



ELSEVIER

Available online at www.sciencedirect.com

SCIENCE @ DIRECT®

Journal of Second Language Writing 13 (2004) 173–201

JOURNAL OF
SECOND
LANGUAGE
WRITING

Tutoring and revision: Second language writers in the writing center

Jessica Williams*

*Department of English (162), University of Illinois at Chicago,
601 S. Morgan, Chicago, IL 60607, USA*

Abstract

There is little research to link what happens during writing center (WC) sessions to how student writers revise their subsequent drafts. This gap in the literature is particularly evident concerning second language (L2) writers who come to the WC for assistance. This study is an effort to fill this gap, exploring the connection between WC interaction and revision by L2 writers. Findings suggest a clear connection between the two, especially as regards small-scale revision of sentence-level problems. They also point to the higher level of uptake of all tutor advice when suggestions are direct, when learners actively participate in the conversation, and when they write down their plans during the session. Also effective in stimulating revision are scaffolding moves by the tutor, including marking of critical features in the text, simplification of the task, goal-orientation, and modeling. In spite of the considerable revision done by all of the writers in this study, second drafts did not receive consistently higher holistic evaluations.

© 2004 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Keywords: ESL writers; Writing centers; Revision

Second language (L2) writers come to the writing center (WC) for many reasons and with a range of goals, some of which may conflict with the goals of WC practice. Some L2 writers come hoping to have their drafts corrected; most tutors have wider aims—to help writers to improve their writing skills. Most sessions end up somewhere in the middle, with work on both local problems (e.g., *Can we work on the punctuation in that sentence?*) and long-range goals (e.g., *How can I approach writing tasks more effectively?*). It is in the middle that this study begins. In spite of the *better writers not better papers* (North, 1984) mantra espoused by many WCs, most writers come to the center with the idea of, and many

* Tel.: +1 312 413 7378; fax: +1 312 413 1005.

E-mail address: jessicaw@uic.edu (J. Williams).

sessions develop in pursuit of, better papers. The focus of this exploration is the revisions that follow L2 writers' sessions at the WC. Longitudinal data demonstrating change in writing behavior and skill over time is ultimately the most valuable; however, it is also difficult data to collect and control (Bell, 2000; Jones, 2001). In addition, although one cannot directly extrapolate from short-term draft-to-draft change to long-term development, in the absence of demonstrated short-term revision, long-term improvement seems unlikely. Analysis of post-session drafts is therefore a logical place to begin in looking at how L2 writers use WC services.

1. Revision

Revision has a long history in the field of composition and has been understood and measured in various ways (see Fitzgerald, 1987; Gaillet, 1996, for overviews). It is generally viewed as a process broader than, though including, editing for errors. It is seen as a goal-oriented process that has both internal and external manifestations; that is, it can be both the thinking process that the writer goes through in reconsidering what is written and in imagining possible changes, and what actually happens to the product (e.g., Beach & Eaton, 1984; Bridwell, 1980; Nold, 1981; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1986; Sommers, 1980, 1992). Finally, although some process approaches place revision after drafting in the multi-stage writing process, revision can happen at any point in writing.

Revision is a problem-oriented process. The writer must come to realize there are parts of a draft that could be better. Of course, this realization does not always lead to improvement in the text, but detection of a problem is the first step. Terms used in this problem-oriented perspective vary, but the process is generally seen as having three stages (e.g., Bartlett, 1982; Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; van Gelderen, 1997):

1. Detection/evaluation/comparison:

Detection may be initiated by writers, as they compare their developing text to their meta-knowledge or to their vision of how they want the text to evolve, often as they realize that their intentions have changed. Detection may also be initiated by someone other than the writer: a teacher, a peer, or, in the case of the writing center, a tutor.

2. Diagnosis/identification:

The writer must then decide what the problem is or how the text, or section of text, can be improved. This may be done simultaneously with detection. The problem may be anywhere from surface level to the level of planning. Not all writers will be able to articulate what the problem is. Again, a writer may do this alone or with help from someone else.

3. Operation/execution/correction:

Finally, the writer must evaluate alternatives and decide on the best course for revision. How effectively a writer does this will depend on many factors, but it is likely that success at the first two steps is a prerequisite for success at this later stage.

Accessing the writer's thought process through these stages with well-known techniques such as think-aloud can be particularly difficult with L2 writers because of the potential conflict between the two languages. These difficulties have been eased with modifications

such as the use of both the L1 and L2 in the protocol (Roca de Larios, Murphy, & Manchon, 1999; van Gelderen, 1997) and recall stimulated by videotapes (Bosher, 1998). Most work on revision, particularly in studies of L2 learners, however, has focused on the texts themselves (see Polio & Knibloe, 1999, for a review), in part because this permits examination of larger sets of data. However, with the decision to analyze written products comes the vexing issue of measurement. What is the best way to express how and how much a text has been revised? How do we differentiate among the effects of revision? How can we measure the extent to which revision has resulted in improvement in the quality of the text?

The most widely used and adapted method for quantitative measurement of revision was devised by Faigley and Witte (1981, 1984) for writers composing in their first language. This complex and detailed method distinguishes between surface (meaning-preserving) and text-based (meaning-changing) revisions. The latter category is further subdivided into micro- and macro-changes, the second being one that would change the gist or a summary of the text. Within these categories, changes are classified as additions, deletions, permutations, substitutions, consolidations, and distributions. Although the authors report success with this system, few researchers in L2 writing have adopted the full array of categories. This may in part be because of the difficulty in reaching acceptable interrater reliability (see Polio & Knibloe, 1999). Nevertheless, some parts of the system have been adapted by many L2 writing researchers (e.g., Berg, 1999; Connor & Asenavage, 1994; Gaskill, 1987; Hall, 1990; Paulus, 1999; van Gelderen, 1997). Van Gelderen used three levels: micro-, meso-, and macro-, with micro- relating to sentence and word level issues, meso- corresponding to relations between sentences, and macro- referring to “problems at a global level” (p. 368). He reports counting at Faigley and Witte’s lowest level of additions, deletions, etc. but pools the data in reporting them as *total words changed*. Van Gelderen’s subjects worked with prepared texts containing a set of problems already classified by the researcher rather than their own texts. His measure of the effectiveness of these changes was connected to the removal of these problems. Hall (1990), in an analysis of L1 and L2 revision, used Faigley and Witte’s finest-grained level of analysis, but added purpose of revision, and substituted *levels* of revision (word, phrase, clause, etc.) for the micro/macro classification. His measure of writing improvement was based on Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Harfield, and Hughey’s well-known ESL Composition Profile (1981). Connor and Asenavage (1994), Gaskill (1987) and Paulus (1999) distinguished between small-scale and large-scale revisions as well as between meaning-preserving and meaning-changing changes (though again exact terms differ); Ashwell (2000) and Berg (1999) simply focused on the scale of the changes that learners made (large vs. small).

The vast majority of studies of L2 revision revolve around specific stimuli for revision, usually peer and teacher response (see Ferris, 2003a, 2003b; Liu & Hansen, 2002, for reviews). Some have focused only on what types of changes were made in response to input, such as teacher or peer feedback (Connor & Asenavage, 1994; Mendonça & Johnson, 1994; Tsui & Ng, 2000; Villamil & De Guerrero, 1998). Others have also addressed the effect of revision on text quality. Again, a variety of measures have been used. As mentioned, Hall (1990) used the ESL Composition Scale. Ferris (1997) combined

quantitative and effectiveness measures in a six-point nominal scale. Ashwell (2000) developed his own content scale, based on both the Composition Profile and the TEEP¹ (Weir, 1990), Berg (1999) based her scale on the TWE² (ETS, 1996), and Paulus (1999), on the MELAB³ (Hamp-Lyons, 1991). Conrad and Goldstein (1999) simply rated changes as successful or not, based on whether the second draft corrected problems addressed by the teacher. Others (e.g., Fazio, 2001; Polio, Fleck, & Leder, 1998), focusing solely on accuracy, used measures such as errored/non-errored forms, error-free T-units/total T-units, and words in error-free T-units/total words. (see Polio, 1997, for full discussion). Thus, there is little consensus on the best way to measure or evaluate revision.

2. Revision, L2 writers, and the writing center

Most studies of the WC have focused on tutor-writer interaction and writing center theory. Surprisingly, very little of the research reports on the effects of tutoring on the subsequent written products. An annotated bibliography of articles published in *Writing Center Journal* through 2000 (DeShaw, Mullin, & DeCiccio, 2000) offers no articles on the topic. Thonus notes, “Rarely is writing center assessment connected with assessments of quality or change(s) in students’ writing” (2002, p. 112). Indeed, there is some resistance in the WC community to an outcomes-based assessment, which some may feel ignores the importance of the WC conversation (e.g., Bell, 2000; Yancey, 2002). Thonus (2002), in her evaluation of the success of WC sessions, combines the perspectives of the participants with an analysis of the interactional characteristics of sessions that they considered successful. Yet the nagging question remains of whether the session has actually had any impact on student writing.

