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Utilizing Teacher Response to Help Students Meet and Transfer First-Year Composition Course Objectives

Clyde Aidoo

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UTILIZING TEACHER RESPONSE TO HELP STUDENTS MEET AND TRANSFER FIRST-
YEAR COMPOSITION COURSE OBJECTIVES

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

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Department of English
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Abstract

For decades, considerable scholarship has explored how teachers can respond more effectively to student writing. There has also been significant research on how first-year-composition concepts can be transferred by students to other arenas of discourse outside of this required course. This thesis begins with a brief discussion on the meaning of transfer. Then, with the Council of Writing Program Administrators' Outcomes (knowledge of conventions, rhetorical knowledge, critical thinking, processes) as a starting point, I redefine and pare down the seven response modes described by Elaine O. Lees to five types of response (calling for correction, reminding, explaining, suggesting, and assigning) designed to create a framework for understanding how teachers can respond to student writing more effectively. Additionally, four recommendations are presented for maximizing the effectiveness of teacher response, while providing students a voice in the conversation on the page. The first recommendation is for teachers to underline content in the draft, calling the student's attention to issues in the text they must revise or to a suggestion the teacher has made. The second recommendation is to use peer response as an extension of teacher response by having peer groups work together to address each comment provided by the teacher on their drafts. The third recommendation calls on teachers to take an individualized method of response based on the disciplines students plan on joining. The final recommendation is the inclusion of critical thinking challenges that inquires about the student's source vetting and tests their logic and reasoning skills through additional questioning and assigning within the teacher response. The purpose of this thesis is to theorize how the use of these recommendations and response types can serve as a catalyst for objectives to be met and for transfer to occur for FYC students.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The single most important influence on student achievement in writing is feedback. This should come as no surprise, as it is through feedback where students can hone the skill of writing through trial and error, a point echoed by Executive Director of the University of Denver's Writing Program, Douglas Hesse, "Writing, like playing the piano or playing tennis or painting watercolors, is a skill learned by doing, with feedback and coaching. I can show you how to grip a racquet, but until you step on a court and hit ten thousand balls, my 'teaching' (which would take about five minutes) hasn't taught you how to serve" (6). Teacher response to student writing is the only segment of first-year composition (FYC) that can house unlimited interaction, guidance, and assistance. Therefore, when teacher response is recognized as the time when the teacher can have the most impact on student writing, it becomes clear that this is the most practical tool to help mold students into writers who can meet course objectives and build habits that extend beyond the FYC classroom into other discourse communities. The Council of Writing Program Administrators' (WPA) Outcomes Statement provides instructors with useful goals for FYC, and teacher response is the most efficient and pragmatic path to reaching these goals. My aim in this thesis is to explore how teachers can respond to student writing more effectively in ways that will help students meet FYC course objectives and transfer these skills into other arenas of composition and discourse.

I will begin by defining transfer prior to identifying the goals of FYC, which will be centered around the WPA Outcomes. Next, I will make distinctions between key terms, including response vs. evaluation, summative feedback vs. formative feedback, and higher-order

concerns vs. lower-order concerns. I will then provide an outline of the stages of the writing process in a course that utilizes my proposed model of teacher response. In chapter 2, I will list the different types of teacher response and discuss how they are each attuned to the WPA Outcomes. Using support from scholars in the field of teacher response, I will also describe the value of each response type. Finally, in chapter 3, I will present four recommendations of effective teacher response strategies that center around interaction, student agency, and course objectives, as well as the transfer of knowledge acquired through these objectives into future discourse communities.

Literature Review

Though some scholars have stated the popularity and value of using conferencing as a method of responding to student writing (Baker, 2014; Edgington, 2016) and others have argued for other interactive methods, such as responding via audio recordings (Dodson and Reisinger, 2017), most of the scholarship, historically and recently, has been centered on responding to student papers through writing. One characteristic of teacher response scholarship that has persisted for decades is corrective feedback. The scholar widely credited for disputing the value of error correction by arguing for its eradication is John Truscott. In “The Case against Grammar Correction in L2 Writing Classes,” Truscott provides studies that reveal that there was no improvement in student grammar in courses that used error correction and, in some cases, the students’ grammar became worse. I disagree with Truscott’s thesis that error correction should be abandoned, but I do agree that correcting the errors for the student is not the best way to create self-sufficient editors who can master and learn the WPA knowledge of conventions outcome on their own and that, as Ferris counterargued, by not correcting the errors, we are signaling to the students that the errors are not important. If students fail to see the significance

of the errors, this would “ensure that many students never take seriously the need to improve their editing skills and that they will not have the knowledge or strategies to edit even when they do perceive its importance” (“Response to Truscott” 8). If nothing else, by taking the time to correct student’s errors, students learn that local issues in a piece of writing something that cannot and should not be ignored.

To ensure that students appreciate the value of comments addressing errors, they must be given a more integral role in the process. McMartin-Miller (2014) suggested that students choose either individually or as a class how teachers address errors, selectively or comprehensively. When selectively correcting errors, teachers only mark a limited amount of errors. In the comprehensive approach, the teacher is heavier handed and less discriminating in the errors that are marked. The L2 students in McMartin-Miller’s study were satisfied with the selective approach, but they preferred comprehensive error treatment. This demonstrates the significance that many students find in improving traditional conventions like grammar and mechanics and a major reason why error correction continues to have a place in teacher response.

Though L2 students particularly place enormous value on error correction, teachers of all learners must recognize that students and their texts present a broad range of needs and challenges. It is important that teachers do not lose sight of attending to global issues and remember that they are writing teachers, not language teachers. Unfortunately, while teachers acknowledge that global comments should be the primary focus when responding to students, studies (Ferris et. al., 2014; Montgomery & Baker, 2014; Lee et al., 2018) suggest that the teachers themselves were surprised to learn that the samples collected demonstrated that most of their comments were related to surface-level issues instead of global comments, contrary to their survey responses, which suggested they prioritized the latter. Lee et al. state that this focus on

surface-level issues may be a result of teachers feeling obligated to tend to grading rubrics and course objectives that list features such as grammar and mechanics that will be considered. And while the authors would present possible solutions for these root causes, such as revising grading rubrics and professional development opportunities, another solution would be to commit to a selective approach to error treatment, where the teacher only marks the errors that interferes with the intended message of the writer.

Another reason why error correction is such a focal point in many teacher's feedback to students is because it is less time consuming and labor-intensive to attend to surface issues as opposed to addressing global issues. For this reason, some have suggested featuring computers to evaluate and deliver feedback to student writing. This would be unfortunate, as it would remove the interaction and interpersonal relationship that arises from teacher response and the mentor/mentee relationship that allows the teacher to coach and mold students' writing skills. In "The Effects of Computer-Generated Feedback on the Quality of Writing," Marie Stevenson and Aek Phakiti describe automated writing evaluation (AWE) that does not stop at evaluating student writing, but also provides written feedback to the students. The authors state that AWE software that is "used for pedagogical purposes also provides written feedback in the form of general comments, specific comments and/or corrections" (52). The growing sophistication of technology and computers could potentially lull administrators into a misguided sense of trust, but this would be a grave error. Because although computers are becoming more advanced, "the same technology that allows people to have 'conversations' with the iPhone's Siri, is improving the analysis of writing. Still, just as Siri is not well-equipped to discuss with you whether Nietzsche or Wittgenstein is the better philosopher, so too do computer scoring systems run into difficulty with complex tasks" (Hesse 3). Regardless of how much technology progress, it will

never be able to keep up with the ever-changing conversation of human to human, teacher to student, mentor to learner. Therefore, it is difficult to advocate for a model of teacher response where the students are empowered to have a voice if they are using that voice to communicate to an automation.

