Asynchronous Online Conference-Based Commentary: A Study of Communication Intention in Instructional Language[1]

Abstract: This article reports on an empirical investigation of asynchronous online conference-based OWI that occurred with three different levels of students in two different educational settings, both post-secondary and secondary. It is a replicable, aggregable, and data-supported (RAD) study of the communication intentions of online instructors in the asynchronous one-to-one conference-based setting that uses a linguistic function taxonomy—first formalized by Gere (1982) and used by Gere & Abbott (1985) in an oral setting, further developed by Hewett (1998, 2000) for comparative oral online settings, and employed by Moser (2002) for an oral setting alone. The idea of communicative intention can illuminate pedagogical strategies because—regardless of modality—the instructors as communicators certainly have educational purposes behind their comments and the students as their interlocutors must interpret those intentions through their responses to the instruction. This study asks: (1) *What can examining language functions in terms of linguistic function, area of attention, and focus of consciousness reveal to educators about the communication intentions of online instructors who teach through asynchronous online conferences?* (2) *How, if in any way at all, do these teaching interactions reflect particular instructional context to include technology, students' educational levels, and instructional epistemology?* The results indicated that all three online instructional populations shared a communication intention typical of reader response in the form of the inform linguistic function; the online instructors supplemented informing with language that directed, suggested, and elicited about writing with varying degrees of emphasis on five focus of consciousness categories. In sum, the study broadened Gere taxonomy to address indirect speech acts, supported Gere's theory that communication intention can be revealed by investigating writing response, and applied the Gere taxonomy and theory to a specific asynchronous online environment to analyze instructional communication intention in that modality.

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When pedagogical changes occur in a discipline, whether a result of advances in the predominant way/s of thinking or in the key technologies through and in which a discipline is taught, scholars have the responsibility to study those changes. Their research leads to collegial discussion, theorizing, and practical suggestions that assist teachers in doing their work. Online writing instruction (OWI) conducted through asynchronous conferences represents one such pedagogical change. Asynchronous conference-based OWI relies upon a developing understanding of how technology both supports and changes theories about writing instruction, student learning, and professional development. Rapid advances in educational technology can create *both* the impression that teaching and learning writing online has no recognizable form—that it is ephemeral and shifts its shape with different technologies—*and* that such online teaching and learning is no different at all from what occurs in traditional settings—that the experience is essentially the same once one becomes familiar with the technology. Even though asynchronous conferences typically occur in increasingly familiar non-real time modalities (e.g., using platforms like email or bulletin boards), and even though they engage universally familiar instructor commenting methods (e.g., embedded local comments and overarching global comments about student writing), educators simply do not yet know enough about what effective asynchronous conferences look like—their personality, so to speak—or whether and how such conferences work with particular student populations. Indeed, this lack of knowledge affects both post-secondary and secondary writing program and writing center directors who are charged with preparing other educators for online teaching and learning.

In general, although teaching online has become somewhat widespread, it is relatively new when compared with traditional face-to-face instruction. Thus, it is important to describe asynchronous conference-based OWI in a variety of ways. Educators know, it seems, far too little about the characteristics common to different OWI scenarios like asynchronous distance-based classes or synchronous conferences or one-to-one tutorials that engage multiple modalities. In addition, educators are not certain how to define or measure OWI's efficacy in one modality or one population, much less certain about drawing conclusions for multiple modalities or diverse population (see, for example, Tuzi, 2004, and Ahrenhoerster and Brammer, 2002). According to Selber (2004), at a minimum, efficacy involves the concept of computer literacy among student users, who either *can control* their online environment or *be mediated* by it (p. 476). The same thinking logically applies to educators. Beyond their obvious needs for functional computer literacy, without adequate research into and preparation for any OWI, they do not control the most basic of their own OWI pedagogies; instead, their teaching is mediated by the OWI. As a result, their instructional choices diminish.

This paper reports on an empirical investigation of asynchronous OWI that occurred with three different levels of students in two different educational settings, both post-secondary and secondary. The study used a linguistic function taxonomy—first formalized by Gere (1982)—to study the communication intentions of online instructors in the asynchronous one-to-one conference-based setting. The results indicated that all three instructional populations shared a communication intention typical of reader-response in the form of the *inform* linguistic function. The online instructors supplemented informing with language that *directed*, *suggested*, and *elicited* about

writing with varying degrees of emphasis on five focus of consciousness categories. In sum, the study broadened Gere taxonomy to address indirect speech acts, supported Gere's theory that communication intention can be revealed by investigating writing response, and applied the Gere taxonomy and theory to a specific asynchronous online environment to analyze instructional communication intention in that modality.

Background

Previous Research

Because the investigation reported here examines the nature of instructional commentary that occurs in an asynchronous conference-based setting, it is helpful first to review studies of instructional commentary and response in traditional classroom settings. Such traditional response to student writing has been investigated through various lenses for more than twenty-five years. Much of the research is grounded on seminal studies by Knoblauch and Brannon (1981) and N. Sommers (1982). For example, response has been studied for a generalized sense of what both idea- ("global") and error-based ("local") commentary look like across a wide variety of instructional interaction (Connors and Lunsford, 1993). Prior (1998) argued that instructors should not privilege their own responses in terms of "the perspectives of teachers and school in defining the contexts for academic writing tasks" (p. 172), preferring instead a multidimensional contextualization of the history of the class and instruction, and the institutional, disciplinary, and social contexts that shape teachers' commentary (p. 173; see also Gottschalk, 2003, regarding formulary writing assignments).

Instructional method is one lens through which scholars have looked at commentary. For example, Elbow (1993) advocated expressivist epistemology in

particular; he addressed “ranking,” “evaluating,” and “liking” as three forms of judgment, each of which has its place, although the author saw the latter two as more helpful. On the other hand, those who favor social constructivist epistemology tend to recommend commentary in terms of conversations between instructor and student (Straub, 2000, 1997, 1996; Smith, 1989; see also Anson, 1989) or in terms of “written comments as multidimensional social acts in their own right” (Sperling, 1994, p. 202), whether the writing occurs in secondary or post-secondary school. Sitko (1992) linked readers and writers for oral conversational feedback prior to revision, and she concluded that “writers detected where readers were experiencing reader difficulty in understanding the text as intended; writers made specific changes in their text to remedy reader confusion; and the changes were substantive rather than surface modifications” (p. 283).

Commentary methods that scholars have recommended from their research include “positive” response to replace comments that more or less overtly instruct by suggesting, giving advice, or making corrections (Zak, 1990; see also Zellermayer, 1989); the relative values of minimal marking (Haswell, 1983); the metacognitive values of a “writer’s memo” (Sommers, J., 1989); and how response can support critical thinking (Slattery, 1990). Useful studies of students’ feelings and beliefs about instructional commentary suggest that students might feel “discouraged” (Smith, 1989) or that student tendencies to focus on surface features are connected directly to the commentary they are used to receiving (Mitchell, 1994); indeed, Freedman’s (1984) study appeared to support such student focus in that instructors shifted register when they believed that the essay writers were students and not the actual professional writers.

Straub (2000) qualitatively studied his own instructional responses and identified seven "certain accepted principles" (p. 24) that he believed stand the test of time: (1) write comments as a conversation, (2) avoid taking "control over the student's text," (3) give priority to global concerns "before getting (overly) involved with" local ones, (4) limit the scope and number of comments, (5) focus on the student's drafting stage and relative textual maturity, (6) write to the individual, not the generic student, and (7) use praise freely. Straub (1996) also examined instructional response in terms such theoretical frames as reader response, after which Smith (1997) analyzed instructional commentary by categories like judging, reader response, and coaching. Greenhalgh (1982) considered voice as an analytical frame regarding the instructor's "interruption" and "interpretation" of student text. Researchers also have examined essay response through highly theoretical frames, such as postmodern theory (Fife and O'Neill, 2001), by the comment's deep structure with results suggesting a need for flexibility and generosity on the parts of instructors (Phelps, 1989), and as a hermeneutical activity that can be represented figuratively as a "chain" and a "loop" (Phelps, 1998).

The advent of computers and composition instruction opened the door for investigations involving such critical issues as software choices, equitable access to up-to-date technology, and political and social ramifications. Specific to student learning and writing in online spaces, some educators have considered the new "literacies" that can emerge from using online spaces (Tuman, 1992; Tornow, 1997). Others have discussed the nuances of teaching and learning in online settings (Yancey, 2003; Takayoshi and Huot, 2003; Palloff and Pratt, 2001; Wood and Smith, 2001; White and Weight, 2000; Provenzo, Brett, and McCloskey, 1999; Gruber, 2000) and various aspects of

professional development and educator preparation for teaching online (Hewett & Ehmann, 2004, 2005; Cargile-Cook and Grant-Davie, 2005)

Among earlier studies into online instruction were those that questioned the shift of peer response group comments from traditionally oral to digital discussions. Palmquist (1993), for example, studied how students' subject matter might influence on-line peer group commentary; he found that those students who shared an argumentation topic appeared to have tighter group cohesion and stronger critical tendencies than those who researched a topic independently (see also Herrmann, 1991, p. 152). Using an email-like platform, Boothby (1988) studied the effects of online interactions, what he called "computer-mediated writing conferences" or CMWC, on revision. Having adjusted and used Faigley and Witte's (1981) revision coding instrument, he presented two case studies of an undergraduate and a graduate student who received online commentary from both peer and teacher. Although the undergraduate student used the peer response in revising, the teacher deemed the revision to be ineffective; the graduate student was more influenced by the teacher's response than the peer respondent. Boothby's results suggested that peer commentary should be authoritative and provide effective guidance; however, the analysis said little about the value of online peer response. He called for additional studies that contrast oral and online peer response, a call to which Singer (1994) responded. In a case study of six first-year writing students who used networked computer software, Singer studied both native and non-native speakers of English. He found that the students' meaning-level revisions were not connected to the online peer response and that most were surface-level changes. Ultimately, these studies provided researchers with some sense of online commentary in the form of peer response, yet each

was either too small or too specifically localized to generalize the results to other populations. As I discuss in detail below, Hewett (1998) followed with a more tightly constructed study of peer response group commentary in a comparative study of oral and online groups.[2]

Beyond online peer response group commentary, scholars also have examined instructional commentary that occurs in online settings. Asynchronous conference-based OWI typically involves instructional commentary presented textually and using familiar response conventions. Despite the relative ease of studying online interactions, which can be archived and shared among researchers, remarkably few studies consider instructional commentary in light of the online environment, making prior research especially valuable for studying any OWI commentary regarding, for example, instructional interactions or student writing development. Among the research that does exist, Sosnoski (1997) argued that student writing produced in electronic educational environments (EEE) should be assessed as "work" with project directors working in collaboration with students. Monroe (1998) described an online writing lab (OWL) conference in terms of its parts (front note, intertextual commentary, and end notes), but also as an "electronic artifact, unstable and ephemeral, shot through with typos, jumbled formatting, and white noise" (p. 23). Kim (2004) shifted focus from the online tutor/instructor to students in order to address their responses to both asynchronous voice and written modalities and found not only that students may interpret voice and written information differently, sometimes not even recognizing the same teacher through both modalities, but also that student preference for modality was split somewhat evenly rather than the predicted preference for voice

[2] Unless otherwise noted, references to Hewett's study will be taken from the more detailed 1998 report of the study.

conferences. Anson (2003) addressed some of the nuances of responding to the essay asynchronously, noting that humans still are needed to respond to human writing; no computer has yet been able to "read responsively" (p. 235). Indeed, beyond nuance, there seems to be something fundamentally different about teaching and learning with OWI about which educators need to know more (Hewett & Ehmann, 2004). Because students still need human readers and because there may be substantive differences between responding to writing in traditional and online settings, educators need to consider online response critically by examining archived instructional interactions as well as student revision regarding those interactions (see, for example, Hewett, 2005, 2006). Such an approach, which considers the language at the heart of the interaction, has had useful results as Kaufer, et. al., (2004) demonstrates through a study of "English strings as instruments for priming audience experience" (p. 37; see also Bandy & Young, 2002).

Research Questions

Undoubtedly, students come to OWI settings just as they come to traditional ones: they expect their instructors to teach and guide them, a scenario that supposes functional expertise in the basics of OWI beyond the technology itself. It is critical, therefore, that educators understand their online pedagogy at practical, experiential levels. Although such understanding develops through anecdotal study and teacher lore, it is especially strongly supported through empirical study. Ten years ago, Eldred and Hawisher (1995; see also Hawisher, Gruber, and Sweany, 1996) found a remarkable absence of empirical evidence in computers and composition studies that would prove online instruction or computer-mediated communication (CMC) improves student writing in any significant way. Indeed, until recently, exceptionally few investigations relative to OWI in any

modality or instructional setting have existed where the knowledge being advanced has been systematically produced, tested, and/or reapplied under reasonably controlled or similar circumstances (see, for example, Hewett, 2005, 2006). Often denigrated in the humanities as positivist, modernist, or ignorant of the social and contextual natures of writing, such studies are the kinds of scholarly investigation that Haswell (2005) defines as "replicable, aggregable, and data supported," or RAD studies (p. 200, 201). An inherent value of such studies is that researchers can use them to make "educated guesses" about applying their discoveries to other, more generalized populations, enabling growth in professional knowledge. RAD studies that, for example, consider whether and in what ways students learn writing through OWI can help online instructors to advance consciously-developed and purposefully-practiced online pedagogies. Such studies also can help program directors to discover essential materials for preparing writing instructors systematically, yet individually, for online settings. Such RAD studies can indeed assist educators to prepare students to make the best use of the online instruction that they receive. Therefore, before considering necessary questions of OWI efficacy, educators can benefit from RAD-based descriptions and analyses of online instructional processes and products such as their instructional commentary—how instructors communicate their intentions—and how students revise in response. To respond to the first of these needs—a description of communication intention in online instructional commentary—the research reported in this paper engaged the principles of RAD investigation by building-onto and extending the published research of three previous RAD studies that used the same analytical tool.

Hawthorne (2002) has expressed a "feeling that there may be a mismatch between our theories and our practices," which she believed could be addressed through analysis of actual student-tutor sessions (and, by extrapolation, to student-to-instructor interactions) (p. 2). Indeed, this mismatch, which leads to tensions between instructional theory and practice, can be considered in part by identifying and categorizing the language choices that educators actually make when they respond to student writing. Questions of communicative intention emerge when one considers the meaning of instructional commentary in asynchronous one-to-one online tutorial and/or online class-based settings. The idea of communicative intention can illuminate pedagogical strategies because the instructors as communicators certainly have educational purposes behind their comments and the students as their interlocutors must interpret those intentions through their responses to the instruction. Like Gere (1982) and Gere & Abbott's (1985), who believed that communicative intent could be revealed in peer talk, I assumed in this study that the online instructors' linguistic approaches and speech act choices would reveal something about their communicative intentions. In particular, I used and extended Gere's functional linguistic analytical taxonomy to ask two questions: (1) *What can examining language functions in terms of linguistic function, area of attention, and focus of consciousness reveal to educators about the communication intentions of online instructors who teach through asynchronous online conferences?* (2) *How, if in any way at all, do these teaching interactions reflect particular instructional context to include technology, students' educational levels, and instructional epistemology?*

Methodological Background

Comparison of a RAD Taxonomy Used in Three Studies

In this section, I outline in detail three RAD investigations that provide background material essential to understanding how the chosen analytical framework illuminates the conferences that I investigated. Further, these outlines demonstrate how, despite its intrinsic usefulness, the framework has required some adaptations based on a developing understanding of online instructional language. These adaptations, in turn, have become crucial to the potential for discussing instructors' likely communicative intentions in this study. See appendix 1 for specifics of those adaptations.

The first investigation recounts the functional linguistic taxonomy that Gere developed (1982) and Gere & Abbott (1985)[3] published in their report "Talking about Writing: The Language of Writing Groups" in *Research in the Teaching of English*. The other two investigations built on and extended the first study by adapting the Gere and Gere & Abbott taxonomy (called simply "the Gere taxonomy" hereafter) to address online instruction in the form of peer response and asynchronous conferences by tutors. The second investigation, Hewett's *The Characteristics and Effects of Oral and Computer-Mediated Peer Group Talk on the Argumentative Writing Process* (1998; see also 2000), was a doctoral dissertation study that used the Gere taxonomy to examine and compare the peer response group process as it occurred in both traditional and computer-based communication (CMC) settings. Her study required only slight modifications to the taxonomy in order to accommodate the nature of the online peer group talk. The third

[3] I refer to Gere's singularly reported work and the initial taxonomy as Gere (1982) and the collaborative report as Gere & Abbott (1985); however, the latter includes the developmental work described in the former. Additionally, although their report was thin in terms of actual correspondence of revision to peer talk, Gere & Stevens (1985) generally should be considered when studying Gere's overall work in this area.

study, Moser's doctoral dissertation *Theories, Techniques, and the Impacts of Computer-Mediated Conferencing in a University Writing Center: Toward a Model for Training Programs* (2002), was developed with a clear relationship to the previous two studies. She used both the original Gere taxonomy and Hewett's modifications as a basis for studying the online tutoring provided, making several minor, but notable alterations to the taxonomy based on her understanding of the two previous studies and her desire to accommodate a social view of online tutoring.

Gere (1982) and Gere & Abbott (1985): Oral Peer Response Talk

Using a traditionally oral setting with nine middle (fifth and eighth grade) and high school (eleventh and twelfth grade) peer response groups, Gere (1982) developed a study of peer talk to: (1) compare the language of those groups, (2) compare student responses to subsequent revision, and (3) develop "general hypotheses about how writing instruction can incorporate a communication intention definition of meaning" (p. 4-5).[4] Specifically, Gere (1982) was "curious about the kind of learning they [peer groups] fostered" (p. 3). She designed "an analytical system" for describing the language of writing groups, and looked for a "communication intention definition of meaning," where meaning exists both in the text and the reader, as with a reader response critical approach (pp. 5, 3).

Gere used Chafe's (1980) definition of idea units (IUs) as "brief spurts" that reveal one's focus of consciousness or attention, and she selected the IU as a measure for dividing the transcripts and a way to examine an interaction's "meaning and function since idea units are units of meaning for the speaker" (p. 5; see also Gere & Abbott, 1985,

[4] A fourth intention was "to compare oral responses of writing groups with subsequent revisions of writing," discussed in Gere & Stevens (1985).

p. 367). Citing Chafe, Gere found the boundaries of the IU through oral intonation (pitch), pauses, and syntax ("an idea unit is usually a single clause") (p. 6). To give "attention to both function and meaning," Gere coded the peer talk by linguistic function, area of attention, and focus of consciousness (p. 6). In particular, the taxonomy addressed such issues as the major focus of an interaction and the type and frequency of linguistic units. This taxonomy has, perhaps, less applicability in terms of discussing the social nature of such interactions, but when understood through the terminology of pragmatics and speech acts, social issues can indeed be considered.[5]

Table 1: Gere (1982) and Gere & Abbott (1985)

Category I Linguistic Function +	Category 2 Area of Attention +	Category 3 Focus of Consciousness	OR Category 4 Phatic Language
Inform (I)	Writing (W)	Content (C)	Phatic (H)
Direct (D)	Group (G)	Form (F)	
Elicit (E)		Context (X)	
		Process (P)	
		Reference (R)	

Gere & Abbott (1985) published the taxonomy's iteratively developed rubric that reflected example language from the study's peer talk transcripts (see their appendix, pp. 382 – 385). As they discussed and as their rubric showed, this taxonomy relied on Sinclair & Coulthard's (1975) definitions of three primary linguistic functions: *Inform* **(I),** *Direct* **(D)**, and *Elicit* **(E)**. IUs that inform tend to convey "ideas, facts, opinions, and information"; those that direct request a "non-linguistic response," and those that elicit "request a linguistic response or non-verbal surrogate" (p. 28; Gere & Abbott, 1985, p. 367). The second category addressed one of two possible general areas of attention of the

[5] Others have seen these same categories at work in their research into instructional response, even though they may not have used them as an analytical framework. For example, Straub (1996) identified teachers as offering information ("qualified evaluations"), directions ("advice") and suggestions (pp. 383, 390); Straub preferred the suggesting mode, as did Smith (1997). Zak (1990) defined as "advice" both suggestions and directions. See also Hawthorne, (2002), Blau, Hall, and Strauss (1998), and Slattery (1990).

