Six adult university Esl students' perspectives of dialogue journal writing: A multiple case study

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Six adult university ESL students' perspectives of dialogue journal writing: A multiple case study

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University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 1994
SIX ADULT UNIVERSITY ESL STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES
OF DIALOGUE JOURNAL WRITING:
A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY

by

Vicki L. Holmes

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

in

Instructional and Curricular Studies

Department of Instructional and Curricular Studies
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May, 1994
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ABSTRACT

To provide insight into adult university ESL students’ perspectives of dialogue journal writing and of their changing views of themselves as writers, a fifteen-week multiple case study was conducted, with student interviews and dialogue journal entries providing the primary sources of data. Grounded in social interactionism and cognitivism, and viewed from the perspectives of the students, this study attempted to add to the growing body of research about dialogue journal writing with speakers of English as a second language.

Six ESL students representing five different cultures and ranging in age from 18 to 33 participated in the study. Each participant wrote and exchanged journal entries with the teacher 11 times during the semester, and interviewed with the investigator four times. These dialogue journal entries and interview transcripts yielded five salient themes inductively derived from the data: 1) Interpersonal Perspectives, 2) Intrapersonal Perspectives, 3) Developmental Perspectives, 4) Self as Thinker, and 5) Self as Competent User of English.

Data revealed that the six students in this study valued writing interactively with the teacher. First, the
dialogue journal writing permitted students to exchange information and feelings with the teacher in a way that enhanced their relationship with her. Second, students valued writing expressively about their own topics, using this opportunity to examine issues and problems in their lives. Third, students experienced improvement in their writing products, which increased their motivation to write. Finally, students changed their views of themselves as writers through the process of interactive writing. As a result, they saw themselves as better thinkers and users of the English language.

Questions raised as a result of this study suggest the need for further research to 1) explore the perspectives of larger samples of similar populations; 2) investigate the relationship that gender, ethnicity, and learning style has to dialogue journal writing; 3) examine the role of error correction in interactive writing; and 4) discover the point in writing development that dialogue journal writing is most efficacious.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many who have assisted in bringing this project to fruition. Most notable are my two chairpersons, Dr. Martha Young and Dr. Rebecca Mills, each of whom, with her own special gifts, guided and instructed me in the process. I am also grateful to committee members, Dr. Steve Grubaugh, Dr. Stan Zehm, and Dr. Paul Jones for their advice and patience in the reading of my drafts. A very special debt of gratitude also goes to my friend and colleague, Cookie Moulton, whose contributions made this project possible. Acting as a sounding-board, reader, and confidante, she saw me through some of the "rough spots." Richard Brickman also receives my thanks for his skillful computer interpretations of my figures.

To the six students who shared their visions with me, I am also grateful. Through their words I was able to glimpse a bit of their reality.

Finally, no one encouraged me more than my husband and friend, Bill Brannon, who endured reading countless drafts, eating untold numbers of fast-food dinners, and spending many nights alone as I completed this project. His loving support sustained me.

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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

Introduction to the Problem

Enrollment of international students as well as recent immigrants in American universities and colleges soared in 1992. Some 419,585 foreign nationals, 8,300 refugees, and immigrants representing approximately 11% of the total student population, pursued education in American institutions of higher learning (Zikopoulos, 1992). Speaking languages other than English, many of these English as a second language (ESL) students bear the burden of learning to speak, read, and write English at the same time they are developing composing skills, a task which researchers note has been historically underestimated (Jones, 1991; Leki, 1992; Staton, 1991). Learning to create meaning in writing appears to be more difficult for ESL students than learning to create meaning in spoken words; yet, much of the research on language acquisition has focused on oral language rather than on written communication (Beebe, 1988; Johnson & Roen, 1989; Kroll, 1990, Silva, 1990).

In my role as a veteran ESL teacher and director of a university ESL program, I am increasingly aware of the difficulties ESL students face in learning to write in
English. At conferences and professional meetings, the ESL community demonstrates concern for these difficulties with a proliferation of sessions devoted to the teaching of writing. Recent journals, too, focus attention on the task of discovering what conditions, what processes, and what tasks nurture the ESL writer. Studies in sociolinguistics, second language (L2) composition and rhetoric, adult learning, and language acquisition suggest theories and practices which inform the teaching of writing to adult second language learners. Out of this body of research emerges a theory-based classroom task that both researchers and practitioners suggest has application in the teaching of writing to L2 students--dialogue journal writing.

Since 1983, I have developed strategies to use dialogue journal writing in the teaching of composition. Other ESL teachers are doing the same, and dialogue journal writing, an interactive process in which the teacher and student communicate or "dialogue" in writing, is gaining the attention of the L2 research community (see for example Johns, 1991; Johnson & Roen, 1989; Peyton, Staton, Richardson & Wolfram, 1990). In recent years both L1 and L2 researchers have suggested that dialogue journal writing enhances the acquisition of written language by bridging the gap between oral and written discourse and by providing a context for authentic communication (Gutstein, 1987;
Kreeft, 1984; Peyton et al., 1990; Staton, Shuy, Peyton, & Reed, 1988). Dialogue journal studies, however, thus far focus on only a few populations and represent the views of a small group of the same researchers. (The limitations of current dialogue journal research are discussed further in this chapter and in Chapter 2.) Thus, little is known about the process and benefits of dialogue journal writing with adult ESL students in higher education, a setting in which academic success is often determined by the ability to communicate well in writing (Johns, 1991; Wigfield, 1991).

To better understand the process and benefits of dialogue journal writing with adult university ESL students, I focused my investigation on the students’ views of themselves as writers and on their reflections about the process of dialogue journal communication during one fifteen week semester. My purpose was to explore interactive dialogue journal writing with adult ESL students by viewing the process in a natural learning environment in which student views could be recorded in their own words and where dialogue text could be analyzed in the context of authentic communication.

Background and Significance of the Problem

Until the last decade, most second language (L2) composition researchers viewed the problems faced by L2 writers to be linguistic rather than affective or cognitive.
(Kroll, 1979; Silva, 1991; Zamel, 1976). These problems, it was suggested, could be overcome if learners simply became better processors of the linguistic system of the new language; in other words, if learners could just master more vocabulary and a larger variety of syntactic patterns, they would become fluent writers (Paulston & Dykstra, 1973; Silva, 1990). Operating under a structuralist view of language acquisition (Leki, 1992), researchers and practitioners assumed that language was easily divisible into discrete elements that could be mastered in small pieces. Thus, classroom writing tasks often involved manipulating prewritten text, applying grammatical rules, and combining sentences, activities which provided students the opportunity to try different syntactic options (O'Hare, 1973; Pack & Henrichsen, 1980).

More recent L2 composition studies, following the lead of first language (L1) writing research (Emig, 1971; Zamel, 1976), emphasize the writer and the process of composing (Arndt, 1987; and Kroll, 1990; Raimes, 1985; Zamel, 1983). Raimes (1985) notes that the attention research has focused on the writer as "language learner and creator of text" has given rise to a "process approach" characterized by "a range of classroom tasks" which often downplay linguistic accuracy as writers learn to communicate in writing (p. 409). These classroom tasks, it is theorized, create
learning experiences which emphasize social interaction and
dialogue (Bruner, 1981; Edelsky, 1991; Long & Porter, 1985), content over form (Raimes, 1983; Zamel, 1983),
cognitive processes (Krapels, 1991; Friedlander, 1991) and
expressionism (Elbow, 1981; Urzua, 1987) as key components
of the process of learning to communicate in writing. The
basic assumption of L2 process theory and practice, notes
Silva (1990), is that writing is essentially
"contextualized communicative interaction, which involves
both the construction and transmission of knowledge" (p.
18).

In the last decade, dialogue journal writing has emerged as a classroom activity which researchers suggest supports the writing process by engaging writing partners in a two-way written interaction that encourages authentic communication (Peyton, 1990; Peyton et al., 1990; Peyton & Reed, 1990; Staton et al., 1988). Unlike personal journal writing, which is essentially a private written communication with oneself (Lucas, 1990), dialogue journal writing involves turn-taking in which participants, typically the teacher and a student, exchange information in writing. These dialogues usually extend over an entire semester or year of instruction and are generally collected in notebooks, although other formats such as computer networking are becoming more common (Sayers, 1986).
In the last several years, the benefits of dialogue journal writing with both L1 and L2 populations is attracting researchers' attentions (Peyton, 1990; Peyton & Reed, 1990; Peyton & Seyoum, 1989; Peyton & Staton, 1991; Peyton et al., 1990; Staton et al., 1988). Studies examining language functions (Shuy, 1988), the speaking-to-writing connection (Peyton, 1988), teacher-student rapport (Reed, 1988), the effects of teacher responses (Peyton & Seyoum, 1989) and the acquisition of grammatical morphology in dialogue journals (Kreeft, 1984) attempt to answer many critical questions. These studies serve to move dialogue journal writing away from its origins as a teacher-invented classroom task into the research arena where it is solidly grounded in theory. The theories most often cited in dialogue journal research come from social interactionism (Freire, 1973; Krashen, 1987; Spolsky, 1989; Vygotsky, 1978). Constructivism (Bruner, 1986; Langer & Applebee, 1987), cognitivism (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Zamel, 1983), and expressionism (Elbow, 1981; Urzua, 1986) are also often mentioned.

**Theoretical Foundations**

Many, if not most, dialogue journal studies base their investigations on social interaction theory. Social interactionism theorizes that all language acquisition is mediated through the process of interaction with others.
(Vygotsky, 1978). In various studies in recent years (Cazden, 1981; Hatch, 1983; Long, 1980) researchers suggest that social interaction is essential in the process of both first and second language acquisition. Freire (1973), on the other hand, calls this interaction "dialogic" and claims that dialogic relationships between teachers and students in which both partners share equal status provide the social context for all learning (p. 52). In the process of interacting, or dialoguing, with a more competent user of the language, Freire (1973) suggests that learners begin to internalize language. Researchers claim that dialogue journals are one way of bringing Freire's and Vygotsky's models of social interaction (Peyton & Reed, 1990; Peyton & Staton, 1991; Staton et al., 1988) into the classroom, making overt for teachers and students the notion that writing is an interactive form of communication.

Vygotsky's (1978) and Freire's (1973) theories provide a link between social interactionism and cognitivism in dialogue journal studies. The developmental theories of Vygotsky (1978) suggest that in the process of writing ideas, students engage in internalized talk which permits them to sort out their own ideas. Through self-talk writers engage in metacognitive strategies that allow them to make sense out of their own experiences and to discover and create knowledge for themselves. The teacher provides
guided assistance via a process which is often called "interactional scaffolding" (Cazden, 1981). In dialogue journal writing, scaffolding often is represented by embedded assistance in the form of correct modeling of linguistic forms or sharing of personal cognitive processes. The teacher models, and the students internalize.

Much like Vygotksy's model, Freire's (1973) dialogic model portrays students taking charge of their own cognitive processes through the use of "problem posing" as described by Berthoff (1990) and Graman (1988). In problem posing the students respond to open-ended questioning, generating their own solutions while engaging in self-directed learning.

Dialogue journal researchers suggest that interactive dialogue writing assists students in both formulating and solving their own problems in accordance with Freire's model (Peyton & Staton, 1991; Staton et al., 1988). The teacher, or dialogue partner, who shares in this written conversation, provides a sounding board for students to test their solutions in writing, with the teacher giving assistance as necessary. Through the dialogues, it is theorized, students take ownership of their learning, for they define their personal boundaries by posing the problems themselves.
As in many dialogue journal studies, the theoretical perspectives of social interactionism and cognitivism provide the framework for this study and guide the collection of data. The role of writers as interactants who dialogue with their readers and as thinkers who reflect on their own cognitive processes provides the focus for this study. In this study, I attempt to extend existing theory by capturing the process of dialogue journal writing from the perspective of those to whom it may have the most significance, the students.

Grounded in social interactionism and cognitivism and viewed from the perspective of the students, this study attempts to add to the growing body of research about dialogue journal writing with ESL adults.

**Need for the Study**

Most dialogue journal studies examine only L1, kindergarten through eighth grade (K-8) populations. Furthermore, they limit their investigations to an analysis of dialogue journal text and to the teachers' or researchers' perspectives of the cognitive and affective processes involved in dialogue journal writing.

Few studies investigate the process of dialogue journal writing with adult English as a second language (ESL) students in an academic setting (Gutstein, 1987 and Lucas, 1990). Furthermore, little is known about the
cognitive and affective benefits of interactive writing with adult ESL students in a higher education setting. Finally, to date no study has investigated dialogue journal writing from the adult ESL student's perspective. For these reasons, several questions arise. Do the benefits ascribed to dialogue journal writing by researchers and teachers investigating kindergarten through middle school populations hold true for adult ESL writers in the university setting? More importantly, do the students' perspectives of dialogue journal writing align with those of teachers and researchers?

Krapels (1991) suggests that students' perspectives are often overlooked. She argues that more information is needed about what occurs in the "real space of writing" from the "collective consciousness of the people making and then sharing that meaning" (p. 51). Krapels (1991) calls on researchers to include participants' points of view in the research process, claiming that ethnography is perhaps the best research design for questioning assumptions about writing processes. Watson-Gegeo (1988) and Zamel (1987) also recommend ethnography as a research method in L2 composition studies. Although the researchers admit that ethnographic studies generally lack direct comparability with experimental studies, they favor ethnographic methods in research about second language writing for the increased
insights gained and for the in-depth inquiry this method permits (Watson-Gegeo, 1988; Zamel, 1987).

Rationale for Qualitative Methodology

The data gathered in this study were collected under naturalistic conditions using the tools of ethnography (Guba & Lincoln, 1982), a qualitative methodology. A case study design was used for the collection of data (Yin, 1989). Case study has long been recognized as an effective method of inquiry in the social and behavioral sciences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Psychologists Freud and Piaget based their theories on the careful and meticulous observations of relatively few subjects. English educator Janet Emig (1971) developed theories of composing by observing the writing processes of six students. Sociologist Peshkin described the struggles that occur between school boards and their constituencies by examining only one case (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Through the in-depth analysis of comparatively few cases, case study researchers make significant contributions to the theoretical bases of the social and behavioral sciences.

In the area of applied linguistics, specifically second language writing acquisition, case study is widely used (Nunan, 1992). Noted L2 writing researchers Zamel (1983), Raimes, (1985), Edelsky (1986, 1991), and Ardnt (1987) use case study to build theory by describing what
second language learners do as they write. A review of the literature in second language writing reveals that composition researchers recognize the need for a research framework that explores the "whole" person, the cognitive, affective, and situational dimensions of the learner in his natural environment (Rose, 1985). Without taking into account the individual as a whole person in the context of learning, the findings of research, according to Zamel (1987), cannot be holistically or "ecologically" interpreted (p. 707).

Case study in the natural classroom setting is making the L2 research community more aware of the variety of factors which influence the development of second language writing (Krapels, 1991). A review of the research in dialogue journals, specifically, reveals the dominance of case study as a method for exploring the cognitive and affective dimensions of this mode of writing. Kreeft (1984), Peyton & Seyoum (1989), Peyton et al. (1990), Staton et al. (1988) all use case study to explore dialogue journal writing. In arguing for qualitative studies, specifically case studies, of dialogue journal writing, Staton (1988b) writes:

This [qualitative] study of the daily thoughts, feelings, and concerns of the teacher and students in interaction is one contribution toward putting our
extensive knowledge about the components of learning
back together, so that we can see again that learning
is a process which all persons are innately designed

As Watson-Gegeo (1988) acknowledges, case study is at
the center of any research which seeks to understand how
humans function: Case study can directly inform practice
when theory is used to guide and control observation and
observation is used to test and refine theory. This
process is best sustained through the use of case study.

Scope of the Study

Purpose and Questions

Two purposes underlie this exploratory case study. The
first is to describe adult ESL students' views of the
process of dialogue journal writing in the social context
of a university ESL writing class. The second purpose is to
identify and explore any changes in the students'
perspectives of themselves as writers as they engage in the
dialogue journal process.

Two questions guided the collection of data:

1. What perspectives do second language university
students have toward the process of dialogue journal
writing as they engage in interactive dialogue journal
writing with their teacher over a 15-week semester?

2. What perspectives do university ESL students have
toward themselves as writers and how, if at all, do those perspectives change as they engage in interactive dialogue journal writing with their teacher over a 15-week semester?

Assumptions of the Study

This study is based on the following assumptions:

1. Students are capable of, and often do, reflect on their own cognitive processes.

2. Student reflections or perspectives about their own learning are worthy of investigation.

3. In searching for an understanding of students' perspectives of their own learning, it is best to record the views of students in their own words and to observe their learning in a natural setting.

4. In moving from understanding to tentative theoretical formulations, it is sufficient to rely on the data collected from the in-depth study of a relatively few cases.

5. Since the study is descriptive, not valuative, there is merit in describing student perspectives of their own learning even though those perspectives may not be generalizable to other populations.

6. Studies using ethnographic methodology depend on the researcher's theoretical sensitivity to yield meaningful interpretations of the data (Guba & Lincoln, 1982).
Limitations of the Study

Several limitations exist in this study. First, since six ESL students in a university setting were studied, findings with other populations may differ significantly. However, the method of studying dialogue journal communication used in this study is applicable in a number of instructional settings.

Second, a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds is represented by the participants in this study. Thus, it is not possible to draw any conclusions with respect to the views and reactions of any particular ethnic group. Nor is it possible to identify the role that culture or native language plays in dialogue communication. However, the ethnic diversity represented by the participants in this study may accurately represent the ESL classroom in American universities and may suggest the extent to which student perspectives about dialogue journal writing may vary.

Third, the study was conducted during one semester lasting fifteen weeks. Thus, the data for this study were gathered during a moderately short time with respect to case study research. The ESL classes at the university are set in accordance with an academic calendar based on semesters in which instruction ends after fifteen weeks and classes conclude. Thus, the study was limited by the time
constraints of the university calendar.

Contributions of the Study

This study makes two contributions to the literature on dialogue journal writing with ESL students. First, it contributes to an understanding of how adult university ESL students view the process of interactive writing with their teacher. Studies involving adult ESL student dialogue journal writing are limited, but studies investigating their perspectives of the dialogue journal process are nonexistent.

Second, this investigation contributes to an understanding of adult ESL students’ views of themselves as writers as they engage in interactive writing with their teacher during a 15-week semester. While researchers have recorded changes in students’ linguistic and cognitive growth in dialogue journals, studies have failed to explore the changes that occur in students’ views of themselves as writers as they write interactively with their teacher.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

An Interdisciplinary Approach

Literature related to the use of dialogue journals derives from a broad academic base and is interdisciplinary in its theoretical foundations. Contributions from linguistics (Shuy, 1987), sociolinguistics (Beebe, 1988; Wolfson & Judd, 1983), social psychology (Gardner, 1985), and educational theory (Bruner, 1986) provide an understanding of the complex processes involved in learning to write interactively in a second language. In exploring the social, cognitive, and linguistic elements of dialogue journal writing, researchers adopt theory from many contexts. Within these contexts, specific areas of interest with respect to this study stem from theories of adult learning and motivation, second language acquisition, second language writing, and dialogue journal writing.

Adult Learning and Motivation

Adult learning and motivation theories implicitly support the practice of interactive dialogue journal writing and are often cited in dialogue journal research.
about second language writers (Gutstein, 1987; Isserlis, 1991; Staton, 1991; Wigfield, 1991). Assumptions regarding adult learning styles and motivation are represented in the theoretical literature of a number of disciplines including education, psychology, and socio-linguistics.

Malcolm Knowles' (1980, 1984) contribution that andragogy, the art and science of teaching adults, differs significantly from pedagogy, the art and science of teaching children, is important. Knowles argues that adult learners differ in their learning styles, and he offers suggestions of how to match learning styles with instructional programming. Central to Knowles' theory of andragogy is the notion that adults learn better when they "feel supported rather than judged or threatened," and when they have direct control of their own learning (1984, p. 279). Researchers Peyton and Staton (1991), Isserlis (1991), and Graman (1988) report that Knowles' conditions for adult learning are created in the process of dialogue journal writing. By responding to student journal writing on a communicative and interactive level without correction, teachers demonstrate their respect for students as "equals and partners in teaching and learning" (Peyton, 1991, p. 18). Students feel nurtured and are willing to explore their own generative themes, connecting their own experiences to the world of the teacher whose language they are learning (Graman, 1988).
Brazilian adult educator/philosopher Paolo Freire (1973, 1987) is also cited often in dialogue journal research literature (Peyton & Reed, 1990; Peyton & Staton, 1991; Staton et al., 1988). Freire's impact on dialogue journal research comes from his Socratic notions about adult learning and his belief in the power of genuine dialogue to provide the fundamental context for all learning (Bruner, 1988). Freire (1973) asserts that the relationship between the sympathetic teacher and the adult learner, a relationship which he labels "I-Thou" (p.52), is the essence of a powerful learning process in which the teacher and learner are two equals with different levels of knowledge. Freire (1973) notes that:

Teaching the purely technical aspect of the procedure is not difficult. The difficulty lies rather in the creation of a new attitude, that of dialogue, so absent from our own upbringing and education...Dialogue is an I-Thou relationship, and thus necessarily a relationship between two Subjects. (p. 52)

Freire's work with adult learners, which began in the poor villages of his native Brazil, is based on a "generative and empowering" definition of learning (Graman, 1988, p. 434). In Freire's view of adult learning, the adult student is imbued with the political and intellectual power to generate his own topics for learning, a condition
which researchers claim is central to the process of
dialogue journal writing (Peyton, 1990; Shuy, 1988; Staton,
1988b). In interactive dialogue journal writing, students
choose their own topics to explore in writing, and teachers
respond, following the lead of students. Through this
process, students control the direction of their own
learning.