Conversational teacher response that implements metadiscourse (discourse about discourse) is multidimensional in ways that are too dynamic for a computer to simulate. Because of the interrelationship between the reader and writer in teacher response, there has been scholarship on the role teachers should fill when responding to students and how students can become more active and prepared participants in metadiscourse. Ädel (2017) describes the interchanging roles of teacher and student during the feedback process as “double roles” (65) that sees the student as not only the writer of the original text but also the reader of the teacher’s response. Meanwhile, the teacher is not only the reader of the student’s paper but is also the writer of the response. Much like an oral conversation, each party takes shifts of listening and responding, and each response is shaped by what was previously heard, how it was processed, and how the listener is hoped and expected to receive the message. When acting as the reader, teachers are not only acting as a specific reader imparting their thoughts and concerns in the communication process, they also act as human simulators, taking the role of a meta-reader, a general audience for the reader, sharing possible interpretations of the text as an imagined audience. But some commentary may apply to both the general reader and the specific reader. For example, a comment such as, “the reader cannot read your mind,” is an indirect way for calling for more specificity in the text, in which the inability to read one’s mind is applicable to both the specific reader responding to the text and the imagined, potential audience member. Comments like these illustrate that there is “not always a clear dividing line between specific and

general reference” (Ädel 65). By allowing students to play a larger role in the metadiscourse between teacher and student by providing another role to the student, a responder to the responder, the dialogue assumes an exchange in which both parties work collaboratively on the revision of the student’s draft” (Shvidko 58) instead of the teacher appropriating the student’s text and reducing, if not eliminating, student agency. When immersed in metadiscourse, it is also crucial to provide students experience filling multiple roles within the framework of textual feedback. Anthony Edgington provides students with experience filling various specific reader roles when reading the work of their peers: a teacher, an employer, a placement reader, administrator, et cetera, as a way to make students appreciate the significance of audience through the lens of different reader roles. This also presents students more opportunities to “notice the multiple ways that responding to student texts can lead to tangible positive results in all aspects of our teaching” (Edgington 87). I share in the belief of scholars like Ädel, Edginton, and Shvidko that the student is much more than a recipient of the feedback but full participants in a dynamic exchange who can be empowered in the first-year composition classroom. A conversational approach to teacher response is not only a vehicle for students to maintain agency during the writing process, but it is also a viable model to assist students in reaching the goals of the course.

Before discussing the goals of FYC, what should be taken into consideration is the subject of transfer: how students carry knowledge from one situation to be used in different situations. When transfer becomes a major pedagogical consideration, students will carry a deeper motivation in their writing process because of the awareness of how knowledge obtained from the course will be useful in their futures. We also must make this consideration with some insight on the role teacher response plays in facilitating transfer and why interaction is so crucial

to this process. Teacher response is the practice of providing feedback to student writing with the intent of helping students address concerns in future drafts of the same paper topic and in developing beneficial long-term writing habits. This is the most valuable feedback a student can receive because it combines expertise with personal investment in the success of the student. Teacher response has the capability of generating further learning opportunities by suggesting or explicitly assigning additional study tasks and also provides an opportunity for both teacher and student to partake in metadiscourse on the written page initiated by meta-comments within the feedback about the student's process, intent, and meaning behind the student's ideas, while reinforcing concepts introduced during class instruction.

Teacher response is pivotal to transfer because as much as the committed FYC instructor would love to give every student an unlimited amount of one-on-one interaction, the reality is that the format of FYC courses lacks the design to give each student extensive one-on-one time during class hours. Even if the instructor manages to minimize lecture time and make the rounds to every student, time will inevitably run out without thorough assistance being provided to everyone. For this reason, it is important that teacher response is where personalized attention to each student is maximized.

When the link between thought, conversation, and writing is bridged, it becomes clearer how teacher response can prepare students to harness their thoughts and hone their critical thinking skills for purposes outside of the FYC classroom. Writing, as Kenneth Bruffee explains, always has its roots deep in the acquired ability to carry on the social symbolic exchange we call conversation. The inference writing tutors and teachers should make from this line of reasoning is that our task must involve engaging students in conversation at as many points in the writing process as possible and that we should contrive to ensure that

that conversation is similar in as many ways as possible to the way we would like them eventually to write. (91)

When writing on students' individualized conceptions of transfer, Elizabeth Wardle advocates a teaching model where students are guided to "seek out and/or create seek out and create situations in which what they have learned will transfer" (67). This approach empowers the student to identify where and how what they are learning will transfer. Wardle goes on to state that although we

cannot prepare students for every genre, nor can we know every assignment they will be given or the genre conventions appropriate to those assignments across the disciplines...what FYC can do, however, is help student think about writing in the university, the varied conventions of different disciplines, and their own writing strategies in light of various assignments and expectations. (82)

I would add that more than helping students seek out and create situations to those initially experienced, they should simply be prepared for situations for when the knowledge they have obtained will be useful. If teacher response is being used to assist students' critical thinking skills that will be used in future disciplines, for instance, students should not be expected to seek out disciplines where they can use their knowledge, but rather, they should be prepared to use the knowledge in the disciplines they were already intending to join. Elizabeth Busekrus (2018) defines teacher response within the framework of transfer as "the application, remixing, or integration of teacher feedback from one writing context to another" (103). This is a definition I will look to implement when integrating teacher response with the goals of the course and applying the skills acquired through the conversational response process to future discourse communities. The concept of transfer looks at how students can use the knowledge obtained

through the attainment of FYC goals in future situations; but first, these goals must be identified before any recommendations can be shared on how teacher response can facilitate this transfer. The next section will define those goals, describe their value, and discuss the role teacher response plays in their linkage with student performance.

The Goals of First-Year Composition

The WPA Outcomes Statement is an excellent resource for FYC programs and instructors to identify the goals of the course. The outcomes were compiled based on what composition teachers have learned through both practice and research. Outcomes are differentiated from standards in that standards, decided by the local institutions and their writing programs, are what are used to measure the level in which the outcomes have been achieved by students. The five outcome categories presented are rhetorical knowledge; critical thinking, reading, and composing; knowledge of conventions; and processes. The language used to define each outcome was extracted from the Council for Writing Program Administrator's Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition. Awareness of these outcomes can assist teachers in delivering feedback with a specific purpose. Every comment (teacher's remark) within the feedback should be rendered with an understanding of which outcome is being addressed when the student responds to the comment.

Rhetorical Knowledge

Rhetorical knowledge calls on students to be able to understand how writing convention is shaped by the author's purpose. By both analyzing and composing texts, students can learn rhetorical concepts such as ethos, pathos, and logos, as well as attending to areas such as voice, tone, and the degree of formality. The WPA also promotes the comprehension of using rhetoric

through a variety of technologies for a range of audiences and the ability to adjust one's rhetoric to different situations and various settings, i.e. print and electronic. In responding to a student, it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure the student has a clear rhetorical purpose in mind and composes accordingly. If the primary purpose of the draft is vague or misplaced, the teacher's response can assist the student in setting the tone. Additionally, teacher response can also assist students in assuring the text matches the rhetorical context and expectations of the audience. The conversational use of teacher response can also engage in an ongoing dialogue with the student that prods the student to write with a sense of conviction where their rhetoric is used to bear what they believe to be true as opposed to an art used to persuade others of that which the author themselves may not believe to be true. For it is this use of rhetoric that can often be abused and dangerous to society at large.

Because rhetoric is so pervasive in our society, there is no question as to the importance of this outcome being taught in the FYC classroom. But just as important as learning how to use rhetorical concepts is learning how rhetorical concepts is used by others in society, i.e. the mainstream media, social media, and partisan groups. Rhetoric is a skill, but it is also an art. Much like the skill of martial arts or boxing, the skill is useful in many situations and should be used in artful competitions or in the defense of oneself, but it should not be used against anybody and everybody, otherwise it could cause great injury to those untrained in the art. This has been a concern down through the ages, from the ancient Greeks to today.