IU. In this coding instrument, area of attention could be either the *writing* **(W)**—the artifact and processes around which the peer group was formed—or the *group* **(G)**—the participants whose job it was to read and discuss the writing. The third category, or "dimension," addressed five specific foci of consciousness: *content* **(C),** *form* **(F)**, *context* **(X)**, *process* **(P)**, and *reference* **(R).** Gere & Abbott noted that content IUs "refer to the content of writing or to non-procedural information about the group"; form "refers to the form of writing," such as paragraphs and introductions; context "designates idea units that refer to the context of writing or to the larger context of the group"; process "units refer to processes of writing," such as developing, substituting, and deleting; and response "designates idea units referring to previous utterances" (p. 368). Finally, a fourth category regarded the *phatic* **(H)** nature of certain utterances as a placeholder or backchannel cues like "uh huh" or "okay" that, among other functions, keep open the communicative lines (p. 368). By accounting for phatic utterances, the researchers coded one hundred percent of the language. In sum, there were thirty-one possible variables for IU coding, each represented by three letters (with the exception of the single letter "**H**" for a phatic utterance). For example, *IWC* is an IU that **I**nforms about **W**riting **C**ontent. *IGR* **I**nforms about the **G**roup **R**eference. *DWF* is an IU that **D**irects about **W**riting **F**orm, and *EWX* **E**licits about **W**riting Conte**x**t.

The results of the Gere (1982) and Gere & Abbott (1985) studies showed that the most common IUs across the student populations and discourse modes (exposition or narrative) were those that inform about writing content (IWC) and those that direct the writing process (DWP). There were very few IUs that elicited (asked questions) overall and many more IUs that informed than either directed or elicited; however, Gere (1982)

believed that when students did elicit from their peers, they did so “from a genuine desire to know” (p. 10). Statistically significant differences included: (1) content, where students gave more content-based attention to narratives then to expositions and younger students focused more on content than older ones; (2) context, where eleventh grade students spoke significantly more context-based IUs than the younger students and these same students had both significantly more expository and narrative context IUs than the younger students, with expository texts receiving significantly more of these IUs than the eleventh graders’ narrative texts; (3) form, where both eighth and eleventh graders spoke significantly more form-based IUs than the fifth graders regardless of mode; (4) phatic, where students at all grade levels responded with significantly more phatic IUs in response to expository texts over narrative ones, and higher grade-level students used statistically more phatic IUs than lower grade-level students; (5) IWC, where the fifth and eighth grade-level students spoke more IUs that inform about writing content than the older students; and (6) DWP, where eighth and twelfth grade students used more IUs that direct about writing process than the younger students and these were statistically more frequent for narrative texts, although expository texts also received a large share of DWP IUs (pp. 369 – 373). By addressing both function and meaning in the recorded peer talk and demonstrating that informing about writing was the most frequently found linguistic function, this study’s taxonomy highlighted an intention communication theory of meaning where peers primarily informed one another about the writing read in the group setting; in other words, their primary interaction was reader-response based. Both Gere (1982) and Gere & Abbott (1985) reported that the students demonstrated their belief in the changeability—the revision—of their writing, using the peer groups to address their

own communicative intentions as writers and audience awareness—how their readers interpreted their messages.

Hewett (1998, 2000): A Comparative Study of Oral and CMC Peer Response Talk

The Gere taxonomy provided a useable and comprehensive coding instrument for Hewett (1998, 2000), who extended and adapted it to her comparative study of oral and CMC-based peer response talk in an advanced undergraduate argumentation course. Her work showed that this taxonomy maintained its initial integrity, yet was sufficiently flexible to incorporate a developing understanding of online interactions that later could be explored in different online modalities and platforms, such as other asynchronous venues and synchronous online conferences (Hewett, 2005, 2006); see appendix 1. As a result of Hewett's adaptive changes, the revised Gere taxonomy was more responsive to specific language functions as well as more sensitive regarding online applications. Indeed, Moser (2002; summarized below) cited Hewett's changes as part of her reasoning for using the Gere and Abbott taxonomy in her study of online tutoring in a university writing center (p. 19). In particular, Hewett (1998) used this taxonomy to: (1) consider similarities and differences among language and focus as they emerged in oral and online interactions; (2) examine synchronicity, which emerges when asynchronous (CMC-based) or synchronous (oral) interactions are compared; and (3) analyze the length, type, and frequency of various linguistic units.

In sum, Hewett's study confirmed many of Gere and Abbott's (1985) reported findings for peer response groups in both the oral and the online groups. Additionally, there were some differences between those groups that indicated language use relative to communicative medium: (1) peers stayed on-task and talked primarily about writing; (2)

IUs that inform occurred more frequently than those that direct and elicit (see especially pp. 149 – 150); (3) IUs that inform about writing content occurred in high frequency, although they appeared more frequently in the online peer group than the oral one; and (4) the students spoke and wrote with phatic IUs more often that the younger students in Gere and Abbott's peer groups, verifying their sense that older students may use phatic language more often than older ones (pp. 147 – 151). However, Hewett's analysis indicated that IUs that inform writing reference (IWR) may be connected to the phatic language as talk that socially connects the participants and potentially might show one difference between the stylized talk of Gere and Abbott's study versus the more interactive talk of her study. She also interpreted language that informs group content (IGC) and procedures (IGP) in the online setting as additional ways that the CMC group sought to make social contact reminiscent of oral settings. Finally, regarding the nature of online versus oral environments, Hewett's study confirmed various scholars' observations that CMC-based interactions have the mixed "hybrid" nature of both oral talk and text (Faigley, 1992), with "elements of both spoken and written language" (Hewett, 1998, p. 152).

This study also illustrated patterns of interactive talk "that suggest that the communicative medium itself influences the type of talk" (p. 222, 158 - 159). The oral group talked "more globally on abstract issues related to their writing and to use more referential talk to answer one another and to refer to previously raised issues," while the CMC group "tended to talk more specifically about concrete issues in the writing, and used less phatic and referential talk" and used "more group-focused talk, presumably to help them to manage their conversations in a non-face-to-face venue" (p. 223). Hewett

conducted a confirmation case study of the CMC group working orally and found that in their peer discussion, the group "increased its use of abstract, contextually-focused talk, as well as phatic and referential talk, while they decreased the frequency of talk that managed group procedures" (p. 223).

Moser (2002): A Study of Tutor Talk in Three Asynchronous Online Tutorials

Moser (2002) used the Gere taxonomy to consider the nature of OWI in an online writing lab (OWL) scenario. One of the first RAD-based studies of OWL tutoring, her case study was developed concurrently and independently of the investigation reported herein, yet it similarly considered how online tutors talk about writing with students in an asynchronous conferencing session. Concerned ultimately with the notion of efficacy in online tutorial interactions, (p. 8), she outlined the basics of professional development goals and tutor training methods (pp. 43, 120-130). Because her study both builds on and presents results that closely reflect those of the antecedent studies—despite, in particular, apparently misreading aspects of the Gere taxonomy and Hewett's conclusions through a specific filter of social constructivist writing center pedagogy—Moser's investigation is helpful to understand.[6]

Moser coded separately for the global tutorial comments occurred in "front notes" and the local comments that appeared "in-text"; she recorded her data as Hewett (1998) had by using percentages to indicate frequency and without statistical tests of significance. Because she studied only three tutors and nine conferences, her results are difficult to generalize. For example, the comments that appeared in the front notes were

[6] For example, Moser stated that Hewett (1998) found traditionally oral peer response to be a more "effective medium" because of the "sociability and clear construction of knowledge" in that group (Moser, 2002, p. 17). However, Hewett had not actually claimed one medium was more effective than another;

frequently inform IUs, but each tutor then differed in terms of the other linguistic function use. Particpant 1 used phatic IUs next most frequently, then elicit and direct IUs; Participant 2 used only direct IUs after inform IUs; and Participant 3 used elicit IUs with an equal number of direct and phatic IUs (see pp. 77, 85, and 93 for tabular presentation). Similarly, there was no agreement among the area of attention or focus of consciousness categories, although both Participants 1 and 2 addressed content more often and format/mechanics next most frequently. Moser's results indicated that particularly for the in-text comments, the three online tutors varied in their uses of the inform, direct, and elicit IUs somewhat in accordance with their epistemological and pedagogical preferences. For example, while Participant 1 had a tendency to inform the student and Participant 2 primarily directed the student, both claimed a pedagogy of reader response; Participant 3, on the other hand, heavily questioned her students and identified her style with a dialogic, or constructivist, pedagogy (pp. 99-100), although her questioning method appears to be more characteristic of a Socratic-like, expressivist pedagogy. All three participants used phatic language the least and all three focused their commentary more on the students' *writing* than on the students themselves. Finally, all three participants addressed form most frequently, then content, reference, and context in that order.

Unfortunately, because Moser studied online tutoring rather than peer response and because she altered the Gere taxonomy in the ways she did (see appendix 1), her results cannot be used to validate Gere and Abbott (1985) or Hewett (1998). Nonetheless, her study is an interesting example of the Gere taxonomy's flexibility. Altogether, her

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instead, she said that "the interactive peer response group talk generated orally differs both functionally and qualitatively from talk generated using CMC" (p. 158).

coding frameworks led Moser to recommend that online tutors need training with experiential practice to learn the register of the student's online discourse community (pp. 111–112). As one of her stated goals was to develop an instructional design model of online tutor training, she identified some commonly-held educational principles for online tutor training; her findings are somewhat validated by those principles that Hewett & Ehmann (2004, 2005) have identified through ongoing empirical study as investigation, individualization, immersion, association, and reflection

A Study of Asynchronous Online Conferences

To learn more about the online instructors' communication intentions, I undertook an in-depth RAD investigation into asynchronous conference-based one-to-one OWI. The analytical methods yielded both descriptively qualitative and quantitative data. This study used Gere taxonomy to examine instructional commentary provided to three student populations in two settings: (1) post-secondary undergraduate students enrolled in six sections of my first year English (FYE) and Developmental (DEV) classes at a branch campus of the Pennsylvania State University (PSU) during the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 academic years and (2) Kentucky high school (HS) students preparing portfolios for the State graduation examination during 2002-2003. Although at first it might seem unusual to report on two such different settings in one article, looking at both secondary and post-secondary data can reveal basic similarities and dissimilarities about online instructional approaches that can help readers involved in either level of instruction to understand expectations and realities of the other. Smarthinking, Inc. provided the professional tutorial services for the post-secondary students and the instructional platform for the

secondary students. Participants provided informed consent in keeping with PSU and Kentucky Department of Education requirements for study involving student subjects.

Post-Secondary Level Participants

Students

The undergraduate students ranged between ages seventeen to twenty-one, with six nontraditional students between the ages of twenty-two and fifty. Final qualifications for the study included PSU Internal Review Board-approved informed consent and use of the online tutoring service beyond a first required submission. Students were able to eliminate themselves from the study by choosing not to sign the informed consent forms, which were presented, collected, and kept by a disinterested party at PSU; they could change their minds at any time during the semester without my knowledge. They also could be added to the study after grades were distributed if they chose. They could be eliminated from the study by not completing a formal portfolio, by never using the online tutorial services, or by not providing digital copies of their writing. After self- and other elimination, thirty-three FYE students from four sections qualified for the study. Similarly, seven out of fifteen DEV students from two sections qualified for the study.

The FYE course focused on developing informed opinions about a common contemporary topic of violent children and teens. The DEV course, which students either elected to take or were required to take prior to FYE, provided novice student writers the opportunity to practice similar skills as the FYE students during a low-stakes one-semester course.[7] This course used the common topic of the hero's journey. Both FYE and DEV students worked toward a final portfolio, 60% of the final grade, in which they showcased a metacognitive learning letter and three pieces developed and revised over

the course of the semester. Common elements for all students included: (1) the instructor; (2) the required course handbook, *Keys for Writers* (Raimes, 2002); and (3) that students received feedback for the final required essay only from the online tutorials and peer response group reviews.

Because the university did not have a campus-based traditional or online writing center for students, I encouraged students to use this service to receive reader commentary in addition to my own formative commentary and peer group feedback. Students underwent extensive technological orientation to the Smarthinking online site during two class sessions. They were trained in the initial logging-on procedure, viewed a web-based synchronous lesson where one of their peers interacted with an online instructor, and received individual guidance about sentence structure questions based on an early draft. Students received additional guidance during scheduled conferences. The asynchronous online instructional platform was available through a textbook agreement for the initial two essays at no extra cost to students. Through a Technology Fee Committee grant, PSU provided continued no-cost asynchronous access for my students through the semester.[8]

Online instructors

The sixteen online instructors who worked at random with the post-secondary students were professional tutors employed by Smarthinking, Inc.[9] Their formal

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[7] At PSU, a "D" grade was sufficient to move to FYE.

[8] Synchronous access, on the other hand, included conferences limited only by scheduled hours.

[9] Because the asynchronous online conference is used to teach students about writing in both classroom and supplemental settings, I consider the professional educators in this study to be *online instructors* with similar goals to those traditionally-labeled teachers who work with students in classroom settings. This terminology also enables a distinction between the consulting role of an undergraduate peer tutor, who is not trained in the same level of English instruction as professional educators, and the mixed consulting/instructional role of those who work in various institutional settings as professional online educators using conference-based OWI in supplemental conferences and hybrid and distance classes.

qualifications ranged from an MA or PhD or related graduate studies, experience as a classroom writing teacher, and OWI training and experience with Smarthinking's Online Writing Program. They received training in asynchronous essay conferencing and synchronous instruction, which included attention to contemporary composition instructional theory, practical simulations, and mentoring from experienced online instructors.[10] The online instructors had either online or print access to the students' handbook (Raimes, 2002), but they did not know which students they tutored were in the study because other online students also used this book.

Secondary Level Participants

Students

Thirty-four secondary school students from a State of Kentucky school district participated in a pilot asynchronous OWI program intended to discern the value of online assistance for students preparing their High School Proficiency Portfolios, a statewide gateway proficiency examination for graduating seniors. The majority of students were second semester juniors or seniors, ages seventeen to eighteen, although two were sixteen and one was nineteen. During data collection, I had no contact with these students, their classroom teachers, or the online instructors. Qualifications for the study included providing informed consent to the teacher, who then gave the forms to the director of *The WritePlace,* and by submitting at least one essay to the online tutoring service.

Smarthinking calls its online instructors *E-structors*®. For more information, see <www.smarthinking.com>.

[10] It should be noted that prior to my appointment at PSU, I served as an initial developer and first director of Smarthinking, Inc.'s online writing program; this research project was started after my departure from Smarthinking with the company's specific permission to use archived interactions. Therefore, the training materials that Smarthinking online instructors had available to them, including rhetoric and composition-specific theory discussions, primarily had been written or vetted by me. For examples of such theoretical background materials, see chapter 2 of Hewett & Ehmann (2004) or Hewett (2001, 2002).

Students submitted their writing from multiple disciplines: Advanced Placement and grade-level senior English, anatomy/physiology, advanced biology, and journalism. Their writing projects included personal narrative, description, exposition, and opinion statements. The most common element among these students was that they were developing writing for their proficiency examination portfolios, which created a high stakes writing environment: students whose writing did not pass the scrutiny of outside evaluators would not graduate that spring.

Secondary school teachers whose students would be participating in this pilot program were orientated to the online platform; they then were responsible for familiarizing their students with the online instructional platform and for encouraging them to use the online instructional opportunity. Students gained access to the online instruction through a state-funded grant, which paid all student and online instructor costs for this research.

Online instructors

The four online instructors for the secondary students were graduate teaching assistants at the University of Kentucky (UK), Lexington's writing center, *The WritePlace*. The UK had leased Smarthinking, Inc.'s asynchronous online instructional platform as part of their online writing center services, which enabled the writing center to use the platform that Smarthinking had developed, but under the auspices of the writing center's own name and management. The online instructors' qualifications ranged from MA to PhD coursework, experience in traditional writing instruction, and six months to two years experience in asynchronous OWI working for *The WritePlace*. Smarthinking trained them to use the technology platform and provided documents

regarding applying contemporary composition theory and pedagogy to online settings, while their writing program administrator educated them in tutoring pedagogy for traditional settings and orientated them to the State Department of Education practices and policies regarding graduation requirement portfolios. The orientation included a holistic portfolio rubric, an ethics quiz for assisting students in portfolio writing, guidelines for student portfolios, and requirements/guidelines for portfolio pieces. Theoretically all the secondary students were eligible for the study, so these professional tutors were aware of student participants.

Online Conference Format

Students submitted essay drafts through a web-based delivery platform by requesting assistance and uploading (attaching) the draft to the request. At their end, online instructors downloaded students' requests and drafts, and they responded with: (1) global, overarching commentary about the essay and writing processes and (2) local, embedded commentary. Figure 1 provides a screenshot of the interface where students receive the Smarthinking, Inc. online instructors responses. Figure 2 provides a partial view of global commentary, and figure 3 provides a partial view of local commentary for the same paper.[11] In all cases, the online instructors were prohibited from physically altering student writing or rewriting any portion of the essay for students; this investigation showed their compliance.

[11] These screenshots have been provided by Smarthinking, Inc. particularly for presentation in this article.

Figure 1: Screenshot of Smarthinking, Inc. Instructor (E-structor®)-to-Student Interface

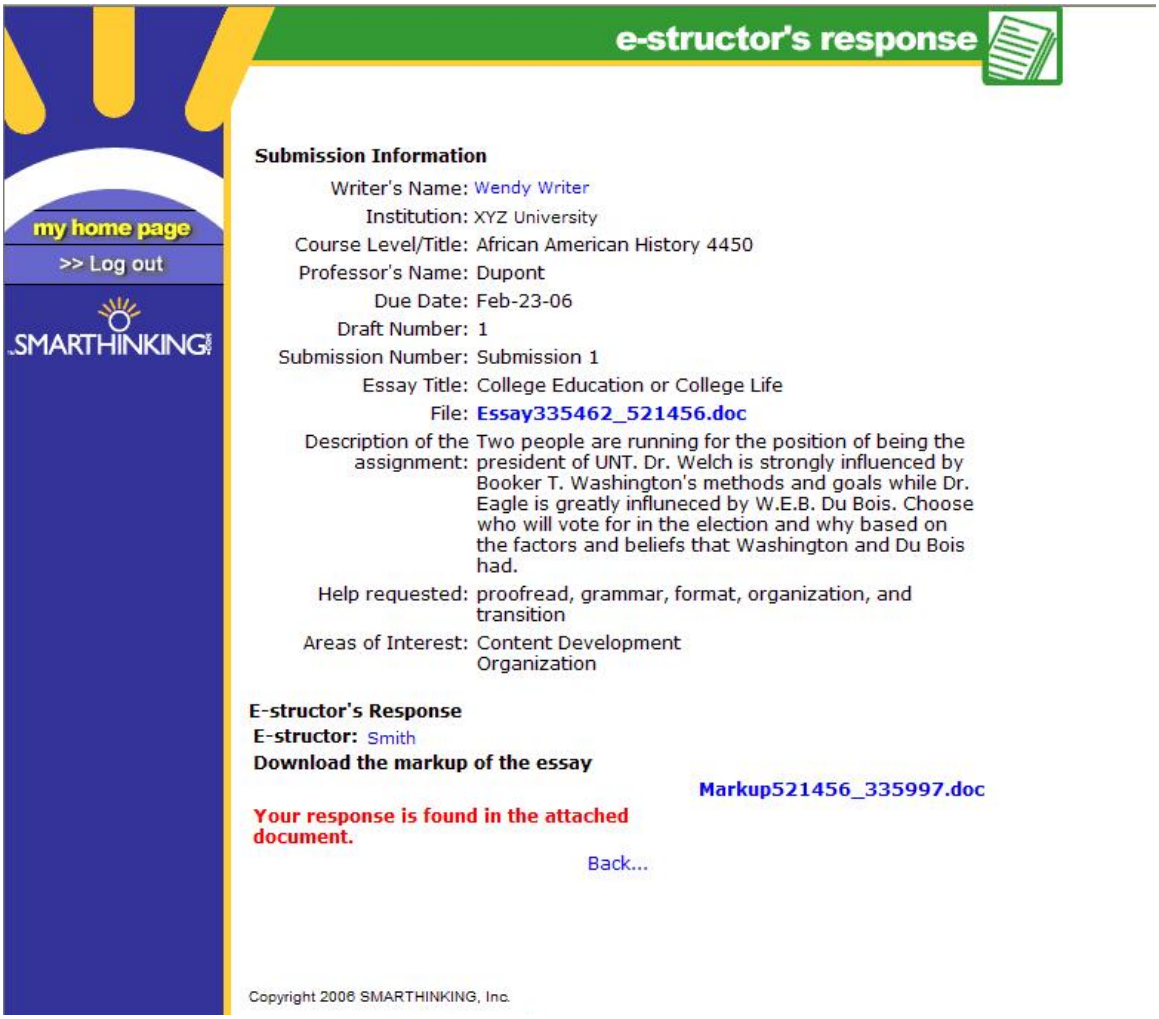

Figure 2: Sample of Smarthinking, Inc. Global Response to Student

SMARTHINKING, Inc. E-structor® Response Form

(Your marked-up essay is below this form.)

