LEARNING TO MENTOR AND BE MENTORED:

DISTRIBUTED EXPERTISE IN AN ESL COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

A Thesis

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by

Chelsea Elaine Sliffe

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ABSTRACT

LEARNING TO MENTOR AND BE MENTORED:
DISTRIBUTED EXPERTISE IN AN ESL
COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

by
Chelsea Elaine Sliffe 2015
Master of Arts in Teaching International Languages
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This study seeks to fill a gap at the intersection of the fields of ESL, composition studies, and mentorship; particularly embedded mentorship in ESL writing classrooms. As increasing numbers of non-native and non-traditional students enter higher education in the U.S., the need for instructional approaches that provide multiple avenues of support must be explored. This study examines students’ and mentors’ perceptions of a model of writing instruction emphasizing the distribution of expertise in order to provide insight into a pedagogical approach that may better meet the needs of ESL academic writers. Findings are based on both quantitative data from student surveys and qualitative data from student and mentor interviews, mentor reflective journals, and researcher field notes. Participants in the study were drawn from a class of international ESL students and embedded mentors in a beginning academic writing class at a state university. The implications of this study in regards to ESL pragmatism and ideology, the role of ESL experience, transfer of learning, and distributed cognition are discussed. In addition, re-conceptualizations of the role of instructors are explored.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

This project represents a two year journey. A journey not only of how to improve teaching and learning in writing classrooms for ESL (English as a Second Language) students, but a journey involving the re-construction of my own identity as a teacher and learner to the firm belief that good teaching and learning never happen alone. This journey began in spring 2013 when a year into my graduate program in TESOL I participated in a course titled “Teaching Composition,” a prerequisite for eligibility to teach first-year composition (academic writing) at the university I attended. This course began my on-going process of negotiating the often conflicting literacy constructs in the fields of ESL and composition studies. This course provided me with my first exposure to the social constructivist theories of learning that would become the theoretical basis for this thesis. As part of the “Teaching Composition” course, I participated in a “jumbo” section of academic writing for EOP (Educational Opportunity Program) students. EOP students are first-generation college students from underrepresented socioeconomic backgrounds. This course consisted of 100 students, ten mentors, and one instructor (Dr. Kay). The “jumbo” met for two hours a week in a large classroom in which students occupied desks with rolling chairs, allowing them to easily arrange themselves into small and large groups with their peers. The class was divided into ten groups of ten students, each led by one mentor. Mentors were “embedded” into the course, attending class right along with students. Mentors participated in class activities with students, often sitting in the center of a large or small group and moving around to check-in with everyone. Mentors also helped pave students’ way into larger class discussions by noting the interesting ideas they were exploring,
and also adding some of their own thoughts, acting as models of “expert” and engaged students. These groups of ten students also met in mandatory adjunct workshops for two hours each week led by their mentors.

The pedagogical philosophy of the “jumbo” emphasized the distribution of writing expertise. In a class of 100 students, the instructor could not realistically provide feedback to every student’s work. By creating smaller, mentor-supported learning communities within the larger class, students could become more confident and capable responders to each other’s work. In this way, they could learn to rely on and support each other as they navigated the course. The creation of a sense of community in these smaller groups more easily facilitated peer collaboration and feedback and the development of a culture of inquiry and engagement. In the “jumbo” the instructor was not just delivering content to students, but purposefully designing learning spaces that provided multiple avenues to participation and self-directed learning.

Varied participation structures including small groups, mentorship, workshops, and digital platforms provided students with multiple ways “into” the course.

The teacher-centered ESL pedagogy that I had been exposed to in my TESOL graduate program was very different from this student-centered, collaborative, distributed model of teaching and learning that was taking place right before my eyes. While I was beginning to struggle with the pedagogical differences between the fields of ESL and composition studies, my classmate Mollie (also a TESOL graduate student) began to as well. We had numerous conversations about the ideological differences between the two fields and agreed that more communication between them would benefit both. Shortly after this experience in the “jumbo,” I was hired to teach my own section of academic writing for international ESL students. This class was comprised of 25 students and did not include any embedded mentors. Though
attendance at workshops was a component of the class, each workshop was comprised of students from several different sections. Although I attempted to have regular contact via email with each of the mentors that worked with the students in my class, it proved difficult to maintain communication throughout the semester. Students often remarked that they did not find these workshops helpful and many chose not to attend at all. I often pondered my experience in the “jumbo.” It was clear to me that a similar structure would also greatly benefit international students, a population also in need of extra support and varied participation structures. During that semester, Mollie and I decided to propose a “mini-jumbo” for international ESL students. Dr. Kay was excited about the idea and encouraged us to begin collaborating on a course design. Mollie and I designed a syllabus that we both taught the following semester in separate EOP sections of academic writing. We discussed our plans before each class meeting and wrote reflective notes in a shared document after each class about what worked and what didn’t. We acquired valuable insight into the ways we were different and learned not only how to negotiate these differences, but to use them to our advantage. We felt confident in our abilities to co-teach a class. Towards the end of the semester, Dr. Kay composed and submitted a proposal for a “mini-jumbo” for international students, which was approved by the English department for the following semester.

The “mini-jumbo” academic writing course discussed in this study was comprised of two co-instructors, five embedded mentors, and 56 international students. The class was modeled closely on the design of the “jumbo” discussed earlier. Each mentor led a group of ten to twelve students. The class met twice per week and students and mentors also met twice per week in workshops. Students engaged in open-inquiry model in which they were able to choose their own areas of interest to explore. An approach emphasizing the distribution of writing
expertise was used, including multiple avenues of participation and support such as group work, mentorship, workshops, and digital platforms (i.e. Twitter, Google Docs, course website). The course was designed to facilitate collaboration with peers and the peer feedback process.

Statement of the Problem

This study seeks to fill a gap at the intersection of three fields: ESL, composition studies, and mentoring; particularly embedded mentoring in ESL writing classrooms. Though the field of ESL composition has surfaced and made great strides in the last two decades in bridging the gap between ESL and composition studies, the majority of ESL writing research is still focused on the linguistic features of written language, rather than effective pedagogical methods. Furthermore, though the field of composition studies has made many contributions to our understanding of the social and recursive processes involved in learning to write, much of this research has not taken place with ESL students. As increasing numbers of non-native or non-traditional students enter higher education the need for instructional approaches that provide multiple ways “into” the curriculum must be explored. By using a model of writing instruction emphasizing the distribution of expertise and multiple avenues of participation, my co-teaching partner and I hoped to increase ESL writing students’ opportunities for support and ultimately, success.

Furthermore, there is also a gap in the research on embedded mentoring in writing classrooms. The few studies that do exist often explore instructors’ and mentors’ perceptions of the mentorship experience. Very few studies have explored students’ perceptions of mentorship in writing classrooms. In addition, no studies have investigated mentorship in the context of an ESL writing classroom, or ESL students’ perceptions of working with an embedded mentor. This study seeks to give a voice to both mentors and students as they learn to mentor and be
mentored, providing insight into a pedagogical approach that may better meet the needs of ESL academic writers than more traditional approaches.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to achieve a greater understanding of students’ and mentors’ perceptions of a distributed approach to writing expertise and instruction. Of particular interest is the effect of mentor-supported small group and workshop interactions on students’ writing process. The goal of employing a model of distributed expertise is to provide multiple avenues of support for international students. This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How do students learn to be mentored? How do students resist or embrace the methods, identities, and possibilities created in a model of writing instruction emphasizing the distribution of expertise among instructors, mentors, and students?

2. How do mentors learn to mentor? How do mentors resist or embrace the methods, identities, and possibilities created in a model of writing instruction emphasizing the distribution of expertise among instructors, mentors, and students?

Limitations of the Study

As with any research this study has limitations. The findings of this study will not be generalizable to settings and populations other than those represented in the study. This study represents the perceptions and experiences of students and mentors in one composition course for international ESL students. The data is largely based on self-report interviews in which bias can be a factor. As not only the researcher, but an instructor in the class, mentors and students may have altered their comments in interviews to align with what they thought I wanted to hear. However, students and mentors were assured that their comments were confidential and would in
no way impact their grades or job status. This study is also limited in that it does not directly explain changes in language or writing proficiency that may result from participation in an instructional model emphasizing distributed writing expertise. Nevertheless, I agree with other qualitative researchers that the findings can still be very useful (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2010, p. 355). This study will be of interest to readers who wish to expand their understanding of the perceptions and experiences of students and mentors in ESL academic writing classrooms utilizing a model of distributed expertise. The insights gained from this study will also provide instructors a way to investigate and improve their pedagogical practices.

**Definition of Terms**

The terms ESL (English as a Second Language) and L2 (Second-language) are used interchangeably to refer to those for whom English is not their native language. However, I acknowledge that those terms are often inaccurate and do not reflect the multilingual proficiency of many international students. The terms imply that students have only learned two languages; their native language and English. Yet many international students learned English as their third, fourth, or even fifth language. Though these terms do not reflect the multilingual status of many international students, they will be used here due to their commonly understood and long-standing use.

**Progression of the Thesis**

This first chapter has provided the context that led to the creation of this study as well as its purpose and significance. Chapter two will examine the historical developments that led to the ideological differences in ESL writing and composition studies and explore social constructivist theories of learning that can be used to develop a model of writing instruction emphasizing the distribution of expertise among instructors, mentors, and students. Chapter
three will discuss the design of the study, the participant population, and the methods used to collect and analyze data. Chapter four and five will discuss the study’s findings and is divided into separate chapters based on the research questions described above. To conclude, chapter six will explore the potential implications of the study’s findings.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review provides an overview of the research and developments in ESL, composition studies, social constructivist theories of learning, distributed cognition, and transfer of learning in order to inform the design of ESL academic writing classrooms that utilize a model of distributed expertise. The discussion begins by exploring the historical developments that led to the creation of composition studies and ESL writing into two separate fields and the ideological differences that characterize the respective fields, including differing conceptions regarding the purpose of writing. The literature review then moves from a call for an integrated pedagogical framework among the two fields, to an in-depth discussion of social constructivist theories of learning that can be used to inform teaching and learning in ESL writing classrooms. After social theories of learning are explained, theories of transfer of learning are explored. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the development of an instructional model emphasizing distributed expertise in an ESL academic writing classroom which included embedded mentoring and adjunct workshops.

Composition Studies and ESL Writing:
Ideological Developments

Issues related to ESL writers have been largely underrepresented in the history of the field of composition studies. One reason for this is what Matsuda (2012) termed the “disciplinary division of labor” (p. 36), between L1 composition and ESL, which “institutionalized the assumption that the student population can be divided neatly into first language and second language groups, and working with the latter is the sole responsibility of the
second language specialists” (p. 36). This division of labor was solidified during the 1960’s by the creation of the TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) organization. During this time ESL studies was seeking to move towards a more professional status, while simultaneously, the field of composition studies desired to carve out its own identity as a respected academic discipline. As Matsuda (1999) argued, “This desire to claim their own areas of expertise led to the division of writing scholarship into first- and second-language components.” (p. 700-701).

**Ideology versus Pragmatism**

This “disciplinary division of labor” resulted in two fields with different scopes and philosophical orientations. Some researchers view the major difference between L1 and L2 composition as that of ideology versus pragmatism (Santos, 1992, p. 166). Throughout its historical development ESL writing has been more closely connected to the field of applied linguistics than to the field of composition studies and has “accommodat[ed] itself to the prevailing standards of inquiry and research in that field” (Santos, 1992, p. 164). Research in applied linguistics has tended to shy away from the social, political, and ideological implications of teaching and learning that composition studies has been tackling for decades:

With the emphasis on wanting to solve language-related problems, one would expect to find in the applied linguistics literature on L2 writing a fair number of publications confronting controversial political issues...and discussion of how these issues intersect with issues related to L2 writing, but, in fact, the number of publications that take on such issues are thus far limited and have appeared fairly recently. (Silva & Leki, 2004, p. 7-8)

Part of the scarcity of research in applied linguistics regarding the ideological nature of teaching and learning can be attributed to its “international and multicultural” scope (Silva and Leki, 2004, p. 7). The field tends toward a focus on “languages instead of language” and to the “requirement of data from multiple languages to make generalizations” (Silva & Leki, 2004, p. 7). The international scope of applied linguistics has led to a more conservative or neutral stance
“out of an attempt to be sensitive to the great varieties of social, cultural, and political contexts in which L2 writing takes place” (Silva & Leki, 2004, p. 8). The conservative and often apolitical nature of applied linguistics is also attributed to its connection with TESOL training programs which prepare English teachers to work nationally as well as internationally (Santos, 1992, p. 167). Santos (1992) argued that these training programs tended toward conservatism “because of the international and diplomatic nature of their role,” and that “teaching abroad makes critical pedagogy much more problematic” (p. 167). Unfortunately, internationalism “has had an effect that is ironically conservatizing in light of applied linguistics’ goals of solving real-world language related problems” (Silva & Leki, 2004, p. 8).

The field of composition studies is generally more “national and monocultural in scope” (Silva & Leki, 2004, p. 7). The U.S. is the only country to offer L1 composition courses at the university level. Therefore, the field of composition studies does not exist as an academic discipline outside of the United States (Santos, 1992, p. 167). This national scope has resulted in a much more social, political, and ideological focus than that found in applied linguistics. As Santos (1992) claimed, “It is easier to focus on politics at the local and national levels than at the international, and L1 composition is markedly non-international” (p. 167). Part of the ideological emphasis in L1 composition research also stems from its connection to social constructivist theories of learning that perceive “writing as a social artifact with political as well as social implications” (Santos, 1992, p. 160). In addition, L1 composition faculty have a long history of being housed within English departments where they have “been highly influenced by critical literacy theories” (Santos, 1992, p. 164). Nevertheless, the national focus of composition studies has left a gap in the field by leading scholars to “infrequently address issues involving, or
even acknowledge the existence of, students from outside the United States or language minority students from the United States who are not African American or Hispanic” (Silva & Leki, 2004, p. 7).

In addition to their differences in scope, the fields of applied linguistics and composition studies differ in their research methodologies. Applied linguistics is primarily empirical in nature, whereas composition studies is primarily hermeneutic or dialectic (Silva & Leki, 2004, p. 7). This difference in methodology has contributed to the emphasis in applied linguistics on the microscopic level and a primary interest in explaining language phenomena or “minuscule features of L2 writing” (Silva & Leki, 2004, p. 7). The field of composition studies takes a more macroscopic view, valuing the behaviors and attitudes of writers over the linguistic features of writing (Silva & Leki, 2004, p. 7). This emphasis on the linguistic features of writing has contributed to applied linguistics view of itself as more concerned with pragmatic rather than ideological issues. As a result of its historical connection to applied linguistics, L2 writing came to “see itself pragmatically,” and as “avoiding ideology” altogether (Santos, 1992, p. 8). This focus on the pragmatic has contributed to the “long history in both ESL and EFL instruction of focusing on discrete language skills rather than literacy” (Ewert, 2011, p. 13). These traditional pragmatic instructional approaches have “favored intensive practice in specific sub-components of reading and writing, as well as practice in discrete grammatical topics” (Ewert, 2011, p. 10).

Conceptions of Writing

The emphasis on ideology in composition studies and pragmatism in ESL writing has led to different conceptions regarding the goals of writing. Researchers have “distinguished between two overlapping cognitive models in their conceptualization of written composition, positing that both are necessary to account for the complexity of writing” (Jeffery, Kieffer &
Matsuda, 2012, p. 186). These two cognitive models include writing as knowledge-telling and writing as knowledge-transforming activity (Jeffery et al. 2012, p. 186). Jeffery et al.’s (2012) review of the literature in two prominent journals in the fields of composition studies and ESL found that the emphasis in composition studies was writing as a knowledge-transforming activity, in which writing is “a means of transforming one’s understanding of the content being written about, and/or transforming the self” (p. 187). ESL studies emphasized a conceptualization of writing as knowledge-telling, or “as a matter of accurately representing one’s cognitions into written text,” “writing as a measure of language ability,” and “successful writing as clear communication or native-like language output” (Jeffery et al., 2012, p. 187).

Writing as knowledge-telling tends to emphasize accuracy, while writing as knowledge-transforming stresses fluency. Writing as knowledge-telling is focused on “explicit tasks that emphasize accuracy in comprehension and production of short decontextualized texts” (Ewert, 2011, p. 14). Jeffery et al. (2012) asserted that the emphasis on accuracy and increased linguistic control in L2 settings, rather than the transformation of knowledge, is understandable considering that “it is a challenging task to transform knowledge through writing in a language that students are still learning” (p. 190). However, Ewert (2011) argued that the focus on accuracy “leads to disfluent reading and writing behaviors” in which “reading becomes the context for learning individual vocabulary words and writing becomes the context for producing correct grammatical sentences, neither promoting academic literacy” (p. 14). Ultimately, waiting for students to achieve native-like linguistic control before engaging in writing as knowledge-transforming activity will limit their access to and success in U.S. academic contexts. Jeffery et al. (2012) concurred with Ewert (2011) on the need to emphasize fluency over accuracy when they argued the following:
Reaching a knowledge-transforming model of writing competence...becomes increasingly important for L2 writers’ educational attainment. If students are to transition from writing in ESL/EFL settings to writing in English-dominated secondary and postsecondary settings, they will need support in developing knowledge-transforming perspectives on writing. (p. 190)

An emphasis on knowledge-transforming practices “maximize[s] confidence and production by focusing on fluency first, in order to motivate literate engagement with texts” (Ewert, 2011, p. 14-15). As Ewert (2011) argued, “The interpretive, collaborative, culturally-sensitive, problem-solving nature of working with texts for both readers and writers is of at least as much, if not more, importance than language features and conventions” (p. 13).

Research clearly shows that L2 writers encounter specific challenges that their L1 counterparts do not (Leki et al., 2006; Silva, 1993). Though these differences should continue to be explored and addressed, “the division between those who study the so-called native English users and those who study nonnative English users reifies the notion that the two groups of learners have fundamentally different needs, while limiting opportunities to examine this assumption” (Jeffery et al., 2012, p. 182). An examination of this assumption leads to disagreement over the extent to which writing pedagogy should be differentiated for L1 and L2 writers. As Jeffery et al. (2012) stated, “Given the lack of empirical evidence and consensus on how to differentiate literacy instruction, scholars have sometimes questioned the extent to which L2 learners benefit from substantially different pedagogical approaches” (p. 182-183). Researchers have argued that emphasizing differences between the two populations puts L2 students at a disadvantage by reinforcing deficit stereotypes (Orellana & Gutierrez, 2006), which view multilingual learners as a “problem.” In addition, an emphasis on difference can restrict students’ access to challenging academic content (Olson & Land, 2007).
The Ideology of Pragmatism

Many ESL researchers argue that the belief that teaching and learning can ever be non-ideological, neutral, or purely pragmatic is a myth. Benesch (1993) claimed that “L2 composition, like all teaching and research, is ideological whether or not educators are conscious of the political implications. Educators who do not acknowledge or discuss their ideology are not politically neutral; they simply do not highlight their ideology” (p. 706). Pennycook (1997) asserted that the construction of ESL teaching and learning as neutral activities is based on the acceptance of the neutrality of language in general, and English as an international language in particular (p. 258). However, the teaching and learning of English are very unlikely candidates for neutrality, since they are “deeply bound up with international capitalism and tourism, the spread of particular forms of culture and knowledge, [and] global media” (Pennycook, 1997, p. 258).

Far from avoiding ideology, pragmatism is an ideology. Benesch (1997) argued that the pragmatism professed in ESL “actually indicates an accommodationist ideology, an endorsement of traditional academic teaching and of current power relations in academia and society” (p. 711). Severino (1993) termed this concern for the pragmatic an “acculturative ideological stance” that emphasizes “assimilating quickly into academic, corporate, and U.S. mainstream cultures (p. 332). Researchers and instructors do have a responsibility to help students acquire the linguistic conventions they need to successfully operate in U.S. academic environments. However, stopping at conventions is a great disservice to students. Pennycook (1997) explained this tension that exists in ESL teaching between “the need to understand and promote culturally diverse ways of thinking, working, and writing” while simultaneously
“giv[ing] people access to the cultural, linguistic and discursive conventions” of U.S. academic discourse (p. 265).

