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Tenor Relations in Negotiating Meaning in an EFL Writing Task: Exploring Individual Contributions

Patrick Fulmer

Abstract

This paper presents an analysis of metalanguage-scaffolded small-group workshop talk involving first-year university EFL reading-writing students. The students worked together to confirm or correct their responses to one recall-inference writing task. Successfully completing the task necessitated students' appropriate use of specific English writing metalanguage in their discourse to determine the corresponding paragraph and essay parts of English writing. Reviewing the completed task sheets and discourse transcription of one representative small group's talk reveals that the students engaged in four sequences through which they negotiated the completion of the task. A preliminary analysis of the students' completed task sheets suggests that they made use of the appropriate metalanguage. Equally, the discourse transcription discloses that students "successfully concluded" their confirmation-correction talk to resolve the recall-inference task. Closer analysis, however, reveals that an interpersonal struggle ensued among individual members, the dynamic of which constituted the key factor in driving the task to completion. This paper will present some of the major linguistic features that illuminate the kind of tenor relations at work in resolving this small-group task. It will also suggest that individual student contributions to talk task resolutions may not be readily discernible from reviewing task sheets and tape transcriptions alone.

Introduction: Exploring the Potential of Inviting Student Review of Their Writing Workshop Talk

This exploratory report follows from my previous research effort to delineate the potentially promising outcome of teacher-introduced metalanguage-scaffolded small-group talk on students' developing English writing metaknowledge (Fulmer, 2003a & b). In that trial research, I demonstrated a degree of achievement in students' appropriate use of writing metalanguage as functional vocabulary in their overall metaknowledge building. Students' in-group confirmed or corrected task sheets and their workshop talk disclosed that the five students of the participating group engaged in "shared" teaching-learning and "successfully" completed the representative recall-inference writing task about paragraph and essay structure.

Herein I explore in greater detail the participant roles in this small group's workshop talk to resolve this recall-inference writing task. Closer examination of the students' final revised task

sheets in conjunction with corroborative student review of the small-group audiotaped discourse reveals that considerable negotiation took place in the task resolution talk. Evidenced in the negotiation is a deepening interpersonal struggle among members whose individual contributions to one extent or another proved instrumental in pushing the task to conclusion. Three students whom I suspected did not contribute as much were in fact the drivers of the discourse to completion. Conversely, the two students whom I assumed were leading the discussion actually had almost none of their inquiries responded to or addressed.

There are thus two purposes of this follow-up exploration. The first is to illuminate the linguistic features of the students' interpersonal struggle evidenced in their negotiating the writing task resolution. The second is to illustrate that individual students' contributions to their classroom learning endeavor may not be as readily observable nor as evidentiary to classroom teachers as we might believe.

This research endeavor is supported by several teacher-researcher convictions of our need as classroom teachers to be more cautious and yet more thorough in our noticing and attending to our instructional practices and the student learning we seek to effect. Both Elbow (1993) and Casanave (1995) note that though difficult, classroom teachers need to find ways of "assessing or evaluating" what students are doing in their writing other than simply looking at their writing and task sheets alone. Fanselow (1992, 1997) suggests that teachers need to "really see and see again" in our classroom observations of ourselves and our students respectively at work and on task. Gebhard and Oprandy (1999) recommend more directed inquiry or focused guiding of our participant observation to better refine our instructional practice. Christie (2002) asserts that discourse and discourse analysis are subject to interpretation in the same way as are transcriptions and video records. She points out that even a very careful review and tape transcription remain at best only classroom teachers' interpretation of what we believe we may see and hear students doing. Christie further calls for our need as classroom teachers to collect and analyze far more classroom talk to ensure that measuring the value of small-group talk or the initiation-response-evaluation pattern of the unfolding talk can be done more reliably (pp. 117-118).

In agreeing with these relevant perspectives, I offer this representative example of the potential for greater clarification made possible by inviting participating students to help this teacher-researcher understand more clearly the nature and degree of students' effort to contribute to their learning experience.