The themes of empowerment and liberation run
consistently through Freire’s work and serve as the basis
for much of the theory underlying dialogue journal writing
(Auerbach & Burgess, 1985; Peyton and Seyoum, 1989; Peyton
and Staton, 1991). Freire theorizes that learning can only
occur when teachers and learners both recognize that
learners have the ability to pose their own problems and to
struggle to discover their own solutions (Graman, 1988 and
Wallerstein, 1987). Building on Freire’s (1973) dialogic
model, Peyton & Staton (1991) suggest that in posing their
own problems with a co-equal teacher/partner in learning,
students establish a relationship of "trust and mutual
engagement" that "paradoxically enables [them] to let go of
the adult defenses that impede language acquisition" (p.
17).

Motivation is a key element in adult learning theory,
as well as second language acquisition, and research
suggests a direct relationship between adults’ learning
quotients and their motivation factors (Bacon & Pinnemann,
1990; Courtney, 1991; Cross, 1981; Gardner, 1985; Krashen, 1987; Krathwohl, 1964; Maslow, 1970; Spolsky 1989). These researchers assert that motivation and learning are directly related and describe environments which enhance motivation and nurture learning.

Learning environments must provide opportunities for safety, acceptance, self-esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1970) for peak adult learning to occur. While the perception is that adults operate at a higher level of motivation than children, Kidd (1973) suggests that adults tend to have more, not fewer, emotional associations with learning environments than do children. Also, adults, unlike children, may carry a stigma that they are not efficient learners (Cross, 1981; Howes, 1977; Knox, 1986). L2 adults, perhaps more than L1 adults, may sense great threat to their sense of self in traditional learning environments which do not consider the emotional attachments they bring to learning (Gardner, 1986). These impediments to learning can be overcome, suggest Bacon & Finneman (1990) and Courtney (1991) if adult educators build active, supportive learning environments in which the affective needs of adults assume center stage.

Peyton & Staton (1991) explore the importance of dialogue journal writing as a medium for building students' self-confidence. They report that the condition of "trust and mutual engagement" that is created in the written
dialogues enables adult learners to "let go of the adult defenses that impede acquisition" and to become more like open, risk-taking children (p. xvii).

The cognitive and affective styles of L1 adult learners bear much resemblance to the learning styles of L2 learners; however, there is a significant research body which addresses the specific needs of learners who are acquiring their second or even third languages. Research in the area of second language acquisition clarifies these needs.

Second Language Acquisition Theory

Second language acquisition (SLA) theory describes the processes by which learners are believed to acquire a second language (Beebe, 1988). Krashen's Monitor Theory, Schumann's Acculturation Model, and Spolsky's Social Context Theory apply most specifically to this study.

Krashen's Monitor Theory

The Monitor Theory developed by Krashen (1985, 1987) generates both widespread praise and criticism from the SLA research community. Despite lingering questions about the validity of his attempt to corral SLA research into a comprehensive theory of learning (Spolsky, 1989), Krashen's Monitor Theory impacts ESL practice and methodology significantly. Krashen's theory is based on a number of separate hypotheses about second language learning. The most relevant to this study are the acquisition and
affective filter hypotheses.

Central to an understanding of Krashen's theory is his acquisition/learning hypothesis which postulates that language skills can best be developed through acquisition rather than learning (Krashen, 1985, 1987). Krashen postulates that acquisition is the natural unconscious process used by children to acquire their native languages; learning, on the other hand, is a conscious process of language study based on inductive rule-learning which is assisted by error correction. Dialogue journal writing mirrors the acquisition process as teachers and students engage in interactive writing about topics of the students' choice (Staton et al., 1988). The teacher models correct linguistic structures but never overtly corrects student language (Staton et al., 1988). In this way, dialogue journal writing is thought to enhance language acquisition in the natural unconscious way described by Krashen (1987).

Krashen's affective filter hypothesis asserts that all learners from the Piagetian formal operations stage and beyond develop an affective filter (Krashen, 1987). This affective filter acts as a device which screens input destined to reach the acquisition device. According to the theory, if a poor affective state exists in which anxiety, low self-esteem, or lack of motivation dominate, the input will bypass the acquisition device even though understanding has occurred (Krashen, 1987). Dialogue
journal research acknowledges the importance of affect in the process of acquiring second language fluency, especially written language fluency (Staton et al., 1988). By creating a non-judgmental environment for learners to communicate with their teachers in writing, dialogue journals provide an opportunity for learners to acquire written language naturally.

Schumann’s Acculturation Model

A second model of SLA relevant to this study is the Acculturation Model, based on Schumann’s (1978) belief that acquisition of a second language is affected by a blend of social and affective conditions. According to Schumann (1978), language acquisition is facilitated when both the target language (TL) and L2 groups view each other as social equals. This notion of social equality reverberates through the literature on dialogue journal writing and is often cited as a reason for its success in supporting language acquisition (Isserlis, 1991; Peyton & Reed, 1990; Peyton & Staton, 1991; and Staton et al., 1988).

In addition to the social context of SLA, Schumann (1978) describes an affective variable he calls language shock, the fear of appearing ridiculous, comical or infantile. According to Schumann (1978) language acquisition is blocked when a learner experiences language shock. Therefore, language learning experiences such as dialogue journal writing, which purportedly diminish
language shock (Staton et al., 1988), may support acquisition.

**Spolsky’s Social Context Model**

Spolsky’s Social Context Model (Spolsky, 1989), based on 73 distinct conditions of language learning, is another SLA model which further endorses the practice of dialogue journal writing. Spolsky’s conditions of language learning can be roughly grouped into three categories: social context, attitudes, and motivation. The primary condition for learning, in Spolsky’s view, is determined by the social context in which the learner operates.

Social context, according to Spolsky (1989), can be thought of as both the informal and formal environments which learners are exposed to as they acquire the target language. Spolsky stresses that language is learned in social contexts that have a profound influence on the learner’s attitudes and motivation toward learning the language. Many linguistic theorists, he argues, limit their investigations to language cut of context, a practice which ignores the most fundamental and important aspects of learning: attitude and motivation.

Spolsky (1989) determines that attitude and motivation are based on several conditions of learning in the social context: matching condition, communication condition, motivation condition, exposure condition and attitude condition. Of primary importance to this study are
Spolsky’s notions about matching and communication.

Spolsky (1989) posits that learners need an opportunity to match their own knowledge with that of native speakers and that their language practice must be used for authentic communication. When these two learning conditions are present, Spolsky (1989) claims that motivation and positive attitudes about language learning are enhanced. Dialogue journal writing provides an opportunity for learners to match their knowledge and for authentic communication to occur. Although not often cited in dialogue journal research, Spolsky’s work directly supports the practice of interactive journal writing by defining the social and interactive contexts in which language acquisition occurs.

Krashen (1985, 1987), Schumann (1986), and Spolsky (1988) consider the importance of motivation and communication in their theories of second language acquisition. This theme also appears consistently in the research on writing with both first and second language learners (Zamel, 1976, 1987). Research in the area of writing process and product yields important results, the most relevant of which focuses on second language writing research.

**Second Language Writing Research**

In the last decade, research in the area of second language writing has emerged as a body of study in its own
right. Prior to the mid-1980s, however, most major contributions to the theoretical basis of second language writing were made by linguists who were, for the most part, interested in form and product as opposed to process (Zamel, 1987). Unlike L1 writing research that focused on the process-oriented issues of what writers do, think, and feel as they write (Emig, 1971), L2 writing research focused on the writer's product (Raimes, 1985; Zamel, 1976, 1987). The paucity of serious research into the processes of L2 writing led Krashen (1985) to observe that "studies of second language writing are sadly lacking" (p. 41).

In the mid-1980s, a new line of inquiry advanced research on second language writing to a different theoretical level. Concerns about the social and psychological processes and conditions of L2 writers emerged as dominant themes in L2 writing literature. Ethnographic research methods, particularly case study designs, replaced empirical research designs. From recent investigations by Lay (1982), Raimes (1985, 1991), Urzua (1987), and Zamel (1983, 1987), a number of dominant themes have emerged.

First of all, many researchers agree that competence in the composing process is more important than linguistic competence in developing L2 writers' ability to write proficiently in English. (Ardnt, 1987; Johns, 1990; Raimes, 1985; & Zamel, 1983, 1987). Through case studies,
researchers reveal that students' writing products improve as they begin to understand and experience composing as a recursive process complete with thinking, writing, rethinking, and rewriting (Zamel, 1982). That second language composing has primary value as a language learning tool, not just as "an adjunct to language learning, useful mainly for practice exercises and reinforcement of academic tasks" (Raimes, 1985, p. 252) is a second theme that has gained attention. Raimes' (1985) case study of eight L2 university students describes a very active composing process in which students talk, negotiate meaning, experiment with phrasing, and test hypotheses. Based on these findings, Raimes (1985) calls on ESL professionals to emphasize writing not as the last skill to be learned but as a primary and effective way for a learner to communicate in a new language.

A third theme to emerge is the notion that social-role relationships which emphasize purposeful communication are inherent to the L2 writing process (Edelsky, 1986; Freeman & Freeman, 1989; Urzua, 1987). These researchers observe several phenomena associated with social aspects of L2 composing: group work in which conversation revolves around the writing provides a highly favorable context for L2 writing; writing situations which give writers control over their own topics greatly enhance the sense of self and allow students to build on their own knowledge; and writers
who have authentic audiences are empowered to access and use their knowledge for communicative purposes. The implication of these findings is that ESL professionals need to expand the range of social roles they ask students to adopt in the writing process (Edelsky, 1986).

The fourth theme notes that focus on form, grammar, punctuation, and prescriptive writing results in writer apprehension and cognitive overload (Bacon & Finnemann, 1990; Gungle & Taylor, 1989). When instruction is over-focused on correctness, L2 writers begin to distrust their ability to write and may develop an aversion to writing. In the worst case, they may develop writer’s block (Gungle & Taylor, 1989), and be unable to get ideas on paper. Zamel (1983) confirmed the risk of focusing on form in a case study which describes students’ anxiety about writing in English because of being overly concerned about grammar and "getting it correct because teachers care about that" (p. 178).

The various themes which emerge in recent L2 writing research reflect serious implications for the teaching of writing (Johns, 1991). One notable implication is the need to restructure L2 writing environments and activities to mirror what research reveals regarding L2 writers learning to communicate effectively in their target languages (Raimes, 1991). As research findings filter into the classroom, restructuring occurs. In particular, research
findings promote writing instruction which emphasizes positive, low-stress writing environments; focuses on content and communication over form; promotes open dialogue about issues of importance to students; engages students in problem-solving strategies using compose-aloud protocols; stresses peer revision as opposed to teacher-centered error correction; focuses on positive feedback in teacher response; and gives students full control of topic selection in their writing (Raimes, 1991; Zamel, 1987; Urzua, 1987).

Researchers provide various modes of instruction for creating the kind of effective writing environment discussed above. One mode of writing instruction garnering support from both teachers and researchers is the practice of dialogue journal writing (Peyton & Reed, 1990; Peyton & Staton, 1991; Peyton, Staton, Richardson, & Wolfram, 1990; Staton, et al., 1988). Research findings, as well as testimony by teachers, suggest that dialogue journals can enhance the process of learning to write by creating the kind of nurturing conditions aforementioned.

Although recently attracting attention from the research community, dialogue journals are a teacher’s invention. According to Staton (1991a):

The spread of dialogue journal use is a story of a teacher’s craft and art, woven together with recent methods of discourse analysis within a constructivist
framework for viewing the acquisition and use of language as a means of thinking and getting things done in the world. (p. ix)

Thus, the dialogue journal is reinvented through the analysis and theories of researchers. Early dialogue journal research on L1 writers suggests themes which have application in both L1 and L2 settings (Peyton & Staton, 1991).

**L1 Dialogue Journal Research**

Much of the published research on L1 dialogue journal writing comes from a team of four researchers who collected and analyzed data from a single population of 26 sixth grade students during a one-year study. The study conducted by Staton et al., (1988), yields a number of themes with respect to the interactive writing shared between teacher and student in dialogue journals. The researchers contend that dialogue journals provide a bridge from oral to written communication, help build teacher-student rapport, focus on function over form and therefore encourage functional language competence, and provide a window on cognitive development (Staton, et al., 1988).

**Bridges Oral and Written Communication**

Staton et al. (1988) present a theoretical view that dialogue journal writing, as analyzed in their study, shares characteristics with spoken language and provides a developmentally appropriate step for early literacy.
learners. They argue that in teaching writing, instructors often expect students to engage in essayist writing before they have mastered functional writing. Dialogue journal writing, they theorize, allows young learners to engage in functional writing, enabling them to "call on what they know about how to use oral language to get things done, and to use it in their writing" (p. 86).

**Builds Teacher-Student Rapport**

Through discourse analysis of the dialogue journal texts and participant interviews, Staton et al. (1988) report that both the teacher and students in their study valued the special relationship that evolved as a result of the journals. The written dialogue between teacher and students, "mutual conversations" (p.183), contained elements of mutuality building, problem solving, and co-membership that transcended the traditional teacher-student relationship. The researchers theorize that the mutual conversations that occur in dialogue journal writing are "products of the process of developing trust and understanding and foundations on which new levels of interpersonal understanding can be attempted" (p. 201).

**Emphasizes Functional Communication**

In a macro analysis of discourse-level language functions of ten of the 26 participants in the study, Staton et al. (1988) profile the development of communicative competence in terms of language functions.
Using an empirically derived continuum to track the frequency and use of language functions, the researchers document how students' functional competence changed during the study. In the beginning of the study, student journal entries reflected relatively few language functions: reporting opinions, reporting facts, and evaluating. By the end of the study, however, eight of the students had added predicting or complaining to their repertory of language functions while three of the ten had begun to report general principles and draw inferences in their dialogue journal writing. The researchers argue that the development and use of more varied language functions in the journals is significant evidence of the growth of communicative competence. Staton et al. (1988) write:

Language functions are a more effective measure of writing abilities than any existing measure of language forms. It is our belief that the architectural principle 'form follows function' is as relevant to language, written or oral, as it is to art. (p. 142)

**Provides a Window on Cognitive Development**

By examining topics cross-sectionally and periodically across the entire data set of the 26 dialogue journals in their study, Staton et al. (1988) create a map of the major topics of interest and the growth of knowledge in the class as a whole throughout the academic year. The researchers
claim that the dialogue journals supply the teacher with critical information for planning instruction as the students supply honest and personal feedback about their academic concerns. Citing Vygotsky and Piaget, Staton et al. (1988) argue that dialogue journals provide the teacher with an inside view of the cognitive development of students:

By working within the zone of proximal development which the student’s writing defines, [the teacher’s] instruction stimulates and leads the student’s development. Vygotsky (1978) and Piaget (1965) have both argued that social dialogue can bring about transition to higher-order cognitive processes (p. 267).

Since the generative work of Staton et al. (1988), additional studies with different L1 populations have been published. Staton’s (1990) research at Galludet University documents the teacher’s perspective of the benefits of dialogue journal use with the hearing impaired, while Dooley’s (1987) work describes the benefits of dialogue journal writing with Native Americans on an Indian reservation in northern Michigan.

In addition to affirming the use of dialogue journals in the teaching of writing and critical thinking with different populations of L1 students, researchers have begun to document the value of dialogue journals in the
content areas. Balliro (1991), Fishman & Rover (1989), and Schneider (1991) focus on the use of dialogue journals in teacher education, noting that interactive writing enhances self-reflection and evaluation in both prospective and experienced teachers. Dialogue journals also have been shown to support teaching of mathematics (Rose, 1989) and foreign languages (Steffensen, 1988).

Thus, since researchers first turned their attentions to the practice of interactive dialogue journal writing in the 1980s, the practice has spread to include a variety of L1 populations as well as a diversity of content areas. A new area of recent interest to researchers, however, is the use of dialogue journals with second language populations.

L2 Dialogue Journal Research

Research in the use of dialogue journals with second language students is a recent phenomenon (Isserlis, 1991). One of the first studies conducted with students learning English as their second language (Kreeft, Shuy, Staton, Reed, & Morray, 1984) outlines the features which make dialogue journals a rich medium for language acquisition. Using a case study research design, the researchers conclude that dialogue journals provide the following conditions for learning: interaction about topics relevant to learning; focus on interaction rather than form; enhancement of reading skills; modeling of correct grammatical forms; natural evolution of grammatical
structures; and interaction in a private, non-threatening way.

The general contexts for learning alluded to by Kreeft, et al. (1984) form the foundation for a handful of other studies which address several important issues in the use of dialogue journals with L2 populations: speaking and writing connection, appropriate teacher response, improvement in writing product, and effects on student motivation.

**Speaking and Writing Connection**

Peyton's (1986) case study of "Michael" reveals dialogue journal writing that progressed along a developmental continuum, mirroring the acquisition of oral L2 language. According to Peyton (1986), "The major assumption linking the interactive written conversation that occurs in dialogue journal writing with the acquisition of literacy skills is that the same principles that guide oral first and second language acquisition guide literacy acquisition as well" (p. 4). Peyton observes that as Michael continued writing in his journal, he began to anticipate questions and to offer evidence, facts, and examples to support his text without being prompted to do so. Peyton's (1986) study suggests that journal writing can support the acquisition of language in a natural way.

**Appropriate Teacher Response**

The effects of teacher responses on student journal
entries is analyzed in a case study research of 12 limited English speakers (Peyton & Seyoum, 1989). The researchers note that teacher responses which were merely "requests for reply" (p. 316) solicited far less volume of writing than teacher responses which were personal and interactive. These findings led the researchers to suggest that dialogue journals promote language learning when teacher participation is in the form of "meaningful, shared communication" (p. 330). The implication is that the question-response mode so often seen in communication between non-proficient writers and their teachers may have little value in improving the writing of L2 students. Much of the value of dialogue journals, suggest Peyton & Seyoum (1989), comes from the interaction of the experienced writer and the inexperienced writer.

**Improvement in Writing Product**

Whether L2 students can acquire grammatical morphology through dialogue journal writing is the subject of another related study. Studying five ESL students, all of whom had been in the United States for less than a year, Peyton (1990) cites evidence of grammar learning in the unstructured, uncorrected journal writing samples of the five students. Peyton wanted to learn if the teacher's modeling of correct structures was internalized by the students during the course of the year-long study. Using both qualitative and quantitative analysis, Peyton
concludes that dialogue journal writing does reflect growth in "grammatical morpheme acquisition" (p. 91), even with students in the earliest stages of acquisition. Furthermore, she notes that the patterns of acquisition observed in the students she studied showed trends as well as individual variations which could be very useful to the writing teacher in analyzing and enhancing the acquisition patterns of individual students.

**Motivation and Dialogue Journal Writing**

In the first study to examine culture and motivation as they relate to dialogue journal writing, Lucas (1990) identifies the individual perceptions L2 students have as they adjust to dialogue journals as a writing "genre" (p. 102). The study was conducted in an extended education adult ESL class in which the primary mode of instruction was personal dialogue journal writing. The findings reveal that the cultural backgrounds of the students had less impact on the students' perceptions of dialogue journals than did individual variations. "Culture may play a role, but individual perceptions, experiences, knowledge, and values may have a greater influence" (Lucas, 1990, p. 114). Lucas urges educators not to rely on cultural stereotyping as a way of explaining students' writing behaviors. Lucas (1990) notes that dialogue journal writing can be highly motivational, indicating that "journal writing may be especially beneficial for students who lack confidence in
their ability to write in English" (p. 116).

In their study of twelve sixth grade ESL students, Peyton, Staton, Richardson, & Wolfram (1990), note that the students produced more than three times as much writing in their journals as they did on assigned writing tasks. This evidence, as well as testimony by the students, led Peyton et al. (1990) to conclude that the dialogue journal format motivated students to write more text more frequently, a fact that the researchers claim is significant in light of the fact that no class time was permitted for journal writing nor were journals graded.

In summary, the major goal of most dialogue journal research has been, as Staton (1991) notes, to develop and articulate a theoretical framework for dialogue journals. In so doing, researchers have drawn from various disciplines, resting their assumptions on studies in human communication, language acquisition, writing methodology, motivation theory, socio-linguistics and social interaction. Yet theory pales, according to Staton (1991), in the face of the "mystic experience" generated by this "simple act of reading a few lines of writing, and writing back" (p. xi). Perhaps the "wonder" of dialogue journals is great, Staton (1988a) suggests, because the dialogues transcend the differences which divide us--culture, language, age, and gender.
Conclusion

This review of literature reveals the interdisciplinary nature of the theory which supports dialogue journal writing. The use of dialogue journals with adult second language learners is supported both directly and implicitly by literature from adult learning and motivation research, second language research, L2 writing research, as well as L1 and L2 dialogue journal research.

Research in dialogue journal writing over the last decade has answered a number of critical questions within a wide range of interrelated fields but has done so without the benefit of varied populations. Specifically, major published research on dialogue journals has come from one year-long study with a single population of 26 elementary students (Staton et al., 1988). Published research projects in L2 dialogue journal writing are not only sparse but generally limited to describing elementary populations. What is more, most L2 dialogue journal research has been published by the same researchers who conducted the aforementioned study of 26 elementary students, giving dialogue journal research a very narrow perspective. Moreover, most research on dialogue journals has viewed the process from the researcher’s or the teacher’s perspective and not from the student’s. The present study has attempted to cast a wider net by investigating dialogue journal
writing with an adult university L2 population and by viewing the process from the student’s perspective. Dialogue journal writing deserves to be studied from the student’s viewpoint for the purpose of illuminating the personal and interactional roles of the second language learner.

