Situating Teacher Written Feedback in an EAP classroom: How Context Influences
Responding Practices

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ABSTRACT

This case study investigates the influence of the learning context on an EAP instructor's L2 student writing feedback. Within a post-process, socio-cultural perspective on writing and learning, the learning context is conceptualized as a nested, multilayered set of influences at the institution, program, and classroom levels that shapes the instructor's responding practices. Factors of influence were (1) identified from data collected through participant interviews, written feedback, and classroom observations and (2) examined using theoretical constructs drawn from Rhetorical Genre Studies and Situated Learning. Findings indicated the greatest influence came from the instructor's pedagogical approach, sustained content-based instruction. Factors originating from the programmatic and institutional layers also impacted upon responding practices, contributing to the overall shape of the EAP instructor's feedback. Implications indicate that greater articulation of guidelines amongst program instructors may increase coordination of responding practices, maintaining consistency in feedback used to guide the learning of academic language and skills.

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ABBREVIATIONS

APA	American Psychological Association
COP	Community of practice
EAP	English for academic purposes
EFL	English as a foreign language
ESL	English as a second language
GP	Guided participation
L1	First language
L2	Second language
LPP	Legitimate peripheral participation
LRP	Library research project
RGS	Rhetorical genre studies
SCBI	Sustained content-based instruction
SLA	Second language acquisition
TOEFL	Test of English as a foreign language
ZPD	Zone of proximal development

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ABBREVIATIONS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION	1
Study Impetus	2
Feedback	4
Context	6
<i>Nested Contexts</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Study's Nest of Contexts</i>	<i>7</i>
Pedagogical Layer	8
Programmatic Layer	9
Institutional Layer	9
Purpose of the Study	10
Research Questions	11
Thesis Overview	11
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW: RESPONDING TO L2 WRITING	13
L1 Practice and Research	13
Early L1 Influence on L2 Responding Guidelines	15
Classifying L2 Responses	16
<i>Error Correction: Feedback on Accuracy</i>	<i>18</i>
Roots of L2 Error Correction	18
Error Correction Continuum	19
<i>The degree of explicitness.</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>The degree of treatability.</i>	<i>20</i>
Grammar Correction Debate	21
The Rebuttal to Truscott	22
Contextual Components included in Research Designs	25
<i>Written Commentary: Feedback on Content and Rhetoric</i>	<i>26</i>
Feedback on Content and Rhetoric: Defined and Described	26
Roots of Written Commentary	27
Contextualizing Studies	28
<i>Classroom components.</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>Participant components.</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>Affective components.</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>From Process to Post-Process</i>	<i>31</i>
Chapter Summary	32

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE: FEEDBACK AS SITUATED ACTIVITY.....	34
Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS).....	35
<i>Genre as Social Action.....</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>Genre as a Cultural Artifact</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>Bakhtian Dialogism</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>Uptake</i>	<i>38</i>
<i>Genre of Feedback.....</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>RGS and the Study of Written Discourse</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>Applying RGS to the Study of Feedback</i>	<i>42</i>
Social Theories of Learning	42
<i>Guided Participation (GP)</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP)</i>	<i>48</i>
Summary.....	50
CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGY.....	51
Case Study Design.....	51
Location of Study	52
Participants.....	54
Data Collection	55
<i>Recruitment</i>	<i>56</i>
<i>Classroom Observations</i>	<i>57</i>
<i>Texts</i>	<i>58</i>
<i>Interviews</i>	<i>59</i>
<i>Transcription Review</i>	<i>60</i>
Data Analysis.....	60
Triangulation.....	61
Summary.....	62
CHAPTER 5. FINDINGS	64
Instructor's Feedback Practices	64
Pedagogical layer	66
<i>Pedagogical approach: SCBI</i>	<i>68</i>
SCBI defined.....	68
Implementing SCBI in her course.....	70
Writing Pedagogy	71
Library Research Project (LRP).....	72
<i>The LRP writing assignments.</i>	<i>74</i>
Feedback in the LRP	75
Feedback as a Tool for Learning	80
<i>Instructor/Reader Expectations</i>	<i>84</i>
Evaluation of the LRP.....	85
<i>Personal views of feedback.....</i>	<i>87</i>
<i>Summary of Pedagogical Layer Influences</i>	<i>90</i>
Programmatic Layer	91
<i>Shared Understandings.....</i>	<i>92</i>
Community of Practice	93
Curriculum	94

Instructor Autonomy	95
Understanding of Feedback	96
Learning to respond	98
<i>Summary of Programmatic Layer Influences</i>	99
Institutional Layer	100
<i>Employment</i>	100
Collective Agreement	100
Assumptions and Expectations	102
<i>Summary of the Institutional Layer Influences</i>	107
Summary of the Nested Contexts	107
CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION	108
Pedagogical Implications	109
Limitations and Future Work	115
REFERENCES	117
APPENDICES	123
Appendix A: Ethics Approval Certificate	123
Appendix B: Classroom Observation Protocol Sample	124
Appendix C: Instructor Interview Questions	125
Appendix D: Student Interview Questions	127
Appendix E: Program Coordinator Interview Questions	129
Appendix F: School Director Interview Questions	131
Appendix G: Interview Coding Sample	133

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Study's Multilayered Nested Learning Context	8
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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Researcher: How important is providing feedback to second language (L2) students on their writing?

English for academic purposes (EAP) Instructor: Actually, I think that this is one of the integral parts of teaching—the part that I think may potentially help a student if they put their mind to it. (Interview, December 1, 2008)

EAP Program Coordinator: I would say it is probably the very core of what you do with writing. The only way that they are really going to understand what's expected of academic writing is to do it and then get feedback on it, so I'd say it's so important that it's probably the most important thing that we do in terms of writing. (Interview, December 3, 2008)

School Director: It is maybe one of the most crucial things we do. (Interview, November 12, 2008)

While each voice speaks from a different position of influence within the institutional hierarchy of this study's learning environment, together, they vocalize a similar message: providing L2 students with feedback on their writing is of utmost importance. In fact, each voice represents one part of a multilayered learning context that surrounds the responding practices of the EAP instructor and influences the resulting feedback she provides her students. The types of responses she gives and their overall importance are addressed by one of her students:

For me, the comments are important because I can write better; I can use better grammar. Without comments, I can see only what I wrote, and I don't see any problems without any comments, and well, obviously for me, comments are most important thing [sic] for getting or becoming a better writer. (Interview, November 12, 2008)

With so much importance invested in feedback, especially in helping L2 students to become better writers, research into L2 writing feedback has been established as a relevant avenue of inquiry within the field of second language writing (Leki, Cumming, & Silva, 2008; Silva & Matsuda, 2001). While inquiries have been varied in their scope and method (Goldstein, 2001; Guénette, 2007), they share common aims that focus on the efficacy of an instructor's response toward aiding a learner's writing development. However, which feedback techniques and strategies are the most effective is not clear, as results are varied due to the equally varied learning contexts in which feedback is provided. Feedback is a product of its environment (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). This realization occurred at the start of my teaching career and has led me to undertake this investigation exploring L2 writing feedback.

Study Impetus

As a novice L2 writing instructor, I faced a number of challenges in the classroom. However, responding to my students' texts proved to be the biggest one. The first course I taught was designed so that students learned to write academic essays using a process approach to writing. They were asked to brainstorm ideas on a given a topic, draft an initial text and then revise it according to their instructor's feedback. Each assignment was graded equally for content and language accuracy. In responding to the students' compositions for the first time, I was clear about two things: (a) my comments were part of *their* writing process, so I needed to give them feedback that would guide them toward composing coherent and cohesive texts, and (b) I needed to address the text's content and language, for their grade was determined through equal assessment of both. Having received no formal training or guidance in how I should respond, I sat for

hours with pencil and eraser in hand, writing and rewriting prescriptive comments in hopes that my feedback would be clear, direct, and effective. It was not an easy task. Upon returning the students' compositions, I was anxious and curious about how my feedback would affect changes in their final drafts. The results were mixed. Some students followed the directions; others ignored them. Some said they didn't understand what I was asking them to do. Others only corrected their language errors. As a writing instructor, I felt fundamentally responsible for providing feedback that would lead to improvements in the quality of the writing, but how could I? How should I?

I began searching for answers to my questions. I consulted with colleagues, who shared their insights and strategies for how they respond. I read published research articles on L2 writers and feedback and tried following the guidelines as detailed in the each author's proposed pedagogical applications. I varied my responding practices by mixing terse imperative directions with probing questions. I informally asked students what they wanted my responses to address in their texts. I responded to individual learners' needs and weaknesses. I didn't give up; I kept responding. At the end of the school year, I was beginning to feel more confident in what I was doing, especially in how I was responding to students' texts.

Over the summer, I was reassigned from teaching remedial ESL courses to teaching writing classes in an EAP program. This type of program focuses on providing English-language skill development "grounded in the social, cognitive, and linguistic demands of academic target situations, providing focused instruction informed by an understanding of texts and the constraints of academic contexts" (Hyland, 2006, p. 2). The majority of the students in the program had not been accepted into full-time study at

the college due to not meeting the language proficiency requirement. Enrollment status was not the only way in which the EAP students differed from the students I had recently taught in the remedial classes. EAP students differed in language proficiencies and levels of academic skill development. Therefore, the EAP curriculum and its overall structure were greatly different from the ESL courses. In fact, the entire learning context of EAP was different. As a result, my teaching practices changed, including responding to the EAP students' writing. It was then that I began to realize that how I responded to my students' texts was greatly influenced by the surrounding learning context. While some influences such as learner proficiency were easily recognizable, other less obvious contextual influences also existed, but what were they?

This study explores the influences that a learning context has on the written feedback an instructor gives to L2 learners on their writing in her EAP class. I begin by clarifying the terms *feedback* and *context*. Then I explain the project's rationale and state the research questions that have guided me throughout the entire investigation. Finally, I conclude this chapter with a brief synopsis of each of the remaining chapters in this thesis.

Feedback

In this study, feedback is an encompassing term used to refer to all written responses that an EAP instructor writes on her students' texts or a prefabricated comment sheet attached to a piece of the student's writing. While an EAP instructor may use other methods of responding to student writing (e.g. face-to-face conferencing or computer-mediated commentary), handwritten feedback remains the most widely practiced (Leki,

Cumming, & Silva, 2008). For this reason, I have chosen to focus on this method of practice.

Feedback can be identified and classified by regularities in form, location in the text, and pragmatic functions. Feedback is found written in the margins (*marginalia*), within the text at the point of intervention, and/or at the end of the text in one summative chunk. Further, it can be semantically structured as statements, questions, or imperatives that respond to a text's content and/or the author's ideas—positively or negatively. Feedback can be formative, given as guidance between drafts of a text, or it can be summative, given as a final comment and evaluation. Feedback also addresses a writer's accurate use of language—grammatically and syntactically. These responses that address errors in accuracy can be given as commentary and/or coding schemes and/or symbols.

Beyond the immediate response feedback addresses in the content and language of a student's text, feedback is also a form of communication that “mediat[es] the relationship between students' wider cultural and social worlds and their growing familiarity with new literary practices” (Hyland & Hyland, 2006, p. xv). Strengthening this relationship bridges an L2 learner's academic skill development with their acculturation into the surrounding community. The feedback an EAP instructor provides can then act as a tool for conveying messages (Lantolf, 2000; Rogoff, 1990) that fosters such a relationship. The types of messages that an instructor's written responses communicate are tied to the learning context in which the feedback is situated. Therefore, the concept of context needs to be further explored and defined.

Context

Defining context is not an easy task, as there are various dimensions in which an event or activity can occur both physically and conceptually. In exploring the role in which context influences L2 writing feedback, Goldstein (2004) describes context as “a unique combination of factors *stemming from* [italics added] the institution and the program within which the writing, commenting, and revision takes place, and factors that teachers and students *bring to* [italics added] the process, as well” (p. 65). While Goldstein does not explicitly define what a factor is, she provides some examples of “contextual factors such as word and length requirements, draft requirements, number of page requirements and entrance and exit exams may also exert strong pressure on teacher commentary” (p. 65). Here, she is using the term *factor* to describe the various sources that may influence the responding practice of an instructor. It is within this same vein that the term factor will be used in this study: a source of influence located within the learning context.

Describing context as a combination of various factors coming from (a) physical locations (e.g. university, classrooms) and associated institutionalized knowledge, power, and ideologies (e.g. curriculum, grades, pedagogies) and (b) the knowledge, practices, ideas, and personalities belonging to students and their instructors, Goldstein (2004) alludes to a conceptualization that (a) context is multi-layered (e.g. institution, program, and teachers and students) and (b) each layer contains factors that may influence the responding practices of an L2 writing instructor.

Nested Contexts

Maguire's (1994) concept of "nested contexts" (p.121) is one attempt at visually representing multiple layers of contexts in an organized manner in order to identify where contextual factors influencing an activity originate from. In her study of the use of narratives in language learning and cultural development, Maguire investigates how context influences bilingual children's story-making. In order to view where sources of influence originate from, she conceptualizes the "socio-linguistic print environment" (p.121) surrounding the children's story-making as a series of concentric layers of contexts, forming a nest around the activity. Moving from the centre outward, the overall environment is divided into layers, namely the invisible, personal, pedagogical, community, socio-linguistic cultural, socio-political-linguistic, national-provincial, and world contexts. Maguire argues that, although not seen in the classroom setting, "such intercontexts as . . . provincial curricula, school-based curricula, policies, school values, and teachers' ideologies . . . impinge directly or indirectly" (p.120) on the consciousness of those who are engaged in the activity that lies at the centre of the nest. Central to Maguire's argument is the idea that not only does context shape the practices situated within them but also more than one layer of context influences the embedded activity.