There has been even less empirical research on L2 writers in the WC (though some examples include Blalock, 1997; Blau & Hall, 2002; Carter-Tod, 1995; Ritter, 2002; Thonus, 1999a, 1999b, 2001, 2002; Williams, in press-a) in the past 10 years. Much of this work on L2 writers in the WC focuses once again on interaction, in particular, on how the roles for tutors and writers are co-constructed in interaction. Ritter, as part of her in-depth study of the WC sessions involving L2 writers, explores WC interaction as a resource for student revision strategy but does not trace these strategies beyond the confines of the WC session itself. Such interaction undoubtedly has an important impact on revision, yet the connection between it and subsequent behavior remains largely absent from the WC literature as a whole and L2 WC research in particular. This study is an attempt to explore this connection.

3. The study

The study begins with the following general areas of inquiry and related research questions:

¹ Test of English for Educational Purposes.

² Test of Written English.

³ Michigan English Language Assessment Battery.

A Type and quality of changes in drafts written after the WC session:

- Do L2 writers revise their drafts following sessions at the WC?
- What kinds of revisions are they most likely to make?
 - Are the revisions substantial or small-scale?
 - Are they primarily corrections of surface-level errors?
- Do the revisions lead to improvement in the quality of the drafts?

B Linking the WC session to changes in the subsequent draft:

- Is there a relationship between *what* is addressed in the session and what writers choose to revise?
- Are there significant revisions *not* linked to issues raised in the session?
- Is there a relationship between *how* issues are addressed in the session and what is revised?
 - Is tutor behavior linked to subsequent revision?
 - Are direct/explicit tutor suggestions more likely to lead to revision than implicit ones?
 - Is writer behavior during the session linked to subsequent revision?
 - written notation of suggestions/plans
 - resistance to tutor suggestions
 - acknowledgment of suggestions
 - Are other interactional features linked to subsequent revision?
 - nature/length of negotiation by pair
 - scaffolding by tutor

3.1. Data collection and analysis

The corpus for this study is part of a larger study of WC interaction and its impact on revision. This set of data consists of five WC sessions with L2 writers. There are four tutor participants, all fluent speakers of English. Two are monolingual native speakers; two are bilingual native speakers. There were five L2 writer participants (one tutor worked with two writers). Their L1s were Chinese-3, Korean-1, and Khmer-1. All were permanent residents of the United States and graduates of local high schools. Their length of residence ranged from 2 to 6 years. Both tutors and writers were paid for their participation in the study. Writers were freshmen enrolled in the basic English composition classes required of all undergraduates. They were recruited for the study through an announcement sent to all composition classes. Tutors were recruited from among the regular staff at the university WC. One was an undergraduate—a senior; the other three were first-year graduate students.

The corpus brings together several types of data in an effort to provide a complete view of the interaction in the session as well as the real life consequences of the sessions. All participants were initially interviewed about their backgrounds, their expectations as writers or tutors, and past experience with tutoring L2 writers/using the WC. All tutoring sessions were videotaped, transcribed, and coded by the researcher and a research assistant. In addition to the transcribed videotapes, the drafts that the writers brought to the session were copied immediately after the session and collected for subsequent analysis. The writers also submitted a copy of the revised draft that they completed after the session. The composition instructors also participated in informal interviews, primarily to discuss their

views on the role of the WC and to elaborate on the particular assignment that the writer had brought to the session. Finally, the corpus includes a modified stimulated recall (Gass & Mackey, 2000) of the session with the writer and the tutor. Each participant was interviewed separately on audiotape while watching the videotape within three days of each session. The data presented here consist of the transcriptions of the sessions and the drafts.

Both sets of drafts were analyzed and coded by the researcher and a research assistant. Revision is tricky to measure, as noted in the literature review. There have been a number of approaches both for native speakers and L2 writers, each attempting to capture different aspects of the revision process. In the present study, the goal was to establish possible links between elements of WC sessions and revision. With this in mind, the following coding procedures were established.

3.2. Overall extent and type of revision

First the number of words in each draft was counted. Then coding began at the level of T-units. Second drafts were divided into T-units and separated into three categories: (i) T-units that remained unchanged from the first to second draft, that is, the same text in the same sequence; (ii) those in which the elements of text were rearranged or slightly changed; and (iii) those in which larger chunks of text, at the level of the clause or larger, were added or changed, as in (1).

1. *Williams did not cursed at the editors. → Williams did not sue at the law or curse the editors when she was frustrated.*

The number of words in each of the three categories was then counted. Those in category (ii) were coded as small-scale or slight changes, many amounting to error correction, those in category (iii), as substantial changes, or new text. These are fairly broad measures but give some idea as to the extent of the revision in the second draft. Agreement on this aspect of coding was 91%, that is, the assignment of portions of text to *same*, *slightly changed*, or *substantially changed/new*. Those portions of texts for which differences could not be resolved were not used in the subsequent analysis. In fact, these represented a very small portion of the data. (See Fig. 1 for more precise coding instructions.) The actual word counts, done after coding, were carried out by the researcher alone.

This coding system is not without problems and ambiguities. One obvious shortcoming is that the measures rely primarily on the second draft, and therefore deletions are not clearly accounted for beyond the diminution in word count. We tried to maintain these fairly objective, structurally-based criteria in our coding because determining changes in meaning had proved problematic for other researchers (see Polio & Knibloe, 1999). The decision to use this coding scheme was partly rooted in our ability to reach reliability with these categories (and our inability to reach consensus on Faigley and Witte's (1981, 1984) categories). For example, Faigley and Witte name tense change as a surface revision that does not alter meaning, yet such a change may impact meaning, as in the second sentence in (2). Indeed, it is frequently difficult to decide whether or not meaning is preserved. In (3), does the shift from imperative to the modal *should* change meaning? One could certainly argue that pragmatic meaning changes, even if referential meaning does not.

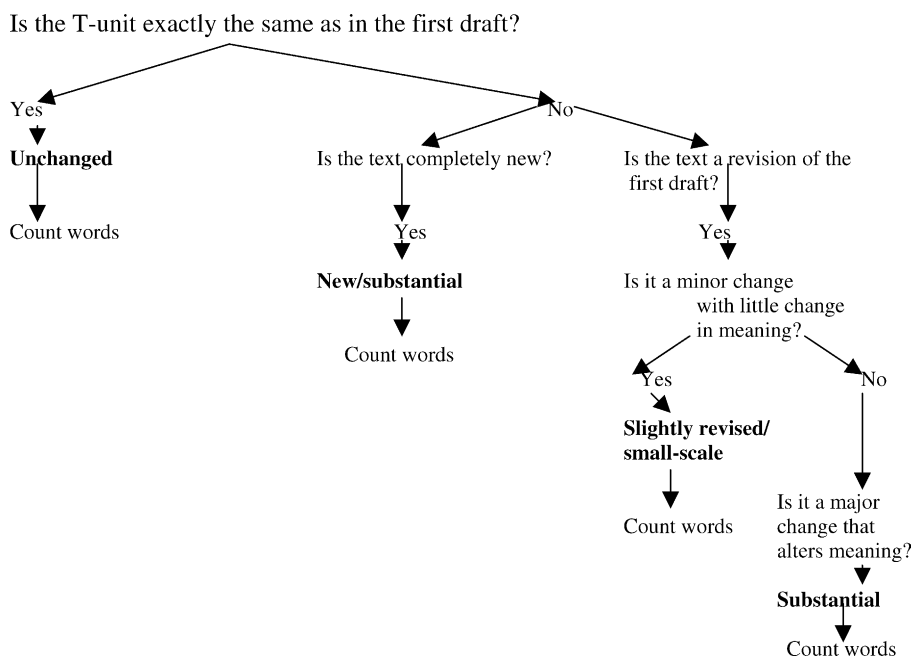


Fig. 1. Coding decisions. (Coding instructions for quantitative evaluation of revision: (1) Count the number of words in each draft; (2) Divide the second draft into T-units; (3) Divide the T-units into three categories.)

2. *I have no clues how he look. It is 30 year from now.* → *I have no clue of what he look like. It's been 30 years.*
3. *If teachers find plagiarism among essays, don't punish the student or scold him for making such mistakes.* → *If teachers find plagiarism among essays, they should not punish the student or scold him for making such mistakes.*

Similarly, many changes that L2 writers make, though small, may impact comprehensibility, as in (4), an issue not normally taken into account in studies of native speaker revision.

4. *Immigrants once come to another country expected to know some certain thing.* → *When immigrants come to the U.S., they are expected to know certain things.*

The revisions in (3) and (4), though important, are relatively small-scale. In cases where a change within an individual sentence was so great as to make us question whether it was truly a revision of the original, the change was coded as a substantial. For example, in (2), though the meaning expressed in the revision probably reflects the writer's original intention, the faulty tense use made the original difficult to comprehend. The revision in this case was therefore considered substantial. Thus, in the end, it was not always possible to avoid consideration of meaning.