An emphasis on the “pragmatic” over the “ideological” may simultaneously grant and deny students access to U.S. academic discourse. Though it may help students acquire linguistic control and conventions, a pragmatic “accommodationist ideology” can actually put them at a disadvantage by “[limiting] the participation of non-native-speaking students in academic culture” (Benesch, 1997, p. 707). ESL students’ participation needs to expand beyond writing as knowledge-telling with its focus on linguistic accuracy. As Ewert (2011) explained, a large number of ESL students “still struggle to adequately comprehend and produce academic texts, not simply because they may lack control over lexico-grammatical features, but because they have limited experience with English academic texts and limited knowledge of literacy expectations in U.S. universities” (p. 5-6). An emphasis on accuracy clearly affects ESL students’ access to opportunities to write in academic contexts, but so does their ability to think critically about academic texts and practices. ESL students may be deemed “not ready for,” and therefore not exposed to, more literacy-based, critical pedagogical methods. A view of difference as deficit often keeps ESL writers excluded from engaging in the literate practices necessary to successfully communicate in academic contexts. As Benesch (1997) explained, “The politics of pragmatism leads to a neglect of more inclusive and democratic practices, such as negotiating the curriculum and collaborative learning” (p. 713-714).

Scholars have articulated a need to consider the “real differences” that ESL students face (Jeffery et al., 2012, p. 183). Historically, exploration of these differences has primarily focused on lexical, phrasal, or syntactic issues. However, a skills-based, pragmatic pedagogy, operating out of a difference as deficit model, doesn’t adequately address the real differences that
ESL writers face. Ultimately, a pragmatic ideology alone does not rise to the challenge of meeting the needs of ESL writers due to its failure to “call for changes in teacher/student relationships, in the way knowledge is produced and disseminated, or in social and economic conditions affecting students’ lives” (Benesch, 1997, p. 707). To more adequately address these real differences we must turn to the more critical, social, and literacy-based pedagogical perspectives more commonly found in composition studies.

**Toward an Integrated Framework**

This project aimed to integrate theories of composition studies into the ESL writing classroom. Though differences exist between the two fields, the time has come for theoretical integration among the fields of ESL writing and composition studies. As Matsuda (2000) argued, “We can no longer rely on the L1/L2 distinction as a guiding assumption for determining the scope of our activities” (p. 17). Integrating research and pedagogy from composition studies into the ESL writing classroom would equip instructors to better meet the needs of ESL writers who are attempting to enter the academic community. In fact, the gulf between the two fields may not be so great after all, “since many of the theoretical assumptions and methodological orientations that inform the field of L2 writing originated in the context of composition studies” (Matsuda, 2000, p. 18). As a result of their common roots, a thorough understanding of L2 writing pedagogy necessitates some knowledge of the theories and practices found in composition studies. Communication between the two fields “will not be an easy task because of the ‘cultural differences’ between composition studies and second language studies, which have evolved separately over the last three decades” (Matsuda, 2000, p. 17-18). Nevertheless, not attempting to cross the boundaries that exist between the two fields will be detrimental to students and to the field of L2 writing (Matsuda, 2000, p. 18).
Social-Constructivist Theories of Learning

Much of the field of composition studies is informed by social-constructivist theories of learning. Social-constructivist theories of learning in the U.S. have their origins in the work of L.S. Vygotsky. In his book *Mind in Society* (1978), he explored the impact of social interaction on individual cognition. Vygotsky’s work emphasized the situated nature of learning. Learning is impacted by the context in which the learner finds herself and the relationships to other humans, to objects or tools, and to the environment found in that context. Each situation or context necessitates the learning of concepts and skills found within that specific learning context; there can be no de-contextualized learning.

For Vygotsky (1978), this situated, contextualized, relationship-oriented model of learning influences what he termed the “zone of proximal development” (ZPD) (p. 86). Vygotsky (1978) defined the ZPD as “the difference between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86). Learners’ actual developmental levels are determined by what they can accomplish independently. However, Vygotsky posited that what learners can do with assistance might actually be a better predictor of their cognitive development than what they can do alone. As Vygotsky (1978) explained, “What a child can do with assistance today she will be able to do by herself tomorrow” (p. 87). The ZPD includes “those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation, functions that will mature tomorrow but are currently in an embryonic state” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). In order for those “buds” to mature into “fruits” learners need to act in collaboration with others and not in isolation (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).
Vygotsky (1978) emphasized that a complete understanding of the ZPD necessitated attention to the impact of imitation on learning (p. 87). As Vygotsky (1978) claimed, “Human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them” (p. 88). Imitation plays a key role in this social process by which learners grow into intellectual life. Imitation within collective activity enables learners to be capable of doing much more than they would be working independently (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 88). Imitation is the means through which the “buds” of learning develop into “fruits.” Thus, imitation is the beginning of all good learning (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 89). Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the pivotal role of collective action in learning when he stated, “Learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers” (p. 90).

Situated Learning

Lave and Wenger (1991) expanded on Vygotsky’s theories regarding the social nature of learning, the ZPD, and imitation, with their theory of situated learning. The theory of situated learning emphasizes that learning is always situated and contextualized within specific forms of social participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). There is no activity that is not situated within a socio-cultural context, for learning is “an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 31). The question of how learning occurs always begins with consideration of the particular context. The theory of situated learning deemphasizes the role of individual cognitive processes in learning, and instead focuses on “what kinds of social engagements provide the proper context for learning to take place” (Hanks, 1991, p. 14). Learning takes place through participation in social practices and not in isolation. As Hanks (1991) explained, “Learning is, as it were, distributed among participants, not a one-person act”
In this way learning is directly connected to participation in a “community of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 98). Lave and Wenger (1991) defined a community of practice as “a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice” (p. 98).

Through what Lave and Wenger (1991) termed “legitimate peripheral participation” (p. 29), learning is located “not in the acquisition of structure, but in the increased access of learners to participating roles in expert performances” (Hanks, 1991, p.17). The motivation to learn is driven by the learner’s desire to become a more expert member of the community. Becoming a more expert member requires opportunities for participation and interaction. As Lave and Wenger (1991) explained, “To become a full member of a community of practice requires access to a wide range of ongoing activity, old-timers, and other members of the community; and to information, resources, and opportunities for participation” (p. 101). Learning results not merely from instruction, but from “access to practice as a resource for learning” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 85). This access to a wide range of activity, resources, and members of the community helps scaffold learners as they participate in and become more expert members of the community.

As learners become legitimate participants of communities of practice their identities are transformed. In this sense the community fashions the individual. The individual undergoes a process of change as she learns and comes to see herself as a full participant of the community. Lave and Wenger (1991) asserted, “Learning and a sense of identity are inseparable: They are aspects of the same phenomenon” (p. 115). Participation in the community gives the learner new resources, interpretations, and experiences. Their new identities are validated by others in the
community and they have the opportunity to become models and guides for new apprentices to
the community.

Participation in the practices of the community allows individuals to access the literate practices found within. Gee’s (2001) Discourse approach to the acquisition of literacies describes literacies as “ways of being in the world” (p. 526). Gee (2001) defined a Discourse as “a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or ‘social network’” (p. 537). Gee (2001) compared a Discourse to a sort of “identity kit” (p. 537). Each of the institutions, networks, or communities to which we belong “commands and demands one or more Discourses and we acquire these fluently to the extent that we are given access to these institutions and are allowed apprenticeships within them” (Gee, 2001, p. 527). Legitimate participation in communities of practice is integral for the acquisition of Discourses. As Gee (2001) explained, “You can’t be let into the game after missing the apprenticeship and be expected to have a fair shot at playing it. Social groups will not, usually, give their social goods...to those who are not “natives” or “fluent users” (Gee, 2001, p. 529). Gee’s (2001) Discourse approach can be applied to academic Discourse communities as well. Those not “apprenticed” early, such as non-native English speakers, will have difficulty in our current social and educational system in acquiring academic Discourses later. For this reason, “for anything close to acquisition to occur, classrooms must be active apprenticeships in ‘academic’ social practices...” (Gee, 2001, p. 533).

Communities of Learners

Brown et al. (1993) argued that creating communities of practice in classrooms is difficult due to their often inauthentic activity. One of the causes of this inauthentic activity is
mass assessment which requires that all students in a certain grade or class “acquire the same body of knowledge at the same time” (Brown et al., 1993, p. 224). The inauthentic nature of schooling is also reflected in the “lack of continuity between school activities and both the cultures of childhood and legitimate adult occupations” (Brown et al., 1993, p. 189). Brown et al. (1993) proposed that authentic activity in classrooms could be created through the construction of what they termed “communities of learners”, or “communities where students learn to learn” (p. 189-190). These “thinking apprenticeships” (Brown et al., 1993, p. 223), would not be focused on preparing students for participation in specific communities of practice, but for participation in the practices and habits of mind of the academic community in general. Students would be participating in “a community of research practice where they gradually come to adopt the ways of knowing, cultural practice, discourse patterns, and belief systems of scholars” (Brown et al., 1993, p. 223). A community of learners requires the development of a community of discourse “in which constructive discussion, questioning, and criticism are the mode rather than the exception. Meaning is negotiated and renegotiated as members of the community develop and share expertise” (Brown et al., 1993, p. 200). In a model of learning utilizing shared or distributed expertise “teachers and students serve as role models not only as ‘owners’ of some aspects of domain knowledge, but also as acquirers, users, and extenders of knowledge in the sustained, ongoing process of understanding” (Brown et al., 1993, p. 190). Expertise is not consolidated in the instructor, but distributed among all participants in the community. Experts and novices are jointly responsible for the learning process. Students become “active researchers and teachers, monitoring their own progress and that of others when they adopt the role of constructive critics” (Brown et al., 1993, p. 203). Teachers become models of active learning. Students “witness teachers learning, discovering, doing research,
reading, writing...rather than lecturing, managing, assigning work, and controlling the classroom exclusively” (Brown et al., 1993, p. 207). Also crucial to the creation of a community of learners is the construction of participation frameworks (Brown et al., 1993, p. 200). Through repeated practice students acquire comfort in transitioning from one participation structure to another. This familiarity of structure allows for increasing levels of participation, discovery, and expertise.

Distributed Cognition

Vygotsky (1978) conceived of the developmental processes that operate within a specific environment and in collective activity with others as “a complex dialectical process” (p. 73). This process is never linear but always recursive and reconstructive. According to Vygotsky (1978), “An essential mechanism of [these] reconstructive processes...is the creation and use of a number of artificial stimuli. These play an auxiliary role that permits human beings to master their own behavior, at first by external means and later by more complex inner operations” (p. 73). These artificial stimuli include the tools and other humans found within particular socio-cultural contexts that allow individuals to off-load or distribute their cognition. As Hanks (1991) explained, “Learning is a process that takes place in a participation framework, not in an individual mind” (p. 15).

Participation in communities of practice allows for and requires the distribution of cognition. Lave and Wenger (1991) asserted, “The notion of participation thus dissolves dichotomies between cerebral and embodied activity, between contemplation and involvement, between abstraction and experience…” (p. 52). Learning and knowledge are not located only in individual brains, but distributed among all participants in the system, and in the tools found in the surrounding environment. As Lave and Wenger (1991) claimed, “Knowing is inherent in the
growth and transformation of identities and it is located in relations among practitioners, their practice, the artifacts of that practice, and the social organization and political economy of communities of practice” (p. 122).

A situated view of learning emphasizes a decentered and distributed approach to expertise. Expertise does not reside with one expert, but is distributed among all members of the community in different ways. As Lave and Wenger (1991) explained, “To take a decentered view of master-apprentice relations leads to an understanding that mastery resides not in the master but in the organization of the community of practice of which the master is a part” (p. 94). Mastery is accomplished through the design of the community and not solely through the dissemination of knowledge or instruction from experts. Much of the learning in communities of practice is accomplished not only through apprentices’ interactions with experts, but through their interactions and relationships with other apprentices (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 93). Lave and Wenger (1991) argued, “The effectiveness of the circulation of information among peers suggests...that engaging in practice, rather than being its object, may well be a condition for the effectiveness of learning” (p. 93). Learners must not be passively acted on by experts; they must be actively engaged in the actual practices of the community.

There are both social and material means involved in the distribution of cognition. Individuals participate in collective activity and utilize material means (tools, artifacts, and the environment) to accomplish that activity (Pea, 1993, p. 50). Pea (1993) argued for the importance of tools in the distribution of intelligence: “The tools literally carry intelligence in them” (p. 53). However, as the tools become commonplace it becomes more difficult to see the intelligence they hold “instead, we see the intelligence ‘residing’ in the individual mind using the tools” (Pea, 1993, p. 53). Through situated activity utilizing other people, tools, or the
environment, intelligence is created. As Pea (1993) stated, “Intelligence, which comes to life during human activities, may be crafted” (p. 50).

The distribution of cognition can also be illustrated through the concept of executive function (Perkins, 1993). Executive function is “the often non routine job of making choices, operating at decision points to explore the consequences of options and select a path of action” (Perkins, 1993, p. 96). For example, in a classroom the teacher may hold the executive function by making decisions about what the class will do. Or a textbook may hold the executive function by highlighting important words for readers to notice. The location of executive function outside of the individual is not necessarily a negative. As Perkins (1993) pointed out, “…Ceding the executive function to the surround is often one of the most powerful moves we can make” (p. 97). In some cases learners may be unable to maintain executive function and must release it (consciously or unconsciously) to tools, other humans, or the environment. As Perkins (1993) explained, “In the course of learning, executive function may appropriately flow toward or away from the learner, depending on the circumstances” (p. 100).

**Person-Solo Emphasis in Formal Education**

Theories of distributed cognition emphasize the mediation of individuals’ cognitive processes through interaction with other individuals, tools, or features of the environment. Pea (1993) claimed, “The resources that shape and enable activity are distributed in configuration across people, environments, and situations. In other words, intelligence is accomplished, rather than possessed” (p. 50). Perkins (1993) explained distributed cognition as a “person-plus” model of cognition (what the individual can do in collaboration with other humans and with tools), as opposed to the “person-solo” view (what the individual can accomplish alone) (p. 89). Far too often, the “person-solo” view is emphasized in present-day formal education.
Part of the function of formal schooling is to equip students for performance in real-world settings. Outside of school “part of knowing how to learn and solve complex problems involves knowing how to create and exploit social networks and the expertise of others, and to deftly use the features of the physical and media environments to one’s advantage” (Pea, 1993, p. 75). However, in the classroom sharing expertise and using resources is considered “cheating.” Schools assess students primarily on what they can accomplish individually, pursuing “a persistent campaign to make the person-plus a person-solo” (Perkins, 1993, p. 95). For this reason “education often results in making far too many people look ‘dumb’ because they are not allowed to use resources, whereas outside of education we all use resources” (Pea, 1993, p. 73).

Outside of the classroom, person-plus is not only common sense, but required for survival. Formal education must be reconfigured to better facilitate person-plus cognition. As Pea (1993) argued, “Socially scaffolded and externally mediated, artifact-supported cognition is so predominant that its disavowal in the classroom is detrimental to the transfer of learning” (p. 75). Schools must become places that encourage “responsive and novel uses of resources for creative and intelligent activity alone and in collaboration. Such an education would encourage and refine the natural tendency for people to continually re-create their own world as a scaffold for their activities” (Pea, 1993, p. 81).

Theories of Transfer of Learning

Cognitive Theories of Transfer

This natural tendency for individuals to continually re-create or transfer their learning from one task or context to another has been the object of extensive research as formal education has become increasingly more “concerned with the portability of learning, knowledge, and skills in ways that it had never been before” (Beach, 1999, p. 104). Cognitive theories of transfer
focus on individual cognition and the transition of knowledge from one task to another. For cognitive theorists, the key to understanding transfer is the concept of schema. Thorndyke (1984) conceived of schema as a bank of knowledge that creates a conceptual structure than can be “filled out” by the specific characteristics of certain situations. Schema are formed from previous experiences with general concepts and can be brought to bear in current experiences. Cognitive views highlight the role of metacognition in transfer of learning. According to Tuomi-Grohn and Engestrom (2003), “In the metacognitive transfer view, successful transfer occurs when the problem solver is able to recognize the requirements of the new problem, and select previously learned specific and general skills that apply to the new problem” (p. 21). Salomon and Perkins (1989) termed the metacognitive mechanism of transfer “high road” transfer (p. 124). Two separate but related mechanisms of transfer, “low road” and “high road,” describe how previous knowledge can be “evoked,” and “successfully applied in a somewhat different situation” (Salomon & Perkins, 1989, p. 120). High-road transfer includes “mindful deliberate processes that decontextualize the cognitive elements which are candidates for transfer” (Salomon & Perkins, 1989, p. 124). The main process leading to high-road transfer is “mindful abstraction” (Salomon & Perkins, 1989, p. 124), which is the “mindful generation of an abstraction during learning and its later application to a new problem or situation from which basic elements are similarly abstracted” (Salomon & Perkins, 1989, p. 127).

In high-road transfer the learner is consciously attempting to generalize knowledge in order to make connections between present and past learning experiences. In contrast, low-road transfer “primarily reflects extended practice” (Salomon & Perkins, 1989, p. 115), its main conditions being “varied practice and practice to automaticity.” (Salomon & Perkins, 1989, p. 120). Low-road transfer “takes place precisely because it is automatic; behaviors and cognitions
are stimulus-controlled” (Salomon & Perkins, 1989, p. 121) and occurs most often in transfer across very similar contexts. Cognitive theorists also conceive of transfer of learning as either positive (learning in one context improves performance in another) or negative (learning in one context negatively impacts the performance in another) (Perkins & Salomon, 1992, “Transfer Defined,” para. 3-4). However, even with an understanding of the mechanisms involved in transfer, cognitive theorists have admitted difficulty in replicating transfer of learning in research studies. As Perkins and Salomon (1992) stated, “Abundant evidence shows that very often the hoped-for transfer from learning experiences does not occur” (para. 1).

This lack of evidence for transfer under experimental control has led some cognitive theorists to claim that the absence of transfer may be more important in discovering creative solutions to new problems. Detterman (1993) argued that the transfer of concepts or behaviors (whether consciously or unconsciously) into new contexts may actually result in an inability to solve new problems. Transfer may contribute to learners’ failure to approach the new problem or situation with a fresh perspective. Furthermore, transfer may actually trap learners in previous ways of approaching or understanding tasks or concepts; thus rendering the transfer of learning counterproductive. For this reason “freedom from transfer” may be more important to successful problem solving than transfer (Detterman, 1993, p. 2). As Detterman (1993) argued, “The creative solution to an important problem may depend on freeing the problem solver from interference from old solutions” (p. 2). Detterman (1993) pointed to the many great human accomplishments made precisely because individuals failed to transfer. The lack of transfer likely contributed to their discovery of something that others may have been unable to discern.
due to interference from previous knowledge. As Detterman (1993) asserted, “It is possible to make as strong a case for failure of transfer as it is to build a case for the importance of transfer” (p. 4).

Marton (2006) expanded on the idea of the potential importance of the absence of transfer with her assertion of the integral role of perception of difference in transfer. For Marton (2006) the focus in transfer research on similarity between tasks or contexts does not give a complete understanding of transfer. Transfer of learning must go beyond the assumption that when learners benefit from what they have learned in a previous experience “they do so because they make use of the same capability in relation to the same features of the two situations” (Marton, 2006, p. 514). The role of difference in connecting situations must also be considered. Marton (2006) posited that “what the learner learns in some situations might enable her to do something different in other situations thanks to perceived differences (and similarities) between situations” (p. 528). The key to transfer is what Marton (2006) termed perceptual learning, or the ability to make distinctions. In order to make distinctions the learner must have encountered difference. As Marton (2006) explained, “Seeing one thing affects how the learner sees another thing subsequently- not because of the sameness of the two, but because of both the similarities and differences” (p. 531-532). Perceptual learning allows learners to discern how the learning contexts are not only similar, but different, leading to the potential for both transfer and the lack of transfer in successful problem solving.