Method: Small-group Workshop Talk Procedure and Initial Findings

As previously reported in detail (Fulmer, 2003a & b), I undertook research leading to this third exploratory aspect in an integrated EFL reading-writing class at a private women's university in Tokyo. The participants in this exploration are one participant workshop group of 5 of 24

Japanese students who were in their first year of university study at the time. Students gave both their oral and written consent to participate in this study, and every effort has been made to ensure their anonymity.

The purpose of this long-term action research continues to be to build students' reading and writing metalanguage and metaknowledge to help them function more proficiently in their overseas study program and in their continuing academic work on their return. This metalanguage and metaknowledge building in first-year integrated reading-writing classes is being done through intensive practical vocabulary familiarization, explicit conscious reading strategy and writing task practices, and metalanguage-supported small-group workshop talk.

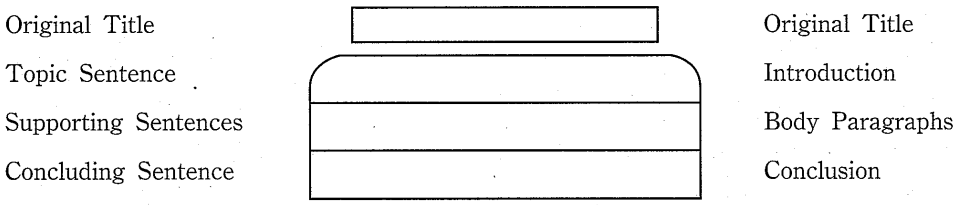
Three principled data sources for this analysis were this group's task-specific pre- and interim-discussion confirmed/corrected worksheets for one representative recall-inference English writing task, audiotaped and transcribed talk of this small-group's resolution of the writing task, and follow-up corroborative student tape review and conferencing.

The recall-inference writing task in this instance was the final question of a 6-question writing activity that made use of a previously taught structural model:

> "Draw a TOPS CAKE below and then write the matching 4 key parts of a paragraph on the left-hand side and the 4 key parts of an essay on the right-hand side."
>
> (Note: As TOPS cake is a popular 3-layered chocolate cake, I use it as one of many structural models for explaining English writing.)

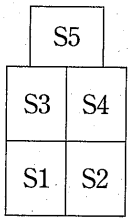
I formulated the task such that students could not successfully resolve it without their recalling paragraph structure, inferring essay structure, using the appropriate metalanguage, and confirming or correcting their practical knowledge of how the paragraph and essay reflect each other semantically and syntactically. The target metalanguage I sought to have students elicit (recall or infer) is reflected in the paragraph-essay metaknowledge construct in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Expected Student Metalanguage/Metaknowledge Response to Q 6



Procedurally, along with their classmates, the five students of this group first worked individually in pencil for 5 minutes to resolve all six questions of the writing task. They then took their task sheets into their talk group as depicted in Figure 2, turned on their audio-recorder, and had 3 minutes to confirm or correct their answers together using any color.

Figure 2. Group 3's Workshop Seating Arrangement



Each student's task sheet provided complementary data sources as depicted in Figure 3: the individually done task and the interim-workshop self-corrections. The audiotaped workshop talk, constituting a 2-minute 15-second moment of the writing workshop group's talk effort to resolve Question 6, is as transcribed in Figure 4 in the verbatim, selectively marked manner advocated by Allwright & Bailey (1991, p. 62), Hubbard and Power (1993, p. 45), and Tannen (1984, p. xix, pp. 32-43).

Subsequently, in line with Allwright and Bailey (1991, p. 73), Brown (2001, pp. 228 & 248), and Hubbard & Power (1993, p. 94), I invited these five participating students and three of their classmates in a number or separate sittings to explore the tape for each student's contribution to the group's task resolution effort. We also worked to ascertain the predominant features of the students' interaction in their seeking to recall or infer the paragraph and essay structure exemplified by the model.