The small-scale changes were then subdivided into grammatical and lexical categories. Grammatical changes included additions or changes in morphology, word boundaries, connections, changes in functors, etc. Lexical changes included the addition or changes in content words, changes of word form (other than inflectional morphology), etc. Many T-

Table 1
Quantitative draft-to-draft changes

	Writer									
	Evelyn		Min		Sammy		Winston		Abby	
	Number of words	As % of #2	Number of words	As % of #2	Number of words	As % of #2	Number of words	As % of #2	Number of words	As % of #2
Draft #1										
Total	1432		1116		1210		357		1184	
Draft #2										
Total	1297		1309		1242		520		962	
From #1 w/o change	1058	82	871	67	1107	89	125	24	272	28
From #1 w/change	92	7	131	10	40	3	73	14	330	37
New	147	11	307	23	95	8	322	62	324	34

units contained both, but no more than one of each per T-unit was counted. These figures appear in Table 2. These small-scale changes were counted, not so much in order to compare them to more substantial changes, but in order to determine the extent of their relationship to the points addressed during the WC session. Substantial revisions almost invariably affect meaning. Thus, these major revisions are parallel to Faigley and Witte's (1981, 1984) *text-based* changes. All writers made at least one substantial revision in their papers; several made more. Previous research has tended to view substantial revisions as somehow superior to small-scale changes and more revision, and more text-based revision, as better than less. This has often resulted in problematic comparisons between these two kinds of changes. Therefore, the more substantial changes in the corpus were not counted individually. Instead, they were addressed in two ways: first quantitatively, by the word counts (Table 1), and second, they were explored in a more qualitative manner.

3.3. Change in draft quality

Ferris (1997) notes the impact of each change (improvement, mixed effect or negative effect). In her study, each change that was examined was prompted by teacher comments. In the present study, though some changes occurred apparently as a result of WC interaction, others did not. In many cases, it was difficult, if not impossible, to isolate and evaluate the impact of individual changes. Therefore, the change in quality was determined for the entire second draft rather than each change.

The two drafts were rated holistically on a scale of A–F (see Appendix B) by 10 raters, all L2 teachers who had experience teaching composition.⁴ Raters began with a practice essay and discussed potential difficulties in using the rating system. Then each rater received three randomly assigned drafts for rating. The drafts were not labeled as first or

⁴ This holistic rating scale is used in the ESL composition program and is quite similar to many other 5- and 6-point holistic scales that focus on features such as task engagement, rhetorical framing, organization and development, cohesion, syntax, lexis, and mechanics, such as the TOEFL or MELAB. It was used primarily because of its familiarity to raters.

second drafts. The goal of the rating system was to get an objective assessment of the text, not one that might have been colored by familiarity with an earlier version of the same text. If both texts had been available, raters might have been tempted to give credit for effort or for revision attempts, or conversely, to downgrade a writer for not making changes. Following some discussion, raters were permitted to award \pm as they might do on drafts in their own classes. The final rating was an average of the three ratings. In all but one case, there was agreement on the rating by at least two of the three raters, with the third no more than a half a grade away. In one case, the ratings were more disparate and, a fourth rater was asked to rate the draft.

3.4. Coding of transcripts

The transcripts were also coded, specifically for episodes of *problematicity*. This included all cases of tutor suggestions, directives, or notations of a problem or error, as well as writer requests for assistance or notations of problems. This corresponds to the detection/identification phase of the revision process outlined above, or to the *identification* stage (Cumming & So, 1996), prior even to the *diagnosis* phase (Ritter, 2002; Thonus, 1999a; Williams, in press-a). Interrater agreement at this coding stage was 94%. Wherever these episodes could be linked to draft-to-draft changes, this was also noted. In fact, a considerable number of changes were not attributable to anything that went on during the session. One weakness of this study is that it does not factor in teacher commentary. One writer brought in a draft to which the teacher had already responded. Others came to the WC before they had received feedback or because they would not receive feedback from the teacher on the draft. One student had received peer feedback but had discounted it, not even bringing it to the WC session. Thus, revisions that could not be keyed to discussion during the session might have come from a number of sources: teachers, peers, or from the writers themselves with more time on task.

4. Results and discussion

It is difficult to generalize regarding the effect of WC sessions on WC revision. Individual sessions have their own interactional features and participants have their own goals. In fact, there is considerable variation across sessions and their aftermath, ranging from resistance to most tutor suggestions to nearly absolute adherence to every tutor suggestion. In some cases, there appeared to be little clear connection between what went on in the WC interaction and the subsequent draft. Instead, the content of the revisions was primarily self-initiated, though the impetus for the revision process may have been provided in the session. One hardly surprising generalization of the results is that the nature and content of the session had an impact on the nature and extent of revision. In this corpus, for example, in sessions in which the writer was resistant to tutor suggestions, few changes were detected in subsequent drafts that could be related to the content of the session. In sessions in which readings were discussed/analyzed, the primary changes were text-based; in contrast, for those in which the writer insisted on attention to form, revision tended to be form-based.

4.1. Finding #1: The focus of discussion is usually the focus of revision

This trend is most easily seen in writers' responses to surface-level issues discussed in the session (see Finding #2 below) but extends to some global concerns as well. Table 1 shows the extent of revision in terms of number and percentage of words that were revised from the first to the second draft. Two of the sessions (Abby, Winston⁵) stood out in that discussion revolved almost entirely around content and organization, with very little discussion of grammatical or lexical choices. The most extensive revisions followed those two sessions (Abby-34%, Winston-62%-completely new material). Interestingly, Abby's revisions closely reflect her tutor's suggestions; in contrast, though Winston followed his tutor's advice that his draft needed revision, he rejected most of the specific suggestions.

Both of these writers retained only about a quarter of their original drafts. In Abby's session, the discussion centered on her misunderstanding of the readings she was to analyze and secondarily, how she should organize that analysis. Her task was to compare and evaluate the views of two writers regarding the use of politically correct language. In excerpt (1), she and her tutor had just finished discussing the first reading, but she was struggling to understand how it related to the second reading.

Excerpt⁶ (1) (T = tutor, A = Abby)

T: So, now after discussing that, do you see how that's um...how that is related to O'Rourke?

A: mmhmmmmh mhmhm yeah.

T: Ok, so explain it to me.

A: (smiles, laughs) Um...um...they...um...the editor they are afraid to to.go.to.go.to court...so they.they make the letter neutral?

T: mm.

A: Kay.um...they make the letter neutral.

T: ...How do they make the letter neutral? By doing what?

A: By deleting, by changing...uh.her essay...And then...what. Why is so important?

T: OK, well, let's think about it this way. Now, the editor didn't print her letter, right? So, she's very upset about it, right? She's upset the way any person would be upset that first of all, they changed it completely. And second of all, um...they changed it to becoming very simple, It hid-it didn't have any of her feelings in it, right? Or any of her in the letter. Of her as you know like as a person. It was very very simple.

A: But um, didn't we discuss earlier that Williams should keep neutral—keep um don't keep the bias in language? If the editor did that, then she will be happy about it?

... Eight turns later...

T: Do you see how those two things can be different?

A: uh huh (smiling) If this...if this idea is behind the story.behind um...um what we came up with—that idea—then that would make sense.

⁵All names are pseudonyms.

⁶See Appendix A for transcription details.

Her new understanding—replete with numerous new sentence-level errors—is reflected in her revision.

In Winston's session, the tutor offered many suggestions for a paper on the American Dream, which was to include his own understanding of the concept based on readings, as well as the results of a survey conducted by the class eliciting the views of others on the topic:

Excerpt (2) (T = tutor, W = Winston)

T: What are some of the things that it said about what the American way of life. what the American dream is?

W: The American way of life is include the religion and it's just mix with the American culture.

T: This is. . . this essay here was about the American way of life. Do they discuss their. or do they talk about the American dream?

W: It just like the American unity by. united by religion not focus on the money—

T: —But do they talk about anything, about the wishes. . . the wants. the American dream that Americans would or all Americans or people have in America? Because this is a way of life, like, ah. democracy. I just noticed they talk about democracy, free enterprise. . . but do they talk about the dream that people have? The dream of. you know. Having. . . a—

W: —I just see the general life had. . . that the general requirements of the dream. It's just like the circumstances—

T: —Okay.—

The tutor tries again about 10 turns later to underscore the importance of introducing the general concept of the American Dream at the beginning of his paper, as a way of orienting the reader, but Winston remains resistant to the tutor's suggestion (see Excerpt 2-cont.). It is also possible that he simply does not understand the suggestion. He seems to think the tutor is simply telling him to give his own definition of the American Dream.

Excerpt (2-cont.)

T: Okay. So, one of the main things that I've heard from you discussing those papers is something. you've been always using the word better. So, maybe from the American dream we can get some. . . we can get something that would improve us more. The American dream is something that would better us as a person. It seems that that's. . . you're using. you know. we'll get more money. a better education. So, it just seems that the American dream is something that will improve us, right? Do you think so or do you think differently?