A dispositional theory of transfer expands cognitive theories to include the role of individual disposition (Bereiter, 1995). Bereiter (1995) described transfer of disposition as the likelihood that learners will actually transfer previously learned principles that they recognize as applicable. His theory departs from other cognitive transfer theories by viewing transfer as an
ability, rather than an event. The possibility of transfer thus having more to do with the learner than with what has been learned (Tuomi-Grohn & Engestrom, 2003, p. 24). Bereiter (1995) broadened his transfer of dispositions to include the transfer of situations, as opposed to transfer across situations (p. 29-30, emphasis added). In the transfer of situations an individual “tries to create or seek such situations in which he can use the principles learned” (Tuomi-Grohn & Engestrom, 2003, p. 33). Furthermore, “the basis of transfer is the creation of situations needed in applying learned principles in practice” (Tuomi-Grohn & Engestrom, 2003, p. 33). Situations in which transfer occurs are “not characterized as static but an individual is able to develop and change them” (Tuomi-Grohn & Engestrom, 2003, p. 33). The transfer of situations emphasizes the individual’s role in the creation and alteration of situations rather than merely the correct application of learned principles to new tasks in static situations.

**Situated Views of Transfer**

Proponents of a situated view of transfer critique the static, de-contextualized nature of transfer in cognitively focused transfer research. Lave (1988) noted its tendency to “dissociate cognition from its context,” and failure to include any acknowledgement of “cognition as socially constructed activity” (p. 43). For cognitive theorists transfer is treated as a process of picking up and applying knowledge someplace new. Situated views of transfer disagree with the belief that metacognitive abstractions of general principles lead to transfer. Lave and Wenger (1991) argued, “Knowing a general rule by itself in no way assures that any generality it may carry is enabled in the specific circumstances in which it is relevant. In this sense, any ‘power of abstraction’ is thoroughly situated” (p. 33-34). Thus, there are few general principles that transfer across situations. General knowledge can only be acquired “in specific
circumstances. And it too must be brought into play in specific circumstances” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 34).

A situated view of transfer is concerned more with the transfer of patterns of participation across contexts than the transfer of knowledge from task to task (Greeno, 1997, p. 12). Greeno, Smith, and Moore (1993) used the notion of affordances to explain the mechanisms at work in transfer. They described an affordance as “support for particular activities created by relevant properties of things and materials in the situation” (Greeno, Smith & Moore, 1993, p. 102). Perception of affordances is integral, since “transfer depends on an ability to perceive the affordances for the practice that are present in a changed situation” (Greeno, Smith & Moore, 1993, p. 102). The perception and use of affordances is acquired through extensive participation in social practices (Tuomi-Grohn and Engestrom, 2003, p. 25). Therefore, the “structure that enables transfer is in the interactive activity of the person in the situation” (Tuomi-Grohn & Engestrom, 2003, p. 26). Successful transfer happens through participation in communities of practice, where very little formal instruction actually takes place. Participants in the community move from novices to experts with transfer of learning occurring as “a byproduct of productive activity” (Tuomi-Grohn & Engestrom, 2003, p. 26).

A view of transfer as the result of productive activity in social practices can be expanded to include attention to the role of the individual’s positioning in interactions (Greeno, 2006). Greeno (2006) proposed that “explaining adaptive, innovative activity that characterizes productive transfer requires hypothesizing agency of the kind [referred] to here as authoritative and accountable positioning” (p. 539). As Greeno (2006) noted, “Transfer except in the simplest cases, requires authoritative action because by definition, it involves doing something that one has not been taught explicitly to do. To act effectively in a way that counts as transfer, therefore,
involves having or taking authority to go beyond what one has been taught” (p. 546).

Authoritative action is developed through participation in what Greeno (2006) termed “connected knowing,” which is acquired through participation within the community or domain (p. 540). Connected knowing increases the individual’s knowledge of the domain which contributes to the construction of a participatory identity. A participatory identity leads to the acquisition of conceptual agency, or the ability to treat “the concepts, methods, and information of the domain as resources that can be adapted, evaluated, questioned, and modified” (Greeno, 2006, p. 539). For conceptual agency to develop, individuals must be “entitled and expected to move about the environment freely with access to resources throughout the environment and with the authority to use, adapt, and combine these resources in unconventional ways” (Greeno, 2006, p. 543). For this reason “authoritative and accountable positioning and knowing the domain system generally are likely to be important ingredients of successful transfer” (Greeno, 2006, p. 543).

**Sociocultural Reconceptualizations of Transfer**

A sociocultural reconceptualization of transfer moves away from a focus on the individual learner as reproducer of tasks or behaviors across situations. In this view transfer is not located solely in the individual, nor solely in the situation, but in their relation to each other (Beach, 1999). A sociocultural approach seeks to go beyond oppositions between cognitive and situated views of transfer in order to “understand continuity and transformation in learning as ongoing relation between changing individuals and changing social contexts” (Beach, 1999, p. 103). Beach (1999) called for an abandonment of the transfer metaphor for the broadened concept of generalization, or “the continuity and transformation of knowledge, skill, and identity
across various forms of social organization, [involving] multiple interrelated processes rather than a single general procedure” (p. 112).

The concept of consequential transition is integral to understanding the view of transfer as transformation. Beach (1999) developed the concept of consequential transition based on Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) concept of ecological transition. Ecological transitions “occur whenever a person’s position in the ecological environment is altered as the result of change in role, setting, or both...every ecological transition is both a consequence and an instigator of developmental processes” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 26-27). Consequential transition expands ecological transition to include “the conscious reflective struggle to reconstruct knowledge, skills, and identity in ways that are consequential to the individual becoming someone or something new, and in ways that contribute to the creation and metamorphosis of social activity...” (Beach, 1999, p. 13). This alteration of identity results in “individuals and institutions [that] are often highly conscious of the development that is taking place” (Beach, 1999, p. 119). The concept of consequential transition veers from previous transfer theories with its emphasis on “the construction of knowledge, identities, and skills, or transformation, rather than the application of something that has been acquired elsewhere” (Beach, 1999, p. 119, emphasis added). In a sociocultural view the question of how to facilitate transfer primarily concerns “support[ing] students in becoming someone or something new, negotiating the boundaries of multiple and sometimes contradictory activities, and changing their participation in these activities as the activities themselves change” (Beach, 1999, p. 131).

Activity-Theoretical Views of Transfer

An activity-theoretical view of transfer builds on socio-cultural reconceptualizations of transfer, but seeks to move beyond a discussion of individual developmental transfer to a
consideration of collective developmental transfer. Cultural-historical activity theory defines “the unit of analysis [as] a historically evolving, collective, artifact-mediated activity system” (Tuomi-Grohn & Engestrom, 2003, p. 29). Researchers have used activity theory to analyze the process of transfer “situated at and around boundaries between multiple activity systems…” (Tuomi-Grohn & Engestrom, 2003, p. 30). Transfer is expanded from “the actions of individuals to the collective organizations. It is not a matter of individual moves between [activity systems] but of the efforts of [activity systems] to create together new practices” (Tuomi-Grohn & Engestrom, 2003, p. 34). Tuomi-Grohn and Engestrom (2003) conceived of transfer as occurring through “expansive learning” which is “initiated when some individuals involved in a collective activity take the action of questioning the existing practice” (p. 30). Questioning leads to collective problem-solving and to intentional redesign of existing practices or creation of new ones. Tuomi-Grohn and Engestrom (2003) explained, “New knowledge and practices are consciously created, instead of focusing on the transition of knowledge from one organization or community of practice to another” (p. 34-35). Learners must be prepared to be “boundary-crossers” in order to bring “new intellectual and practical tools and insights into the change process” (Tuomi-Grohn & Engestrom, 2003, p. 32). At the boundaries of communities a collaborative team comprised of “heterogenous networks” with varying kinds of expertise negotiates skills and knowledge in “their partially interdependent zones of proximal development” (Tuomi-Grohn & Engestrom, 2003, p. 33). In an activity-theoretical view the concept of transfer becomes more concerned with “changing communities rather than individuals” (Tuomi-Grohn & Engestrom, 2003, p. 35).
Distributed Expertise in an ESL Composition Classroom

This study implemented a “community of learners” model (Brown et al., 1993) of academic writing instruction emphasizing distributed expertise and multiple participation frameworks. The distributed approach chosen for this study was co-taught, mentor supported, and included student participation in small groups and adjunct workshops. Actively participating in a community of learners is integral to international ESL students’ co-construction of confident academic and social identities. An environment in which expertise is distributed allows students increased access to models of successful academic practices and identities, provides them with support and validation as they are constructing their new identities, and grants them an opportunity to become models of success for other students.

“On Location” Writing Mentorship

In contrast to writing workshops or writing centers which support students outside of the classroom, classroom-based writing tutoring programs embed tutors into regular class sessions. In this way students are provided with “continuous help” that is “on location” (Ottery, Petrolle, Boczkowski, & Mogge, 2005, p. 62). Spigelman and Grobman (2005) ascribed the benefits of classroom-based tutoring to “its engagement on the scene (and, therefore, as the scene) of writing. Tutoring on location performs our contemporary understanding of writing itself, reaffirming that textual production is intrinsically collaborative, chaotic, and recursive” (p. 6). Tutors (hereafter referred to as mentors) embedded into the classroom act as expert students, models and guides. They function as a bridge between students and instructors, students and students, and students and academic and cultural discourses. For this reason “classroom-based writing tutoring enacts collaboration…” (Spigelman & Grobman, 2005, p. 7).
Embedding mentors into the academic writing classroom helps students access course content by providing the opportunity for academic support “on demand” and “just in time” (Gee, 2007, p. 37). Mentors are able to provide students with immediate feedback because they are actually participating in what students are doing in class. Spiegelman and Grobman (2005) explained that “writing activity and talk about writing occur on the spot so that students have the immediate experience of the writing context. [Mentors] also prompt and support students’ use of writing as a form of inquiry” (p. 7). This has the added benefit of not only empowering students, but also mentors because they understand instructors’ assignments and expectations. This is often not the case for mentors who are supporting students in spaces disconnected from the classroom, such as writing centers, or workshops comprised of students from several different classes. This immediate support is invaluable for students who often don't feel comfortable approaching the instructor for help or asking questions during class time.

ESL students are often prescribed the label of “basic” writers because they are non-native speakers of English. Often they are given this designation because what has actually been measured is their language acquisition and not their writing skills (Rodbý & Fox, 2000, p. 90). As Rodby and Fox (2000) illustrated, “The differences in considering writing practices and language acquisition are actually quite significant” (p. 90). ESL writers may be comfortable with English writing practices or rhetorical strategies but be at beginning levels of English language proficiency. Or, they may have a high level of English language proficiency but need to develop their English writing practices or rhetorical strategies. But as Rodby and Fox (2000) asserted, “One will not automatically or necessarily entail the other” (p. 90). Often ESL students come to English academic writing classrooms believing that their writing practices are inadequate, or that they are not “good” writers. For this reason the function of mentors as a
bridge between the academic writing practices and discourses students already possess and the U.S. academic discourses they need to acquire is especially important. Writing mentors provide “scaffolding and supported interaction upon and through which basic writers enter academic discourse” (Grobman, 2005, p. 46). As Gee (2001) explained, Discourses are not mastered by “overt instruction…, but by enculturation (‘apprenticeship’) into social practices through scaffolded and supported interaction with people who have already mastered the Discourse” (p. 527). Mentors can act as expert students and apprentice ESL writers into the practices of U.S. academic discourse. Mentors “make academic discourse’s inside visible, so basic writing students do not have to invent it blindly” (Grobman, 2005, p. 45-46).

Embedding mentors into the academic writing classroom helps to create a “hospitable space for a student’s unfolding” (Ottery et al., 2005, p. 65). This environment of intellectual hospitality is “an atmosphere in which students are invited in, welcomed, and made comfortable in a realm of ideas and communicative strategies” (Ottery et al., 2005, p. 68). Embedding mentors helps to develop this atmosphere and provide connection and community. This hospitable space also provides students with a “social foothold in a bewildering mass of new information and personalities” (Ottery et al., 2005, p. 65). This is especially crucial for international ESL students who are often suffering from culture shock and may be experiencing difficulties with intercultural adaptation. Mentors can provide help with students’ transitional experiences through simply taking the time to listen to their struggles. As Ottery et al. (2005) noted, many mentors considered their informal interactions such as “…listening, advising, and personal sharing…to be their most significant contribution” (p. 65). In this way, mentors “play a crucial social role that teachers could not appropriately play” (Ottery et al., 2005, p. 65).
Depending on students’ cultural backgrounds, they may be asked to participate in their learning process or collaborate with others in ways they are unfamiliar or uncomfortable with. Embedded mentors are uniquely positioned to support students as they explore new pedagogical approaches. This is particularly important in ESL writing classrooms in which students are often operating at varying levels of written or oral language development. With the support of mentors, ESL writers can complete tasks, wrestle with content, and collaborate with other students in ways that they might not otherwise be able to. As Spigelman and Grobman (2005) explained, “Prompted by [mentors], student writers are more likely to invent together and to engage in higher levels of discussion and analysis than they might on their own” (p. 7).

Embedding mentors into the classroom also contributes to the development of distributed expertise. The presence of mentors in the classroom facilitates the decentering of power relations (Spigelman & Grobman, 2005, p. 8). It contributes to “turn[ing] teaching into a more public activity...a learning opportunity for teachers and [mentors] as well as for students” (Ottery et al., 2005, p. 67). Not only does the presence of mentors allow for instructional support, through “extra ‘hands’ or voices in the room,” but it increases opportunities for instructional development as well (Spigelman & Grobman, 2005, p. 9). Mentors can act as a go-between, “provid[ing] instructors with information about how the students [are] reacting to the class” (Grobman, 2005, p. 63). Mentors often notice different things about class dynamics and have insight into students’ personal struggles. Mentor feedback also gives instructors insight into the ways students may be resisting or struggling with course content. This provides immediate feedback to instructors which allows for the opportunity to make changes before it is too late. Ultimately, the development of a community of learners can foster student agency. Spigelman and Grobman (2005) stated, “More democratic teaching models give students at least some voice
and therefore some investment in their learning” (p. 8). Embedded mentoring contributes to the creation of “supportive, heterogeneous college communities” through the new links “forged among disparate populations of students, [mentors], and teachers” (Spigelman & Grobman, 2005, p. 8).

**Adjunct Workshops**

Students in the academic writing class in this study were required to participate in mentor-led workshops. The workshops included time spent in large group discussion, time in small-group, pair, and independent work, and also time working individually with the mentor. Workshops provided students with a space to discuss and question the writing practices they were engaging with in the academic writing class. As Rodby and Fox (2000) noted, “The [mentor’s] role in the workshop dialogue is not only to model processes and practices but to reframe questions or concerns” (p. 95). Workshops also provide a space for the encouragement of productive conflict:

The workshop instructors report that they believe that because the workshop isn’t graded and students are not in the workshop with others with whom they are competing for grades, they are “free” to express confusion, despair, anger, and bad opinions that they could not raise in the first-year writing class because it is graded. (Rodby and Fox, 2000, p. 96-97)

This physical separation from the academic writing class provides students a space to take on roles they may not feel comfortable with in the larger classroom setting (Rodby & Fox, 2000, p. 96). Students may feel more comfortable speaking up, questioning, or resisting in the workshop than in the larger class. Part of the mentor’s role is to “reframe the resistance” (Rodby & Fox, 2000, p. 96). The workshop provides a safe zone for students to “try on discursive practices of academic writing without fear of being graded, and thus make visible conflicts with texts, teachers, classrooms, assignments, and responses” (Rodby & Fox, 2000, p. 98).
conflicts can be viewed positively by reflective instructors who view the resistance as productive feedback about their pedagogical practices.

The workshop also makes teaching and learning more visible and public. In this way, “The instructor’s teaching practices...are all made public in a context where the instructor is not present” (Rodby & Fox, 2000, p. 97). This non-traditional arrangement of learning spaces makes “visible and public the struggles and talents of both teachers and students” (p. 98). Not only is teaching made more visible and subject to critique, but students’ struggles and practices are made more visible providing instructors with valuable information. Rodby and Fox (2000) stated, “This visibility allows the program and students to see a broader range of language use and provides us with more opportunities to teach” (p. 98). Students are provided with more than one way “into” the curriculum so that “those very students who...do not so easily slide into the academic world are not punished by their difference” (Rodby & Fox, 2000, p. 98).

Summary

This literature review began by exploring the historical developments that led to the division of composition studies and ESL writing into two separate fields and the ideological differences that characterize the respective fields. The literature review then moved from a call for an integrated pedagogical framework among the two fields to an in-depth discussion of social constructivist theories of learning including situated learning, communities of practice, distributed cognition, and transfer of learning. These theoretical frameworks were used to inform the design of the ESL academic writing class discussed in this study which utilized a “community of learners” approach emphasizing distributed expertise among students, instructors, and embedded mentors.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This research study investigated a “community of learners” approach to ESL academic writing instruction in one classroom and its adjunct workshops by using social constructivist theories of learning, distributed cognition, and transfer of learning theories as theoretical frameworks for analysis. The study used an action research approach which is particularly relevant to educational settings, since it enables instructors to design their own research studies in order to create more effective learning environments. Although there is some research on embedded mentorship in writing classrooms very few studies have explored students’ perceptions of mentorship, and even fewer have explored the role mentorship may play in ESL writing classrooms. For this reason qualitative and quantitative methods were used to further explore students’ and mentors’ perceptions of mentorship in one ESL composition classroom.

Design of the Investigation

This study used four sources of qualitative and quantitative data. These included semi-structured interviews (Gall et al., 2010, p. 134-135) conducted with five students and five mentors, anonymous mid- and end of semester student surveys, mentors’ written reflective journals, and the researcher’s field notes. The focus of the research was the semi-structured mentor and student interviews which were conducted throughout the semester. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for later analysis. An interview protocol was developed prior to each student and mentor interview. The choice to include qualitative interviews was
made in order to allow students and mentors the opportunity to better explain their perceptions of the mentorship experience. Through the use of qualitative interviews this study allowed ESL writers and mentors to voice their feelings and opinions as they participated in a collaborative approach to academic writing instruction emphasizing distributed expertise.

To allow for a larger sample size and for the opportunity for different perceptions of mentorship to be expressed that may not have been represented in the interviews, all of the students in the course were invited to participate in the mid- and end of semester surveys. These surveys were designed using Google Forms and students were provided access to them digitally. The questions included both multiple choice and open-ended questions. The surveys were given anonymously in order to ensure students that their responses would in no way affect their grade in the class. Mentors’ reflective journals provided a way to identify their perceptions of mentorship on an on-going basis. These journals were composed in Google Drive and shared with me. The researcher’s field notes were collected in a notebook in order to provide another perspective on student-mentor interactions.

Population

The participants in this study were located at a mid-sized university in a small, semi-rural city in Northern California. All student participants were international students from six different countries and none of them were native English speakers. The mentor participants were either undergraduate or graduate students attending the university and employed as mentors. All of the mentors were non-international students and native-speakers of English. The names of all participants and the university have been changed to maintain confidentiality. The university, referred to as Banyan State University (BSU), has a large number of international students. For this reason some sections of first-year composition (also known as “academic writing”) are
designated for international students only. This study took place in one of these academic writing classes for international students and the adjunct, mentor-led workshops that were a mandatory component of the class. All students, mentors, and the co-instructor filled out a consent form giving permission to use survey, interview, journal, and observation data for the present study (see Appendix C for Human Subjects Consent Form).