Figure 3. Compilation of Question 6 Task Sheets "Individually done". and "In-workshop self-corrected" Compared

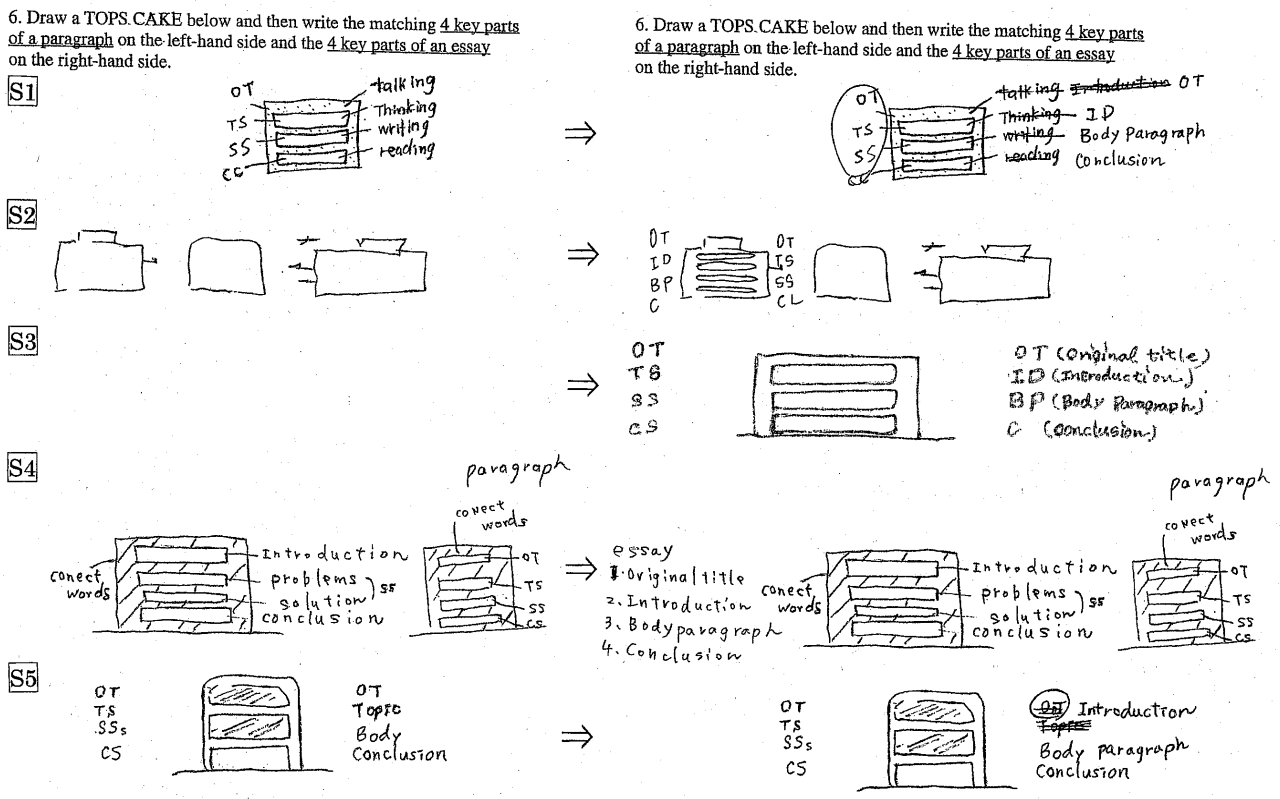


Figure 4. Transcript of Group 3's Question 6 Recall and Inference Task Resolution