W: Um, the American dream, she didn't say include my view in the. ah. my project.

T: I know but we're just trying to get something general to include in your introduction. I don't want you to say. you know. I believe this. I believe that. . . but what we wanna do is get something, something general into. um. into your introduction paragraph. How. um. an American dream basically is the defi. . . there is no real definition of what an. of what the American dream is. It's gonna be, like you said. . . some of them was

about a better education and some of them defined it as more money or working hard to get more money. So, I'm not saying for you to include your opinion but we can include a general, general, very general definition of what the American dream is and the importance of success is in your introductory paragraph. Just so we can introduce your thesis and then.ah. .the survey and then the research.

W: You mean just to write the general information about American dream?

T: Right, and that's why I asked you what you can get out of those. what were the different views? What were the different types of definitions that people gave the American dream? And then from that we can come up with something very general just to have in your introductory paragraph and then include your thesis.

Winston's second draft represents a substantial rewrite, mostly of content and organization, reflecting the emphasis of the WC session. Yet, in spite of his tutor's repeated advice, there remains no general introduction about the American Dream. It begins by immediately introducing the survey project, as in his first draft.

Of these two writers with the most substantial revision in their second drafts (Abby-34%, Winston-62%-new material), only Abby's revisions were clearly stimulated by the WC session. Winston's revisions appear to have come from another source. The other writers' portions of new text ranged from 8 to 23% of the second draft, with some changes traceable to WC sessions.

4.2. Small-scale revision

4.2.1. Finding #2: Surface-level features discussed during the session are more likely to get revised than text-based problems

However murky the findings on global revision, it is clear that specific suggestions for surface-level changes of grammatical and lexical choices, and in particular, for error correction, are generally heeded (see Table 2). The majority of such changes can be traced to tutor suggestions (grammar-65%; lexicon-77%). In fact, only 9% of the suggestions made by tutors for surface-level changes are ignored. In part, this may reflect the tenor of the sessions. Previous research has found that tutors tend to focus on language during sessions with L2 writers (Ritter, 2002). This cannot be the whole story though. Only two of the sessions (Evelyn, Sammy) had a heavy emphasis on language, one was more balanced (Min), and the two discussed earlier contained little discussion of sentence-level problems. In all likelihood, the high rate of follow through on tutor advice for these small-scale changes is ease of revision (also see Finding #4). It is easier to note down or remember, for example, that a verb is missing and make the appropriate change than to rearrange or rewrite whole sections of text in response to the more nebulous advice that often emanates from discussions of text-based revisions. This is supported by earlier research on revision by L2 writers. Conrad and Goldstein (1999), in a study of the relationship between teacher comments and successful revision, found that there was little clear connection between the two. Instead, the only consistent feature of successful revision was the type of problem that it sought to correct: Problems that were easy to repair were revised successfully. More complex problems involving explanation and analysis were revised with less success or not at all.

Table 2
Surface-level changes

	Writer					Total	%
	Evelyn	Min	Sammy	Winston	Abby		
Grammar	5	18	44	7	4	78	
Tutor initiated	5	10	28	4	4	51	65
Direct	5	7	21	4	3	40	78
Writer noted	5	5	21	4	3	38	
Implicit	0	3	5	0	1	9	22
Writer noted		0	2		0	2	
Writer initiated	0	8	16	3	0	27	35
Lexicon	19	9	20	2	2	52	
Tutor initiated	18	5	14	1	2	40	77
Direct	15	5	13	1	2	36	90
Writer noted	12	3	10	0	2	27	
Implicit	3	0	1	0	0	4	10
Writer noted	1		0			1	
Writer initiated	1	4	6	1	0	12	23
Tutor suggestions not taken	2	3	6	2	1	13	
Direct	0	0	2	1	0	3	23
Implicit	2	3	4	1	1	10	77
Errors remaining from draft #1 ^a	17	15	13	6	8		
Errors introduced in draft #2	2	5	1	10	10		

Note. *Writer-initiated* revisions may in fact be the result of suggestions from friends, family or the teacher.

^a These are limited to errors not discussed or pointed out during the session.

4.2.2. Finding #3: Issues explicitly addressed by the tutor are more likely to be revised than those that receive more implicit treatment (see Table 2)

Often tutor suggestions for sentence-level revision are quite direct, as in this excerpt in which the tutor simply tells the writer how her text should be revised. In this assignment, the student was to use one of the class readings to explore the topic of plagiarism and to offer advice about how teachers should handle the problem in their classes.

Excerpt (3): T = tutor, E = Evelyn

T: Exactly. (reads) "If teachers find plagiarism among essays"...okay. "don't punish the student or scold him." Again in front of don't—

E: —Comma—

T: —No.no no. "If teachers find plagiarism among essays"...it should probably be... "they shouldn't punish or scold the student." Okay. "If teachers find plagiarism among essays"...okay. "then the teacher should not punish the student', right? So. "If teachers find plagiarism among essays, they shouldn't punish the student...or scold him for such mistakes."

In some cases, when the tutor tries a less direct approach, the student seems to need more guidance, as in (4). In this paper, the writer was to develop a script for a talk show, with the authors of several of their readings to be included as guests.

Except (4): T = tutor, S = Sammy

S: Barry's Show is a television show that sponsored by Channel One, the new generation China.

T: OK...Is...OK...Do you think the sentence is missing anything?

S: ...no

T: OK...um...Barry's show is a television show that *is* sponsored by Channel One?

S: OK.

In the drafts that followed these sessions, revisions were made according to the tutors' suggestions. In contrast, more implicit suggestions were more likely to be ignored. Only 22% of revisions of grammatical features were associated with implicit suggestions made during the sessions and only 10% of lexical changes. By contrast, only 2% of the direct tutor suggestions for surface-level revision were ignored. In the following excerpt, the tutor tries to get the writer to rewrite an unwieldy sentence but did not show him exactly what to do.

Excerpt (5) T = tutor, S = Sammy

T: Do you think that's an important part of a sentence?

S: Here? Right here?

T: Right after that word.

S: (reads)... yah

T: OK. Do you think this sentence.um.can be shortened or divided? For the purpose of making it more um.like complete and.easy to read?

In the end, the writer left it as he had written in the first draft, making only minor changes in wording.

Some of them are adults, who are mature and responsible, like my father who takes care of my mother and me. → Some men are adults, who are mature and responsible, like my father who takes care of my mother and me.

The decision to provide more direct advice to L2 writers may be a conscious one on the part of the tutors. Williams (in press-a), in a study of WC interaction, reports that tutors used more direct, less-modulated directives with L2 writers than with native speakers. Thonus (1999a) suggests that this may be in an effort to increase the comprehensibility of the advice directed to L2 writers. The relative uptake by writers of explicit and implicit advice in the present study indicates that the strategy may be an effective one for prompting revision.

4.2.3. Finding #4: Writer response to tutor suggestions/explanations is predictive of their impact on revision

- Writer takes down suggestion/explanation. → Related revision is likely to appear in subsequent draft.
- Writer resists suggestions. → Related revision is unlikely to appear in subsequent draft.
- Writer offers minimal/non-verbal backchannel. → Related revision is not likely to appear in subsequent draft.

Making a written notation about a problem or a change was an important factor in revision. All written notations were made by the writers; tutors were not holding pens or pencils during the tutorials. As noted in Table 2, writers are more likely to write down direct suggestions than implicit ones, and once written down, these tend to be followed up in the subsequent draft. In response to the 79 direct tutor suggestions made in the sessions, writers wrote down 82% of them, compared to the 13% of the implicit suggestions. Plans for change that were written down during the session accounted for 54% of all the eventual small-scale changes. It should be noted that not all written notations resulted in changes that were exactly what the tutor suggested, nor were the changes always effective.

There were a small number of cases in which the writer challenged a tutor's suggestion. Not surprisingly, revision did not generally result from these episodes. One writer, Sammy, consistently used the word *maybe* to resist or challenge his tutor's advice (6,7), a modal expression that Salsbury and Bardovi-Harlig (2000) also found was favored by low-proficiency L2 learners in challenges and refusals.

Excerpt (6) T = tutor, S = Sammy

T: Ok, um...what do you think about this sentence...the one you just read?

S: What do I think?

T: mmhm.

S: It is a little longer than usual.

T: OK...so you think you might be missing anything in there?

S: *Maybe*.

T: OK. Maybe what?

S: *Maybe* missing something?

T: OK...What do you think you might be missing?

S: (reads). Missing something.

T: OK, well...“we strongly encourage teachers to come to the show from time to time, and present the textbooks materials to the students in classroom.”“right? What's this “from time to time?”

T: Just like...I have watch it and then present it.and student.

The tutor is trying to get Sammy to realize that the expression *from time to time*, as written, modifies *come see the show*, yet what he means is that the teachers should *present the textbook material from time to time*. Her efforts are not successful and the passage remains unchanged in the second draft.