HOW THIS WORKS: Your e-structor has written overview comments about your essay in the form below. Your e-structor has also embedded comments [in bold and in brackets] throughout your essay. Thank you for choosing SMARTHINKING's OWL; best wishes with revising your paper!

***Strengths of the essay:**

Hi Ellen! Welcome back to Smarthinking. My name is Stacy and I'll be working with you on your writing today. You've got a good start here, Ellen. I can see that you're trying to focus on specifics in the story that show how Chekhov does or doesn't do what he says a writer should do. That's going to be one key to a good paper—lots of specific examples that illustrate your points.

***Ellen 218683 has requested that you respond to the Content Development:**

Ellen, when you revise this, remember that you need to focus on Chekhov and his theories about writing. Remember that the reader may not know those theories, so you're going to want to explain them. You have a couple of different possibilities for organizing and developing your paper. You can pick the three or four "rules" you're going to discuss and you can have the first part of your paper discuss Chekhov's theories, explaining what those rules are. Then in the second part of the paper you can show how he violates his own theories in this particular short story. You'd want to give examples about each of the "rules" you described in the first part of the paper. Alternatively, you can discuss a "rule" and follow that with an example of how Chekhov violates (or doesn't violate) that particular theory. Either way would work. The idea is to make sure that you 1) explain the theories to the reader and 2) link those theories to the story you're discussing.

Introduction/Conclusion:

I like your opening sentence where you quote Chekhov about good writing. That's the perfect start for your discussion! What you also need is an introduction that explains

Figure 3: Sample of Smarthinking, Inc. Local Response to Student

As Chekhov says to Maxim Gorky, "good writing should be grasped at one – in a second" (1632). I agree with Chekhov, as a reader I want read a short story that pulls me in, fills my mind with vivid imaginations, and words that hold my interest. **[See my comments for help with this sentence.]** In Chekhov's "The Lady with the Little Dog" his choice of descriptive words in his paragraphs makes it hard to keep the focus on which subject he is describing. Just as Chekhov states "You have so many such terms that the reader's mind finds it a task to concentrate on them, and soon grows tired" (1632). I feel Chekhov did not always refer to the technique in writing the short story in the "The Lady with the Little Dog". **[I'm not sure what technique you mean when you say "the technique. Can you make this clearer for the reader? But when you revise, don't get rid of your clear statement of your opinion. That's an important part of the assignment!]**

While Chekhov's character, Gurov is describing his wife, he explains she has "dark brown eyebrows, erect, imposing, dignified, and a thinking person". Here I loose sight of what she may look like because he starts off with a physical feature, but ends up speaking of how she acts. **[That's a great observation!]** Further on, Chekhov starts to describe how Gurov's wife isn't "too bright, narrow-minded, graceless, was afraid of her long ago, and disliked being at home" making me feel clusterphobic while my thoughts are trying to picture a person being all of those things at one time (299). **[I don't think "clusterphobic" is the word you want to use here!]** In Chekhov's descriptions of his characters, I perceive he goes into too much details pulling the reader away from his real intent, acquainting us to the character. **[This is probably a very important point you're making here, so you will want a bit more development. Perhaps this sentence would work well as the topic sentence for the paragraph. Also, make sure that you relate this idea to his theories about writing. If this violates one of his "rules" be sure to sav so!]**

Typically, students of all three populations had multiple opportunities to revise and resubmit their writing. The process, therefore, was entirely asynchronous for these students, yet part of a broader dialogue about their writing: students "spoke" online by writing questions, asking for particular assistance, and submitting their writing; online instructors "replied" by reading and responding textually to the questions and writing; students "listened" by reading the comments and "replied" in turn by (a) revising or not and (b) resubmitting the writing or not.

The conferences, or instructional interactions, were "saved" and returned to students over the web-based platform. Students retained access for the entire academic year to their original documents, as well as the interactions, while online instructors had continued access to all student interactions through an archival database. For the study, I

obtained both the archived instructional interactions and the students' digital drafts pre- and post-instruction.

Analytical Tools

As detailed in appendixes 1 and 4, I used the Gere taxonomy to analyze the instructional interactions, which enabled me to consider instructional focus, synchronicity, and the nature of the discourse in terms of linguistic units—as well as to have a unit of measure by which to understand the revision changes in a second part of the study (see Hewett, 2005). Although this framework helps to isolate the more dialogic nature of such an interaction, the interchanges under study here were heavily weighted (approximately 92%) with the instructor's commentary to students. It is helpful to remember, therefore, that in asynchronous conferences, students can respond through revision, resubmission, and follow-up requests in which they can also use a full range of linguistic options to announce their needs, request certain kinds of responses, or question the online instructors.

Coders began by separating participant talk into IUs. Soon into the task, however, I realized that because a published key or set of guidelines for IU separation associated with the Gere taxonomy did not exist, coders needed a common method. Such guidelines seemed essential because coder reliability with the Gere taxonomy required that researchers had first separated the language into similar IUs. Thus, because of the complications inherent to a two-step coding process, either one person needed to separate all of the conference transcripts into IUs or the coders needed a second discrete tool for agreeing upon IU separation. In brief, as chunks of linguistic information that are "segments of discourse that coincide with a person's focus of attention" and that "reflect

the speaker's object of consciousness" (Gere & Abbott, 1985, p. 367), IUs can be as short as one word (e.g., "*yes*," "*done*," "*Hello!*") or as long as a full sentence (e.g., "*It looks like about here you veer away from talking about social standing and into character relationships*" and "*A comma after 'stubborn' would have helped me avoid that momentary confusion*"). Or IUs can be clauses that reveal a different linguistic function, area of attention, or focus of consciousness (e.g., two IUs: "*I'm missing the first sentences you included in the other argument -- // the sentences that let me know what point of view I'm in….*"). As Gere showed, in oral talk, IUs reveal their boundaries through intonation, pauses, syntax, and body language. However, in written conversation, synchronous chat, or asynchronous instructional commentary, where intonation and pauses must be conveyed textually, IUs are revealed by syntax, grammatical boundaries, punctuation (such as hyphens or ellipses), and obvious shifts in subject. To aid researchers in replicating this study or in developing studies of their own, appendix 3 provides tentative IU separation guidelines.

My second task involved practice coding and training two additional coders to use both the IU guidelines (to which they added their insights) and the Gere taxonomy. During this process, I began with Gere's three categories (linguistic function, general area of attention, and focus of consciousness) or into the exclusive fourth category (a phatic utterance). However, I soon realized that there were IUs that did not fit precisely into the three primary linguistic functions. Thus, through an iterative process, I uncovered a need for a fourth linguistic function category that I have called "suggest." The suggest IU serves the function of an indirect speech act with the apparent intention of providing guidance that does not inform, direct or elicit, yet does all three. Specifically, a suggest

IU represents an indirect speech act where form and function do not match, while the formerly established three linguistic functions represent direct speech acts where form and function do match. Appendix 1 details this alteration to the Gere taxonomy and appendix 4 provides a detailed rubric that further defines, discusses, and exemplifies IU categories, including those adjustments made for this research project. It should be noted that although I believe the addition of a category for indirect speech acts is crucial to this investigation, its addition is not because this study regards *online* instruction. Instead, I believe that the suggest IU category would have been helpful as an integral part of Gere & Abbott's (1985) and Hewett's (1998) peer response studies, as well as in Moser's (2002) study of online tutoring. Rather, I think that the *role difference* or authority of the professional online instructors—that of instructor to student rather than peer to peer or peer tutor to student—simply brought the mixed nature of suggestions into specific relief and that communicative intention relevant to authority probably would have emerged in any instructional investigation—traditional or online—where the researcher had familiarity with the Gere taxonomy. Because such changes represent my developing understanding of how to apply usefully the Gere taxonomy to code interactive talk, particularly in online settings, the appended rubric should prove helpful to other researchers interested in similarly-conceived RAD studies.

Two independent coders and I trained to use the IU-based coding instrument. The independent coder for the post-secondary group worked on ten total test cases from post-secondary students, while the coder for the secondary group worked on ten total test cases from secondary students. I co(ded all twenty test cases and participated as a coder for both student levels. We used three test cases for a first round of coding practice; these

results refined the rubric with additional detail. Reliability was dependent on coders agreeing first on the IU lengths or chunks and second on their categorization. A final round of test coding (seven cases each) revealed that the coders had achieved 85 percent agreement in both IU and linguistic coding

The Data

There were sixty-three conferences from thirty-three FYE students, twenty-two from seven DEV students, and fifty-three from thirty-four HS students.

Total IUs

Each group of students wrote between 7 – 9% of the total IUs. Of a total of 4980 IU, FYE students wrote 384, or 7.7% of the IUs; online instructors wrote 4596 IUs, or 92.3%. Of a total of 1993 IU, DEV students wrote 95, or 4.8% of the IUs; online instructors wrote 1898 IUs, or 95.2%. Of a total of 2511 IU, HS students wrote 243, or 9.7% of the IUs; online instructors wrote 2268 IUs, or 90.3%. The similar numbers of student comments to guide the interactions, though interesting, probably were due to the instructional prompts, although commonly understood conventions regarding talking to teachers, online or face-to-face, could have factored into these results.

Area of Attention

Tutorial-focused IUs. Tables 2 – 4 present three ANOVAs, one for each instructional population (FYE, DEV, HS), as well as significance levels, means, and standard deviations relative to the areas of instructor attention: writing, tutorial, and phatic. The statistical post-hoc differences are described in the notes.

Tables 2, 3, & 4: Writing-, Tutorial-, and Phatic-Focused IUs

Table 2: ***ANOVA on FYE WTH***

W		T		H	
M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
2.91	.88	.75	.26	3.44	1.18

Note. F (2, 183) =168.97, $p < .001$. At the p =.05 level: H>W, T; W>T.

Table 3: ***ANOVA on DEV WTH***

W		T		H	
M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
3.12	1.24	.92	.41	5.59	3.25

Note. F (2, 63) =29.43, $p < .001$. Every group statistically differed from every other group.

Table 4: ***ANOVA on HS WTH***

W		T		H	
M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
1.88	.70	.35	.14	.78	1.13

Note. F (2, 147) =52.09, $p < .001$. Every group statistically differed from every other group.

Common to all three populations, both students and online instructors account for the IUs that inform about the tutorial [IT] and direct about the tutorial [DT], although students wrote more of the DT IUs overall. Generally speaking, both IT and DT IUs were focused on the context of the tutorial and socially-necessary greetings and introductions (e.g., ITX: “My name is Melissa.”) or on directing the response that students desired from the interaction (e.g., DTR: “Point out any errors in grammar or ways to make the final paper better.”). Because they primarily are teaching-task focused and mostly student-spoken, these IUs are not especially pertinent to the following discussion of the teaching interactions themselves, and they will not be addressed further here. Similarly, the IUs that elicit about the tutorial [ET] and that suggest about the tutorial [ST] add little to this

discussion. The student-written IUs occurred in the essay submission form, in which the student identified the assignment (IWX) and the types of assistance he or she wanted with the essay draft (DTR).

The ANOVAs in tables 2 - 4 demonstrate that in each case, the writing-focused talk was more common than the tutorial-focused talk, revealing a communication intention about the writing. The rest of the data section addresses IUs that the instructors wrote and focused on the writing.

Analysis of communication intention: Linguistic function, writing-focused, and phatic commentary. Tables 5 – 7 present three ANOVAs, significance levels, means, and standard deviations relative to the instructors' choice of linguistic functions (inform, direct, elicit, suggest), which were primarily writing-focused, and phatic language. The statistical post-hoc differences are described in the notes.

There were few occurrences of phatic IUs (H) in this study. Phatic utterances most often occurred by using an emoticon to imply affect or facial/body expression or a student's name in the text. Generally, these IUs served to underscore praise, to make personal contact, or to convey warmth or empathy after a particularly critical comment. Sometimes, phatic language emphasized the online instructor's participation or reader response with a typed "hmm," "well," or "okay." Though relatively rare in these data, the online instructors seemed to be using phatic language to express individualized, human, "real-time" responses to student writers' work. It is useful to note that these ANOVAs address the mean and standard deviation of phatic (H) IU occurrences, as seemed necessary to account for a full range, or 100 percent of the IUs. However, in this case (as with tables 11 - 13 below), the mean for H, while statistically accurate, presents a

somewhat distorted picture because the Gere taxonomy allowed for only one set of H to be compared against, for example, ten sets of inform (I) IUs (e.g., IWC, IWF, IWP, IWX, IWR, ITC, ITF, ITP, ITX, and ITR). Therefore, this discussion addresses H, but pays more attention to the other IU categories.

Tables 5, 6, & 7: Writing- and Phatic-Focused IUs

Table 5: ***ANOVA on FYE IDESH***

I		D		E		S		H	
M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
4.18	1.31	1.14	.54	.89	.43	1.82	.70	4.44	1.18

Note. F (4, 305) =219.17, $p < .001$. At the p =.05 level: I > D, E, S; D<S, H; E<S, H; H > S.

Table 6: ***ANOVA on DEV IDESH***

I		D		E		S		H	
M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
4.64	1.74	1.15	.61	.80	.66	1.47	.84	5.30	1.62

Note. F (4, 105) =68.86, $p < .001$. At the p =.05 level: I > D, E, S; H > D, E, S.

Table 7: ***ANOVA on HS IDESH***

I		D		E		S		H	
M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
2.42	1.01	.96	.48	.46	.43	.61	.41	.78	1.13

Note. F (4, 245) =54.37, $p < .001$. At the p =.05 level: I > D, E, S, H; D> E.

By far, the majority of online instructor IUs in any one linguistic function category was those that inform about writing [IW], which in all cases were statistically more common than writing-focused IUs that direct about writing [DW], elicit or ask questions about writing [EW], and suggest about writing [SW]. In other words, for all three populations, the primary instructional response was declarative in nature: indicating

a common communication intention of explaining to the students what they saw in the writing or how to proceed in revision.

However, beyond inform IUs, online instructors for different level students wrote commentary with a varied linguistic function focus. The HS online instructors primarily used language that informs, then language that directs, suggests. The FYE/DEV online instructors wrote suggestions to students more often than they used direct IUs. Everyone wrote questions, or elicit IUs, the least often. Most likely because of the asynchronous modality, and possibly because of the tutorial situation where online instructors did not personally know the students, there were far fewer phatic utterances in this study than Gere & Abbott (1985), Hewett (1998), as well as for Moser (2002) who may have coded the phatic category more broadly than the previous researchers did. A limited comparison with those earlier studies reveals that these findings show similar patterns of language use. Gere & Abbott found that the students in the oral peer response groups tended to use language that informs, makes phatic contact, directs, and elicits in that order. Hewett (1998) found a similar pattern in the oral peer response group talk and a less-differentiated use of CMC-generated language that directs and elicits, along with a lower frequency of phatic IUs (pp. 147-151). Moser is more difficult to compare because of her smaller sample size, but her results also showed a tendency toward more inform IUs. Such comparisons imply that regardless of the speaker/writer, in situations where either peers or peer/professional tutors, the primary response is to inform about the writing, which indicates a primary communicative intention of explanation or reader-response, as Moser suggested with Participants 1 and 2.

Analysis of instructional context. The conferences seem to indicate an instructional communication intention for informing, while also expressing either overt or indirect preferences for particular revision responses from the students. To understand why informing was such a dominant communication intention, it is helpful to briefly review some of the contemporary instructional theories to which the FYE, DEV, and HS online instructors had been exposed in practice and training. The commonality of their basic backgrounds in traditional educational environments strongly suggests that their instructional and interaction behaviors were similar at the outset. Thus, the differences that this study found in their communication intention for the direct and suggest IUs in particular may have been mediated by the medium as much as by any guiding theory or by the educational levels of the students with whom they conferenced.

In the 1970s, expressivist theory reversed the instructor's presumed authority over student writing that had been so prevalent in current-traditional theory and pedagogy, making it difficult to own and convey specific strategies for teaching writing (see, for example, Elbow, 1993, 1981, 1973). At about the same time, instructional focus shifted from error and form-based issues to writing and "rhetorical" processes.[12] Neoclassical theory, popular among some compositionists, returned the writer to a more stable and concrete set of theories and constructs—ancient ones that focused on purpose and audience, and that provided heuristics to which teachers could refer and articulate as having withstood the tests of time (see, for example, Corbett, 1990; Horner, 1988). When this study was conducted, current-traditional precepts had been nearly universally

[12] Cognitive theory, on the other hand, tended to view students more systematically by describing the writing process through the similarities and differences between novice and expert writers (see, for example, Flower and Hayes, 1980, 1981; Flower, 1979; Flower, et al, 1986). More recently, post-process

eschewed (theoretically, if not in practice) as bad pedagogy, and neo-classical theory had peripheral favor in that expressivism and social construction, its counterpart in popular theory, have seemed to be more often preferred by compositionists. Social theory, a product of the 1980s, takes the view that knowledge is socially bounded and constructed—relative to the community that engages it (see, for example, Bruffee 1993, 1984; Straub, 2000, 1997, 1996; Onore, 1989; E. Smith, 1989).[13] The social constructivist view values educational collaboration; yet as a writing process, collaboration has not yet been thoroughly studied for weaknesses that arise when student writing bumps up against the concept of idea ownership (Spiegelman, 1998, 2000; Hewett & Ehmann, 2004). In particular, however, both the expressivist and social constructivist paradigms, which have a common tendency to promote a non-authoritarian approach to writing instruction, have maintained their popularity in composition pedagogy, to which a reading of recently published literature will attest. Generally speaking, whereas the expressivist paradigm calls for non-appropriation of student text, the social constructivist paradigm calls for renegotiation of authority and writing as a form of inquiry among co-learners (see, for example, Onore, 1989, p. 248.). In these epistemologies, writing can be interpreted as somewhat unteachable because it is individual to the writer, relative to the group, and unpredictable in nature.