Survey Population

The population that participated in the mid- and end of semester surveys utilized in this study was comprised of the 56 students enrolled in the academic writing course. However, one student officially dropped the course and four students had stopped attending by mid-semester, resulting in an end of semester population size of 51. Of the original 56 students nine were female and 47 were male. The class was comprised of a variety of international students; however, the majority of the students were from Saudi Arabia. Students also came from Kuwait, Pakistan, South Korea, China, Japan, and Italy. Most of these students were in their first semester at BSU, though a few had taken previous English courses at the language institute located on the BSU campus. Though many students had previous experience working with tutors none had experience working with a mentor in a group setting.

Student Interview Population

Only five students were selected to participate in the interviews. Due to time constraints it would not have been practical to interview more than this number of students. In addition, asking students to elaborate on their feelings and experiences in a non-native language can be very stressful. For this reason students were approached who could provide a representative sample of the class and articulate themselves in English comfortably and without undue stress. This process took time and students were selected with the input of their mentors.
Seven students were approached individually in the third week of the semester with an invitation to participate. Students were informed that if they completed all four interviews it would count as their final project which was equal to ten percent of their grade. The time students spent in the interviews would have been roughly equal to the time spent creating a final project. The offer of participation in interviews in lieu of the final project was intended to show students that their time was valued and encourage them to take their participation seriously. Of the seven students approached five were willing to participate. Of these five students three were females and two were males. See Table 2 for their pseudonyms, genders, native countries, and general descriptions. All five students participated in all four interviews except Qadir who was not in attendance at the final group interview. Each student had already signed an informed consent form during the first week of the semester which mentioned participation in interviews; therefore, additional consent was not necessary.

Table 1

Student Interview Population Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kabira</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>quiet, attended some high-school in the U.S., undecided major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yara</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>outspoken, computer engineering major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eun</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>outspoken, musical theater major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zahid</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>outspoken, civil engineering major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qadir</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>quiet, civil engineering major</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mentor Interview and Reflective Journal Population

All mentors working in the class were willing to participate in an end of semester individual interview and keep a weekly reflective journal. They were all given and signed interview consent forms. Mentors’ had varying educational backgrounds and types of experience. Three mentors had no prior group mentorship experience and one mentor had no experience with ESL writers. See Table 2 for their pseudonyms, genders, descriptions, experience, and the student from the study that they worked with. Mentors were paid to attend class with students twice a week, lead adjunct workshops comprised of ten students from the course twice per week, attend a one hour meeting with the instructors and other mentors once per week, and participate in one hour of prep work each week.

Table 2
Mentor Interview and Reflective Journal Population Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentor Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>General Description</th>
<th>Prior Experience</th>
<th>Associated Mentee’s Pseudonym</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phil</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Graduate student in TESOL</td>
<td>Several semesters ESL tutoring experience, no mentoring experience</td>
<td>Eun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyle</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Graduate student in English</td>
<td>No ESL experience, several semesters mentoring experience (including embedded mentoring)</td>
<td>Zahid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ava</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Undergraduate student in English</td>
<td>Several semesters ESL tutoring and mentoring experience. No embedded mentoring experience</td>
<td>Qadir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evelyn</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Undergraduate student in English</td>
<td>Several semesters ESL tutoring experience, no mentoring experience</td>
<td>Kabira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigel</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Undergraduate student in criminal justice</td>
<td>No prior experience</td>
<td>Yara</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instruments

Data was collected throughout the semester using student surveys, student and mentor interviews, mentors’ reflective journals, and researcher field notes. Data from surveys provided a general view of students’ perception of mentorship. The mid-semester survey was given in the seventh week of the semester (see Appendix B for Mid-semester Survey). Students had already been informed of the research study the first week of the semester when the informed consent forms were signed and collected. The mid-semester survey was given at the beginning of the class period without mentors present. Students were reminded of the study’s purpose and the survey was displayed for the class. Each question was briefly discussed in order to clarify unfamiliar vocabulary and to address any confusion. Students then located and opened the link to the survey on the course website and were reminded to click ‘submit’ at the bottom when they were finished. The mid-semester survey received 56 responses, meaning that all students enrolled in the course at that time completed the survey.

The end of semester student survey was given the fifteenth week of the semester and was designed to see if students’ perceptions regarding mentorship and their overall experience in the class had changed over the course of the semester. Though many of the questions were the same as the mid-semester survey, some were altered and new ones were added (see Appendix B for End of Semester Survey). The same protocol for giving the mid-semester survey was used for giving the end of semester survey. The end of semester survey received 42 responses. At that point in the semester 51 students were still attending the class regularly. Though there were five students absent the day the survey was given it is impossible to tell whether the additional missing surveys were due to incorrect submission or intentional non-completion.
Student interviews took place four times during the semester. Group interviews were conducted with the five student participants on three occasions during the fifth, seventh, and ninth weeks of the semester. To acquire a deeper and potentially different understanding of students’ perceptions of mentorship, individual interviews were conducted with each student during the eleventh week of the semester. At the beginning of all interviews students were reminded that their voice would be audio-recorded, that everything would be kept confidential, and that they had the right to opt out of the study at any time. Interview protocols were developed in advance of each meeting (see Appendix A for Student Interview Protocols). However, in the attempt to keep the interviews conversational in nature and to help students feel more relaxed the questions were not strictly followed. Questions were asked that were not on the protocol depending on the direction the conversation took.

Mentors and instructors met as a group once per week to discuss the class and their mentorship experience. In order to provide mentors the opportunity to discuss their experiences privately, individual mentor interviews took place on one occasion during the twelfth week of the semester. An interview protocol was designed prior to the interview but was added to or altered depending on the direction the conversation took in order to keep the tone of the interview conversational and relaxed (See Appendix A for Mentor Interview Protocol). Also in attempt to help interviewees feel relaxed, field notes were not taken during student or mentor interviews. Instead, all audio recordings were transcribed in order to analyze the data. Interview questions were paraphrased as well as any unrelated side conversations. Otherwise, students’ and mentors’ comments were transcribed exactly as spoken in order to most accurately reflect their perceptions and experiences.
Mentors’ reflective journals provided a way to identify their perceptions of mentorship on an on-going basis. These journals were kept in Google Drive and shared with the researcher. They were updated weekly at the beginning of each mentor meeting. Sometimes mentors responded to specific prompts regarding the mentorship experience. Other times mentors responded generally with any questions or concerns they had about the students, the course, or mentorship.

Field notes were recorded in order to provide another perspective on student-mentor interactions. They were kept in a bound notebook which I brought to each class meeting. At the end of each class meeting impressions about student-mentor interactions were written in the notebook. Notes from the weekly mentor/instructor group meetings, individual meetings (non-interview) with mentors, weekly co-instructor meetings, or meetings with students during office hours that were relevant to the study, were also written down.

Analysis

The data was analyzed using interpretational analysis which utilizes a coding system. As Gall et al. (2010) stated, “The goal of interpretational analysis is to identify constructs, themes, and patterns that best make meaning of the data...” (p. 350). The interpretational analysis was based on grounded theory in which data is analyzed inductively, rather than deductively, and claims are discovered from the data itself (Gall, 2010). Using an open coding system the data was separated into categories and comparisons were made to uncover common themes and connections between the coding categories.

After the survey responses were received they were transferred into a Word document. As mentioned earlier the majority of the questions were open-ended. The questions and responses were copied and pasted from Google Form’s “summary of responses” into a Word
This made it easier to view the original question and each student’s written response to that question. The mid-semester survey responses were read and the data indicated that students’ perception of mentors’ roles fell into four main categories: 1) interpreting, explaining, and clarifying class materials, lectures, and assignments, 2) keeping students “on track,” 3) providing feedback to students, and 4) facilitating students’ participation in the activities/practices of the class, including group work and class discussion. Each category was given a color and students’ responses were then color-coded based on the above categories. The data was then separated into these larger categories within which sub-categories were made using bullet points. The same four categories were used for coding the end of semester data. Comparisons between the surveys were made to note common themes in each category and any changes over time.

Interview data began in separate documents by interview date. The interview data was then reorganized by speaker. Each speaker’s comments were contained in a separate document in an attempt to note any changes in the speakers’ perceptions over time. Interview data was then organized by workshop, in which each mentor’s and his/her corresponding mentee’s comments were combined together into one document. Next, a control + F search was made to determine the frequency in occurrence of several terms: peer, mentor, one-to-one, individual, writing, revision, feedback, comments, classmates, students, workshop, role, and job. Analysis of the terms revealed an emphasis on five common themes across the data: group work, intercultural communication, individual student interactions with mentors, feedback, and perception of mentors’ roles. A new document was then created with the five common themes named above and ‘miscellaneous’ as categories. Students’ and mentors’ comments from interviews were then reorganized into one of the six categories. It was at this time that the
impact of mentors’ previous experiences on the present context became very apparent. The five categories of themes listed above were also used to analyze the data in the mentors’ reflective journals. Each category was assigned a color and then mentor’s written comments were color-coded based on category. These themes were used to analyze students’ and mentors’ comments in surveys, interviews, and journals in order to make the claims discussed in the following chapters.

Description of Course Practices and Assignments

The goals of this academic writing class included students’ development of rhetorical awareness in order to critically evaluate the arguments of others and make and support their own arguments. The class utilized an open-inquiry model that allowed students to choose their own areas of research. The class included extensive writing practice including in-class quick writes, rhetorical analyses of four different genres, a source synthesis chart, and a problem/solution paper. Students also composed multimodal projects including an online Storify and a final research project of their choosing. Revision of all student work was an integral and ongoing part of the course and included multiple drafts of all major assignments. Revision was defined as reorganizing, expanding, thinking more deeply, significantly clarifying ideas, or connecting ideas to new things. It did not include editing tasks such as correcting spelling and grammar errors, unless they interfered with the reader’s understanding. Revisions needed to respond to and seriously consider the feedback of peers, mentors, and instructors in order to be given full credit. All student work was read and responded to not only by instructors and mentors, but also by peers using Google Docs. The peer feedback process (see Appendix D for Peer Feedback Guidelines) was completed for every major assignment in order to facilitate revision and help
students critically respond to the work of others. The peer feedback process emphasized responding to the content and development of the writer’s ideas rather than linguistic errors.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS I: HOW DO STUDENTS LEARN TO BE MENTORED?

Introduction

This study primarily utilized interviews with students and mentors about their experiences working together in an academic writing classroom and its adjunct workshops. This data was supplemented by survey data from students, passages from weekly mentor reflections, and instructor/researcher field notes. The questions this study set out to answer were: (1) How do students learn to be mentored? and (2) How do mentors learn to mentor? Each of these questions is examined in separate chapters of this thesis. Relevant data pertaining to each research question is presented and analyzed. In the final chapter of the thesis, the implications of the findings in regards to previous research on ESL pragmatism and ideology, the role of ESL experience in mentoring, transfer of learning, and distributed cognition are explored.

This chapter focuses on the question, “How do students learn to be mentored?” by examining the ways in which students resist or embrace the methods, identities, and possibilities created in a model of writing instruction emphasizing the distribution of expertise among instructors, mentors, and students. The chapter begins by examining students’ perceptions of what constitutes an effective workshop space. Second, students’ perceptions of the mentorship model are discussed. Finally, the impact of students’ previous learning experiences on the current context is explored. The chapter concludes with a synthesis and evaluation of what the data indicates about utilizing an instructional model emphasizing distributed expertise with ESL writers.
Perceptions of the Workshop:  
A Space to Work with Peers

In the end of semester survey when asked how the quality of their learning experience in this ESL writing class compared with the quality of their learning experience in other writing classes, 65% of students said significantly better or better. In response to the survey question, “In what specific ways did you find the learning environment in this class most helpful?” 60% of students stated that the time spent working with their peers was the most helpful part of the class. Students’ responses to this question included comments such as “group work,” “sharing our work with peers,” “working with peers,” “teamwork,” “small groups helped with participation,” “groups made it easier to talk to other people,” and “sharing opinion in public freely.”

The data indicated that students primarily perceived the workshop to be a space to interact with their peers to complete the work of the class. Students expressed frustration when too much time was spent either working alone, working individually with the mentor, in whole group discussion, or when the workshop did not stay focused on the work of the course. Students articulated a strong sense of what should constitute the workshop space - focused interaction with peers around their writing process. Time for interaction with those students giving and receiving feedback to each other became particularly important to students as the semester progressed since peer feedback and revision were a required component of the class. Likely because of this, students quickly perceived the importance of the workshop in providing them the opportunity to interact with their peers in order to successfully complete class requirements and become more proficient writers.

Eun expressed her desire for a complete reorganization of her workshop to include more focused peer interaction. The structure of her workshop consisted primarily of the mentor
providing individual consultations with students, or students participating in whole class discussions about their writing topics and general writing skills. Very little time was devoted to collaboration with peers through the peer feedback process which Eun considered “very helpful because there are many things I missed or I couldn’t notice.”¹ Eun explained, “We usually checking our own thing individually with mentor. Individually.” Eun expressed why she was frustrated with the focus on working individually in her workshop when she stated, “We have no chance to talk about [peer feedback] in person because we so busy focus on our own stuff. My point is we still have a big group, but I think at this point it is not working. It’s staying too individual.” Working independently or participating in whole class discussions and activities did not give her the opportunity to discuss the feedback she received from her feedback partners. In order to revise her writing, which was a required component of the class, she needed to clearly understand the comments from her readers, and clearly understanding the comments required discussion with them in person.

Eun further explained why the whole class discussion that dominated her workshop was not helpful. She said, “When it comes to group discussion or activity I think at this point it is not that helpful because we all have different topics and it’s really hard to have some discussion with each other because everybody just focus on their topics and we have a lot things to do and think.” Time spent sharing concerns or questions with the whole class did not provide her with the opportunity to speak with her feedback partners who were more familiar with her writing, thus slowing down her revision process. She explained that whole group discussion required students to stay engaged and interested in everyone’s work, which she pointed out may be unrealistic. She stated, “Everybody doesn't care, they just focus on our own topic. Many

¹ Grammar errors were not corrected in order to maintain the authenticity of speakers’ ideas.
people don’t know other's topic except their peers [providing feedback]. Peer feedback very helpful. The comments good. Just discussion about the feedback and topics not helpful.” Eun found her peers’ comments helpful, but discussing each person’s writing with the whole group was ineffective. She suggested that the discussion about the feedback would be more helpful if it took place in small groups comprised only of feedback partners. She explained, “I think if we make another group with just peers [those giving written feedback] because they already know my writing and I already know their writing, their papers, their topics. I think that would be more helpful, if we make small groups, just with peers.” For Eun these small groups consisting of feedback partners could become intimately acquainted with each other’s work in a more focused way than working as a whole class could. The emphasis on time spent working alone with the mentor or in whole class discussion led her to view the workshop as “not working.” Whole class discussion and working alone with the mentor took away from time discussing feedback with her peers, which she felt was what she most needed in order to revise her writing.

The value of spending time in discussion with feedback partners was further explained by Zahid. Zahid was very happy with the organization of his workshop and considered it to be very effective at helping him succeed in the course. He explained that the majority of his time in workshop was spent working with his two feedback partners. He agreed with Eun that expecting students to be engaged with the work of everyone in the workshop wasn't realistic. Zahid explained, “That’s why she is saying we must stay in one group with our peers [that give us feedback]. Cause we don’t care about the whole group. We only care about myself, and maybe the two that are giving feedback, That’s it.” He considered it beneficial to commit to engaging deeply only with the specific students giving feedback to his work. He stated, “Dabir and Kaida, I already know a lot about their topics so if we sit in class in a group
together we can have a chat instead of sitting with someone that I did not read his paper.” He elaborated further on the benefit of working with the same students throughout the semester: “I have been with those two since the start. I know their writing, I know that. Like Dabir improved really. I can see the change, I can see everything. I can’t be interested in everybody’s things.” Committing to work with the same students for the duration of the semester enabled them to develop the relationships necessary to successfully complete the work of the course and become more proficient writers.

Yara also agreed with Eun and Zahid that the workshop should primarily provide a place for interaction with peers regarding their writing. Like Eun she believed that her workshop was too focused on working individually. Yara explained, “It is separate in workshop. We have the same people give feedback in the [marginal] comments but we don’t really talk in workshop class.” She also agreed with Eun and Zahid on the need to meet specifically with those students participating together in the feedback process: “I agree with her. If we had our peers every single time sitting together it would be benefitting each other because we know already his or her topic.” She did not have the opportunity in her workshop to discuss the peer feedback she received which she believed should be a primary function of the workshop. Just reading her peers’ written comments to her writing was not enough. She needed to be able to get clarification about the comments in person. Yara knew that understanding her peers’ comments was crucial to revising her work; therefore, she wanted her workshop to be a place to talk with her peers in order to better understand their comments about how to improve her writing.

The value of peer feedback was explained further by Kabira: “I think that feedback is really helpful for me. I reply to my peers’ feedback and they can reply to me back about it. When I get to my workshop they can talk to me about it as well. I get to talk to them by
commenting and by talking in person so that’s gonna help us all.” Having an opportunity to meet
to discuss feedback in-person in the workshop allowed her the opportunity to receive any
clarification she may have been unable to get through the written comments alone. Kabira
stated, “I have to talk to them in person because I don’t understand their [marginal] comments.
It is helpful to talk to them in class and workshop.” For Kabira the interaction with other students
regarding her writing was the key to helping her succeed. She explained, “Meeting and talking
in person is such a good idea. In high school, I worked with lots of international students, but for
peer feedback we only do it at the bottom. But here it’s more helpful. We can interact more
with other students. Now I can interact and speak more and I am learning more. We get to
interact a lot. Interacting is what help me.”

Kabira indicated that she viewed her high school experience with peer feedback as
non-interactive and therefore not very helpful. At her high school peer feedback was given only
in summative comments at the end of her documents. Students never discussed these comments
in person and no marginal comments were given throughout the document. In contrast, the peer
feedback process in this class allowed her to have an on-going conversation about her writing
through replying to her peers’ marginal and summative comments, as well as discussing their
comments in-person in the workshop. This led to Kabira’s new view of peer feedback as a two-
way, ongoing conversation, as opposed to one-time, one-way comments that ended the
conversation before it ever began. Kabira, Eun, Zahid, and Yara’s comments all indicated that
they conceived of writing as a process that required on-going collaboration. Peer feedback was
the catalyst for this ongoing conversation and interaction with their peers which they viewed as
essential to improving their writing. Learning to become a better writer took place through
participation frameworks such as the peer feedback process and not in isolation. In this way learning was distributed among the participants in each peer feedback group.

Students also believed that the workshop should stay focused on the work of the class. Yara discussed her frustration when her workshop’s lack of focused direction did not provide the support she needed. She reported, “I feel like it’s really worthless, I am not doing anything, it’s a waste of time. To be honest, we don’t do anything. It’s not working for me.” She went on to describe her workshop as a “break room,” a place to talk about things unrelated to the course or to complete work for other classes. She stated, “Everyone is talking not even in English. It’s just go into this room and talk, but talk about anything else!” Yara did not consider the “break room” version of workshop to be effective at helping her improve her writing. It failed to provide students with the structures, relationships, and models they needed in order to succeed in the class. Yara indicated that she would like her mentor to take a more directive role in facilitating the workshop, rather than leaving it up to students: “He is not doing anything. He is expecting us to come and ask. But what is the point for him?” Yara highlighted her desire to have the workshop act as an extension of the academic writing class. She explained, “I want [the instructors] to be in my workshop. I want to have just more of your class.” Yara considered the practices of the academic writing class helpful and wanted her workshop to follow a similarly structured format.

Yara admitted that at times she ended up focused on her writing in the workshop, albeit accidentally. She stated, “Sometimes me and Amani talk to Tahir cause he has no one from his own country and that leads us back to stuff, we talk about the paper and that is awesome, I am like thank you for that! I need that regularly to happen because the workshop is essential if you use it the right way, it’s a backup line for this whole big class.” For Yara focused
interaction around her writing needed to happen regularly and on purpose through the skilled direction of the mentor. Whether through an emphasis on the facilitation of peer feedback, or the organization of the workshop for collaboration, students’ comments indicated their perception of the integral role of collective action to their writing process and their mentors’ role in facilitating that action. Students indicated the need for mentors to organize the workshops in such a way that the focused interactions with peers necessary for improving their writing could take place. Students’ comments implied that more learning was accomplished through students’ relationships and interactions with each other than through students’ interactions with the “expert,” or mentor. The cognitive processes necessary to improve their writing operated best through focused interaction and cooperation with their peers. Mentors were needed to facilitate increased access to participation with peers in order to help students advance to more proficient levels of writing.