In the next excerpt she urges him to repeat the antecedent in order to establish better cohesion. Again, he rejects and ultimately ignores her advice.

Excerpt (7) T = tutor, S = Sammy

T: OK...look at this sentence for a second. “Different men have different characters. Some of them are adults who are mature and responsible.like my father, who...takes care of my mother and of me until I.marry...”OK. My elder brother.OK.my elder brother is another example of what?

S: oh.uh.of different man.

T: Ok.so. . .see how you had to go back there and read it. The reader would have to do the same thing, right? Because by the time we get here, right. . .the reader doesn't remember what he read on the other page.

S: *Maybe* they did. *Maybe* they do.

T: Okaaay. [drawn out] **Maybe** [loud] they do, but—

S: —yeah, but if I just read it uh.the.not stop. I will remember. But if I stop, like.I talk to you.*maybe* I can't remember. That's the difference.

T: OK.

Writer responses to tutor suggestions are an important signal in WC interaction. Backchanneling is a normal part of conversation and, because they are modeled on conversation, WC sessions might also be expected to include considerable backchanneling (See Blau, Hall, & Strauss, 1998; Thonus, 2002). Generally, backchannel cues are understood as demonstrating attendance to the interlocutor's message and, in many cases, understanding as well. Those who have worked with L2 learners in the classroom or in the WC will probably agree that though the first may be true, the second often is not. Writers may respond non-verbally by just nodding or maintaining eye contact, or minimally with *mmm* or *uh huh*, yet they do not always understand or agree (Heritage & Sefi, 1992; Thonus, 2002). Research on L2 writers in the WC contains numerous references to the cross-cultural barriers that may affect communicative success (e.g., Harris & Silva, 1993; Moser, 1993; Powers, 1993; Ronesi, 1995; Severino, 1993). It is difficult to connect any revision to a single adjacency pair containing a backchannel cue because most episodes involve several exchanges. However, examination of writer responses to suggestions that do not result in revision may be more instructive. The following excerpts (8,9) are typical.

Excerpt (8); T = tutor, M = Min

T: OK. But my question is nowhere in the sentence have you mentioned the different perspectives. right?.And your thesis sentence um. . .should be at the end of the introduction.

M: uh [softly]

T: And by putting it at the end of the introduction, you tell the reader what the paper is going to be about, right? So, if you put this. . .if.for example, imagine this paragraph does not exist for now, from here to here. Imagine this doesn't exist. You're still not telling the reader what you're going to be talking about. Do you see how that makes the paper a little bit confusing?

M: mmm [rising intonation]

Excerpt (9) T = tutor, E = Evelyn

T: Um. (reads)“Teachers and students should cooperate together”.Okay. . .They need to do something, right? Then you need to say that they need to do something. They need to cooperate. So. . .instead of *should* you can say the teachers and students need to cooperate. . .together.

E: Oh—

T: —Exactly. In order to make their lives successful.

E: mmhm.

T: So, you need to explain the part they need to do this.

E: uh.

T: Alright.

In these exchanges, the writers are not actively involved; they contribute minimally to the exchange, in part, perhaps because of the dominant role taken by the tutor, especially in (9). No revision of the second draft resulted from these episodes. Compare these to the following excerpt:

Excerpt (10) T = tutor, E = Evelyn

T: This...you say that the “teaching techniques are inappropriate”.right?.and then you say “Improper teaching techniques lead students to feeling great pressure.” Okay, but why are they inappropriate teaching techniques?

E: What are the inappropriate//

T: //inappropriate, what are the inappropriate techniques? Why these techniques not appropriate? Do you see my question?

E: Yeah.I...you mean I have to put what kind of techniques that is not appropriate?

T: Exactly, exactly...because you mention that there are inappropriate techniques but you don't mention why.

E: Uh...but the point is all I have to do is put the reason I don't need to um like...go further to explain...what techniques are not appropriate.

T: That's true but you put down the reason. Okay, what is the...the reason for what? You're saying, “Students buy papers because they don't like to write essays”. right? and then you're giving two reasons why. One of the reasons is that the way they're taught is inappropriate...So, you want to explain to the reader what is inappropriate about the way that the student is taught...Do you see what I'm saying?

E: Okay, uh huh, then I should write, like, another paragraph—

T: —it's not even a paragraph. Just one or two sentences saying what is the inappropriate technique that a teacher may use, you know, to make the student feel pressure.

In spite of the equally forceful role played by the tutor in this session, Evelyn was an active participant in the discussion. She revised this section of her paper successfully along the lines discussed in the session. The importance of writer participation has been demonstrated in settings outside of writing centers, in particular in student-teacher conferences. [Patthey-Chavez and Ferris \(1997\)](#) found that active participants in conferences made more substantial revisions in their drafts, appropriating and transforming teacher suggestions to create their own text. Weaker participants were more likely to transfer verbatim teacher suggestions into the revised draft. [Goldstein and Conrad \(1990\)](#), in their study of conferences with L2 writers, found similar patterns. Those students who participated in negotiation during conferences were more likely to make meaningful revisions in their drafts.

4.3. Substantial revisions

Up to this point, the primary focus has been on small-scale revisions in response to tutor suggestions and advice. Yet, much of the conversation in the sessions in this corpus revolves around broader issues, with the aim of assisting writers toward more substantial revisions. However, these changes are harder to attribute directly and quantitatively to the interaction during the sessions. In an effort to capture their potential effect, the analysis of interaction must shift to a more qualitative and descriptive form. Such analysis reveals two features of the interaction that may be associated with subsequent student revision.

4.4. Finding #5: Text-based revisions that can be traced to WC discussion are associated with interactional features of negotiations that take place during the session

- Extended negotiations tend to favor subsequent text-based revision.
- Assisted performance/scaffolding by the tutor, in a variety of forms, is associated with text-based revision.

Studies of teacher–student and student–student interaction in a variety of settings—with native speakers and L2 learners, children and adults, in classrooms and tutoring contexts—suggest specific features that may assist learners in the mastery of skills they do not yet control. In particular, it has been noted that if an expert, a more capable peer, or even a true peer works collaboratively with the learner to bring about conditions for learner participation and extension of his/her skill, learning may result (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Donato, 1994; Gallimore & Tharp, 1990; Kanagy, 1999; Ohta, 2001; Patthey-Chavez & Clare, 1996; Storch, 2002; Swain, 2000; Swain & Lapkin, 1998; Tudge, 1990).

A comparison of several of the sessions in the corpus illustrates these conditions particularly well. Sessions that led to substantial revision offer evidence of the features listed below. The first two have been identified in the L2 learning literature as important to acquisition (e.g., Gass, 1997; Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Long, 1996; Pica, 1994). Features 3–6 have been identified as elements of scaffolding or collaborative problem-solving that promote learning (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Antón & diCamilla, 1998; Donato, 1994, 2002; Gallimore & Tharp, 1990; Takahashi, 1998; Thonus, 2002; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976).

1. Negotiation episodes
2. Active writer participation in these episodes
3. Clarification of critical features by tutor
4. Sustained emphasis on goals by tutor
5. Organization of task by tutor
6. Modeling by tutor

The session that contained the most sustained negotiation was Abby's. Abby made extensive revision, retaining just over a quarter of her first draft in the second. Much of the revision can be linked to the discussion that took place during the WC session. In this particular session, most of the session centered on her misconception of the gist of the readings that she was to analyze and incorporate into her paper. Of the 50-min session,

almost 40 min were devoted to this topic, with the student participating actively in the dialogue, seeking clarification where she was confused, pushing her own perspective (which she later discovered was wrong) as seen in (11), and finally acknowledging a new perspective, as seen back in excerpt (1).

Excerpt (11) T = tutor, A = Abby

A: um. . .um. . .the problem is when I'm read the story.'kay, I find out. . .'kay. . .Williams.I think I think she thinks there shouldn't be any racism in this world anymore. But in the other story, we should keep the bias in our language. Otherwise, it will, some sentence like-he give some example in the story-it will-it will make no sense, it will sound silly and. . .funny.

T: OK.

A: So we should keep the bias in our language. But right here, but in this sentence right here, . . .um (reads) "the blind application of principals of neutrality." .is that mean- does that mean we should keep the bias in our language?

T: uh. . .let's see. (reads) "what is the most interesting in this experience is how the blind application of principals of neutrality <murmurs>. Yeah. that means just keep the text neutral.you know.being all the same.

A: What do you mean by "being all the same?"

T: Not all the same but neutral means kind of um. . .like not picking sides.you know.if you had a choice to pick A or B.

A: ah. OK.

T: Neutral would be like staying in the middle. You're not choosing sides.

A: So Williams is saying. . .be neutral, right?

In contrast, in sessions in which treatment of suggestions for text-based changes is relatively brief (12) and there is little negotiation, that is, the writer is a less active participant (see also (8)), revision is less likely to result:

Excerpt (12) T = tutor, W = Winston

T: So these are. . .you're gonna introduce the American dream by circumstances, alright? And then you're gonna discuss a little bit about the American dream.