In FYC, students should learn how to use rhetoric to advance truth, not to create it. That is, instead of being used as a means to persuade the audience of the superiority of a particular narrative, rhetoric should be a tool for students to introduce the audience to knowledge in whatever context the rhetoric is being implemented. By interacting with the student on the page

through teacher response, the teacher can better understand how students arrived at the conclusions in which they are now sharing. For the students to be prepared to provide sufficient reasoning for their use of rhetoric, particularly when crafting arguments, they must be assisted throughout the course in differentiating truth from opinion, evidence from bluster, and the logical from the fallacious, which is why rhetorical knowledge and critical thinking skills go hand in hand.

Critical Thinking, Reading and Composing

The critical thinking, reading, and composing outcome states that by the end of FYC, students should be able to: learn critical skills through inquiry and communication in various rhetorical contexts through composing and the reading of a variety of texts; comprehend the difference between assertion and evidence; understand the role audience plays in organization and patterns of a text; acquire the ability to evaluate sources for credibility, bias, accuracy, etc.; and be able to use various strategies to synthesize interpretations with the writer's original ideas. The WPA stresses the importance of each of the above skills as foundations for academic writing going forward.

Reading a variety of texts is important because it allows students to notice patterns of how rhetoric is used by different voices of the same platform and, of course, be introduced to different perspectives on whatever issue is before them. But it is not enough to understand the use of rhetoric or even to gain multiple perspectives, the distinction between assertion and evidence is crucial, as this is perhaps the biggest difference between rhetoric used to mislead through persuasion and rhetoric used to convince with the effective use of rhetorical strategies. This is very important not only in terms of meeting the critical thinking goal within FYC, but because such critical thinking is extremely valuable in the outside world when consuming

societal rhetoric, which can have a major effect on students' civic lives if they are not trained on how to properly vet authentic sources from "fake news."

Preparing students for social rhetoric is crucial because of the impact its consumption can carry. In dispensing thought-provoking teacher response to the student, they will be prepared to utilize these thoughts when writing in their own social discourse or, at a minimum, be more fit to decode and deconstruct the rhetorical usage of others and thus better comprehend implicit meanings and general truths. FYC, spearheaded by conversational teacher response centered on critical thinking skills, prepares students to not fall victim to propaganda or partisan rhetoric, but rather to develop insight on the workings of societal rhetoric and the narratives that create it.

Knowledge of Conventions

The third outcome in the WPA Outcomes Statement is the knowledge of conventions. The fulfillment of this outcome, according to the criteria put forth by the WPA, is to become familiarized with the formal rules of writing, specifically attending to mechanics, spelling, usage, citation, and style. Although the consensus among FYC scholars is that grammar does not improve student writing, negligence of conventions can certainly impede the successful transmission of the writer's intent. While grammar and conventions are of secondary importance to content improvement, it is the job of teachers to take every possible avenue to help students communicate their message and use their voice as effectively as possible while limiting any obstructions that may interfere with its transport.

Additionally, knowledge of fundamental writing conventions is valuable to students because of the effect poor grammar, which is one of the conventions listed by the WPA, can have on their personal, professional, and academic lives. From a personal standpoint, a 2013 Match.com survey of over 5,000 people found poor grammar to be the second biggest

disqualifier in finding a potential mate. While it is not our job as teachers to play Cupid for our students, this merely speaks to the fact that even unexpected sectors of society take grammar very seriously. Therefore, poor grammar could have surprising impacts on aspects of the student's personal life they find essential. Larry Beason's study, "Ethos and Error: How Business People React to Errors" disclosed ways in which business professionals judge candidates and employees based on poor grammar. As professionals, these employees are viewed as faulty thinkers who are uneducated and lack attention to detail. As writers, they are viewed as being hasty, careless, and uninformed.

Finally, a failure to attend to writing conventions could affect a student's grade in other courses. For instance, when encountering poor grammar, Dana Ferris found that some faculty members are less tolerant of grammar issues and that it affects the way they evaluate the work of the student. Therefore, it is unreasonable to simply expect that these professors will one day "get over their unrealistic expectations" (Ferris 8). Without knowing how much emphasis is placed on errors by other university faculty, it would be wise for students to take the pains to improve grammar and for teachers to hold up their end in helping students learn all the conventions listed in the WPA Outcomes Statement. Teacher response is best suited to fill this need so as not to replace valuable instruction time with excessive grammar instruction.

Teacher response should be used to empower students to become self-sufficient editors themselves and not become dependent on the teacher. This will increase the likelihood of the students retaining the conventional rules they are attending to. In conversational teacher response, the teacher helps students reach this outcome by conferencing with them on the page as co-editors.

Processes

In this outcome, students are expected to learn how to compartmentalize the different stages of what the WPA calls “projects.” Students must be able to become familiarized with different strategies in the development of a completed project, such as pre-drafting research, in-drafting research, revision, and interaction with a colleague. The inclusion of the multiple drafts element incorporates the components of discovering new ideas, as well as making appropriate use of collaboration time. Through multiple drafts, students can be urged not only to inquire deeper into their point of view but into that of others. In doing so, as the WPA’s language in this outcome states, students will become free to discover ideas and reconsider their own. Also, through collaboration, students will better be able to better revise and reflect on their writing as well as the very process that influenced its creation. Even experienced writers require multiple drafts, so it is only logical that students be provided sufficient time to improve a text and, in doing so, build good long-term habits that will assist students in recreating compelling texts. The writing process I am proposing for a FYC course that marries teacher response to evaluation is as follows:

1) First Draft

In the first draft, students are evaluated primarily on effort and attending to the requirements of the prompt, such as page length, structure, and rudimentary coherency commensurate to the writing level of the student. Students are prompted to write with a free and clear mind but, at the same time, write in such a way that they are confident the submitted draft is capable of being a final draft. The perfect paper does not exist, so there will always be enough room for improvement to always warrant another draft.

Ultimately, if the students put forth sincere effort in the first draft, they will earn a completion grade.

2) Teacher Response

The teacher's response to the first draft will set the tone for the final evaluation. Each of the comments will be provided in the margins of the paper electronically. The teacher must make each comment with the knowledge that students will be replying to each of them. Therefore, the teacher can be as liberal or conservative with the amount of comments as they deem necessary for student improvement, with the amount also being manageable for the student during a peer review session's time span.

3) Peer Response

The peer review portion of the writing process provides students the opportunity to assist one another by collaborating to directly address the teacher's comments on the first draft. Time spent on the peer review session on comments addressing higher-order concerns will be separate from the time addressing lower-order concerns.

4) Second Draft

The second draft directly responds to and addresses the teacher's comments using approaches developed through the collaboration of peer response. Underneath each comment left behind by the teacher, the student clicks "Reply." In the reply, the student describes either how the teacher comment has been addressed in the paper or how changes were made to the paper's direction due to an inability to address them. For example, if a student was asked to find evidence to support a claim and was unable to do so, the student could respond by stating how that changed their approach, or even their opinion, based on this failure.

5) Teacher Response to Second Draft

Teacher responds to second draft, this time highlighting any issues remaining in the paper the teacher would like the student to work on. At this point in the process, the student has already received their essay grade based on how they have met the criteria of the assignment, including their attendance to teacher comments, referred to as their “discourse engagement.”

6) Discourse Engagement as Supplemental Reflection

After the second draft, some students will still partake discourse engagement about the same essay; other students would have excelled in the second draft to where they have moved on to other class assignments. For instance, a class assigning during the week for some students would be a generalized assignment presented to the class; meanwhile, other students would continue to interact with the teacher regarding a past essay.

Therefore, much like the response itself, the assignments for each student will have an individualized aspect to it.

One of Donald Murray’s implications of writing was that students should be afforded unlimited drafts. Of course, the term “unlimited” is not meant in the literal sense, as at some point, even if the teacher and student wish not to move on, the academic calendar will. Therefore, the teacher and students must make the best of the time shared together. However, this implication is best understood as entering the drafting process with an open mind as to the number of drafts that will be needed for students to fully complete the task objective. Because, among other reasons, students have other modes of writing to attend to and cannot be expected to continue redrafting the same essay for the entire course, one way to redefine the term “unlimited” is to have students respond after the second draft to teacher comments as an

opportunity for further reflection while they simultaneously work on other essays. This component of the course will be manageable to the student because the bulk of the essay has already been completed, and they are now only responding to teacher comments without being required to redraft the entire essay. And this will be manageable to the teacher because they can deliver as many comments as they feel they can realistically grade while still attending to new essays. At this stage, the additional comments are much fewer in number, as they now focus on the one or two biggest areas the teacher would like the student to improve and reflect on for future drafts.