Perceptions of Mentorship: A Bridge to Participation

The data indicated that overall students’ description of mentors’ roles fell into four main categories 1) interpreting, explaining, and clarifying class materials, lectures, and assignments, 2) keeping students “on track,” 3) providing feedback to students, and 4) facilitating students’ participation in the activities/practices of the class, including group work and class discussion. One student succinctly highlighted the mentors’ wide-ranging roles: “The mentors play an imperative role in making sure all students are ‘plugged into the matrix’ of the class to understand its rules and regulations, what is required of them in class, as well as making sure all students are not bored and none are left behind.”
Mentors as a Bridge to Other Students

Though the vast majority of students stressed that the time spent working with their peers was the most helpful component of the course, the data indicated that students wished to have more intervention from their mentors when difficulties with group dynamics arose. As one student wrote, “When they see that in our small groups some people aren’t working they need to tell them that they have to work,” and another, “They need to give the roles of who to do what.” The role of the mentors in helping to cultivate a sense of community in the workshops was stressed by students. As one student wrote in the survey, “My mentor made our group feel like a family, and this made me actually look forward to coming to class. And I largely accredit this to my mentor as he made this class and workshop enjoyable while doing our work.” Because this was a survey response the student did not indicate exactly how the mentor made the group feel like a family. Students viewed the workshop as a space in which students should be actively working together to complete the work of the class. Students perceived it was the mentor’s job to facilitate community and positive group dynamics. As survey respondents wrote, mentors should “make the class engage more” and “make a good climate of the class.”

Eun explained some of the difficulties she experienced with group dynamics in her workshop group. During the academic writing class, each workshop group of ten students was often divided into two smaller groups of five students in order to better facilitate collaboration and participation during class activities. In Eun’s group her mentor Phil split the group into one group of highly proficient English speakers and one of less proficient English speakers. He spent much more time working with the group that was less proficient which Eun was not a part of. As she recalled, “My group don't have a mentor and the other group have Phil.” She explained why Phil spent so much time with the other group: “Because in our small group there are many
people who are really good at English. Yeah they [the other group] are not good at that much as this group. In my case, not me, all of the others are good.” Eun believed her English proficiency was impacting her ability to participate in group discussions. She said, “When we have a discussion I have my opinion, my thoughts. Just because my English is not good enough, sometimes I feel they don’t listen to me. My friend is actually good at English, but sometimes they still don’t listen to us. We feel like we interrupt their discussion.” She expressed her frustration that Phil was not more actively involved in helping to facilitate the discussion in her small group: “We really want to participate in the discussion very actively, but because there is no one like Phil who could be like, you can do that or that. But there is not someone like Phil. Many times we feel like it is unfair.” She clearly wanted to participate and wished her mentor would help facilitate communication in her group.

In a later interview Eun recalled how she requested to move to the small group that Phil spent most of his time with hoping that she would be able to participate more: “I can understand better because I can ask a lot of things to Phil all the time.” However, Eun remained dissatisfied with the discussion in the new group. She admitted, “But the thing is now the group I joined, now they don't have discussion because all the people are busy catch up with the lecture things and what we need to do right now so there's no discussion here.” Discussion was non-existent in her new group because their time was spent primarily working individually with the mentor. The mentor would work one-on-one with students who were struggling while the rest of that small group worked independently. The mentor often spent his time with only one or two students during the class period. Thus the mentor was not helping to facilitate discussion or activities in either of the small groups. Eun noted, “Now it’s a totally talking group, no talking group. So I don't know what to do about that. But I keep trying, I say, ‘let’s talk about it.’” Her
desire for interaction and a chance to participate was clear, but her mentor was not able to help facilitate group discussion and participation while spending the majority of his time helping one student at a time.

Yara also discussed her difficulty with group dynamics and her desire for her mentor to intervene. As was the case with Eun, she was also part of the small group that her mentor spent less time interacting with. She noted, “Nigel [the mentor] was more focused on the other group because they were more productive.” In her case the mentor chose to give the majority of his attention to the group that was more highly functioning, while in her group collaboration broke down: “The guys, as I told you after class, they just don't participate. All the work fell on me and my classmate, and we were discouraged because right now Amani, she always look at me and say, ‘I don't want to do anything because they are not.’” Yara attempted to take an active role in encouraging the others to participate. She reported, “Last class I asked them several times, ‘do you guys have a quote?’ I am trying as the discussion leader to lead them to the discussion, but they don't want to participate.” She illustrated some of the intercultural dynamics that led to difficulties with collaboration: “One guy he speaks in his language to the other one and the other one answers me. And that bothers me. I am so, so offended by that. I am very, very angry, right now.” She later stated, “[It’s] too hard to separate these people and say come and work with me. They just won’t. Especially the guy that doesn’t speak with me in English. I try several times. Oh my God! I am going to talk to him! I don’t know if he is doing this purposely, he just ignores me every single time.” She emphasized her desire to have someone intervene in the functioning of her small group. She asserted, “I am frustrated, very much and I want to talk to you. Thank God we're having this meeting. I am so hopeful that you will address this.”
When Yara was asked if she had discussed this issue with her mentor she replied, “He is looking at me, and he ask me, and then he just turned around, like you do it.” Later she stated, “If he wants to help he could. I don’t know if I have the power to tell the other guys, ‘You have to do this.’ I know Nigel can do that. I think that’s part of what I am expecting him to do.” In her opinion helping her small group function more effectively was part of the mentor’s responsibility: “Why he focusing on the stronger group rather than the less productive group. I am just suggesting some time for Nigel to come, but I can’t force him to come and stay with us. I am questioning if Nigel knows what I do. Is he ignoring me?” She viewed his failure to help resolve the issues as him ignoring the problems in her group. After discussion with the instructors Nigel did intervene in the small groups by moving group members around. Yara reported the difference the change in group members made to her success: “They really worked hard and we all spent most of the time talking and discussing, and I had so much more understanding to whatever we were doing just because we were discussing it! For the fact that we were discussing it, it made it way easier. I was so happy with the fact that we changed.”

Qadir also addressed the need for the mentor’s involvement in small group dynamics. He noted, “Some group members do not like to work. They just watching us do the work and we don’t like that. In the first two weeks Ava [the mentor] she used to mix us up. This time you will work with this person, another time you will work with another one. She no longer doing that. She doesn't do anything. She just sit watching us.” Qadir interpreted his mentor’s lack of intervention in group dynamics as her not doing anything. Qadir went on to explain how the students in his workshop grouped themselves based on cultural background: “In my workshop you can always see the Saudi people are on the right, the other groups are on the left. They do not like to talk together.”
During an interview a month later Qadir expressed a markedly different opinion of his workshop and mentor. He recounted with excitement an activity the mentor had facilitated in which everyone worked together:

The last few workshops she had us go to the computer and open up our page and see it and revise it together, the whole class we revise it together. Each one give his opinion of the work. What he thinks. Read through each part together. Then the person who has the paper revise it in front of us. That’s really good, helps a lot. Took us three days. Really helpful.

He explained his mentor’s active role in facilitating the activity: “Ava was sitting with us, she let us first give our ideas then she give her ideas, then we compare together and we come up with the revised stuff.” He discussed how his mentor was again attempting to have students work with new people like she did at the beginning of the semester. He said, “She like to make us divide into groups and make us work with new peers every day. At the beginning of the semester it wasn’t good, but after she does that, now we have been doing that for six classes, and that’s really good.” He explained the change in students’ attitude: “People at first weren’t comfortable with that, but now everyone is comfortable, like we get to know each other, we are friends.” When I remarked that his opinion of his workshop and the mentor had drastically changed he agreed, “Totally changed. It’s good. Much better than before. We are getting every help we need. She try to help us as she can. We just have to ask, she will do what she can.” When asked what he believed influenced the change in his opinion of his mentor he explained, “It because of what she does. She mix us up, everyone work with someone you haven’t work with, it help us a lot. Last weekend we hang out together, for fun.” The active involvement of the mentor in group activities and her intervention in group dynamics led Qadir to change his opinion of the mentor from “she doesn’t do anything,” to “we are getting every help need.”
Qadir, Eun, and Yara all acknowledged that in order to succeed at doing the work of the class they needed to successfully communicate and collaborate with their group members. However, the data indicated that though students wanted positive and successful interactions with their peers, they took a mostly passive role in facilitating those interactions. For the most part they left it up to the mentors to form groups, moderate communication, and handle any problems that arose. Successfully communicating with individuals with vastly different cultural backgrounds in an unfamiliar country and in a non-native language is a difficult task. For this reason the role of the mentor as a bridge between students, helping to foster a sense of connection and community, is particularly important in learning spaces comprised of students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

**Mentors as a Bridge to Academic Discourse**

The data indicated that students believed the mentor’s job included “make[ing] sure students are taking part in the action.” Students wanted mentors to help them access and participate in the in-class activities and discussions. This access was partially facilitated through receiving encouraging verbal feedback from the mentor during in-class activities. As Eun noted, “I think one of the big role for mentor is that encouraging students.” Yara expressed frustration over her mentor’s lack of verbal encouragement and her awareness of another mentor’s skill at doing so. She admitted, “I am so jealous of you guys. Kyle’s [a mentor] group is the best. I want to go there. Each time he stops everything and he says, ‘you did a good job.’ It’s encouraging. I hope Nigel could do that. We are doing so hard. Why should I if there is no even, you know you did a good job.” She acknowledged the insecurity that often comes with attempting to communicate and work with others in a non-native language: “As a foreigner you think you are doing a really good job just speaking the language so you need that. Oh my God
Kyle, please just let me go there. I need that encouragement.” For non-native speakers, this desire for frequent verbal encouragement and validation was particularly important.

In addition to students’ emphasis on verbal encouragement from mentors, they expressed frustration when mentors did not connect individual students or small groups to the activities and discussions of the larger class. One survey respondent wrote, “I felt isolated from the class with my mentor.” As Eun stated, mentors should “encourage people to ask something, and encourage people to participate in some activities.” Students declared their desire for the mentors to help them share their ideas with the larger class. One survey respondent wrote that the mentor needed to “help encouraging us to speak up.” Yara expressed her frustration at her mentor’s lack of support in connecting her to the class discussion. She said, “We are the only group that doesn’t tell anything when we share out in class. I want to share, but I don’t have the courage to speak loud. Nigel saw it in my paper; he could have said it instead of me.” In a later interview Yara again emphasized her desire to have her mentor help her ease into larger class discussions when she explained:

Last time I tried to speak. I’m shy, but I try so hard, you have no idea. When I did that, when I spoke up, Mollie [the co-instructor], she just ignored me. That’s really discouraging. I think it’s because she is too far. She didn't have any eye contact with me. She didn’t hear me maybe. I think it's the class size. It’s part of the mentor’s job more than that.

Zahid offered an example of how his mentor helped students participate: “Like Kyle, he will say ‘Chelsea’ and point to the student who want to say.” Kyle was consistently more active than the other mentors in bringing to the instructors’ attention a student who was attempting to speak, or calling attention to interesting points students made in small group discussions. Through these practices he helped to pave students’ way into the larger class discussion. Furthermore, during an interview several students brought up the differences in
mentors’ personalities and how that may affect their comfort with addressing the larger class. Yara explained, “Nigel he tries, he is a bit shy.” Kabira affirmed that though she would like her mentor to be more involved in helping students share their ideas with the class or ask instructors questions, she believed that all mentors may not be comfortable or skilled at doing so: “Evelyn is a little shy to speak up. You know Kyle has the power to speak.” In her eyes, and in the eyes of many other students, Kyle was comfortable and confident in his role as a bridge between his group of students and the larger class.

In addition to having difficulty in class acting as a bridge between their students and the larger class, several mentors struggled to interact with their group of students during class time. Despite the instructors’ explicit direction to move among their groups during class time and facilitate and participate in activities and discussions, the majority of mentors did not consistently do so. When asked about the mentor’s interaction with the group during class time Qadir mentioned, “My mentor doesn't do that. Not a lot of discussion. Just do this and this.” After giving the students directions, some mentors would stay in their chairs and communicate no further with students as they worked together to complete activities. One survey respondent wrote, “My mentor did not guide me very well, nor interacted with us as a group.” Many students requested more in-class interaction with their mentors. One respondent wrote, “She need to help us more actively.” Another survey respondent commented, “She need to help me not feel lost. She is not really helping us.”

Due to the fact that mentors attended class with students, students were keenly aware of the kind of support other mentors were providing. Many students viewed some mentors as more effective than others. One student wrote, “I’ve been talking to the next group, they are saying [the mentor] is helping a lot. They love having him. Maybe the problem not from the
mentors system, the problem is from our mentor.” Many students commented that Kyle was the most effective mentor. In the end of semester survey many students wrote comments such as “Kyle is the best one” or “help us more actively like Kyle.” Because these were survey responses, the students didn't say exactly what Kyle did or what they liked, nor how they knew he was the “best” mentor. Several students directly asked the instructors if they could switch to Kyle’s group. As mentioned earlier Kyle had the easiest time of acting as a bridge between students and the larger class. Kyle was also the most interactive with his group of students. During class he actively assisted his two small groups, bouncing back and forth facilitating discussions and clarifying material. The rest of the mentors often spent time with only one of their two small groups, worked individually with only one student, or did not interact with students at all. For some students that led to gleaning information from other mentors located in close proximity. Yara recounted, “Right now I am sitting next to Kyle's group to just hear. So I am like, ‘ok, alright!’ He is kind of loud so that is good for me!”

The data indicated that students perceived the most effective mentors to be those who were most comfortable acting as a bridge between students and students, students and instructors, and students and academic conversations and activities. Students wanted to participate in the discussions and share their ideas, but they often needed scaffolding and supported interaction from their mentors in order to do so. The mentors who were most comfortable participating along with students in class discussions and activities were best able to provide access to the discourse of class which was particularly important for non-native speakers wishing to participate in an unfamiliar environment.
Feedback from Mentors

Students highlighted the importance of the mentors’ role as providers of immediate feedback. In the survey data one student wrote, “I think mentors play an important role in [this class] as they can be more easily accessed and are always there to help you,” and another wrote, “The mentors are here to help us whenever we need them.” One student emphasized the differences in accessibility between mentors and instructors: “They can be accessed more often than a class teacher.” Students stressed the great benefit of the immediate, individual, personalized assistance mentors could provide. Mentors were available to answer questions, clarify material, and give students individual help with their work. This often led to individual consultations via email, during workshops, or even meetings with students outside of regular class and workshop hours. Eun stated, “He thought workshop is not good enough. So we are supposed to meet this weekend. So we are gonna meet, at that time he will help us. Making chart, organizing writing.” Another student recorded in the survey that this ability to access the mentors for help even extended to issues not related to the class. He wrote, “He is connected to us all, and whenever we need him he is there for us not only in class, but everything we need help with in the university.”

Early in the semester, the data emphasized the major role mentors played in providing immediate feedback by helping students “translate” or clarify instructors’ verbal and written comments and directions, and course practices and assignments. In an interview early in the semester Eun explained that in the beginning of the course Phil was particularly helpful at assisting her in “translating” what the instructors were saying or expecting. She said, “I told you this is my first semester, my first experience to take class in English. So many times actually I
don't understand you. Many time I am missing many things. I always ask him by email and in person he was always willing to answer me and answer all of us, so it was really, really helpful.”

As the semester progressed, students wanted less immediate feedback in “translating” course expectations and practices and more immediate feedback with the writing process. As Eun discussed, “At that point it was very helpful. These days, it's still helpful, I still ask what you are saying when I missed something. But now I ask more about my argument or the flow of logic, about what I am writing.” Likewise Zahid mentioned the benefit of the immediate feedback his mentor provided early on in his writing process when he was trying to locate sources for his paper. He explained, “He not just see what I wrote but also give me another link and provide some useful information. Here’s a good article for this part, he’s so helpful.” Zahid admitted that this must have required a great deal of extra time from his mentor: “He give us academic articles from the library, that mean on his own time he go to the library database and search for those. Not just search for this, but he would have to do some skimming, you can see that’s so good.”

Though students valued their ability to receive immediate verbal feedback and assistance from their mentors, they desired more specific written feedback from their mentors in the form of marginal and summative comments in their documents. Students discussed how often the most specific and helpful feedback they received did not come from their mentors. Students described specific comments as those that addressed local issues, or exact places in their writing that needed work. These types of comments were considered more constructive or critical in nature. In contrast, the mentors tended to give more general, encouraging comments. Students described general comments as having a more global focus, or concerned with overall impressions of the writing and tended to emphasize what writers were doing well. Eun
illustrated the differences between the feedback her mentor provided and the feedback her peers provided. She stated, “So that’s [Phil’s comments] not that new, not fresh. For me the comments from Phil less helpful than others. In my case he give some help about general idea or big picture not specific comments. Usually specific comments is from peers in my case.” Kabira further illustrated the lack of specific focus in her mentor’s written feedback. She said, “I feel like the peers have a different view on the paper. The instructor giving you feedback is much more helpful, they can be more specific. Peers are not always specific which is not helpful. Evelyn, her comments are like peer feedback.” Yara explained her frustration with her mentor’s lack of specific feedback: “But when I see Nigel’s comments, I think thank God my peer’s comments are there because my mentor is not giving me insight into what is going on. My peers are more specific. Maybe they are harsh on me but that is good, that gonna make my paper better.” She further explained the type of feedback she was hoping for from her mentor: “When you and Mollie comment it is right on the point. That is what I need. It makes me feel more relieved.” Revision in the class was based heavily on content and not linguistic errors, unless they interfered with meaning. Giving feedback to content is often more difficult than correcting grammar and spelling errors. Several mentors had difficulty providing feedback to content. They tended toward vague comments that commended students for their hard work but failed to explain how specifically they could improve the content of their writing. For Yara, as for many ESL writers, omission of specific and corrective feedback causes anxiety. ESL writers are often accustomed to a pragmatic focus which tends toward directive feedback regarding problems with linguistic features. Students were willing to adapt and quickly accepted the emphasis on content over linguistic features. However, students still desired specific and critical
feedback regarding the content of their work and became frustrated if their mentors did not provide it.

Students wanted mentors to point to specific places in their writing that needed revision, and not just provide general, vague comments. In one interview Yara explained that the feedback she received from her mentor was not helpful: “With my claim Nigel didn't give me feedback, just say it’s good, nothing specific. Then I noticed something and fixed it. I asked Nigel in the workshop once and told him I am really lost and he sat with me, he just said that is good. See Nigel [points to Nigel’s comments] it’s just all, good job, good job, good job.” She emphasized that receiving positive encouragement was nice, but that it didn’t help make her writing better. She explained, “I feel like he is complimenting who ever comments, not the paper. In his comments he is commending Amani for her comments on my paper, but he never mentioned something about me. It is not Amani’s paper! It’s not specific about my topic.” In trying to encourage peer feedback Nigel may have inadvertently failed to provide Yara with the specific feedback and direction she was looking for. Though Yara acknowledged the value of receiving peer feedback she admitted, “I am not as comfortable with the comment from my peer, we are on the same level, we don’t have the English speaker perspective, so sometime I don’t like to see my peer commenting.” All of the interviewed students felt the peer feedback process was valuable and provided additional perspectives on how to improve their writing. However, none of them saw it as a replacement for the mentor’s feedback, who they viewed as the expert native English speakers assigned to help them succeed. Yara illustrated the type of support she was looking for from her mentor:

I am behind, this is the time for him to come as a support to pull me from that confusion and tell me where I need to go. It’s a completion of what I had in my head. That’s what I’m looking for Nigel to do, don’t tell me a new idea, build on mine, we can go from there. I have it in my mind. I think in my language what it is gonna be, I translate it in
English, it makes sense to me. But in English it’s not. Help me translate, even the organization, sentence structure maybe is not good but the thought is good, just help me switch this around. I ask for that right now, I have no choice I can’t wait anymore for him to know I need help.