W: Yuh.

T: And then.ah. now we're gonna move on to your thesis statement. . .You think you can get ah.two or three sentences out of here?when you start organizing the.typing them?

W: mmm.

T: Okay, so now your thesis statement. From your survey what are the most important things that you got out of it? You said education.

W: mm.education.

The only evidence in Winston's second draft of this episode is his mention of education, though in a rather different context, in a section of text that also appeared in the first draft. He incorporates none of the tutor's advice in his revision.

Tracing revisions back to elements of the paper discussed during the session reveals that these episodes have several other characteristics in common. One is that the tutor often helps the writer clarify what he or she is trying to say at critical points. Sometimes, these involve a major shift in a writer's thinking and subsequent plans for revision, as seen in

excerpts (1) and (11), when Abby finally grasps that she has completely misunderstood the thrust of the argument in her reading, that she has, in fact, understood the opposite of the author's intention. Or, it may be more local as in the following excerpt (13).

Excerpt (13) T = tutor, E = Evelyn

T: (reads) "Then 'every time he/she has a writing assignment, he/she would go ask for help. . . Okay, now this is. . . to me. it sounds contradictory. Okay, if they feel pressured, feel pressured in class, right? And if they're taught inappropriately, why would they go ask for help?"

E: Because um. . . once a student—

T: —Oh! I see what you're saying! Okay. . . they will ask for help not from the teacher, right? They will go to Witherspoon.

E: They'll go outside the class—

T: —Okay, **that's** [loudly] what you need to put in here. . . who will they ask for help from. They're not gonna ask for help. . . they're gonna buy the help, right?

E: Uh huh. . . buy.

T: Okay, so instead of "asking" for help because the way this is said is they're gonna ask the help from the teacher. But that's not what you're writing. You wanna say that they will either buy the help from somebody like Witherspoon, right?
(student writes silently)

T Okay. So.(reads as amended) "Some students would *buy* essays if they choose to do so. . . as Witherspoon revealed in her story." Okay, we got that.

Another consistent feature that is connected to substantial revision is the tutor's sustained emphasis on the goals of the session. In one session, the writer, Min, is attempting to explore two different perspectives of a specific group that she is to identify and define. She has chosen ESL students, perhaps a poor choice, based on the assignment, which is really focused on in-groups and out-groups, but the tutor tries to work with the writer's choice. One major problem with the original essay is that it does not clearly contrast the two perspectives. Early on, the tutor decides that the student should follow standard block compare-and-contrast format. Whether or not one considers this the right decision, the tutor maintains this goal throughout this session and keeps drawing the writer back to it. She returns 11 times during the session to the task of constructing a thesis statement that will compare the two perspectives and how this will control the structure of the rest of the draft. This is perhaps related to the length of negotiation described above, and, in fact, carries over several episodes. An examination of the revised draft reveals the following revised thesis:

One perspective argues that people should treat ESL students differently and comprehend them. This perspective demonstrates that English is not the essential key to determine their achievements in school and ESL students are more likely to become successful. Another perspective is that ESL students should not be treated specially and there is no need to feel sympathy for them; they see that ESL students are handicapped and more likely turn out to be failure.

The impact of the session on Min's revision is clear. She has changed her draft to conform to the tutor's goal. The two paragraphs that follow expand on each of the two perspectives presented in the thesis.

Tutors may also try to make the complex task of revision more accessible for the writer. One favored technique at this WC is informal outlining of old and new drafts. It organizes the task for the writer into a sequence of more manageable chunks and makes these chunks clearer and more explicit.

Excerpt (14)

T: Ah, let's, let's... I'm gonna give you some sort of an outline form. Do you have, um... you wanna keep on using this sheet of paper? or the otherside? Okay, let's put number one here and then right there you're gonna put 'introduction' and then write 'general views'. Okay, and then um, right underneath of that you're going to include your thesis at the end of that introductory paragraph. Alright, okay. So then, um, number two would be the rest of the results. Which is this that you have already right here.

This form of scaffolding also functions as a model for future writing/revision strategies. Models and, to a lesser extent, modeling are a controversial topic in writing instruction. On the one hand, models have been rejected as part of a mechanical process that does not invite writer participation. On the other hand, modeling is hailed within the sociocultural approaches as a means of scaffolding difficult tasks for novice learners or as an important step in apprenticeship. The problem is that in WC sessions, "modeling" can run very close to "telling." In this corpus, there is considerable evidence of tutors simply telling writers how they should revise, as in excerpts 3, 4, 9, and 14. And, in each of these cases, the end result was what might be called successful revision; that is, the writer changed the text to conform to the tutor's suggestion.

In these cases, it is difficult to gauge how much the writer has actually learned from this type of revising, which, in some cases amounts to little more than transcribing. The problem for tutors in embracing the apprenticeship metaphor is how to model without taking ownership. Generally, experts model a behavior as they perform or create something of their own. This cannot be accommodated in the WC format because the focus is on the writer's and not the tutor's text and writing process. Thus, many tutors attempt to model indirectly by eliciting an improved performance from the writer. This is particularly evident in the excerpts from Abby's session (1, 11) and (15) below. The tutor senses that Abby is still having trouble seeing the connection between the two essays (note the *mmmhm*) and asks her to reflect back her understanding. The tutor keeps asking questions until she leads the writer to her own, more accurate, understanding of the text.

Excerpt (15) T = tutor, A = Abby

T: The editor made her. Y'know... may as well have the perfect letter that did contain bias and her emotion and feeling. He made it like this sentence. It's very plain and simple. And that may not make sense to her. Do you see how I'm relating these... totally different essays to one another?

A: ...mmhm

T: *OK, so explain it to me.* (both laugh)

A: oh. . .oh.

T: *Or tell me what would be the central idea behind your paper that you're going to write.*

A: . . .mm. . .I will write for Williams, um. . .if we take. . .if we don't keep the bias in language, then. . .that would make her feel upset. Is that right?

T: OK.but again, if you write that, that's going to be the same thing as this paper.

A: what do you mean?

T: That's not really what the teacher's looking for. He wants you to take Williams and O'Rourke and tie them together and say why they are either the same or why are they different. Or what is the correlation between them? . . .Do you see what I'm saying

A: mmhm.

T: *'Kay, so do you think they're the same or they're different?*

A: . . .They are different.

T: *Why are they different?*

A: . . .are they different? (smiles)

T: *Ok, why are they the same?* Do you think Williams and O'Rourke have the same things in mind. . .about keeping the bias in writing?

A: . . .actually, . . .they have the same point of view, isn't it? (smiling)

T: OK! [loud] *And what is that point of view?*

A: Like. . .for example, if the essay, um. . .he.he would he said we should publish her and Williams says, the editor should publish my essay. . .right? (big smile)

T: Right.and they should publish it exactly the way it is.with all the bias in her writing. And that's why, in my opinion, O'Rourke and Williams are the same. They both want to keep the bias in the language.

A: Right. (smiling)

Although in the end Abby comes around to the perspective suggested by her tutor, one might wonder, in an interaction where the participants labor for 45 min to arrive at an understanding, if such struggle really makes sense. The tutor knew all along that the two writers held similar views, an analysis that was to be included in the essay, yet she did not say so. And although she was able to lead Abby slowly toward this goal, her time might have been better spent showing Abby exactly how she was able to come to this conclusion. In other words, some direct instruction on critical reading of the text might have been more helpful, or at the very least, more efficient in this case.

4.5. Revision success

There is a tendency for both teachers and researchers to think of revision as a positive step. Yet in this corpus, the second drafts are not always better, at least not according to the objective criteria of most holistic assessment measures.

4.5.1. Finding #6: Revision does not always lead to higher-rated essays

Table 3 shows raters' evaluation of student writing before and after WC sessions.

In fact, the ratings suggest that the second drafts are not a substantial improvement over the first. In two of the five cases, there is no improvement in the rating; in the other three, the improvement is small. Furthermore, one paper underwent substantial revision follow-

Table 3
Average holistic ratings of first and second drafts

	Writer				
	Evelyn	Min	Sammy	Winston	Abby
#1	B–	B–	C	C	C+
#2	B	B–	C+	B	C+

ing the session that appeared to be the most successful in the corpus (Abby, see 1,11,14), yet it showed no improvement in rating. Two papers with the least revision showed modest improvement. Why should this be? There are several possibilities. First, as noted in the description of the study, raters did not receive both drafts of any papers. Rather, they were given three randomly chosen drafts, some of which were first, some second, but no two came from the same writer. Thus, they had no opportunity to evaluate draft-to-draft changes. In the case of Abby, her extended revision resulted in a more accurately *text-responsible* draft (Leki & Carson, 1997), but there is no way that the raters could have known this, having read neither the articles nor the other draft. She is taking more risks and stretching as a writer, and problems at all levels may accompany such growth. A related possibility is that substantial revision tends to be accompanied by new errors (see Table 2). In the case of Abby's second draft, raters may have responded to the considerable number of new sentence-level errors that accompanied the revision. Thus, the revision process resulting from WC sessions may not be captured by holistic assessment or even by teachers reading the draft that follows a visit to the WC. As long as assessment is restricted to measures of writing products, much of the development process that is encouraged in WCs may remain hidden.