Study's Nest of Contexts

My study takes a nested context approach to conceptualizing the learning context that surrounds the practice of responding to EAP student writing in an English-medium university in Canada, henceforth the University. The nest I have constructed (see Figure 1) has three layers: pedagogical, programmatic, and institutional. The layers were determined according to the institutionalized hierarchy in which the University has

structured the overall learning context—an instructor provides feedback to her students in an EAP *course* (pedagogical); the course is one of three within a *program* (programmatic); the program is run and managed within a *language school* (institutional), henceforth the School. While the term *layer* connotes defined borders, the boundaries between layers are not fixed or impermeable. With this caveat in mind, each layer is further described below.

Figure 1. Study's Multilayered Nested Learning Context

Pedagogical Layer

The pedagogical layer surrounds the centre of the nest. It contains all of the objects that belong to the physical environment of the classroom in which the course takes place such as the room's tables and chairs and how this furniture is arranged, the number of whiteboards or chalkboards and how they are arranged, etc. This layer also contains the instructor and her students, the lessons she teaches, her pedagogical approach, and all of the exercises and assignments that are outlined on the course syllabus. Further, the pedagogical layer takes into account the instructor and student

personalities, and the resulting interactions that occur among classmates and between students and their instructor.

Programmatic Layer

The programmatic layer surrounds the pedagogical layer and contains all of the factors that belong to the structure and management of the EAP program. This includes standards, policies, and guidelines established and observed by EAP instructors. Also, included within this layer is the coordinator of the program, providing leadership for the program's instructors. Additional factors belonging to this layer are instructor interactions, decisions concerning the direction of the program, discussions concerning instructors' practices, and shared philosophical views on teaching and learning.

Institutional Layer

The nest's outer layer is the institutional layer. This layer encompasses all of the factors that stem from the administration of the School's programs, of which EAP is one. Located within this layer is the director of the School that administers the EAP program and associated bureaucratic influences that impose a structure on the EAP program and its courses. Further, because the director must answer to his superiors within the institutional hierarchy, he is subjected to rules and regulations concerning the administration of the School's programs, including the hiring of its instructors, grading of students, conferring of degrees. Factors that stem from labour and union regulations and rules belong to this layer as well.

Together, these three layers form a multilayered nest of contexts that surrounds the practice of responding to L2 student writing, taking into account how feedback is used, who uses it, and the function(s) it serves.

Purpose of the Study

Within a large amount of literature compiled on L2 writing feedback, specifically studies investigating the effects of written commentary and/or error correction on the composing and revising practices of students (see the literature review in the next chapter), context is most often used only to situate the investigation (e.g. see Montgomery & Baker, 2007; Sugita, 2006). It is rarely the subject or the focus of a study. In the few studies (e.g. see Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Ferris, 1995; Hyland, 1998) that have probed context to examine its influence on feedback, researchers have tended to focus on the contextual factors existing within the physical confines and conceptual boundaries of the classroom such as who the learners are, what types of assignments they compose, or where the study takes place. These studies rarely, if at all, have questioned (a) the influence contextual factors exert upon the construction of an instructor's responses, (b) if any influences originate from sources outside of the classroom, and (c) then how such contextually shaped responses help L2 students learn.

This study aims to delve into these little-accounted-for areas by taking a nested context approach to the study of feedback to identify the factors that originate from each layer of the learning context and how such factors influence the responding practices of an EAP instructor. Further, the investigation aims to view the practice of responding to L2 student writing from a perspective shaped by socially and culturally constructed practices and philosophies (Lantolf, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985). Such a perspective will be used to see how context shapes the instructor's feedback into a cultural artifact that mediates learning. The ultimate objective is to understand where the main influences on an EAP instructor's responding practices originate from and how the

feedback supports learning. Garnering insight into the connection between contexts and responding practices may help explain why feedback is so important in the development of writing for L2 learners in preparing for university studies.

Research Questions

Adopting a socio-cultural perspective, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. How, and to what extent, do contextual factors located within various layers of a nested learning context influence the responding practices of an EAP instructor?
2. Does the instructor's resulting feedback help L2 students to learn? If so, how?

This resulting investigation into the influence that context has on the responding practices of an EAP instructor is outlined below.

Thesis Overview

In the next chapter, I review literature on L2 writing feedback, so as to better situate my study and clarify its potential contribution to this existing body of knowledge. The third chapter reviews the theoretical constructs employed in the study, drawn from Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS) and Situated Learning. Such constructs are used to view how feedback mediates learning in a socially constructed and situated learning environment. The fourth chapter outlines the study's methodological approach to data collection and data analysis. This is followed by an analysis of the findings in chapter five, presenting the contextual factors that influence the EAP instructor's responding practices according to the layer from which they originate and how such contextually shaped feedback mediates learning. The final chapter discusses the results of the findings,

including pedagogical implications, study limitations, and future avenues for continuing investigations.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW: RESPONDING TO L2 WRITING

This chapter reviews literature that has been compiled on L2 writing feedback, beginning with the phenomenon's roots grounded in first language (L1) practices and studies. The review then moves into L2 contexts, following a dual focus that mirrors the state of the field: feedback on form and feedback on content. Each section aims to show how context has been accounted for within previous studies.

L1 Practice and Research

Significant interest in researching responses to L2 student writing began as a result of the pedagogical changes that first occurred in North American L1 educational contexts during the late 1970s (Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 2003; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Zamel, 1985). Classroom instruction in L1 courses at that time began to shift from being instructor-centred towards incorporating more learning-centred approaches into pedagogical practices (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). From out of this move, the “process approach” to writing emerged, in which students took more control over developing and discovering meaning through the practice of drafting a single text—writing and then rewriting (Ferris, 2003; Goldstein, 2005; Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Within this new approach, the composition of academic texts was broken down into stages that included pre-writing, drafting, and revising.

The paradigmatic shift in composing practices, from product-focused to process-focused, also required a reformation of both student-writer and instructor-reader roles. Where once a student submitted a single final copy of her composition for evaluation, now she was expected to cyclically submit and resubmit multiple drafts. In between

drafts, the writer fulfilled her new role by revising the text using commentary her instructor provided in either the margins or in endnote messages that prompted her to correct grammatical errors or clarify ideas (Ferris, 2003; Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Likewise, the role of the instructor also shifted. No longer was an instructor's feedback on compositions a summative response to a finished product that was both a judgment on performance and a justification of its grade. Now, responses came in between drafts, formatively. Using responses as directives to guide and encourage the discovery of meaning during the process of composing, instructors were expected to assist student writers in the production of subsequent texts, and at the same time, contribute to developing skills for future writing tasks (Hyland & Hyland, 2006).

The change in pedagogical practice not only altered the roles of both instructors and students but also shifted the focus of research being conducted as well (Ferris, 2003; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Zamel, 1985). Even before this shift, responses, while summative, were providing learners with feedback on their work and were "widely seen in education as crucial for both encouraging and consolidating learning" (Hyland & Hyland, 2006, p. 1). Therefore, with the inception of an approach to instruction that incorporated feedback into the process of producing a text, the importance of responding to writing became even more crucial. Studies were undertaken to garner new perspectives on feedback. On the one hand, through research, writing instructors could "discover the kinds of responses they make and the underlying assumptions about writing that these responses reflect" (Zamel, 1985, p. 83). On the other hand, studies could provide instructors with a measure of effectiveness that their responses prompted from one draft to the next, indicating if interventions provided led to the composition of stronger and

accurate texts. Further, a measure of efficacy was desirable for justifying the amount of time instructors spent commenting on and correcting their students' drafts¹.

Early L1 Influence on L2 Responding Guidelines

Two early L1 studies by Brannon and Knoblauch (1982) and Sommers (1982) that attempted to measure the efficacy of instructors' responses resulted in characterizing feedback as an ineffective and useless enterprise. In fact, both studies reported that providing written commentary was not a worthwhile task to invest both time and effort into, as any positive results from intervention could not be measured. Instead, each study prescribed a set of restrictions and guidelines that instructors should follow when responding to student writers in order to counter any negative effects that commentary may produce. Despite having been criticized harshly by many other scholars due to unreliable data reporting and questionable data analysis (see Ferris, 2003; Goldstein, 2001), the prescriptive directions that were introduced in these two articles have greatly influenced L2 instructors' responding practices to this day, including (a) when to provide feedback, and (b) how to provide feedback. Recommendations encourage instructors to comment on content, rhetoric, and organization on early drafts and leave corrections of grammar and syntactic structure for the penultimate draft. Further, instructors are warned to avoid directives that appropriate the voice of the writer; instead, they should ask questions that do not usurp the writer's intent or purpose.

¹ Within the body of literature examining responses given to student writers, one of the most pervasive factors cited by early researchers (e.g. see Ferris, 1995; Sommers, 1982; Zamel, 1985) as a motivating agent for uncovering the efficacy of intervention strategies is the notion of time. So overwhelming, this factor prompted Hairston (1986) to coin instructors as "composition slaves" (as referenced in a review by Ferris, 2003) due to the amount of time they spent marking and commenting on their students' texts. The issue of time is still a concern acknowledged by instructors today (e.g. see Guénette, 2007).

Because the transition from a product-focused pedagogy to a process-focused approach presented new challenges to instructors, the guidelines offered by Brannon and Knoblauch (1982) and Sommers (1982) were intended to ease any troubles writing instructors may encounter as they transitioned from responding summatively to formatively. Their guidelines, though derived from studies conducted within L1 contexts, were so influential that not only were they adopted by and applied to L2 pedagogies but are also still adhered to today in EAP classrooms (e.g. see Montgomery & Baker, 2007).

Establishing guidelines is one way that researchers have been able to steer and streamline responding practices toward a common goal: helping students compose more accurate, content-relevant, and coherent academic texts. However, this central concern amalgamates three distinct features of text construction: accuracy, substance, and coherence. This division has led to the formation of two classes of feedback research: focus on form (issues of accuracy) and focus on content and rhetoric (issues of substance/coherence).

Classifying L2 Responses

When responding formatively, L2 instructors can direct students in (a) correcting any linguistic or grammatical errors in form made throughout the text and/or (b) enriching texts with relevant content and/or clarifying or reorganizing ideas. Thus, feedback has the ability to focus on form and/or focus on content and rhetoric. In responding to these issues in a student's text, an instructor may use a variety of feedback techniques to indicate where a problem exists. Typically, in L2 writing feedback literature, issues of accuracy are subject to research in studies that examine error corrective techniques and practices while issues of substance/coherence are subject to

research in studies that examine written commentary. That being said, this distinction is often blurred. Sometimes, instructors use written comments to respond to grammatical inaccuracies. Further, incoherent ideas are viewed by some instructors as mistakes and are subject to error correction techniques. However, the labels *error correction* and *written commentary* are widely accepted and used amongst practitioners (Ferris, 2003; Guénette, 2007; Hyland & Hyland, 2006) to binarily and somewhat arbitrarily equate error correction with issues of accuracy and written commentary with issues of content and rhetoric. The remaining sections of this literature review use these labels in a similar fashion.

The first class of feedback discussed involves issues of linguistic and grammatical accuracy. These are responses that focus on form. In the following sections, I will provide a background on studies that are labeled as error correction, beginning with a description of corrective techniques, their characteristics, and why instructors use them. Next, I present how efficacy is measured in error correction studies, the debate that has emerged concerning the correction of grammar, and conclude the section with an explanation on how components of context have either been incorporated into research designs and/or influenced investigations into responses on accuracy. This is followed by a review of studies that focus on content and rhetoric. That section will discuss defining characteristics of feedback that address issues of content and rhetoric and how research studies exploring this class of feedback have incorporated and/or have been influenced by components of context.

It is pertinent to note that although an instructor's written feedback occurs within a classroom setting, feedback can potentially be influenced by contextual factors

originating from beyond of the boundaries of a pedagogical context. However, studies, whether form-focused or content-focused have tended to only focus, if at all, on the influences located within a pedagogical context. Which factors and how they are addressed in studies will be noted in the remaining sections of this literature review. Further, any sources originating from beyond a pedagogical context will also be noted. Noting how context has been accounted for in previous research is important for this study, as this project aims to understand how factors originating from multiple layers of a learning context together influence responding practices.

Error Correction: Feedback on Accuracy

Roots of L2 Error Correction

Early research on feedback addressing issues of form-focused accuracy took place from 1976 to 1986 (Ferris, 2003). At that time, students' texts were viewed as finished products, and consequently, instructors graded them within the same vein. As a result, summative feedback provided had a dual purpose: (a) to act as a justification for the grade awarded using evaluative commentary; and (b) to indicate where the writer had made errors in syntactic form and linguistic structure (Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 2003; Hedgecock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Hyland & Hyland, 2006). As a result, the research on error correction practices was aimed at understanding if form-focused interventions made in the summative responses from instructors had a positive effect on improving and developing written accuracy (Chandler 2003; Ferris, 2003; Hedgecock & Lefkowitz, 1994). Once the shift from product to process-focused pedagogies occurred, research on "sentence-level accuracy issues" (Ferris, 2003, p. 42) diminished, but did not disappear.

Reviews and discussion of the literature compiled on L2 error correction feedback by Bitchener, Young, and Cameron (2005), Chandler (2003, 2004), Fathman and Whalley (1990), Ferris, (1999, 2003, 2004), Ferris and Roberts (2001), Guénette (2007), Hedgecock and Lefkowitz (1994), Hyland and Hyland (2006), and Truscott (1996, 1999, 2004, 2007) have all critically examined experimental studies designed to measure the efficacy of intervention strategies in both short-term and long-term treatments intended on improving the accuracy of grammar and syntax usage in L2 student writing. Within the reviews, positive findings indicating an improvement in written accuracy as a result of teacher interventions (e.g. see Ashwell, 2000; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris 1997; Ferris & Roberts 2001; Robb, Ross, & Shortreed, 1986) are often contrasted with findings indicating no improvement in accuracy or a negative effect on overall linguistic control as a result of teacher intervention strategies (e.g. see Kepner 1991; Polio, Fleck, & Leder, 1998). However, the comparability of these studies' results, based on the dichotomous concept of positive versus negative, is overly simplistic and misleading. This occurs because the studies being compared are vastly different and vary in aspects of research design, including, but not limited to, the subjects, research questions, intervention strategies studied, and data analysis and reporting. What becomes initially apparent in reviewing error correction studies is the lack of consistency in the operationalization of feedback techniques given to improve grammatical and syntactic accuracy.