These ideas about individuality, relativity, predictability, and teachability have led to strained instructional practices where much of writing instruction can seem impossible.

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theory has attempted to move beyond writing-as-a-process to engage the socio-political nature of the world as composition's subject matter (see, for example, Kent, 1999; McComiskey 2000; Flower, 1994).

[13] For useful opposing views, see Smit (1994) and Hewett & Ehmann (2004). Yancey and Spooner (1998) used vignettes and multiple voices to question notions inherent to social constructivism and collaboration; see especially pp. 46-47. For an historical perspective pertinent to computers and composition, see Blair and Monske (2003). Hewett (2001) recommended using an eclectic blend of these theories for OWI.

Teachers who ground their pedagogy—and particularly their online pedagogy—in contemporary instructional theory often seem constrained by a sense of uncertainty that compels them to respond to writing in positive, yet critical, ways that do not imply any certainty about how novice writers do or ought to express themselves. One common result, in my observation, is a tendency to provide reflective feedback and reader response about what currently exists in a piece of writing (its "content"), as well as a recital of "truisms" about the writing process that may or may not hold especially true (e.g., "*Most people expect to see a thesis sentence at the end of an introductory paragraph*," or "*Focusing on your content means not digressing*."). In this sense of the "here and now," instructors can talk about the writer's content, form, context (audience and purpose), and process. Yet, because of a primarily hands-off attitude about directive instruction that stems from prevailing theories, many instructors—and especially tutors trained in contemporary writing center theory—hold a belief that their job is to guide the student to become a better writer, leaving the text to the student and enabling the instructor to avoid the risk of "appropriation" (Sommers, 1982; Greenhalgh, 1992). Indeed, Moser's (2002) study provided an interesting example of this practice: Participant 1 wrote primarily reflective feedback to her students, while Participant 3 adhered fairly strictly to an expressivist questioning pedagogy designed in part to broaden idea development while adding no specific revision guidance. Thus, many traditional and online instructors seem uncomfortable with offering concrete solutions or problem-based instruction to formal or surface issues in particular, merely pointing them out or leading students to them with questions instead. The results can be a statement that a problem exists (e.g., "*You have a fragment in this paragraph*"), a rhetorical question that begs a

particular answer (e.g., *"Is the second sentence a run-on?"*) or a simple reflection of the content that provides no guidelines about strengthening it (e.g., "*Paragraphs are supposed to occur where the idea shifts*"). Likewise, some teachers are worried about appropriating or co-opting students' essays, and therefore they offer non-committal content-based comments (e.g., "*Interesting ideas here,*" or "*I wonder whether parents can be held responsible for all teenage violence*."). In practice, many contemporary teachers and tutors—and, by default, online instructors in various settings who have been educated in contemporary practices—may encourage student ownership of the writing and stand back from the student's work by choosing not to write on, or embed comments in, the writer's essays, as well as by insisting that the student do all the writing even in conference situations.

Concurrent with a pedagogical stance attentive to student ownership, the expressivist theory particularly encourages writing development through probing questions (often called "Socratic") or through more open-ended questioning. Indeed, questions that are contextually-focused may open up potential thinking about a subject and help a writer to develop different or deeper ideas (Hewett, 1998, p. 154; 2000). However, questioning techniques like the Socratic may give the appearance of being "hands off," while often having a specific goal in mind, and they reveal these intentions in suggestions. Savvy students recognize and address suggestions if the goals are not disguised too heavily, but they may express frustration if those goals are disguised beyond recognition. For example, some students in this study noted in their end-of-semester surveys such concerns as: "*I feel that there were times that they never really answered my questions; instead they asked me questions in return*" and "*Some of the*

tutors didn't just say what was wrong but instead asked me questions and that didn't always help me." Indeed, the instructional communication intent appears to be one of politeness, distance, and a desire not to appropriate student writing, which can result in clear signals that a problem exists but a vagueness or lack of clarity identifying the problem.

The social constructivist construct also may lead to strained practice. Social theory guides a more community-oriented writing instruction, such as peer groups, where every reader's voice potentially influences the writer's ideas. Practically speaking, however, many socially-oriented instructors are hesitant to deal squarely with the issues of ownership and perceived plagiarism that arise when students share and develop texts with other students or with tutors/instructors (Hewett & Ehmann, 2004; Hewett, 1998; Spiegelman, 1998, 2000). Thus, a less straightforward practice is to hint at a problem's solution or to simply point out the problem area without teaching how to address it because straightforward instruction might appear to be "giving the student the answer." Students expressed these concerns in terms of unclear or unhelpful responses to their queries: "*It could have been more explanatory"; "[I needed them to] Give examples in the essay that show to be problematic"*; and *"Instead of just pointing the problem, they could've helped solve it."* Certainly, these difficulties concern both traditional composition instruction and tutoring practices, as well as those that have been adapted or transferred into various online settings. Such challenges indicate that some contemporary pedagogical practices found in the traditional environment may not sufficiently address OWI's nuances and may not be applicable universally to the online environment.

With these ideas in mind, one possible reason for the high frequency of language that informs about writing in this study is that contemporary writing instruction, in which all of these instructors had been trained for traditional oral environments, privileges an instructor's response to writing as a "feedback" of what exists in the writing. Thus, the online instructors in this study may have been conditioned by their scholarly and pedagogical backgrounds, available training materials, and practical exposure to contemporary practice to respond to students in an expressivist manner that encouraged students to "own" their voices. Concurrently, they were trained to understand and apply social constructivist theory by valuing cooperative thinking. From either theoretical position, a focus on informing (providing feedback) or asking questions about the writing would be theoretically acceptable instructional options. Again from either position, a focus on directing students, which involves problem-based teaching about a concept or issue inherent to writing or a process of offering concrete next steps, would be deemed unacceptable because these strategies could be perceived as usurping students' authority over their texts. Offering "suggestions" to students, however, theoretically might be considered a more appropriate instructional option, provided that the suggestions did not appear to detract from authorial ownership or choice (see, for example, Straub, 1996, 1997, 2000; and S. Smith, 1997).[14]

Analysis: Instructional context. One can look beyond instructional theory and see other reasons why online instructors may have written the types of comments that they did. The FYE/DEV online instructors, for example, were guided primarily by Smarthinking online instructor training that reiterated and emphasized contemporary

[14] Suggestions, however, might not be recommended by Boothby's (1988) study, which had concluded that online commentary would be strongest if it was authoritative and provided effective guidance.

instructional theory and then suggested ways of applying that theory to OWI. They worked in an environment where specific guidelines existed for complete responses, yet they were encouraged to respond individually to student writing and instructional needs (Hewett & Ehmann, 2004). Further, the FYE/DEV online instructors had received electronic copies of my classroom assignments for context. Indeed, some of them had developed a prior working relationship with me when I had directed Smarthinking's online writing program. Their general familiarity with me and my typical methods of addressing student writing most likely had some influence on the types of responses they wrote to students. Additionally, they tended to "see" the same students on a repeat basis because they were scheduled to conference specifically with students who accessed the instructional service through a license bundled with their handbook. Overall, their knowledge of these students' identities came through the web site's submission form, which made the online instructors somewhat familiar with the material and classroom expectations. The FYE/DEV online instructors also frequently used the online archives for reviewing previous essay drafts and instructional interactions, which is made clear in the content and context of many of the interactions. This kind of familiarity with the students' assignments and writing development may have enabled them to develop a more comfortable, friendly asynchronous relationship—one where they might consider directive prodding and gentle suggesting to be useful alternatives to informing. These contextual suppositions do not, however, account for the low frequency of straightforward questioning that, in particular, the expressivist epistemology values.

The HS online instructors, on the other hand, may have been somewhat more constrained by their students' circumstances. They, too, were aware of their students' HS

status through the web site's submission form. However, the HS students in this study were novel to the university's online writing lab. All of the other students were post-secondary or graduate level. Thus, the level of the students by itself—simply because college-level educators may expect less syntactic maturity and verbal fluency from secondary students—could have influenced these online instructors to be somewhat more directive and even less interested in phatic contact. Further, because the nature of teaching interactions in secondary school can be more directive than post-secondary school, one can speculate that the HS online instructors saw themselves as needing to take a more straightforward, guiding role than in the online setting.

Like the FYE/DEV online instructors, the HS online instructors focused their responses in relation to their students' context. The HS pilot project specifically outlined the ways in which the online instructors could address the student writing. Their guidelines spelled out the types of comments that online instructors might make. These comments included asking clarifying questions, indicating position and type of surface and sentence errors, marking on the essay itself, and providing a key to those markings. On the other hand, online instructors were instructed specifically not to change the student writing, correct the errors, or add/subtract any details. Following their orientation to the portfolio development guidelines, online instructors took an "ethics" quiz that exemplified possible gray areas. According to informal interviews, the HS online instructors understood that they could signal problem areas to students, but that they were not to "correct" student writing or to tell a student how to "fix" the writing. The major category of IU function that they used was inform, which reveals that they abided by this injunction; however, the content of inform IUs also reveals that these online instructors

may have been unsure of how to talk about writing when they were not to give guidance on how to "fix" or develop it. Thus, many of the inform IUs comprised simple pointers allowed by the State's Portfolio Guidelines and that kept the comments within the realm of the "ethical": *"misspelled word"* or *"missing comma."* Other inform IUs included such reflective statements as: *"It seems to me that the main point of your story comes in the final paragraph when you talk about a father's love"* and *"I think your conclusion needs to be revised."* Typical of the kinds of inform IUs found in this study, neither comment provided a student with guidance in specific next steps—that is, neither comment taught students how to proceed. Similar to the questioning techniques of the FYE/DEV online instructors, the HS online instructors asked relatively few questions. Such questions included *"How did this make you feel?"* and *"Did you need to include a thesis in this report?"* The HS instructional guidance permitted these questions.

Interestingly, nearly 18 percent of the HS writing-based IUs were direct-focused, with the imperative function to order, command, or request; when informally interviewed, the online instructors indicated that they worked hard not to direct students in their writing. Indeed, often the most directive of IUs did not indicate specifically how a change should look or how it could be achieved. For example, one typical DWP IU from the HS data was, *"Ask yourself this."* The IU immediately following that direction generally usually was a question like: *"What would a person do in this situation?"* or "*How would you rewrite this paragraph?"* Another DWP IU was *"Consider revising,"* a command often followed by an *inform* IU: *"This is a run on sentence."* These directions tended to function most fully in the context of other IUs that gave the student more information about necessary revision. Other directions included comments like, *"check*

your use of semi-colons" and *"don't overuse similes."* Such directions fell within the Portfolio Guidelines, thus posing no ethical conflict for the online instructors.

In this study, the only IU type that seemed to be problematic regarding the Portfolio Guidelines for the HS online instructors were suggestions because these IUs tended to convey precise ways that students might change their writing. The HS online instructors' uses of suggestions were similar to those of the FYE/DEV online instructors. Examples of the HS writing-based suggestions included: *"You might consider adding some concrete examples or personal stories about getting caught speeding"* and *"Does it have a place in your paper?"* Such suggestions had the quality of leading the student to a particular action or next step that, generally speaking, the HS online instructors were restricted from addressing in their comments overall. In a way, the suggest IU allowed those specifics to "sneak out" under the guise of conditional statements and rhetorical questions; in other words, it enabled a sort of teaching denied especially by the prohibitions of the HS guidelines for response, indicating a communication intention of indirection in a setting where straightforward instruction was prohibited.

Focus of Consciousness

Finally, tables 11 – 13 present three ANOVAs, significance levels, means, and standard deviations relative to the instructors' choice of IU focus of consciousness (content, form, process, context, and reference), which were primarily writing-focused, and phatic language. The statistical post-hoc differences are described in the notes.

Tables 8, 9, & 10: Writing- and Phatic-Focused IUs

Table 8: ***ANOVA on FYE CFXPRH***

C		F		X		P		R		H	
M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
2.04	1.04	2.07	1.10	1.26	.71	2.80	1.32	.61	.39	1.23	.29

Note. F (5, 366) =47.66, $p < .001$. Every group differed from each other statistically, except for C and F, and X and H.

Table 9: ***ANOVA on DEV CFXPRH***

C		F		X		P		R		H	
M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
1.91	1.11	2.06	1.00	1.44	1.01	3.83	1.65	.84	.59	5.59	3.25

Note. F (5, 126) =24.56, $p < .001$. At the p =.05 level: P, H >C, F, X; P > R; P < H

Table 10: ***ANOVA on HSC FXPRH***

C		F		X		P		R		H	
M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
1.49	.82	1.89	1.00	.72	.29	1.21	.43	.26	.27	.78	1.13

Note. F (5, 294) =31.60, $p < .001$. At the p =.05 level: C >X, R, H; F>X, P, R, H; P> R; H > R.

Studying focus of consciousness offered a measure of to what degree online instructors concentrated on particular writing issues in their commentary and feedback, which is another indication of communicative intention. One natural point of comparison is between the FYE/DEV online instructional foci. Because these online instructors came from the same teaching population, it is not surprising that the IU distribution is similar. There were notable differences in communication intention between the FYE/DEV and HS groups, however, as this analysis shows, and as I discuss from most to least frequent.

Process. Unlike Gere & Abbott (1985), Hewett (1998), and Moser's (2002) studies, with both the FYE/DEV online instructors, the statistically most frequent focus of consciousness regarded writing process, where they primarily informed, suggested, and directed (with few questions) about such writing processes as how the writing moves readers from point to point and methods for revising. The HS process-focused writing-based IUs were third most frequent for their population, and they informed, directed, suggested, and elicited in that order.

IUs about writing process provide or supplement classroom instruction on both general writing processes and those specific to individual essays or writing problems. For example, a common type of IWP IU feedback addressed student writing process in a praising, affirmative manner: *"Beyond that, you've also written this very well, // with a distinctive, intelligent voice that readers will hear as they read."* This example demonstrates two different IWP IUs, both of which offer praise. Hewett (2005) found that despite other potential benefits of praise, there was no evidence of revision connected with it. The first IU simply states that the essay is well written, while the second one addresses a slightly different aspect of the writing process, which is the general reader response that the writer has achieved with the online instructor (and presumably will achieve with other readers). In the second IU, the online instructor stands in for a more general readership, a common practice among instructors who teach with attention to audience.

Suggestions also focused strongly on the writing process. For example, online instructors often suggested methods for proofreading the writing (e.g., *"To catch these mistakes, you can try reading your essay out loud to see if it "sounds right")*, or they

simply applied suggestions to urge the student to revise (e.g., *"and [I] am sure you will do fine with some revision*"). When the online instructors directed students about the writing process, often these directions began with the words "remember" or "consider" and, generally, they concerned common revision processes like proofreading or editing. Examples of DWP are: *"Remember to check your other examples!"* and *"Here, too, take the time to re-read."* Few questions addressed the writing process (EWP): *"Have you looked back at some of your earlier submissions and compared them to what you do now?"*

Form. The second most frequent IU focus of consciousness for FYE/DEV online instructors was form; for the HS online instructors, form by far was the statistically most frequent IU. Formal writing-based IUs involve such aspects as structure, length, tone, thesis/assertion, organization, and transitions, as well as the surface issues most commonly associated with editing writing (e.g., addressing run-on sentences, fragments, comma problems, and punctuation). Both FYE/DEV online instructors informed students about their writing form more often than they directed, elicited, or suggested about form. The HS online instructors informed about form less frequently, but they directed and suggested about form more frequently than the FYE/DEV; HS coders found only one form-based question.

IWF IUs primarily functioned to teach students what formal issues and errors looked like and then provided concrete ways to address them. For example, a common IWF IU would address introductions and/or conclusions: *"Your opening is terrific. [IWF]. . . your conclusion sounds a little too apologetic [IWF]."* In the second IU, the comment concerns two formal elements—both the conclusion and the writer's tone. In

the FYE/DEV online instruction, these types of formal comments occurred roughly as frequently as those of surface-level formal issues. Examples of this second type of IWF IU included both praise statements (e.g., *"This is the right use of the possessive!"*) and instructive ones (e.g., *"You have a few comma splices (or run-ons) in your essay. // Run-ons are independent clauses that are incorrectly joined.")*. Like the FYE/DEV online instructors, the HS online instructors informed students about their writing form the second most frequently; however, the comments differed strikingly in purpose. The FYE/DEV online instructors tended to use these IUs primarily to teach students how to recognize formal issues and errors, as well as to provide concrete ways to address them, while HS generally used IWF IUs merely to signal that a problem existed (e.g., *"run-on!"* or *"fragment"*). This tendency most likely was connected to the HS online instructors' belief that they were prohibited ethically from giving too much information about the writing; when asked in a post-study survey, they claimed that their intention was to inform rather than to direct a change or to "give the answer," as I discussed above. Examples of other form-focused writing IUs are: *"Perhaps your story could follow the chronology of his life?"* [SWF]; *"Because you are changing direction in the next sentence (IWP), you should start a new paragraph."* [DWF]; and *"Which [tense] do you think is better here?"* [EWF].

Content. Content was the third most frequent IU focus of consciousness for FYE/DEV online instructors and the second most frequent for HS. Content-focused comments concerned what was in the text at the time of instruction, what could be in the text in its future, and what should not be in the text at all. The FYE/DEV online

instructors primarily informed students about their content, then suggested, elicited, and directed, in that order.

Informing about the writing content [IWC] most commonly took the form of restatements of what was in the text and often were general comments about the text as a whole. For example: *"You give a good, broad view of Carrey's life and talents"* and *"By using the comma after lyrics, [IWF] you make it seem as if all lyrics deal with violent subjects."* Suggestions were the second most frequent type of *content*-focused writing-based IU. SWC IUs seemed designed to prod writers to look at new content or different ways to phrase current content: "*Aren't you overstating the position of the other side by inserting "all" here?"* Interestingly, in the *content*-focused IUs, questions were more frequently used than directions, a reversal that may be linked to the nature of idea-based versus text-based comments. EWC IUs tended to ask questions that sought more detail about statements made in the text (e.g., *"Is he [the cited source] referring to serious roles or comedic ones?"* or *"What do you mean here?"*). Finally, DWC IUs, which represented the least frequently used linguistic function regarding content, directed some aspect of the content. Examples include: *"Work on expanding the ideas in your sentences,"* or *"Focus on picking one particular aspect of the media to discuss."*

Context. Writing-based IUs with context as their focus of consciousness occurred fourth most frequently for all three online instructor groups. Like content, context is another idea-based focus of consciousness. Unlike content IUs that concern subject matter that is, could be, or should be in the text, context IUs concern the ideas with which the writing is, could be, or should be addressing. The line of demarcation between content and context is fine, but important all the same. Context concerns the assignment

itself, background ideas and issues, research and sources, and as-yet unused evidence. In short, context includes the less specific nature of *ideas*, such as what one thinks about issues or what one had *in mind* when writing and to definitions of general ideas, such as "common knowledge," as well as the nature of the assignment itself. Context-focused IUs may hold the key to generating and developing ideas among writers in peer response groups (Hewett, 1998, p. 154) and in online instruction, as well, a potential that Moser (2002) apparently misunderstood but that Gere (1982) and Gere & Abbott (1985) left open to possibility in their original definition of context. IWX IUs provided feedback about a student's used research sources (e.g., *"Your resources help support your views, // and that's a big help to your paper."*) or discussed a student's ideas as they applied to the topic and/or assignment (e.g., *"This [idea] actually reflects poor environment // which is related [to bullying], // but not on the target you start with."*).