5. Conclusion

This is a small-scale, largely descriptive study, and all of the caveats that accompany such research regarding generalizability apply here. It addresses a specific student population, primarily generation 1.5 (Harklau, Losey, & Siegal, 1999) undergraduate writers, in a specific WC setting. Other kinds of students, for example, international students or graduate students, in other kinds of settings, such as centers with professional rather than peer tutors, might all yield different results. Yet several issues emerge from the current findings. The most important issue is one that dominates discussions of L2 tutorials: Should tutors provide information to writers rather than elicit it? Despite its pervasiveness in the WC literature, this is not a yes/no question. There is much that no amount of questioning, indirect or otherwise, could ever elicit from these writers because there is so much that they simply do not know or understand about their L2 and academic writing. In some of the data presented here, non-directive tutoring led to almost absurdly circuitous interactions, in which the writer engaged in a sort of guessing game (see Blau & Hall, 2002): *What is my tutor not telling me? And why? (I know she knows)*. Yet rejection of this kind of approach does not have to mean appropriation of the writer's text. Perhaps the best alternative to either asking or telling is showing and explaining. Thus, for example, neither

asking the writer: *What is the perspective of the author of the assigned text?* nor telling her: *This the perspective of the author of the assigned text may be the best choice.* Rather, showing: *This* (e.g., this word, this passage) *is how you can tell the perspective of the author of the assigned text* (see e.g., Schleppegrell & Achugar, 2003) may make more sense. The findings of this study suggest that doing this explicitly rather than indirectly can increase the likelihood that L2 writers will process the information that is offered.

Second, it is important for tutors to recognize features of interaction that may be linked to revision (or lack thereof). As has been frequently noted, active participation by the writer is an essential step in successful revision and should be encouraged. In addition, tutors should be sensitive to writers' responses to their suggestions. Minimal response may well be a signal of resistance or lack of understanding. Writers must, of course, be free to reject tutor advice, but tutors need to be aware of the reduced cues that may signal resistance rather than acknowledgment. Also clear from the findings is the effect of making a written record of plans for revision. Doing so significantly increases the chance of follow through.

Finally, the results of this study leave unspecified the relationship between better texts and better writers. Although some tutor behavior and interactional features do seem related to revision, it is also apparent that WC visits and subsequent revisions do not always immediately result in better papers. Is it possible that nevertheless, in some way, the participants in this study have become better writers? Only a longitudinal study can address this question in any precise way. It is likely that whatever their approach, tutors cannot really foster better writers directly. Rather, writers become better writers by working on their texts. Those of us who work with L2 writers still need to pursue more effective ways to assist them in this process.

Acknowledgements

This research was supported by a grant from the University of Illinois at Chicago Office of Vice Chancellor for Research. Thanks to Leane Dostaler for her transcription and coding assistance and to the JSLW reviewers for their helpful advice.

References

- Aljaafreh, A., & Lantolf, J. (1994). Negative feedback as regulation and second language learning in the zone of proximal development. *Modern Language Journal*, 78, 465–483.
- Antón, M., & diCamilla, F. (1998). Socio-cognitive functions of L1 collaborative interaction in the L2 classroom. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 54, 314–342.
- Ashwell, T. (2000). Patterns of teacher response to student writing in a multiple-draft composition classroom. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 9, 227–240.
- Bartlett, E. (1982). Learning to revise: Some component processes. In M. Nystrand (Ed.), *What writers know: The language, process and structure of written discourse* (pp. 345–363). New York: Academic Press.
- Beach, R., & Eaton, S. (1984). Factors influencing self-assessing and revising by college freshman. In R. Beach & L. Bridwell (Eds.), *New directions in composition research* (pp. 149–170). New York: Guilford Press.
- Bell, J. (2000). When hard questions are asked: Evaluating writing centers. *Writing Center Journal*, 21, 7–28.
- Bereiter, C., & Scardamalia, M. (1987). *The psychology of written composition*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

- Berg, C. (1999). The effect of trained peer response on ESL students' revision types and writing quality. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 8, 215–241.
- Blalock, S. (1997). Negotiating authority through one-to-one collaboration in the multicultural writing center. In C. Severino, J. Guerra, & J. Butler (Eds.), *Writing in multicultural settings* (pp. 79–93). New York: Modern Language Association.
- Blau, S., & Hall, J. (2002). Guilt-free tutoring: Rethinking how we tutor non-native-English-speaking students. *Writing Center Journal*, 23, 23–44.
- Blau, S., Hall, J., & Strauss, T. (1998). Exploring the tutor-client conversation: A linguistic analysis. *Writing Center Journal*, 19, 19–48.
- Bosher, S. (1998). The composing processes of three Southeast Asian writers and the post-secondary level. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 7, 205–241.
- Bridwell, L. (1980). Revising strategies in twelfth grade students' transactional writing. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 14, 197–222.
- Carter-Tod, S. (1995). The role of the writing center in the writing practices of L2 students. (Doctoral dissertation, Virginia Polytechnic Institute). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 56(111), 4262.
- Connor, U., & Asenavage, K. (1994). Peer response groups in ESL writing class: How much impact on revision? *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 3, 257–276.
- Conrad, S., & Goldstein, L. (1999). ESL student revision after teacher-written comments: Texts, contexts and individuals. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 8, 147–179.
- Cumming, A., & So, S. (1996). Tutoring second language text revision: Does the approach to instruction and the language of communication make a difference? *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 5, 197–225.
- DeShaw, D., Mullin, J., & DeCiccio, A. (2000). Twenty years of *Writing Center Journal* research. *Writing Center Journal*, 20, 39–72.
- Donato, R. (1994). Collective scaffolding in second language acquisition. In J. Lantolf & G. Appel (Eds.), *Vygotskian approaches to second language research* (pp. 33–56). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Donato, R. (2002). Sociocultural contributions to the foreign and second language classroom. In J. Lantolf (Ed.), *Sociocultural theory and second language learning* (pp. 27–50). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Educational Testing Service. (1996). *TOEFL test of written English guide* (4th ed.). Princeton, NJ.
- Faigley, L., & Witte, S. (1981). Analyzing revision. *College Composition and Communication*, 32, 400–414.
- Faigley, L., & Witte, S. (1984). Measuring the effects of revision on text structure. In R. Beach & L. Bridwell (Eds.), *New directions in composition research* (pp. 95–108). New York: Guildford Press.
- Fazio, L. (2001). The effect of corrections and commentaries on the journal writing accuracy of minority- and majority-language students. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 10, 235–249.
- Ferris, D. (1997). The effect of teacher commentary on student revision. *TESOL Quarterly*, 31, 315–399.
- Ferris, D. (2003a). Responding to writing. In B. Kroll (Ed.), *Exploring the dynamics of second language writing* (pp. 119–140). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ferris, D. (2003b). *Response to student writing*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Fitzgerald, J. (1987). Research on revision in writing. *Review of Educational Research*, 57, 481–506.
- Gaillet, J. (1996). Revision. In P. Heilker & P. Vandenberg (Eds.), *Keywords in composition studies* (pp. 13–23). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Gallimore, R., & Tharp, R. (1990). Teaching mind in society: Teaching, schooling and literate discourse. In L. Moll (Ed.), *Vygotsky and education* (pp. 175–205). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gaskill, W. (1987). Revising in Spanish and English as a second language: A process-oriented study of composition. (Doctoral dissertation, University of California at Los Angeles). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 47(10A), 3747.
- Gass, S. (1997). *Input, interaction and the second language learner*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Gass, S., & Mackey, A. (2000). *Stimulated recall methodology in second language research*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Goldstein, L., & Conrad, S. (1990). Student input and negotiation of meaning in ESL writing conferences. *TESOL Quarterly*, 24, 443–460.
- Hall, C. (1990). Managing the complexity of revision across languages. *TESOL Quarterly*, 24, 43–60.
- Hamp-Lyons, L. (1991). Scoring procedures for ESL contexts. In L. Hamp-Lyons (Ed.), *Assessing second language writing in academic contexts* (pp. 241–276). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