Error Correction Continuum

In error correction studies, researchers are typically interested in measuring the amount of change that occurs post-treatment in a student's accurate use of grammar,

syntax, and linguistic structures in their writing. Instructors, when responding to linguistic errors, can employ a number of intervention strategies often reported in experimental studies as being either direct or indirect. This division is not a true dichotomy, but rather best perceived of as a continuum defined by degrees of explicitness and treatability.

The degree of explicitness. While often presented as an either/or, directness should be viewed as a sliding scale that works in tandem with degrees of explicitness. On one extreme, the treatment of an error can be direct (e.g. the instructor crosses out an error) and explicit² (e.g. the correct form is written into the text), while on the other extreme, the treatment can be indirect (e.g. an endnote comment informs the student there are errors of form in their text) and implicit (e.g. the student must find, identify, and correct these errors in form independently). As these descriptions exemplify the extremities of the error treatment poles, there are, in between them, varying degrees of explicitness that provide instructors with a range of intervention strategies to use when responding to the errors of form in a student's composition.³

The degree of treatability. Consideration of error treatability can help instructors decide on the directness and explicitness in their choice of intervention strategy. Treatable errors are those that are rule-governed and can be corrected by students with the aid of reference books (e.g. grammar textbook), as opposed to untreatable errors that are more idiomatic

² For a detailed example of direct, explicit feedback treatments in an experimental study, see Bitchener, Young, and Cameron (2005).

³ For further discussion of the varying degrees of explicitness of intervention treatments that focus on form, as operationalized in experimental studies, see Ferris (2003) and Guénette (2007).

(e.g. phrasal verbs) and idiosyncratic (e.g. collocations) and defy explanation (Ferris, 2003).

In determining an error's treatability, an instructor should take into consideration the level of a student's language proficiency. Second language acquisition (SLA) research has determined that learners acquire particular linguistic forms in a particular sequence, impacting a learner's ability to attend to certain types of grammar errors in their texts (Ferris 1999, 2003, 2004; Truscott 1996, 1999, 2004, 2007). In other words, students are not always developmentally able to learn from interventions that instructors may provide. A further consideration is classroom instruction. Errors become more treatable when the isolated and integrated practice of grammar and syntax occurs in instructional settings, raising a student's awareness of how forms are used in compositions (Ellis, 1998; Guénette, 2007).

While considering an error's degree of treatability helps instructors to determine how they can respond to a student's mistakes in grammar and syntax, eventually all interventions strategies are ultimately judged upon whether or not they can affect change in accuracy over the short term or long term. Judging the usefulness of feedback for improving issues of accuracy has led to a disciplinary debate on grammar correction.

Grammar Correction Debate

In the L2 writing literature, the "grammar correction debate" was sparked by John Truscott's (1996) controversial article that called for the abandonment of grammar correction in feedback practices within the L2 writing classroom. Defining grammar correction as "the correction of grammatical errors for the purpose of improving a

student's ability to write accurately" (p. 329), Truscott makes a case against it based on four main arguments:

(a) research evidence shows that grammar correction is ineffective; (b) this lack of effectiveness is exactly what should be expected, given the nature of the correction process and the nature of language learning; (c) grammar correction has significant harmful effects; and (d) the various arguments offered for continuing it all lack merit. (p. 2)

To support his argument, he turned to experimental studies.

The most compelling evidence presented by Truscott (1996) to bolster his arguments comes from SLA research on the developmental sequences in language acquisition. Truscott argues that because language acquisition is developmental, error correction, if used at all, should only target the forms students are developmentally ready for acquiring. However, he claims that "instructional sequences run counter to them . . . [and that] . . . teachers corrected students on grammar points for which they were not ready" (p. 337). The question, then, is how can a student's proficiency level be measured to determine her level of developmental readiness? How can this knowledge be applied pedagogically? The onus now falls on researchers and instructors to determine how to marry the two together, and until then, Truscott's argument stands firm: abandon grammar correction.

The Rebuttal to Truscott

Since the publication of Truscott's article, many scholars who favour grammar correction and believe it does contribute to increased accuracy in L2 learners' texts have

undertaken experimental studies to find evidence that supports their views (e.g. see Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Chandler, 2003; Ferris & Roberts, 2001). Others have countered each of his arguments by reexamining his sources (e.g. see Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 1999, 2003, 2004), arguing for the continued use of grammar correction in L2 writing classrooms. However, not all of Truscott's views are contested. Some scholars agree that effective grammar correction must be given in respect to SLA developmental sequences (Chandler, 2003; Ellis, 1998; Ferris, 1999, 2004), but they do not agree that grammar correction should be completely abandoned. The question raised now is why do instructors correct their students' grammar?

One of most prevalent reasons cited in studies for the continuation of error correction is that students want to be corrected (e.g. see Hedgecock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Montgomery & Baker, 2007; Radecki & Swales, 1988). Additionally, findings from experimental studies that measure the effects of feedback on grammatical and linguistic accuracy have shown statistically significant improvements in students' writing (e.g. see Ferris & Roberts, 2001). Therefore, researchers argue that evidence also “*predicts* [italics in original] (but certainly does not conclusively *prove* [italics in original]) positive effects for written error correction” (Ferris, 2004, p.50). Another argument is that L2 instructors intuitively feel that they must provide some type of feedback directed at grammar or linguistic structure in order to aid the development of accuracy and control (Ferris, 2003). Following what one intuitively feels one should do is a practice that Truscott (1996) argues is not supported by research evidence, and it is, in fact, a contradiction to the tenets of empirical research. Truscott's argument, thus, highlights a tension between teaching and researching.

Ellis (1998) sheds light on this tension by exploring the differences between the social and work worlds of instructors and researchers, namely between practical and technical knowledge. Instructors, he claims, need and use practical knowledge in the classrooms where they make decisions about what and how to teach in the moment of teaching. Conversely, researchers produce and advance technical knowledge “either by reflecting deeply about the object of enquiry or by investigating it empirically” (p. 40). This distinction between technical and practical knowledge is embodied in the teaching profession. SLA research, over time and through the work of many researchers, has amounted to a considerable body of technical knowledge concerning how people learn an L2. Equally as large is the amount of intuitive and implicit knowledge classroom instructors have gained over time and through experience. As a result, experienced instructors know how and what to teach to whom without, in general, a great technical awareness of their practices. Because practicing professionals such as L2 language instructors must attend to the situation that they face in the moment of teaching, they most often rely on their practical knowledge. However, that is not to say that instructors do not utilize technical knowledge when planning lessons, creating materials, and making decisions concerning pedagogical strategies. Bringing this back to the disciplinary debate over grammar correction, Ellis claims instructors need to make decisions based on intuition, especially “given that error correction involves attending to a variety of social and affective factors . . . [for which] . . . technical knowledge about what works best for language acquisition can never provide a complete basis for correcting errors” (p. 53). Therefore, finding a balance between practical and technical knowledge needs to occur in order to maximize the learning through feedback interventions.

Contextual Components included in Research Designs

As the grammar correction debate continues (e.g. see Chandler, 2009; Truscott, 2009), the body of literature and research continues to build. Often, researchers have designed their studies to generate quantifiable and comparable data amongst treatment groups (Ferris, 2003; Guénette, 2007) in order to measure intervention strategies' efficacy. Consequently, treatment type, length of treatment, and population numbers are the main variables modified from study to study. Contextual components such as pedagogical approach, curricular design, or administrative structuring do not play a major role in research designs or analysis of data collected. However, some components of the pedagogical environment are accounted for in the selection of the populations being treated. Differences between international and immigrant populations are noted, as well as whether or not the course being taught is English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL). These components have led to explicating variations in (a) the amount of attention students give to the treatment of error to improve their linguistic accuracy, and (b) the types of goals they set for achieving greater overall accuracy.⁴ However, little analysis is afforded to unpacking how these variations in the pedagogical context contribute to influencing how feedback aimed at issues of accuracy is constructed.

As mentioned earlier, in addition to issues of accuracy instructors use feedback to address issues in content and rhetoric. The following sections turn to a more detailed review of the feedback that addresses a focus on content and rhetoric. The review

⁴ For detailed discussion of research design variables in error correction studies see a review by Ferris (2003) and/or a critique regarding the research designs used in error correction studies by Guénette (2007).

includes a description of the characteristics of written commentary. It also describes how context has been accounted for in research designs and the results of such studies, focusing on the efficacy of written commentary.

Written Commentary: Feedback on Content and Rhetoric

Written commentary is the label used to classify responses that address issues of content and rhetoric within texts because the technique most often employed by instructors to address such issues is the written comment. To reiterate, hand-written comments can be used to indicate errors in grammar and syntactic structure; however, the majority of written comments found in a student's text are directed at responding to the issues of the content's substance, argumentation, and generic organization (Ferris, 2003; Goldstein, 2005; Hyland & Hyland, 2006).

Feedback on Content and Rhetoric: Defined and Described

Not all written comments that address issues of content and rhetoric are the same. They vary in their location, length, and content. An instructor's comments can be (a) localized: written in the text or margins at the place of question; (b) collective: a paragraph at the end of the text addressing issues needing revision throughout; or (c) appended: written on a separate sheet or on a pre-fabricated comment rubric (Goldstein, 2005). Comments can take the shape of (a) questions, (b) statements, or (c) imperatives. Looking into the content of the comment also reveals variations. A comment can be specific and related to the individual text upon which it is written, or it can be generic and appear on any text regardless of other factors such as topic or genre of the assignment or even the proficiency level of the student (Ferris, 2003; Goldstein, 2005). Additionally, comments can be (a) positive and encouraging, (b) negative and punitive, and/or (c) a

mixture of both (e.g. see Hyland & Hyland, 2001). These variations in written commentary have been the focus of research studies. How L2 students use or not use varied types of comments in their revising strategies and as a prompt for future compositions is what researchers have focused on measuring in experimental studies (e.g. see Ferris, 1997; Hyland, 1998).

While the measurement of effectiveness is a central focus of experimental research in this intervention strategy, it is not the sole focus. Studies can measure efficacy quantifiably by looking for statistical significances that indicate improvement as a result of the intervention treatment (e.g. see Sugita, 2006). However, others have taken a more qualitative approach, conducting case studies (e.g. see Hyland, 1998) or adopting a mixed-methods approach (e.g. see Montgomery & Baker, 2007) in their research design by triangulating statistical analyses with the opinions and insights of instructors and students. As a result, qualitative and mixed-method research paradigms have allowed investigators more of an opportunity for incorporating components of context within the scope of data analysis.

Roots of Written Commentary

Zamel's (1985) study of responses given to L2 learners' texts was itself a response to the state of feedback research being conducted at that time. Observing that feedback practices had only been integrated in the context of L1 writing classroom (e.g. see Brannon & Knoblauch, 1982; Sommers, 1982), her study was designed in order to examine "actual reactions to and comments about authentic texts in real instructional settings . . . by teachers in their own university-level ESL writing classes" (Zamel, 1985, p. 8). Further, she wanted to understand if L2 instructors responded any differently than

her L1 counterparts, so she shifted the larger classroom context from an L1 composition course to an L2 writing class. Her findings led her to conclude that L2 instructors were responding in similar ways as their L1 counterparts.

The conclusions Zamel (1985) drew from her findings were not a positive endorsement for providing written commentary. Findings indicated that L2 instructors' comments (a) appropriated students' texts⁵; (b) were contradictory, idiosyncratic and arbitrary; and (c) addressed mostly grammatical and syntactic errors in form and usage. Therefore, Zamel provided a number of directives that L2 instructors could use as guidelines for how they should respond to their students. These suggestions were aimed at maximizing the efficacy of an instructor's feedback in improving the overall quality of an L2 student's writing, rhetorically and structurally. However, of all the guidelines she offered, the first directive was the most influential on future research. In it, she insisted that an instructor should become an ethnographer of her own practice. To do so would require an instructor to observe and analyze her own actions and her students' (re)actions within their classroom context. Zamel's prescriptive guideline, then, opened the door for a greater integration of contextual components into studies examining the use of written commentary given to L2 students.

Contextualizing Studies

Classroom components. Taking their cue from Zamel, other researchers designed studies to focus on particular components of the classroom/pedagogical context. Study designs reflected the varied contexts in which L2 writing classes existed (Ferris, 2003).

⁵ Zamel (1985) is referring to feedback that changes the student's intended meaning, often given as a result of the instructor misreading or not understanding the full intent of the student's text (see pp. 86-88 for examples).

Contextual components that were accounted for in research on L2 writing feedback included the number of students being studied (e.g. see Hyland, 1998), the proficiency levels of the students (e.g. see Radecki & Swales, 1988), or the pedagogical structure of the course (e.g. see Ferris, 1995). From these studies, researchers drew pedagogical implications that led to the creation of guidelines, encouraging other practitioners to apply such directions in their classroom practices. As a result, guidelines were continually being drawn and redrawn to shape and reshape the classroom/pedagogical contexts of L2 writing classrooms.

The systematic exploration of various contextual components not only generated a number of different guidelines concerning how instructors should structure and deliver their written commentary but also produced insights into how the impact of commentary on text revision and the composition process intersects with the instructional context. For example, by situating a study within a course that follows a specific pedagogical structure, a multiple-draft composition class, Ferris (1995) found students focused more attention on the commentary given on early drafts of their texts. This attention led to overall improvements in the quality of subsequent revisions. Therefore, Ferris directs instructors to give more feedback on preliminary drafts as this effects more positive changes in the quality of written production.