Students quickly internalized the course’s philosophy of writing as an ongoing, two-way, communicative act. Students desired active involvement from mentors throughout all stages of their writing process. One survey respondent wrote, “Follow the student writings step-by-step to make sure they are in the right process.” As the semester progressed the ability to have an ongoing conversation about their writing process became integral to students. However, they noticed that mentors often seemed to be absent from this ongoing conversation. As one student wrote, “Giving more feedback will help support me and the other students to organize and better writing our papers.” Yara discussed this desire for ongoing support and discussion when she said, “I replied to the comments so we could have this discussion, I just wanted another feedback to understand more what the comments meant. I replied to your comments but I got no answer back.” When she was informed that due to time constraints the instructors were not able to respond to marginal comments more than once per week, she replied “But what about the mentors? Why aren’t they commenting it? Don’t they want to know how we struggle? What we are writing?” All of the students in the interview agreed with Yara’s questions and expressed confusion as to why the mentors rarely provided written feedback to their work. By not providing written comments to students’ work mentors were failing to enter the conversation in the way students expected them to, leading students to question if mentors were even reading their work at all.

The Impact of Previous Experiences

Zahid’s description of the assistance his mentor provided outside of class and workshop hours is a perfect example of the far-reaching accessibility and immediate feedback a
mentor can provide:

He can make time for us to meet after class not just a few minutes, he always say if you want to meet with me, of course meet with me. It is even free! He makes from his own time. He don’t have to, but he make time for us. He make sure he have time to meet with everyone. If not, he stay after class and give that person he didn't meet with the information he needs. He always say, if you want to sit and discuss with me more, be my guest.

In the above comment, “It is even free!” Zahid calls attention to an important point regarding students’ perception of working with mentors individually outside of class and workshop hours. According to survey data none of the students in the class had ever experienced this level of accessibility to help without having to pay for it. The data indicated that many students had experience working individually with a tutor and a few students had experience working individually and informally with a mentor. However, no student had experienced working with a tutor as part of a group, nor been in an environment in which they were able to receive individual assistance without providing payment. For many students the closest past experience they could relate to this present experience was a tutor-tutee relationship. Attempting to transfer their past experiences with tutors to the current situation resulted in confusion for some students. One mentor’s description of the confusion one student experienced when he met with him for individual help outside of class and workshop hours is a perfect example:

One day I offered to help him after class and since there’s a class right after ours we went to the library. I helped him read through a very complex article about his topic and after an hour we got ready to leave, but he wouldn’t let me go without giving me some money. I tried to refuse again and again telling him that I don’t do this for money and that it’s no trouble and that I already get paid by the school to do this job and he said that I get paid for workshop and class and that if he met with me outside of those times he had to pay me. He wouldn’t let me go without paying me and even told me that if I didn’t let him pay me, that he couldn’t ask for my help again outside of class.

These comments indicated that the student was attempting to transfer the appropriate behavior and patterns of participation from his previous experiences with tutors to the present
situation of working individually with the mentor. Later in the semester the mentor arranged another individual meeting with the student to help him make revisions to his final paper. The mentor again emphasized that it would be free of charge, but after the meeting the student insisted on paying for the mentor’s time. The mentor refused, saying he was compensated by the school for one hour outside of class and workshop hours. According to the mentor, “He countered that he had to pay me because if he didn’t, ‘it’s embarrassing.’ He ultimately conceded, but said that next time we met he had to pay me.” This student’s comments suggested that he was not discerning what behaviors from his previous contexts were unhelpful or not applicable to this new context. His previous experiences were likely interfering with his adaptation to the new context. Perceiving how the contexts were different may have better enabled him to transition to this new situation. The student also appeared to be attempting to re-create the mentoring relationship in such a way that he could apply the behaviors and practices he had already learned in previous tutoring situations. The student was involved in transition as he navigated the boundaries of the sometimes conflicting and contradictory activities of tutoring and mentoring. He appeared to have some resistance to re-constructing his identity as a tutee in order to become a mentee.

Another student provided insight into this potential difficulty for students by explaining the differences between the mentor-mentee relationship in this class and similar types of relationships in his native country. According to his mentor’s reflection, this student explained that in his home country people who were not instructors but were providing help to students were always provided payment. The student emphasized that this led to students’ view that people providing individual assistance “were working for the students instead of with them.” The student articulated his understanding that in this class the mentors’ job was to work with the
students which might have led to confusion for many students. This student’s comments suggested that for students from his country the experience of learning to be mentored was so different from any previous educational experiences that many of them may have been in a process of consequential transition. His reflection about the differences between “working with” and “working for” students reflects a perception of how the situations were different. This conscious reflection of the differences may have given him the ability to more easily transition into the present situation and construct a new identity as a mentee. For this student previous experiences did not seem to interfere with his ability to transition into the new activity of mentorship. The student explained that the inability to discern the difference between working with and working for students and alter their behavior accordingly could be what led some students’ to struggle with the mentorship experience. Many of them may have been falling back on the behavior learned in previous experiences with those providing them one-on-one assistance and struggling to reconstruct their skills and identities in order to become successful mentees. According to the mentor, “He said a lot of his peers expect certain kinds of treatment and behavior from these mentors as if the students were paying them a wage.” Though this student did not specify exactly what these expected behaviors were, the comment indicated that these students were attempting to re-create the mentorship relationship in order to more closely align it with previous experiences so that they might more easily apply already learned behaviors.

Many students did seem to perceive that the help they received from their mentors in class and during workshops was different from any previous experiences and adjusted their behaviors accordingly. One mentor noted that not all students had a desire to pay him for individual assistance received outside of class and workshop hours. At one point in his reflection the mentor wondered if students’ desire to pay for help had to do with cultural background. As
the mentor recorded, “This stands in stark contrast to my Asian students who constantly and consistently ask me for help outside of class or after class.” It is possible that these students’ previous social, cultural, or educational experiences may have prepared them in some way to easily adapt to this new situation. Or these students may have quickly perceived learning to be mentored to be an entirely different experience than any they had previously encountered and therefore did not attempt to re-fashion it into the image of those previous experiences. However, it is possible that a lack of previous similar experiences may have led to a lack of interference in transitioning to this new situation. For these students the transition to mentee seemed to be less consequential and therefore involved less of a struggle in adapting to the new ways of interaction and participation found in the mentor-mentee relationship.

Summary

To conclude this section we return to the question, “How do students learn to be mentored?” How did they resist or embrace the methods, identities, and possibilities created in a model of writing instruction emphasizing the distribution of expertise among instructors, mentors, and students? Overall the data indicated that students quickly picked up on a model of writing instruction emphasizing distributed expertise. In survey data the majority of students said that working with their peers was the most helpful part of the course. Their comments indicated that they viewed improving their writing as a process that required on-going collaboration. They described this collaboration as primarily taking place through their participation in the peer feedback process. Students described the importance of committing to a group of three students for the duration of the semester to jointly construct and revise their work both digitally and in-person through the peer feedback process. Students implied that more
learning was accomplished through their relationships and interactions with their peers than through interactions with their mentors.

Due to students’ perception of the integral role of collective action to their success in the course, they expressed the importance of the mentor in facilitating that action. Students often took a passive role in facilitating interactions with peers indicating the necessity of the mentor in the creation of connection and community in learning spaces comprised of very diverse learners. When the workshop became a “break room,” a place to work independently, or work individually with the mentor, students viewed it as ineffective. In students’ eyes the most effective mentors were those that were the most comfortable acting as a bridge between students and students, students and instructors, and students and academic discourse. Students did express a need for periods of individual interaction with the mentors in the form of more specific, content-based written feedback to their writing.

The data indicated that students had varying levels of success in transitioning into the mentoring relationship. Students’ inability to perceive how the current situation was different from previous ones may have resulted in their attempts to re-create the mentoring relationship in such a way that they could apply previously learned behaviors. Some students’ previous experiences were so different that the process of learning to be mentored represented a consequential transition. Students who more easily transitioned to working with mentors may have perceived the differences between previous and current situations, resulting in less interference or need to re-create the existing situation to align with previous ones. For these students the transition may have been less consequential in nature and therefore involved less of a struggle in adapting their behaviors.
CHAPTER V

FINDINGS II: HOW DO MENTORS LEARN TO MENTOR?

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the question, “How do mentors learn to mentor?” by examining the ways in which mentors resist or embrace the methods, identities, and possibilities created in a model of writing instruction emphasizing the distribution of expertise among instructors, mentors, and students. The chapter begins by examining the impact that previous experience working as an individual ESL tutor had on mentors’ experience in the current context. Next, the experiences of mentors who had previous group mentorship experience are explored. Finally, the extent to which previous experience working with ESL populations is necessary for successful ESL mentoring is questioned.

Perceptions of Mentors with ESL Tutoring Experience

Two of the mentors, Phil and Evelyn, had extensive experience tutoring ESL writers individually. Other than interning for a semester in a workshop that did not utilize an embedded mentorship model, they had no experience as group mentors. The mentors’ experiences working as tutors affected their process of learning to be a mentor in this class. Their experiences emphasized two main themes: the utilization of a tutoring model emphasizing individually assisting students, and that tutoring experience alone may not provide new mentors the skills needed for successful group mentoring.
Utilizing a Tutoring Model in the Workshop

The learning environment Phil and Evelyn created in their workshops emphasized the role of the mentor as tutor or instructor. The activities in both workshops included mentors’ instructing the whole group during mini-lessons, or mentors providing individual consultations with students about their work. These strategies in many ways replicated a traditional classroom model. While the mentor worked with individual students the other students worked independently, with little time devoted to collaboration among students. These mentors often sat at the desk at the front of the room waiting for students to seek out assistance. Kabira described the way she received help from Evelyn during the workshop: “I bring a piece of paper and write down some notes. I sit next to Evelyn’s desk and she help me out. She giving me suggestion.” Likewise, Phil described that his workshop began with a review of class material, followed by a “short talk, ten to fifteen minutes about a skill they might need,” then the remaining time was devoted to helping students individually. He explained the process of working with students in his workshop:

I sit in front of the class...it feels awkward to give lengthy feedback crouched beside them. They’ll come up to me. Someone will approach me with an in-depth question and we’ll talk for maybe fifteen minutes. I realize by doing that I’m only helping one person maybe two, but I found I can help two. They have specific questions about their papers. So I’ve been sitting with one or two and some students have never taken advantage of that, that’s fine. It’s up to them. But half repeatedly ask questions about their work.

Both Evelyn and Phil emphasized a focus on student-initiated interactions with the mentor. Though Phil explained that he did “visit the students who never approach me,” to check-in with them, he admitted to “only discuss with the students who approach me.” The students who approached him received the largest amount of his attention. Both Phil and Evelyn chose to be available at the front of the class for students to approach them for individual help.
This model of the student approaching the mentor is similar to the practice of acquiring help in the tutor-tutee relationship. Phil’s comment that “It’s up to them,” highlights his perception of the students’ responsibility in initiating the interaction for help from the mentor.

Phil questioned his level of engagement with students who did not approach him. He stated, “I wonder sometimes could I be pushing, not pushing, but more involved with students who are less advanced or should I be giving my time to those really putting effort in? Tough call with limited resources.” Phil highlighted a common dilemma for teachers who utilize a traditional pedagogical model in which the teacher is the main source of help or knowledge: ‘How can I possibly help everyone?’ These “limited resources” to which he refers - time spent working individually with the teacher/mentor/tutor - are in short supply in all group learning settings. He further illustrated his perception of his role as the main resource in helping students succeed when he stated, “I thought I was going to save the world eleven students at a time. I am far less idealistic now than I was at the beginning unfortunately. ”

The focus on the development of a personal relationship between the mentor and each student was emphasized by those with tutoring experience. Phil asserted, “Mentors must build working, personal relationships with each of their students in order to be effective and the successes that I’ve seen in the workshop are in part a result of these relationships. Mentors don’t want to fail to help their students, and the students don’t want to let their mentors down.” He perceived the mentor-mentee relationship as the primary contributor to students’ success. This is similar to a focus on the personal relationship between the tutor-tutee. Successfully mentoring students does require developing personal relationships with them. However, the emphasis on the mentor-mentee relationship as central in the workshop did not take into account the place of helping students develop relationships with each other, which was integral in the model of
writing instruction utilized in the class. In response to my question of how Phil was facilitating students’ interactions with each other, he wrote, “I don’t force them to mix, or really even encourage them to do so; while mixing is good, the primary objective of the workshop is to help them to learn to write in an academic setting.” This indicated that his perception of learning to write did not necessarily involve collaboration among students, but consisted primarily of individual instruction and assistance from the mentor.

In response to students’ frustration that not enough time was spent collaborating with other students during the workshop, the instructors met with Phil to discuss the ways in which he was implementing the collaborative models of learning emphasized in the class. In a reflection he recounted his thoughts about the meeting:

This makes me reflect on the way mentors are perceived and treated by the instructors. The teaching philosophy for [ESL academic writing] classes obviously tries to take into account the diversity within student backgrounds and make allowances when needed. Perhaps accounting for mentor diversity would also be in order. Instructors may, in fact I think usually will, assume that mentors will act as extensions of the instructor(s)’ teaching methods, beliefs, preferences, etc. I think that in most workshop activities this will be true. Mentors will bring the main classroom’s elements into the smaller meetings. But mentors bring their own experiences and backgrounds, which they unconsciously bring to bear to in the workshop.

Phil articulated his preference for mentor autonomy in the philosophy and design of the workshop space. In a workshop model in which the class and workshop are not directly connected, mentor autonomy is rarely problematic. However, the data indicated that in this embedded mentoring model in which the workshop was directly tied to the class, mentor autonomy was problematic for students. As explained in the previous chapter, students viewed the workshop as a direct extension of the academic writing class and insisted that it help them succeed at the work of the course, which involved a large amount of collaboration among students. Students became frustrated and described their workshop as ineffective when it did not
closely align with the philosophies and practices of collaborative learning emphasized in the academic writing class.

Phil indicated his opinion that students may not be comfortable with the student-centered model of learning found in the course. He stated, “I would think that international students often may be taken aback by such workshop structures [and] relationships.” Students were in fact unfamiliar with the model of distributed writing expertise utilized in the class as it differed in many ways from the more traditional models of instruction and learning they were accustomed to. However, as the data from students indicated, they quickly adapted to and accepted this new model of writing instruction, perceiving it as integral to their success in the class. Students insisted their workshops facilitate the collaborative writing practices utilized in the class. In workshops led by mentors with previous tutoring experience, in which the emphasis was on working independently, or working individually with the mentor, students viewed their workshops as less effective. They were not being provided with the time they needed to work with other students, which was a required component of the class. Though a quick acceptance of a collaborative model of writing instruction and its centrality to success in the class was evident in students, it was not as easily perceived in mentors with a tutoring background.

Transitioning from Tutoring to Mentoring

This view of the mentor as a “tutor” and as the most valuable resource, even a “savior” of sorts for students, fails to recognize and build on the resources available to students from their peers, a main goal of the academic writing class. Mentors noted that their previous experiences as individual tutors did not fully prepare them to mentor a group. Group mentoring presents challenges not present in the tutor-tutee relationship. As Phil asserted, “This [group mentoring] does require a new skill set, its own set of skills. It’s not one-on-one tutoring, but it’s
not teaching either.” Mentoring does involve working with students individually at times, but unlike individual tutoring, it also requires the ability to manage the diverse needs of a group.

The Diverse Needs of a Group

Evelyn explained some of the differences between tutoring and mentoring: “It’s more difficult [than tutoring]. I feel like I have all this responsibility to have students do things and normally I am the person who sits there with them and fixes every little detail and makes things perfect. When I’m tutoring that’s what they want.” She emphasized her role as a tutor to work with students individually to correct their errors. She went on to explain the difficulty of juggling the diverse needs and motivations of a group of students. She stated, “But with this class it’s like some people want help, some people want to do things on their own, and some people kind of feel like coming to America is one big vacation.” She also acknowledged the difficulty of working with students who may have been resistant or struggling: “So it’s a dynamic I am not used to. I’ve never had to feel like, Oh no! This student isn't catching on to what is happening, or this person isn’t doing the assignment. What do I do? This is the first time I have felt that. I haven’t had experience with students who just didn’t want to do the assignment.” Tutors often do not spend time trying to help students who are resistant, since the assumption is if they are requesting help from the tutor, they are motivated to complete the work. Evelyn explained that her tutoring experience consisted primarily of students bringing her “essays that are pretty much finished. What they are bringing in is very different from what these students are bringing in.” Her mentoring responsibilities required her to work with students at all stages of the writing process, something her tutoring experience did not. In addition, this class emphasized the content and development of students writing over linguistic features. The emphasis in Evelyn’s tutoring experience on editing students’ work to “fix every
little detail,” did not adequately prepare her to help students with the content and development of their writing in this class.

Phil also discussed his difficulty with how best to help those students who did not approach him for help. He questioned his strategy of moving around the room to check-in with students: “Just looking over their shoulders going around the room I don’t think I am making much impact.” This led him to admit that his skills from his tutoring experience did not fully prepare him to mentor. He explained, “That’s made me wonder if my approach is correct at this point, my experience as one-on-one tutor is clearly influencing my approach. But I think that's probably not the role a mentor is supposed to have, a group mentor.” He went on to explain, “I am having trouble translating the skills I need to mentor a group.”

Phil and Evelyn both expressed difficulty with reading and commenting to all of their students’ writing. Phil disclosed, “I haven’t read all their papers every submission, and certainly haven’t commented on them. I haven’t always read all their work, in a timely way. The exceptions are the students who approach me, I have read much more of theirs. It’s not uniform.” When asked if they used students’ writing to help inform what took place in each workshop, Phil and Evelyn both admitted that they did not do so. Phil stated, “No, that would be a good strategy, to read what they have, in a sense, read their minds, figure out where they are at and make a collective address based on where I see the needs. No, once again I had not seen that because I’ve been so accustomed to work one-on-one. I never thought about it.” Phil countered by again emphasizing the amount of time he spent meeting with students individually in the workshop. He said, “I have spoken with them one-on-one clearly, many times, about their individual papers, but I never thought about synthesizing some general needs.”
Providing Written Feedback

Those mentors with experience tutoring emphasized their preference for providing verbal feedback to students’ work. However, in addition to verbal feedback providing written feedback to students’ work was part of each mentor’s responsibilities. As discussed in the previous chapter, students quickly perceived the mentor’s responsibility to provide written feedback and believed written feedback was more specific than verbal. This led to students’ frustration when it was not provided. Even after directions and models from the instructors regarding giving written feedback to students, providing written comments to students’ documents proved difficult. Evelyn explained her difficulty with written feedback: “I wasn’t good at it. I’m not used to writing actual comments on people’s papers.” Her previous experience as a tutor did not require her to provide written comments to students’ work. Phil explained his preference for verbal feedback: “It’s not that I don’t see the value in written comments. The margin comments, I never totally warmed up to them. I didn’t reject them outright, but I see the value in verbal, it also fits better with my personality and the timeframes I have. The help they need, I couldn’t possibly write it out well.” He agreed with Evelyn that his previous experience contributed to his perspective. He explained, “I speak with every one of them. I am so accustomed to that personal relationship.”

A student in Evelyn’s workshop provided insight into Evelyn’s ambivalence about her role in providing written feedback. She stated, “She thinks the instructor, it’s their job to provide you with [written] comments and her job is to talk to us in person. It was easier for her to talk to us.” As a tutor Evelyn would have had the opportunity to spend extended periods of time working with and speaking to students individually. Tutors are often not directly connected to specific classes and may not be aware of instructors’ assignment criteria, leading them to be
reluctant to provide written feedback about content in fear of incorrectly advising students. As the student stated, “She doesn't want to point out stuff she is not supposed to be pointing out. She wants to talk in person, rather than commenting on your paper.”