Continuing to revisit an old draft is a means to an end, where students are provided more time to reflect on areas of past concern, whether it be rhetorical, critical thinking related, or regarding conventions. Even if the teacher assigns two comments for the student to respond to, if strategically cast by the teacher, addressing these two comments can go a long way. This discourse engagement helps meet the process outcome, as it provides students an opportunity to continue reflecting on a piece of writing in the context of how they can develop as writers moving forward by ongoing reflection on what has worked well, what hasn't worked, and how this distinction will improve future writing projects. Although students will solely respond to the comments and not redraft, each comment will be placed within the larger context of the original essay and the writing process as whole, by asking the student to reflect on how their responses and revisions to the assigned comments have helped them to become more prepared to build on the practices used in the discourse engagement to influence future work, which is a criterion for the WPA process outcome.

When employing this process in an FYC classroom, some key distinctions must be made, firstly that of response vs. evaluation and how this distinction manifests into the feedback

provided to the student. When responding to student writing, teachers are delivering feedback in the hopes students will improve their draft and/or develop as long-term writers. When evaluating the student, teachers are assessing how well students performed in each draft and how well they adapted their draft to the initial feedback provided to them. Broadly conceived, feedback can be categorized as formative and summative. Formative feedback is provided during the process of writing which can come in the form of marginal or in-text comments with the goal of helping students compose the strongest draft possible. This form of feedback is product-centered, but it also can be used to aid in the long-term development of the writer. While formative feedback is placed in text or in the margins of a draft, summative feedback occurs at the end of a text and is used to provide closure to a writing project with comments on how students can improve moving forward. This feedback addresses the next steps for the improvement of either the quality of a writing assignment or the long-term writing practices of the student.

More specifically, feedback can be described as lower-order and higher-order. Lower-order feedback consists of comments addressing local, surface-level issues such as grammatical errors, mechanics, phrasing concerns, spelling, etc. Lower-level concerns are usually delivered through formative feedback, although it is possible that if a draft's evaluation was largely impacted by lower-level issues, it could appear in summative comments at the end of the draft as well. Higher-order concerns, on the other hand, are oriented more towards global issues of the writing such as organization, structure, and the clarity, support, and logic expressed within the ideas. These comments are delivered regularly through both formative and summative feedback. Both lower-order and higher-order are crucial to the development of student writers.

For teacher response to help students meet the goals of the course, measures must be taken to ensure that each type of feedback are read by students and that the value of the response

is understood. The process that I am proposing ensures that students continue to find relevance in feedback because the feedback will continue to be addressed in unlimited rounds of discourse engagement as continuous opportunities to reflect and grow. What teachers must do is give the response every opportunity to resonate in the students' psyche, primed to be stowed for use in the near future. The best way to ensure that the teacher response is not skimmed through briefly or read once but instead engaged with fully and deeply is to ensure that students must respond to and address the comments submitted. This proposed model of the writing process guarantees students read the teacher responses with urgency and care. The student's discourse engagement becomes another criterion of the final evaluation along with ideas, organization, support, etc., and it formally marries teacher response to evaluation and, in doing so, ensures students prioritize teacher response as much as we need them to. In the second draft, students must directly address the teacher's comments as part of the final evaluation grade. The comments may be in the form of questions, additional study tasks, or specific clarification on items of confusion. After the teacher replies to the second draft, the discourse engagement will continue a personalized level with unlimited rounds. In the next chapter, I will take a closer look at how these comments will appear within the different types of teacher response.

Chapter 2: Types of Teacher Response

Just as feedback to students can be described in different ways (formative/summative, higher-order/lower-order), teachers can also examine the different ways that teachers might respond to student writing. Though the following types will be described separately, they are designed to converge to provide a cohesive yet multi-faceted approach to responding to the student and aiding in the development of a stronger finished product and the long-term progression of all writers. Since Elaine O. Lees' 1979 publication, "Evaluating Student Writing," we have seen variations of one or all of what Lees describes as "modes" incorporated by scholars like Nancy Sommers, Michael Robertson and Dana Ferris, among others. Elaine O. Lees divides the activity of responding into the following categories:

- Correcting
- Reminding
- Emoting
- Describing
- Suggesting
- Questioning
- Assigning

I have revised Lees' original list to create a framework based on the following types of response:

- Call for Correction
- Reminding
- Expressing

- Suggesting
- Assigning

These categories are appropriate to teacher response because they each play a role in assisting students to meet the WPA outcomes through conversational response. These types are useful to the recommendations that I will be proposing because, like the recommendations, they each continue the conversation between teacher and student as opposed to appointing the teacher as the final authority. Although the student maintains agency in their writing under these types of response, all five types prompt the student toward an action that is predestined to lead them toward an outcome. In this section, each type of response will be redefined along with detailed explanations and examples on how they would appear on the document and why they would be beneficial to the student. These types of response are intended to benefit 21st century FYC teachers in generating teacher response that can be as effective as possible.

Call for Correction

Correcting is when the teacher changes an error made by the student in the draft. The problem with the traditional form of correcting is that when the teacher explicitly changes the error for the student, research has shown that this does not improve student grammar. For Truscott's thesis that corrective feedback does not improve student grammar, three things must concurrently take place: 1) The grade of the student is not penalized by grammatical errors. 2) Students are not provided measurements on how they are improving following error correction. And 3) The teacher makes corrections for the student without any student accountability. The weight an instructor places on grammar in evaluating a student's writing rightfully varies from instructor to instructor. However, the best way to ensure students have learned from errors is to

give them the opportunity to correct the error themselves. Dana Ferris supports this stance in “The Case for Grammar Correction in L2 Writing Classes: A Response to Truscott:”

It is critical that students become more self-sufficient in editing their own writing.

Though it is arguable whether grammar feedback and instruction will be consistently effective for all L2 student writers, it seems clear that the absence of any feedback or strategy training will ensure that many students never take seriously the need to improve their editing skills and that they will not have the knowledge or strategies to edit even when they do perceive its importance. (8)

This can be done by drawing attention to where the error is located in the paper, directing students to where to review the rule of the error in question, and providing them an opportunity to demonstrate that they have made these corrections. With this in mind, instead of “correction,” that is, the teacher correcting errors for the students, an upgraded version of this form would be the “call for correction” form, which calls attention to an error made by the student and allows them to change the error themselves with the aid of resources provided by the teacher and thus become more self-sufficient learners and editors. This fits into the conversational framework of teacher response because it prevents the teacher from being heavy handed and allows the student to take control, learn for themselves, and, when applicable, even make a case for their usage choice. If nothing else, by taking the time to address errors themselves, students learn that local issues in a piece of writing is something that cannot and should not be ignored.

Reminding

Reminding ties a comment from the teacher back to something covered or discussed in class. This could also be extended to remind students of comments made on previous drafts to bring awareness to some of their writing tendencies. One example is Blaauw-Hara’s “fix-it

pages.” The fix-it page has columns that give students directions on how to fix the error by telling students where the rule can be found in the handbook. Then, in the future, students use past fix-it pages from past responses as a reminder to double check for solecisms they have made in the past.

Another example would be teachers reminding the student of effective use of rhetoric. A teacher may type a comment in the margins stating, “Remember, if you are calling your readers to action, it is not enough to inform, but to use devices (i.e. pathos) to resonate deeper within your audience on why this issue and their participation is important.” When the student is reminded, they should have a resource to turn to (class notes, class texts, other reading material, etc.) that have already been provided for them to reference when receiving such comments.