Participant components. In addition to exploring components of the classroom context, thicker and richer descriptions of participants are often detailed to situate studies more concretely. Most studies today provide details of their participants' background information such as cultural heritage, native language, residency status, age, sex and previous education (e.g. see Ferris, 1997; Ferris, Pezone, Tade, & Tinti, 1997; Hyland,

2000; Montgomery & Baker, 2007). Although the reporting of these features helps to “contextualize” a study, they have not been, typically, paramount in the analysis of the data collected. Even though these contextual components could be used as windows into the social and cultural worlds of learners, a student’s background information has rarely been investigated as an influencing factor on her instructor’s composing practices, especially feedback addressing issues of content and rhetoric. This is beginning to change in regards to the learner’s use of feedback. Attention is now being drawn towards investigating the socio-affective dimensions of learners and how different learners use written commentary for developing as writers (Goldstein, 2005).

Affective components. Aside from studies focused on the contextual components of the classroom, researchers have conducted investigations exploring the affective domain of learners and their views surrounding feedback. While early studies mainly focused on understanding the composing practices of instructors and the effectiveness of their comments on future text composition, Radecki and Swales (1988) turned to the students in order to understand the interpreting practices of learners and their preferences for receiving feedback. While focusing on affective qualities, the researchers drew connections between students’ perspectives on learning and their influences on course design, a factor originating from the pedagogical context. Radecki and Swales argued that studies which gathered “information about student’s attitudes to writing, and about the roles they assign to themselves and to their instructor in the review process, would be of value in devising courses that take into account these attitudes” (p. 355). Their study influenced other researchers to begin further investigations designed to better understand students’ perspectives on feedback. Other studies, specifically on written commentary,

looked at not only the student's perspectives but in combination with the instructor's perspectives as well (e.g. see Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Hyland, 1998, 2000). Gleaning such views and attitudes is an important aspect of studying feedback, especially since it is a socially constructed and situated writing practice (Dias, Freedman, Medway & Paré, 1999; Goldstein, 2005; Lantolf, 2000).

From Process to Post-Process

After reviewing the two classes of L2 writing feedback—accuracy-focused and content-focused—one can argue that the goals of most studies have been to provide L2 writing instructors with guidelines or directives to follow when responding to their students. Their responses, in turn, would then help L2 learners become more accurate and/or rhetorically savvy academic writers. Further, the majority of studies reviewed have shown that research designs have tended to only explore components of context that lie within the pedagogical layer of the overall learning context, namely what happens in the classroom. Perhaps this fact can be linked to the use of the process approach to writing instruction. Since its original inception in the writing classroom, the process approach has necessitated feedback. Therefore, research was also needed to understand how to fully incorporate the responses given to writers in classroom pedagogies that maximized efficacy in future text construction. However, the classroom is only one of the many components of which a learning context is comprised. For a greater understanding of how various feedback treatments may aid L2 learners in developing their academic writing skills, the research focus on context needs to be widened to include additional layers that lie beyond the boundaries of the classroom.

In recent years, a broader and wider perspective on L2 writing, as a discipline, “has been termed and explored as the opening of a post-process era” (Leki, Cumming, & Silva, 2008, p. 4). This post-process perspective on L2 writing has “prospective and heuristic power . . . [the] ability to take us beyond a focus on writing simply as a process, or more specifically as a highly cognitive, individualist, largely asocial process” (Atkinson, 2003, p. 10). By adopting a much wider perspective on writing, Atkinson (2003) argues that writing must be viewed “as a human activity . . . that casts doubts on conventional boundaries between individual and society, language and action, the cognitive and the social” (p. 10). He further suggests that post-process is a sound base from which “to investigate the complex activity of L2 writing in its full range of sociocognitive situatedness, dynamism, diversity, and implications” (p.10).

From a post-process perspective, the focus of L2 writing feedback investigations should adopt a wider scope of understanding by looking at how the process of composing academic texts is part of a larger socio-cognitive and situated activity. Likewise, post-process invites a reconceptualization of the written feedback given to L2 writers as a socially constructed and culturally relevant artifact that mediates knowledge needed to develop academic writing skills.

Chapter Summary

The preceding literature review of research into responses to L2 writing presented a detailed look at the two main classes of feedback research: accuracy-focused (error correction) and content-focused (written commentary). While each class of research has been designed to contribute toward building a greater disciplinary understanding concerning treatment efficacy, study results have been varied and inconclusive. Further,

components of context have rarely, if at all, been explored as factors that influence the responding practices of instructors. Exploring how contextual factors influence feedback is where this study aims to make its contribution. The next chapter presents the theoretical perspective within which response and situation are examined.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE: FEEDBACK AS SITUATED ACTIVITY

Writing is a social activity (Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré, 1999). This perspective underpins my investigation. As a social activity, writing is inherently determined and shaped by the context in which it occurs. In fact, Dias et al. claim that “the contexts of writing not only influence it (facilitating it or frustrating it or nudging it in a particular direction) but are integral to it” (p. 17). No text can be composed devoid of context, for “context constitutes the situation that defines the activity of writing; to write *is* [italics in original] to address the situation by means of textual production” (p. 17). Therefore, the situation defines the activity of writing. Further, the situation must be viewed as a “social reality . . . a shared, communally available, culturally defined reality” (p. 18). This view, then, posits that the activity of writing is a socially situated practice. It is this perspective on writing that is extended onto feedback in my study. Responding to writing is viewed as a textual practice constituted by and constitutive of the social situation it addresses. To assist in understanding how feedback addresses the situation of writing, I first turn to constructs supplied by Rhetorical Genre Studies (Bakhtin, 1986; Freedman, 1994; Miller, 1994a, 1994b; Paré & Smart, 1994; Schryer, 1994) and then to social theories of learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990, 2003; Wenger, 1998). When combined, the theoretical constructs I draw upon create a perspective allowing me to explore relevant concepts in my study: response, context, and learning. Further, such a perspective gives me a vocabulary for articulating how context shapes feedback into a cultural artifact that can mediate learning within a socially constructed pedagogical environment.

Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS)

Genre as Social Action

Genres, from a rhetorical perspective, are conceived of as socially motivated, typified actions given in response to rhetorical situations perceived to be recurrent (cf. Artemeva, 2004; Artemeva & Freedman, 2006; Freedman & Medway, 1994; Miller, 1994a). This view was developed out of Carolyn Miller's reconception of genre as social action, derived from her argument that "a theoretically sound definition of genre must be centred not on the substance or the form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish" (1994a, p. 24).

In redefining genre, Miller turns to the work of Burke's New Rhetoric, Campbell and Jamieson, and Bitzer in order to reconceptualize three key constituents: action, dynamism and exigence. Burke's New Rhetoric's claim that "discourse is action" (Artemeva, 2004, p. 6) provides an anchor with which Miller grounds her reconception, and in doing so argues that "if genre represents action, it must involve situation and motive because human action, whether symbolic or otherwise, is interpretable only against a context of situation and through the attributing of motives" (Miller, 1994a, p. 24). The concepts of situation and motive are further explained through the redefining of Bitzer's notion of exigence that lies at the core of a rhetorical situation. Miller reconceives exigence as a social motive for action that comes not from an external defect in the material construction of a social situation, but as "a form of social knowledge—a mutual construing of objects, events, interests and purposes that not only links them but makes them what they are: an objectified social need" (p. 30). Rhetors' perceptions of similarities in social motives prompt responses that become typified through recurrent

use. Miller claims that genres are the socially motivated typified actions taken in response to this form of exigence, and as such, she reconceives genres as “typified rhetorical action based in recurrent situations” (p. 31). In light of this reconceptualization, genres can be seen as fluid and flexible, yet “stabilized-for-now” (Schryer, 1994, p. 107), allowing users to recognize them and respond appropriately (Freadman, 1994). Genres, thus, retain the ability to evolve, but also the potential to decay and eventually die.

Genre as a Cultural Artifact

Miller (1994b) further theorized the role of genre as a constituent of culture. She argues that a genre is a “‘cultural artifact’ . . . a product that has particular functions, that fits into a system of functions and other artifacts. . . . [that] literally *incorporate[s]* [italics in original] knowledge” (p. 69) of the culture in which the genre is created and used. A culture can be characterized by its genre set, which “represents a system of actions and interactions that have specific social locations and functions as well as repeated or recurrent value or function” (p. 70). Drawing upon Giddens’s structuration theory, specifically his notion of the “duality of structure” (as cited in Miller, 1994b, p. 70), Miller suggests that genres, while structured by our experiences in social interactions, themselves recursively shape social relations through their enactment; in short, genres are both “resource and product” (p. 70). Additionally, Miller argues that “social actors *create* [italics in original] recurrence in their actions” (p. 71), thereby producing and reproducing the institutional structures in which genres are used. Such recurrence incorporates cultural knowledge in a virtual manner, “available for further memory, interpretation, and use” (p. 71). This knowledge allows rhetors, then, to discursively interact within a “rhetorical community . . . a virtual entity, a discursive projection, a

rhetorical construct . . . invoked, represented, presupposed, or developed in rhetorical discourse” (p. 73). It is through genres that rhetors can interact within the rhetorical community, furthering the production and reproduction of cultural knowledge.

Feedback, as a genre, a cultural artifact, incorporates the knowledge of the academic culture in which it is created and used. In an EAP classroom, socially motivated responses given by the instructor to her students produce and reproduce knowledge of academic language and writing skills. Therefore, when L2 students who receive such feedback on their writing use their instructor’s comments to draft and redraft texts, they are recursively reproducing the same knowledge. In such a manner, instructors and students interact via feedback and revisions. Whether through textual or virtual interactions, genres are the discursive artifacts used by rhetors to socially interact. Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism (1986) further helps to understand how genres shape social interactions.

Bakhtian Dialogism

According to Bakhtin (1986), “language is realized in the form of individual concrete utterances (oral and written) in the various areas of human activity” (p. 60). Bakhtin further conceives that “relatively stable types of these utterances” (p. 60) form speech genres that are specific to the “sphere of communication” (p. 60) in which they are used. Utterances are given in response to and in anticipation of a response, and as such, their boundaries are identified by the change of speakers, making utterances inherently dialogical. The dialogical nature of an utterance implies that whether or not given in a face-to-face dialogue or separated by space and time, oral or written, every utterance is responsive and, therefore, contains both an author and an addressee.

Addressivity is the term Bakhtin uses to describe the inherent dialogism of utterances that respond to or come from the “other” (p. 67).

As a basic unit of speech communication, the utterance can be used as a unit of analysis to study dialogism that occurs between texts. When applied to the study of written discourse, addressivity will “indicate the degree to which individual texts act as links between previous texts and the inevitable response of others” (Artemeva, 2004, p. 10). For EAP instructors who incorporate formative feedback into a drafting cycle within their writing pedagogy, written responses are inherently dialogical, given to students in response to a text and in anticipation of a response, a revised text. However, the appropriateness of responses is an issue that needs to be addressed. Freadman’s (1994) concept of *uptake*, discussed through the metaphor of a tennis match, sheds further light on the dialogical interaction between responses and addresses the issue of appropriateness.

Uptake

Freadman (1994) uses the metaphor of a tennis match to conceptualize genre use as an exchange of shots: a shot and its returning shot, its uptake. From her perspective, a genre is composed of a minimum of a shot and its uptake in some form of dialogical exchange. However, her definition of genre “as consisting, minimally, of two texts” (p. 48) is at odds with Miller’s (1994a) conceptualization and Bakhtin’s (1986) view in which one utterance by one speaking partner is one genre. To highlight the dialogical interplay between a student assignment and the feedback received, while still conceptualizing each turn as accomplishing one rhetorical action, that is, as being one genre, I will draw upon Devitt’s (1994) concept of “genre set.” Such a concept refers to

the “entire genre constellation that a particular individual or group engages in, either productively or receptively” (Hyland, 2006, p. 55). In such a view, the genre set in this study would include all texts used in the classroom, of which students’ written assignments and the instructor’s responding feedback are a part. Out of Freadman’s (1994) notion of genre, the key idea applicable to this study is appropriateness; that being, uptake must respond appropriately in order for the game to continue.

A game may contain many shots, although each play alters “the meaning of the interaction” (Freadman, 1994, p. 44) in some way. Because players must adjust their uptake accordingly so that discursive interaction continues, there is “perpetual modification” (p. 44) of each shot being played. Therefore, there is no set of rules for playing a game, but rather rules of play. Such rules are determined by the situation, the ceremony, in which the game is played. Rules cannot be learned pre-game. Learning the rules means playing the game. Again, the notion of a dialogical exchange whether between utterances (Bahktin, 1986) or shots (Freadman, 1994) is what is most important to draw upon for use in this study.

In applying Freadman’s perspective to this study, a text and its responding feedback, in a dialogical exchange, become part of the classroom’s genre set and engage in play. The rules of engaging in such an exchange are determined by the learning context in which they occur. Students cannot learn to write by following a formula but instead they learn to write through writing and revising within the context in which the practice occurs. An EAP instructor makes the first shot with the writing prompt. The first draft written by the student is the returning shot, its uptake. In responding formatively to her students’ texts within a drafting cycle, an instructor provides feedback (uptake) so that

the student can revise the first draft, improving linguistic accuracy or content. In order to continue improving the text within the drafting cycle (perpetual modification), students need to respond appropriately to the instructor's feedback. These are the rules of play. Students who recognize and interpret their instructor's responses and respond with the appropriate uptake engage in play, developing stronger texts. In playing the game, instructors and students exchange texts, shaping and reshaping them in response to each other. Such a perspective is most applicable to formative feedback, as it often involves a cycle of revisions, allowing for the exchange of shots. However, this is only one perspective that can be used to view feedback as a genre.