This review of the literature additionally demonstrates that dialogue journal research is classroom based and consistently uses research methods borrowed mainly from ethnographers but occasionally from quantitative methodologists as well. Staton (1988a) claims that the "healthy mixture" of approaches seen in dialogue journal research "refutes the simplistic division of research into qualitative or [emphasis hers] quantitative" camps (p. 3). Wolfson (1986), however, claims that "rigorous qualitative study" is the key to understanding interaction between learners and teachers and must precede quantitative study of linguistic events (p. 697). In investigating interactive writing between learners and teachers in a natural classroom setting from the student’s perspective, the present study uses the qualitative tools of ethnography described in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study explores adult ESL students' perspectives about the process of dialogue journal writing. In addition, it investigates the ideas students hold about themselves as writers as they engage in interactive writing with their instructor in a university ESL writing class. It is based on the philosophical assumption that reality is a "multilayered, interactive, and shared social experience" (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993, p. 373) that can best be interpreted by individuals acting in their natural environments. The research assumes that the social experiences of the participants in the study can be studied holistically and that the results may yield an understanding of the "patterns and webs" of interaction which shape the cases (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 238).

Research Design

Multiple Case Study Design

This study uses a multiple case study design. In order to establish transferability of results (Guba & Lincoln, 1982), multiple cases are needed in a case study design.
Yin (1989) notes that multiple cases allow for "cross-case analysis" and the development of a "rich theoretical framework" (p. 54).

Multiple cases and multiple sources of evidence (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Mathison, 1988) provided the corpus of data used to explore the issues in this study. Multiple sources of evidence, notes Mathison (1988), allow researchers to enhance the validity of their research findings. By gathering multiple sources of data from the same participants, "triangulation," researchers can control for bias, increase rigor, and check results (Mathison, 1988, p. 13). Yin (1989) notes that multiple data sources permit the researcher to explore a broad range of issues and to develop "converging lines of inquiry," corroborating information gleaned from several sources (p. 97).

This chapter describes the conceptual framework of the study in addition to methods used in obtaining, coding, and analyzing data.

**Context of the Study**

**The English as a Second Language Program**

The study was conducted in the English as a Second Language Program (ESL Program) at an urban Southwestern university. The ESL Program offers classes in the mornings, early afternoons, and evenings to accommodate the schedules of ESL students who typically are non-traditional
university students working in a variety of occupations in the city.

ESL students at the university are a diverse group. Ranging in age from 17 to 75, they represent 45 different nationalities and speak some 30 different languages. Some have little or no formal education while others arrive with advanced degrees from their native countries. They have been exposed to English language instruction in a variety of contexts through methods such as grammar-translation and audio-lingual. They have various notions of the role of student and teacher, but generally they view themselves and their learning in a traditional way, with the teacher as purveyor of knowledge and the student as passive learner.

The curriculum of the ESL Program consists of three levels of proficiency with various skills offered at each level: speaking and listening, reading and vocabulary, composition, grammar, and pronunciation. New students entering the program are given a diagnostic placement examination consisting of a 75-minute, 100 item multiple-choice test with grammar, vocabulary, and reading items; a 20-minute listening comprehension check with 45 multiple-choice items; and a holistically graded writing sample written under the pressure of time (25 minutes) and without the aid of a dictionary. Following completion of the placement examination, students are interviewed by the
director or an instructor who evaluates and explains the results of the placement test and sets a schedule for the new student.

The ESL placement test reveals student strengths and weaknesses in writing, reading, grammar, vocabulary, and listening. Students are placed in classes according to their levels of proficiency in the various skills. For example, students who score between 25 and 36 out of 50 on the holistically graded writing sample would be placed in Intermediate Composition ESL.

It is important to note that several practical considerations affect the placement of students in the ESL Program. First, students' abilities vary across the skills. For example, a student may score at the intermediate level in writing but score at the advanced level in listening. In this case, the student might be placed in an intermediate level writing class and an advanced level speaking and listening class. Second, the point ranges established for placing students are based on a three-level program. Thus, the range of ability in each level is broad when compared to many ESL programs which have six or seven levels. For these reasons, the populations in classes at the ESL Program tend to be quite diverse not only with respect to native languages and age but also with respect to English ability in the various skills.
Intermediate Composition ESL

The study was conducted in ESL 127-Intermediate Composition ESL, a three-credit, 15-week course which met on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings from 9:30 to 10:20 in the spring of 1993. It had an enrollment of 21 students from twelve different countries representing four geographic areas: Latin America, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East.

The curriculum of the intermediate writing class in which the study was conducted consisted of both formal and informal writing assignments. The formal assignments involved the writing of paragraphs using a variety of rhetorical modes: description, classification, narration, argumentation, cause and effect, comparison and contrast, and logical proof. The students each wrote ten formal paragraphs which were corrected and evaluated by the teacher and returned for revision. The revised paragraphs were then resubmitted for a final grade. A sample of a corrected formal paragraph in Appendix A shows the style of correction and grading criteria used by the teacher.

The informal writing assignments in Intermediate Composition ESL consisted of a weekly dialogue journal written outside of class and periodic in-class freewriting assignments. Neither the dialogue journal entries nor the free writing assignments were corrected or evaluated. The
teacher merely read and responded to the content of the writing, giving the students maximum credit for having completed the assignments. With respect to the dialogue journals, topics were initiated by the students who wrote as often and as much as they chose to although they submitted their journals only once a week. The teacher responded to each journal and returned them, along with her responses, at the following class meeting. A sample of a journal exchange between a student and the teacher is provided in Appendix B.

Participants

Selection

The teacher participant, Sandy (a pseudonym), who taught the writing class in which I conducted the study, is a veteran English teacher with over 20 years of teaching experience. Although Sandy has taught adults for many years, she is relatively new to the teaching of ESL, having taught ESL writing for only two years. Following the process of theoretical sampling which suggests that participants be chosen based on their attempts to implement a concept or theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), I selected Sandy to participate in this study because she uses interactive dialogue journal writing as part of the regular curriculum in her writing classes and has been doing so since she began teaching writing in 1966. Moreover, Sandy
advocates open and genuine two-way communication as a necessary element in the learning environment, a condition which is both essential to dialogue journal writing and to the research process itself.

Student participants were selected for this study following the practice of purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Purposeful sampling is often used when the research requires an in-depth study of a relatively small sample of information-rich key informants or cases (Patton, 1990). The sample of participants for this study was selected from among students enrolled in the intermediate level writing class taught by Sandy at the university in the spring, 1993, semester. On the first day of the semester, the students were briefed on the purpose of the research study and were invited to participate by completing a research questionnaire. Of the initial 21 invited to participate, 20 volunteered. This high rate of volunteerism may be explained by my role as director of the ESL Program, a role which makes me a well-known person among the ESL students.

The initial group of volunteers were screened in order to select participants who would represent a "maximum variation sample" (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993, p. 381). Maximum variation samples are used when the researcher wishes to describe in detail different meanings of
participants represented by the full range of subunits in the population. In this study, which investigated both the participants' views of the interactive dialogue journal writing process and their views of themselves as writers engaged in that process, a sample was needed which included the range of a priori notions students held about themselves as writers. Moreover, a sample was needed which included students who demonstrated a commitment to the class by handing in assignments on time and by maintaining good attendance. Thus, a detailed screening process was devised to draw participants who would assist in describing the variety of perspectives held by the ESL students in the study.

The screening was conducted during the first five meetings of class. At the first class meeting, I explained the study and distributed the Research Study Questionnaire (see Appendix C) to the students. In the questionnaire, the students were asked to evaluate their experiences with, abilities in, and emotions about writing. In addition, students were asked if they would be willing to participate in the study by allowing themselves to be interviewed and by allowing their dialogue journals to be read and included in the study.

During the next four class meetings, I observed volunteers in their natural classroom setting, keeping
detailed field notes about their interactions with the teacher and each other. I also read and photocopied all writing assignments submitted by the initial 20 volunteers.

At the end of the fifth class meeting, two students were eliminated from consideration: one for poor attendance and one for failure to submit the assigned dialogue journal writing. The remaining 18 volunteers were divided into three categories based on the information they had provided in the Research Questionnaire and the first entries in their dialogue journals.

The categories used for dividing the students into groups were based on the students' self-described evaluations of themselves as writers in the Research Questionnaire and in their early dialogue journal entries. I made no attempt to evaluate their writing product; only the students' personal views of their own writing and themselves as writers were considered. Students were then placed into categories labeled low, middle, and high confidence writers based on their responses to question 18 on the Research Questionnaire. Students who rated themselves as poor writers were labeled low confidence, while those who rated themselves as average were labeled middle confidence. Students who rated themselves as either good or excellent writers were labeled high confidence writers.
Of the 18 volunteers, seven were categorized as low confidence, eight as middle confidence, and three as high confidence. Two students were selected from each of the three categories in a blind drawing and were invited to participate in the study.

The initial contact with the six volunteers chosen in the blind drawing was made by telephone. I called the students at the numbers they had provided on their Research Questionnaires and officially invited them to participate in the study. I explained what their commitment to the research project would mean: approximately four hours for interviews scheduled at three-week intervals, permission to quote from their interviews and dialogue journals, and time outside of class to review parts of the study which pertained to them. Furthermore, they were guaranteed that their final grades in the class would not be connected to the research project. They were assured of complete anonymity in the study through the use of pseudonyms in all record keeping and research findings. Additionally, they were informed of the possible benefits of the study.

The next step in the selection process involved a face-to-face interview with the students who had been contacted by telephone. During this interview, I reviewed the Consent to Participate in a Research Study form to verify their willingness to participate in the study. The
forms were signed and copied in accordance with the university’s Human Subjects in Research Committee Guidelines (see Appendix D). One copy was given to each participant, and other copies were placed on file in the appropriate university departments.

**Description**

Table 1 presents relevant descriptive information on each participant: pseudonym, gender, age, nationality, native language, and self-described level (SDL) of writing ability and confidence.

Table 1

<table>
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<th>Name</th>
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<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Native Language</th>
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<td>Demi</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanita</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 1 shows, the six students represent five different language groups, range in age from 18 to 33, and are of either Asian or European origin.

The Research Questionnaire provided additional descriptive information about the six participants in this...
study. Although I did not attempt in this study to suggest any effect of these variables on dialogue journal writing as a whole, I did consider these factors when making observations about individual student interactions and responses to dialogue journal writing. Table 2 shows descriptive data on the six cases in this study.

Table 2
Descriptive Data Related to the Six Case Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Yanik</th>
<th>Dang</th>
<th>Code Names</th>
<th>Ceci</th>
<th>Demi</th>
<th>Wanita</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of ESL Study (years)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Completed (years)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Residence in USA</td>
<td>6 mos</td>
<td>5 yrs</td>
<td>2 yrs</td>
<td>2 yrs</td>
<td>5 mos</td>
<td>2 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Status</td>
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<td>FT</td>
<td>PT</td>
<td>FT</td>
<td>PT</td>
<td>FT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F=female; M=male; yrs=years; mos=months; FT=full-time student; PT=part-time student

As Table 2 shows, all of the participants have completed 12 years of schooling. Four of the participants have attended institutions of higher learning in their own countries. In addition, all students have studied English
for at least one year, but two have studied for six years. Four participants are part-time and two full-time university students. Four students in the study do not work at all; two work full-time. One of the participants, Ceci, both works and attends university full-time.

**Anonymity**

Through the use of pseudonyms, all participants in the study remain anonymous in the record-keeping and in this final report. The participants, each of whom signed consent forms allowing release of information gathered during the research for the purposes of examination and reporting (see Appendix x), understand that confidentiality was strictly maintained in the reporting of all data.

**Data Collection**

**Data Sources**

In accordance with standard case study research practice, multiple sources of data were collected and examined during this study (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Mathison, 1988). Multiple sources, Mathison (1988) suggests, provide the researcher with converging lines of evidence, allowing for the construction of "meaningful propositions" about social phenomenon (p. 15). Guba & Lincoln (1982) also note the importance of triangulation whereby a "variety of data sources are pitted
against one another" to cross-reference data and interpretations (p. 247). The sources of data for this study were interviews, observations, and participant-written dialogue journal entries.

**Interviews**

Interviews provided a primary source of data for this study. The purpose of the interviews was, as Seidman (1991) suggests, not to get answers to questions but to attempt to "understand the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (p. 3). Since the purpose of this study was specifically to explore a phenomenon from the participants' perspectives, interviews provided a primary source of data for the study. Interview protocol are provided in Appendix F.

Four one-hour interviews of each participant were scheduled at three week intervals. Using Seidman’s (1991) three-interview model with one extra interview added to provide closure, the first interview focused on life histories of the participants. Students reconstructed their early experiences with writing, up to the time they entered the writing class in which the study was taking place. This initial interview provided rich contextual and biographical data which helped to formulate questions for the second interview.
The second interview concentrated on the "details" (Seidman, 1991, p. 13) of dialogue journal writing from the students' perspectives. During this interview, students reflected on their relationship with dialogue writing, with their dialogue partner, and with themselves as writers. The purpose of this interview was to ask students to begin the process of putting experience into language, to tell their stories by selecting events that held meaning for them (Seidman, 1991).

The third interview was focused on the participants' reflections about the meaning of their experience with dialogue journal writing. The question of meaning, according to Seidman (1991) addresses the intellectual and emotional connections made by the participants between their past and present lives in the context of the study. During this interview students were asked to make connections and draw meaning from the dialogue journal experience.

The fourth interview, an exit interview, was added to provide closure. It provided an opportunity for me to not only share transcripts from the first three interviews as well as preliminary interpretations of the data but also to ask the participants for clarification about specific reflections. It gave the students an opportunity to review
their interview transcripts and to alter, amend, or reiterate previously stated views. This sharing of the transcripts and my early interpretations of their perspectives with the students is in keeping with Guba and Lincoln’s (1988) practice called member-checking. Guba and Lincoln (1988) claim that researchers have an obligation to represent participants accurately and fairly and that member-checking helps meet that obligation. In addition, member-checking contributes to the trustworthiness and credibility of the research.

The interviews were conducted in the manner described by LeCompte and Preissle (1993) as nonstandard interview practice. In order to provide a degree of uniformity, semi-structured questions (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993) were written prior to the interviews, but the order in which they were posed was changed in some cases according to how the participants reacted (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). This approach provided the flexibility needed to respond to the cases on a personal and individual basis and resulted in the rapport I was able to build with the participants.

All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. The transcription files were transferred to Ethnograph (Seidel, Kjolseth, & Seymour, 1988), a software tool for managing qualitative data.
Ethnograph is a series of menu driven computer programs designed to assist the qualitative researcher with the mechanical aspects of data analysis. It is not designed nor can it be used to replace the researcher in the interpretive and analytical aspects of data analysis.

Observations

Direct observation (Yin, 1989) of the participants in the natural classroom setting provided a second data source. As a direct observer, my role was to gather data as unobtrusively as possible (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). I positioned myself to the front and left side of the class where I could hear and observe all the participants no matter where they sat but where they would not be tempted to interact with me during the lessons. I did, however, make a point of arriving early so that I could interact informally with the class as they waited outside for the previous class to exit. I often stayed after class to converse with the students outside the classroom. These frequent informal interactions before and after class increased the likelihood of my becoming a familiar and "trusted person" in whom the participants may have been more willing to confide (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 39).

During the first three weeks of the study in which the selection process was being conducted, I observed all
meetings of the class, keeping detailed field notes of student behaviors and interactions (Yin, 1989; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Following selection of the participants, I made weekly visits to the class, recording my observations of the participants in their natural classroom setting in detailed field notes. According to Marshall & Rossman (1989), observation allows a researcher to learn about behavior and the meanings attached to those behaviors. This notion, they clarify, is based on the assumption that behavior is generally "expressive of deeper values and beliefs" (p. 79). My field notes of the students' behaviors and interactions during the fifteen weeks of the study later became sources of data against which to balance interpretations of interview responses and dialogue journal entries (Mathison, 1988).

**Dialogue Journal Texts**

Another data source was the text of the dialogue journals written by the participants and their teacher. This written data source consists of a total of 136 dialogue journal entries, 64 written by students and 70 by the teacher. The disparity in the number of student and teacher journal entries is explained by the fact that two students missed handing in their journals one week and that the teacher in this project wrote the first and final
entries. Although teacher responses in the dialogue journals are not the specific focus of this study, the teacher entries were collected and read to provide clues to understanding the participants’ responses to her entries. The written interactions between the teacher and the students became critical in interpreting the students’ reflections about the process of dialogue journal writing.

The students participated in dialogue writing throughout the semester. Most wrote a total of 11 entries, although two students wrote ten each. Students who submitted 11 entries received a total of 12 responses from the teacher, while those who wrote only ten journal entries received 11 responses. Students wrote as many journal entries per week as they liked; although, typically they wrote one or two. No time was given for writing journals in class. Most journal entries were composed by hand, although several students began using typewriters and word processors as the semester progressed.

At the beginning of the study, the students were invited to choose their own topics to explore in the journals. Furthermore, they were informed that the purpose of the dialogue journals was communication and for that reason the journals would not be corrected or graded. The teacher informed the class that maximum credit would be
awarded to any student who submitted the journal on time. The teacher read the journals as written and responded to the content of the students' writing as if responding to a letter from a friend. No corrections or suggestions about the quality of the writing product were ever made.

**Writing Apprehension Test**

The English as a Second Language Writing Apprehension Test (ESL-WAT) (Gungle & Taylor, 1989) provided a fourth data source. Gungle and Taylor's instrument, adapted from the Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension Test (Daly & Miller, 1975), is a 26-item self-report instrument designed to measure writing apprehension in ESL students. The examinees respond to each statement on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (6). (See Appendix G)

Each statement in the ESL-WAT is paired with a polarized statement to insure the validity of student responses. For example, for every positive statement about writing there is an equal but negative statement. The following statements illustrate Gungle and Taylor's (1989) attempts to establish internal validity in their instrument: "I avoid writing in English" is paired with "I look forward to writing down my ideas in English."

Polarized statements are mixed randomly so that students...
might not detect the pattern.

All students enrolled in the intermediate composition class were given the self-report instrument on the second day of class and again on the final day of class. Only the instruments of the six participants were examined for this research.

The four data sources—interviews, observations, dialogue journal texts, and writing apprehension test—provided the data base used to explore the questions in this study. In addition, I wrote theoretical notes and diagrams (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) during the collection of the data which proved useful in the coding and analysis of the data.

**Data Analysis**

**Analytic Process**

Systematic data analysis began early in the investigation and continued throughout the study. Using the constant comparative method of data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), I searched for trends in the students' perspectives of dialogue journal writing and their views of themselves as writers. Semantically related trends suggested by the data were first underlined and then coded and categorized (Constas, 1992) through a process of comparing and contrasting discrete parts of the data.
Consistent with the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), as new data were collected they were compared with existing data. Previous data and new data were continuously analyzed and cross-referenced to create new categories or rename previous ones. Related categories were merged to create more comprehensive ones. These comprehensive categories then guided the further collection of data in a process Strauss and Corbin (1990) call theoretical sampling.

The pattern-seeking process I used to collect and analyze data is cyclical and recursive (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993). It involves a number of overlapping steps whose purpose is the synthesis of data to create new understandings about the phenomenon in question. The process generally begins with questioning but often ends with the need to ask more questions. The model in Figure 1 shows the process used to analyze the data in this study.
Figure 1 Recursive Process Used in Data Analysis

Questioning, comparing, contrasting, synthesizing, and categorizing were the main analytical tools used to "discover patterns from the data" (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 237). My personal and professional experience, what Glaser (1978) calls "theoretical sensitivity" (p. 8), along with the analytical tools of ethnography listed above, allowed me to recognize the patterns as they emerged. My knowledge of the literature of second language acquisition, L2 composition theory, and dialogue journal
research along with over 15 years as a writing instructor for international students give me a basis for understanding the phenomenon investigated in this study. In addition, my personal experience of living abroad for seven years and learning two different foreign languages expanded my understanding of what it means to live and communicate in a second language. My broad personal and professional background "sensitized" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 42) me to the data in this study and allowed me to derive meaning from it.

**Coding Students' Perspectives**

*Ethnograph*, (Seidel et al., 1988), a computer program designed to be a mechanical cut and paste tool, was used to enter codes and categorize data during the interpretive phase of the study. The initial coding was done by hand on a printed copy of numbered data files. Sentences and fragments of sentences representing student perspectives of the dialogue journal process or of themselves as writers were the units of analysis (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Units of analysis in each interview transcript and dialogue entry were underlined and then coded using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The codes were entered into *Ethnograph* which was used to recode, sort, analyze, compare, and categorize data segments. A
sample of coded text generated with the use of Ethnograph is provided in Appendix H.

Initially, I coded the data from the interviews and dialogue journals as either related to students' perspectives about the dialogue journal process (DJ), the self-as-writer (SELF), or both (DJ/SELF). If students discussed or wrote about concepts which reflected perspectives on the process of dialogue journal writing itself, I coded that information, DJ. If, however, students clearly refereed to themselves in the context of writing, then those references were coded, SELF. Some students refereed to both themselves as writers and to the dialogue journal process simultaneously. Those references having elements of both DJ and SELF were determined to have a mixed orientation and were double-coded.

