...	Your readers would assume you have done extensive research
Student M	None	none
Student Z	Your readers would wonder why you chose past tense. Your readers are allowed to interpret your thesis...	none

INSTRUCTOR A- TRANSIVITY - Action by instructor/institution	First essay	Final essay
Student A	MLA spells numbers out...and we use hyphens to link words A comma rule I hope you can remember Another place academics like a comma... When we want to express excess in a sentence... We need a transition	MLA capitalizes first letters
Student G	MLA essay format requires double line spacing...	MLA does not capitalize prepositions In academic writing, we try to avoid references to our intentions... We try to avoid such fallacious logic in an academic argument
Student M	MLA requires double line spacing..	MLA requires double line spacing... This will be the final comment I make in this essay about period placement...
Student Z	MLA italicizes title...	none

INSTRUCTOR B- AGENCY- Action by author	First essay	Final essay
Student A	You've got a clear sense In the future, [you] be quick to challenge the easy answer You have big fat paragraphs... After you have a draft, [you] go through and force yourself.... You should be able to express this idea... As you work on these elements, [you] be aware...	You've done a good job
Student B	Your voice draws readers in here. You've made good decisions about... [You] watch out for faulty parallelism...	You should have a compelling reason for not putting sourcework in your own words. You fall into a number if annoyances here...
Student C	[You did a] Really nice job with this essay. Your overall structure is effective You establish clear main ideas... Your style is infused with... You've zeroed in on... You've shown a willingness... [You] get in the habit of ... You have a very solid sense of... You will confuse your readers...	[You have] Very strong revisions here...
Student D	You want to communicate what a hero is.... Your definition involves...	n/a

INSTRUCTOR B- AGENCY - Action by reader	First essay	Final essay
Student A	We don't get much more by way of specific aspects... We're mostly skimming the surface... What we don't see is a challenging of assumptions We're getting these examples but we're not getting...	We're dropping back into this question again... We do still need to keep going with this....

Student B	We appreciate that we're hearing from a person humbled by their experience...	We got to learn of a specific part of the "how"...
Student C	We keep focused in the meaning of "living" throughout.. ...We especially see this within your paragraphs... Readers expect to you to use... Readers generally expect that you use...	none
Student D	None	n/a

INSTRUCTOR B- AGENCY - Action by instructor/ institution	First essay	Final essay
Student A	Another strength I see is.... Another element I'd like you to be focusing on... When we jump from point to point, it's difficult for the audience to identify... Note that I'm not suggesting... I'm suggesting It's artless, and more importantly, it's not a claim...	We again see writing on the sentence level that shows... We didn't move far enough... I'd again recommend... I don't buy it. We need these cited here. In my feedback on your draft, I suggested this paragraph doesn't serve a useful purpose
Student B	I see strength in this draft too in your willingness... We also see some struggle here with unity on a clear thesis What I can know us that, based on your other writing I've seen... I think our first step moving forward is to chat so I can get a sense of... We have three items in this sentence...	Here we continue to see your prowess as a writer... We get very competent writing at the sentence level... I've highlighted my favorite line We also get a very solid arc We tend to get a lot of sourcework directly quoted...
Student C	We also see a strong command of language here... I'll add that the revisions... I'd like to see you continuing to work We see a few places where we make assumptions – that will ultimately get challenged by an audience of critical thinkers...	We get a much better sense of taking the issue apart from multiple angles... We do start to lose some of that focus I've marked one of those...

	Also in the future, I'd like to see you working on... We won't accept outright that...	
Student D	We have some clear strengths in this essay... When we look at the essay as a whole, it exhibits... We have some help in identifying the topic of each sentence I don't see much revision... I'm going to say my previous comments still stand The structure we choose for development... Development of that essence is where we fall short a bit We have little – maybe no – revision here. I'd encourage you to... I'm confident....	n/a

Appendix E: Feedback Reflection Rubric

Component	Reflection Question	Answer	Examples	Response
Presupposition	What vocabulary am I assuming the student knows?	Terms related to grammar, idea development, organization	Transitions, thesis, comma rules, possessive	I should consider adding definitions to the comment and using specific examples from the student's writing to show concept and application.
		All terms used are fully defined and explained	The thesis, your main idea of the whole essay..., When you transition, switching from one idea to the next....	I've done excellent work integrating direct instruction into feedback to individualize comments for each student in context.
Naming Reference	What type of naming reference am I using?	Impersonal, collective	We, understood you, you (singular) as part of directive	I might need to revise pronoun use to be clear, specific, and personal for this individual student.
		Personal, individual	Student's name, I, you (singular) that is not directive	Good job, I have crafted an inviting comment!
Modal Verbs	Am I expressing certainty or possibility in my use of modal verbs?	Certainty	Will, must, should	I could revise my modal verbs to create space for student choice.
		Possibility	Could, might, may	I appreciate my approach to allow the student to make the choice! I have offered a humble and open-ended comment.
Agency	Who is the actor in my comments?	Instructor / Institution	I, MLA, academics	I may want to rewrite the comment so the student is the actor.
		Student	You, student name	I've done a nice job! I empower the student as the agent.