Genre of Feedback

Writing instructors, by responding to recurring social situations (Miller, 1994a), may intentionally create and/or inadvertently develop a vocabulary of feedback and a feedback genre. Such a genre forms as a result of the patterning and regularizing of comments an instructor provides on her students' texts. A feedback genre can be easily recognized and characterized by similarities found in syntactic structures, rhetorical organization, or placement throughout the text, and as such, can be subject to classification. However, classification can be problematic given the fluidity of genres. From an RGS perspective, a feedback genre is best viewed as both a social action(s) that accomplishes certain motives and as a "cultural artifact" (Miller, 1994b) that emerges from and mediates the action, embodying significant knowledge of the culture in which it was created and is currently being used.

For L2 learners, feedback from their instructors not only conveys knowledge about what is culturally valued in academic texts but also directs changes and revisions

needed so that their texts accomplish the appropriate social actions academic texts are intended to perform. In order to gain a better understanding of how the theoretical constructs of RGS may be extended onto the study of L2 writing feedback, it is necessary to see how such constructs have been used in the study of written discourse.

RGS and the Study of Written Discourse

The theoretical constructs supplied by RGS have been instrumental in the study of both academic and workplace writing (e.g. see Artemeva & Freedman, 2006; Freedman & Medway, 1994; Freedman, Adam, & Smart, 1994; Schryer, 2000), shedding light on “how social contexts influence meaning and affect the way a writer approaches a writing task (the process) and what he/she writes (the product)” (Artemeva, 2004, p. 5). To comprehend how such influence occurs, Paré and Smart (1994) developed a research methodology that allows for written genres to be studied naturalistically, where they “can be seen as a broad rhetorical strategy enacted within a community in order to regularize writer/reader transactions in ways that allow for the creation of particular knowledge” (p. 146). Their methodology considers a genre as a distinctive profile of regularities across four dimensions: “a set of texts, the composing processes involved in creating these texts, the reading practices used to interpret them, and the social roles performed by writers and readers” (p. 147). In examining genres in such a manner, Paré and Smart argue that “genres are complex social actions, and the dimensions we describe are not discrete or mutually exclusive; they are reciprocal and interactive” (p. 153). They suggest Miller’s definition of genre be restated as “typified rhetorical actions *and* [italics in original] recurrent situations” (p. 153-4). Paré and Smart’s methodology can also be extended to include the study of L2 feedback genres. In looking at the regularization of

composing and interpreting processes as a means of creating knowledge, I may be able to identify patterns of feedback that convey culturally significant knowledge for L2 learners regarding the development of academic writing skills.

Applying RGS to the Study of Feedback

In a study by Smith (1997), theoretical perspectives supporting a rhetorical view of genre were used to examine the end comments instructors wrote to their students. Looking at the commentary instructors composed as “typified rhetorical actions” (Miller, 1994a), Smith claims that a feedback genre develops because “teachers follow patterns that meet the needs of the situation . . . a situation that consists of the relationships between the teacher, students, their papers, and the educational institutions that sanction and encourage the interchange” (p. 250). Expanding upon Smith’s study of the end comment, this study considers all written feedback an EAP instructor provides on her student’s text as a feedback genre. The instructor’s typified comments and responses, all together, respond to the “needs of the situation” (p. 250), conveying knowledge to the students in her class. Further, because the activity of responding to writing occurs within a learning environment, social theories of learning that can be applied to writing studies may provide supporting perspectives to view how situation influences the genre of feedback.

Social Theories of Learning

Social theories of learning all posit that knowledge is constructed through the interactions between people within a particular situation. Varying theories and models account for the learning that people engage in within different contexts via mediating artifacts, including language (cf. Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Hutchins, 1996; Lave

& Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990; Wenger, 1998). Underlying each of these perspectives is the Vygotskian notion that higher mental functions develop within the social milieu (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985). For the purpose of this study, I have drawn upon the following constructs: guided participation (Rogoff, 1990, 2003), community of practice (Wenger, 1998) and legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Guided Participation (GP)

Rogoff (1990) developed the concept of GP to account for how children learn. Central to her perspective is the concept that children are “apprentices in thinking” (p. 7). She views children as being actively involved in the process of learning through participation in culturally valued, problem-solving activities guided by more experienced members of their community. Although initially conceptualized to focus on children’s learning, Rogoff (2003) has expanded her perspective to account for the learning that adults engage in as well. Therefore, this perspective can be applied to young adults studying in an EAP program at university.

To shape her perspective on cognition as developed within the context of socio-culturally shared activities, Rogoff (1990) draws substantially on Vygotskian socio-cultural theory, particularly his concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD).

Vygotsky’s (1978) perspective on learning involves the use of both tools and signs for mediating knowledge. Tools are artifacts (including language) used to act upon the external world while signs are aimed at “mastering oneself” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 55). The process through which learning occurs involves the transformation of signs into tools. This begins with the internalization of external concepts into signs. Once the concept has been internalized, it can be externalized through tool use.

Vygotsky's concept is exemplified in how a child learns. First, a child must internalize the concept of an externalized action; in other words, the child must understand what an action accomplishes. The example that Vygotsky uses is that of a child learning to point so that she may be given a toy. At first, a child sees a toy she wants. She reaches out to grasp it but cannot take hold of it. The mother sees the child reaching for the toy, picks it up, and gives it to her. The next time the child sees the toy, the same actions happen. She reaches for the toy and her mother gives it to her. Over time, the child begins to internalize her action of reaching as a means of getting the toy. As she internalizes this concept, she realizes that she does not have to reach but just raise her arm and point at the toy. Pointing is a tool she can use to achieve her goal. When she externalizes her desire for the toy by pointing, she demonstrates that she has internalized the concept. She has learned that objects she wants, but cannot reach, can be obtained by pointing to them.

Within Vygotsky's (1978) theory, development occurs through social interaction between children and more skilled members of their community via the use of tools in goal-directed activities aimed at solving culturally significant problems. In this tool-mediated interactive relationship, those more competent in the problem-solving activity guide the child or children in order to increase their understanding, thus supporting cognitive development. This supportive guidance given to a child in a goal-directed activity enables her to solve a problem she could not do independently. The difference in the developmental levels—actual and potential—as characterized by the difficulty of the tasks the child can solve independently and in collaboration with a more capable peer or adult creates an imaginary zone, which Vygotsky (1978) labeled the ZPD, and it is within

this zone that learning occurs. It is the concept of the ZDP that GP draws upon. Within Rogoff's (1990) perspective of cognitive development, learning occurs when children are guided through activities that they could not do independently but can now as a result of co-participation with others more competent, together solving culturally significant problems.

In an EAP classroom, an instructor's feedback is designed to engage learners in a goal-directed activity that is culturally significant within the context of class and community at large, composing academic texts. Specifically, feedback is the tool that the instructor uses to guide her student from text to revised text in the drafting cycle, scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978) the student's learning. Through the perspective of GP, an EAP student learns relevant academic writing and study skills by solving problems she could not do independently but has the potential to solve with guidance from her instructor through feedback.

By focusing on the interaction of participants in a shared activity, GP also posits that the activity and the social domain the activity inhabits as mutually involved. The mutuality of action and context are essential for Rogoff's (1990) perspective. GP's unit of analysis is the event or activity. Within such activity the participants and the social situation are inseparable. This unit is comprised of a dyadic pairing of a child and caregiver or a novice and a more competent or skilled expert. In relation to this study, the activity of responding to writing involves the dyad of EAP instructor and L2 student and the context in which the feedback is given, a language-learning environment.

Underpinning this perspective is the notion of “intersubjectivity” (Rogoff, 1990, p. 8), a shared focus and purpose between the participants in the activity, in which guidance is tacitly or explicitly structured, thus resulting in greater comprehension of and ability to solve culturally significant problems. While engaged in the drafting cycle, feedback is given so that students can improve their texts, ultimately developing their study skills.

As one perspective on situated learning, GP can be applied to this study to view how an EAP student learns culturally-valued skills through social activities with a more skillful member of her community, her instructor. Initially, Rogoff (1990) viewed the structured guidance through culturally-valued activities as a means to account for learning for learning sake. Such may be the case in educational settings, where arguably learning does occur for learning sake. However, more recent thinking has led to a view that cognitive development via such activities can occur in other contexts as well and can be “connected with more than one community’s practices” (Rogoff, 2003, p. 326). This suggests that learning skills valued in one community may be used in other communities. In such a manner, learning certain skills may allow participation in and membership to various communities. Such a notion is explored through Wenger’s (1998) concept of *community of practice* (COP), addressed in the next section.

Community of practice (COP)

Wenger (1998) contributes to the social perspective on learning in discussing how learning occurs within a COP. He focuses his theory of learning on “social participation” (p. 4), meaning that learning occurs through the “process of being active participants in the *practices* [italics in original] of social communities and constructing *identities* [italics

in original] in relation to these communities” (p. 4). The integration of meaning, practice, community, and identity becomes “necessary to characterize social participation as a process of learning and of knowing” (p. 4-5). Wenger argues that all individuals belong to multiple COPs (e.g. family, workplace, school). Learning occurs through engagement in action and interactions between members of a community. Shared participation within such practices provides individuals with meaningful experience(s).

For Wenger (1998), the concept of *meaning* is central to his theory of how learning occurs through social participation in a community. Meaning “is located in a process . . . call[ed] the *negotiation of meaning* [italics in original]” (p. 52). The negotiation of meaning “involves the interaction of two constituent processes . . . *participation* and *reification* [italics in original]” (p. 52). It is through participation and reification that “we experience the world and our engagement in it as meaningful” (p.53).

Participation is “the social experience of living in the world in terms of membership in social communities and active involvement in social enterprises” (Wenger, 1998, p. 55). As an “active process” (p. 56), participation involves a “mutual recognition” (p. 56) between members of a community in their ability to negotiate meaning. “Recognizing [themselves] in each other” (p. 58) enables members to develop identities through participation. Reification describes “our engagement with the world as productive of meaning” (p. 58). Through reification we give “form to our experiences by producing objects that congeal this experience into ‘thingness’” and “project our selves onto the world” (p. 58). Wenger argues the duality of participation and reification are not opposing forces but rather “a single conceptual unit” (p. 66) that is full of “richness and

dynamism” (p. 66). In order for learning to occur in a COP, members must negotiate meaning through both participation and reification.

EAP students belong to a particular community, a community of learners. In an EAP program, students learn as they negotiate meaning through participation in classroom activities such as writing, producing texts, reified objects of their experience. This process of participation and reification occurs as students write and rewrite texts, practicing the skills and genres necessary for success in academic study post EAP. In such a manner, they begin to develop a sense of membership not only in the EAP class but also in their program of study and in the university at large. While Wenger’s (1998) perspective of learning is applicable to students’ learning in a classroom, what about an instructor? How does an instructor learn how to respond to her students? Although articulated prior to Wenger’s (1998) subsequent elaboration of the community-of-practice construct, Lave and Wenger’s (1991) legitimate peripheral participation framework may provide a better lens for understanding the instructor’s induction into the EAP program through interaction with more experienced instructors.

Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP)

Lave and Wenger (1991) elaborate upon the concept of apprenticeship as a perspective of learning within a community of practitioners. In their view, learning is a situated activity, which contains “as its central defining characteristic a process . . . call[ed] *legitimate peripheral participation* [italics in original]” (p. 29). This process

. . . draw[s] attention to the point that learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners and that the mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the socio-cultural practices of the community.

‘Legitimate peripheral participation’ provides a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artifacts, and communities of knowledge and practice. It concerns the process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice. A person’s intentions to learn are engaged and the meaning of learning is configured through the process of becoming a full participant in a socio-cultural practice. This social process includes, indeed it subsumes, the learning of knowledgeable skills. (p. 29)

LPP offers a view of learning as a process of becoming full participants of a community that shares a socio-cultural practice. Unlike EAP students who are unlikely to become full participants in the community of instructors, student teachers or newly hired instructors, as newcomers to the EAP program, may interact with more experienced EAP instructors with the understanding that one day they will be able to fully participate in the social practices of that community. The LPP perspective on learning is thus appropriate for understanding some of the ways in which the instructors in an EAP program may have learned classroom practices and ultimately, in this study, responding practices. Through a process of LPP, new instructors, newcomers, would learn from experienced instructors, oldtimers, the practices that are valued by the community of practitioners, EAP instructors, which they are entering. Furthermore, LPP attempts to account for the notion of situatedness as something more than just the idea that learning occurs through action but rather that “learning is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice” (p. 31). Therefore, an instructor will learn relevant and needed skills through engaging in the social practices of the EAP program community, of which providing feedback is one.

Summary

This chapter has presented the theoretical framework used in the study, drawing upon constructs belonging to RGS (Bakhtin, 1986; Freadman, 1994; Miller, 1994a, 1994b; Paré & Smart, 1994; Schryer, 1994) and social theories of learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990, 2003; Wenger, 1998). Together, such constructs have given me a lens for viewing and explaining how context can influence the responding practices of an instructor and exploring the key concepts in my study: response, context, and learning. In the next chapter, I move to detailing how I conducted this investigation, outlining my study's methodology.

CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGY

This study seeks answers to questions best found through the exploration of situation, noting emergent themes from collected data that describe thick and rich qualities of experience—all attributes of qualitative research (Creswell, 1997). In addition to such characteristics, “qualitative research also generally emphasizes the importance of examining and interpreting observable phenomena *in context* [italics in original]” (Duff, 2008, p. 30). To understand the particularities of a specific phenomenon, a case study approach, L2 written feedback in its context, was taken—“the most widely used approach to qualitative research in education” (Gall, Gall, & Borg as cited in Duff, 2008, p. 21). In addition to describing the case under investigation, this chapter also details the study’s location, its participants, and its procedures, including data collection, analysis, and triangulation.