Like the content-based IUs, elicit (EWX) IUs exceeded those that directed the context. For the FYE/DEV online instructors, they also exceeded suggest (SWX) IUs, which was unusual in this study; the opposite was true for the HS online instructors. EWX IUs enabled online instructors to ask students about ideas in a straightforward manner. The context of the writing was, perhaps, the one area about which online instructors did not have more knowledge than the students. Such IUs included questions like "*Does anyone say that <u>all</u> violent children can be accounted for in just one way?" and "Does that mean that this side supports the opposition, too?"* SWX IUs addressed context less straightforwardly than EWX IUs, so it is interesting that they occurred less frequently. These IUs, like most *suggest* IUs, tended to push politely for a particular action. For example, at the end of commentary about conclusion text that introduced

entirely new material, one online instructor said, *"Again, probably best to leave that argument for a future paper."* In another instance, an online instructor prompted the student to check out MLA style information with the professor: *"I am sure [your instructor] can help you if necessary."* Finally, DWX IUs were very rare; most often, they addressed the assignment or resources in a very general way (e.g., *"Check MLA Format for your citations"*) or provided praise in an imperative manner (e.g., *"Hold on to that skill as you develop as a writer!"*).

Reference. The fifth focus of consciousness, reference, occurred the least frequently in this study. Writing-based IUs that address reference reflect interaction between participants or with the text; they either responded in a straightforward and personal manner to the writer's text (as opposed to the generalized "reader-response" of process IUs) or they referenced (repeated or echoed) the text or previous archived instructional interactions. Reference IUs were relatively infrequent in this study, but their importance seems clear: reference IUs reveal interaction between participants or with the written text or tutorial. The exceptionally low frequency of HS reference-focused IUs reveals the apparently non-interactive nature of the HS asynchronous interactions, leading to natural questions about why such was the case: was it because of the beliefs and attitudes of particular online instructors, their specific high-stakes context, the actual secondary school level in which they worked, or some other factor/s? According to Hewett (1998), in an asynchronous instructional environment, reference IUs may serve to connect the participants as much as or more than phatic IUs, and therefore their presence and absence warrant further study.

In all three online instructor groups, IWR IUs were the most frequent of reference IUs; indeed, they represented nearly the entire 1% of the HS reference-focused writing-based IUs. One example of IWR affirmed the student's writing and was written after an especially clear thesis sentence: *"I now know just how you will approach the essay."* This next example provides a contrast between an IWR IU offering a personal response and an IWP IU that offers general reader-response: "*Nice! [IWR] I can tell this paper is going to be fun to read, [IWR] and your readers will feel the same way" [IWP]*. DWR IUs occurred much more frequently than EWR IUs, while few SWR IUs occurred in the study. An example of a DWR IU is, *"Also, keep in mind that you promise here to tell about other ways to punish criminals"*; this comment referred the student to a statement she had made earlier in her essay. An example of an EWR IU is, *"How would you answer the people who say you are making too big a deal about this issue?"* This is an interesting example because it arguably could be coded as an IU that elicits about the writing process in its concern about reader response. Indeed, many IUs with a reference or response function could be coded within another category; often, the coders believed that the other category superceded reference. However, in this case, the online instructor most seemed to be eliciting a *response* from the writer, in essence asking, "What counterargument would you write in response to people who disagree?" Finally, SWR IUs, as I have explained, were extremely rare in this study. The following example may show why they were so rare: *"I'm not sure I'm convinced that what you witnessed here qualifies as concern to prevent a future murderer?"* This IU is a classic example of the *suggest* IU where form (interrogative/imperative) and function (direction) do not match. In a round-about and polite way, the online instructor seemed to be saying: "Personally,

I'm not convinced. Convince me"; most online instructors, however, expressed such personal responses using less ambiguous language.

Analysis: Communication intention. The data indicate that the online instructors for FYE/DEV students responded most often to student writing with process-based IUs; the frequencies of form- and content-based IUs were roughly equal. The online instructors for HS students responded most frequently with form-, then content-, and then process-based IUs. Context- and reference-based foci of consciousness were fourth and fifth in frequency for all the online instructional data. Similar to the writing-based IUs overall, a primary theoretical reason for these findings appears to reside in issues of ownership and authority found contemporary notions of expressivist and social constructivist theories. As I discussed earlier, both the FYE/DEV and HS online instructors expressed concerns about taking over student writing and about the ethics of giving them too much information. One can partially explain—or at least explore—the prevalence of process-focused IUs (especially those that inform and direct), as well as the relatively high frequencies of content- and form-focused IUs by the idea of appropriation.

"Appropriation" is a word that composition and writing center professionals often use to represent a negative act; such use may have originated to some degree with N. Sommers' (1982) seminal essay "Responding to Student Writing" (see also N. Sommers, 1980). Along with Brannon and Knoblauch (1982), N. Sommers studied teacher commentary and student revision (see also Knoblauch and Brannon, 1981) in an attempt to understand "how our theory squares with teachers' actual practice" (p. 149). In this article, Sommers stated that "teachers' comments can take students' attention away from their own purposes in writing a particular text and focus that attention on the

teachers' purpose in commenting"; in other words, teachers appropriate student text "particularly when teachers identify errors in usage, diction, and style in a first draft and ask students to correct these errors when they revise," which gives a disproportionate importance to surface errors at the wrong part of the writing process (pp. 149, 150). North (1984) echoed these concerns in his canonical article, "Training Tutors to Talk about Writing." He noted as the "greatest bugbear" of novice tutors the need to "master in tutoring an appropriate sense of control, an ability to identify and promote direction without taking over from the writer" (pp. 437-8). His use of the adjective "appropriate," a verb for N. Sommers and many since her, is meant to address "control of a dictatorial kind" that "is fairly easy to exert" (p. 438). Contemporary composition instructional theory and practice frequently defines appropriation in the sense of taking away student autonomy and dictating control. I think that this definition leads to a kind of wariness about their language when instructors try to teach students exclusively through written text (see, for example, Straub, 2000; Greenhalgh, 1992).

In this sense, process as a focus of consciousness may have provided a comfort zone for the online instructors. They worked within the boundaries of a process-based pedagogy and their relationship with students was one where students would expect some proficiency above their own regarding writing processes. Apparently, the online instructors did not abuse this pedagogy. They informed students about the writing process most often, and they suggested more often than they directed (or, in the case of the HS online instructors, nearly as often). However, many suggestions are, in fact, indirect imperatives (non-straightforward and infused with overt politeness); thus, one may consider the online instructors to have directed regarding process quite often. Possibly,

their roles as writing authorities in the online setting supported taking more personal authority with writing process-focused issues than with other foci of consciousness.

Similarly, content-focused IUs probably would seem appropriate to the online instructors. Most had some familiarity with the assignment or, at least, with the subject matter. As educated individuals, most probably would have felt competent to respond to content. However, the online instructors did not assume much familiarity with content; instead, they primarily informed or reiterated what they saw in the existing content.

A different sense of appropriation is one found in linguistic (Mortensen, 1992) and some composition studies (Spiegelman, 1998; Hewett, 1998, 2000; Hewett & Ehmann, 2004). In this sense of the word, writers who collaborate—as they are expected to do in peer writing groups—may "read their essays aloud, and often they appropriate sections of each others' texts and refigure them in their own papers" (Spiegelman, p. 250). Indeed, Hewett (1998) was able to classify such appropriations in a systematic way as direct, intertextual (imitative and indirect), or self-generated (p. 164). This investigation indicates that it may be helpful, especially when developing pedagogy specific to online conference-based settings, to reconceive the notion of appropriation as a suitable action when writing is shared between online instructor and student, as well as among peers. Indeed, it may be similarly helpful to share such a reconception openly with professional development and student preparations for online educational settings.

Here it is worthwhile to consider the relative scarcity of context-focused writing-based IUs. Context IUs address ideas, but they do so more generally and globally than content-based writing based IUs. Although it is of limited value, Hewett's (1998) study partially confirms the results of this analysis. In that study, when students talked to each

other about their writing using an asynchronous bulletin board, they used less context-focused language than they did when in the oral environment. The results suggested that abstractive language that focuses more generally on ideas and global thinking might be more challenging to engage in the asynchronous CMC environment of that study (p. 154). The results in this study seem to support that finding, especially because the interlocutors under review here were college-level instructors and not students. One might expect instructors who are schooled in the world of global ideas and idea generation to display a comfort level with idea generation in both the online and the oral environment. Following this reasoning, one might expect a lesser comfort level from students in any instructional setting. However, the online instructors—particularly those for the HS students—wrote remarkably few context-based IUs. Educators should wonder why and should consider the degrees to which developing ideas asynchronously is possible and/or preferable in the asynchronous instructional environment; additionally, they should develop specific strategies for effective asynchronous idea development. It seems especially important to develop a picture of context IUs in this study of asynchronous OWI—in part because synchronicity may influence an online instructor's ability to talk with students about contextual issues.

Similarly, the relative lack of reference-focused writing-based IUs may be result from the generally disconnected nature of asynchronous instruction. Although there can be an impersonal nature to asynchronous instruction, where writer and reader/instructor often have not met face-to-face, there also is a relative safety in such anonymity. It seems clear that to the degree one wants to be more connected in the asynchronous environment, one needs to reach out more deliberately through phatic contact and, as this

study demonstrates, through reference-focused language that offers personal responses and refers directly to the written text and previous instruction.

Analysis: Instructional context. I have left the discussion of form-focused writing-based IUs until last because these IUs represent a complex issue in asynchronous OWI. For the HS online instructors in particular, addressing formal issues seemed to be an ethically dicey proposition, at least by the defined boundaries of the HS Portfolio Guidelines. For the FYE/DEV online instructors, their training had required that they respond to content issues before surface ones, a goal that they clearly worked to meet. In either case, generally-acknowledged contemporary theory and pedagogy eschews a focus on form over content and process. Thus, it is very interesting that overall the online instructors offered so many comments regarding form, and that the HS online instructors in particular directed about form as frequently as they did given their explicit prohibition against "fixing" surface features or giving the student too much information about editing. The following are possible explanations for the more intense focus on form and process in this study's teaching interactions (and the concurrent less intense focus on content and context).

First, the type of asynchronous teaching interaction in this study—a tutorial written by teachers unknown to these students—did not encourage content-development on a high level. Students were responsible for describing their assignments and what they wanted from the interaction. Few HS students explained their assignments beyond naming a genre, which might inhibit an outside instructor/tutor from venturing too deeply into idea-constructive waters. Students presented their drafts as drafts, but they tended not to ask for comments about improving, changing, or deepening the ideas in the drafts.

Instead, they asked about formal concerns like sentence faults and proofreading. This request-based scenario may have led online instructors to offer form-based feedback more frequently than they otherwise might have done. Further, form-based responses would engage the online instructors in areas where they were certain they could be of some assistance, given that they lacked close knowledge of a classroom teacher's expectations for an essay. In this case, the fact that content-based IUs generally occurred second most frequently might be considered remarkable.

Second, the HS online instructional setting in particular led those online instructors just as surely *toward* formal issues as it steered them *away* from directing students. This deep inconsistency created a tension that was difficult to surmount. For example, in their training, the online instructors received photocopied portions of Kentucky's *Writing Development Teacher's Handbook*. The section that discussed the "ethics in marking student papers" included eight questions that teachers might ask about evaluating student papers. Of the eight questions, four dealt specifically with formal issues. The focus on formal issues that the State itself held was made clear for respondents through these questions, and it likely encouraged the online instructors to focus similarly on formal issues. In other words, the online instructors most likely were doing what they were trained to do by focusing on formal issues.

A third possible explanation is similar to the second. The HS online instructors received copies of Kentucky's holistic scoring guides during their training. These scoring rubrics were used to evaluate final student portfolios as novice, apprentice, proficient, or distinguished. The scoring criteria were divided into six common areas: (1) purpose/audience, (2) idea development/support, (3) organization, (4) sentences; (5)

language, and (6) correctness. The first two areas were idea-oriented, in keeping with the online instructors' secondary focus of consciousness. The third area, organization, certainly is a common instructional focal point. The final three areas, all formal concerns, also are not unusual in and of themselves. Indeed, the examiner prioritization of these formal concerns is consonant with contemporary writing pedagogy, which generally privileges fluency of ideas and organization over correctness, or formal issues. However, the final three areas do comprise one half of the rubric's total focus, and they reveal that fully one half of the outcomes for students were form-based. As such, particularly when combined with the students' own stated instructional desires, these formal concerns necessarily would have required a significant amount of the online instructors' attention.

Summary of Findings Regarding Communication Intention

This study used linguistic function analysis of 119 asynchronous conferences for post-secondary and secondary student writers to outline an emerging understanding of the nature of communication intention in asynchronous online instructional language. The twenty professional online instructors were trained in contemporary writing pedagogy and experienced in traditional, as well as online, education. The study offers, as well, a RAD-based adaptation of the Gere taxonomy that researchers, program directors, and instructors can replicate and/or further adapt to their own educational settings. The data shows that the online instructors primarily informed the students about their writing. They also directed, suggested, and questioned the writing in that order. The FYE and DEV online instructors focused their instructional language primarily on process, then on form, content, context, and reference; the HS online instructors focused primarily on formal issues, then on content, process, context, and reference in that order. These data

are somewhat consonant with Hewett's (1998, 2000) previous study of CMC-based writing-focused peer response groups where IUs were the unit of measure. Further, the data generally are consonant with instructor/tutor-training both for these particular online instructors and more generally in contemporary writing pedagogy; their preparatory backgrounds had emphasized some characteristics of reader-response, expressivist, and social constructivist theories, much like the Moser's (2002) study also described.

Critique of the Instructional Interaction Study

This study used an established taxonomy and methodology for examining and understanding instructional and student language that occurs in asynchronous OWI-based instruction, which can be adapted in other online educational situations. One of the advantages to such a RAD study is its ability to research a question regarding, for example, a communicative experience's linguistic functions or a writing instructional interaction's focus of consciousness. An obvious disadvantage to such a study is the challenge of developing larger-scale studies using this taxonomy; such time-intensive research may not be encouraged by academic work schedules or research funding. Additionally, this instructional language study's information could be deepened and its reliability improved through promptly conducted interviews that enable students and online instructors to discuss and explain their writing and instructional decisions in context.

While some generalizations about online instructional communication intention seem possible from this study, without appropriate reliability studies that also examine traditional oral (face-to-face) writing instruction, readers should not draw comparative conclusions about online and traditional oral writing instruction from this study. Instead,

readers might see this study as providing a foundation for understanding asynchronous conference-based OWI characteristics in terms of communication intention. In particular, although the Gere taxonomy addressed social language to some degree, this study was unable to account for participant affect or the social ramifications of asynchronous OWI, important elements to consider regarding any educational setting, but especially important for online settings. For example, this study examined phatic instructional language and reference-focused IUs, yet there is insufficient context to fully understand or theorize their relationship to online instructor or student affect or to social connection between or among participants.[15] However, future studies could use the phatic- and reference-focused IU data as a baseline for examining affect overall in conference-based asynchronous OWI contexts.

Future Research

Educators undoubtedly need to conduct more empirical research into OWI. This research project is valuable because it used the Gere taxonomy for studying instructional communication intention in asynchronous online conferences. Its value is compounded, however, because there simply is not enough RAD-based research into online instruction—of any kind, in any setting. Like any instructional modality that is widely used, online teaching conferences require careful RAD and descriptive research into its characteristics and efficacy. Therefore, replication studies are needed to examine online instruction through linguistic IUs, as well as for the effects of such IUs on revision (Hewett, 2005).[16] For example, this discussion implies that researchers should consider

[15] See Moser (2002), which offers some conclusions in those areas, as does research in progress by Ehmann Powers and Stuber (2006).
[16] See also Tuzi (2004) for a similar type of study conducted with second language writers that examines both e-feedback and revision

further the reasons that online instructors commented using suggest IUs, the scarcity of elicit IUs, the minimal reference and phatic IUs, and the preponderance of form-focused IUs in this study.

The suggest linguistic function category is new to this coding instrument. As appendixes 1 and 4 describe, the suggest IU serves the function of an indirect speech act with the apparent intention of providing guidance that does not inform, direct or elicit, yet does all three. How online instructors use indirect speech acts like the suggest IU raises important questions about efficacy of asynchronous online conferences for students. Scholars should examine instructional uses of indirection versus direct speech acts, and they should probe instructional intention and student interpretation of suggestions, as well as consider whether and how suggest IUs influence student writing and understanding of writing.

Context- versus content-based language also emerges as worthy of future study. Educators should consider the degrees to which developing ideas asynchronously is possible and/or preferable in the asynchronous instructional environment; in other words, it is important to advance research-based efficacious practices and reasonable educational outcomes related to idea development in such a setting. It seems especially important to develop a picture of context IUs in online conferences because synchronicity may influence an online instructor's ability to talk with students about contextual issues in asynchronous, as well as synchronous settings (Hewett, 2006).

This study indicates that future research should consider the asynchronous OWI environment as one that requires its own theories and practices—attentive to, but distinctive from, contemporary "traditional" writing instruction theory and practice. OWI

has reached a stage where pedagogical theory should be adapted consciously to address the different realities of asynchronous (and, by extension synchronous and mixed modality) OWI.

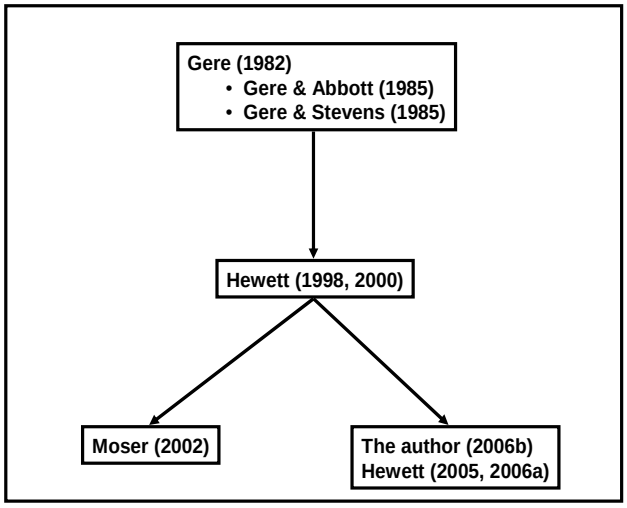
Any of these studies would benefit from experiential questionnaires, interviews, and/or researcher observations to deepen an understanding of affect and instructional intention or student interpretation of that intention. More information about the participants' experiences of particular instructional interactions would be useful. Ideally, student and instructor interviews relative to a particular interaction should occur within a short time period such as twenty-four or forty-eight hours. When face-to-face interviews prove difficult or impossible because of the online instructional setting, they could be conducted either synchronously (e.g., instant message chat) or asynchronously (e.g., e-mail).

Finally, adequate preparation for online settings is critical to useful teaching and learning experiences. Instructor preparation is key to developing consistent, potentially effective conference-based asynchronous online instruction. Student preparation also is key to helping writers to interpret the instructional communication intention and to make use of the instruction in their writing. Thus, future research should address both instructor training and student preparation from these different perspectives. In particular, practice, experience, and further RAD-based research will help asynchronous online instructors to learn what effective asynchronous conferences look like for students of different levels or populations, as well as for individual students. Diverging from such a grounded understanding then can become a purposeful and powerful instructional act, rather than a blunder into potentially ineffective online instruction.

Appendix 1: Genealogy of Gere Taxonomy in RAD Investigations

Figure 4 depicts the relationship among three RAD studies that used the Gere taxonomy to investigate both peer and online instructor conferencing recounted in this paper.

Figure 4: Genealogy of a RAD-based Investigation Using the Gere Taxonomy



Each of the studies that have used Gere taxonomy has verified Gere and Abbott's results despite minor alterations to the analytical framework and the resulting rubric, as I briefly discuss below.