**Coding for DJ.** Within the concept DJ, a number of patterns emerged from the data suggesting several broad categories with respect to how students view the dialogue journal process (Strauss, 1987): Interpersonal Perspectives (INTER), Intrapersonal Perspectives (INTRA), and Developmental Perspectives (DEVELOP). Using the process of axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1991) in which the participants' statements were contrasted and compared across categories, each category was further divided into
Figure 2  Dialogue Journal Perspectives

As Figure 2 shows, the Intrapersonal Perspectives category is composed of students' notions about using dialogue journal writing to explore their feelings and ideas for themselves. The Interpersonal Perspectives...
category, on the other hand, is composed of students’ notions about the use of dialogue journal writing to relate to and exchange ideas and experiences with their teacher. The Developmental Perspectives category contains students’ views about the influence that dialogue journal writing had on the development of their writing fluency and their motivation to write.

Student perspectives of the dialogue journal process described in their own words via the inductively derived categories shown above are explored in detail in Chapter Four.

Coding for SELF. Within the concept, SELF, two categories concerning the students’ views of themselves as writers emerged during the ongoing analysis of the data: Self as Thinker (THINK) and Self as User of the English Language (LANG). These categories describe the students’ changing views of themselves as writers as they engaged in dialogue journal writing. Figure 3 shows the interactive relationship of these subcategories.
As Figure 3 shows, the concept of Self as Writer is divided into two categories inductively derived from the coded interview transcripts and dialogue journal texts. These interactive categories, Self as Thinker and Self as User of English, include the changing views that students held of themselves as they engaged in dialogue journal writing. Students described themselves as writers in terms of either their abilities to conceive of and think about ideas in English or in terms of their abilities to control the English language at the grammatical level.

Chapter Four explores in detail the concept of Self as Writer from the perspective of the students in this study. 

Analyzing the ESL-WAT

Data from the participants’ ESL-WATs were analyzed informally using a pre-post individual item analysis.
First, I looked for consistency in student responses to the polarized items, noting inconsistencies for later analysis. Then I grouped positive statements and negative statements into their respective categories and tallied, item-by-item, the units of change between pre and post test items. The units of change on each item of each student's test were then summed, arriving at a number which represented the overall units of change, both positive and negative, for each student's ESL-WAT. A positive number represented an overall reduction in writing apprehension while a negative number represented increased writing apprehension as reported on the ESL-WAT.

The results of the English as a Second Language Writing Apprehension Test (Gungle & Taylor, 1989) were not used in the development of categories describing students' perspectives of dialogue journals but were used instead in an exploratory way. Each student's attitudes about writing reported in the interviews and dialogue journals were examined with respect to the pre and post test results on the ESL-WAT. Consistencies corroborated the findings of the interview and dialogue journal data. Inconsistencies raised questions which required further probing of interview and dialogue journal data as well as speculation about the appropriateness of the instrument to this study.
Criteria for Goodness of the Study

Guba and Lincoln (1982) name four criteria for judging the "trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiry" (p. 246): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility, demonstrated through the "verisimilitude between data of the inquiry and the phenomena those data represent" (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 246), was established in this study through the use of multiple sources of data, maintenance of authentic artifacts in the form of dialogue journal entries, and member checking. Six cases were investigated, and three sources of data from each participant were collected and analyzed. Taped and transcribed interviews of the participants' perspectives as well as their dialogue journals were collected and archived. Copies of documents, as well as a rough draft of relevant parts of the final report, were then provided to the members to check for accuracy.

Transferability and confirmability, "intended to maximize the range of information collected and to provide stringent conditions for theory grounding," were established through the use of a purposeful sample, "thick description," careful maintenance of archives, and an "audit trail" (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 248). Participants
were carefully selected using a lengthy process of questioning, observing, and artifact checking to attain a sample which closely matched the range of perspectives about writing held by members of the class. In addition, "thick description" of the participants and their perspectives provide the reader with adequate contextual material to determine the transferability of the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 248). Moreover, all data were carefully archived, and field notes detailing methodological decisions regarding the data were maintained.

Confirmability was established through the use of multiple sources of data, as described above, and reflective journal writing. During the study I periodically wrote theoretical memoranda in which I explored the underlying assumptions of the study and made tentative formulations about the data as they were collected.

**Ethical Considerations**

**Role of the Researcher**

As a researcher, I adopted an observer role and did not interact with the participants during class lessons (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). This role ensured that total observation time was spent in the collection of detailed fieldnotes. Moreover, by maintaining the role of observer,
I hopefully impacted the natural learning environment only minimally.

**Human Subjects Review Process**

In compliance with the requirements for the Human Subjects Review Process, each participant was informed of the purpose of the study, the distribution of information collected from the study, the confidentiality of participants and site in the study, and the right of participants to withdraw from the study at any time.

All requirements of the Human Subjects Review Committee were met in the execution of this study.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Chapter Four presents findings on six adult ESL students' perspectives of the dialogue journal process and on their views of themselves as writers engaged in that process. Two questions guided the data collection for this study:

1. What perspectives do second language university students have toward the process of dialogue journal writing as they engage in interactive dialogue journal writing with their teacher over a 15-week semester?
2. What perspectives do university ESL students have toward themselves as writers and how, if at all, do those perspectives change as they engage in interactive dialogue journal writing with their teacher over a 15-week semester?

As data were collected and compared across the six cases, categories in student perspectives of the dialogue journal process and their views of themselves as writers emerged. This cross-case analysis of the data (Yin, 1989), in which each unit of analysis was compared across all six
cases, revealed a number of categories and subcategories which emerged early in the data collection to focus and shape the study. Derived from coded interviews, coded dialogue journal transcripts, and field observations, these categories were translated into five salient themes (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) based on the case study data: 1) Interpersonal Perspectives, 2) Intrapersonal Perspectives, 3) Developmental Perspectives, 4) Self as Communicator, 5) Self as Thinker and User of the English Language.

The five inductively derived themes are described through the voices of the participants in the case study. Relevant passages from the students' interviews and dialogue journals are interwoven with analytical comments explaining the nature and relevance of the students' words.

This method of reporting qualitative data via inductively derived themes is widely used in case studies of second language acquisition (Nunan, 1992). Dialogue journal researchers Dolly (1987), Lucas (1990), Peyton and Seyoum (1980), Staton, et al. (1988), and others use the thematic approach to report their findings on the benefits and uses of dialogue journals with second language students. The thematic approach to data reporting was selected for this study because of its widespread acceptance and usefulness in communicating case study
findings to other researchers in second language acquisition.

The themes emerge from two major divisions which correlate with the questions in this study: Student Perspectives of Dialogue Journal Writing and Student Perspectives of Self as Writer. Each theme is explored in detail in this chapter, using the voices of the six participants to describe the process of dialogue journal writing. In general, the interview transcripts and dialogue journal writing of the students are presented in unedited form to preserve the authenticity of their voices and the developmental nature of their language proficiency. Bracketed explanations clarifying the students' utterances or writing are included only when necessary. This method conforms to standard practice in the reporting of qualitative data in second language acquisition (Nunan, 1992).

Students' initial perspectives about their educational backgrounds and previous writing experiences are reported in Appendix I. Although not part of the questions which define this study, these perspectives provide an understanding of the participants as well as a platform from which to view their emerging perspectives of dialogue journal writing and themselves as writers.
Dialogue Journal Perspectives

From the interview and dialogue journal data, three themes emerge with respect to the students' perspectives of the process of writing dialogue journals. These themes, suggested by the inductively derived categories of coded data, describe the students' interpersonal perspectives, intrapersonal perspectives, and developmental perspectives, of writing interactively with their teacher during the fifteen weeks in which this study was conducted. The words of the students suggest the naming of the themes, and it is their words which guide my description.

Theme One: Interpersonal Perspectives

Participant awareness of the interpersonal level of dialogue journal writing dominated the interview transcripts and dialogue journal entries. Participants used words and phrases like "communication," "exchange," "relationship," and "she listens to my problems" to describe their interpersonal experiences in writing interactively with Sandy. They were aware of her as a partner in dialogue and valued the interaction that occurred in the written exchanges. In their interviews and dialogue journal entries students expressed their interpersonal perspectives about dialogue journal writing 87 separate times.

To clarify the students' views about the interpersonal
aspects of dialogue journal writing, their comments are grouped into two sub-categories suggested by the students' own words: Relationship and Exchange Ideas and Experiences.

**Relationship**

The concept of relating/relationships is most prevalent in the testimony of the participants. A unit analysis of the interview transcripts and dialogue journal texts reveals 48 separate references to the notion of relating with Sandy, the teacher and dialogue partner. In the journals, students wrote directly to Sandy. They asked for advice, shared their insecurities, prayed for her happiness, thanked her for helping them learn to write, called her mom, invited her to lunch, or told her they cared about her. In the interviews students talked about Sandy. They commented about her friendship as either a teacher or friend, focusing specifically on her demonstration of caring for them in the dialogue journals and their appreciation of having someone to relate to.

According to participant responses, the relationship between the students and Sandy that developed during the process of dialogue journal writing became very meaningful for many of the participants. Comments from interviews and dialogue journal entries cited below suggest the growing importance that students placed on the relationship that evolved in the dialogue journals between themselves and
Sandy during the semester.

In her first interview, Wanita commented on how writing with Sandy made her feel:

Because sometimes whenever you feel comfortable with somebody...they give attention to you. You like to give more close. Then somebody really read my letter and get attention to it is ok, but when somebody answer and say great you did good, it feel good.

Although the word relationship is not present in Wanita’s comment, the notions of being "comfortable" with someone who makes one feel "close" and "feel good" suggest the dynamics of an evolving interpersonal relationship from a student who may not have the word relationship in her lexicon.

Wanita’s positive response to the interpersonal aspects of writing with Sandy also are reflected in her second dialogue journal entry: "I fell geting to know you a little bit, you will know me more by reading all my letter, I hope you have fun to read them all as much as I do writing you every week."

The concept of relating gathered strength in subsequent interviews with Wanita. In the second interview she described dialogue journal writing: "One way to get to know the person, too. By writing you correspondence the person....You get more close." By the third interview,
Wanita had begun to discuss how she values her relationship with Sandy. When asked to describe the dialogue journal process, she responded:

A close relationship with the teacher and student. A close contact. So we feel really free. You know some teachers sometimes they have a distance like that. I don’t know like in Asia the teacher...In the states we really close. We free. So we can discuss a lot of things together.

At the end of the project Wanita summarized her perspectives about the nature of relating to her teacher through the dialogue journal: "How to say that. I think it is good exercise to make the connection between the teacher and the student." In her final journal entry, Wanita revealed some very personal concerns, admitting to Sandy: "I wrote this to you because I fill so comfortable with you, thank’s for your understanding."

For Wanita, dialogue journal writing became important enough that by the end of the semester she asked Sandy to continue writing with her after the class ended. Also, she attempted to start a dialogue journal communication with me by writing me several "letters" during the ninth and tenth weeks of the study. She did, in fact, start a dialogue journal with another female student, Leila (pseudonym), whom she met in the class. Wanita and Leila composed
letters to each other and then faxed them back and forth daily on their husbands' fax machines. A recent telephone call to Wanita confirmed that the fax dialogue journal writing is still underway. Wanita recognizes the power that interactive writing has for her, and she has made attempts to continue it.

In her first interview, Ceci alluded to her awareness of the relationship she was establishing with Sandy through the journal, yet she was not sure about the boundaries of that relationship. She reported:

First time I writing to Sandy I want to write everything. I worry is too many things. Different times I write. Today morining [sic] is I am worry about. You are teacher and I am student. so, what can I think of for you. You are teacher. You are not my friend. Just you are teacher, so how can I write about you. So I am worry about that.

Ceci's early dialogue entries also reflected the process she experienced in defining the relationship that was evolving in the journal, or "letters," a term many students, including Ceci, used to refer to the dialogue journal. In her second journal entry, she wrote: "You told us we can write anything to you. But I have confused this meaning sometimes. What can I think about you? You are a teacher to me. So, I am worry about writing you."
Ceci’s confusion about her relationship with Sandy began to evaporate by the third and fourth weeks of journal writing. In the third week she referred to Sandy as her friend: "I’ll pray for you. Because you are my friend. My friend Sandy! Whenever I think about you, I always get happy." Then, by week four, Ceci expressed her comfort with the relationship: "When I met you at first, I didn’t know such this things would happen each other. I feel more comfortable step by step. I understand your feeling."

In her second interview, Ceci defined the relationship between Sandy and herself, describing her as a friend: "After I wrote the letter, I feel good. Maybe I think she is my friend. I need a friend. I need somebody. I need talk somebody and I feel good."

Like Wanita and Ceci, Demi discovered and valued the relationship she developed with Sandy through the journals. Unlike Ceci, who experienced confusion in defining that relationship, Demi was clear about the relationship from the outset:

I really happy about this [dialogue journal]. I never done this before my life. I think its very great because more close to teacher personally. Talking is different than writing. This is more deep relationship. Unique....So I think it can be good relationship between student and teachers. I think it
was wonderful.

As the semester progressed, Demi’s feelings about the relationship developed in the journal intensified. In the middle of the semester Demi began to view the relationship in familial terms. "I feel more like relative feeling. It’s very comfortable. Anything I like to say, something like I do with my mom. Yea. It is a funny feeling for me, but it works," she stated. She shared these feelings with Sandy in a journal entry:

I am so glad to receive your letter every week. I thought that you have a lot of work....I was very comfortable with you as my mother. Sometimes you remained [remind] me my mather [sic]. She was very sweet and nice, helpful.

More than any other aspect of dialogue journal writing, Demi valued the relationship she and Sandy developed through the journal. In her final interview she summarized her views of dialogue journal writing:

The best part is about being the teacher and student relationship. Most people think that we don’t have any individually relationship. But in the letter you can see my personlity [sic] of the letter....So she can see me in what kind of person I am to write in my mind maybe she read. so I think that is wonderful thing between teacher and student have a relationship.
For Mikhail, too, the concept of relating through dialogue journal writing became apparent early in the semester, but he described the relationship in a different way. "I want her to have some dialogue between each other. Just to try to make a dialogue between two people. A conversation to find a good subject where both like it," he commented in the first interview. While he continued to view the interpersonal relationship in terms of a teacher-student relationship, Mikhail began to see the dynamics of the relationship turn upside down by the second interview: "She give me only answers. Like I am teacher, and she is only student." He claimed to enjoy this egalitarian relationship for the opportunities it gave him to display his knowledge of European culture and literature: "If you have good relationship between teacher and students you exchange knowledge where she have different culture. You have relationship between partners."

Although Mikhail valued the relationship he established with Sandy, he never thought of her as a close personal friend: "I am not her friend. Normally you have people you contact outside. I am not real her friend. I feel comfortable, but I don't know how she feel about me." He did, however, view her as a partner with whom he could share knowledge and broaden his own horizons:

I think so for everybody interesting to know a little
Yanik, like Mikhail, saw his relationship with Sandy in the dialogue journal as one of dialogue between a teacher and student but for the purpose of improving his English:

This relationship is information about...not friendship, a relationship like teacher between the students. That mean she give me information about English, about my writing, I don't know about. Then she ask me a couple of questions about me to know me better, to know my level.

Yanik valued the relationship for the opportunity it gave him to communicate with Sandy. "It’s a communication. It is not passive. That mean a relation. An exchange. That mean a new style of writing....It is important thing in life," he explained. Yanik kept the relationship at a level he felt comfortable with by "talk[ing] about Belgium and the politic in Belgium."

Although he referred to it frequently, Dang was ambivalent about his relationship with Sandy in the journal. In one interview he described his relationship with her in a positive light:
Just like a friend. She tells me what she think about what I wrote about in the paragraph, but she never treat me as a student. She treat me as a friend. It is a real letter form....So the relationship between me and her is just like regular friend. Really typical. Later, Dang clarified that the relationship did not extend beyond the journal: "The relationship between her and me just like friend is when we are writing in English, not in the class."

Dang's ambivalence about relating through the journal surfaced when he asked for advice about a romance he was having with a classmate. When he didn't like the advice he solicited from Sandy, he lost confidence in the notion of relating with her through writing:

Well tell you the truth we have too many disagreements between me and her because every time I write something her response is kind of disagree of what I type. I feel it is kind of weird. Because tell you the truth, I don't feel very comfortable about that. And is to know that I don't think I can write what I really think to her.

Dang's opinion of the value of the relationship to the journal process in general never fully recovered from his reaction to Sandy's advice although he continued to submit journal entries regularly.
**Summary of "Relationship".** Although all participants acknowledged the existence and importance of the relationship between themselves and Sandy in the journal, clear differences exist in how they defined that relationship. While Wanita, Ceci, and initially, Dang, used the word "friend" to define the relationship, Demi used "mom" to describe her relationship with Sandy. Mikhail and Yanik, on the other hand, did not view Sandy as a friend but more as a "partner" in communication. Nonetheless, the volume and content of the students' references to relationship in the interviews and journal texts suggest the importance of this concept in the students' perspectives about dialogue journal writing.

**Exchange of Ideas and Experiences**

While the concept of exchanging ideas may seem inherent to the concept of relating, the students' testimony and journal texts suggest that most students valued the exchange of ideas as a unique and separate benefit of dialogue journal writing. In fact, the word exchange or related synonyms such as correspond and conversation appeared in the transcripts 39 times. Students wrote or talked about exchanging feelings, ideas, or experiences.

Embedded in this concept of exchanging ideas, feelings, and experiences is the students' awareness that
they were writing to an authentic and interested audience who would respond and not just to complete an assignment for a grade. As Mikhail stated, "I try to make a dialogue between two people, a conversation to find a good subject where both like it."

Mikhail's awareness that exchanging ideas holds importance for him became increasingly focused during the study. In the third interview he stated:

I think so it is comfortable. It's right way to increase my English and to take some knowledge from somebody, to exchange knowledge. Exchange knowledge, exchange the art, the style. This is where you must have connection between two people. Some subject where is comfortable for both....You just take more view for different culture, parts. Who I am. Who she is. Just exchange information, subject. Bits which build one big picture. Whole purpose of these letters, I think so. To exchange opinions, to exchange just facts, or truth.

Suggested in his testimony is Mikhail's awareness of Sandy as an audience in the exchange of information. He referred to looking for a topic that would interest her. "I try to pick up some topic where she like it. Where both of you enjoy this topic. This is writing between two people," he explained.
Like Mikhail, Yanik valued the exchange, or communication, that took place in the journal. When asked what the journal meant to him, he responded:

To have a communication, an exchange with the teacher. She can know better the student, the problem from the student. That is what is that, you say, a dialogue. If you do a dialogue, you can do it to each other.

Yanik's testimony suggests an understanding of dialogue journal writing as a dynamic exchange in which he is writing for an intended audience. This concept is clarified in his final interview: "Yesterday I begin my letter and I think of idea from her letter. I read her letter and I begin my letter with this topic."

Although he claimed early in the study that "this is not a real letter," by the end of the semester, Yanik valued the real exchange that was taking place in the journal. "This is the way for learn English. That mean what? That mean that you will write....Language is communication. It is important," he concluded.

Wanita, too, valued the exchange that took place in the journal; however, she seemed to place more emphasis on the "caring" and "sharing" nature of the exchange than on the real transfer of information. She suggested, "I feel good that somebody has corresponded to, attention to my letter. Give me comments." Wanita compared the written
exchange in the dialogue journals to a conversational exchange; however, she called the writing more "open":

It's just nice for me to have somebody to talk—to write myself. I really enjoy now. Now I can talk to somebody—to write. It's good that somebody can listen to me and answer me like that. Just like we are talking together. It is just more open to write.

Like Mikhail and Yanik, Wanita valued exchanging what she called "conversation" with Sandy: "It's like to write to somebody like to talk. I talk to Sandy and she always respond. That's our conversation together."

The exchange Demi valued most in the journal was her sharing of personal views about life with Sandy:

First I write to her to tell her a little bit about my high school. Then she back to me to write she has been divorce, no children....I feel very happy after she give me that. That's respecting, I very appreciate to her.

Demi's appreciation of Sandy's willingness to exchange personal insights appeared consistently in her testimony. She anxiously awaited each week's response from Sandy: "I am happy to get her answer. I wonder what she is going to give me. A surprise answer." Demi was aware of Sandy as her audience and wrote with her in mind. "When you are writing you have think about the person to ask questions."
And you will tell her the feeling."

Ceci also spoke at length about the value of exchanging experiences in the journal: "I wrote experience about my hotel and Sandy wrote about that she had an experience about occupation. She gave that experience to me. We exchange experience." Not only did she value exchanging experience but she preferred doing it in writing, a form of communication that she claimed resulted in a more honest exchange:

Just writing is also oral communication same thing.
Sometimes better than oral communication. Writing is more frankly than oral communication. Something is to talk difficult, but writing is more comfortable...
Some problems is so big I don’t want to talk nobody. I am so shy. I have a pride so I can’t talk about that somebody, but the letter sometimes frankly writing. So I think writing is better than oral communication.

Ceci used the journal as a forum to explore and exchange personal problems and perspectives with Sandy. She used the journal because, by her own admission, she is too shy to talk in person. "I write down everything. I can say my problem so in face-to-face I am shy. But letter is more comfortable so I can write down everything," she explained.