Case Study Design

Case study research “highlight[s] the ‘bounded’ singular nature of the case, the importance of context, the availability of multiple sources of information or perspectives on observations, and the in-depth nature of analysis” (Duff, 2008, p. 22). In order to investigate the influence that context has on responses to L2 writing, an embedded case study design was used (Duff, 2008). L2 writing feedback was studied through the case of an introductory level EAP class, located within the programmatic layer of the nested contexts. Within this case, focal attention was given to the instructor and two students, located within the pedagogical layer of the nest, which thus constitute “minicases” embedded within the case study of the class. Case studies typically involve the

delimitation of the case under study, conceived of a “bounded system” (Creswell, as cited in Duff, 2008, p. 22) such as a school, a program, or an individual, and its context. In this study, the context was not only the background for understanding the case but also a focus of investigation. Thus, the class, as a case, can be contextualized within the EAP program, which in turn, can be contextualized within the School in which it is housed. It is within the class that the phenomenon under investigation, L2 writing feedback, exists. Through an examination of the responses the instructor provided within such a multilayered context, the study aims for a deeper understanding of how a learning context influenced the feedback in a particular EAP class. The institutional setting of the study is detailed in the next section.

Location of Study

This study took place in an English-medium university in Canada. The University holds a language proficiency policy for all registrants applying to programs of study at both the undergraduate and graduate levels; therefore, applicants whose first language is not English must satisfy this requirement to gain full acceptance into the University. According to the School’s website, such students can meet this requisite condition via (a) proof of having taken full-time studies in either a three-year secondary or post-secondary program in which the language of instruction was English, or (b) obtaining a minimum set of scores on a standardized English proficiency test such as TOEFL. For students who submit to the language proficiency test, one of two possible offers can be made post-results. Those who score satisfactorily may be offered full admission. For those who do not obtain the requisite scores, yet meet all remaining admission requirements, an offer of conditional acceptance may be given. The condition is that the student must enter and

complete the EAP program. Successful completion of the EAP program satisfies the language proficiency requirement.

The EAP program is a three-tiered program that a student may enter at any level dependent upon their initial admissions test scores. While enrolled in the EAP program, students are allowed to take other university courses, concurrently, for credit; however, the number of courses is determined according to their program tier and overall grade. While in the lowest tier, a student may take one additional course. Barring those who have not achieved a B- (70-72%) in the first level, those in the second tier may take an additional two courses. Finally, in the upper tier, students who have passed the previous level with a final grade of B- or higher may take an additional three courses. The number of credits awarded for completing EAP courses added towards a university degree is dependent upon the student's program of study. Students who fail a tier have a maximum of three chances to pass that tier before failing out of the EAP program and losing their conditional acceptance to the University.

I purposely chose to situate my study within an introductory level course of the EAP program so that I could investigate the responding practices of an instructor who is teaching novices to the program. Moreover, as beginners in the program, these learners are new to the School's community of learners and their practices (Wenger, 1998).

EAP is one of the several programs run by the University's Language School that provides language training. The School's programs and courses are taught by professional language teachers. In the recent past, a coordinator had headed the EAP program, prior to a recent restructuring of its administration. In the current hierarchical

structure of the program, the position of coordinator has been dissolved and the coordination of the EAP program is now included in the duties of the School's director.

Participants

Because of the nested approach I have taken towards conceptualizing the learning context, my study required participants from each of the three different layers. From the pedagogical layer, participants included an EAP instructor, Paula, and two of her students, An and Satoshi. From the programmatic layer, the former coordinator of the program, Emily, participated. Adam, the director of the Language School in which the EAP program is run, was also a participant, sharing insight into the institutional layer. In total, there were five participants. All participants' names are pseudonyms.

The student participants are both international students and new to Canada and the University. In addition to this introductory level EAP course, both were taking a second course, the maximum allowed at this level of their conditional offer.

An is a female student from China and is in her early twenties. She had taken university classes in her home country, but had not completed a full degree. She had not declared a major, but would like to pursue a degree in psychology. Satoshi is a male student from Japan and is in his late teens. This was his first experience attending a university. He had yet to declare his major, but would like to pursue a degree in design.

As the introductory course was in the Fall semester, the traditional start of the school year, it was likely that the students enrolled in this course would also be new to the University. This was true for An and Satoshi. As newcomers to the EAP program, they were encountering the School's multilayered learning context for the first time.

The instructor participant, Paula, is a member of the EAP program COP and a trained language professional, holding a master's degree in the field. She is not a novice instructor, having taught at this University and in this EAP program for a number of years. Paula has conducted her own research projects on feedback in her classroom, and is interested in the phenomenon. In addition to this introductory level course, she was also teaching a second EAP course of a different tier, concurrently.

The former EAP program coordinator, Emily, was a key participant in exploring the programmatic layer of influence. In addition to instructing courses being taught in the program, she had been the coordinator for a number of years. However, the director of the School, Adam, is currently responsible for the administration of the EAP program. Both Emily and Adam have been included in the study in order to gain insights into the layers of context of which they have knowledge about, especially to aid in uncovering any influences that may impact on feedback practices. In fact, during my interview with Adam, I was encouraged to seek insights into the programmatic layer by speaking with Emily.

Data Collection

The data that I collected for this study will be discussed⁶ in five parts: recruitment, classroom observations, texts, interviews, and transcription reviews. Instruments used in each step are also described.

⁶ While the reporting of case study results can take various narrative styles to capture the voice of the participant, it is not uncommon to “hear” the voice of the researcher in qualitative case studies within the field of applied linguistics (Duff, 2008). I have chosen to include my voice, as researcher, here in this section.

Recruitment

After being granted permission for conducting this study by the University Ethics Board (see Appendix A for ethics approval form), I began recruiting participants. The first participant I sought to recruit was the EAP course instructor. I solicited via email all of the instructors who were currently teaching the introductory course of the EAP program. From the responses I received, I randomly selected one of the instructors and corresponded again via email to confirm participation and arrange a time to meet in order to discuss the project face-to-face, answer any questions the participant may have, and sign the letter of information and consent. To the other instructors who had indicated an interest in participating, but were not selected, an email was sent to them, thanking them for their interest.

Once the EAP instructor had agreed to participate and signed the consent form, I then was able to solicit students in her introductory course to volunteer their time as participants in my study. I was given permission to attend a class and allotted some time to introduce myself, my project, and ask for volunteers. This was done with the assistance of a letter of introduction that was handed out to all members of the class. At the bottom of the letter, students who were interested in volunteering wrote their names and email addresses. I collected this letter back from all students, signed or unsigned, before they left the class that day. From those who had indicated an interest in volunteering, I randomly selected three of them and sent them an email of confirmation. Only two of the original three responded. I then resent the confirmation email to the third volunteer, to which I never heard back from. I went back to my original signed letters of introduction and randomly selected another student who had expressed interest and sent an email of

confirmation. I did not receive a reply from that student. The remaining students who were not selected but had indicated an interest in volunteering were sent a thank you email. Due to time constraints, I decided to run the study with the two confirmed volunteers. I met with them individually to discuss the project in more detail, answer questions, and ask them to sign a letter of information and consent.

The coordinator and school director were contacted via email and asked if they would volunteer their time to participate in the study. Both agreed. I met both individually and each participant signed a letter of information and consent, agreeing to their participation in my study.

Classroom Observations

Once both the EAP instructor and the student participants consented to participate, I began a series of classroom observations. Their course ran three days a week, each class consisting of three hours, for a total of thirteen weeks—the length of one semester. I was able to observe seven consecutive classes, totaling twenty-one hours of classroom instruction. These classes were the last seven classes prior to the exam period at the end of the semester. Although observations could not have occurred prior to this point due to the time frame involved with ethics approval and participant recruitment, observing the class at this time provided me details I might not have seen had I observed them closer to the start of the semester. At this point in the semester, distinct social roles amongst the students of the class had formed and a community of learners (Wenger, 1998) had started to develop.

I conducted my observations from a seat located at the back of each of the different classrooms used on different days of the course. I remained as removed from the

class as I possibly could. I recorded observation field notes using a modified version of Creswell's (1997) "Sample Observational Protocol" (Figure 7.6, p. 129) (see Appendix B for classroom observation protocol sample). In my notes, I used descriptive notes to record what I saw happening in the classroom—what the instructor did, the students' actions, reactions, and interactions that occurred between instructor and students and students and students—specifically watching and notating the interactions of my participants with their instructor and other classmates. Additionally, I used simple diagrams to describe the physical layout of the classroom. I also took reflective notes both immediately after the class and then again later in the evening on the same day I observed the class. In these notes, I questioned, critically, the motives behind the action of the classroom, the pedagogical context, and how these could impact upon feedback or the development of writing skills. Finally, I kept special notations regarding patterns of action, reaction, and interactions within the classroom.

Texts

I collected samples of the student participants' writing. During the first face-to-face meeting I had with each of the participants, individually, I asked them to bring me a sample of their writing that their instructor had written feedback on, any subsequent revisions that had been done using the instructor's responses, and the instructions given by the instructor to prompt the text's initial composition. Each participant brought all of their assignments and let me choose. I was given permission to select more than one sample from each of them. From both students, I selected a text written at the beginning of the semester, one from the mid-point, and one composed near to the end, the time when I was an observer in the class. All of the texts, which contained their instructor's

written feedback, along with the assignments' instructions were photocopied and immediately returned. All of the texts were pieces of a semester-long research project that was designed to build research and academic study skills in EAP students enrolled in the course that I observed.

Interviews

Semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted with each of the participants in the study, individually. However, for the instructor and her students, a section of the interview was discourses-based, that is, centred on the discussion of a particular text written by the student and the written responses by the instructor. The interviews lasted between thirty minutes to one hour in length. Each participant was emailed a copy of the questions (see Appendix C for instructor interview questions; Appendix D for student interview questions; Appendix E for program coordinator interview questions; and Appendix F for School director interview questions) asked during the interview prior to the meeting so that all participants (a) had an opportunity to think about answers they may like to share, (b) were not surprised by any of the questions asked, and (c) had a chance to ask for clarification of questions not clearly understood. In addition to taking hand-written notes, I audio-recorded each of the interviews.

During the discourse-based section of the instructor and student interviews, I asked each participant questions about the comments and notations contained in the feedback that was located on the texts I had collected from the students. I asked the instructor to recall the rationale behind certain comments. Comments asked about were a mixture from both the participant's texts. I also asked her to explain how she composed such feedback. The student participants were asked to recall how the same comments

were interpreted the first time they read them and how, if used, they guided a revised version of their assignment.

Transcription Review

After I had transcribed the interviews, I met with all of the participants, individually, once again so that they could review the transcript of our interview. In each of the meetings, I provided the participant with either a printed, hard copy of the interview or a soft-copy open file on my laptop and asked them to read the transcript. They were told to make any appropriate changes to their responses that they did not feel were adequately articulated the first time around. They were also able to notate any elaborations they felt were necessary or strike any responses they felt were inaccurate or inappropriate. Any and all changes were then considered to be the final transcript of the interview and it is this version I analyzed.

Data Analysis

In order to analyze the interview transcripts, I used a modified grounded approach to data coding (Charmaz, 2006), enabling me to identify thematic patterns that emerged from the interviews. I modified the approach in that I went into the data looking for particular themes and concepts: feedback, context, and learning. I was looking for ways in which these themes were discussed within their responses. I used the computer program, Microsoft Excel in order to code my data (Geisler, 2004). First, the interview transcripts were copied into a virtual spreadsheet. Each utterance, indicated by the change of speaker (Bakhtin, 1986), was placed into a separate cell. This was my initial unit of analysis, an utterance. Then I began a systematic descriptive coding of each of the utterances. I began at the beginning of the interview and worked my way toward the end

by describing what each utterance of the respondent was expressing. At the point when the speaker's idea changed within the same utterance, I split the cell in two and described each idea separately. This altered my unit of analysis to one complete thought. This remained the unit of analysis throughout the coding of all transcripts. Upon completing the descriptive codes for each of the units of analysis, I then went back to the beginning of the interview and conceptually coded each of the descriptive codes (see Appendix G for interview coding sample). These conceptual codes were then further combined into greater concepts until they could no longer be combined or until such concepts were saturated (Charmaz, 2006), representing the major emergent themes. The themes from each interview were cross-referenced with each other to look for similarities. Additionally, the themes were triangulated (Duff, 2008) with the classroom observation notes. Here, I looked for instances from classroom actions and interactions that would be embodiments of the themes that had emerged from the interview data.

The themes that emerged from my analysis have indicated how different layers of context influenced the EAP instructor's feedback practices. The contextual factors that did impact upon Paula's feedback will be detailed in the following chapter in order to show how context shapes feedback into a culturally relevant artifact that mediates knowledge designed to support learning.

Triangulation

Data triangulation is "an important principle in current qualitative research" (Duff, 2008, p. 143) in order to ensure "consistency, dependability and trustworthiness of the research process and interpretations" (Duff, 2008, p. 108). To this end, a number of triangulation strategies have been incorporated in my qualitative case study research

design. First, theory triangulation has examined the same phenomenon, L2 writing feedback, using different, yet complementary theoretical constructs. Triangulating theories have afforded different views on feedback, as multiple perspectives had provided a wider scope on the phenomenon. Second, data triangulation has come from multiple sources to ensure that insights into L2 feedback were collected using different means such as classroom observations, texts, and interviews. The third type of triangulation used was *member's checks*. Member checking is “a procedure used by qualitative researchers to check their reconstructions of the emic perspective by having field participants review statements . . . for accuracy and completeness” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, as cited in Duff, 2008, p. 171). Together, these three types of triangulation were used as measures to ensure the dependability of my study's findings.