Turn	S	Discourse Utterance	Language Function(s)
(1)	S2:	このえが分かんない！　どんどん悪くなってる！	Puzzling & joking
		[*laughter*; S1 & S3: ちがう！ちがう！]	
(2)	S4:	ああ、これさ.... Essay のさ... 2 番めって何？	Directing & asking
(3)	S2:	Essay?	Noticing
(4)	S4:	これさ....	Redirecting
(5)	S1:	あーう！これ　ぜんぜん　ちがう　こと　書いちゃった！	Realizing mistake
(6)	S2:	何かこれ三つ書かれたんだけど！　...ル...ム....	Hazarding
		(*yawns deeply*)	
		[*laughter*]	
(7)	S4:	四 key part of....	Refocusing
(8)	S2:	何　わけ　分かんない　とこ　書いてんの？	Puzzling
(9)	S4:	じゃあ、これ　四つで！	Declaring
(10)	S2:	これ　四つの key part を書けってこと？	Asking to clarify
(11)	S3:	Introduction とか....	Hazarding
(12)	S4:	Introduction, problem, solution....	Continuing by hazarding
		[S3 *laughs*]	
(13)	S4:	分かんない！	Mock giving up
(14)	S2:	Introduction. Conclusion....	Hazarding
(15)	S4:	こっちが essay なん だよね！	Confirming/Reflecting
(16)	S5:	うん。	Agreeing
(17)	S4:	Problem?	Hazarding
(18)	S3:	何だろうね？..... ああ，origi... あっ，title　じゃん！ Title?	Puzzling, declaring & self-questioning
(19)	S5:	ううん。	Disagreeing
(20)	S3:	Title. Introduction....	Self-repairing & continuing
(21)	S5:	Introduction...	Prompting to continue
(22)	S1:	Introduction と ID とか いれる？	Confirming by hazarding
(23)	S3:	...introduction...body...body paragraph....	Continuing
(24)	S2:	何て書いてあったの？	Confirming (looking over at S3's paper) & writing
(25)	S3:	...で conclusion.	Declaring
(26)	S4:	Original title...introduction...	Reconfirming by repeating & writing
		[*coughing*]	
(27)	S4:	あっ，body paragraph だ！	Declaring & continuing to write
[(28)	Pat:	Hookay! If you're finished...if you're fin-.... If you've finished ah 14, please go to 15.]	Signaling
(29)	S1:	うん？	Prompting to continue
(30)	S4:	...conclusion.	Continuing & writing

A preliminary look at the students' discourse (Figure 4) indicated that the students together "successfully" resolved the task of recalling and inferring paragraph and essay structure (Fulmer, 2003 a & b). The sequential instances of metalanguage used as functional vocabulary demonstrated that students followed the fairly expected pattern of stepwise narrowing toward task resolution. Considerable puzzling, pondering and hazarding (risking or venturing a guess) marked the students' mostly L1 talk up to turn 14. Students then shifted to an ever-narrower focus on accomplishing the task from turn 15. From turn 20 on, their talk centered on confirming and repeating the essay structure, enabling them to correct and finalize their paragraph-essay structures.

What follows in Discussion is a closer examination, with student tape and transcript corroborative review, of the tenor relations at work in their negotiating the task to resolution.

Discussion: Corroborative Student Tape Review in Illuminating the Tenor Relations in Their Task Resolution

Post-task corroborative review with selected students of the audiotaped talk and transcript reveals that this small group completed the task principally through engaging in four interlocking negotiation of meaning sequences in which the target metalanguage served a key function. These sequences illuminated an interpersonal struggle among individual group members that served to push the task to completion. Notably, while the inquiry outcomes were rarely successful for students S1 and S2 whom I had assumed were actually driving the discussion, students S3, S4 and S5 unexpectedly contributed more significantly to resolving the task.

In clarifying the negotiation of meaning sequences, I follow Gass and Varonis's (1985, 1991) 4-prime model of a trigger, indicator, response and optional reaction, also explored in Ellis (1994). To facilitate the discussion of tenor relations below, I present these sequences and the transcript in translation.

The focus of Negotiation Sequence 1 is on incomplete understanding for S2 & S1 overridden by S4's confusion, refocusing and declaring. The metalanguage focus here for student S4 is on "essay" and "four parts." S4 starts the sequence by turning to S2 on her left (or "south" in the seating arrangement) and asking S2 to clear up S4's confusion about the middle part of the essay, serving to trigger this initial negotiation from turn (2). S2 responds with her own question, however, repeating "Essay?" (3). At this early point, S4 gives S2 the only response S2 will get during the entire task: "Yeah, here..." (4). At first glance, S4 seems to respond indirectly to S2's indicator "Essay?" (3). Actually, however, she overrides S2's inquiry with her need to clear up her own confusion. She does so because she knows that "problem" and "solution" she wrote as essay parts 2 and 3 on her task sheet are incorrect (see Figure 3). Accordingly, S4 does not respond or offer S2 other-repair to S2's further indicator in (6): "Ya know, I drew three [things] here but...!", but leaves her unanswered. Nor does S4 address S1's first indicator "Oh, I wrote somethin' totally different here!" (5). S4 persists with her refocusing

on her concern: "Four key part[s] of...!" (7). In fact, S2's third query "Why'd you write this here?" (8) (referring to "problem...solution") serves as a deciding stimulus for S4 to declare unilaterally that "Yeah, [there are] four [parts] here!" (9). Notably, the direction of this initial talk is to S4's left or in the "south" of the students' seating arrangement.