The reminding type of response is a major tool to reinforce concepts with the student and increase the probability of retention of the information being reiterated by the teacher. The reminding form of response illustrates how intertwined teacher response is to instruction and the pursuit of course objectives. It also provides students an opportunity to engage with the process outcome, which centers on in-process reflection as well as the development of flexible strategies during drafting, reviewing, rewriting, and editing. In a 16-week FYC course, every moment of class time is a treasured commodity, and in the fast-paced progression of the course from lesson to lesson, it is invaluable to use reminding as an anchor for the teacher to depend on as a “reminder to remind.” This form of response is a somewhat retroactive fit to the conversational model of teacher response, as it refers back to a past exchange of knowledge that is likely to have taken place external to teacher response, and yet this response type brings that conversation back to the page in the context of the draft, where the meta-discourse between teacher and student is at a fever pitch.

Expressing

The two response types of emoting and describing that Lees offers work in tandem and thus have been merged together to create the form of expressing. In this form, the teacher emotes to the student's prose and describes why. When the teacher emotes, they convey how the student's writing made them feel in the moment or reflect on a more profound level. These could be comments of

Praise:

- "That was a really powerful statement!"
- "Poignantly stated!"

Criticism:

- "This point is very concerning and limited."
- "This is problematic."

Or somewhere in between:

- "Not sure how I feel about this."
- "You lost me here."

The expressive form is complete when the teacher describes why they emoted in the manner they did:

- "That was a really powerful statement! Great use of pathos, as it successfully provokes the reader to venture into the uncomfortable to develop an essential understanding of this subject's gravity."
- "Poignantly stated! Your meticulous word choice really shines through here."
- "This point is very concerning and limited. Without an example, it is difficult to understand what you are attempting to convey here."

- “This is problematic. You seem to be making hasty generalizations without any evidence to support your claim.”
- “Not sure how I feel about this. You are writing with a high degree of passion, but you may be getting a bit overzealous and, in the process, neglecting to consider possible alternative solutions to the problem you are discussing.”
- “You lost me here. I am unsure of how this connects to your thesis. Remember, your thesis previews what your paper will discuss, and this paragraph seems to be going in an entirely different direction.”

In the above examples, you see the teacher expressing their thoughts to the student. When the emoting is left without the describing, it results in a vagueness that students do not find at all useful.

Bryan Bardine conducted a study in an honors high school English class to get the perspective of students on teacher feedback, and the results are very relevant to the present discussion on emoting and discussion, as one student was quoted, "Yeah. What's weird is that even some of the comments that are positive, at least I guess they are, I'm not sure what exactly was good about my writing. See (he shows her a comment 'good job!' next to a paragraph, with no explanation of what was good). I know she likes my paragraph here, but I don 't know what about it was good" (239). It is OK to offer brief emoting in the text or margins of a student paper, but for the emoting to have meaning, a description must always offer an element of text specificity to the comment so that the same emotive words could not have just as easily been tacked on elsewhere on the paper.

Text specificity is a critical piece of effective teacher response and the describing form, as echoed by Nancy Sommers whose 1982 study of 35 teachers at New York University revealed

comments that were “not anchored in the particulars of the students' texts, but rather are a series of vague directives that are not text-specific” (152). Greg Giberson also commented on the dangers that can occur when emoting without accompanying text specificity: “When teachers respond to texts with cookie-cutter words and phrases such as ‘awkward,’ ‘avoid cliché,’ or ‘elaborate,’ we are not responding to the text we are reading, but to the ideal text that we have in our minds” (413). Teacher elaborating on their emoting signal the importance of the comments and are vital to the teacher response process. The expressive form’s purpose within this conversational framework of teacher response is to reassure the students that their ideas are not just being heard, but they are being felt, which is something passionate writing is meant to do for the reader: stir the emotions as well as the intellect. Much like the reminding form, this form is also important to student engaging with the process outcome, as by expressing in detail what students are doing well and areas that are unclear, they can carry this knowledge with them in the redrafting and reviewing steps in the drafting process, and hopefully transfer what works during this process in future writing projects.

Suggesting

Suggesting is certainly another valuable form of response, especially when these comments remain suggestions and not prescriptions. Suggestions are comments that advise students to add or remove elements of their paper or provide alternatives on how students can proceed. It is important that these comments do not intrude on the students writing process because “problems arise when teacherly suggestions become merely blue prints for rewriters of papers” (Lees 372). By providing suggestions, this signals to the student that the teacher is a resource in a conversational process and not a dictator that is overseeing the student’s toil. In place of a tyrannical voice the students hear on the page, the teacher should use conversation

voices. As moderators and participators of the discussion, teachers must be sure to allow the students a place at the table where they maintain a sense of agency when making decisions as writers and to be able to respond to teacher when, upon reception of the teacher's response, the floor again is taken by the student.

There are infinite potential combinations of words in the English language. Though it is the teacher's responsibility to guide the student, the students must maintain a sense of agency in navigating through a terrain in which "there are no rules, no absolutes, just alternatives. (Murray 6). Patrick Bizzaro also added in "The Concept of Control in Historical Perspective" that true discourse "occurs when knowledge is not a pre-packaged commodity to be delivered by the teacher but is an outcome constituted in the classroom through the dialogic interaction among teachers and students alike" (4). Most recently, Calhoon-Dillahunt & Forrest's 2013 study reported that students "found 'suggestions/constructive criticism' to be the most helpful" (233). One student in the study was quoted as saying that teacher feedback should "guide you on your paper without telling you what to do" (223); and another student added, "I find that directions telling me how to change my writing are the least helpful because they take away my freedom in my own writing" (234). Constructive criticism, on the contrary, is very helpful because it assists students on the formative and summative stages of feedback by advising students what to continue doing on the current draft and also future writing projects.

The use of constructive criticism also reverts to the describing form of response, and the student's affinity for suggestion speaks to how much they value the kind of writers' autonomy that results from being delivered advice instead of marching orders. One example of suggesting would be to advise a rhetorical strategy to be used on a section of the paper but not explicitly assigning it: "I think an anecdote could be useful here that perhaps uses ethos to establish your

experience or direct knowledge on this issue. Otherwise, you may need to use a few briefer examples instead.” It could be assisting in the research process, “If you are struggling finding more sources, here is a database that has a wide range of articles on your topic.” Or it could even be sentence-level suggestions, “I notice you have used this word a few times. Here is a good site to use as a thesaurus. If you see a word you like, be sure to read how the word is used in sentences and not just its definition.” Each suggestion is not overbearing and allows the student to maintain agency in their writing. Conversational teacher response uses the suggestion form to praise the student to reinforce and encourage the continuation of these habits. This response also, as the above theorists note, should not refine the student’s options or imaginations. Instead, teachers should use the suggestion form to provide different writing options and additional suggested reading material. One example of an outcome this form works towards is the rhetorical outcome, which calls on students to consider different options and weigh the alternative impact each choice will carry before determining which suggestions work best under the rhetorical context at hand.

Assigning

Although Lees lists questioning and assigning separately, since my proposed form of teacher response requires student response, the questions are a part of the assigning process. This form goes a long way in challenging students’ critical thinking skills. By asking questions, we continue to challenge the students’ stances and drive them to delve deeper into the subject matter. Assigning is the use of teacher response as an opportunity to create a new assignment that is related to the previous draft. The value that comes from multiple drafts is that it informs the student that the discussion is ongoing and that teacher response is crucial to understanding what comes next and cannot merely be given a cursory glance.

In my proposed model of teacher response, when students receive the initial teacher response and, after peer response and self-correction, submit the next draft, they should do so without the assumption that the revised draft is the final. If the teacher sees the same or new holes in the content of the paper, the next set of teacher comments should continue to challenge the student's critical thinking skills, for these are the skills that they will need when confronted by societal rhetoric and/or their selected discourse communities on a day-to-day basis. And when challenging students in this model of teacher response, the teacher is not expecting or requiring a specific response; but rather, as addressed in the discussion on the suggestion form, the papers are "examined to see what other choices the writer might make" (Murray 6). Every subject, especially one where truths are being pursued, has a myriad of different options, layers, perspectives, and factors. The competent instructor uses teacher response to help the student understand the various dimensions and contexts of each writing subject with clear eyes for as long as the teacher/student discourse persists.