Summary

This chapter described how an embedded case study design was used to investigate L2 writing feedback and the influence which context has on it. The phenomenon was studied by focusing on the negotiation of feedback between one instructor and two students in one EAP course conceived of as a case. Data was collected from different sources and analyzed using a modified grounded approach (Charmaz, 2006) in order to identify themes that provided insights into the concepts of context, feedback and learning. Data triangulation strategies were incorporated to ensure dependability and credibility of the research design and research findings.

An analysis of the research findings will be discussed in the next chapter. The results of the investigation answer the questions that have driven the study: How, and to what extent, do contextual factors located within various layers of a nested learning

context influence the responding practices of an EAP instructor? Does the instructor's resulting feedback help L2 students to learn? If so, how?

CHAPTER 5. FINDINGS

This chapter begins with a description of the types of feedback that the EAP instructor provided to her students. This is followed by a discussion of the contextual factors that influenced her responding practices, starting with those that originated from within the pedagogical layer. Moving outward, the discussion continues with factors stemming from the programmatic layer and finally the institutional layer. Overall, this chapter details how factors originating from various layers of the learning context shaped the instructor's feedback into a cultural artifact students in the EAP course used as a tool for learning academic language and skills. It is pertinent to note that (a) some contextual factors originated from more than one layer and (b) all factors worked together in influencing the responding practices of the classroom instructor, Paula.

Instructor's Feedback Practices

The feedback that Paula provided was both form and content-focused. While she mixed both types of responses on the same text, the majority of her feedback was form-focused.

Paula's form-focused feedback was given as written commentary, brief marginal questions or strong suggestions to "tell them 'what's this?' or 'why don't you...' . . . not necessarily very elaborate" (Paula, Interview, December 1, 2008). Other indications of inaccuracies in linguistic form and structure were given using a variety of techniques such as writing " 'confusing,' or a question mark, or underlin[ing] [a] sentence, or 'run-on' . . . I use an editing list. I mark 'wrong word'. Sometimes, I will give them the word

because it is impossible for second language learners to know which word is right” (Paula, Interview, December 1, 2008).

On the error correction continuum, the techniques Paula used are mostly direct and implicit, indicating where the error exists but not always giving the correction. This was intentional, for upon returning a text, post-feedback, Paula gave her students time in class to correct linguistic and syntactic errors themselves. This was done “so at least they start thinking about correctness and accuracy” (Interview, December 1, 2008). This type of scaffolding exercise attempted to raise students’ level of ability from what they produced on their own to what they could produce as a result of with Paula’s guidance. Such guided participation (Rogoff, 1990) works by creating a ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978) and encouraging the potential for learning.

Paula’s content-focused feedback combined both student-specific and text-specific responses. Some responses indicated where relevant ideas were expressed well, praising students with brief comments such as “‘good’ or ‘excellent’” (Paula, Interview, December 1, 2008). Other content-focused comments indicated where logic in ideas needed to be revised with personalized comments saying “‘XX [student’s name], you have a problem with the cause and effect . . . you still have a problem with that’ ” (Paula, Interview, December 1, 2008). Additional comments simply responded to the content, conversationally. As Paula explained:

That [comment] was talking to him. It had nothing to do with [revising]. Yes, that was responding to what he wrote. It isn’t asking him to restructure or change the

content. . . . I sometimes do that when it [the text] is interesting. I will comment on what I think. (Interview, December 1, 2008)

When Paula writes such comments on a student's text, she is responding as an interested reader. Comments written from such a perspective are in contrast with feedback that directs a specific change, instructing students to revise the text in a particular manner in order to respond with appropriate uptake (Freadman, 1994). Responding as a reader and responding as an instructor were two of the social roles that Paula performed. Creating distinct social roles helped Paula to regularize the writer and reader transactions (Paré & Smart, 1994) occurring between her and her students. Regularizing such transactions also resulted in regularizing Paula's feedback into recognizable patterns, creating typical responses to rhetorical situations she perceived as being recurrent. How situation influenced Paula's feedback is discussed through each of the three layers of the learning context, beginning with the pedagogical.

Pedagogical layer

The pedagogical layer of context is the innermost layer within the nest of contexts. The contextual factors originating from here exerted the greatest impact upon Paula's responding practices. In fact, most of the factors that influenced Paula's feedback were connected to the approach she took toward classroom pedagogy: Sustained Content-Based Instruction (SCBI). In having adopted this approach, Paula structured her course and its assignments in a particular manner, which subsequently shaped her instructor/reader expectations toward her students' texts. Consequently, the approach greatly influenced her responding practices. The other contextual factor that contributed to shaping her responses is her personal philosophy toward feedback.

Together, the pedagogical approach, instructor/reader expectations, and philosophical stance influenced how Paula structured her responding practices, determining the kinds of feedback (e.g. form-focused or content-focused) she provided to her students. Regardless of its focus, her feedback can be conceived of as a textual response that addressed the situation or pedagogical context in which it was embedded, a situated writing practice (Dias, Freedman, Medway, Paré, 1999).

The contextual factors within the pedagogical layer contributed to regularizing her responses into recognizable patterns, creating a feedback genre (Smith, 1997). This genre not only responded to similar errors Paula recognized within and across her students' texts, a situation perceived by the rhetor to be recurrent (Miller 1994a), but also embodied knowledge of the academic culture in which such responses were created and used (Miller, 1994b). Students in her class who were able to recognize her feedback as a motive for action (Miller, 1994a) (e.g. to help promote their learning) and responded with the appropriate uptake (Freedman, 1994) (e.g. writing new and improved texts) used her feedback as a tool for learning language and writing skills. Conversely, Paula used her responses to scaffold the students' learning through guided participation (Rogoff, 1990) in writing assignments, creating the opportunity for a ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978) in which students could develop stronger academic language and writing skills. In such a manner, feedback became a reified artifact (Wenger, 1998) of cultural knowledge students could use to learn about valued practices other students participated within in the University.

Within the unique drafting cycle of the course's term project assignments, reader and writer roles became regularized (Paré & Smart, 1994). As a result, Paula and her students came to expect particular kinds of textual responses (e.g. feedback and improved

texts) from each other, regularizing the situation as well. In order to see, in greater detail, how Paula's feedback was influenced by contextual factors originating from within the pedagogical layer, I first turn to the most influential factor, the pedagogical approach: Sustained Content-based Instruction (SCBI).

Pedagogical approach: SCBI

Paula had been using an SCBI approach to structure her pedagogical practices for the past five years. In fact, she preferred this approach "because it allows students to go deeper into the topics" (Interview, December 1, 2008). To understand why this may have been so, SCBI is defined further below.

SCBI defined

SCBI, as an approach to language instruction, developed out of the need to provide university and career bound ESL/EFL students with sufficient skill development to achieve success at school and/or work (Pally, 2001). According to Pally (2001), the most important skill such students needed to develop was argumentation and its associated use of analytical and critical thinking. The engagement of such thinking skills becomes a central part of how the learning context is viewed within the approach as defined by Pally:

Sustained CBI argues that a context for learning analytical/critical thinking skills can be found in language classes which simulate the demands of academic work and so require students to practice academic skills. . . . Skills such as the synthesising / comparing / contrasting of sources, compiling research for support for papers, etc. cannot be done without the accumulation of concepts and information. Thus, sustained CBI distinguishes itself from 'theme'-based ESL

where topics vary frequently through the semester . . . Rather, in sustained CBI students study one discipline for a half or full semester, progressing through various aspects of a larger topic such that later concepts and information rely on earlier ones—just as students in content classes do . . . students learn skills because they need them for the immediate job of grasping the content. (p. 281)

Pally (2001) makes a strong case for the application of the SCBI approach within an EAP classroom. Since EAP programs are designed to prepare students for future academic endeavors (Hyland, 2006; Jordan, 1997), sustaining a single disciplinary topic over a period of extended study would provide L2 students opportunities to experience similar kinds of pedagogical demands as may be expected of them post EAP. Further, sustaining one topic allows students to focus on academic skill development, namely: critical and analytical thinking, researching, synthesizing materials, and writing academic genres. It also encourages the development of academic vocabulary and language (Pally, 2001), as key words and phrases need to and become recycled in different texts that discuss the same topic.

In developing both academic skills and language through the prolonged study of one topic, EAP students do “go deeper” (Paula, interview, December 1, 2008) into the course’s content through an SCBI approach. Sustained study would also allow the students to learn like apprentices (Rogoff, 1990), as Paula guided them through classroom tasks and assignments using pedagogical tools such as feedback, just as other students in the University would. Thus, an SCBI approach attempted to create an authentic learning context that replicated not only similar demands but also cognitive apprenticeship-like opportunities that may be offered to students in non-EAP courses.

The questions that now need to be asked are (a) how did Paula implement such an approach within her class so that her students could capitalize on such benefits, and most importantly (b) how did the operationalization of the SCBI approach influence Paula's responding practices? The answers begin with a discussion of how the course was structured.

Implementing SCBI in her course

In the introductory course Paula taught, the sustained topic was child labour. This topic provided the content through which academic language and skills were practiced. The main source of the topic's content came from a selection of readings bound in a coursepack. Oral group discussions and written assignments designed to practice key academic skills such as critical thinking and synthesizing material were based on the content from the coursepack readings (Pally, 2001). As Paula explained:

Whenever they are asked to write something, they first have to read. They have to take in-text notes . . . things underlined and comments in the margins. . . . They have to discuss the reading or readings in groups. This is done to not only develop language skills but also to develop an understanding of the topic. (Interview, December 1, 2008)

The types of written academic genres assigned and practiced were primarily summaries and essays. Paula chose to focus on these genres because she views them as essential for use in course work outside of the EAP program. As Paula elaborated:

I tend to give many summaries because paraphrasing and writing summaries, I think, is extremely important for them. It tells [sic] their ability to understand, and

it also tells their ability to paraphrase and write, full out, and it's useful for future work when they will have to do all those annotated bibliographies or literature review[s] . . . Also, they are asked to write an analysis, so they have to apply theory to practice, like definitions to situations, or sometimes we practice how to organize information in comparison and contrast . . . but I don't want to do [sic] these distinctions between an essay—this is not a comparison and contrast essay, but it is an analysis that uses comparison and contrast, and there will be a cause and effect in it because it's all together. (December 1, 2008)

In addition to emphasizing why she had students practice such written genres, Paula also discussed the importance of learning and practicing different rhetorical modes and types of textual organization, particularly those related to argumentation in keeping with SBCI's focus on analytical and critical skill development (Pally, 2001). To teach how to write academic texts, Paula used a specific writing pedagogy.

Writing Pedagogy

Paula employed the process approach to writing pedagogy. As she explained, “For writing, it's process approach. . . . Every time they [her students] write, they go through the brainstorming, planning, discussing it, discussing the plan, writing the first draft, discussing it, writing the second draft. . . . the different steps of refining and finally editing” (Interview, December 1, 2008). The process approach worked within the overall SCBI approach very naturally, according to Paula. In fact, she believes that the two approaches “come together” (Interview, December 1, 2008). Because the composition of a written assignment integrated readings, requiring a student to apply critical thinking skills (Pally, 2001), Paula perceived the drafting cycle students followed in her class as

“academic process” (Interview, December 1, 2008). As she elaborated, “I call it process approach to writing within academic context. . . . It’s based on readings and evaluation of readings. . . . It’s academic process, and this is what happens in academia” (Interview, December 1, 2008). Having her students practice the type of writing process that she sees as being expected of them post EAP, Paula aimed to teach her students how to write in a similar manner as other members of the University’s community of learners (Wenger, 1998).

The adoption of a process pedagogy took the composition of text through a drafting cycle, allowing Paula to provide formative feedback in between drafts. Her intention in providing formative responses was so that students “can use the feedback and then come up with a better product” (Paula, interview, December 1, 2008). In such a manner, Paula thus guided her students (Rogoff, 1990) through a drafting cycle to produce a coherent and accurate text that had substance. In having her students systematically work through a drafting cycle every time they wrote a text, Paula regularized the writing process (Paré & Smart, 1994), within which her feedback was included. The regularization of the writing process “allows for the creation of particular knowledge” (Paré & Smart, 1994, p. 146). How the process was regularized and the kind of knowledge it created is best seen through a discussion of the course’s term project, the library research project (LRP). A detailed examination of the project’s unique assignment cycle ultimately reveals how an SCBI approach influenced Paula’s responding practices.

Library Research Project (LRP)

The LRP included both oral and written assignments. However, the majority of the project’s assessment was based on a portfolio of written work. The LRP was

introduced to the class near the beginning of the semester, and a handout was given to the students that described the LRP as follows:

During the next **eight** [bold in original] weeks, you will research a topic of your choice related to your field of study or academic interest (for example, engineering, science, business, social studies, economy, architecture, etc.). The purpose of this assignment is to develop your research and note-taking skills and to expand your academic vocabulary and structures. It is expected that by the end of the term you will feel comfortable expressing yourself, both in writing and orally on the topic.

In having the students choose a topic related to their major or a field of interest, Paula provided them with an opportunity to “go deeper” (Interview, December 1, 2008) into learning about a topic which interested them. In sustaining one topic over a number of weeks, students working on this project practiced “skills such as the synthesising / comparing / contrasting of sources, compiling research for support for papers” (Pally, 2001, p. 281), engaging their critical and analytical thinking and developing overall academic skills, as expressed in the project’s description. Further, in keeping with SCBI, LRP tasks “progressing through various aspects of a larger topic such that later concepts and information rely on earlier ones” (p. 281) were designed to develop language through content that is meaningful to the student’s intended discipline and its community’s members. Overall, the project was designed to mirror the fundamental tenets of SCBI, having students practice academic skills that may be relevant for their future studies through sustained engagement in one topic.