Among the six participants, only Dang responded
ambivalently about the opportunity to exchange information and experiences in the journal. He acknowledged that the journal was a forum for exchange: "I think it is a form of communication. Regular people write and somebody write a response." He also concluded that he felt no fear in exchanging ideas and personal problems in the journal: "If I write on the letter I really not afraid to talk to her. I talk about the society event and then my personal problem." Nevertheless, in his final interview he stated he preferred not to write in this way. When asked what the journal meant to him, Dang responded:

Well, I think it doesn't matter to me. Usually I type it and I don't treat it as a letter. I treat it as an English assignment. Yea. Because I feel, tell you the truth, I don't like the idea of letter, I like more the formal English class.

Dang's comments suggest the felt need for more structured and formal assignments like the formal paragraphs that Sandy corrected and graded. By treating the journal as a typical "English assignment," Dang appears to cast it into the arena of formal instruction in which he suggested he is more comfortable. Dang's previous positive comments about relating with Sandy, however, suggest some ambivalence in his view of the interpersonal aspects of dialogue journal writing.
Summary of "Exchange Ideas and Experiences". The six participants repeatedly mentioned the exchange of ideas and/or experiences as part of the dialogue journal process. While the males in the study, Mikhail, Yanik, and Dang, focused on the exchange of ideas in their testimonies, the females, Wanita, Ceci, and Demi, focused on the exchange of experiences and their feelings attached to those experiences. The males and females in this study responded to Sandy differently in their dialogue entries, establishing different levels of intimacy which suggest a connection to gender.

Only one student, Dang, had ambivalent reactions to exchanging ideas and experiences in the journal. While acknowledging that exchange occurred frequently in the journals, he at times professed to be disinterested in exchanging both experiences and ideas with Sandy. At other times he appeared to appreciate the exchange. "She tells me what she think about what I wrote, but she never treat me as a student. She treats me like a friend. It is a real letter form," he noted. In the end, however, he concluded that a more traditional, formal approach to learning writing was preferable to him.

Summary of "Interpersonal Perspectives"

As the participants experienced the process of dialogue journal writing, they referred repeatedly to the
relationship between themselves and Sandy that was evolving and to the exchange of ideas that was occurring in the journals. As evidenced by the frequency and content of their comments, this aspect of the process clearly held significance for all but one of the participants, who himself, displayed ambivalence about the interpersonal aspects of dialogue journal writing.

**Theme Two: Intrapersoanal Perspectives**

Testimony revealing that participants valued the opportunity to explore their personal feelings and ideas in the dialogue journals suggests the Intraperosonal Perspectives Theme. Apart from the relationship and exchange of ideas that they experienced with Sandy, participants referred to the importance of expressing their feelings and ideas in the journal in a way which helped them examine their personal emotions and thinking. This theme explores the students' use of the journal as a way to relate with the self through writing.

Demi discussed using the journal to try to understand her relationships with people: "I saw many people and sometimes I want to write about these people, interesting characters they have and personality and philosophy I want to know." She used the journal entries to describe feelings for people or resolve emotional conflicts in her life, at one time writing about relationships and another
about her feelings for God.

Wanita’s interest in using the journal to explore personal issues centered in her role as a mother. She commented, "I like to write about me and my kids, my family. I really enjoy. About the life. The American ways. How they live. Right now I am looking what is good." In her journal entries, Wanita discussed the feelings about motherhood that she was wrestling with, claiming that writing helped her solve her problems:

I think it make us more comfortable to write whatever in your mind. So you don’t feel like, well, some people can be real down. But when you just write whatever you think, you feel more comfortable. and then you do every day and you change yourself by writing.

Ceci, too, reported valuing the journal for the opportunity to describe her feelings and thinking. "I like the letters. Is easy. So easy and then I could express my feeling. My feeling and my thinking, my emotion." In the journal she examined her feelings of loneliness and depression as well as conflicts with loved ones. In one journal entry she wrote about her mood: "I love raining. But everything is not good to me because [sic] of raining. I am getting to blue. Maybe it is loneliness. I missing so many friends in this morning." In another entry, she wrote
about her confusion about a love interest:

I determined to never do one-sided love. But I still doing one-sided love a new person because I am so lonely due to America. I think my life is no fun and bored despite I have ambition for future. I thought many things about this for a few days. Why man and woman have to miss each other? Why one-sided love is happened?

Ceci’s pattern of exploring her own emotions and thinking became increasingly valuable to her as the dialogue journal process unfolded. In her final entry she wrote, "I solved my depression because I felt more free after writting [sic] letter."

Although he expressed reservations about revealing too much about himself, Yanik valued the journal for the freedom it provided him to explore his own ideas:

I feel free, you know. You can scribe what you want. You can learn with this. With the letters you have always to create something yourself. You don’t know where you are going with the letters....Because in the letters you choose your subject and then you write what you want.

Yanik’s choice of topics to examine was rarely intimate. He chose, instead, to pen his philosophy about film, politics and American life. As he stated, "It is more easy to talk
about something else than yourself. It's instinctive, you know; you are more protected."

Dang, on the other hand, described using the journal for probing both feelings and ideas. In relating what he liked about writing in the journal, Dang stated, "Like my personal problem because sometimes if I feel bad then I write about that and it make me feel better." Choosing his own topics and writing his own ideas took on greater importance for Dang as the semester progressed. In an early interview, Dang declared: "As my personal opinion I like to write letter better than paragraph because I can choose my own topic. Then I have more details and then I feel good about that, and I can write a lot." By the final interview, Dang held a strong sense of the value of dialogue journal writing as a form of communication with oneself.

Writing the letter I can write about everything I want. I can choose whatever topic I want so I will really do a good job on that topic. Also [I will] not worry about what to say because I am not talking to a person, I am writing a letter to myself. If I write some topics I am not interested in, I can't type because I feel kind of restrict by somebody.

Above all, Mikhail valued the journal for the opportunity it gave him to choose his topics and test his ideas and opinions in writing. After only three weeks of
dialogue journal writing, he verbalized the importance of writing about his own topics: "I think so this is good idea to write what you want. I'm not sure how it is good, but I feel it is good. I think so this just push people to make people to think." By the end of the semester, Mikhail's perspective about the benefits of writing for himself were more lucid:

I hope so everybody in this journal tell his experience. I try to tell what I think. No what must to put in there. I think it is more important for me to describe my ideas, what I think not what somebody think. This is where more important for you to improve your mind. Your idea. Idea make person. It is not only what you see in the book where somebody tell you what you must to think.

Although he never broached an intimate topic, Mikhail used the journal to investigate a multitude of themes and experiences of personal interest. He wrote about totalitarianism versus freedom, education in Bulgaria versus education in America, as well as a new-found passion for the computer. He viewed the journal as a forum for personal expression. "It is important to explain my opinion," he stated.

Summary of "Intrapersonal Perspectives"

Probing personal feelings and ideas in writing became
an important aspect of the dialogue journal process for the participants in the study as evidenced by their testimony and journal entries. While Demi, Ceci, Wanita, and Dang mentioned being able to examine personal problems as well as ideas in the journal, neither Mikhail nor Yanik seemed comfortable with communicating intimate and personal details, preferring instead to examine ideas and to resolve conflicts related with their thinking. Although participants differed in their responses to the personal level of communication in the journal, they all used the journal to advance personal goals and to write for themselves. As Wanita spoke so succinctly, "We write in it every day what we think. It's some exercise for yourself."

**Theme Three: Developmental Perspectives**

The theme, Developmental Perspectives, is suggested by the students' reflections concerning the gradual growth and unfolding of both writing fluency and motivation that occurred for them in the dialogue journal process. In describing the increase in their writing fluency they used words and phrases like "write easier," "comfortable," "better," "no dictionary" and "improve." On the other hand, when describing how the process caused changes in the way they feel about writing they used words like, "no scare," "feel good," "like to write more," and "excited."

While it may seem artificial to separate development
in writing fluency from development in the motivation to write, as each influences the other, the students in the study viewed the two processes separately. When asked how the dialogue journal process benefitted them, they invariably described the changes in their motivation to write apart from the changes in the fluency of their writing. Thus, in the view of the students, although the notions of fluency and motivation were not necessarily interrelated, dialogue journal writing encouraged development in both writing fluency and motivation to write.

**Develops Writing Fluency**

The participants claimed that writing dialogue journals produced changes in the fluency of both their written and oral English. Many used the words "easy," "comfortable," "directly," or "quickly" to describe those changes in their writing which they attributed to the dialogue journal. Some even compared writing in the journal to talking, saying that writing had become for them as easy as conversation.

Yanik, for example, compared writing in the journal to talking, claiming that writing about his own topics in the journal helped him write quickly and easily. As a result, he claimed, he was able to write more. He noticed the changes in his writing after only six weeks of the
semester:

The writing is that you write more. That you write differently. Yeah. It’s more, the sentence are more easy. Because you write what you want. It shows your sentence. Letters, I think, it is more like talking.

Early in the semester Yanik relied heavily on his dictionary, using translation to write his entries. By the middle of the semester, however, he was writing quickly and fluently without the use of a dictionary. This accomplishment, which he attributed to dialogue journal writing, was important for Yanik:

It changed because I go more quickly now when I write. I remember before when I begin was long time in the library. I take long time to write in English. Because before I was thinking more to make my sentence, now it go faster and I don’t looking in my dictionary. Before I was looking in my dictionary and I make first my sentence in French, then in English. Now, yesterday, I make it directly in English. Now, (whistles) I go quickly. I am cool to write.

By the end of the semester, Yanik’s estimation of his fluency in writing is heightened:

I learned to write. I think that writing letters were a good experience for me. I feel like I learned more about writing, especially to write more quickly. When
I was writing my first letter, I remember that I did it first in French, then I translated all in English. Now I write directly in English. Now I write more directly in English, and what can I say, I am more in the subject too.

Ceci, too, noticed the changes in her writing fluency in the journal, suggesting that the changes came not only from closing the gap between her thinking and writing but also from the comfort and ease she felt in writing interactively about topics of her own choice. Early in the semester she compared the dialogue journal with traditional paragraph writing assignments:

I like the letters. Is easy. I like that. It’s more Americanized my writing. More comfortable. More easier. Journal is I can explain about myself and what I want to talking [say]. But is [in] paragraph, my thinking and writing have gap.

Like Yanik, Ceci noticed a decreasing dependence on the dictionary as her fluency increased in the journal. "At first I always have to find dictionary," she claimed, "but after one month, a little bit I don’t need dictionary. Step by step, a little bit."

But it is the change in her thinking that Ceci credited most to the journal writing. In her final journal entry she wrote:
I'm going to tell about what was good for me through this journal. First, I could arrange my thought from Korean language to American grammatical sentence. I can arrange my thinking better than before. At first I was confused because of Korean language. Korean language in head and was coming out confusing. Second, I feel writing more comfortable. My English sentence much better than before.

Demi, like Ceci, claimed the dialogue journal process improved her fluency because it caused her to think in English. "Improve my English, the expression of myself. When I wrote I have to think English, not Korean. That give me to work and I can have more time to think about English," she declared. As a result, she was able to write more easily and quickly as the semester progressed. "For me, time saving writing. Faster than before. Compared to before when I had to think a long time....That is nice way to write," she explained.

Wanita, on the other hand, suggested that the increasing fluency she experienced as a result of writing in the journal, occurred as a result of writing regularly in a form more like conversation:

It become a habit for me. I like to write every day. I can improve myself because I just do more--write, write, write. I think it like a conversation, you know
dialogue. Talking, just like that. I think that is very nice. It make it just like a habit writer. I feel more responsible to write more.

Wanita also noticed changes in the quality of her journal writing as the semester unfolded. "It really is good exercise for me. My husband see my change. Lately, I don’t do much mistake. It is getting better," she offered.

Mikhail attributed the changes he noticed in his fluency to many factors associated with dialogue journal writing. As he stated, "When you write the letter, it help not only for grammar but help for your whole your English."

Practice is one of the elements of dialogue journal writing that Mikhail claimed contributed to the improvement in his writing: "Practice, practice, practice. When you practice everyday it helps. It give me homework for write the letter. I think this help." Choosing his own topic to write about in the journal, Mikhail stated, also contributed to his ease and fluency in writing. "To pick up some choices, it is more easy. Because you don’t must to follow only one topic. You form your opinion in your mind. It’s more easy to write," he explained.

In his final journal entry, Mikhail wrote Sandy about an additional change he noticed in the fluency of his writing as a result of the journal: "I think writing these letters have been graet [sic] help to me. First, this has
helped to build my vocabulary. Second, it has increased my proper knowledge of English." Mikhail's growing confidence in his fluency is echoed in his last interview in which he claimed that writing in the journal also helped his oral fluency:

This is where it help me more. Because before I don't pay attention this rules. More be carefully because when I start to speak I think. Before I speak in a hurry without paying attention to this grammar. Now I speak more carefully and pay attention for special grammar.

While Mikhail continued to see changes in his fluency throughout the semester, Dang noticed changes early, but felt that Sandy's policy of not correcting errors in the journal prevented him from improving his writing throughout the semester. Early in the second interview, Dang commented, "I think it is better my letter. I can write down what I think more easily in English. I think it is getting help me a lot." Later in the same interview, however, Dang complained, "Sometimes you make some mistake English grammar. You will keep on doing the wrong thing over and over again if somebody doesn't correct you."

The need to have his journal writing corrected appears consistently throughout Dang's interview testimony, although he only asked Sandy for corrections twice in the
journal entries. Perhaps the need for correction contributed to the ambivalence in Dang’s perspectives about the dialogue journal process. In the last interview he conceded that the journal "helped my writing skill," but also stated,

I think it is getting better at the first period of the semester, but then it come to the point that my language development is stop because Sandy doesn’t help me, doesn’t correct my letter in the weekly journal. So is come to the point that it stop.

It is important to note that Dang received frequent error correction in the formal paragraphs that Sandy assigned the class. Like the other students in the class, Dang’s ten formal paragraphs were edited for grammar, syntax, punctuation, spelling, and style and were then returned for revision. Perhaps transferring the learning gained via error correction from one writing genre to another was not possible for Dang and resulted in the cognitive dissonance he experienced with respect to the uncorrected interactive writing of the dialogue journal.

Also, it is important to note that Sandy explained the purpose of uncorrected dialogue journal writing and offered to point out the positive aspects of his writing when he asked for corrections. Furthermore, she pointed out that she modeled corrections in her responses and asked him to
take note. Following Dang’s first request for corrections in the journal, Sandy wrote:

I know you asked me to make corrections to your letter, but that’s really not the purpose of the letter writing. While you can learn a lot by studying corrections, you can also learn a lot (and sometimes more easily) just by doing something often without someone else correcting you. In the letters, I want you to think about what you are saying, not how you are saying it. That way you can experiment with more subjects without having to worry about grammar and grades. I hope you will also see that I actually do correct you by using some of your ideas and rephrasing them in a more American manner.

Despite her explanation, Dang once again asked Sandy for corrections in the following journal entry. Sandy responded:

You’ve really given me a lot to think about here. I like that! Still, I think its best not to correct your grammar or vocabulary for the reasons I wrote before. But since you have written some wonderful sentences all on your own, I will point out some of them so that you know some of the things you’re doing right.

In subsequent journal entries, Sandy pointed out Dang’s well-crafted sentences so that Dang might learn from his
own successes. For example, in the third week she wrote: "Your phrase about the street being 'rife with drugs, illegal guns, and gangs' is very well stated." In addition, Sandy continued to model corrections for Dang throughout the semester. In the final analysis, however, Dang was never convinced that he could learn as well from uncorrected interactive writing as he could from formal writing assignments.

**Summary of "Develops Writing Fluency".** In the view of the participants, dialogue journal writing contributed to their growing fluency in written English in a number of ways. Yanik, Ceci, and Dang suggested that writing in the journal helped them learn to compose with ease and speed, without relying on dictionaries and translation. Demi and Ceci emphasized the journal's contribution to their ability to convert their thinking into clear writing. Wanita and Mikhail claimed that the repetitive practice provided by the journal writing, the "habit writer" as Wanita called it, improved their writing fluency.

Of the six participants, only Dang expressed some reservations about the connections between dialogue journal writing and the development of fluency. Although he admitted that journal writing enhanced his fluency to a certain extent, he emphasized that without corrections, he was destined to repeat the same errors again and again in
his writing. He was never conscious of transferring the corrections made in the formal writing assignments to the informal writing in the journal.

**Develops Motivation to Write**

Participants' testimony about their desire to write more and their enhanced enjoyment and satisfaction with writing as a result of the dialogue journal process suggests that interactive writing motivated the participants in this study. Similar to the comments they made regarding the development of fluency through interactive writing, the participants used words and phrases like "no scare," "feel good," "like to write more," "feel free," and "excited" to describe their perspectives about the motivational aspects of dialogue journal writing. Only one participant, Dang, expressed less than whole-hearted endorsement of the dialogue journal process as a motivational experience.

In the first half of the semester, Dang expressed positive feelings about his accomplishments in writing the journal. After only three weeks of journal writing, Dang was motivated by the sense of accomplishment he felt in writing a "letter":

I enjoy that I feel I have done something like writing an English letter because in my high [school] I don’t think I have ever written after five year of living in

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the U.S. I write a letter and after finish the letter and I read over it and I feel good about it. I feel I have done something—something important because during this five years maybe this is the first time I use my heart and mind. I really work hard.

Two weeks later, Dang again expressed a growing sense of accomplishment in writing in the journal. When asked to explain his feeling, he commented:

Because I feel there is a sense of accomplishment in my writing. Because I feel I have done a good job on my English. Because for a long time I always feel that my English is not better than other people. So I feel kind of sad about that. But when I write more I feel a sense of accomplishment and I feel better about that.

Later, however, Dang’s feelings of accomplishment began to fade as he began to question the uncorrected dialogue journal format. After asking Sandy twice to correct his journal and mentioning corrections a total of nine times in the interviews, Dang grew resigned to writing dialogue journals without corrections although he never accepted this aspect of the process. In his final entry to Sandy he wrote about his dissatisfaction, noting that what began as a motivational process reversed itself in the end:

However, there is some dissatisfaction about this class that I would like to point out. As my personal
opinion, the so called "letters," a good idea when it started at the beginning, turns out to be a senseless assignment by the end of the semester. When this assignment first started, it gave me ready to write in English, but then it goes to a point that I can’t improve anymore; mainly because there were no corrections nor suggestions about the letter structures or grammars, and consequently, I will make English mistakes over and over again each time I write a paragraph.

In his final interview, however, Dang softened his objections, suggesting that, with exceptions, the dialogue journal was a valuable experience:

Actually, I think the journal could be keep, but actually the journal makes the students to write English more. But, in addition to that, we should have more formal English. Because if you don’t have that you always make a mistake.

Dang’s dissatisfaction with the lack of corrections is balanced against his often-stated positive feelings about being able to write about his own topics. "I feel it is great that I can write everything I want so I feel kind of good about that. I can pick my own topic and write everything I want," he claimed. Dang’s alternating
enjoyment of and dissatisfaction with journal writing suggests ambivalence in his feelings about the motivational aspects of the dialogue journal process.

The other five participants, however, expressed no reservations about the motivational aspects of dialogue journal writing. Ceci, Yanik, and Demi described feeling less fearful about writing as a result of the dialogue journals. After only six weeks of journal writing, Ceci noticed the changes in her feelings about writing associated with journal writing:

Maybe it give to me more comfortable writing. And it is easier, so I try. I want to try writing. At first, I was scared about writing, but is now it is funny. I get like writing because of journal. Maybe I am used to English sentence.

Ceci suggested that she was more willing to write, perhaps that writing was even fun, because the fear she originally associated with writing diminished as a result of writing interactively with Sandy in the journal.

In the final interview, Ceci reiterated the value of the motivational aspects of dialogue journal writing. When asked what was best about the dialogue journal experience, she responded: "I am not afraid about writing anymore. That is best for me." In her final journal entry to Sandy, Ceci shared that her lack of fear resulted in a newly
discovered comfort with writing. "I feel writing more comfortable. My English sentence more better than before. I felt more free after writing letter to you and also your answers gave freshness." She concluded by thanking Sandy and writing, "I will keep this journal forever."

Yanik attributed his motivation to write to the evolving feelings of comfort, freedom, and reduced apprehension associated with dialogue journal writing. Articulating these feelings after only three weeks of the semester, he focused specifically on the lack of corrections as a motivating factor:

I feel free. Yes, you feel good and you think you can scribe good because you know when she give back [the journal] you see nothing you feel happy. You say, OK. (laugh) But with the composition, you feel a little bit sick. You understand? It’s real. It’s like this. She said, ‘I don’t want to agress you so I don’t correct.’ Yea, its good psychologically because every time we see mistake, you know, it is not good for the students. They are too much demotivated.

The reduced apprehension he experienced through journal writing, Yanik declared, helped him take greater risks with his writing because "you don’t scare for the structure." In the final interview, Yanik elaborated on the motivational aspects of uncorrected dialogue journal
writing:

If you are too constipated, you write nothing, you know? First, you have to make your mistake. Than you can write. But first you have to put something on the paper. That is what you say in French. It [dialogue journal] helps you because your idea on the paper. You put something. If you are scared to scribe and you say this is not good, not good, you have only three line to write. But if you do not scare to make fault, you write, write, write. Then later you can rectify, you know?

In Yanik’s view, writing in the journal motivated risk-taking because of the uncorrected communicative aspects of the interactive writing process. Yanik’s feelings of fear, "scare," about writing were replaced with feelings of comfort and ease.