One example of the assigning form comes from Michael Robertson, who revisited an occasion where he was grading a pro-segregation essay where the student argued that black and white students do not belong in the same schools. In his response to the student, Robertson commented on the effectiveness of the thesis and criticized the transitioning of the paper and its overall organization and structure. Robertson regrets this feedback and stated that if given the opportunity, he would assign an additional assignment where the student would read Dr. Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" and then respond with how he thought Dr. King would have replied to his essay. This is a superb example of not imposing one's beliefs on the students who may have ingrained beliefs...but challenging them to do something that is often neglected in both our classrooms and in our society: understand other perspectives.

Christyne Berzsenyi described a response model where students were required to respond to teacher questions. In Berzsenyi's responses, comments arrived in the form of suggestions for revision (call for correction), compliments on an effective aspect of writing (emoting and describing), and questions. To assure that students understood the feedback, they were required to rewrite the feedback prior to responding to each of the teacher's comments. The student's response could come in the form of "1) Providing revisions and explanation of reasons for agreement with the feedback and 2) justification for disagreement with suggestions for revision, and explanation of a successful writing strategy" (90). Berzsenyi even provides a sample of what a question/response interaction between teacher and student looks like in her classroom:

Instructor Comment: Could you expand on this concept of retribution and explain how it supports your main argument about injustice in our contemporary law courts?

Example of Student Response: My revised sentences would read, "Retribution involves the just punishment for the crime. With the bureaucracy and loop holes of the legal system, justice rarely can prevail. Therefore, vigilante justice is the only real form of justice. Adding this would clarify the connection between the vigilante example and my point about the weaknesses of our justice system. (90)

Berzsenyi's article is testimony to how a true conversational approach to teacher response looks like and it is certainly one for educators, myself included, to draw inspiration from when taking a similar approach. One difference from the model I am proposing is that when Berzsenyi responded to the student's response, that closed the conversation. I would argue that a true conversation ends naturally when all there is to be said has been said, which is why the discourse engagement as supplemental reflection component to my proposed model is critical to the representation of the teacher/student interaction as an authentic conversation.

Still, Berzenyi's model is a stellar example of conversational teacher response and a fine use of the questioning form of response. The assigning form is useful to conversational teacher response because it ensures that the student is well aware they are more than just encouraged to take up their part in the conversation, but that it is a part of their experience as FYC students. The assigning form pushes the students to speak back when the world speaks to them, respond to unique situations, and generate ideas for solutions—skills that will transfer to the discourse communities that await.

Chapter 3: Recommendations for Effective Response Strategies

The primary purpose of this thesis has been to provide recommendations of effective teacher response strategies to help students meet FYC outcomes and transfer to other discourse communities. The way teacher response is to be used in each of the recommendations is through the Review function present in most word processing programs, where the teacher creates comments visible in the margins of the student draft. After reading the teacher comment, the student must then hit “Reply” to the teacher’s comment where they can respond to the teacher’s comment in a manner that is appropriate to the original comment. For example, if the original comment addresses a convention error, students will usually reply with how the mistake was fixed, but they may also provide an explanation of their choice, which may be stylistically or grammatically justifiable. If the teacher comments on the paper’s structure and organization, the student can also respond by explaining how the issue was resolved, or they may explain their process in such a way that makes the teacher reconsider the original comment.

When submitting the second draft, the student would have replied to each of the teacher’s comments. Any issue that remains unresolved will then move to the supplemental reflection component of the course, where the discourse engagement on the essay will continue. As listed earlier, the WPA’s outcomes for FYC students are knowledge of conventions; processes; critical thinking, reading, and composing; and rhetorical knowledge. I will now present four recommendations for improving teacher response that are conducive to meeting the WPA Outcomes.

Underlining Text-Specific Issues for Revision

The first recommendation is for the teacher to underline text that the student must revise. For lower-order errors, this can be done by drawing attention to where the error is located on the paper, directing students to where to review the rule of the error in question, and providing them an opportunity to demonstrate that they have made these corrections. Earlier, I mentioned the “fix-it pages” described in Mark Blaauw-Hara’s “Why Our Students Need Instruction in Grammar, and How We Should Go About It.” However, the strategy that I find most intriguing in this article is the use of a check mark located beside a sentence where an error occurs. Students must then determine what the error is and fix it on their own. What I propose is using a merger of these two ideas in the margins of the teacher’s response to the first draft. In this strategy, the teacher underlines the sentence in which the error is located and, in the margins beside the error, shares either a link, webpage, or book page number that explains the rule. If more than one error is committed in the same sentence, the teacher shares multiple links or page numbers next to the sentence. One particular WPA bullet point for this outcome, “practice applying citation conventions systematically in their own work” can be met by using the same strategy for citation errors, where the sentence with the citation error is underlined and in the marginal comments the teacher writes, “citation error” with a link or page number to a source that assists students in discovering the error.

This recommendation does not only facilitate the call for correction form of response but also the types oriented more towards higher-order concerns such as suggesting and expressing. When using the reminding form, text can be underlined so that when the teacher leaves a comment such as the earlier example of, “Remember, if you are calling your readers to action, it is not enough to inform, but to use devices to resonate deeper within your audience” the student

knows what specific section of the text the teacher is referring to. The deployment of text-specific comments avoids vague commentary and instead uses text-specific comments that scholars like Nancy Sommers advocated. The same can be said for the suggesting and the expressing types of responses. When the teacher is suggesting to the student, by having text underlined for the student, it will be easier for students to plan where they will implement the suggestion provided to them. If the suggestion refers to the entire paragraph, the teacher can underline the opening sentence of the paragraph and be sure to use phrasing such as, “In this paragraph,” so that the student knows the suggestion refers to the entire paragraph. This is also very helpful to the expressing form so that when a teacher pinpoints what a student is doing well or areas of criticism, the comment is very text specific.

Peer Response as Extension of Teacher Response

One of the stated WPA outcomes is process. There are two different avenues in which teacher response can help students reach this outcome: collaborative and individualized. The bullet points from the WPA Outcomes Statement that call for collaborative learning state that students should “experience the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes” and “learn to give and to act on productive feedback to works in progress.” Both points can be met through peer response that is structured around teacher response. After the students receive feedback from the teacher from their initial draft, the peer response sessions can be spent with students working together to address the specific concerns raised by the teacher. If, for example, one of the comments on a student’s paper is that there was a hasty generalization in one of the points made by the writer, the students would be challenged not necessarily to consider how the generalization could be reworded, but rather, how it can be reevaluated. When students are challenged to perform tasks like finding more evidence, the peer reviewers can discuss the value

of potential sources together and brainstorm how the sources could be used in the second draft. This method of peer response does not relinquish the guidance of the teacher, and yet it gives students a true sense of purpose for the peer response session that will compel them to discuss, collaborate, and, as a team, complete the session with a report on what new ideas, sources, or perspectives were gained from it.

To ensure that students can generate and develop ideas with a liberated mind, the higher-order phases of the writing and peer review processes must remain separate from the error correction and editing stage, a concept that Donald Murray also agreed with in his sixth implication that held that “mechanics come last” (6). In a way, this conversational, heuristic model of learning error correction is a compromise between the Truscotts of the world and the Ferrises. As the call for corrections form of teacher response is designed to do, this design does not explicitly correct the errors for the student, but it rightfully keeps the practice of error correction involved in the process of teacher response. This way, students must work to fix the errors themselves, as self-sufficient editors, and become much more likely to retain the rule they learned and meet the knowledge of conventions outcome. For students who have more errors than others, the teacher can use their own discretion on how many errors and rules they assign the students to revise; but teachers would be wise to direct feedback towards the errors that interfere with the intended message of the text.