Towards the end of the semester, Evelyn grew more confident at giving written feedback. She explained, “The marginal comments are better for me now than just telling them to do something before. Now I am in almost all of their documents every week and it’s just something I had to get used to.” She explained some of her apprehension regarding written feedback: “I wasn’t sure, am I really supposed to write in there? They were wondering what my role is, but I’m thinking I don’t know, am I really allowed to do this?” Evelyn had difficulty accepting the agency she had as a mentor to provide written feedback to students’ documents. By the end of the semester Evelyn realized the importance of her role in providing written feedback to student’s work. She said, “Now I realize, oh okay I can totally do that, this is what I’m supposed to do, I should do this!” She went on to bring up an important point: “I feel like I needed more clarity. I don’t think I was the only one that was confused about being in students’ documents and doing all these things. I think we were like, wait, we’re really supposed to go in there and comment on stuff?” This brings attention to the fact that those without previous mentoring experience needed extensive encouragement, instruction, and modeling in order to successfully acquire the agency they needed to provide effective written feedback to students’ writing.

Evelyn and Phil’s comments regarding how they organized their workshops, how they interacted with students, and how they approached students’ writing showed they were transferring the practices and mindsets they learned from tutoring into the new context of mentoring. Their experiences reflected an attempt to re-create the mentoring situation into one
in which they could use their previously learned practices. Through their extensive experiences as tutors they had both acquired conceptual agency in that particular domain. Both mentors exhibited a strong sense of reflective awareness about their practices and the knowledge gaps they felt the possessed. Transitioning from tutor to mentor represented a consequential transition as seen through their reflective struggle to reconstruct their identities and practices. Their dearth of mentoring experience left them with a lack of conceptual agency in navigating this new domain of mentoring. This lack of conceptual agency as mentors likely contributed to their struggle to alter their pedagogical approaches even when they discerned they were not effective.

Perceptions of Mentors with Group Mentoring Experience

Two of the mentors, Kyle and Ava, had extensive group mentoring experience. Much of Ava’s group mentoring experience was with ESL writers, though she had no experience as an embedded mentor. Though Kyle had extensive group mentoring experience including a semester as an embedded mentor, this was his first time mentoring ESL writers. Both mentors’ experiences as group mentors influenced their perceptions of the model of distributed expertise utilized in this academic writing class. Their perceptions emphasized two main themes: The importance of supporting a student-centered model of writing instruction, and the creation of a sense of community in the workshop. This section concludes by questioning the extent to which mentors who work within ESL writing classrooms require ESL experience in order to provide a successful workshop/mentorship experience.

Supporting a Student-Centered Model of Writing Instruction

Both mentors with group mentorship experience articulated the necessity of reading students’ writing and using it to guide each workshop, a practice that mentors with tutoring
experience did not use. Kyle explained, “I always talk from their drafts. When in doubt speak from the text.” He elaborated on how he prepared for workshop: “I prepare by skimming over their drafts [and seeing what] a lot of people seem to be having trouble with. I’ll start the workshop with discussing the things I’ve noticed they are having trouble with.” Both of the mentors with previous group mentoring experience also more easily implemented a collaborative learning model than did those mentors without group mentoring experience. Kyle explained the focus on student interaction in the workshop: “They can ask me questions, ask each other questions. I’ve got them talking to each other about similar topics. Now they are actually starting to do that.”

Ava discussed that in the beginning of the semester her job involved “helping them understand this class was different, it may require more effort,” due to the large amount of time devoted to student collaboration and revision. She described how she viewed her role: “It's become more about supporting them to become better writers and better feedback writers.” She explained her perception of students’ views of giving and receiving feedback: “When they realized they were better writers and had better ideas when they had someone to bounce things off of, that’s when feedback improved.” Her level of involvement changed as the semester progressed. She explained, “Now the support [from me] has trickled off. They are really dialed into their subject, their paper, and giving feedback to each other. Now from me they need more support with not losing focus at the last minute.” As time went on her direct support and individual assistance decreased; she gradually released more and more responsibility to the students to work with one another to complete the work of the course. As discussed in the previous chapter, Ava’s group had difficulties with intercultural dynamics and resisted working together. As the semester progressed, students began to view peer collaboration more positively
and to see its value in helping them complete the work of the course. Ava explained the change in her workshop:

Getting the work of the class done has become more important than the cultural issues. They are more demanding time to talk together and work together because though I am helpful they see it’s more helpful that they have someone else right there bouncing ideas. They want to work more within the groups I set up which were the people who have the same ideas, researching the same thing. They want to share research. Now they are realizing how important it is to identify someone to work with. They build ideas together; maybe they have a different opinion. A lot of their topics came from discussions we had as a class. We kind of ended up having all these conversations related to health topics. They each got into something from that.

Ava indicated students’ perception that successfully completing the work of the class was their highest priority, and was of greater importance than any differences they may have had. Students also perceived that they would have more success completing the work of the class if they worked together with other students.

Ava’s comments indicated that her extensive experience and knowledge of mentorship gave her the conceptual agency she needed to alter her pedagogical strategies as the semester progressed. She was able to recognize the affordances of the situation and locate and adapt resources as needed, allowing her to transfer her extensive knowledge regarding how to mentor a group into the new, and very similar context of learning how be an embedded group mentor. Ava’s alteration of her pedagogical strategies indicated some reflection on her part about her experience. However, it’s likely that the transition between this experience and previous ones was not a consequential one and therefore did not require much identity or knowledge transformation, resulting in the need for a minimal level of conscious reflection.

**Developing a Sense of Community**

Both mentors with mentorship experience articulated the central role of developing community in the workshop. Kyle emphasized the integral role students played in developing
this sense of community. He stated, “You are never gonna have the same experience in because it’s the students who make the space, not you. You help. If you’re a crappy mentor they’re not gonna function very well. At the same time you could have the best mentor in the world, but if students don’t want to do the work, then there’s not really anything [the mentor] can do.” He discussed the ways in which his group worked well together: “They are not excluding people, they are not being mean. I haven't seen that once.” Kyle attributed the success of his workshop to the presence of a sense of community. He explained, “My section, I feel like it has a lot of community in the general sense. They are comfortable with each other, comfortable with me. I have community, being with them four out of the five days of the week, we have community.”

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Kyle’s workshop had the highest level of student satisfaction and many students in the class viewed him as the most effective mentor. However, Kyle did not attribute his groups’ ability to function well together to anything he was consciously doing. He stated, “I listen to the other mentors, saying I’m having this problem, this problem, and I’m not. But I don’t think that’s anything I’m doing. I think it’s just them. They are awesome; they’ve made my job easier.” When asked to explain how he altered his mentorship strategies to mentor ESL writers he did not elaborate much, other than stating, “I am slower, patient, thorough. They want clear instructions, ‘what do I have to do? Am I done?’ I am more pragmatic in this space than in other mentorship spaces. I am more perceptive of my students in this space. I am very directive, ‘you need to do this by x, here’s how I can help.’” He explained the differences between how he went about building community in this workshop and in previous ones in which he was not embedded and worked with native speakers. He said, “I’ve gone about building [community] a different way. It’s not feel free to [complain] to me about whatever you want. It’s feel free to talk to me about the class, and feel free to
communicate with each other. They feel comfortable talking to each other. It’s a different kind of community.”

Though Kyle did not attribute students’ positive workshop/mentorship experiences to anything much that he was doing, his extensive mentorship experiences likely enabled him to develop a strong sense of community and a highly successful workshop despite the fact that he lacked training and experience with ESL writers. Even without previous experience mentoring ESL students, his extensive mentorship experience enabled him to develop the conceptual agency he needed to confidently transition to this new population of students. Kyle recognized the affordances of the situation and utilized the other mentors’ ESL experience as a resource for adapting his strategies. Even though he was now working with a new population of students, this situation did not seem to represent a consequential transition for Kyle and therefore may have not required much need for conscious reflection. Kyle’s groups’ possibly natural ability to work well together may have also contributed to a minimal need for conscious reflection regarding his approach to mentoring ESL writers. The possibility exists that because his group never had difficulties functioning he was never forced to reflect on how he may have been altering his mentoring strategies, or in what ways he could alter his strategies to work with ESL writers.

Rethinking the Necessity of ESL Training for Successfully Mentoring ESL Writers

Kyle presents an interesting case, as he was the only mentor who did not have previous pedagogical training or experience with ESL writers. He explained his initial apprehension in working with this new population: “I was intimidated by [ESL academic writing] for so long. Every semester there was at least one mentor who had a major problem class, or problem student and every single time it was [an ESL workshop] and so I thought [ESL workshop] equals scary. I shied away because of that, but lo and behold I love it.” Kyle’s
extensive mentorship experience seemed to make up for his lack of knowledge of and experience with ESL writers. In fact, it appeared to have been the key to the success of his workshop. His extensive mentorship experience provided him with the agency he needed to successfully adapt to a new population of students and create the kinds of structures, practices, and models that students perceived they needed to be successful in the class.

Kyle often mentioned the role the weekly mentor meetings played in helping him learn to mentor ESL writers. During these meetings he often asked the other mentors questions about cultural etiquette, tapping into the cultural knowledge that the others mentors possessed. Though Kyle did not have previous ESL training or experience, he was able to pick up “on the spot,” the knowledge he needed to successfully mentor ESL writers. His previous mentorship experiences gave him extensive practice and confidence in working with collaborative models of writing instruction. His knowledge and confidence in his abilities allowed him to identify what resources were available to him and quickly figure out how to use them. His comfort in navigating the mentorship domain allowed him to quickly adapt and make adjustments as needed to mentor ESL writers. His extensive mentorship experience likely contributed to his students’ high levels of satisfaction with the mentorship/workshop experience.

Despite Kyle’s ability to experientially learn how to work with ESL writers, those with extensive ESL tutoring experience did not have the same outcome. As discussed earlier both mentors with extensive ESL tutoring backgrounds had little experience or training in collaborative models of writing instruction. Though both tutors possessed a great deal of conceptual agency in working as tutors, they struggled in the transition of learning to become mentors. Even with attendance at weekly meetings where discussion about the philosophy and implementation of collaborative learning practices were discussed and modeled, picking up on
these strategies “on the spot” was difficult. Their lack of experience led to a lack of agency in their identities as mentors. It was more difficult for them to adapt their ESL experience and learn to mentor than it was for Kyle to adapt his previous mentorship experience and learn to work with ESL students. Through the process of mentoring Phil and Evelyn were learning to mentor and therefore did not possess the wealth of mentoring knowledge and experience that Kyle and Ava already did. For this reason they sometimes fell back on the more traditional teacher/tutor-centered pedagogical models they were familiar with. Their ESL tutoring experience did not fully prepare them for the kind of work the class was trying to engage students in and therefore didn’t fully prepare them for the kind of writing students needed to complete in order to be successful in the class. Successfully learning to mentor ESL academic writing students in this class was more closely connected with previous mentorship experience than with previous ESL tutoring experience.
CHAPTER VI

IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This thesis has explored students’ and mentors’ perceptions of a model of writing instruction emphasizing the distribution of expertise in an ESL context. The study is located at the intersection of three fields: ESL, composition, and embedded mentorship, in an attempt to understand the ways in which an instructional approach emphasizing distributed expertise may better support ESL composition students than more traditional instructional approaches. This final chapter includes three sections. The first summarizes the purpose and methods of this study. The second provides the implications of this study in regards to ESL pragmatism and ideology, the role of ESL experience, transfer of learning, and distributed cognition. The third section concludes with some final thoughts regarding new conceptualizations of the role of instructors.

Summary

This study began as an exploration of an alternative pedagogical approach in pursuit of more effective ways to support ESL academic writing students. As more and more non-native and non-traditional students enter higher education the need for instructional approaches that provide multiple ways “into” the curriculum must be explored. By using a model of writing instruction emphasizing the distribution of expertise and multiple avenues of participation, my co-teaching partner and I hoped to increase ESL writing students opportunities for support and success. Students’ and mentors’ perceptions of their experiences with distributed writing expertise were explored through student surveys, student/mentor interviews, mentor reflective
Few studies to date have investigated embedded mentorship in writing classrooms. Even fewer have explored students’ perceptions of mentorship, and none have focused on ESL student writers. For this reason this study sought to understand the experience through ESL students’ and mentors’ eyes with an emphasis on the following research questions:

1. *How do students learn to be mentored?* How do students resist or embrace the methods, identities, and possibilities created in a model of writing instruction emphasizing the distribution of expertise among instructors, mentors, and students?

2. *How do mentors learn to mentor?* How do mentors resist or embrace the methods, identities, and possibilities created in a model of writing instruction emphasizing the distribution of expertise among instructors, mentors, and students?

**Implications**

**Distributed Expertise: Pragmatic and Ideological**

Findings from the study concur with previous research questioning the extent to which ESL learners benefit from pedagogical approaches that are substantially different from those utilized with L1 learners. This course for ESL writers was very similar in design to composition courses designed for L1 writers at BSU. The findings indicated that the majority of students’ believed that the quality of their learning experience in this course was significantly better than in other writing courses. In addition, students’ quick acceptance of the collaborative, communicative, literacy-based model of academic writing instruction and their emphasis on the value of interaction with peers force us to strongly consider whether the traditional, teacher-dominated, pragmatic ESL writing pedagogy is the most effective approach. In fact, both
instructors in the study anecdotally noted that student’s writing in this course was the most
thoughtful and well-constructed of any of the writing they had seen in the previous three
semesters.

The field of ESL writing has aligned itself with a primarily pragmatic focus for valid
reasons. ESL researchers and instructors do have the responsibility to attend to pragmatics in
order to help students acquire the linguistic control and knowledge of conventions necessary for
access to U.S. academic communities. However, as the findings indicated, ESL students are
more than ready for an ideological approach that re-conceptualizes teacher/student relationships
and the way knowledge is created and disseminated. The course in this study would be
considered by many ESL researchers and instructors as non-pragmatic in focus, considering that
discrete language skills and grammatical topics, content common in many ESL writing classes,
were not emphasized. Students were involved in writing as a collaborative and communicative
activity in which expertise was distributed among instructors, mentors, and students. The fact
that the majority of students had not achieved native-like linguistic control did not affect their
ability or willingness to participate in an instructional model emphasizing collaboration and
shared knowledge construction. This class did not reduce the complexity of writing and writing
instruction to the learning of a series of discrete skills and production of error-free final products.
The emphasis always remained fluency first, not accuracy; thus enabling students to develop
academic literacy practices through engagement with challenging academic texts and tasks in
order to prepare them to meet the literacy expectations of the U.S. university.

The time has come for the integration of pragmatic and ideological approaches in
ESL writing pedagogy. Even in a class with an ideological focus, pragmatic concerns will
surface. An ideological/pragmatic approach must consider the pragmatics of process (the
behaviors, attitudes, and practices of successful U.S. academic writers) to be just as important as
the pragmatics of error-free final products. The course in this study created a new model for
what a pragmatic focus in ESL writing might look like through distributed writing expertise that
provided students with the support they needed “on demand” and “just in time” (Gee, 2007, p. 37). Through attending class with students, and facilitating adjunct workshops, mentors were
able to provide students practical assistance right at the point of need. Embedding mentors into
the classroom provided students with models of effective academic writing practices and habits
of mind, as well as immediate written and oral language feedback. Through participation
structures such as small-group work and peer feedback groups, students came to highly value the
immediate support and expertise their fellow students could provide. These varied participation
frameworks provided students with multiple avenues of access to the practices of the academic
community. Students came to see themselves as able to successfully collaborate with students
from other countries, cultures, and language backgrounds through scaffolded support. Students
were thus provided the best of both worlds: a pragmatic approach that could be focused on
process and at the appropriate time, product, and an ideological approach that involved students
in writing as collective, distributed, and knowledge-transforming activity; thus moving beyond
dichotomous arguments regarding an emphasis on either pragmatics or ideology. A model of
distributed expertise in ESL academic writing instruction allows for multiple avenues of
participation across contexts, cultures, and language/writing proficiency levels in ways that could
not exist in courses utilizing traditional, teacher-centered pedagogical models.

Influence of ESL Experience

The results of this study complicate our ideas about the role ESL knowledge and
training plays in effective ESL group mentoring. To a large extent, students based mentors’
effectiveness on their success in facilitating productive group interactions. Students maintained a rather passive role in working through any problems that arose in peer interactions. The role of mentors in helping students negotiate ways to effectively collaborate was central to students’ success. This would lead us to conclude that knowledge of cultural differences and strategies for facilitating connection and community is a necessity for group mentors in multilingual and multicultural situations. However, the study’s findings complicated this conclusion by forcing us to reconsider the necessity of previous ESL training and experience for acquisition of the skills necessary for successful group mentorship in ESL contexts. Training and experience with ESL students as a tutor did not result in success with mentoring ESL writers. On the other hand, a lack of ESL knowledge or experience did not prevent good mentorship from occurring. The key to high levels of student satisfaction in this context was more strongly connected with mentors’ previous mentorship experience than with previous ESL experience. Those with extensive mentorship experience possessed the skills necessary to adapt to mentoring ESL students. This leads to the need for future research on the specific types of ESL knowledge and training that are necessary for success in ESL mentoring situations.

Transfer of Learning

The findings of this study concur with much of what is known about the transfer of learning. The data did indicate evidence for transfer in the process of learning to mentor and be mentored. However, it was determined that the common definition of transfer as “the application of the knowledge learned in one context to a new context” (Lobato, 2006, p. 436) was too narrow in scope for the purpose of understanding transfer in the context of this study. Instead, a more relaxed definition of transfer was more appropriate: “Relations between what people learn and can do in different situations” (Marton, 2006, p. 510). As the findings revealed, there was
evidence of the metacognitive reflection viewed as crucial to cognitive theorists for high-road transfer among mentors and students. However, this metacognitive reflection did not result from awareness of similarities between the current and previous situations as many theorists claim it does. The findings indicated that the majority of metacognitive reflection came in the form of recognition of perceived differences between prior contexts and the current one, thus supporting Marton’s (2006) emphasis on the importance of perception of difference, and not just similarity, in transfer.

The data also showed evidence of Bereiter’s (1995) theory of transfer of situations. The mentors who were also tutors created their workshops with an emphasis on tutoring practices, indicating their desire to create a situation in which they could utilize what they had already learned as tutors. In a similar way, students who approached their mentor as someone working for them rather than with them were seeking to fashion the mentor-mentee relationship into one that more closely aligned with the principles and behaviors they had already learned from previous experiences. In both cases, mentors and mentees were seeking to re-create the current situation in order to facilitate the transfer of their previous knowledge and ways of interacting.

Cognitive theories of transfer, with their general emphasis on the role of individual metacognition and the transfer of tasks across similar contexts, did not prove adequate for understanding the type of transfer of learning that occurred in this context. The findings from this study more strongly supported situated views of transfer in which the metaphor for learning is not transfer, but participation. The findings validated Greeno’s (2006) emphasis on the individual’s positioning in the interaction, with transfer viewed as an inherently authoritative action. Kyle and Ava’s extensive mentorship experiences allowed them the recurring patterns of
social practice necessary to facilitate participation. Through extensive participation as mentors they were involved in the “connected knowing” or domain knowledge they needed in order to develop conceptual agency (Greeno, 2006, p. 540). This allowed them to confidently navigate their new situations, finding and accessing the resources or affordances available. This conceptual agency led to their perceived authority to use, alter, or combine these resources in novel ways. As a result of not having extensive opportunities for participation as mentors, Evelyn, Phil, and Nigel did not have the opportunity to develop the participatory identity necessary to attain conceptual agency as mentors, leading them to refashion their roles as mentors to more closely align with their identities as tutors, an identity in which they possessed much more conceptual agency.