Negotiation Sequence 1: Incomplete understanding for S2 & S1 overridden by S4's confusion, refocusing and declaring

(1)	S2:	I don't get this picture! (My drawing) gets worse and worse! [*laughter*; S1 & S3: No, no, not like that!]	Half joking
(2)	S4:	Hey, here.... The essay...what'd he say was the second part?	Trigger 1 (for S2)
(3)	S2:	Essay?	Indicator 1 for S2
(4)	S4:	Yeah, here....	Responds by redirecting
(5)	S1:	Oh, I wrote somethin' totally different here!	Indicator I for S1
(6)	S2:	Ya know, I drew three [things] here but....!	(Repeated) Indicator 2 for S2
(7)	S4:	Four key part[s] of...!	Refocusing
(8)	S2:	Why'd you write this here?	Indicator 3 for S2
(9)	S4:	Yeah, [there are] four [parts] here!	Declaring (Becomes Trigger 2 for S2)

Note: As I present these sequences in translation, I use underscoring throughout to indicate the English and particularly the target metalanguage produced.

The focus of Negotiation Sequence 2 is on continued incomplete understanding for S2, more confusion for S4, S3's first response, and S5's initial encouragement. The metalanguage focus here for S4 is on her attempt to clear up her confusion about the two middle parts of the essay. S3, sitting across from S4, offers S4 one key part of the essay, "Like introduction...." (11). Though the tape and transcript give the appearance of S3 directly addressing S2's question ("I gotta write four key part[s] here?" (10)), S3 revealed in the follow-up review that she in fact offered this initial essay part in response to S4's trigger 2 (9). Here again S4 does not respond to S2 either or offer her other-repair. The exchange continues from S3's prompting with S4 repeating "Introduction,..." and hazarding "problem, solution...."(12) as the essay parts. S3's laughter tells S4 this is not correct, leading S4 to vocalize her indicator more clearly: "I don't get it!" (13).

Once again, S4 overlooks S2's rehazarding of the two key parts of "Introduction. Conclusion...." (14) as she and S3 did with S2's turn (10), and turns instead to her right, or "north," to S5, and asks, "[Pat said] This one's the essay, right?" (15) In positively responding with "Yep" (16) to S4's question (15) as her second indicator, S5 encourages S4 to continue. Noticeably again, S2 gets no responses to her questions/indicators. S2's mounting frustration will

carry to the end of the task, dampening her interest in contributing more to resolving the task.

Negotiation Sequence 2: Continued incomplete understanding for S2, more confusion for S4, S3's first response, and S5's initial encouragement

(9)	S4:	Yeah, four [parts] here!	Trigger 2 (for S2)
(10)	S2:	I gotta write four key part[s] here?	Indicator 4 for S2
(11)	S3:	Like introduction....	S3's response: not to S2 but to S4's (9)
(12)	S4:	Introduction, problem, solution.... (S3 *laughs.*)	S4's hazarding &
(13)	S4:	I don't get it!	S4's indicator
(14)	S2:	Introduction. Conclusion....	Indicator 5 for S2:
(15)	S4:	[Pat said] This one's the essay, right?	S4's indicator 2 (turning to S5)
(16)	S5:	Yep.	S5's confirming response 1

Self-reflection and self-repair exemplify Sequence 3, specifically in the form of continuing confusion for S4, S3 taking the lead in hazarding and declaring, and S5 continuing to offer encouragement. Here the metalanguage focus shifts to S3 hazarding the essay parts, S5 confirming them or offering encouragement, and S4 reacting by writing down these essay parts on her task sheet. Again, S4 knows that there are "four parts of an essay" but intuitively recognizes that "problem, solution" (12) are not two of them. Nevertheless, S4 continues to be both persistent with her indicator, "Problem?" (17), and attentive in her commitment to completing the task. While S3 offers "origi[nal] title" (18), S5 steers both S4 and S3 with "Nope" (19). And when S5 recognizes that S3 is finally on the right track with "Title. Introduction...." (20), S5 encourages S3 to continue responding to S4 with "Introduction..." (21).