With the printed draft that includes the teacher’s response, students will have a clear picture of where they began and, with the aid of the teacher’s response, where they must go. And in the peer review stage, students will have another mind to aid them in getting there. With the use of smart phones, students would have the liberty to use the class time to conduct any necessary research and provide proof of the research in the completion of the peer review

assignment itself, which will produce evidence of learning in an exit ticket where students address what was learned in the session and how that information will help them in the subsequent draft. During the entire process, students will use the time to concentrate on the ideas and content of the paper because students “should not seek only to ‘correct’ errors but should see peer review as a brainstorming process as well as an editing process” (Brammer and Rees 81). The primary focus of peer response should be on content, just as that is the primary focus of teachers.

What is most important in the peer review stage is that students feel as though they are actively and legitimately involved in the conversation with the teacher and with one another. For students to become engaged in peer response the way we want them to be, as Brammar and Rees state, “instructors need to continue to build collaborative groups that encourage rapport, moving away from lists of peer review questions that lead to a lot of writing, but little interaction” (81) because it is interaction, especially in the context of peer response, that is never stronger than when there is a common goal being reached. After students have worked together to address the higher-order comments from the teacher, they can then work together in class to tackle the lower-order concerns. The teacher will be available to assist in answering questions as to the nature of the original comment if the student interprets the comment as ambiguous. But aside from clarification matters, the students will be left to resolve each comment with only the aid of their peer response partner.

Discipline-Oriented Response

The WPA Outcomes Statement has integrated ideas from Writing in the Disciplines (WID) to help students build on what they learn in FYC in other departments. It states that students should be aware of the writing expectations in their field, its purpose of composing, and

the features of such compositions. These rhetorical outcomes can be greatly facilitated through individualized teacher response by teachers responding to the writing in accordance with the expected critical thinking skills and rhetoric of the discipline students have identified as future destinations

Donald Murray's second implication stated that students must find their own subject. When discussing an individualized approach to teacher response, surely, it starts by allowing writing opportunities that have also been individualized through the selection of the student. Students should be encouraged to consider disciplines they plan to participate in or have an interest in learning more about. The next step is determining what exactly are the expectations of the field? What determines if a piece of writing in this genre is successful or effective? Whatever these traits are, that is how the writing is evaluated in the professional, real world. To identify these traits, teachers can undergo training in WID, research independently, and also invite students into the process to help identify these traits if necessary. Bergmann and Zepernick discovered through their study on transfer that students would very much value learning these traits:

One obvious outcome of this study is additional empirical support for proponents of writing in the disciplines, taught by experts in that discipline. Clearly the students in our study were much more open to learning to write like historians, chemists, or electrical engineers in the context of studying chemistry, history, or electrical engineering than they were to learning to write like students in the context of a writing class. (141)

The connection that students writing to the expectations of their field has to teacher response is that all academic writing is developed through feedback. As Nancy Sommers argued in remarking on the importance of text specificity, when reading the teacher's feedback, students

should be able to identify which matters are of higher importance based on the degree of emphasis placed on each area of the teacher response.

The optimization of teacher response does not stop at reaching the goals of one course; it also places consideration on how it can help prime students for future writing endeavors or to develop their writing skills more fully. In my years as an educator in secondary education and also during my studies in English programs at the university level, I have often encountered students who complained that teachers act as if their class is the only class the students must worry about. This complaint is usually in reference to the workload, but it is just as applicable to the lack of transferability. Scholars like Douglas Downs and Elizabeth Wardle tackled the matter of transfer by stating the FYC should be a gateway course for Writing in the Disciplines (WID) programs. And indeed, much work has been done and continues to be done in WID to address writing in various disciplines just as much work has been done in Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) programs to address writing throughout the university.

Because students are entering different discourse communities, in responding to each student, different traits must be prioritized in the response. The prioritization would only be unchanging if instructors are subconsciously promoting the belief that the only writing that matters is within the FYC course and that the same writing skills are prioritized equally in all disciplines. As teachers, we already calibrate our response according to the writer's purpose, so this tendency would only be ramped up with a more discipline-oriented response mindset. This approach to teacher response comes with many challenges, however, and may require FYC to be connected more formally to WID programs, as suggested by Downs and Wardle, to be fully effective. There is, however, another teacher response strategy that teachers could begin

immediately to help students transfer FYC objectives to the discourse communities within or centered around their future disciplines.

Critical Thinking Challenges

The WPA Outcomes Statement lists the reading of a diverse range of texts while recognizing the difference between assertion and evidence as well as the ability to locate and evaluate for credibility, bias, accuracy, etc. of primary and secondary resource materials as two of the outcomes under the critical thinking, reading, and composing category. Through the assigning form, the teacher can issue “critical thinking” challenges that question the credibility of the student’s primary sources when the teacher finds it necessary and make it plain that these questions are to be specifically addressed when the student replies to the comment when submitting the second draft. In these challenges, the teacher is not required to be the final authority on what is biased or non-biased, but these challenges require students to explain their process on how they, themselves, vetted the sources.

Though teachers would love for our students to always partake in such appraisals during the initial draft without such challenging, data shows that many students who enter FYC may not have experience in properly vetting their sources. Lee Rainie found in her 2016 study, “Digital Divides,” that 60% of students admit to struggling in determining if a source is trustworthy or not, and that is only a percentage of those aware of the weakness. According to a 2016 Stanford University study, up to 90% of high school students have trouble judging the credibility of what they read. And as reported in the mainstream news in relation to the 2016 Presidential Election, many adults also struggle between differentiating fake news from legitimate. Many people assume that because, generally, students are fluent in social media, they are equally perceptive about what they find there. Unfortunately, this is often not so. One of the ways teacher response

can help in enhancing informational literacy is to directly ask students how they determined their source is reliable.

The Association of College and Research Libraries lists as one of its six frames for information literacy in higher education, Authority is Constructed and Contextual. Now this is an important frame for us to keep in mind, especially with the digital environment. Students must have criteria in order to evaluate information and know that people are constructing their own authority. Anybody can put anything on the web and thereby construct their own authority, but it may not be a valid authority. In fact, the information can carry intent that is irrefutably malicious. For instance, if an article seems questionable in terms of its objectivity and it turns out that it came from a right-wing source, students could be asked to describe their fact-checking process, such as checking if the information has been fact-checked from bi-partisan and/or left-wing sources to verify the claims, with the same being done for sources known to take left-wing stances on issues. This, as the language of the WPA Outcomes Statement lists, calls for students to read a diverse range of texts with an eye for the audience it is geared towards and how it could be shaped by biases. When students are asked in the teacher response about whether the source has been fact checked, it is far from a yes or no question, as students will be expected to elaborate on the process in which they established their sources objectivity and/or veracity, skills that will have been taught and incorporated in the course curriculum, when replying to the teacher in the second draft.

The teacher who uses critical thinking as a foundation of the class, can use teacher response to describe fallacious reasoning that may be present in the writing and explicitly assign that students address them in the next draft. Acting as a human reader, as Robertson, Connors, and Lunsford promoted, would mean responding the same way an authentic audience member

would, including refutations. However, the teacher does not necessarily have to refute a student's claim in order to challenge them meet the critical thinking challenge. On the contrary, they can simply do just that: challenge them.

Another use of critical thinking challenges would be to test the logic and reasoning skills of the student in a way that pushes them towards truth and objectivity. For instance, suppose a student writes a paper about the Paris Climate Agreement and why it was wise for the U.S. to withdraw. The major points of the student's paper are that the U.S. must focus on other pressing matters at home, not every scientist believes in global warming, and that citizens must trust the judgment of our president. An FYC teacher might politely ask the student to show more evidence to support their argument before commenting on other global issues such as the student's tone and the structure and organization of the paper...not to mention the surface-level issues that are always addressed, even if teachers pause to publicly admit it. But is the student being challenged intellectually as strongly as they could be by simply partaking in a confirmation bias expedition where they find sources to support their current belief?