In the same way, students’ lack of prior group mentorship experience resulted in a lack of conceptual agency and authoritative positioning in their role as mentees. Those students who did possess some level of agency appeared to be successfully discerning differences and similarities between previous tutoring or group learning situations and the current situation and altering their behavior accordingly. Most likely, mentors’ and students’ participatory identities and conceptual agency would further develop with continued mentorship experiences. The findings indicated that learning to mentor and be mentored is a by-product of extensive productive activity. The knowledge necessary for successful participation is so context-specific that it can only be obtained through actual participation in the practice. For this reason, those lacking previous mentorship experience cannot be considered prepared for group mentoring “right out of the gate.” They will need multiple means of support and access to practice as they learn to mentor and be mentored. This leads us to question how we can create spaces that
facilitate more authoritative positioning of mentors and students as they develop conceptual agency and more expert forms of participation.

Understanding transfer of learning in this study extended beyond just exploring forms of participation. The findings supported Beach’s (1999) reconceptualization of transfer as a process of transition or transformation. The focus was not just the transformation of knowledge or skills, but identity as well. Rather than just applying knowledge, mentors and students were involved in reconstructing their relationship to the learning context. For some, the current situation was so different that it began a process of consequential transition. Both Phil and Evelyn were involved in conscious, reflective struggle to reconstruct their knowledge as tutors in order to become something new - mentors. Some students also appeared to be involved in consequential transition. They were consciously struggling to reconstruct their knowledge of previous situations in which someone was working for them into the new situation in which someone was working with them. This required a shift in their identity as students and a creation of new identities as mentees. For several students and mentors, this construction of a new identity was resisted, which must be considered a natural part of the development of their new identities. For Kyle and Ava, their current and previous experiences as mentors were so similar that they could not be described as being in a state of consequential transition. Moving forward we must explore how we can provide support to students and mentors who are in the process of a consequential transition, negotiating the boundaries of sometimes conflicting identities as they learn to mentor and be mentored.

The data supported activity-theorists views of transfer as a process not only related to individual action, but to collective activity within and across situations as well. Members of this cohort of mentors possessed several areas of expertise: group mentoring, embedded mentoring,
tutoring, and multilingual/multicultural sensitivity. As seen in the weekly mentor meetings, each person acted as a “boundary-cropper,” bringing new tools and insights to the group. These collective capabilities and resources could be pulled together to create new practices for mentoring ESL writers. In the same way, students in each workshop group acted as boundary-crossers, navigating relationships with each other, course content, and instructors, all through the support of the mentors, who in many ways were pivotal to the transition and transformation of students’ identities as they learned to be mentored. In the same way, feedback and input from students was crucial in mentors’ developmental process of learning to mentor. An instructional model emphasizing distributed expertise is better positioned than more traditional models for creating “boundary crossers” and the collective activity and transformation necessary for transfer of learning. As we move forward, our sights must be focused on how to best support participation in the collective, boundary-crossing activity that is part of all good teaching and learning.

Distributing Cognition through Relationships

The results of this study affirm much of what is already known about the distribution of cognition: that individuals use tools, people, and features of the environment to learn and make meaning. In fact, proponents of the theory of distributed cognition argue that it occurs everywhere, all the time, often without any conscious awareness on the part of the individual. Nevertheless, even if we agree that it occurs all the time, or predict that it will occur, we can’t understand exactly how it works until we study it within particular contexts. This will allow us to determine how distributed cognition is enacted in particular situations. The elements of distributed cognition operating in one space may be very different than those operating in another. The data in this study provided ample evidence of the distribution of cognition.
However, the findings showed that certain elements of distributed cognition were more integral to learning to mentor and be mentored than others.

Much of the research on distributed cognition has emphasized the role of tools and the material environment as the means in which individuals off-load their cognition and cede executive function in order to complete certain tasks. However, this study’s findings indicated that tools and the material environment did not play as great a role in the process of learning to mentor and be mentored. The key element involved in the distribution of cognition in the process of learning to mentor and be mentored was participation in relationships. Learning to mentor and be mentored was distributed across participation in various kinds relationships present in the class environment: student-student, student-mentor, mentor-mentor, instructor-mentor, and instructor-student. Expertise regarding how to mentor or be mentored was not consolidated in one individual or in one type of relationship. The process of learning to mentor and be mentored occurred through bi-directional expertise within, across, and at the boundaries of relationships.

The distribution of learning across relationships contributed to the co-construction of the new identities needed to successfully mentor and be mentored. Learning to mentor and be mentored had much to do with learning to become someone or something new. Some mentors had to learn to see themselves and their students differently in order to mentor students more effectively. It was only through the input of students, other mentors, or the instructors, that mentors realized that what they were doing was or was not working. Relationships with other mentors and the instructors also allowed mentors the opportunity to “think through” and potentially re-construct their practices or mindsets through shared expertise. In a similar way, most students had to learn to become someone new in order to be mentored. The ability to learn
the new role of mentee was facilitated through the questioning, conversation, and negotiation that took place through interactions with other students, mentors, and instructors. The co-construction of the knowledge, behaviors, and identities that mentors and students needed in order to successfully learn to mentor and be mentored were primarily found in the relationships they participated in.

Distributed Expertise as Boundary Crossing

Learning to mentor and be mentored had much to do with questioning, crossing, and transforming existing boundaries in teaching and learning. Up to this point, the discussion has primarily focused on the ways in which students and mentors enacted this boundary crossing activity. But what role do instructors play in boundary crossing? The co-instructors in this class were also involved in a process of transformation as we questioned existing ESL writing pedagogical practices and sought collectively to redesign them. We were learning to participate in a distributed model of expertise along with mentors and students. Our own identities as instructors were transforming as the boundaries between instructors, students, and mentors were reconceived. A model of distributed expertise leads to a reconceptualization of the role of the instructor. Instructors no longer act solely as deliverers of content, concerned with transferring knowledge from their minds to students’ minds. The instructor becomes a member of a team of individuals who are collectively creating new practices; a designer of learning environments that provide multiple avenues for access to practice and participation. As stated in chapter 1, the growing number of non-native and non-traditional students in higher education calls for investigation into instructional approaches that provide multiple ways “into” the curriculum and a reconceptualization of the role of the instructor. A model of writing instruction emphasizing
distributed writing expertise and multiples avenues of participation such as small groups, workshops, and mentorship, holds great potential for providing ESL students the extra support they need for increased success.
REFERENCES
References


APPENDIX A
Student Interview Protocol - Initial Group Interview
(40 minutes)

Disclaimer:

The goal of this study is to achieve greater understanding of students’ and mentors’ perceptions of a model of academic writing instruction utilizing distributed expertise including embedded mentorship and adjunct workshops. Additionally, this study attempts to uncover the specific ways in which embedded mentors help and/or hinder students. This interview will be audio-recorded, but all information will be kept confidential. Your name will not be used in any report or dissemination of the data.

Questions:
1. Tell us a little about yourself. How did you end up at Chico State?
2. Have you worked with mentors within a class before? If so, how was it the same or different?
3. How are you doing at figuring out what’s due, getting through the reading assignments, figuring out how to accomplish the assignments?
4. Can you tell us about a time your mentor was very helpful to you?
5. Are there things you feel you need help with that you are not getting help with right now?
6. Let’s talk a little about your Rhetorical Analysis papers and how your mentors provided you with support or ways they could have provide you with more support.
LEARNING TO MENTOR AND BE MENTORED:
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COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

Student Interview Protocol - Second Group Interview
(40 minutes)

Disclaimer:

The goal of this study is to achieve greater understanding of students’ and mentors’ perceptions of a model of academic writing instruction utilizing distributed expertise including embedded mentorship and adjunct workshops. Additionally, this study attempts to uncover the specific ways in which embedded mentors help and/or hinder students. This interview will be audio-recorded, but all information will be kept confidential. Your name will not be used in any report or dissemination of the data.

Questions:

1. Please clarify your understanding of the mentor’s roles. What do you think they are there to do?
2. Some students are coming to Mollie and I and saying “We are not doing anything in there. We don't do anything in the workshops.” How much you think it is the mentor’s responsibility to plan the workshop? Should students have any responsibility in playing a part in deciding how the workshop is going to go? Are students responsible for coming with ideas for what they don’t understand or need specific help with?
3. How is your research going? How are mentors modeling the process or helping you navigate that process?
4. What kinds of activities have they been doing in workshops to help you with your research?
5. How are the small group dynamics going? Last time some of you discussed how you felt ignored by your peers or even your mentor? How is that going?
Disclaimer:

The goal of this study is to achieve greater understanding of students’ and mentors’ perceptions of a model of academic writing instruction utilizing distributed expertise including embedded mentorship, adjunct workshops, and small group work. Additionally, this study attempts to uncover the specific ways in which embedded mentors help and/or hinder students. This interview will be audio-recorded, but all information will be kept confidential. Your name will not be used in any report or dissemination of the data.

Questions:

1. How are your groups and your mentors helping you as we are starting to write the problem/solution paper?
2. How helpful you are finding peer feedback?
3. How helpful do you think interacting with others is in the process of writing?
LEARNING TO MENTOR AND BE MENTORED: DISTRIBUTED EXPERTISE IN AN ESL COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

Student Interview Protocol - Individual Interview
(30 minutes)

Disclaimer:

The goal of this study is to achieve greater understanding of students’ and mentors’ perceptions of a model of academic writing instruction utilizing distributed expertise including embedded mentorship, adjunct workshops, and small group work. Additionally, this study attempts to uncover the specific ways in which embedded mentors help and/or hinder students. This interview will be audio-recorded, but all information will be kept confidential. Your name will not be used in any report or dissemination of the data.

Questions:
1. What do you feel is the greatest benefit to you of working with a mentor?
2. Tell me about a time your mentor was particularly helpful to you or to your group.
3. Let’s talk about your problem/solution paper. Walk me through when, how, and from whom you got support for writing this.
4. What kind of support do you need now to get you where you need to be with this paper?
LEARNING TO MENTOR AND BE MENTORED:
DISTRIBUTED EXPERTISE IN AN ESL COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

Mentor Individual Interview Protocol
(40 minutes)

Disclaimer:

The goal of this study is to achieve greater understanding of students’ and mentors’ perceptions of a model of academic writing instruction utilizing distributed expertise including embedded mentorship, adjunct workshops, and small group work. Additionally, this study attempts to uncover the specific ways in which embedded mentors help and/or hinder students. This interview will be audio-recorded, but all information will be kept confidential. Your name will not be used in any report or dissemination of the data.

Questions:
1. What types of mentoring or tutoring experiences did you have prior to working in this class? How are they different from the work you are doing in this class?
2. What do you believe is your role as a mentor? How do you enact that role?
3. Walk me through what takes place in a typical workshop meeting.
4. What do you think students need the most support with?
5. What do you think is the greatest benefit to students of working with a mentor?
6. Do you use students’ writing to inform what you are going to do in workshop? If so, how? What else do you use to inform what takes place in the workshop?
7. Have you been in a position in which you gave students written feedback to their writing before?
8. What is your approach to giving feedback? Do you find anything about it difficult?
9. Is there anything about being embedded in the class that you find difficult? In what ways does it benefit you and the students?
LEARNING TO MENTOR AND BE MENTORED:
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COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

Mid-Semester Survey (adapted from Henry, Bruland, Sano-Franchini, 2011)

This survey will be completed mid-way through the semester, using the digital platform Google Forms.

1) What is the role of mentors in this course? (open answer)

2) Please indicate how often your mentor has helped you with the following aspects of your writing: Likert scale 1 (never) - 5 (frequently)
   - choosing a problem to research
   - generating ideas for a paper's content
   - finding sources (documentaries, TED talks, news articles, academic articles)
   - incorporating sources into a paper
   - clarifying the paper’s purpose or arguments
   - organizing the paper more effectively
   - refining grammar, sentence mechanics, or MLA
   - giving/receiving peer feedback
   - providing you with feedback for revision
   - Other:

3) Please indicate how often your mentor has helped you with the following aspects of this course: Likert scale 1 (never) - 5 (frequently)
   - understanding an assignment’s requirements
   - understanding material covered in class (the lecture)
   - understanding the course readings
   - dividing the work among classmates in small groups
   - approaching instructors with concerns, questions, or comments
   - upholding course practices and responsibilities
   - utilizing course technology (google docs, course website, twitter)
   - understanding instructors' comments, directions, or feedback
   - sharing your ideas and speaking with your small group
   - sharing your ideas and speaking to the whole class
   - dealing with interpersonal conflicts with other classmates
   - Other:

4) Please indicate how often your mentor has helped you in general with being a university student: Likert scale 1 (never) - 5 (frequently)
   - connecting to university resources (i.e.: library, search engines, websites, student health center, career counseling, etc.)
   - acquiring skills in time management and personal organization
   - handling issues of college and personal life not directly related to English 130
   - Other:
5) Overall, how would you rate your level of satisfaction with the support your mentor is providing?
   • very satisfied
   • satisfied
   • not sure
   • unsatisfied
   • very unsatisfied

6) Please describe the specific ways in which your mentor is most helpful. (open-answer)

7) Please describe the ways your mentor could better support you. (open-answer)
End of Semester Survey (adapted from Henry, Bruland, Sano-Franchini, 2011)

This survey will be completed at the end of the semester, using the digital platform Google Forms.

1. What is the role of mentors in this course? (open answer)

2. Please indicate how often your mentor has helped you with the following aspects of your writing: Likert scale 1 (never) - 5 (frequently)
   - choosing a problem to research
   - generating ideas for a paper's content
   - finding sources (documentaries, TED talks, news articles, academic articles)
   - incorporating sources into a paper
   - clarifying the paper’s purpose or arguments
   - organizing the paper more effectively
   - refining grammar, sentence mechanics, or MLA
   - giving/receiving peer feedback
   - providing you with feedback for revision
   - Other:

3. Please indicate how often your mentor has helped you with the following aspects of this course: Likert scale 1 (never) - 5 (frequently)
   - understanding an assignment’s requirements
   - understanding grading criteria
   - understanding material covered in class (the lecture)
   - understanding the course readings
   - dividing the work among classmates in small groups
   - approaching instructors with concerns, questions, or comments
   - upholding course practices and responsibilities
   - utilizing course technology (google docs, course website, twitter)
   - understanding instructors' comments, directions, or feedback
   - sharing your ideas and speaking with your small group
   - sharing your ideas and speaking to the whole class
   - dealing with interpersonal conflicts with other classmates
   - Other:

4. Please indicate how often your mentor has helped you in general with being a university student: Likert scale 1 (never) - 5 (frequently)
   - connecting to university resources (i.e.: library, search engines, websites, student health center, career counseling, etc.)
   - acquiring skills in time management and personal organization
   - handling issues of college and personal life not directly related to English 130
   - Other:
5. Overall, how would you rate your level of satisfaction with the help your mentor provided during the large class?
   - very satisfied
   - satisfied
   - not sure
   - unsatisfied
   - very unsatisfied

6. Please provide specific examples of how your mentor was helpful during the large class. (open answer)

7. Please provide specific examples of how your mentor could have been more helpful during the large class. (open answer)

8. Overall, how would you rate your level of satisfaction with the support your mentor provided in the workshop?
   - very satisfied
   - satisfied
   - not sure
   - unsatisfied
   - very unsatisfied

9. Please provide specific examples of the ways your mentor made the workshop a helpful experience for you. (open answer)

10. Please provide specific examples of the ways your mentor could have made the workshop more helpful to you. (open answer)

11. What challenges did you have in working with a mentor? (open answer)

12. Overall, how would you rate your level of satisfaction with your learning experience in English 130E?
   - very satisfied
   - satisfied
   - not sure
   - unsatisfied
   - very unsatisfied

13. How did the quality of your learning experience in this class compare with the quality of your learning experience in your other classes?
   - significantly better
   - better
   - about the same
   - worse
   - significantly worse

14. In what specific ways did you find the learning environment in this class to be most helpful? (open answer)

15. In what specific ways could the learning environment in this course be improved? (open answer)
APPENDIX C
My name is Chelsea Sliffe and I am a graduate student in the Education Department at Chico State and an English 130 instructor. I am conducting a study on integrating embedded mentors into First-Year Composition classrooms. This research study - “A Community Approach to Teaching International Students in the First-Year Composition Classroom” - seeks to achieve a greater understanding of how utilizing embedded mentors affects the development of the academic and inter-cultural identities of international students. Additionally, this study attempts to uncover the specific ways in which embedded mentors help and/or hinder students.

To help me understand and evaluate students’ experiences working and learning in a classroom utilizing embedded mentors, I will be collecting my own and mentor field notes, and administering entrance and exit surveys. I am writing to request your permission to allow me to use field notes and survey data for the purpose of studying this course. In addition, selected students may choose to participate in focus group meetings two times per month to discuss their experiences working with mentors in this course. Meetings will be audio recorded. For those students and mentors participating in meetings I request your permission to analyze the recorded data. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from this study at any time. Only with your permission will I use survey data or meeting information. There are no anticipated risks or benefits to you if you choose to participate.

If you give your permission, I will analyze surveys, field notes, and the audio recordings from meetings in order to improve the teaching of First-Year Composition. All of the information that I obtain from surveys, field notes, and meetings will be kept completely confidential. I will store the audio recordings in a locked cabinet and field notes and survey data in a password protected file. A pseudonym will be used with all data so that your name is never associated with your data. I will not use your name or identifying information in any presentations or published findings of my research. After this research is completed, I may save my notes and the audio recordings for use in future research by myself or others. However, the same confidentiality guarantees given here will apply to future storage and use of the materials.

Please sign below to indicate that you agree that I may collect and analyze survey data and field notes, and for those choosing to participate in meetings, audio recordings. Your participation is very important as it will help improve First-Year Composition courses for future students. Thank you in advance for your assistance. If you have any concerns or questions about this request, please do not hesitate to contact me at csliffe@mail.csuchico.edu.

I have read and agree to this consent form.
__________________________
Signature

__________________________
Date

__________________________
Print Name
APPENDIX D
Since we believe that the writing process happens best in collaboration with others, you will be working with your peers each class to share and invent ideas and receive feedback to your work. Providing your peers’ with written and verbal feedback is an important part of this course. You may feel that you don’t have the authority to offer feedback because you are not an “expert.” However, all you need to offer effective feedback is a willingness to read and listen thoughtfully, and to share and receive ideas and suggestions. All of your work will be read and responded to not only by your instructors and mentors, but by your peers as well. The steps of the peer feedback process include the following:

Step 1: Comment on Your Own Draft
- Write marginal comments (using the comment function in Google Docs) in which you point to places in your text where you need help or have questions.

Step 2: Compose Memo
- The memo is for your peers and the instructor.
- Write it at the top of the first page of your paper.
- Address 3-5 issues of concern.
- Focus on the purpose of the assignment.
- You can include general questions about the assignment, but also address specific places in the paper that you are struggling with.

Step 3: Comment to 2 Peers’ Drafts
- Share your draft with 2 peers via Google Docs.
- Read the entire paper 1 time without commenting.
- Provide marginal comments on the 2nd reading.
- Do not point out grammar/spelling errors unless they interfere with meaning.

Step 4: Compose Response to Reading
- Write a paragraph at the end of your peers’ papers responding directly to the concerns they mentioned in their memos.
- Give 3-5 helpful suggestions.
- In particular think about:
  - How successful is the writer at clearly presenting his/her claim?
  - How well does the writer develop that claim?
  - How well are the arguments/main ideas supported?
○ Are there places in the text where the author needs more support? Needs to be more clear? More convincing? Or provide more explanation?

Step 5: Revise Based on Peer Feedback
● Do not delete or resolve marginal comments unless it happens as a result of removing the highlighted text.
● Revise based on your peers’ comments or justify in the marginal comments why you chose not to revise.

A FEW TIPS

● Provide positive feedback, but explain what the writer is doing well and how it succeeds. Explaining how and why a passage of text works benefits both the writer and the reviewer.

● Provide constructive, critical feedback. Students are often uncomfortable giving critical feedback. These are drafts, and all drafts can be improved. They require honest, engaged, critical feedback in order to improve.

● Don’t just locate problems; try to provide suggestions for how the writer might address them.