Appendix Table 11: Hewett (1998, 2000)

Category I Linguistic Function +	Category 2 Area of Attention +	Category 3 Focus of Consciousness	OR Category 4 Phatic Language
Inform (I)	Writing (W)	Content (C)	Phatic (H)
Direct (D)	Group (G)	Form (F)	
Elicit (E)		Context (X)	
		Process (P)	
		Reference (R)	

As appendix 1 table 1 (above) shows, Hewett did not make any elemental changes to the analytical tool in terms of the functional categories themselves. However, she did make substantive changes of note to the taxonomy and the rubric. For example, Gere and Abbott (1985) defined the "reference" focus of consciousness somewhat unclearly. They appeared to use the words "response" and "reference" interchangeably in explaining the taxonomy, calling this focus of consciousness category both "reference" and "response" in the sense of designating "idea units referring to previous utterances." Yet, the

appended rubric did not use either term (p. 368; Hewett, 1998, p. 77). Thus, Gere and Abbott had defined "reference" in the *inform writing reference* (IWR) category, as:

> Informs re another IU. This most often occurs in writing groups that give a lot of attention to revision, which leads to comments about how to revise the text. These comments, rather than the text itself, often become the subject of discussion. (p. 382)

Hewett added the following iteratively-developed observations to this definition:

> *Generally, such IUs precede, and often include, comments that refer directly to the content, form, or context of the writing; regarding such multi-functionality, only those statements that indicate direct responses to another's comment or that refer directly to previous comments are considered under this code.* (p. 249).

Notably, this change clarified *reference* as a focus of consciousness category without changing it fundamentally, and it provided the researcher and her readers additional guidance for coding reference-based IUs.

Another change that Hewett made concerned what she called a "discrepancy" in the coding of IUs in the *direct* about *writing* linguistic function category. Even though their results indicate that Gere and Abbott (1985) found IUs that both *informed* or *elicited* regarding the writing *content*, *form*, *process*, and *reference* in their coding (see table 1, p. 370, and the published rubric), they seem to have found only *direct* IUs for *process*-focused talk. Nonetheless, their article clearly shows that they considered the possibility of IUs that *direct* writers about the writing *content* (DWC), *form* (DWF), *context* (DWX), and *reference* (DWR). Hewett noted that the rubric itself indicates that such directive language may have been "collapsed into the focus of process" (p. 76). She expressed curiosity about this phenomenon and provided this explanation:

> At first, I found idea units that seemed to include all of these areas of focus and thus might fit into the process category. For example:
>
> > *But what I'd kind of like to see in a more organized form – format // what could come out of these literacy programs*.
>
> This statement comprises two distinct idea units that initially, I coded as directing the writing processes (DWP), according to Gere & Abbott's rubric. Then, I realized that the first idea unit actually deals with directing the writer's attention to form and the second directs the writer to content. Thus, whereas at first it might appear that the category of process alone encompasses such idea units, I found that I could separate numerous idea units that I had originally coded as DWP into categories similar to those in Inform and Elicit, as their Table 1 indicates the authors tried to do originally. (p. 76)

Hewett's (1998, 2000) published rubric both defines and exemplifies the direct category regarding focus of consciousness. While this attention to direct IUs was not elemental,

the reason it was made actually led to a more fundamental taxonomy change in my current study, as I outline below.

The most important of Hewett's adjustments were those that addressed the textual nature of the peer group talk in the online setting. It was natural that Gere & Abbott's earlier rubric had not accounted for textual talk among peer group members, but Hewett's study needed to be able to compare the language used for talking about writing in both online and oral settings. The rubric required additional delineation and examples to account for the textual talk generated online. Two specific adjustments were related to the lack of face-to-face contact among the peer group members. The first adjustment accounted for online platforms like bulletin boards that automatically post one student's comment to an entire group. In such cases, students need to address their entire groups in their comments or otherwise specify the intended interlocutor. However, in a traditional oral environment, interlocutors can use facial expressions, eye contact, and body language to address their remarks to specific recipients while, perhaps, never using that person's name. Therefore, as Hewett (1998) notes, "students in the CMC groups wrote initial addresses such as 'It's me again!!!' or 'Dear Charlotte.'" She coded such initial addresses inform group content (IGC) IUs because "such addresses are outside of procedures for reading and responding." Similarly, the second adjustment regarded the fact that students who communicated using the online media often signed their names to the messages despite the fact that the platform's template already identified the group, writer, and post time. Hewett noted that such signatures appeared both as simple and humorous versions of one's name, and often were accompanied by emoticons [smile and frown faces: :) & :( ]," which she coded as phatic utterances (H). In essence, since they did not convey necessary content and had a function more like that of a backchannel cue than any other linguistic function, such signatures and emoticons seemed designed to "keep the lines of communications open for writers in this non-face-to-face medium" (p. 80 – 81).

Gere and Abbott (1985) had followed a peer group protocol that emphasized Peter Elbow's (1973) teacher-less writing group in which students had a specific set of rules for orally reading their writing and then listening to their peer's comments. Because Hewett encouraged her students to talk interactively, there were more examples of *inform group reference* (IGR) IUs to add to the rubric. Such rubric changes exemplified that interactivity requires participants to groups to manage the group procedures with particular language choices, and that these choices can produce "off-topic chat" (p. 74).

Examples of minor changes to the rubric include the following:

1. Example language like "briefs" and "counterarguments" to account for the argumentative mode that her students were discussing;
2. Example that accounted for the "less stylized and more interactive nature of the student talk" in her study (1998, p. 78); and
3. Example language that accounted for the coded peer response prompts that guided students initial comments. In particular, these prompts appeared to have influenced

the direction of the interactions and even became a part of the interaction—in both the oral and the online settings (p. 79-80).

Table 12: Moser (2002)

Category I Linguistic Function +	Category 2 Area of Attention +	Category 3 Focus of Consciousness
Inform (I)	Writing (W)	Content (C)
Direct (D)	Student (S)	Form (F)
Elicit (E)		Context (X)
Phatic (H)		Process (P)
		Reference (R)
		Mechanics (M)

In 2002, Moser used the Gere taxonomy to consider the nature of OWI in an online writing lab (OWL) scenario. Her RAD-based case study considered how online tutors talk about writing with students in an asynchronous conferencing session. Moser's investigation of three tutors and three of their conferences in an online setting represents one of the first studies of OWL tutoring, of which she particularly noted that the notion of efficacy in online tutorial interactions must be studied (p. 8). From this work, she outlined the basics of professional development goals and tutor training methods (pp. 43, 120 - 130).

With an apparent focus on social interaction in mind, Moser adapted and altered the Gere taxonomy from its previous forms in several ways. First, she interpreted the foci of consciousness of "form" to mean "format" rather than all formal properties, which led her to add a sixth foci called "mechanics." Moser noted that she wanted to isolate the mechanics because so many tutors seem to focus on them, and adding her data for mechanics to her results for form IUs would yield a frequency that could be more comparable to that of previous results for the form-based IU.

Another change that Moser made came from her misunderstanding that phatic language originally resided in the focus of consciousness category rather than as an alternative to the inform, direct, and elicit linguistic functions as Gere (1982), Gere & Abbott (1985), and Hewett (1998) did. Thus, when Moser altered the taxonomy by moving phatic language to the linguistic function category "because the social exchanges and explanations of writing center work are a part of writing center protocol," she did not see phatic language in its original singular function but as a multi-variable category that could also be coded for area of attention and focus of consciousness. In fact, Moser saw phatic language philosophically as an indicator of social attention and, it may be that she coded language beyond backchannel cues in the phatic category, expanding the notion of what is phatic more so than previous researchers (pp. 75 – 76). This issue should be considered when interpreting Moser's results.

A third, more major change—one that appears to represent a difference of philosophical filter as well as a misperception—involves another focus of consciousness category: context. She cites Hewett (1998) in particular regarding context as a social process, which is a misreading of the Gere taxonomy that seems to be connected to her

attention to the social pedagogy connected to the constructivist epistemology (p. 76).[17] However, Hewett had defined context as IUs that concern the writing situation such as the assignment itself, research into the topic, and ideas that are not yet part of the writing but could be in the future. Consequently, she saw context as a potentially idea-developing foci of consciousness like that of content, and her analysis suggested that:

> . . . speculating and conversing about the hypothetical writing situation in an on-line environment may present a greater challenge than doing so orally. It is possible that the computer medium itself hinders this kind of developmental discussion, leading to a greater chance that students will have to work harder or differently to generate ideas together, or that they might not generate the same quality and quantity of ideas that they could if they were talking orally. Speculative thinking often involves spinning ideas that are fluid and imperfectly formed; it requires an atmosphere of give-and-take and circumlocution, the additive and redundant qualities that Walter J. Ong (1982) associates with oral speech. (pp. 154 – 155)

Indeed, unlike Moser, Hewett saw the more social aspects of the interaction as emerging in the phatic, reference and group-focused IUs.

Finally, Moser's developed two additional analytical frameworks. She called the first one "Interaction" and used it to isolate the tutor's self-monitoring talk and social as aspects of the talk. She folded both emoticons and other non-verbal textual conveyances under a subcategory of "immediacy," which, by contrast, Hewett included in the phatic category as phatic-like communication. Moser called the second framework "Technical Aspects" and used it to consider the ways that the online tutors reading and response techniques, as well as their attention to higher and lower orders of concern. Moser theorized that such technical aspects revealed themselves in directive, cognitive, dialogic, reader response, and collaborative pedagogies. Her triple-coding scheme, while complex and in some senses redundant of the Gere taxonomy, formed a comprehensive set of analytical tools for understanding the nine online conferences of the study.

Table 13: Hewett (2006)

Category I Linguistic Function +	Category 2 Area of Attention +	Category 3 Focus of Consciousness	OR Category 4 Phatic Language
Inform (I)	Writing (W)	Content (C)	Phatic (H)
Direct (D)	Tutorial (T)	Form (F)	
Elicit (E)		Process (P)	
Suggest (S)		Context (X)	
		Reference (R)	

Most recently, I have used the Gere taxonomy in both an asynchronous study (outlined in this paper and Hewett, 2005) and a synchronous study (2006a) of online

[17] Hewett's original read: "CMC talk also is like oral language in that it is context-dependent. Interlocutors cannot understand one another *as* interlocutors without knowing the background and conditions of the conversation; yet, as the prompts generated using CMC demonstrate, comments can be constructed to be independent of the conversation" (1998, p. 153).

writing instruction provided by professional online instructors as tutors. The primary change that I made to the Gere taxonomy involves the addition of a fourth linguistic function that I have called "suggest," a change that required sharpened specificity in the other three linguistic function categories exemplified in appendix 3. I identified this category in an iterative manner, as I realized that not all IUs fit the previous definition of IUs that inform, direct, or elicit (or provide phatic-like connection). For example, *"You might consider adding some concrete examples or personal stories about getting caught speeding,"* is written like an inform IU, but actually pushes the recipient toward a particular revision, which is not unlike a direct IU. In another example, *"Don't you list more than one "aspect" or "question" here?"* is written in the form of a question, but actually seems intended to inform.

Using an iterative process, I returned to the Gere taxonomy's linguistic function category and applied pragmatics to the problem. The English language has one set of terms for *sentence form* and another matching set for *utterance function* (Grundy, 1995, p. 95). The IUs comprising "direct speech acts" (e.g., *inform, direct*, and *elicit*) account for the declarative, imperative, and interrogative forms of English.[18] Each speech act has a matching function: declarative (to inform), imperative (to direct), or interrogative (to elicit). "Indirect speech acts," however, have forms (declarative, imperative, or interrogative) that do not match the linguistic function, which variably could be to *inform* or, more rarely, to *elicit*, but that most often seem to *direct*; I called these IUs "*suggest*."[19]

As I searched the data for potentially confusing or ambiguous instructional comments, I saw that the least clear IUs typically were those that eventually would be coded as suggestions. Many suggestions, of course, especially "if/then" statements that simply are conditional in nature, are relatively straightforward (e.g., *If this is a book, then the title should be underlined; if it's an article, the title should be in quotation marks*."). However, many other suggestions disguise their function in mixed syntactic forms, making them unclear by their very nature. The examples that follow are sample suggestions; I have provided one possible intended meaning (italicized in brackets) that, from an educator's perspective, I think each might convey:

1. You might consider adding some concrete examples or personal stories about getting caught speeding. [*Add some concrete examples or personal stories about getting caught speeding*.]

[18] Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995) also use speech acts to describe and discuss essay commentary. In their case, they consider the illocutionary acts (e.g., assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations) involved in professional journal peer review (p. 67).

[19] Naming this category was itself an investigative process that uncovered layers of nuance. I canvassed a variety of colleagues for a representative linguistic function label. One colleague offered "passive directive" as a term for indirect speech acts in writing instruction. However appealing it is regarding such an utterance's function as a non-straightforward directive, "passive directive" does not seem to be as accurate a term as "suggestion" for conveying the ultimately crucial politeness intention of the instructional suggestion. Nor does that term account adequately for the occasional *inform* function of these linguistic forms. Perhaps through future investigations, researchers will learn whether *suggest* is a singular form of the indirect speech act and whether there are other subforms for which the Gere taxonomy should account.

2. Perhaps you could base your essay on ideas found here. [*Here are some ideas for your essay*.]
3. Could you reword the information in the previous sentence to make it more readable? For example: <u>At John Frederick's funeral, I observed many people, including family members, who came to mourn his death</u>. [*Here is a way to reword your sentence*.]
4. Would it be more logical to put all the description together…? [*It is more logical to put all the description together*.]
5. Can you tell your reader some more about the article? [*Tell your reader more about the article*.]

These comments appear to have one of two primary functions: to tell (inform) or to command (direct) the interlocutor, who is the writer. Comments 1 and 2 illustrate the imperative function, and comment 3 illustrates the declarative. For the three comments that use the question mark, none at its core seems to be an open-ended question—even though one could answer each question in the negative or affirmative. Instead, the questions seem to either inform the writer about a foregone conclusion, as with a rhetorical question (# 3), or politely direct the writer's next steps (# 4, 5). These are types of "indirection" by which a communicative utterance means "something *more* than what we mean directly" (Akmajian, et al, 1997, pp. 363, 350).

Thus, by definition, an IU that suggests may have the grammatical form of the declarative, imperative, or interrogative, although observation indicates that most frequently it is imperative and that forms may be mixed. The functions of the suggest IU are variably to inform, question, or direct by mentioning, introducing, prompting, or proposing an idea or thought. It often addresses specific actions in an indirect manner and without plain expression. The suggest IU is considered an indirect speech act because the grammatical form and its function do not match. Suggest IUs refer to propositions, rhetorical questions, and yes/no questions in which the "answer" seems obvious to those informed about writing. This type of IU, sometimes called a "Socratic" comment or question, functions to lead the participant to a particular action or conclusion. Suggest IUs usually are indicated by the use of the subjunctive mood, conditional statement (if, then), or an auxiliary modal verb with or without a modal verb. Suggest IUs may include adverbs such as "really" and "actually" that modify the statement to make it more strongly suggestive (e.g., *Do you <u>really</u> want to say that?*). These IUs seem to be used when participants want to be polite or want avoid overtly directing the interaction or a writing action.

Appendix 2: ANOVAs by Research Variable and Group

Forty-one ANOVAs were conducted on research variables by group. There was no variation on DTF, DTX, ETF, ETX, ETP, and STF; thus the ANOVAs could not be calculated. The ANOVAs, significance levels, and the groups' means and standard deviations are presented in table 14.

Table 14: ***ANOVAs on Research Variables by Group***

			Group					
			FYE		DEV		HS	
Variable	F	Sig	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
IWC	2.007	.138	6.95	4.72	5.82	4.38	5.42	3.12
IWF[b]	3.820	.024	11.35	6.64	11.59	6.83	8.26	5.90
IWX[b]	7.923	.001	2.94	3.43	1.82	1.97	1.02	1.04
IWP[b, c]	21.109	.001	6.98	4.83	9.14	5.58	2.98	1.93
IWR[b, c]	14.917	.001	2.15	2.18	1.95	1.68	0.42	0.91
ITC[b,c]	15.995	.001	2.68	2.81	3.86	5.60	0.12	0.44
ITF[a]	5.713	.004	0.15	0.44	0.59	.85	0.30	0.46
ITX[a, b, c]	25.319	.001	3.39	1.84	5.32	1.94	2.44	0.93
ITP	3.385	.037	2.32	1.91	2.59	1.97	1.64	1.12
ITR[a, c]	7.354	.001	1.89	1.86	3.73	3.27	1.64	2.04
DWC	1.473	.233	1.24	1.56	0.68	1.17	0.96	1.23
DWF[b, c]	23.856	.001	1.89	2.20	1.36	1.56	4.92	3.29
DWX	1.790	.171	0.29	.58	0.23	0.61	.48	0.68
DWP[a, b, c]	22.976	.001	4.39	2.96	7.77	5.03	2.40	2.04
DWR	3.124	.047	0.13	.38	0.05	0.21	0.00	0.00
DTC	.577	.563	0.02	.13	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
DTP	1.025	.362	1.26	1.80	0.91	1.23	.88	1.12
DTR[a, b]	13.242	.001	0.18	0.43	0.55	0.74	0.00	0.00
EWC	0.304	.738	2.40	2.75	2.32	3.81	2.82	3.38
EWF[b, c]	10.035	.001	0.58	1.03	0.82	0.96	0.02	0.14
EWX[a, c]	5.712	.004	1.98	2.21	4.00	5.30	1.62	1.77
EWP[b]	4.468	.013	0.53	1.00	0.45	0.80	0.10	0.30
EWR[b]	4.841	.009	0.31	0.56	0.36	0.95	0.02	0.14
ETC	0.838	.435	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.14
ETR	1.562	.214	0.08	0.33	0.05	0.21	0.00	0.00
SWC	0.417	.660	2.97	2.57	2.59	3.07	2.56	2.17

Table 14 (Con't): ***ANOVAs on Research Variables by Group***

			Group					
			FYE		DEV		HS	
Variable	F	Sig	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
SWX[a, b]	14.842	.001	1.47	1.86	.18	.50	.22	.58
SWP[a, b, c]	29.087	.001	6.03	4.67	9.05	5.96	1.68	1.57
SWR	2.754	.067	.10	.35	.00	.00	.00	.00
STC	1.790	.171	.05	.22	.00	.00	.00	.00
STX	1.173	.313	.03	.18	.00	.00	.00	.00
STP[b, c]	16.091	.001	.90	1.08	.73	1.08	.00	.00
STR	1.144	.322	.06	.31	.05	.21	.00	.00
H[a, b, c]	46.389	.001	3.87	2.36	5.59	3.25	.78	1.13
Total [b, c]	41.154	.001	74.13	20.57	86.27	28.51	45.36	15.56

Note. df=2, 131. [a] indicates FYE differs from DEV, [b] FYE differs from HS, [c] DEV differs from HS.

Appendix 3: Suggested Guidelines for Separating Idea Units (IUs)

Whether one codes by idea units (IUs) in a formal research study or for programmatic review, it is challenging to determine and set IU boundaries systematically. Yet, some systematic process for determining IU boundaries is necessary to ensure internal reliability, as well as to help coders when utterances defy unqualified codification. Even when an individual instructor is categorizing IUs for self-reflection rather than for more public or wide-ranging purposes, questions of reliability and simplicity arise.

This appendix provides some suggested guidelines for separating IUs when studying both online and traditional instructional language and interactions. These guidelines, unavailable with previously published work that uses the Gere Taxonomy, emerged iteratively from test coding situations, and they guided the coders in this research study. Researchers, program directors, and individual instructors can use or modify these guidelines as needed to fit their own institutional contexts and/or language philosophies.

Coordinating conjunctions, **semi-colons** separating independent clauses, **periods**, or any other **formal break** through punctuation (such as a dash —) to indicate independent clauses **usually signal separate IUs**.