Negotiation Sequence 3: Continuing confusion for S4, S3 takes the lead in hazarding and declaring, and S5 continues encouraging

(17)	S4:	Problem?	(Repeated) Indicator 3 for S4; (following (12) & (13))
(18)	S3:	I wonder? Oh, hey, origi[nal] title isn'[t it] Or title?	Start of S3's response
(19)	S5:	Nope.	S5's confirming response 2 ("No" to "title"; yes to "original title")
(20)	S3:	Title. Introduction....	
(21)	S5:	Introduction...	S5's confirming response 3
(22)	S1:	Should I put in somethin' like introduction and ID?	

(23)	S3:	...introduction...body... body paragraph...	
(24)	S2:	What's that you're writin' there?	
(25)	S3:	...and conclusion.	End of S3's response
(26)	S4:	Original title...introduction...	Reacts by repeating & writing on her task sheet.
(27)	S4:	Uh, it's body paragraph[s]!	Looking at S3's task sheet & reacting
[(28)	Pat:	Hookay! If you're finished...if you're fin-.... If you've finished ah 14, please go to 15.]	
(29)	S1:	Say what?	
(30)	S4:	...conclusion.	Finishes writing

Importantly here, with confirming disagreement from S5 ((19); that it is not "title" but "original title") and prompting to continue (21), S3 assumes the role of leading the group in declaring the four essay parts in turns (23) and (25). Noticeably, S3 responds to S4's earlier indicator (12 & 13) and repeated indicator (17) by continuing to hazard and declare these essay parts. Also of note is that S3's individually done task sheet shows no pencil marks, indicating that she was initially unable to answer the question. However, engaging in the foregoing negotiations of meaning appeared to stimulate her recollection and inference to resolve the task. S4 subsequently reacts to S3's aided response (from S5) in turns (26), (27) in which S4 exclaims with a certain jubilation that the middle part is "body paragraph[s]," and (30) by repeating and writing down her answers on her own task sheet. Most notably, this focused exchange also takes place in the north of the seating arrangement with S3, S4 and S5 all directly overlooking both S1 and S2 and working to finish the task.

In the final prominent Sequence 4, embedded in Sequence 3 where increasingly more rapid task resolution is evident in the S4-S5-S3 exchange, the focus is on the unsuccessful indicators of S1 and S2, respectively (22) and (29), and (24). I set out this embedded sequence in this emphatic way because it epitomizes the thrust of the deepening interpersonal struggle. Clearly in evidence is the negotiation focus remaining on incomplete understanding for S1 and S2 with no direct response or other-repair received, leading to their overall unsuccessful involvement. As resolution accelerates, S1's and S2's triggered indicators go unresponded. Remaining focused on responding to S4's indicator, "Problem?" (17), S3 overlooks S1 (22) first, continues, and then overlooks S2 (24) as well. In continuing to repeat and write, S4 also ignores the final indicator from S1 (29: "Say what?"). Neither does S5 address any of these final S1 and S2 inquiries.

Principally in this embedded sequence, S2 attempts to contribute initially but continues to go unresponded. S2's initial 6 turns in the first half decrease to questioning only once in the second half (24) with her dropping out to look only at S1 sitting across from her to finalize her task answers. We also have S1's only two questions (for 2 of 3 turns) in the second half. S1

makes an effort here in (22) to self-repair but gets only an indirect response that S3 actually intends for S4. On their task sheets, however, S2 and S3, both of whom are closest to S1, appeared to respond indirectly by also writing down S1's hazarded "ID." Finally, as I have called time's up in turn (28), no one responds to S1's "Say what?" (29) request for clarification. Of particular interest, this embedded sequence marks the developing interpersonal struggle mirrored in the south-to-north shift in the talk.