- Harklau, L., Losey, K., & Siegal, M. (Eds.). (1999). *Generation 1.5 meets college composition*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Harris, M., & Silva, T. (1993). Tutoring ESL students: Issues and options. *College Composition and Communication*, 44, 525–537.
- Heritage, J., & Sefi, S. (1992). Dilemmas of advice: Aspects of the delivery and reception of advice in interactions between health visitors and first-time mothers. In P. Drew & J. Heritage (Eds.), *Talk at work: Interaction in institutional settings* (pp. 359–417). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jacobs, H., Zinkgraf, S., Wormuth, D., Harfield, V., & Hughey, J. (1981). *Testing ESL composition*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Jones, C. (2001). The relationship between writing centers and improvement in writing ability. An assessment of the literature. *Education*, 122, 3–20.
- Kanagy, R. (1999). Interactional routines as a mechanism for L2 acquisition and socialization in an immersion context. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 31, 1467–1492.
- Leki, I., & Carson, J. (1997). “Completely different worlds”: EAP and the writing experiences of ESL students in university courses. *TESOL Quarterly*, 31, 39–69.
- Liu, J., & Hansen, J. (2002). *Peer response in second language writing classrooms*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Long, M. H. (1996). The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition. In W. Ritchie & T. Bhatia (Eds.), *Handbook of research on second language acquisition* (pp. 413–468). New York: Academic Press.
- Mendonça, C., & Johnson, K. (1994). Peer review negotiations: Revision activities in ESL writing instruction. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28, 745–769.
- Moser, J. (1993). Crossed currents: ESL students and their peer tutors. *Research and Teaching in Developmental Education*, 9, 37–43.
- Nold, E. (1981). Revising. In C. Fredericksen & J. Dominic (Eds.), *Writing: The nature development and teaching of written communication* (pp. 67–79). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- North, S. (1984). The idea of a writing center. *College English*, 46, 433–446.
- Ohta, A. (2001). *Second language acquisition processes in the classroom*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Patthey-Chavez, G. G., & Clare, L. (1996). Task, talk and text. *Written Communication*, 13, 515–563.
- Patthey-Chavez, G. G., & Ferris, D. (1997). Writing conferences and the weaving of multi-voiced texts in college composition. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 31, 51–90.
- Paulus, T. (1999). The effect of peer and teacher feedback on student writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 8, 265–289.
- Pica, T. (1994). Research on negotiation: What does it reveal about second language acquisition? *Language Learning*, 44, 493–527.
- Polio, C. (1997). Measures of linguistic accuracy in second language writing research. *Language Learning*, 47, 101–143.
- Polio, C., Fleck, C., & Leder, N. (1998). If I only had more time. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 7, 43–68.
- Polio, C., & Knibloe, D. (1999, March). *A text-based approach to examining revision*. Paper presented at the Annual TESOL Conference, New York.
- Powers, J. (1993). Rethinking writing center conferencing strategies for the ESL writer. *Writing Center Journal*, 13, 39–47.
- Ritter, J. (2002). Negotiating the center: An analysis of writing center tutorial interactions between ESL learners and native-English speaking writing center tutors. (Doctoral dissertation, Indiana University of Pennsylvania). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 63(06A), 2224.
- Roca de Larios, J., Murphy, L., & Manchon, R. (1999). The use of restructuring strategies in EFL writing: A study of Spanish learners of English as a foreign language. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 8, 13–44.
- Ronesi, L. (1995). *Meeting in the writing center: The field of ESL*. *TESL-EJ*, 1,3. Retrieved June 14, 2001 from <http://www-writing.berkeley.edu/TESL-EJ/ej03/a1.html>.
- Salsbury, T., & Bardovi-Harlig, K. (2000). Oppositional talk and the acquisition of modality in L2 English. In B. Swierczbin, F. Morris, M. Anderson, C. Klee, & E. Tarone (Eds.), *Social and cognitive factors in second language acquisition* (pp. 57–76). Somerville, MA: Cascadia Press.
- Scardamalia, M., & Bereiter, C. (1986). Research on written composition. In C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (3rd ed., pp. 778–803). New York: Macmillan.
- Schleppegrell, M., & Achugar, M. (2003). Learning language and learning history: A functional linguistics approach. *TESOL Journal*, 12, 21–27.

- Severino, C. (1993). The 'doodles' in context: Qualifying claims about contrastive rhetoric. *Writing Center Journal*, 14, 44–61.
- Sommers, N. (1980). Revision strategies of student writers and experienced writers. *College Composition and Communication*, 31, 23–31.
- Sommers, N. (1992). Between the drafts. *College Composition and Communication*, 43, 378–388.
- Storch, N. (2002). Patterns of interaction in ESL pair work. *Language Learning*, 52, 119–158.
- Swain, M. (2000). The output hypothesis and beyond: Mediating acquisition through collaborative dialogue. In J. Lantolf (Ed.), *Sociocultural theory and second language learning* (pp. 97–114). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Swain, M., & Lapkin, S. (1998). Interaction and second language learning: Two adolescent French immersion students working together. *Modern Language Journal*, 83, 320–338.
- Takahashi, E. (1998). Language development in classroom interaction: A longitudinal study of a Japanese FLES program from a sociocultural perspective. *Foreign Language Annals*, 31, 392–406.
- Thonus, T. (1999a). Dominance in academic writing tutorials: Gender, language proficiency and the offering of suggestions. *Discourse and Society*, 10, 225–248.
- Thonus, T. (1999b). How to communicate politely and be a tutor, too: NS-NNS interaction and writing center practice. *Text*, 19, 253–279.
- Thonus, T. (2001). Triangulation in the writing center: Tutor, tutee, and instructor perception of the tutor's role. *Writing Center Journal*, 22, 59–81.
- Thonus, T. (2002). Tutor and student assessments of academic writing tutorials: What is "success?" *Assessing Writing*, 8, 110–134.
- Tsui, A., & Ng, M. (2000). Do second L2 writers benefit from peer comments? *Journal of Secondary Language Writing*, 9, 147–170.
- Tudge, J. (1990). Vygotsky, the zone of proximal development, and peer collaboration: Implications for classroom practice. In L. Moll (Ed.), *Vygotsky and education* (pp. 155–172). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- van Gelderen, A. (1997). Elementary students' skills in revising. *Written Communication*, 14, 360–397.
- Villamil, O., & De Guerrero, M. (1998). Assessing the impact of peer revision on L2 writing. *Applied Linguistics*, 19, 491–514.
- Weir, C. (1990). *Communicative language testing*. New York: Prentice-Hall.
- Williams, J. (in press-a). Writing center interaction: Institutional discourse and the role of peer tutors. In K. Bardovi-Harlig & B. Hartford (Eds.), *Institutional talk and interlanguage pragmatics research*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Williams, J. (in press-b). *Teaching writing in second and foreign language classrooms*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Wood, D., Bruner, J., & Ross, D. (1976). The role of tutoring in problem-solving. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 17, 89–100.
- Yancey, K. (2002). Seeing practice through their eyes: Reflection as teacher. In P. Gillespie, A. Gillam, L. Brown, & B. Stay (Eds.), *Writing center research: Extending the conversation* (pp. 189–201). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Appendix A. Transcription conventions

- (.) Each (.) represents a 0.5 s pause
- Speaker chaining/interruption; no pause between speakers
- // Speaker overlap
- <·> Unintelligible
- (·) Nonverbal action
- Bold** Increased volume
- Italics* Relevant portion of interaction is italicized for reader
- [·] Voice modulation (e.g., loud, softly)

Appendix B. Holistic evaluation of drafts

An A paper exhibits most of the following features:

- Demonstrates full understanding of concepts in assignment/readings
- Gives an accurate and thorough treatment of issues
- Takes a clearly supported position
- Provides examples and illustrations
- Shows clear and unified paragraph development
- Shows logical sequence and organization
- Connects ideas smoothly
- Uses complex and varied syntax and academic vocabulary
- Contains few errors in grammar and vocabulary use
- Contains few errors in mechanics

A B paper exhibits most of the following features:

- Demonstrates good understanding of concepts in assignment/readings
- Gives a substantial treatment of issues
- Takes a adequately supported position
- Provides some examples and illustrations
- Shows adequate paragraph development, but may contain some irrelevant material or may contain some underdeveloped ideas
- Shows generally logical sequence and organization
- Some transitions may be abrupt or missing
- Uses a mix of complex and simple syntax and some academic vocabulary
- Contains some errors in grammar and vocabulary use
- Contains some errors in mechanics

A C paper exhibits most of the following features:

- Demonstrates incomplete understanding of concepts in assignment/readings
- Treatment of issues is incomplete and may contain inaccuracies
- Takes a position but it is not well supported
- Provides few examples or illustrations, or these are not clearly linked to main ideas
- Shows lack of development
- Shows lack of clear organization or illogical sequence
- Does not connect ideas
- Uses simple syntax and vocabulary
- Contains a considerable number of errors in grammar and vocabulary use
- Contains a considerable number of errors in mechanics

A D paper exhibits most of the following features:

- Demonstrates little understanding of concepts in assignment/readings
- Treatment of issues is incomplete and contains inaccuracies
- May not take a position or make any claim
- Provides few examples or illustrations
- Shows little development or connection of ideas
- Syntax and word choice errors often obscure meaning

Appendix B. *(Continued)*

An F paper exhibits most of the following features:

- Demonstrates little or no understanding of concepts in assignment/readings
 - Is off-topic
 - Contains too little text to evaluate
 - Formal errors obscure meaning, making content difficult to evaluate
-

From Williams (in press-b).