Demi also concluded that the journal writing reduced her fear of writing and motivated her to write more. "So now I felt I didn’t afraid to writing. I feel comfortable. Even spelling is wrong, I don’t care. Just writing more," she stated. Demi suggested that the uncorrected dialogue journal writing was a kind of communication that showed Sandy’s acceptance and respect for the student, an aspect that Demi valued highly:

She didn’t correct the journal. Maybe she accept as
person, the feelings and things and the way they expression. Maybe she doesn’t understand some words, but she accept for us. She respect the person. If she correct every time, but sometimes afraid to write. If she correct every time is nice way, but the other hand is criticize. So maybe she give us the expression of whatever we can tell her. The respect as person. I feel very happy with that.

Demi claimed that dialogue journal writing motivated her to write comfortably and easily, focusing less on errors. "That is nice way to write. I write easily. Makes really comfortable. Even though the spelling will be wrong it doesn’t bother me much because now I can writing more comfortably."

Wanita, too, experienced a feeling of comfort and ease that motivated her to write more. Also, the feeling that she could write more easily gave her the confidence to help her children with their writing, a very important motivating factor in Wanita’s life. "I have to say that it [dialogue journal] make more writing and easier to write. It is easier for me to help my daughter with her writing. I am feeling more comfortable and now I write a lot more letters," she shared. In addition, Wanita’s new-found comfort with writing "letters" with Sandy motivated her to begin a dialogue journal with a fellow classmate. As a
result of dialogue journal writing, Wanita concluded, "I am more open to write. To ask more questions."

Mikhail, also, discussed being motivated by the process of exploring his ideas in a written format that was uncorrected and ungraded. He concluded:

I think so letter is more enjoyable to me. I hate to have rules about mine to manage. It's just ideas where you have in your head. You explain your ideas. This is more easy for me. I know its not for grade this letter. This just more enjoyable when its not for grade....It give me rich choice where I like to write more.

Summary of "Develops Motivation to Write". With the exception of Dang who had ambivalent views about dialogue journal writing, students throughout the semester viewed the dialogue journal process as motivational, claiming that it spurred them to write more often with greater comfort and less apprehension. In addition, students claimed that writing about topics of their own choosing in the journal induced them to write more easily and more frequently. Only Dang failed to sustain a positive motivation toward writing in the journal. While he initially viewed the dialogue journal process as motivational, by the end of the semester he had reversed his perspective, claiming that the lack of corrections in the journal made it a "senseless
Nevertheless, he concluded that the journal "should be keep" because "it makes the students to write English more."

**Self as Writer**

The perspectives that students have of themselves as writers during the process of dialogue journal writing are described in the category Self as Writer. Through their dialogue journal entries and interviews students describe linguistic and cognitive changes in their writing which precipitated changes in the way they view themselves as writers. These changes are grouped into two inductively derived themes: Self as Competent User of English and Self as Thinker.

Although these two themes appear to be independent of each other and of the previously discussed themes, they are nonetheless highly interactive. They represent concurrently existing phenomena in the process of dialogue journal writing. As students described changes in their abilities to control English as the linguistic level, they began to describe changes in their abilities to think clearly in English. As these changes occurred in parallel, student perspectives of themselves as writers changed. These changes in the students' perspectives are recorded in the words of their dialogue journals and their interview transcripts and are described as either Self as Competent
User of English or Self as Thinker.

Theme Four: Self as Competent User of English

With the exception of Dang and Demi, students’ views of themselves as competent users of the English language changed noticeably in the process of writing dialogue journals. In the early weeks of the semester, all students’ expressed difficulty in manipulating the language in their journals. By the end of the semester, however, most reported feeling more comfortable with themselves as writers as a result of the linguistic control they gained through journal writing.

Mikhail’s perspective of his ability to use the language became apparent early in the semester. In the first interview, he explained how his poor control of English influenced his view of himself as a writer:

I have problem for writing. It’s difficult. It’s real difficult. This is different structure, plus I don’t have this vocabulary for one child about 10 years old. This is what make me trouble. To tell you the truth, Miss Vicki, I don’t feel a person. I have shame for my English. It is not a joke. I don’t feel a person. I feel a some, most of the time, a person without hands where must to do something.

Mikhail’s frustration with his ability to control the language tempered as he saw changes in his writing. After
six weeks of dialogue journal writing he reflected, "I feel everyday it is just a little more easy for me to start to put my words in right place in the sentence." His frustration with the vocabulary, however, persisted: "I start to look for different words, but I tell you it is hard because English you have one word couple of meanings."

By the end of the semester, Mikhail's view of himself as a competent user of English was cautiously optimistic:

It is difficult to tell language changed at once. Language change every day just a little bit. I start to understand more. I start to know better grammar. Just I know I feel more better about my writing, about my speaking, about my understanding.

In his final correspondence with Sandy, Mikhail wrote, "I think writing these letters have been graet [sic] help to me....Perhaps some day I will not be ashamed of my English."

Although he too never viewed himself as a good writer, Yanik experienced an evolution in his ability to control English grammar and syntax in his journals. In his first interview he perceived himself having trouble with writing because of his lack of linguistic control:

It's not easy for me to write. The most difficult is to make sentence. To make, you know, the grammar, everything, the vocabulary. I tell you, the stem it is
not difficult because I can look in the dictionary. But the grammar is difficult and the conjugation, you understand? First I have to write in French and then in English.

By the end of the semester, however, Yanik wrote directly in English, "looking sometimes in [his] dictionary." He said of himself, "I don’t write so good, but I make an evolution. I think I am like this. I think I have a lot to learn in vocabulary, but I feel a lot of work. I don’t think I am writing like in French, but..."

Like Mikhail and Yanik, Wanita’s perspective of herself as a competent user of English changed in the process of dialogue journal writing although she never came to view herself as a "total improved" writer. In her first entry to Sandy she shared her view of herself as a writer, "Now I have problem with myself...but I couldn’t do much because I have limited with my language. Make me feel so sad." Wanita wanted to help her daughter in school, but she felt incapable of doing so. By the end of the semester, however, Wanita had begun to help her daughter with writing, resulting in a changed view of herself as a writer:

I think I can realize something that I do better than before. I feel more comfortable. In writing with Sandy you more writing you learn more grammar too. You are
writing more just like you talking. So directly you do your grammar. Everything comes at once.

Although Ceci complained about her writing ability early in the semester, she viewed herself as a somewhat competent writer by the end. At first, she saw herself as incapable of good writing: "I want to be write better than is now. But I can't. Always is same thing. I can't be better." After six weeks of dialogue journal writing, however, Ceci viewed her writing ability in a different way. When asked what changes she saw in her writing, she responded:

Progress the English and recognize grammar. Skill is better. Get better. More grammatical and more Americanized. Maybe I am used to English sentence. At first I was confusing, but now I can recognize about that.

In the final interview, Ceci credited the journal with improving her writing. When asked how her ability has changed through journal writing, she claimed: "Everything is better than before. I think it [her writing] is 70% correct." Proud of her accomplishment, Ceci wrote about her new confidence in herself as a user of the English language in her last journal entry to Sandy:

Now, I'm going to tell about what was good for me through this journal. First, I could arrange my
thought from Korean language to American grammatical sentence. Second, I feel writing more comfortable. My English sentence much better than before.

Only Dang and Demi failed to notice significant changes in their ability to use written English correctly in their journals. Demi’s early assessment of her ability, "I was confused and I don’t have enough vocabulary to put it into words," remained essentially the same at the end of the semester although she testified that she enjoyed writing more. In her final interview, she concluded, "Writing sometimes I don’t have enough vocabulary expressing those feelings." Although she wrote to Sandy about how comfortable she felt relating to her in the journal, Demi still had difficulty by the end of the semester seeing herself as a competent user of English. In her last journal entry she wrote, "I thought that English was very difficult to learn, and the more I write, the more difficult time it is with me." Perhaps Demi’s expectations for herself as a writer grew as she experienced the interactive writing process with Sandy, and the disparity between her writing and the model writing provided by Sandy became evident.

Although he noticed change in his writing ability early in the semester, Dang also never perceived the kinds of changes in himself as a user of English that he had
hoped for. He conceded that he made progress in his writing, but expressed disappointment with himself and the dialogue journal process. "I think it is getting better at the first period of the semester, but then it come to the point that my language development is stop." Dang blames his perceived lack of growth largely on the uncorrected form of writing that occurred in the dialogue journals.

**Summary of "Self as Competent User of English".** With the exception of two students, the participants' perspectives of themselves as competent users of the English language changed in the process of dialogue journal writing. As the semester progressed, students experienced greater control over the linguistic level of their dialogue journal entries. According to their testimony, they were able to arrange their thoughts more grammatically, spell better, and use a wider variety of vocabulary items causing them to view themselves as more competent writers. Two of the participants did not change their perspectives of themselves as users of English appreciably. Although Dang admitted that he "changed to a point," Demi suggested that writing in English was more difficult for her at the end of the semester than at the beginning.

**Theme Five: Self as Thinker**

Closely aligned with their perspectives of themselves as competent users of English are the students' views of
themselves as thinkers. However, while just four of the six students saw improvement in the linguistic level of their journal entries, all participants observed changes in themselves as thinkers in the process of dialogue journal writing. They reported experiencing changes in their ability to think up new ideas to write about, to think logically, and to think in English.

Demi’s view of herself as a thinker changed dramatically during the semester. In the beginning, she struggled to find ideas to write about and when she did find an idea, she struggled to think it through logically in English:

Sometimes I haven’t got any ideas. It’s a little bit bother me to get ideas every week [for the journal]. Sometime I get the idea right away, but I put in writing I don’t know what to do with it. I lost the way. That’s my problem.

At the end of the semester, Demi saw herself as capable of clear thinking. She began to read books to get her ideas, and she reported having no trouble thinking about her ideas in English.

So I reading books two hours day. Get the ideas...Most of the time now I think ideas English way, not Korean. Sometimes I think very similar thing with Americans. I agree with them. I have very different mind than
Korean way now. It’s funny, I think in English most of the time.

Like Demi, Ceci’s judgment of her own ability to think clearly in English changed in the process of dialogue journal writing. In her early entries, Ceci complained about her inability to think, "So bad. So bad. I want to think about something but because of language, English, my brain is no work." By the end of the semester, however, Ceci’s view of her thinking, as experienced through journal writing, changed:

I can arrange my think better than before. At first time I was confused because of Korean language. Korean language in head and coming out is confusing. But it is a little bit easier now....A little bit is my thinking is Americanized so it is same word and same meaning.

Ceci attributed her improved ability to think in English to the journal writing. In her final entry to Sandy, she wrote: "Now, I am going to tell you what is good for me through this journal. First, I could arrange my thought from Korean language to American grammatical sentence." Ceci’s testimony suggests an understanding of the interactivity of clear thinking and control of the language suggested by other students’ testimony.

In the first six weeks of the semester, Wanita also
viewed herself as incapable of thinking coherently in English. In the second interview she described the struggle she had in getting ideas on paper:

When I start to write, I can't think. When I sit and start to write my...I just don't know what to write again....I am circling around and I tear the paper again. I tear again. And I tear again. I don't know how many pages. OK, I try again. I don't want to give up.

By the end of the semester, however, Wanita's perspective of her ability to think, as well as her approach to writing, altered dramatically. When asked to describe the changes she perceived in herself as a writer, she responded:

The feeling. Just more comfortable to write. The thinking is come out automatically. I just write more what I thinking. Whatever is in your mind just bring it out and write, write, write and then after you can correct it.

While Yanik, Dang, and Mikhail never experienced trouble in thinking of topics to write about, they reported having difficulty thinking in English, a problem that affected their views of themselves as writers. Yanik, for example, at first felt hampered in his thinking by having to rely on his dictionary: "I am concerned to find idea
but it is not my real problem you know... Maybe I have to be careful because one day she ask me to write something without my dictionary. I don’t can think." In his final interview, Yanik reported that thinking in English was now easy for him: "Yeah, when I write I try to make directly in English. If I think in English is more easy than before."

Dang also realized changes in his ability to think in English as a result of the journal. In the beginning of the semester he claimed that he reverted to thinking in Chinese whenever confronted with a new or difficult idea:

But when there is sometimes some harder English I cannot thinking, then I think in terms of Chinese. Then you know when I think in Chinese and type in English I cannot think... So I just can’t write it. So I think of another idea.

But by the end of the semester, Dang reported thinking most often in English. He suggested that the journal writing had helped alter his thinking process:

I have a little bit of feeling that when I am typing down the letter then I will use, in my mind, I will think of more English than Chinese.... So I think it has improved, has changed, internal when I sit down typing English I will think in English more.... And the more I write in English, then I will think more in
English.

In his first interview, Mikhail revealed a lack of confidence in his thinking ability: "I like to tell what I think and most of the time it is wrong." He blamed his lack of knowledge of English vocabulary and his habit of thinking in Bulgarian for his inability to verbalize his thinking. At the end of the semester, however, Mikhail was cautiously optimistic about the changes he experienced in his ability to think clearly in English: "I still think in Bulgarian, but I start to think for English."

**Summary of "Self as Thinker".** The participants experienced changes in their perspectives of themselves as thinkers through the process of dialogue journal writing. While some reported changes in their abilities to conceive and think through topics, others reported changes in their abilities to think clearly in English and to write their thoughts "directly" in English.

**Summary of Findings**

This chapter reported the views that participants expressed about the dialogue journal process and about themselves as writers engaged in that process. An analysis of the participants' testimony and dialogue journal texts suggests five themes that conceptualize their perspectives of dialogue journal writing: Interpersonal Perspectives, Intrapersonal Perspectives, Developmental Perspectives,
Self as Competent User of English and Self as Thinker. Although these five themes are described separately, they are nonetheless interrelated in the participants' testimony, suggesting that dialogue journal writing is a complex process consisting of highly interactive linguistic, cognitive, and affective dimensions.

As students engaged in interactive writing in their dialogue journals, they began to notice the interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects, affective and cognitive dimensions, of this form of communication. Many students reported developing a relationship with Sandy in which they could exchange ideas and feelings. This nonjudgmental relationship experienced by some, resulted in greater feelings of ease and comfort in writing. For others, the intrapersonal aspects of dialogue journal writing were more meaningful. These students valued the opportunity to relate to themselves through their writing. They explored new topics, worked out depression, or resolved problems through journal writing. For them, the journal was valued, in part, as a private and personal experience.

As students wrote in their journals, they also began to experience developmental changes in both their writing and their motivation to write. Students reported being able to compose more "quickly," "directly," "comfortably," or "easily" as a result of journal writing. These outcomes,
along with the interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects of dialogue journal writing valued by the students, gave rise to the development of greater motivation to write. Students reported writing more often and with less fear as a result of the dialogue journals.

Only one aspect of dialogue journal writing, the lack of teacher correction in the dialogue texts, was problematic for one of the participants. While most students in the study found dialogue journal writing to be highly motivational, one student objected to this uncorrected form of written communication suggesting that it would be useful if corrections were made.

Finally, most students connected the developmental changes they perceived in their journal writing to their changing perspectives of themselves as writers at the linguistic and cognitive levels. They saw themselves as being better users of the linguistic system of English and better thinkers as a result of the dialogue journal process.

**Results of the ESL-WAT**

Table 3 indicates the results of the pre and post scores on the English as a Second Language Writing Apprehension Test. The results are reported in a single score representing units of change between the pre and post tests. Positive scores indicate reduced writing
apprehension while negative scores represent increased apprehension.

Table 3

Results of ESL-WAT

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<td>Yanik</td>
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<td>Michael</td>
<td>Demi</td>
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As Table 3 shows, Yanik's score indicates increased writing apprehension while the other scores indicate a reduction in writing apprehension as measured by the ESL-WAT.

When compared with the data from the interviews and dialogue journal entries in which students reported about their personal engagement with writing and with the dialogue journal process specifically, the results of the ESL-WAT are inconclusive. In some cases, they differ sharply from the testimony and writing of the students. Yanik, for example, talked often in his interviews about gaining confidence as a writer. He claimed to have improved his ability to communicate by writing faster and more "directly" in English. As he stated, "I am more cool to write." The weight of Yanik's testimony and the content of his dialogue journal entries indicate not a person whose
writing apprehension increased but a person who began to see himself as a competent communicator in written English. Yanik summarized his experience of writing in his final interview, "The more you write, the more easy you do. I feel good about it." Yet the results of Yanik's ESL-WAT indicate an increased apprehension of writing, a finding that does not agree with his testimony and raises questions about the appropriateness of the instrument for the population investigated in this study.

In the case of Dang, who testified frequently about misgivings concerning his abilities as a writer, the results of the ESL-WAT are particularly inconsistent with the data from the interviews and dialogue journal entries. Dang's high score on the ESL-WAT indicates a relatively strong reduction in writing apprehension between the pre and post tests, yet his testimony throughout the semester suggests a preoccupation with, almost a fear of, making mistakes, a preoccupation that some researchers (for example, Rose, 1985; Zamel, 1982) suggest contributes to writing apprehension.

In conclusion, these inconsistencies raise questions about the appropriateness of the Gungle and Taylor (1989) instrument for use with intermediate level ESL students. It is important to note that during the first administration of ESL-WAT, the students had to ask Sandy and me frequent
questions about the meaning of specific words in the items. For example, a number of students asked about the meaning of "avoid," a key word in item 1 of the test. Others asked about the word "evaluated" (items 2, 4, 9, and 25) and the word, "confident" (item 11). In addition, several students became confused about having to respond negatively to a negative question to indicate a positive response. For students whose native language is not English this is a very difficult linguistic task and many students needed extra explanation of the negative items. Still, as witnessed by the frequency of "scratched out" and re-scored items, it is not clear if they possessed the linguistic competence needed to answer these items accurately.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

In this exploratory study I have considered six adult ESL students' perspectives about dialogue journal writing. Two questions guided the collection of data and considered (1) the students' views of the process of writing interactively with their teacher and (2) the changing views that the students held of themselves as writers engaged in that process.

The data suggest findings which describe the values of dialogue journal writing from the participants' perspectives, values identified in dialogue journal studies of other populations as well as those which appear to be unique to this population. The discussion in this chapter begins with a summary and interpretation of these findings, followed by implications for second language writing instruction and research. The chapter concludes with suggestions for further research in dialogue journal writing with adult ESL students.

Summary and Interpretation of the Findings

The results of this study suggest that dialogue
journal writing changes the students' perceptions and feelings regarding the writing act. These changes, which can be described as benefits, are the result of a number of features of dialogue journal writing which distinguish it from traditional expository writing. The students in this study identified these features and how they influenced their writing as well as their awareness of themselves as writers.

**Interpersonal Interaction**

Interacting with the teacher in writing was a singularly motivational feature of dialogue journal writing according to most participants in this study. Although students reported interacting in different ways and with varying intensity, the communicative cycle enacted in the dialogue journals impacted the participants’ experience of writing in a positive manner. It provided the opportunity for them to relate to a native speaker who responded not as a teacher but as a friend and social equal.

This study suggests that developing social-role relationships through writing supports ESL writers. As Freire (1973) and Vygotsky (1978) have argued, human learning is dependent on interaction with others. Language acquisition, too, is dependent on social interaction. While this is no less true for the acquisition of written English than it is for the acquisition of oral English, ESL writers
are seldom given the opportunity to interact in written English. This study highlights the importance of interaction and corroborates what dialogue journal studies with L1 populations have concluded: communicative, cognitive, and affective benefits derive from the relationship established with a more competent writer (usually the teacher) through the informal exchange of written discourse.

**Communicative competencies.** Through interactive writing, students experience the communicative process of placing themselves in the positions of both writer and audience. This process mirrors the pattern of oral discourse and encourages the exchange of authentic communication which Krashen (1987), Spolsky (1989), and Schumann (1978) have argued is a condition of language acquisition. In this study, the students wrote to the teacher, not for the teacher, just as she wrote to them. Meanings were negotiated, ideas explored, relationships established, and language tested in the process of exchanging communication with a competent writer who modeled correct language.

The six students in this study observed changes during the semester in their abilities to use English competently for communication. They acknowledged improvement in their spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and expression of ideas.
through dialogue writing. That students perceived improvement in their communicative competence validates, to some degree, Vygotsky's (1978) assumptions about the connections between learning and modeling through social interaction. According to Vygotsky, learners mimic the teacher's language guide until they internalize the structures that allow them to guide themselves. The acquisition of the grammar and syntax of written language is controlled by learners who consciously or unconsciously gradually pattern their writing after the teacher's model and learn to communicate the way the teacher does.

In this study, the students' journals provide a highly visible and credible demonstration of modeling, of their ability to write fluently and communicatively, though not necessarily without error. The students' views of themselves as communicators and writers changed as a result of this demonstration. They began to see themselves as competent users of English.

**Cognitive processes.** In this study the participants reported that their ability to think clearly about topics in English was enhanced by dialogue journal writing. What began as a difficult process for most of the students--selecting topics, organizing discourse, and communicating in written English--became noticeably easier for all the students during the semester.
The improved thinking experienced by the students is an important finding. It corroborates what both L1 and L2 writing researchers suggest about the act of composing; that is, writing is a tool of thought. Writing is more than the manipulation of prefabricated ideas or pieces of sentences. It is a highly demanding cognitive task involving higher order thinking skills. The changes in thinking processes described by the students in this study are further evidence that writing is a vehicle for thought and that when writing is practiced in an open and communicative context such as a dialogue journal, thinking is enhanced.