Negotiation Sequence 4 (Embedded in Seq. 3): Incomplete understanding for S1 & S2 with no response or other-repair received: Unsuccessful involvement

(21)	S5:	Introduction....	Trigger (3 for S1)
(22)	S1:	Should I put in somethin' like introduction and ID?	Indicator 2 for S1; gets indirect response from S2 & S3 in writing
(23)	S3:	introduction...body.... body paragraph....	Trigger 4 (for S2)
(24)	S2:	What's that you're writin' there?	Indicator 6 for S2; gets no response
(25)	S3:	...and conclusion.	
(26)	S4:	Original title...introduction...	
(27)	S4:	Uh, it's body paragraph[s]!	Trigger 5 (for S1)
[(28)	Pat:	Hookay! If you're finished...if you're fin-.... If you've finished ah 14, please go to 15.]	
(29)	S1:	Say what?	Indicator 3 for S1; gets no response
(30)	S4:	...conclusion.	

Four additional aspects of the discourse and developing interpersonal rift are noteworthy. These are the total utterance and metalanguage count/student, the questions or indicators posited in these sequences, their addressed/unaddressed responses, and their possible speaker status interpretations. These aspects are summarized for greater clarity in Table 1. Firstly then is the prevailing dominance of S4's 11 of the 29 total utterances (37.93%) and S4's and S3's respectively high metalanguage use counts: 15/34 for 44.12% and 11/34 for 32.35%. These totals stand in stark contrast to those lower counts of S1 and S2 summarized in the table. Secondly, is that only one of S2's four questions (3) is addressed by S4's redirecting (4) and both of those of S1 (22 & 29) are directly overlooked or left unaddressed:

(3)	S2:	Essay?
(4)	S4:	Yeah, here....
Unaddressed for S2:	(8)	Why'd you write this here?
	(10)	I gotta write 4 key part[s] here?

	(24)	What's that you're writin' there?
Unaddressed for S1:	(22)	Should I put in somethin' like introduction and ID?
	(29)	Say what?

Conversely, all of the questions posed by S3 and S4, respectively two questions in (18), and (2), (15) and (17), are addressed in some way.

Table 1. Summarized Individual Contributions to Concluding the Task

1) Total utterance and metalanguage counts/student:

Total # of utterances/S				Total metaL used as functional vocab/S		
S1	3		10.34	S1	2	5.88
S2	6	(+ joke (1)	24.13	S2	5	14.70
S3	5		17.24	S3	11	32.35
S4	11		37.93	S4	15	44.12
S5	3		10.34	S5	1	2.99
Totals:	29		99.98%		34	99.99%

2) Instances of questions being **addressed**/unaddressed:

Total question turns		Questions **addressed**/unaddressed	
S1	2	**(22*)** (29)	**1**/2
S2	4	**(3)** (8) (10) (24)	**1**/4 = **2**/6
S3	2	**(18): 2 questions**	**2/2**
S4	3	**(2) (15) (17)**	**3/3 = 5/5**
[S5	0	None asked.	0/0]

*Gets S2's and S3's indirectly writing down S1's hazarded "ID."

3) Instances of indicators being **considered/addressed** or overlooked/unaddressed:

Total indicator turns		Indicators **considered**/overlooked or unaddressed	
S1	3	(5) **(22)** (29)	**1**/3
S2	6	**(3)** (6) (8) (10) (14) (24)	**1**/6 = **2**/9
S3	3	**(11) (18) (20)**	**3/3**
S4	5	**(2) (9*) (13) (15) (17)**	**5/5 = 8/8**
[S5	0	None made.	0/0]

*Since no one counters or offers other-repair, which is a form of consideration, S4 declares "Yeah, four [parts] here!" in turn (9).

4) Efforts to stimulate self- or other-repair:

a) S5's brief but guiding responses encourage repair in turns (16) & (19), and continuing in (21).

b) S3's self-repair response sequence in turns (18), (20), (23) and (25).

c) S4's persistence in hazarding, realizing and self-repair in turns (12), (13), (15), (17), (26), (27) and (30), pushing ahead with 11 of the total 29 student utterances.

d) S1 offers 1 self-/other-repair effort (22) & gets indirect written response from S2 & S3; S2 attempts 2 self-repairs in (10) & (14) but gets no response.

e) S1's and S2's 7 of 9 indicators go unresponded or elicit no other-repair.