In the margins of each of the above three points the students made in their paper, the teacher could reply: "1) Red Herring. How would you reply to someone who argues that the Paris Climate Deal and other matters are not mutually exclusive? 2) What is it about the minority arguments that appeal to you more than the arguments from the majority scientists? 3) Appeal to Authority Fallacy. Is a human being's judgment infallible because of their current sitting position? If not, how does this lend credence to civil dissent and damage your point?" Though responding to student writing can be a very time-consuming practice, the three example "critical thinking challenges" provided above would take only couple additional minutes to add. Such teacher response should be delivered with a disclaimer from the teacher during class time,

informing students that the teacher is not arguing against the students but challenging them to think deeper and, more importantly, to reconsider their stance if it means drawing closer to truths. The students would be required to either address the counter-arguments in the next draft, directly answer the teacher's questions by responding to each, or, finally, reconsider their points of defense or perhaps even their entire argument in favor of either a reversed or more moderate stance centered more on comparing and contrasting perspectives. These critical thinking challenges can be in the form of questions, additional study tasks, or specific clarification on items of confusion. This response strategy would constantly challenge and scaffold students' reasoning and critical thinking skills, which are skills that are guaranteed to transfer outside of the course into every social and professional discourse community.

The WPA Outcomes Statement does not only address students learning how rhetoric varies according to the expectations and purposes of their field, but it also states that students should learn the kind of critical thinking that is important in their disciplines as well. Sometimes these critical thinking skills will manifest itself into compositions either within the workplace or in a discourse community about the discipline, such as a website, blog, or discussion board where ideas are shared. Whether or not the thinking manifests in a composition, it is still important that these thinking skills be enhanced in FYC, as this is highly likely to transfer out of FYC into the outside world. When teachers consider writing to be, as Walter Ong describes as "restructured thought" and recognize that writing is a tool used to refine and express thought, it can be recognized that composition teachers are every bit as much in the thinking business as the composition business.

When students are taught to become better critical thinkers in ways that will have an influence on discourse communities they will participate in, it encourages them to become more

involved in the sharing of ideas that were created through process methods and critical thinking skills learned in FYC, and they also learn to share it in these communities through the WPA rhetorical knowledge outcome picked up along the way of understanding how to use a variety of technologies to address a range of audiences. Every discipline has an ethical component to it. Regardless of what industry a student is interested in, there will always be situations and/or policies to consider that they could potentially impact either directly if they find themselves in a managerial position or indirectly through lobbying and advocacy within discourse communities that can produce change. Teacher response can be used to help students become better critical thinkers on such matters to help them transfer these valuable cognitive skills to their discourse communities. This is where personalized teacher response shines through—when teachers utilize teacher response as a means to not only meet the FYC goals but to also transfer them.

If teachers have a student who wants to become a doctor, the FYC instructor will not be able to teach them medicine, as that is not our specialty. However, it also cannot be ignored that the students' long-term goal is to be a doctor, and that it is this long-term goal that has them in the classroom today. Therefore, at the most individualized stage of instruction, the teacher response, the instructor has the capacity and authority to cultivate the thinking, research, or writing skills that are valued in each students' future discourse community. The questioning and assigning types of teacher response could help students think more critically about their chosen fields by challenging the ideas presented in the first draft. For example, if a student wants to become a doctor, the student can write on an ethical or policy issue related to the discipline or the teacher could either assign a topic such as a malpractice case for the student to read or have them research one on their own. The student could then be assigned to share their ideas on the policy and/or opinion about the best ethical practices in the field. Not unlike the teacher response

on contentious topics such as the Paris Climate Agreement, the teacher response can then respond to these papers with the questioning form of commenting, asking for students to address additional concerns or unanswered questions or use critical thinking challenges to question the logic and reasoning of the writing the same as done on an argumentative paper. If a student is a business or marketing major, they could write a paper about business/marketing ethics or business policy and, in the following draft, respond to the questions and concerns the same way the aspiring doctor did in their paper. Regardless of the topic, the result is the same: students are required to read the teacher response and to also think more critically about their original thoughts. And in these instances, the response helps the student think more critically about their future discipline without the FYC instructor needing to be licensed or an expert in that discipline. If it is believed FYC makes a difference in every students' future, it follows that teachers must identify what those futures are and interact not just with the writer on a student level but, as the motto for Georgetown University holds in "Cura Personalis," also care for the whole person. As teachers, we're looking for the whole human development of the person, not just the development of the mind, which includes considering how to make students stronger thinkers in the discourse communities they are targeting as future destinations.

Call for Additional Research

This thesis has sought to discuss how the types of conversational teacher response can form as a bridge to the FYC course objectives and their transfer as well as provide recommendations to maximize the effectiveness of teacher response. The first recommendation is to underline content in the draft the student is either required to revise or that calls the student's attention to a suggestion made by the teacher. This recommendation is not only effective for lower-order concerns, where students will be guided to identify and correct the error

in the underlined text with the aid of a resource supplied by the teacher, but also higher-order concerns, where the underlining of the text provides text specificity to the teacher's suggestion, expressing, or reminding.

The second recommendation is to use peer response as an extension of teacher response by having peer groups work together to address each comment provided by the teacher on their drafts. This provides an opportunity for students of all writing levels to work as a team towards addressing the teacher's feedback. By linking peer response with teacher response, the students will know precisely what to look for and yet problem-solve in their own way. These sessions will begin with the higher-order concerns listed in the teacher response first before moving on to the lower-level concerns, just as each writer does while composing their first draft on an individual level. This recommendation allows students to help one another and assist the teacher in enhancing their teacher response by having a second interpreter of the response help deliver then address the message.

The third, arguably most ambitious, recommendation is for teacher response to take a more discipline-centered approach to how the teacher responds to each student. The impetus behind this recommendation is the appreciation that every student is on a different path and will be using writing differently in their lives. Being of the belief that teacher response can be the primary tool in assisting students to meet FYC objectives, it only follows that teacher response would have the same capacity to helping students become better disciplinary writers. Additional research must be done on how FYC and WID can work together nationwide so that all students who enter FYC are learning skills that will benefit them in their future disciplines. More specifically, research can be done to see how FYC and WID are being used together well at specific sites and how their methods can be replicated on a broader scale. The research can also

look at how FYC teachers are being trained to implement WID concepts effectively, to what extent, and to what degree of prevalence this training is occurring.

The final recommendation for teacher response to include critical thinking challenges that tests the student's source vetting as well as their logic and reasoning skills. This recommendation also requires a need for additional research, particularly in the current partisan climate of today's politics, of how teachers are already responding to student's writing in terms of how critical thinking is being evaluated. For instance, do some teachers favor certain sources without considering possible biases while considering other sources that are valid to be "fake news?" In other words, does the teacher only look for bias on one side when addressing the topic of source credibility? And when it comes to the student's rhetoric, does the teacher tend to refute and challenge claims only because it goes against their personal beliefs? Such research would call for student interviews as qualitative data and also case studies where teachers are surveyed on their political beliefs and samples of how these teachers respond to argumentative papers where the writer shares their beliefs on social or political issues are collected and contrasted with writers whom the teacher disagrees with. With this research, we can then begin to see how much training is needed to help teachers perform their jobs in a more self-aware, impartial, and effective fashion that evaluates student rhetoric by the same standards.

If we expect students to be motivated writers, it is essential to know how the writing and literacy skills they have learned in FYC will transfer out into future discourse communities. By providing students with the resources and the opportunities to become self-sufficient editors, they will develop a stronger knowledge of conventions, including grammar, which can serve as a hurdle to students' personal, professional, and academic lives. Additionally, by employing each of the five types of teacher response when providing feedback to the student, we help students

reach each of the WPA outcomes that are intended to build knowledge that will transfer to other situations, such as rhetorical knowledge according to audience expectations and critical thinking skills. Lastly, each of the recommendations presented in this thesis would help students meet the goals of the course and implant within them an awareness of how and where FYC outcomes will transfer— information that is sure to impart a deeper sense of purpose for their writing in our courses.

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