This research suggests that dialogue journal writing is even more cognitively demanding than other teacher-directed forms of writing. Dialogue writing creates cognitive demands on students to select topics, to plan discourse, to examine situations from different perspectives, to elaborate on topics in response to queries, and most importantly, to sustain and build interaction over time through the exchange of mutually engaging discourse. The process of writing in dialogue journals, this study suggests, leads to changes in students’ cognitive processes. In the words of Ceci who summarized these changes succinctly, "I can arrange my think [sic] better than before."
Affective changes. Researchers suggest that low-stress writing environments that emphasize communication over form nurture student writers and lower their apprehension about writing (Johnson, 1989; Leki, 1991; Raimes, 1991). Adult ESL writers, who typically bring to the writing task a plethora of fears about grammar and form, are especially empowered by nonthreatening writing contexts. This study demonstrates that dialogue journal writing, with its uncorrected, unedited communicative format, encourages risk-taking which, in-turn, builds confidence in adult ESL writers. Students reported "feeling more comfortable" about their writing as they explored a full range of both personal and public topics.

The findings suggest that students' attitudes about writing and feelings about themselves as writers can change as a result of the open, nonjudgmental nature of dialogue journal writing. In addition, this study suggests that relationships built through interactive writing can give students confidence, or as one student in this study called it, "respect," which motivates students to write more often about a wider variety of topics, taking greater risks with their linguistic structures.

Unlike traditional writing assignments in which the teacher acts as evaluator, the teacher's role as communicator in the dialogue journal is important to
building students' confidence about themselves as writers. Through responding to the content of students' writing by sharing personal topics and by not correcting their errors, teachers can build social relationships with adult ESL students which validate them as individuals and peers. Teachers can reduce fear, nervousness, and self-consciousness by controlling affective variables (such as emphasis on grammar and correctness over communication) which negatively impact the writer.

This study reinforces two important assumptions regarding dialogue journal writing: relating to the teacher as a peer or partner and writing without fear of being criticized are highly motivational features for adult ESL learners who bring to the task of writing a diversity of experience, ideas, and attitudes. By giving students freedom to discuss their ideas openly without judgment, and by responding to those ideas with ideas of their own, teachers create a climate of social equality which Freire (1973) and Knowles (1984) suggest is a necessary condition for motivating adult learning.

**Individualized Learning**

**Challenge of diversity.** Diversity is the hallmark of ESL university composition classrooms. As Krapels (1990) points out, "The L2 composition class may represent at least half a dozen strikingly different cultures, very
different educational backgrounds, ages ranging from sixteen to sixty, and very different needs for being able to write in a foreign language" (p. 45). In addition, adult ESL students typically vary greatly in both L1 and L2 composition proficiency.

While most ESL programs group students according to their proficiency in English, matching English proficiency with writing abilities is a more daunting task. As Leki (1991) posits, "...language abilities are not unambiguously correlated to writing abilities" (p. 87). Fluency in L2 may mask lack of experience in both L1 and L2 writing, while lack of fluency in L2 may eclipse well-developed composing, as well as cognitive, skills.

Despite the great diversity of the university ESL composition class, all too often the temptation in L2 writing instruction is to divide composition tasks into discrete, manageable basic skills (often grammar- or vocabulary-based), which are repeated until the entire class masters them. ESL students themselves encourage this practice. Frequently the only sense of security they feel in a writing class comes from applying the grammar rules they have memorized in their native countries. They see themselves as having few options for composing in their L2 and often embrace the "safety" of writing exercises which emphasize basic skills. Yet this study suggests that when
students engage in writing tasks which emphasize communication and not basic skills, their writing is enhanced.

**Interpersonal engagement.** The findings of this study suggest that dialogue journal writing is a process that individualizes learning for adult university ESL students. For example, the freedom students had to interact with the teacher at different interpersonal levels in the journal individualized the experience for each learner according to need. For some who needed a more intimate connection, the journal became a forum for discussing confidential concerns while for others it became a forum for exploring public issues.

In this study the level of interpersonal engagement in the journals differed not only by individual but also according to the gender of the students. The three females related to the teacher in a very intimate way, referring to her as "friend" or "mom" and discussing issues of an emotional and private nature. The three males, on the other hand, related to the teacher in a less intimate way. They referred to her as a "partner" (although Dang called her a "friend" at one point in the study), discussing public issues such as travel, music, history, and the news. These gender differences, as well as individual differences in interpersonal engagement, support the need to individualize
instruction, especially in the ESL writing classroom in which so many different variables affect the student's learning.

**Topic choice.** Writing about their own topics and exploring personal issues were individualized features of dialogue journal writing that students in this study valued for several reasons. First, students reported that personal topic selection enhanced their thinking processes, allowing them to solve problems or discover personal points of view. Second, they valued the process of topic selection because they were able to write using familiar vocabulary to describe topics of personal interest. Communicating about a personal topic in depth, without "battling" language or a "boring" topic gave the students a good feeling about writing and about themselves.

The finding that the participants unanimously valued their roles in topic selection is important. It illuminates a basic irony in adult ESL instruction. Although research promotes the teaching of critical and independent thinking in learner-centered classrooms, much adult ESL writing occurs in response to teacher-assigned topics for the purpose of evaluating the student's writing ability. Such assignments often result in passive writing about topics for which students may have little or no interest. Dialogue journal writing, however, offers an opportunity for
students to take control of their own learning by generating individual and personal themes, just as the participants in this study reported doing.

The adult ESL students in this study needed and wanted to be self-directed learners who discovered their own purposes for writing and learning. Their testimony indicates that dialogue journal writing assisted in their need to become independent learners. This finding matches Peyton and Reed’s (1990) research which suggests that the dialogue journal is a mode of learning about oneself, about establishing autonomy in a second language environment.

Error correction. One assumption underlying dialogue journal theory and practice is that error correction is not conducive to the kind of communication encouraged in the journals. The prevailing view, supported by research in both L1 and L2 writing, is that error correction appears to have "little effect on students’ ability to reduce the number of errors in their writing" (Leki, 1991, p. 107). The belief among ESL teachers is that errors are a natural part of the L2 learning process, and that given time and increased exposure to the language, many of the errors will disappear naturally.

Sandy adopted a non-correction policy which she explained in detail in one of her first dialogue journal entries to the students. (See Appendix J) Most students
enthusiastically embraced this policy and used the journal to focus on communication. Dang, however, stridently objected to the non-correction policy, and expressed a strong desire to have all his writing corrected—both formal paragraphs and dialogue journal. A fear of making mistakes in the journal that, if left uncorrected, would be repeated—fossilized, strongly dominated his thinking. It is not clear whether Dang was unaware of or unwilling to transfer the learning he derived from the corrected formal writing to the uncorrected journal writing. Nonetheless, his unsatisfied need to be corrected in the journal became an issue that affected his acceptance of the dialogue journal process.

Dang’s overwhelming need to be corrected is not completely unusual among ESL students, and it raises questions regarding theory-to-practice issues. Research in second language acquisition suggests that students develop fluency when they focus on communication and not on errors (Edge, 1989; Ellis, 1992; Krashen, 1987). Edge (1989) points out that mistakes are developmental signals of learning and that over-correction can lead to stymied communication. She writes, "There should be times in our lessons when we simply encourage fluency. At such times we don’t correct linguistic mistakes" (Edge, 1989, p. 19). Although the practice of dialogue journal communication
rests on the assumption that students benefit from nonthreatening, uncorrected writing practice, Dang's overwhelming desire to be corrected in the journal point to his need to be responded to as an individual. Had Sandy not been part of this research project in which theory was being tested, she stated she would have put theory aside and responded to Dang's stated individual needs as she had done with students in the past.

Dialogue journal writing, this study indicates, provided a context which "demystified" the act of writing and validated the participants as individuals. They wrote more often, using the full range of their developing language abilities to communicate in different contexts.

**ESL-WAT Findings**

The initial reason for including the ESL-WAT as a data source in this study was to complement the qualitative data by providing a quantitative source against which I could balance my interpretations of the students' perspectives of themselves as writers. While this process of combining qualitative and quantitative data has been used in case studies of dialogue journal writing (Peyton & Staton, 1993), the use of the ESL-WAT in this study yielded inconclusive results. In addition, it raised questions about using survey instruments with ESL students which employ the kind of logic required in the ESL-WAT.
Specifically, the logic of answering a negative item with a negative response to indicate a positive reaction to the item is a very complex linguistic task, a task that many second language students are not developmentally able to do.

Further, the students’ responses to the items on the ESL-WAT suggests the need to use surveys which are designed specifically for the population being investigated. The ESL-WAT is an adaptation of a test developed for native speakers. Gungle and Taylor (1989) adapted each item on their ESL-WAT from the Daly-Miller (1979) test by simply adding the word "English" to each item. No changes were made in the syntax nor in the method of responding. The results of the ESL-WAT in this study suggest that such changes are insufficient to render the instrument useful for ESL populations. Because the syntax and lexical items on the ESL-WAT were inappropriate for the students in this study, the results do not correspond directly with the students’ testimony and writing.

Implications for Second Language Instruction

This research supports the conclusion that the adult ESL students investigated in this study associated a number of communicative, cognitive, and affective benefits with dialogue journal writing. The benefits they identified suggest several implications for the teaching of writing to
university ESL students. These implications not only suggest pedagogical practices but offer words of caution as well.

**Teacher-as-Collaborator Engages Students**

As Edelsky (1986), Silva (1990), and Urzua (1987) have reported, exchanging purposeful communication with an authentic audience can strongly affect students' engagement with writing. Altering the teacher's role of teacher-as-evaluator to teacher-as-collaborator in written communication changes the dynamics of the teacher-student relationship so that students can feel valued for the individual perspectives they bring to their writing. It expands the social roles that students adopt in writing and influences the way they view themselves as learners and writers.

Dialogue journal writing, in which the teacher responds to what students write and not to how they write, offers adult second language instructors an alternative to the traditional skill-based writing curriculum in which the only audience for students' writing is typically a caring but judgmental teacher (Applebee, 1984). Freire (1973) has argued that adult students need to engage in egalitarian relationships with teachers in which dialogue empowers the students to express their ideas. This is especially true of second language students, whose contact with native
speakers outside the classroom is often severely limited. Through dialogue journals, ESL students can explore different issues with a native speaker and, in the process, discover their own voices and their motivations to write.

This study corroborates what previous dialogue journal studies with L1 populations suggest; that is, that the teacher-student relationship established in the journals is critical to the success of written dialogue communication. For this reason, L2 teachers, like their L1 counterparts, must be somewhat cautious about the degree of interpersonal engagement they encourage with students. ESL students, who typically have few contacts in the L1 community, may become deeply involved with their dialogue partner as they did with the teacher in this study, sharing problems that can take up an inordinate amount of the teacher’s personal time. As a result of the relationships established in the journals, teachers may be asked, as Sandy was, to provide assistance outside of class with such problems as legal matters, car purchases, or marital difficulties. Students may ask for advice that places the teacher in a "no-win" position and puts the teacher-student relationship in jeopardy if the teacher responds in a way that is somehow unacceptable to the student.

Thus, teachers need to be aware of the importance that students place on the relationships developed through
interactive writing. They must nurture these relationships with care, establishing a balance between openness and professional circumspection.

**Personal Topics Liberate and Motivate**

This study suggests the importance of structuring writing assignments that allow students to explore the full range of their linguistic and cognitive abilities by writing about their own topics. Freire (1973, 1987) and Knowles (1984) have emphasized the importance of adult students generating their own topics for learning. When students write about what is important in their lives, they bring to the task the benefit of their individual experience and knowledge about the world. Without struggling to discover a topic that is pleasing to the teacher, students are free to explore issues of personal significance, thus playing with language along the way. As one student noted, "You can scribe what you want. You can learn this way."

Students in this study valued dialogue journal writing for the opportunity it provided to explore personal topics in a narrative context in which content was emphasized over form. They found this kind of writing "easy" and "comfortable," and it liberated them to write. As one student reflected, "You feel free."

The students' strong reactions to personal expressive
writing suggests the need for adult ESL writing teachers to expand the contexts for writing. Zamel (1983) argues that teachers must overcome the strong temptation to over-control the writing of students who are not competent in the target language. By dictating the form and content of their writing, Zamel (1983) suggests, teachers limit the students’ cognitive and linguistic growth. Teachers must remind themselves that adult ESL students bring with them complex histories and individual perspectives spun from the existential fabric of their lives. By allowing students to write about the "stuff" of their lives, teachers encourage cognitive and linguistic growth while motivating students to write. As one student observed, "I think so this is good idea to write what you want...This is where [it is] more important for you to improve your mind."

Does this finding suggest that adult ESL students should primarily write about topics of their own choosing when academic requirements at the university level often call for expository writing about professor-chosen topics? Is it realistic to assume that writing about personal topics prepares ESL students for the greater rigors of rhetorical writing? This study does not suggest that dialogue journal writing replace academic writing. It does, however, suggest, that from the students’ perspective, writing interactively about personal topics enhances the
motivation and comfort with which they write. It suggests that for second language students, dialogue journal writing is an important part of a writing program, a finding which parallels Peyton and Staton's (1993) conclusions about dialogue writing with ESL sixth graders:

...writing in a variety of contexts is important to the development of ESL students. In particular, dialogue journal writing turns out to be a good way to give students practice with writing and allow them to focus on topics that they choose to explore...it allows for higher level thinking and contains features that are valued in more formal writing. (p. 219)

Develops Fluency and Individualizes Instruction

As concluded by Peyton and Staton (1993) and Peyton et al. (1990) in their empirical analyses of ESL students' dialogue journal discourse, interactive writing develops linguistic fluency in ESL students. That conclusion is mirrored in the outcome of this study, which suggests that students experienced gains in their fluency through the individualized unedited and uncorrected writing produced in their journals. This conclusion supports the view that ESL students, like all students, need to practice writing in a nonthreatening context which gives full range to their developing literacy skills. They need the freedom to take risks, make mistakes, and play with language as they
explore the natural limits of their writing abilities. As Staton (1993) concludes:

Learning to read and write for native as well as non-native speakers can be a process much like the natural functional process of oral language acquisition.... Dialogue journals as written conversations appear to resemble in many ways the kinds of interactions characteristic of first language acquisition. (p. 123)

Dialogue journal writing offers ESL teachers a way to encourage the natural acquisition of literacy described by Cazden (1981), Krashen (1987), Staton (1993) and others. By focusing on writing to learn rather than on learning to write teachers may help students avoid the cognitive overload and aversion to writing which sometimes results from over-correction of their writing (Gungle & Taylor, 1989). The experiences of the six students in this study suggests this is the case—with one exception. One student’s objection to not having the errors in his dialogue journal entries corrected by the teacher raises serious issues about an age-old concern of writing teachers: When and how is it best to correct students’ writing errors?

The question of when and how to correct student discourse creates a serious dilemma and has significant implications for the teaching of writing in the
multicultural ESL classroom. On the one hand, some teachers and students fear that uncorrected writing assignments result in fossilization of errors; other teachers believe that over-corrected writing inhibits students, negatively reinforcing them and robbing them of the joy of creating. Dialogue journal practice is based on the second assumption. It assumes that students need opportunities to write to communicate, unfettered by the need to "get it perfect." However, dialogue journal writing is also based on the assumption, supported by this study and others, that students need to be responded to as individuals. Thus, one student's strident objection to not having his journal corrected implies the need for occasional compromise between theory and practice in the interest of individualizing instruction and meeting student needs and expectations.

This study suggests that correction is a practice which calls for individualization. If a student repeatedly asks for universal error correction, even when the teacher has explained why it may not be helpful and may possibly even be harmful, then perhaps total error correction is in order. This attitude suggests that the student is the best authority on personal learning style. Teachers of adult ESL students must be vigilant that their methods consider the individual cultural values, customs, experiences,
expectations, and learning styles that mature second language students bring to the task of writing. As this study suggests, recognizing the influence of each individual’s experience in the writing process is what makes it an enormously complex cognitive task, not only for the student but for the teacher as well.

The results of this study suggest the need for ESL teachers to develop alternative and individualized strategies for correcting students’ writing errors, strategies which both satisfy the students’ need for error correction and the teacher’s instructional need to focus on content over form. Teachers might consider using grammatical footnotes to explain errors, using conferences to help students correct their own errors, or using standard error correction techniques to correct some, but not all, of the expressive writing that students do. These strategies may be used singly or in combination with the modeling that teachers typically do in responding to students’ expressive writing. By negotiating the type and frequency of error correction done with each student who expresses the need for it, the teacher and student may agree on a strategy that meets individual learning needs.

Implications for Future Studies

Based on issues and questions raised in this study, further investigation is needed with adult university ESL
populations. Generally, how do differences in gender, culture, language, and learning style impact students' perspectives of dialogue journal writing? More specifically, are the gender differences observed in this study a result of the inherent differences in the way men and women respond to the world, or are the differences the result of a female teacher responding to males from a feminine perspective? Is the more "intimate" level of communication established by the females in this study an indicator of greater acceptance of the dialogue journal genre than the more "public" level of communication established by the males?

Instructors in university ESL programs, which typically enroll both male and female students from many cultures with different languages and different learning styles, need more research on which to base their decisions about writing instruction. If they are to use dialogue journal writing effectively in a multicultural setting, they need to know if and how the aforementioned differences impact students' engagement with interactive writing. They need to develop strategies for individualizing writing instruction based on sound research about diversity.

Secondly, this study suggests the need for additional research regarding ways in which dialogue journal writing affects the language acquisition of adult ESL students.
Although most students in the study reported increased fluency in their writing, the testimony of one student suggested that he failed to make connections between the corrected writing in his formal paragraphs to the uncorrected writing in his dialogue journal. His experience poses an important question: Does dialogue journal writing promote writing skills that transfer to other writing tasks? The answer to this question is of utmost importance to writing teachers who work with both L1 and L2 populations.

Dialogue journal writing is an enormously time-consuming task for teachers. In order to commit to such a task, teachers need to believe that their efforts will make a lasting difference in the writing abilities of their students, for changes in student attitudes about writing alone may not warrant the effort involved in sustaining the dialogue over an extended time. While this study suggests that fluency was, in the view of the participants, enhanced in the process of dialogue journal writing, no objective measure was used to validate the students' views. Nor was any speculation advanced about the transfer of that fluency to other writing contexts. Future studies might answer the transfer of skills question and increase the knowledge base about dialogue journal writing with adult ESL populations.
A third recommendation for future study addresses the need to better understand the teacher's role in dialogue journal communication. What is, or should be, the nature of the teacher's role? Should teachers maintain the typical teacher-as-evaluator role, correcting all dialogue journal entries, or should they use discretion, correcting only when necessary? Furthermore, is it necessary that the dialogue partner be the teacher? Would adult university ESL students benefit equally from dialogue communication with another, albeit more fluent, student as their dialogue partner? Can native speaker volunteers from the community be effectively used as dialogue journal partners for adult ESL students? These questions suggest the need to explore, from both students' and teacher's perspective, the range of roles and role-models that are appropriate and beneficial to dialogue journal communication.

Finally, studies which investigate the dialogue journal perspectives of larger, more varied populations of university ESL students are needed to extend and replicate the findings of this study. This need suggests the use of a team of case study researchers who could pool their efforts to explore the perspectives of an entire class of university ESL students or perhaps even an entire university ESL program. On the other hand, a well-designed survey written specifically for ESL students would allow...
researchers to gather the dialogue journal perspectives of an even larger population of students in ESL programs across the country.

This study provides a beginning for the investigation of adult university ESL students’ perspectives of interactive writing. Based on a small sample, it answers questions and recommends follow-up studies to provide answers to these questions.

Conclusion

For the past ten years, researchers have explored the interactive writing between students and their teachers in dialogue journals, examining clues that point to cognitive and linguistic changes in students’ writing. Researchers have identified many benefits that appear to be directly attributable to dialogue journal writing, but, on the whole, they have done so without the benefit of the students’ perspectives. Furthermore, they have generally studied the dialogue journal writing of a narrow segment of the L1 student population, kindergarten through eighth grade. Few studies have investigated dialogue journal writing with ESL populations, and fewer still have studied adult university ESL populations. This study attempted to explore the process of writing interactively with adult ESL students by viewing the process from the students’ perspective.
The results of this study indicate that a group of adult university ESL students associated many cognitive, communicative, and affective benefits with the dialogue journal writing they did with their teacher during one 15-week semester. The study also suggests that the participants’ views of themselves as writers evolved during the semester, an evolution they credited to the dialogue journal process. The testimony of the students suggests the benefits to be derived from including dialogue journal writing in a university ESL program.
Appendix A

Sample of Corrected Formal Paragraph
Exaggerated? Overplaying advertisements should not be allowed, for a right choice of consumer. An advertising agency asserts below. First, they just emphasize the merit of a product. Second, the consumer can misunderstand of a product but it is not a our fault. Third, consumer don't have a disturbance right to our creative job. On the other hand, the consumer assists their positions. First, exaggerated Overplaying advertisements is a kind of deception because the consumer can't get any information about the product except an advertisement. Second, an advertising agency has to explain both of the shortcomings and merits due to essence of a product.
Third, overplaying of advertising is not right before a quality of production. For example, showing a woman's sexual attraction is not right. Therefore, a true advertisement should be made of the quality and creativity of the product at the same time.

Comments:
I'm afraid the English got in the way of your argument. I think you're trying to say that advertising should not be deceptive or promote anything other than the product itself, but you've lost me.