Thirdly, the indicators and hazarding of S3 and S4 would seem to command a greater degree of respect or status than do those of S1 and S2. Only one of S1's three indicators (22) and only one ("Essay?" in turn (3)) of the six of S2's (3, 6, 8, 10, 14 & 24) are considered/addressed in a meaningful way or garner any response. Rather S3, S4 and S5 directly or indirectly appear to overlook or ignore them, so much so that S2's frustration is readily apparent in her shutting down her initially enthusiastic six utterances (including turn (1)) made in the first half of the discourse to offering only one (24) in the second half. Conversely, the eight indicators posed together by S3 and S4 all generate a response.

Finally are the many instances of S3, S4 and S5 stimulating or effecting self- or other-repair with no noticeably similar effort being made by S1 or S2. Again, prominent here are S5's brief but guiding responses to encourage repair in turns (16), (19) and (21), S3's self-repair response sequence in turns (18), (20), (23) and (25), and S4's sequence of hazarding, realizing and self-repair in turns (12), (13), (15), (17), (26), (27) and (30). Notably prominent as well and not unencouraged are S4's 11 of the total 29 student utterances. In immediate contrast are S1's and S2's eight of nine unresponded indicators that elicit no direct self- or other-repair.

Taken together, these aspects delineate the interpersonal struggle developing between S1 and S2 seated in the south and S3, S4 and S5 in the north.

Closing Remarks: Implications and Challenges

This analysis of the interpersonal relations at work in this small-group writing task resolution is admittedly brief. Nevertheless, the linguistic features highlighted clarify to a considerable extent the contributory teaching-learning in which three of the five participating students engaged through stimulating self- and other-repair among themselves. The analysis also emphasizes the other two students working to make some contribution but principally going unconsidered or unresponded. Either by choice or due to the talk group's dynamic, these two students enjoined in lesser involvement and hence added less to the task resolution.

This closer exploration affirmed for me that reviewing this representative small group's completed task sheets and transcription of their taped resolution alone may only hint at the nature and degree of students' second-language discourse effort. Though I worked continuously with these students and their classmates over the one-term period, adhering closely to the tenets of participant observation and engaged interviewing, I could not take for granted that I was seeing and hearing the entirety of their struggle to learn through talk. Even as a "careful and committed" participant observer during students' small-group talk, I remained sometimes assumptive in my interpretation of what students were "doing." Specifically, as might be the case for many classroom teachers, reviewing only the students' evidentiary materials and talk tape initially led me to believe that considerable "shared" teaching-learning and "successful" task completion occurred for this 5-student group as a whole. My previous research also

reinforced for me that though individual student contributions were instrumental in the task resolution, their degree was uncertain.

In thus recognizing the need to involve students in confirming what they understood and the classroom learning transpiring for them, selectively reviewing together telling audio and video segments proved especially informative. In particular, this subsequent student review and conferencing led to two unexpected surprises. The three assumedly "quiet" students dominated the talk and pushed it to completion whereas the two "group leaders" were less successful and involved in the talk effort. Equally revealing was the illuminated interpersonal struggle deepening for the students during their negotiating the task instructions and answers, which they portrayed more as a rift or fissure in their relations.

A widely held premise is that all discourse is essentially a site of struggle. I would accordingly emphasize from a classroom teacher perspective that what we believe we are "seeing, hearing and comprehending" on students' task papers and in their workshop talk may little expose the character and process of students' difficulty to contribute meaningfully to their task talk and to their classroom learning endeavor as a whole. At the same time, I would caution against over-reliance on "readily" observable or evidentiary classroom realia "signaling" individual students' learning. Although teachers' in-class work and time are necessarily challenged by a great many instructional and learning variables, I would rather suggest limited whole-class or selected-student review of students' work similar to that done here. As a potentially insightful classroom teaching-learning tool, such corroborative review could well foster on the one hand a clearer picture for the teacher of students' effort to teach and learn from each other about EFL writing in this case. And on the other, follow-on student review could well provide an involving opportunity for students to look more critically at their own writing language and talk performance to benefit their L2 learning.

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