- *It [this sentence] doesn't really conclude what you're talking about here*, [IWF] // *and it introduces a new idea*. [IWF]

Non-restrictive clauses separated either by commas or dashes **need to be coded contextually**. Sometimes they are part of the main/independent clause and are not coded separately; at other times, they reveal examples or text of a clearly different focus of attention. Examples of the latter seem to occur more frequently, as with the following:

- *First, then, // Fred, // see how you can add some details to help catch and maintain your reader's interest in your essay, // then go on to edit and proofread,* {"First, then, see how you can . . . " is one IU [DWP] and "Fred" is a Phatic interrupter [H].}
- *Is location of the cemetery, // or is location being physically near to another person? // Either of these-- // and many other things and spaces-- // would constitute a location.* {"and many other things and spaces" is a non-restrictive clause that is coded separately. "Either of these would constitute a location" is another IU. In this case, each is coded as IWX as they inform the writer about writing context.}

Noun, verb, prepositional, and absolute phrases generally are coded as part of the IU that contains the independent clause's subject that they modify. Comma separations as with introductory clauses generally do not create new IUs for these kinds of phrases.

- *In your essay, you have two areas of focus instead of one main area*. [IWC]

But, **process-based introductory clauses** usually are coded as **two IUs** because the introduction, although it may begin with a preposition or a relative pronoun, relates a dependent clause with a subject and verb:

- *As you write,* [IWP or SWP depending on context] *// think about paragraph strategies.* [DWF]
- *After you write,* [IWP] *// revise your draft*. [DWP]
- *When you revise,* [IWP or SWP depending on context], *// watch spelling*. [DWF]
- *When you get this,* [ITP] // *ask your self if your encomium focuses on supporting the idea that Mario Lemieux is one of the best hockey players ever*. [DWP]
- *As you work on your next draft,* [IWP or SWP depending on context], *do XYZ.*

Subordination

When dependent clauses are separated from independent clauses by subordination, whether in the <u>independent + dependent clause</u> or the <u>dependent + independent clause</u> patterns, each clause is coded as a separate IU. Most subordinating conjunctions fall into this category. Rare exceptions may apply. If unsure, flip the position of the subordinate, or dependent, phrase with the independent phrase; then reread the IUs.

- *You will probably want to take a look at your topic sentences* [SWP] *// once you generate a thesis.* [SWP]
  - *Once you generate a thesis,* [SWP], *// you will probably want to take a look at your topic sentences.* [SWP]
- *When you talk about Lemieux's skills, awards, and legacy,* [IWP] *// you need to use the possessive.* [DWF]
- *Consider revising* [DWP] // *because it gets a bit repetitive*. [IWF]

If/Then statements, as with subordinate patterns, <u>are coded contextually, but generally fit the pattern of separate coding for dependent and independent clauses.</u>

If/Then statements all are conditional and refer to fact, prediction, or speculation about future or past situations. **Generally, their linguistic function is to suggest**, since they work indirectly (e.g., they do not inform, direct, or question in a manner where linguistic form and function match.

- *If you feel unsure about that [previous non-ambiguous pronoun reference], though,* [SWC] // *you could reword it somehow*. [SWP]
- *And if it doesn't,* [SWP] *how can I reword it to sound better?* [EWP]
- *If you have not already interviewed your person,* [SWP] // *consider doing so*. [SWP]
- *If you think your audience would be hostile, for example,* [SWP] *// you might want to use "may"* [SWC] *// so you can say,* [SWP] *// but I am only saying "may" and I have made my case for that!* [SWC]
- *If you want to be absolutely sure you don't have an ambiguous pronoun,* [SWF] *// you would have to recast the whole sentence,* [SWP] *// maybe using an "if… then…" format.* [SWF]

<u>One exception to the if/then rule involves the word "could" such as when the online instructor or writer is explaining what s/he *could* do to follow a line of reasoning.</u> In that case, the phrase might be coded contextually, but likely will be ITC. For example, one online instructor said:

- *If I change this first sentence by adding a dependent clause,* [ITC] *I could get rid of the fragment that follows it.* [ITC]

Another exception to the if/then rule involves formal rules for writing. Often these rules are expressed as if/then statements, but they tend to mean "when X occurs, Y happens. In such cases, the statement is coded as one single IU.

- *If a noun is singular, a pronoun that refers to it must be singular as well.* [IWF]

Nonrestrictive relative clauses, usually separated from the main clause with commas, but occasionally separated by parentheses, usually are coded differently from the main clause.

- *Considering audience, which is part of the assignment, is important to your argument's success.* "[w]hich is part of the assignment," is coded as IWX, while *Considering audience is important to your argument's success* is coded as IWP.

A + B IUs (Compound Subjects) may be coded either as one or two IUs, depending on context:

- *Reading backwards helps to slow your eyes down and make them see what is really there,* [IWP] *// not just what they think should be there*. (A + B, not C, where B is reliant on A for its meaning, and C is a noun group w/o the stated verb)
- *I'm missing the first sentences you included in the other argument* – [IWR] *the ones that let me know what point of view I'm in* [IWP] *// and transition me into the new idea.* [IWP] (C, A + B, where A and B relate different writing processes)
- **Sub-pattern Both/And:**
  - *I would like to recommend that you read your work aloud to find small typos and also to locate passages that sound repetitive*. (Subject (reading aloud) leads to A (finding typos) + B (locating repetitive passages).
- **Sub-pattern Either/Or:**
  - *Were you able to see the entire place because it was large, // or because you were sitting somewhere with a good view?* (Subject (seeing entire place) occurs because of A (large size) or B (good view). Either A or B could be correct, but generally the pattern is not asking about both.

Note: Whether a comma appears before an "and" or "or" or other coordinating conjunction is not the deciding factor for a separate IU. While the comma may signal a possible new IU or even may be "incorrectly" used, only the sentence pattern itself and its contextual meaning will verify the presence or absence of another IU.

Parenthetical expressions (not functioning as non-restrictive clauses) often represent new IUs:

- *I noticed that you use parentheses quite often in the introduction* [IWP] *(9 times)* [IWP]. {e.g., The online instructor uses a second IU to clarify and/or emphasize how many times the student used parentheses.}

Examples:

Examples can appear in individual statements or grouped into one sentence. However, when separated by lines, parentheses, bullets, numbers, or other boundary markers, a series of examples is coded by separating each example to reflect individual examples and typically would not be grouped as a class.

Numbers:

When numbers are used as part of a list, these are counted as one set of numbers per list per paper or tutorial. If lists are used more than once, then that amount of lists will equal the "numbers" counted for that tutorial. In the following example—(1) *do ABC,* (2) *then DEF,* (3) *then GHI,* and (4) *finish with JKL*—the parenthetical numbers would be counted as one separate IU for that entire list.

Stacked Phrases:

- When talk is written with many phrases and/or stacked phrases within one sentence boundary, breaking down the IU may be more challenging. In such cases, recall the rules from above and break down the stacked phrases to code first the IUs as individual units and then the intended meanings. For example, see below:
- Online instructor: *First, then, // Fred, //* [H] *see how you can add some details to help catch and maintain your reader's interest in your essay, // then go on to edit and proofread, // paying extra attention to your punctuation choices, // to prevent reader stumbling and to prevent sentence fragments.*
  - To code this example, look at the break down of verbs: First, then, (Fred **[H]**), see how you can add some details to help catch and maintain your reader's interest in your essay, **FIRST DO X.** // then go on to edit and proofread, **THEN DO Y.** // paying extra attention to your punctuation choices, **PAY ATTENTION TO Z.** // to prevent reader stumbling and to prevent sentence fragments. **Z DOES A AND B.**
  - The prepositional phrase at the end of this series of clauses can be confusing. In this case, consider the preceding IU in conjunction with the prepositional phrase: "**pay attention to Z to accomplish A and B**, and note that **"To accomplish A and B"** comprises a dependent clause.
  - Flipping the clauses around, we get: **"To accomplish A and B, pay attention to Z.** According to these IU breakdown guidelines, then, an independent and a dependent phrase are coded separately, thus justifying the breakdown of the above example.
- Online instructor: *It may help to think about the old adage, "show, don't tell": // in an essay that tells, we simply are told this happened, then that happened, then that happened, and that was it. // In an essay that shows, on the other hand, we get to see people moving and talking and we get to see scenery and background and we can even conjure taste and touch and smell with words!*
  - Recall that sentence boundaries and "proper" sentences are not always good markers of IUs. Generally, such boundaries help the coder, but meaning must be accounted for in IUs.
  - In this case, after the colon, there are two single IUs. The first informs about the parameters of an essay that "tells" (IWF), and the second informs about an essay that "shows" (IWF).

Appendix 4: Asynchronous Idea Unit (IU) Rubric

Category 1 (Linguistic Function)

Inform
An IU that *informs* has the grammatical form of a declarative (subject + verb order). Its matching function is to describe, assert, tell, state, restate, evaluate, and/or judge something (among other possible declarative functions). The declarative is considered a direct speech act because the form and function match. The *inform* IU categories are used when an IU tells the participant something about either the writing or the tutorial itself. Often, it is used to teach a point or to explain a problem. An example is: Your paragraph needs to be expanded. Talk that praises students seems to use "Inform" IUs.

Direct
An IU that *directs* has the grammatical form of an imperative (no overt subject, or with a stated second person subject). Its matching function is to order, command, or request. The imperative is considered a direct speech act because the form and function match. The *direct* IU categories are used when an IU tells the participant to do a particular action regarding either the writing or tutorial itself. The preverbal word "please" is grammatical only where the function is to order or request; thus, "please" signals a *direct* IU. Examples are: Expand your paragraph, and Please expand your paragraph. Talk that "corrects" seems to use either "Direct" or "Suggest" IUs.

Elicit
An IU that *elicits* has the grammatical form of an interrogative (verb + subject order, with some exceptions). Its matching function is to ask a question. The interrogative is considered a direct speech act because the form and function match. *Elicit* IUs refer to open-ended questions that do not imply the response in the question itself. Such questions may be written with or without a question mark and may or may not have a "question" word at the beginning of the IU. However, questions that belong to the *elicit* category tend to use "who," "what," "when," "where," "why," or "how" in the IU itself. An example is: How can you expand your paragraph? Talk that expresses confusion seems to use "Elicit" IUs.

Suggest
An IU that *suggests* may have the grammatical form of the declarative, imperative, or interrogative, although observation indicates that most frequently it is imperative and that forms may be mixed. The functions of the *suggest* IU are variably to inform, question, or direct by mentioning, introducing, prompting, or proposing an idea or thought. It often addresses specific actions in an indirect manner and without plain expression. The *suggest* IU is considered an indirect speech act because the grammatical form and its function do not match. *Suggest* IUs refer to propositions, rhetorical questions, and yes/no questions in which the "answer" seems obvious to those informed about writing. This type of IU, sometimes called a "Socratic" comment or question, functions to lead the participant to a particular action or conclusion. These IUs may be related to the authoritative quality suggested by the instructor/student or tutor/tutee relationship,

especially where the tutors are acknowledged professionals; further study is needed to see whether peer tutorials engage similar dynamics. *Suggest* IUs usually are indicated by the use of the subjunctive mood, conditional statement (if, then), or an auxiliary modal verb with or without a modal verb. *Suggest* IUs may include adverbs such as "really" and "actually" that modify the statement to make it more strongly suggestive (e.g., *Do you really want to say that?*). These IUs seem to be used when participants want to be polite or want avoid overtly directing the interaction or a writing action. An example is: Can you expand your paragraph? Talk that corrects seems to use "Direct" or "Suggest" IUs.

Category 2 (General Area of Attention)

Writing

In this taxonomy, *Writing* (W) provides one of two possible second letters in a coded IU. IUs that address writing content, form, process, context or that refer to the writer's writing specifically are coded using the *writing* category. An example is: A thesis is a one-sentence statement of your main idea.

Tutorial

Tutorial (T) provides the second of two possible second letters in a coded IU. IUs that address tutorial content, form, process, context or that refer to the tutorial specifically are coded using the *tutorial* category. An example is: I was told that each [essay] submission, including revised drafts, counts as a separate submission.

Category 3 (Focus of Consciousness)

Content

In this taxonomy, *Content* is one of five possible foci of consciousness. *Content* deals either with what is in the writing or with the non-procedural content of the tutorial itself. Regarding the writing, the focus is on what is, what should, or what could be writing content. *Content* addresses the question: *What should I put in my essay?* Regarding the tutorial, *content* deals with tutorial procedures, contextually necessary greetings and closings, and template or clipboard type explanations and examples that could apply to any writer's concerns rather than to the specific writer's concerns. However, where the template uses the writer's own sentence or words, that IU or portion of the template is coded as [WC] and not [TC]. An example of *writing content* is: But remember that your focus is on TV and movies. An example of *tutorial content* is: This is just a fraction of the possible transitional phrases that you can use.

Form

Form is the second of five possible foci of consciousness. *Form* concerns the formal aspects of writing such as structure, length, thesis statement/s, claims, evidence, introductions, conclusions, audience, reader/writer bias, tone, and correctness, among many others. *Form* addresses the question: *What should my essay look like?* Regarding the tutorial, *form* is relatively rare, but generally addresses where or how writers can use particular parts of the tutorial. Tutorial *form* addresses the question: *What does the*

tutorial look like? An example of *writing form* is: Great topic sentence! An example of *tutorial form* is: My comments are in bold font and enclosed in brackets.

Context

Context is the third of five possible foci of consciousness. *Context* concerns the background surrounding the content, form, process, or reference of the writing or tutorial. Regarding writing, *context* generally refers to three kinds of information: (1) IUs that discuss the writing assignment in general, research resources, or readings useful to the writing; (2) IUs that suggest sources or other evidence (e.g., examples, statistics, anecdotes, or testimony) that writers might employ, but have not yet employed, in the writing; and (3) IUs that provide context, or background discussion, for the writing; such context occurs at the idea level, and may extend ideas to the meta level. *Context* includes the less specific nature of *ideas*, such as what one thinks about issues or what one had *in mind* when writing. It may refer to the writer's intended future actions, as related to the writing content, not process. *Context* also may refer to definitions of general ideas, such as "common knowledge." *Context* addresses the question: *What should I consider when writing my essay?* Regarding the tutorial, *context* generally concerns topics related to the tutorial as a discrete session, as well as outside it in time or beyond its existence as an instructional method. It also applies when the talk turns to joking or off-topic discussion. An example of *writing context* is: Also, I was wondering if any more recent data is available [for your topic]. An example of *tutorial context* is: Thanks for sending this essay in for my comments.

Process

Process is the fourth of five possible foci of consciousness. *Process* concerns with IUs focused on the writing process and those that refer to tutorial procedures. Regarding writing, *process* refers generally to the experience of writing and of writers, to include writing activities or developmental processes. This category includes IUs that reflect on the online instructor's reader-responses as potential audience for the writing. (e.g., As your reader, I think… or Your teacher or another reader might wonder…). *Process* addresses the question: *What should I do to my essay*? Regarding the tutorial, *process* addresses the procedures of using the electronic platform for submitting essays, for using a live whiteboard, when and where to type, and how to use linked resources. An example of *writing process* is: You do a good job of explaining the alternatives in a situation like this. An example of *tutorial process* is: I'll send you a hyperlink to a module that explains fragments.

Reference

Reference is the fifth of five possible foci of consciousness. *Reference* IUs respond directly to individual IUs or *refer* to larger chunks of text, such as the entire composition, or to previously addressed text. Reference IUs are important because they reveal interaction between participants or with the written text or tutorial. They may include an "echo" or repetition of a previous question or chunk of text or situate the response. Regarding writing, *reference* IUs may represent the writer or online instructor's non-instructional response to the writing. An example of such a response is: Wow! That experience must have been hard for you. Generally, such IUs precede, and often include,

comments that refer directly to the content, form, or context of the writing. When faced with such multi-functionality, this code includes only those statements that indicate direct responses to another's comment/text or that refer directly to previous comments. Regarding tutorials, *reference* IUs respond to other IUs related to the tutorial and unrelated to the writing. A *reference* IU could be the first sentence in a comment that reveals off-topic chat; these are comments about comments or comments about the tutorial itself, and not about writing. *Reference* addresses the questions: *What did you say about my writing? What did I read in your writing?* Note: *Elicit __ Reference* IUs do seem to function a bit differently from the other linguistic function categories, however. Regarding writing, an EWR IU *elicits* a *response* to the *writing* or writing process by asking a question about a participant's previous statement. Regarding the tutorial, an ETR IU *elicits* a *response* re what has happened or will happen in the *tutorial*. Examples include Are you ok with making an outline? Does this example make sense to you? A more general example of writing reference is: You sound more confident and assured in your writing now. A more general example of *tutorial reference* is: The same [web] page also has email and phone information should you have further questions.

Category 4 (Phatic)

Phatic

A *phatic* utterance is one that contains no content but serves as a placeholder or back channel cue that keeps open the communicative lines. These mental placeholders seem to occur more frequently in traditional oral interaction and synchronous online interactions than in asynchronous online interactions; they most likely are due to the added spontaneity of oral talk. For this taxonomy, in an online setting, phatic utterances also include phatic-like text such as emoticons (e.g., smile ☺ and frown ☹ faces), which attempt to convey information usually revealed by body language. In the asynchronous OWI environment, this code also includes uses of participant names that are neither contextually (ITC) nor socially (ITX) necessary, second greetings, signing off, and emoticons at any point in the IU. Such communication is not required by some asynchronous platforms, such as the one used in this study for essay tutorials, but participants seem to use them for politeness or to ensure that they have made contact with their readers. In the offline asynchronous questions and with synchronous teaching interactions, the initial greeting with one's name is contextually necessary; however, if a name is repeated within or at the end of the instructional interaction and is not contextually necessary to establish interlocutors, it becomes *phatic.* Some oral *phatic* utterances such as *Hmmm* or *ok* or *thinking* occasionally are typed as placeholders. Another example is: Are you there, David? as used when an online instructor was not sure whether the writer was still connected in a live session.

Code Rubric by Complete IUs (Linguistic Function, Area of Attention, Focus of Consciousness)

Inform

IWC An IU that *informs* re the *content* of the *writing*. If participants refer to sources

and then describe the content or evidence in the writing, this code applies. This code specifies content that is in the writing at the time of the tutorial and DWC or SWC specifies content that participants believe should be in the writing. This code includes general encouragement and undetailed praise, such as "good job" or "nice beginning."

- This is an indicator that many of your ideas are not fully fleshed out or explained. [OI]
- You have a lot of quoted or borrowed material here, // Sunny [H]. [OI]
- It looks like about here you veer away from talking about social standing and into character relationships. [OI]
- I'm not entirely sure where the conflict lies in what you describe here, // and how it relates back to your topic sentence. [OI]
- I'm a little unsure as to the main point of your essay right now: // I can see the underlying issue . . . [OI]

IWF An IU that *informs* re the *form* of the *writing*. Formal properties include structure, length, assertion/thesis statements, claims, reasons, evidence, proposals and counter proposals/arguments, rhetorical appeals (logos, ethos, pathos), introductions, conclusions, audience, writer/reader bias, organization, clarity, tone, style (especially rhetorical uses of language to achieve the desired response from the audience), and correctness. Participants may mention the need for addressing any of these formal properties without elaborating as to content examples. Where content or process is introduced regarding a formal property of the writing, it is coded either as IWC or IWP, as appropriate (e.g., *content* or *process* supercedes *form*). Praise that addresses a formal aspect of the writing is coded as IWF: *This is a good (word choice, sentence, paragraph, essay).*

- Your paragraphs are awfully short;// they are commonly just one or two sentences. [OI]
- A thesis is a one-sentence description of your main idea. [OI]
- It [the thesis] creates the backbone upon which the rest of the essay rests. [OI]
- Run-ons are independent clauses that are incorrectly joined. [OI]
- Great topic sentence! [OI]

IWX An IU that *informs* re the *context* for the *writing*, whether the writing assignment, form, or content of the writing. *Context* in this study takes in three kinds of information: (1) IUs that discuss the writing assignment in general, research resources, or readings useful to the writing; (2) IUs that suggest sources or other evidence (e.g., examples, statistics, anecdotes, or testimony) that writers might employ, but have not yet employed, in the writing; and (3) IUs that provide context, or background discussion, for the writing; such context occurs at the idea level, and may extend ideas to the meta level. *Context* includes the less specific nature of *ideas*, such as what one thinks about issues or what one had *in mind* when writing. It may refer to the writer's intended future actions, as related to the writing content, not process. *Context* also may refer to definitions of general ideas, such as "common knowledge." When separated by lines, parentheses, or other boundary markers, a series of examples is coded by separating each

example as an individual and not grouped as a class.