Some things to concentrate on:

Rating:
- Content & development (10) 6
- Organization (5) 5
- English usage (10) 6
- Mechanics (5) 5
- Total 22

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Appendix B

Journal Exchange Sample
Dear,

As a person is growing up, his/her (what is another word for his and her) will have more and more things to worry about. I think it might be the routine of a person's life. My freshman year so far, have left me some good memories, but also some bad memories. I usually have disagreements with my girlfriend usually since I met her last semester. She is sweet, friendly, cute, and very innocent; but in the other side she is spoiled, childish, and irrational. I know we both love each other a lot, but unfortunately, we just don't have too much on common. If you didn't consider to marry her why would you be boyfriend with her as I though, but she have her own different opinion. She even warn me to go with her to the UH (University of Hawaii) summer school this summer, or otherwise she will find another new boyfriend. I don't understand why a person want a boyfriend or girlfriend if the person doesn't consider to get marry? Don't you feel it is a kind of ridiculous if all you want from your 'boyfriend' or 'girlfriend' is just having some fun? I love her a lot but sometimes her irrational attitude bothers me a lot. I think the culture differences may be the major reason why we are not matched since she from Japan and I from Taiwan and that I am just too early having a girlfriend since I have more important things to do. I hope she will be my last one and only one girlfriend because I do love her a lot. Well!!! It's almost the end of this page, and I am looking forward to hear your response about this situation. I'll talk to you next week on letter. Bye!!!

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February 18, 1993

Dear

I don't know enough about Taiwan or about Chinese attitudes toward male-female relationships to know whether your attitude is typical of your culture or just your own beliefs. I know that I have certainly dated men who I had no intention of marrying. But I enjoyed their company and had fun with them and learned more about men than if I had just waited for the right person. I think that what I learned about them and from them helped me be a better wife later. It also helped me figure out what qualities I wanted in a husband. (Of course, I didn't do a perfect job of figuring that out since it took me two tries--two husbands.) In cultures where courtship (dating, in modern terms) is open and not arranged as it was in so many cultures in the past, dating is part of discovering both yourself and your mate. A lifetime (which is what most people hope their marriage will last) is a long time to live with just one other person, so most of us try out many relationships temporarily to find the one that has the best chance for a lifetime's success.

I'm not trying to talk you out of being in love or into dating a lot of different girls. Because I really don't know you well and can't see your face to know how you're reacting, I'm not even sure exactly what to say. (This might work out better as a conversation over a drink.) In fact, I've written three different "next paragraphs" so far and erased them all because they either sounded too much like a sermon or too frivolous or too focused on you and Iris as a couple. I know you're a thoughtful person and will do what you think is best.

Sincerely,
Appendix C

Research Study Questionnaire
RESEARCH STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer each question as completely as possible. This information is for Vicki’s study and it will be kept confidential.

Name________________________

1. Where were you born?

2. What is your native language?

3. What other languages, if any, do you know well?

4. What is your major field of interest?

5. Are you a full-time or part-time student?

6. Do you work? Where?

7. Which classes are you taking this semester?

8. What other English classes have you taken in the US? Where?

9. When did you come to the US?

10. What was your main purpose for coming?

11. Are you planning to return to your country? If so, when?

12. When did you start learning English?

13. How many years have you been learning English?

14. Among these activities, please check the ones you have done in your past English classes?
translate reading passages, exercises, or drills
read silently
discuss reading topics in English
hold conversations about your own topics
study grammar rules
memorize lists of words
read aloud
read silently
learn dialogues from a book
practice pronunciation
practice oral grammar exercises or drill
write compositions on assigned topics
write your own thoughts in English

15. Of the activities listed above, list the ones you have done the most:

16. Of the activities listed above, list the ones you enjoy the most:

17. Of the activities listed above, list the ones at which you are best:

18. What is your English ability in each of the skills below? (Circle one description for each skill.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>listening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speaking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grammar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reading</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. Which of the following kinds of writing have you written:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English?</th>
<th>Your language?</th>
<th>notes or memos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>diary or journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>paragraph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>short composition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>longer composition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>research paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>other writing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
20. What is the most difficult part about writing in your native language? What are the kinds of concerns you have when you write?

21. What is the most difficult part about writing in English? Do you worry about the same kinds of things as when you write in your native language? Explain.

22. In which language do you prefer to write? Why?

23. What kind of a writer do you think you are in your native language? Explain. Poor? Average? Good? Excellent?

24. What kind of a writer do you think you are in English? Please explain.

25. Are you interested in being part of this study? Circle your answer.
   yes     no

26. Are you willing to let me read your dialogue journals as part of the study? (Your name will not be mentioned in the study.)
   yes     no

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION!!!
Appendix D

*Human Subjects Review*
TO: Vicki L. Holmes
FROM: Dr. William E. Schulze, Director, Research Administration
DATE: November 24, 1992
RE: Status of human subject protocol entitled:
"Dialogue Journal Writing of Adult ESL Students"

The protocol for the project referenced above has been reviewed by the Office of Research Administration, and it has been determined that it meets the criteria for exemption from full review by the UNLV human subjects committee. Except for any required conditions or modifications noted below, this protocol is approved for a period of one year from the date of this notification, and work on the project may proceed.

Should the use of human subjects described in this protocol continue beyond one year from the date of this notification, it will be necessary to request an extension.

If you have any questions or require any assistance, please give us a call.
HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Description of Study

1. SUBJECTS:

Subjects for the study will be selected from an intact class in the English as a Second Language Program at UNLV. Based on the teacher's early perceptions of students' ability to communicate in writing, the researcher will solicit six volunteers from the class. Attempts will be made to solicit volunteers from several different cultures who display varying levels of writing proficiency. The researcher's initial contact will be made by telephone. Students will be asked if they would be willing to participate in a study of the writing attitudes and habits of international students as they engage in dialogue journal writing. They will be made aware that their participation will involve approximately one hour biweekly of additional time outside regular classroom activities to engage in an interview process. They will be assured of complete anonymity in the study. Furthermore, they will be advised that no extra writing, other than the writing required of the course, will be required. Most importantly, they will be guaranteed that their final grade in the class will in no way be connected with their participation in the study.

The second step in the selection process will involve a personal interview with student volunteers to ascertain their willingness to participate in the study. See Appendix B.

The third step in the selection process will be to read aloud the case study consent form with each student volunteer and to check for understanding. See Appendix C.

2. PURPOSE, METHODS, PROCEDURES

The purpose of this case study is exploratory: to investigate the affective and cognitive aspects of the dialogue journal writing (interactive writing) of adult second language students in a university setting. There are three reasons for conducting this study. The first is to learn if there is any relationship between overall attitude toward writing and the practice of dialogue journal writing. The second is to observe if dialogue journal writing produces any changes in the volume of writing students produce. The third is to observe if there are any variations among cultures in student response to dialogue journal writing.

A qualitative research design will be used for this study. Case study methodology will be employed in the gathering of data. Data will be collected via multiple structured interviews, observations, writing samples, and a writing apprehension survey instrument (Gungle & Taylor, 1989). See Appendix D. All data and data interpretation will be available to volunteers at any time during and after the investigation. The researcher will act...
as a participant observer and will not be involved in classroom activities.

Each student involved in the study will be asked to engage in four one-hour interviews during the fifteen weeks of the study. Each student will be asked, as part of the regular classroom assignments, to keep a dialogue journal (a bound notebook in which the student writes about self-generated topics and the instructor responds to the content of the writing without judgment or evaluation). Students will be asked to make their journals available to the researcher for analysis.

3. **RISKS:**

There will be no risks to the subjects involved in this study.

4. **BENEFITS:**

The results of this study may benefit professionals engaged in the teaching of second language writing in a number of ways. First, by identifying affective aspects about composing associated with dialogue journal writing, the researcher may assist teachers in employing teaching strategies which enhance motivation and reduce writing apprehension. Second, by analyzing variations in response to journal writing exhibited by different cultural groups, the researcher may inform the practice of educating in a multicultural environment. Third, it is anticipated that the results of this study will add to the body of knowledge about dialogue journal writing with second language adults—an area of inquiry in which few systematic studies have been conducted.

5. **RISK-BENEFIT RATIO:**

N/A

6. **COSTS TO SUBJECTS:**

N/A

7. **INFORMED CONSENT FORMS:**

The informed consent forms will be signed by all volunteer subjects and collected by Vicki L. Holmes, the principal investigator. Originals will be stored in the ICS Office of the College of Education (CEB 354). Copies will be stored in the researcher’s office (CG-11, #4). Volunteers will receive copies for their personal files.
Appendix E

Participant Consent Form
Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Purpose of the study: You are being asked to participate in a research study. I hope to learn about your attitudes about writing by examining your involvement with a process called dialogue journal writing, a regular part of your writing class. I am doing this research project as part of my doctoral program in the College of Education at UNLV. The results will be written up and will form part of my doctoral dissertation.

Conditions of the study:

1. The information I collect during this investigation will be reported in my dissertation which will be read by my committee members: Drs. Young, Mills, Zehm, Grubaugh, and Jones. When the work is completed and approved, it will be made available to the general public.

2. You will be asked to be involved for one semester, 15 weeks, during which time I will ask to interview you every third week for no more than one hour. No other requests will be made of you, other than to ask that you participate actively in the class which you have chosen to take.

3. Your real name will not be used in the study.

4. You will have the opportunity to read transcripts of all your interviews and to read the research report when it is completed. You will receive a copy of the final document.

5. You will have the opportunity to read the complete dissertation before it is submitted for approval. If you disagree with references made about your writing, you may negotiate with me to clarify the meaning.

6. You may withdraw from the study at any time by speaking with me, Vicki Holmes. I will give you any information I have collected about you.

7. You are a valuable and integral part of this study and you volunteer willingly. The information gathered about your writing may help teachers become better at teaching writing.

8. If you have any questions at any time during this study, you should call me at 895-4311 or 792-9966 to discuss your questions.

9. Information gathered during this study may be used to inform other teachers through workshops, conferences, journal articles, or books.

10. You will be given a signed copy of this agreement to keep.

YOUR SIGNATURE, BELOW, WILL MEAN THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO VOLUNTEER AS A PARTICIPANT IN THIS STUDY AND THAT YOU HAVE READ THE INFORMATION WRITTEN ABOVE.

Signature of Participant, Date________________________Signature of Researcher, Date________________________
Appendix F

Interview Protocol
Interview One - Questions

1. Please talk a little bit about your education before you came to the United States.

2. What experiences did you have with writing in your country? How often? What kind of writing? Who chose the topics? How were you evaluated?

3. Please talk about your composition class here. How is it going? What is the easiest part of writing for you? The hardest part?

4. Talk about the dialogue journals you are keeping with Sandy? How do you feel about that kind of writing? How do you choose topics to write about?

5. What does the dialogue journal mean to you? What is valuable about it?
Interview Two - Questions

1. Now that you have been in composition class for seven weeks, how is it going?
2. Do you see changes in your writing? Please give examples.
3. Tell me about your dialogue journal. What do you enjoy about it the most? The least?
4. What does the journal mean to you? How do you feel about writing it?
5. How has journal writing changed your writing?
Interview Three - Questions

1. Talk about your relationship with Sandy in the dialogue journal. How do you view her? How does she help your writing in the journal? What other ways does she help you in the journal?

2. Talk about yourself and the dialogue journals. How do you express yourself in the journal? How and why do you choose the topics you write about? What are your thoughts about writing about your topics and your feelings in the journal?

3. Talk about your language development in the journal. How has the quality of your writing changed in the journal? How has the quantity of your writing changed in the journal? How do you view Sandy’s responses (which do not involve corrections only comments about the content) to your writing?

4. How do you view your ability as a communicator in written English?

5. How do you view your ability as a thinker in written English?

6. How do you view your ability to use the English language correctly in writing?
Interview Four - Questions

1. Now that the semester is almost over, what are your feelings about the dialogue journals that you wrote with Sandy?

2. (Show students specific quotes and ask them to respond to what they have said during the past three interviews.) Could you describe your reaction to these words you said earlier in the semester? Have you changed? Would you like to add to these thoughts?

3. How have you changed as a writer through your experience of keeping a dialogue journal? Your thinking? Your feelings about writing? Your language usage?

4. Between the paragraphs and dialogue journal which one did you enjoy most and why? Which one improved your writing more? Why?

5. In your opinion, what are the best reasons for writing to your teacher in a dialogue journal?
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Appendix G

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Appendix H

Coded Text from Ethnograph
2 M

SC: DJ MOTIV

2 3/11/93 10:00am

#-DJ DEVELOP #-DJ MOTIV

: M: I enjoy most about it is that I feel
: I have done something like writing an
: English letter because in my high I
: don't think I have ever written an
: essay. After five year of living in
: the US if I write a letter and after
: finish the letter and I read over it
: I feel good about it. I feel I have
: done something. Something important
: because in my during this five years
: maybe this is the first time I use my
: heart and mind. I really work hard.

2 M

SC: DJ MOTIV

2 3/11/93 10:00am

#-DJ MOTIV -#-DJ DEVELOP

: M: I feel it is great then I
: can....because in conversation when I
: talk to people I don't talk to people
: about my personal problem or
: anything. I just say hello or
: something like that. But in a letter
: I can write everything I want so I
: feel kind of good about that. I can
: pick my own topic and write
: everything I want.
Appendix I

Students’ Initial Perspectives
Students' Initial Perspectives

The six participants form a heterogeneous group whose interviews and dialogue journal entries provided the data from which the themes were drawn. Although some background information about the participants is provided in Chapter Three, the brief sketches below describe the students' initial perspectives about writing and about themselves as writers. These perspectives were revealed during the study through the students' own words.

**Yanik**

Yanik is a 20-year-old student whose experience in school was "not so good." He started in a "hard school" but later changed to "an artistic school which general you do a little more easy" in his native country, Belgium. Yanik came to study English at the university because he failed to pass the language portion of his "jury," a requirement for graduating from high school, and because he "made sedition more than other ones" and couldn't finish his high school in Belgium. He intends to enroll in film studies after learning English well enough to "pass the TOEFL" (Test of English as a Foreign Language).

Yanik's experience with writing includes writing essays, which he calls "dissertations," about assigned topics--"politics, literature, and philosophy" in French
grammar, the orthograph, the structures, and who [how] do you argue." He wrote, "I’m not interested in writing but I learned it in school." In school, Yanik only wrote when it was required, and "not so much." Before beginning the semester in Sandy’s class, Yanik had not written in English although he had been studying English for about a year.

Dang

Dang, age 18, is the son of Taiwanese immigrants who brought the family to live in the United States five years ago. Dang entered an American school in the ninth grade, and although he graduated from a local high school, he is very critical of the American education system and frequently compares it to Taiwan’s system. Dang complained, "In high school I learned nothing, but just sit there and wasting my time. Taiwan’s education is better than here because education give a lot of assignments to practice. Not like here." He is resentful about having to take ESL classes at the university after having spent five years in American high school. Dang blames his lack of language competence on the school, saying, "It is obviously that my English school is not very good. That is why after five years here I still go to the ESL classes in college."

Dang is also discouraged about his experience with writing in high school and, consequently, his ability to write in English. Although he does admit that he was
required to write some simple compositions of "five or six sentences," he thinks that it wasn’t enough to make a writer out of him. He stated, "It is kind of ridiculous but in the final-I still get an A," even though, by his own evaluation, his compositions were "not pretty good." Dang is keenly aware of his need to prepare for English 101, Freshman Composition, as he is a full-time student, majoring in computer science at the university. He feels his entree to freshman composition is through control of grammatical features of English, and he is frustrated with assignments that do not focus on grammar and correction. "I really wish that she correct my grammar. Maybe I am too urgent to study," he stated.

**Mikhail**

Bulgarian born, 32-year-old Mikhail has lived in the United States for two years while working full-time as a waiter. He came to the United States as a political and economic refugee. A graduate of a Bulgarian technical college, he is both proud and disdainful of his former education. On the one hand, he claims that his Bulgarian education was very "extensive" in terms of exposing him to "world history, geography, languages (you learn two languages--first, is Russian, second is Western language--German or French), Bulgarian history, literature, Bulgarian tradition and music." On the other hand, Mikhail claims the
system suppressed his own thinking, "They tried to teach me for communist system, communist topic. They don't want people to think. Just people to study special programs."

Mikhail's exposure to writing in his native language is extensive. He claims to have written long essays and research papers although he resents having had his topics controlled by his professors. "They don't want your topic; they want this topic where they want for to be. You must to know what must to write. Not what you want to write. Not your ideas. This is where I was until two years," he stated. Mikhail is concerned about his ability to express his ideas in written English, not because he has trouble with thinking, but because of the grammar and structure of English sentences. "I have problem for writing to put my ideas in a list because it is different construction. Have English sentence. My language have different order for to put words," he explained. Mikhail feels that in order to succeed in his adopted country he must learn to read and write English very well. His goal is to "take whole this program for English and then to continue to be a full-time student in the university."

**Ceci**

Ceci came with her family to the United States two years ago from Korea where she was a university student. Now she is both a full-time student majoring in
communication studies and a full-time employee. Her experiences with education in Korea, particularly with writing, were very positive. Although she admits that her high school teachers did not emphasize writing much, she managed to learn to love writing and to win a prize for her compositions. "I like to write in Korean. Is easy because everyone say to me, 'Your writing is good.' So I had a prize, many prize," she stated.

Writing in English, Ceci claims, is not as easy as writing in Korean. She expresses concern with being able to put her thoughts into English, yet she realizes how important writing is for her major, communications. She claims she wants to be a journalist. When she first enrolled in the writing class, she thought it would be easy but later admitted how difficult it is for her to express herself. "I want to write, but I can't. How can I do that? I don't know a word. I have thinking. I have a thought, but I can't remember any word, so I have to find a dictionary," she complained. Ceci recognizes that the content of her writing is limited by her control of the lexicon of English.

Demi

Married to an American Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DODDS) teacher in Korea, Demi came to the university from Korea specifically to study English.
Her educational background is unique in several respects. Demi has a fairly severe spinal cord deformity, yet her parents were able to include her in a Korean education system and society which, according to Demi, makes few accommodations for the handicapped. As she stated, "We don't [have] any much [of] the system of handicapped in Korea. So we had [to] suffer." Demi's suffering in the Korean school system, she stated, was mollified by her parents who carried her to school everyday until she developed enough strength in her legs to walk. Despite the physical and psychological difficulties associated with school ("They very mean sometimes. They come along and touch my back and ask me personally things"), she managed to finish high school as well as earn an undergraduate degree in art.

According to Demi, writing was not an important part of her education in Korea: "We don't have much writing because we always test." Even the tests, she stated, were multiple choice, so Demi seldom had an opportunity to write. Even in the English Institute in Seoul, Korea, where she studied English for four years, writing was not a part of the curriculum. "They teach grammar and vocabulary, but they never teach writing. I discovered myself sometimes I want to writing some [thing]. I really want to show my feeling. I don't know how because I never learned this." It
was out of this need to express herself in writing, Demi stated, that she decided to come to the United States to study English. "I always wanted to write beauty things—in human life. I wanted to study here in the U.S. I need to have writing."

**Wanita**

Indonesian born Wanita has been living in the United States with her two children and businessman husband for two years. In Indonesia, Wanita was educated in nursing and worked as an intensive care and pediatrics nurse until she married and started her family. She has positive memories of her formal education, except with respect to writing. She characterizes herself as a poor writer who doesn't really enjoy writing. "But when it come to me to write, I have a hard time to write. I can't correct it. I never like to write because when I was in school I didn't like my own language—you know, Indonesian," she stated.

Wanita blames much of her dislike of writing on an abusive language teacher and her own inability to think clearly. "He mean with the kids. Maybe he crazy or something. He slapped the kids," she claimed. At the same time, Wanita blames herself for much of her problem: "I read and then when I start to write, I can't think. I set and start to write my...I just don't know what to write. Maybe it's not there yet."
Wanita’s interest in writing in English stems from her motivation to help her two children to do their homework and her husband to write business correspondence. Wanita volunteers at her children’s school. She sees the need to participate in their education directly; however, because of her poor reading and writing skills, she is unable to do so. In addition, because her husband travels extensively, she often needs to answer urgent business correspondence but can do so with limited success. Although she completed six years of English classes in Indonesia, Wanita’s fluency is fairly well limited to oral English.
Appendix J

Sandy’s Non-Correction Policy
February 1, 1993

Dear

I know you asked me to make corrections to your letter, but that's really not the purpose of the letter-writing. While you can learn a lot by studying corrections, you can also learn a lot (and sometimes more easily) just by doing something often without someone else correcting you. In the letters, I want you to think about what you are saying, not how you are saying it. That way you can experiment with more subjects without having to worry about grammar and grades. I hope you will also see that I actually do correct you by using some of your ideas and rephrasing them in a more American manner.

Since your paragraph last week was on how to get along with a roommate, I think you have probably tried hard to perfect your technique of getting along with people. I remember my first year at school living in a dormitory (many, many years ago!). I had to share a room with two other girls, and we didn't really have a lot in common. I was better friends with two girls down the hall. I didn't spend much time with my roommates; we really just sort of tolerated each other and spent very little time together. The next year my roommate (another girl) and I chose to live with each other, but I really don't remember much about that. In fact, I can barely remember any of my roommates. We obviously did not develop a longlasting friendship. I hope yours works out better than mine. I suppose as the semester continues, we'll both find out just how good a technique and friendship you have.

Talk to you (on paper) next week!

Sincerely,
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