- Also, I was wondering if any more recent data is available. [OI]
- Failure to do so can result in academic dismissal if your instructor decides to follow up on it! [OI]
- But the assignment was to cover several of our problems. [OI]
- After all, this is an exemplification essay, not a problem/solution essay [OI]
- You haven't watched them [the 8-year olds] progress into teens and adults who will become violent. [OI]

IWP An IU that *informs* re the *writing process*. IUs in this category usually will refer to the general experience of writing and of writers, to include writing activities or developmental processes. This category includes IUs that reflect on the online instructor's reader-responses as potential audience for the writing. Comments by the online instructor or writer about specific revision intentions are coded as DWP.

- One really simple exercise to do is this: // take a blank sheet of paper and write your thesis at the top. // Then, go through your essay and write down the topic sentence or main idea of each paragraph. // Then, go through your list and see if each one supports your thesis. [OI] [Note: the IU is not *direct* because it presents a sample strategy rather than an "order." e.g., *Here is a simple process for writers: XYZ.*]
- You can correct them by rewriting the sentence into two sentences,// joining them with a comma and a coordinating conjunction,// or joining them with a semi-colon. [OI]
- … a reader will expect to see several problems relating to social problems of children. [OI]
- You do a good job of explaining the alternatives in a situation like this. [OI]
- You present yourself as a thoughtful, insightful person, // so your readers will give serious consideration to what you think! [OI]
- A comma after "stubborn" would have helped me avoid that momentary confusion. [OI]

IWR An IU that *informs* by *referencing or responding to* another IU. These comments *respond* to individual IU or *refer* to larger chunks of text, such as the entire composition, or to previously addressed text, and they demonstrate interaction with between participants or with the written text. They may represent the writer or online instructor's personal response to what s/he has read; e.g., the response is not instructional in nature. Generally, such IUs precede, and often include, comments that refer directly to the content, form, or context of the writing. Regarding such multi-functionality, this code includes only those statements that indicate direct responses to another's comment/text or that refer directly to previous comments. The more substantive an IU is, the more likely it will be coded as other than reference/response. For example, "*It was supposed to be about 7 pages long"* clearly responds to a previous IU, but its greater function is to offer substantive information about a formal aspect of the writing, and thus would be coded IWF. IUs like "*A few times, yeah" or "yep"* in response to a

previous IU carry less substantive information and typically are coded as IWR.
Not hypothetical like reader-response, but actual, in real-time response.

- High school sounds like it was a pretty good experience for you, // Justin [H]. [OI]
- You sound more confident and assured in your writing now. [OI]
- I've heard lots of people say similar things about Rowling. [OI]
- I'm missing the first sentences you included in the other argument -- // the sentences that let me know what point of view I'm in…. [OI]

ITC An IU that *informs* re the *tutorial content* except for procedural issues. This code includes <u>contextually necessary</u> (e.g., the name previously is unknown) initial greetings and closings to the writer/online instructor to whom the comment is directed. It appears most often in the synchronous or asynchronous platform where the names are not automatically revealed and, therefore, visible during the interaction. Such a convention is helpful given the online medium's lack of face-to-face contact. ITC also includes template, or clipboard-type, examples drawn from a source other than a student's work, and sometimes indicated by the words "here's an example." Such templates appear to address common writing trouble spots.[20] Where the explanation uses the writer's own sentences as examples, those IUs are coded as IWC.

- Because you don't explain what Roberts' article is about, specifically, // I can't really give you much more specific suggestions! [OI]
- Here is a style tip: [OI]
- <u>Template</u>: Here's an example: // "I went running with my friend we ran four miles." // Here's a few ways to correct it: // "I went running with my friend. We ran four miles." // "I went running with my friend; we ran four miles." // "I went running with my friend and we ran four miles." [OI]
- <u>Template</u>: Remember, a comma serves to join together thoughts that are very closely related, [IWF] // like introductory ideas for sentences [IWF] // (Proud of myself, I stood on the stage.), [ITC] // adding phrases to the end of a sentence [IWF] // (When my turn came, I leaped into the pond, creating a great splash and waves on the still surface.), [ITC] // comments inserted into a sentence [IWF] // (I searched the horizon, fearful, but I saw nothing.), [ITC] // or linking two sentences with an "and" or "but" [IWF] // (I spent the remainder of the day sleeping, but I still woke up sicker than a dog.). [ITC] [OI]

ITF An IU that *informs* re the *form* of the *tutorial*. Such IUs appear to be rare.

- These comments are in bold font and enclosed in brackets. [OI]

[20] Although such a series of IUs were certainly formal in focus, they were coded as IUs that inform re the tutorial content (ITC). This coding decision was made because some IUs clearly were template items that certain online instructors had developed and pasted into the commentary as instructional text; such text generally followed a personalized identification of a problem in the student's writing. The pre-written nature of these comments did not appear to change their impact for students in revision (as studied in Hewett (2005), but such ITC IUs did seem to require a different coding category. Technically speaking, rather than informing about writing form, they informed about the tutorial content, which was that a formal problem had been observed and identified.

- And they appear in [brackets] and bold print. [OI]

ITX An IU that *informs* re the *context* of the *tutorial*. Such IUs refer to topics related to the tutorial as a discrete session, as well as outside it in time or beyond its existence as an instructional method. ITX includes all socially necessary initial greetings and self-introductions, where the platform automatically reveals those names, but the participants greet to meet politeness conditions. ITX also is used if the talk turns to joking or off-topic discussion; however, if there is any content at all related to the writing under discussion, the IU is coded as IWX.

- Hi John. [OI]
- My name is Melissa. [OI]
- I submitted my essay late, // I am taking an on-line course // and my PC has been down. // I am desperate. [W]
- I don't have a current MLA book beside me. [OI]
- Good luck in revising. [OI]
- It was a pleasure reading your draft! [OI]

ITP An IU that *informs* re *tutorial processes* or *procedures*. IUs in this category deal with such issues as where to locate the completed tutorial, how to use the whiteboard, when and where to type (speak), and how to use linked resources.

- I'll send a link to tell you more. [OI]
- I've made some comments in the body of your paper. [OI]
- Then I want to talk about whether you answer the issue you set forth. [OI]

ITR In the tutorial context, an IU that *references* or *responds* to another IU related to the *tutorial* and unrelated to the writing, or it references the tutorial itself. This could be the first sentence in a comment that reveals ongoing off-topic chat. Unlike IWR, these are comments about comments or comments about the tutorial itself, and not about writing.

- Good to see your work again! [OI]
- It's nice to see your writing again. [OI]
- As Amy said in response to your previous essay, [OI]
- I did some checking on the questions you asked, // and I was told that each submission, including revised drafts, counts as a separate submission. [OI]
- You should also know that these comments refer to the sentences that come before them. [OI]
- The same page also has email and phone information should you have further questions. [OI]

Direct

DWC An IU that *directs* re the *writing content*. Generally, this command or request is given by the online instructor to the writer. This code specifies content that participants believe should be in the writing. Hewett (1998, 2000) found DWC,

although Gere and Abbott (1985) apparently did not find these IUs in their data. In online tutorials, DWC IUs often occur in response to the writer's submission requests and indicate content that readers think should be in the writing.

- Consider whether you can add some other consequences to your essay. [OI]
- Work on expanding the ideas in your sentences; [OI]
- Focus on picking one particular aspect of the media to discuss [OI]
- But remember that your focus is on TV and movies [OI]

DWF An IU that *directs* re the *writing form*. Includes the online instructor's directive feedback about formal aspects of discourse/grammar. DWF also includes all of the formal aspects related to writing as listed above in IWF. As with DWC, Gere and Abbott found no specific examples, but Hewett (1998, 2000) did.

- Put your page citations inside the sentences' punctuation. [OI]
- Watch your sentence structure here. [OI]
- . . . check for commas you have left out . . . [OI]
- Double-check to make sure you keep in the present tense when you are talking about the story. [OI]
- Make sure that you continue to connect your ideas to one another with transition sentences. [OI]
- Please remember to cite the sources for your quotations and paraphrases. [OI]

DWX An IU that *directs* re the *writing context*. Although most often the DWX coding applies when an online instructor speaks, it may refer to the writer's intended future actions. DWX also includes instances when the writer states s/he will use an online instructor's suggestion for research or revision, or when the writer indicates having gained a new understanding of the assignment from the tutorial.

- Consider consulting a handbook for a list of transitional words and expressions, [OI]
- Hold on to that skill as you develop as a writer! [OI]
- Check MLA Format for your citations. [OI]
- Use a style handbook. [OI]

DWP An IU that *directs* re the *writing process*. IUs in this category usually will direct re the general experience of writing and of writers, to include writing activities or processes. This category includes IUs that give directions based on the online instructor's reader-responses as potential audience for the writing. These IUs commonly are direct suggestions to the writer about how to change the writing in general. Comments by the online instructor or writer about specific revision intentions are coded as DWP. Direct suggestions for content, form, and context are coded as stated above with DWC, DWF, and DWX.

- Remember to write essays to readers who don't know anything about what you are talking about; [OI]
- Make sure that they support and develop your main idea (your thesis). [OI]
- Your first priority should be to develop a thesis; [OI]
- Keep pushing yourself to explore the story's use of tone and its relationship to

the larger meaning of the story. [OI]
- Tell us briefly. [OI]

DWR An IU that *directs* re the *writing response* by requesting of the online instructor or writer a particular type of response to the writing. These IUs are highly contextual to the talk that occurs before them. Generally, these IUs are found in essay submission forms or as initial directions in synchronous interactions. Apart from the submission forms or the beginning of a synchronous tutorial, DWR IUs seem to be rare within the tutorial itself.
- Look back at your page two [OI]
- Also, keep in mind that you promise here to tell about other ways to punish criminals. [OI]

DTC An IU that *directs* re the *content* of a *tutorial* activity not necessarily related to reading and responding to the student writer's text. No asynchronous examples were found in the data.

DTF An IU that *directs* re the *form* of a *tutorial* activity not necessarily related to reading and responding to the student writer's text.
- Try this sentence. (a problematic example follows) [OI]

DTX An IU that *directs* re some activity related to the *context* of the *tutorial*. These IUs refer to topics related to the tutorial, but outside it in time or beyond its existence as an instructional method. DTX includes directions re off-topic discussion and joking unrelated to the writing but related to the tutorial process or product. No asynchronous examples were found in the data.

DTP An IU that *directs* re the *tutorial procedures*. This type of IU commonly directs participants in when/how to respond, thus keeping the talk lines clear. Like ITP, DTP also refers to the process of using the online instructional platform.
- Please consider submitting it to SMARTHINKING. [OI]
- Consider re-submitting it for more comments. [OI]
- Click on the links below // [OI]
- See my suggestions for revision below and in the attached essay. [Asynch; E]
- See the chapter I have given you the link to below [OI]

DTR

An IU that *directs* re the *tutorial response.* It responds to another IU related to the tutorial but unrelated to the writing. This could be the first sentence in a comment that reveals ongoing off-topic chat. More frequently, such IUs respond to the writer's prompt on the asynchronous tutorial submission form (Help Requested). Unlike DWR, these are directions in relation to previous comments or directions about the tutorial itself, and not about writing.
- Point out any errors in grammar or ways to make the final paper better [W]
- Help requested: contents, transitions, sentence structure, organization [W]
- Just fix it, please [W]

- See notes above on run-ons! [OI]
- Please see my notes in "Introduction and Conclusion" for ideas about organization. [OI]

Elicit

EWC An IU that *elicits* information re the *writing content*. Often asked of the writer when an online instructor needs clarification re the writing or a writer needs clarification re the tutorial. Includes the writer's questions about how the online instructor/reader responds to content. In online chat and tutorials, punctuation often is not an indication of a question.

- Why is this information important? [OI]
- How does it [this information] relate to your thesis? [OI]
- Who is "they"? [OI]
- So how is this example of a problem? [OI]
- Why are you comparing us to other nations? [OI]

EWF An IU that *elicits* information re the *writing form*. Includes questions by the writer or online instructor about how the participant/s respond to discourse/grammar—both in the writing itself and in feedback/comments. Includes, as well, all of the formal aspects related to writing as listed above in IWF.

- What is it that you want to say about tone in this essay? [OI]
- Which [tense] do you think is better here? [OI]
- You have a possessive here, too. [IWF] Can you find it? [OI]

EWX An IU that *elicits* information about the *writing context*. This could be a request for feedback about the writing assignment, or the background for, or intent of the writing itself. See IWX for possibilities re writing context.

- What about the magazine the ad appeared in? // Is that important? [OI]
- Or what can a reader learn from reading this story? [OI]
- Am I implying that you can't or shouldn't reveal Jean Christopher's life? // Absolutely not. [IWR] [OI]
- Have you researched this [subject] area yet? [OI]
- Will your readers know what PTSA stands for? [OI]

EWP An IU that *elicits* information re the *writing process*. These often will be a writer's questions about how to write or revise a composition.

- It looks like you are working to make a general "rule" from a specific incident, right? [OI]
- Have you looked back at some of your earlier submissions and compared them to what you do now? [OI]

EWR An IU that *elicits* a *response* to the *writing* or writing process by asking a question about a participant's previous statement or the text itself.

- How would you answer the people who say you are making too big a deal about this issue? [OI]

ETC An IU that elicits information regarding the *tutorial content* and not related to procedures.
- Does this example make sense to you?

ETX An IU that *elicits* information re the *tutorial context*. This category includes off-topic discussion and joking questions. No asynchronous examples were found in the data.

ETP An IU that *elicits* information about *tutorial procedures*. No asynchronous examples were found in the data.

ETR An IU that *elicits* a *response* re what has happened or will happen in the *tutorial*. These IUs seem to occur most often from the online instructor and using the synchronous platform where a response can occur directly.
- Does this example make sense to you? [OI]
- Can you see if I have clear sentences that you can understand? [W]

Suggest

SWC An IU that *suggests* actions or thinking re the *writing content*. When a *suggest* IU addresses content, there is a quality of a "hint" or coaching in the utterance. These IUs include examples where one of the participants rewords the writer's own sentence.
- You might consider adding some concrete examples or personal stories about getting caught speeding. [OI]
- Don't you list more than one "aspect" or "questions" here? [OI]
- Perhaps you could base your essay on ideas found here. [OI]
- Ok, [IWR] // but is this an example of a problem? [OI]
- Here, for example, you could talk about how the setting influences the message Lawrence seems to be getting across in this story. [OI]
- Can you tell your reader some more about the article, [OI]
- I'd describe one {position} as maintaining that there is a direct relationship between kids and what they see, [OI]

SWF An IU that *suggests* or leads re the *writing form*. It addresses specifically changes that the writer might make re the formal aspects of discourse/grammar and it includes all of the formal aspects related to writing as listed above in IWF.
- Does it have a place in your paper? [OI]
- Can you give some examples? [OI]
- Do the video games really help advance the argument…? [OI]
- Could you replace the pronoun "it" with a noun that reflects your meaning more clearly? [OI]
- This is a sentence fragment you will want to fix. [OI]

SWX An IU that *suggests* re the *writing context* through a comment or question that strongly coaches or leads the participant to a particular action or conclusion.

- I'd also recommend talking with your instructor about ways to bring this essay a little closer to the demands of the assignment. [OI]
- [Since your assignment is to agree or disagree with Roberts' article,] you will want that to be a thread throughout your essay, // and you will want some comment about his article to be your thesis. [OI]
- I am sure that Professor Jones can help you if necessary. [OI]
- (And I may have the wrong understanding about your assignment) [OI]
- Why not give some statistics to back up your claim? [OI]
- You might want to check a style manual for the different ways these words are used. [OI]

SWP An IU that *suggests* or leads the writer re the *writing process*. IUs in this category usually will refer to the general experience of writing and of writers. This category includes IUs that make suggestions based on the online instructor's reader-responses as potential audience for the writing.

- Can you avoid ending your sentence with "is"? [OI]
- Would it be more logical to put all the description together…? [OI]
- Doesn't this state what you want to do in this paper? [OI]
- Can you expand your intro and essay to incorporate others [problems]? [OI]
- Could you pull that discussion together into one paragraph of discussion? [OI]
- You might try reading the draft out loud, slowly, // so you can hear things you may miss by just looking at the paper or screen. [OI]
- If that is the case, I would suggest you invert your current order and talk about the specific incident first, // then go on to discuss general "rules" we can take away from examining this incident and what happened. [OI]

SWR An IU that *suggests* by *referring* to the *writing*. Its purpose is to address another IU using a form of comment or question that clearly is intended to strongly coach or lead the participant to a particular action or conclusion. In the first case below, the student is urged to unify the essay in response to tutorial.

- Once you think you have a more unified essay [SWR] // and you've also considered some of my other suggestions [SWP] [OI]
- I'm not sure I'm convinced that what you witnessed here qualifies as concern to prevent a future murderer? [OI]

STC An IU that *suggest*s re the *content* of a *tutorial* activity not necessarily related to reading and responding to the student writer's text.

- Let's talk about what a good conclusion usually consists of. [OI]

STX An IU that *suggests* re the *context* of the *tutorial* by proposing that the participant do something.

- You might take a look at a style handbook. [OI]

STP An IU that *suggests* re the *tutorial's procedures*. This type of IU commonly coaches or leads participants to when and how they should respond or take tutorial action. Like DTP, STP also refers to the process of using the online instructional platform.

- If you have any questions about any of my suggestions // remember you can visit a tutor in the live writing center. [OI]
- Feel free to visit a tutor in the brainstorming room. [OI]
- I'd like you to review [a link] before you begin revising. [OI]
- Let's look at an outline of your essay and talk about issues you raise. [OI] {Notice that the "let's" statements suggest a collaborative process beyond the asynchronous talk medium}

STR An IU that *suggests* re a *tutorial response* unrelated to the writing. The response itself will be an indirect statement or question rather than a direct response to the question.

- (And I may have the wrong understanding about your assignment) [SWX] // If so, [STR] // then I humbly apologize. [STR] [OI]
- I'd like to recommend that you review the suggestions of past tutors. [OI] [Note: this IU is a judgment call. In addition to referencing previous tutorials, it also suggests a process.]

H Phatic utterance

An IU that contains no substantive content but serves as a placeholder or back channel cue that keeps open the communicative lines. These mental placeholders occur more frequently in traditional oral interaction and are most likely due to the added spontaneity of oral talk. In the asynchronous OWI environment, this code also includes uses of participant names that are neither contextually (ITC) nor socially (ITX) necessary, second greetings, signing off, and emoticons at any point in the IU.

- Hmmm. [followed by "This sentence is not clear."] [OI]
- Jen [OI]
- Well, [OI]

Contextual Coded IU Examples

1. Writer: Can you give me an example? {May be genuine question from the student}
2. Online instructor: Can you give me an example? {Online Instructor is an authority figure and the question now represents the shifted role. This IU is *Suggest* because of the conditional and the online instructor's implied expectation of a response from the writer.}

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