The LRP writing assignments. The LRP portfolio contained the written work students had completed during their research, including a research journal. This journal consisted of six requisite entries, one for each of the six sources found. The structure and content of each entry was detailed on the handout the students received:

Each entry will have **three sections and three attachments (i.e. glossary, notes and a copy of the source material)** with separate headings for each. In the first section you will provide a detailed account of your **search for the source (step by step)**. The second section will be a short **summary** of the source material (5-6 sentences). The third section will include a **discussion** of how the information relates to or answers your research question and your growing understanding of the topic (about 2 double-spaced pages). If you think it is/is not relevant, say why/why not. Entries must be in paragraph form. [emphases in original]

Regularizing the journal entry requirements, namely format, organizational structure, and kinds of writing skills practiced was viewed by Paula as facilitating their learning. She explained:

It's a good thing to repeat the same format of an exercise, I find, from their learning point of view. They are not surprised each time something's different. . . . The reading could be very different and interesting . . . but the format of the assignment is the same. (Interview, December 1, 2008)

In repeating the same format, Paula created a written genre, a rhetorical response (Miller, 1994a) that addressed the social situation in which it was embedded. Specifically, students had to write six entries. They submitted each journal entry assignment

individually before moving on the next. Once submitted, Paula would then provide the students with feedback on their work. In patterning both the journal entry submission and its feedback, students and Paula regularized “a set of texts” (Paré & Smart, 1994, p. 147), and as a result, also regularized their composing processes involved in the “creation of these texts, the reading practices used to interpret them, and the social roles [Paula and her students] performed” (Paré & Smart, 1994, p. 147).

Within the LRP’s research journal, the regularized process of writing and responding consisted of a text (journal assignment) and its uptake (feedback) and its uptake (journal assignment) and so on (Freadman, 1994). The dialogical exchange between texts perpetually modified each textual response, as journal entries incorporated feedback into new submissions to which the next round of feedback would respond differently. In such a manner, this written genre would develop out of the pedagogical situation in which it was embedded, a situated activity (Dias, Freedman, Medway, & Paré, 1999). Students engaged in the drafting cycle practiced academic skills valued by the community that these learners were entering, a community of learners (Wenger, 1998). How Paula’s feedback functioned both rhetorically (i.e. Miller, 1994a) and pedagogically (i.e. Rogoff, 1990) within this project will be discussed in the next section.

Feedback in the LRP

The implementation of the SCBI approach greatly influenced the structure of the LRP, which in turn, influenced the frequency of Paula’s responses, regularizing a writing process (Paré & Smart, 1994) that led to the creation of recognizable feedback responses. The LRP journal genre contained a set of texts in a responsive dialogical exchange, resulting from the project’s unique assignment drafting cycle. Instead of directing

students to use the feedback given on one journal entry to revise that very text, composing a subsequent draft or drafts, Paula provided feedback intended to guide the composition of the next journal entry. Such an intention was explained by Paula, in reference to how she wants Satoshi, one of her students, to use her responses, “next time [because] this one [journal entry] was weak, and this is probably more like a summary of the reading, which very often happens, not a discussion of its usefulness as a source, so I’m hoping next time” (Paula, interview, December 1, 2008).

For Paula and her students, writing and responding within the assignment cycle was regularized but not formulaic. Each text and its uptake were responsive, yet different each time, and as such were the rules of play in this game (Freadman, 1994). Further, the social conditions in which the genre was played also shaped the responses (Freadman, 1994). Conditions were determined by the pedagogical context in which the LRP and its write and response cycle were embedded. The developmental feedback cycle Paula created fit within the regularized structure of the LRP. Such a cycle allowed her to guide her students through the composition of each subsequent journal, scaffolding their learning from entry to entry like guided participation (Rogoff, 1990). Providing developmental feedback also influenced the types of responses Paula would write on her students’ texts.

Within the developmental feedback cycle, Paula’s content-focused and form-focused responses became patterned. Such patterns formed as Paula regularized and typified her comments when responding to the students’ journal entries, a recurring rhetorical situation (Miller, 1994a). Paula’s feedback was recognizable. Satoshi described how Paula

sometimes cross[es] out on [sic] my wrong one word, or she puts lines under my sentence. Then she puts another better sentence under the line, or she puts brackets outside words or phrases, and she explains ‘you could put this’ or ‘you don’t have to [use that]’, or something like that. (Interview, November 13, 2008)

Clearly, Satoshi could recognize where linguistic and structural errors occurred in his text, identified by the generic textual regularities of Paula’s responses. What did he do with these responses? What was his responding uptake to Paula’s feedback? He explained, “I don’t really use them, but I read them” (Interview, November 13, 2008). Why did he not use them? He recognized the feedback as indications for change, but he did not make any changes. Perhaps he did not understand what Paula’s feedback was asking him to address in the drafting of the next assignment, and as a result, he did not know what the appropriate uptake to the commentary should be. While Satoshi’s lack of response to Paula’s feedback was a response, it may not have been an appropriate one, especially if not used in guiding the drafting of the next assignment.

As Paula’s feedback is given in response to a text with the intent of a further response (Bahktin, 1986), the student’s uptake must address her feedback appropriately (Freadman, 1994). This would allow for the developmental feedback cycle to scaffold students’ abilities within a ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978), ultimately supporting learning, as perceived of through guided participation (Rogoff, 1990). For Satoshi, who had difficulty responding to Paula’s feedback, it seems as though he does not clearly understand the intention of her responses or rules of play, especially with comments that address his use of language. As he explains,

I don't need just an answer. I need more in detail. Like if I wrote wrong sentence [sic], I want my teacher to explain why it's wrong, like with the right answer to it, so not just answer [sic], but explanation with it. (Interview, November 13, 2008)

While Satoshi may have wanted an answer to why his mistakes were wrong, a common expectation of L2 learners (Montgomery & Baker, 2007; Radecki & Swales, 1988), was he developmentally ready for learning particular grammar rules so that he could fix such errors? Such a situation is the basis for the case against grammar correction (Truscott, 1996) and the core of the disciplinary debate over the provision of grammar corrective feedback (Chandler, 2003, 20004; Ferris, 1999, 2004; Truscott, 1999, 2004, 2007).

In Satoshi's case, there was an indication that he was not developmentally ready for acquiring the grammar rules associated with his mistakes. Paula claimed her feedback did address grammar rules: "If you [the instructor] know the rule, you [the instructor] tell them. I do because maybe they have known it, but somehow it's not coming out" (Interview, December 1, 2008). Despite being told a grammar rule on one text, Satoshi had difficulty in applying that rule on a subsequent text. As he explained:

I remember almost all the questions or problems the teacher gave me in feedback, and right at that time, I understand it. When I write [a] new article, [I] sometimes have the same problem that I had before, but I just couldn't remember it. (Interview, November 13, 2008)

While there may be many reasons why Satoshi could not remember the rules once told, one strong possibility is the fact that he was not developmentally ready for learning such rules. The structures were "not coming out" (Paula, interview, December 1, 2008)

perhaps because the grammar Paula was correcting was out of development sequence with where Satoshi's acquisition of structures was at. As a result, Satoshi could not acquire the rules Paula gave in her feedback and, therefore, he could not reproduce the correct grammar form during the composition of a new text. Such a situation supports the argument that grammar correction does not improve the linguistic accuracy of those not developmentally ready (Truscott, 1996).

Why then was Paula correcting grammar and language issues? One reason is that Satoshi wanted Paula to provide "comments about . . . spelling mistakes or phrases and the missing words and . . . I'd prefer getting those grammar [sic] from the teacher" (Satoshi, interview, November 13, 2008). As previously stated, giving Satoshi feedback on his grammar because he wants such feedback is one reason why Paula provided such comments. However, correcting his grammar is not within the rationale behind the developmental feedback cycle Paula had created. In order for Satoshi to learn and develop both academic language and writing skills through the LRP, Paula must give feedback on issues that can be revised on the next journal assignment. In other words, she must use feedback to scaffold his learning, guiding him in solving linguistic, organizational and content-related problems from one text to the next. Such are the textual issues Satoshi could potentially solve on his own in future writing tasks as a result of his guided participation (Rogoff, 1990, 2003). Within the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978) created from scaffolding tasks, Paula used her feedback as a tool for mediating problem solving, ultimately supporting learning.

Feedback as a Tool for Learning

Satoshi and his classmate An used Paula's feedback as both a conceptual and physical tool for learning in the class. As Satoshi explained:

Whenever I look over my sentence again or whenever I start writing another writing and when I have the same problem, I can look over those feedbacks and I can, you know, see the right way again. I can rewrite. (Interview, November 13, 2008)

In rereading the responses Paula provided for him on his text, Satoshi did in fact use the feedback she gave him. He used it as a model for how to avoid textual problems on the next assignment. An also used Paula's responses in a similar fashion, using feedback as a physical tool for learning. As An explained, "First, I will go to ask the teacher and then next time when I am writing, I will put it [text containing Paula's feedback] beside [me] and write... follow the first one [journal assignment]" (Interview, November 18, 2008). Verifying the meaning of the comment was a method An used to ensure the feedback would direct her in avoiding errors when writing the next assignment.

Conceptually, Paula's responses also conveyed messages concerning why certain structures or ideas she addressed with her feedback were problematic. In such a manner, Paula reified her knowledge (Wenger, 1998) of academic language and writing skills within her written feedback. Examples of such reification are best seen through the developmental feedback students received for the "repetitive things. . . . Citations are one of them. . . . organization, that's another one" (Paula, interview, December 1, 2008). Her comments addressed such textual features repeated within each of the journal entries. In

doing so, Paula could help her students learn and apply proper citation styles and organizational patterns to subsequent journal entries, responding to feedback with appropriate uptake (Freadman, 1994).

Paula's feedback is also an embodiment of the culture in which it exists (Miller, 1994b), and as such, can be used as a tool to teach her students about what is valued within the university community through scaffolded activities, guiding leaning (Rogoff, 1990). Textual coherence in English academic writing is valued. One convention Paula taught her students for creating and maintaining textual coherence is the use of headings and sub-headings. On one assignment, An did not organize her text with headings. Paula's response to the one long paragraph An wrote was "What about headings?" Did this comment convey to An why the use of headings is important in academic writing? As An revealed:

She [Paula] means I have to add the introduction. I have to mention September, when the class is, and what it is about, the first class, and second, and here, maybe . . . I have to write the purpose of the activity. . . . If I add the headings, not only she can read it clearly also maybe it is well organized. (Interview, November 18, 2008)

An's comment has indicated that Paula's feedback has conveyed relevant knowledge about the academic use of headings. Further, such feedback has begun a process of internalization (Vygotsky, 1978), as An now recognizes how one type of textual structure, headings, can be used to accomplish particular actions. Over the course of the

LRP assignments, An may externalize her knowledge of headings by using them to organize her texts.

Another convention valued in academic culture is the use of citation. Citing sources and referencing the work of other thinkers and researchers is a convention that is integral to writing academic genres in many university programs. An learned about one commonly used citation style, the American Psychological Association (APA) style, through Paula's feedback. As An explained, "Once I made a mistake of the APA style. We have to write the name [of the author]. I wrote the first name before the family name, I made the mistake, so after that I never this mistake" (Interview, November 18, 2008). An also explained that inverting the names was a mistake due to "cultural differences" (Interview, November 18, 2008). Although An claimed she would never repeat this mistake, did she understand why citation and referencing is important and valued in an academic culture? When asked why citation was important, An did not respond with an explanatory answer that focused on notions of original thought or acknowledgement of ideas. She was not entirely clear on why this practice was done.

Overall, An perceived Paula's feedback positively and as an essential part of her learning:

Well, I think it [feedback] is an important part of our course because if you don't get your feedback, you won't know how you did [on] your writing and what is the mistake you made in the writing. And next time if you write . . . if you write the same kind of writing [the next journal assignment], you will make the same

mistake and you don't know . . . are you did the wrong way [sic] or you did well or not. (Interview, November 18, 2008)

An's perception of Paula's feedback also reveals that, as a student, she expected the responses she received on her writing to fulfill specific functions. An expects feedback to (a) address her linguistic and content errors so she can construct accurate texts and (b) earn her good grades so that she can be a successful student. Such expectations were being met by Paula's feedback. As An revealed, Paula's comments "will say 'well done,' 'very good,' 'it is very interesting to read your writing, but you should . . . , for example,' 'there is still some mistakes,' and they [Paula's comments] will point it out" (Interview, November 18, 2008). As a result of having her expectations met, An saw the feedback addressing her errors as being the "most important feedback the teacher points out" (Interview, November 18, 2008).

As An has explicated, the feedback she received influenced her expectations. The more Paula responded to An's language, the more An expected such feedback on her writing as a measure of her performance, a finding similar to Montgomery and Baker's (2007) study exploring L2 student expectations and perceptions concerning feedback and assessment. Conversely, for Paula, expectations influenced how she composed her responses. In fact, the assessment of writing tasks, specifically the distribution of points on the journal assignment and the LRP's overall grading system, influenced what Paula expected to read in a text and subsequently how she would respond as an instructor. The effects of her expectations were further seen in the types of comments she provided, as further explored in the next section.

Instructor/Reader Expectations

As an EAP instructor, Paula has certain expectations concerning her students' learning. In adopting an SCBI approach to structure the LRP, Paula expected her students to develop particular academic skills. Such skills would be needed to pass her course and be used for future successes throughout their academic career. One method of gauging her students' learning was to assess how well students were able to demonstrate their use of target academic skills through various classroom exercises and tasks. As an instructor/reader, Paula expected the students/writers to (a) understand what an assignment was asking them to do and (b) demonstrate this understanding by applying particular skills such as synthesizing material coherently, citing sources properly, thinking critically, and using language accurately. Therefore, when reading her students' writing assignments, Paula was looking to see how well students could demonstrate their ability to meet her expectations. Specifically, Paula explained her expectations as follows:

. . . understanding what the assignment is asking you to do; content; and organization; it changes more to language. But if they get the content, and it's based on readings, and pulling information from many readings, right, that means they understand the readings too. (Interview, December 1, 2008)

One method Paula used to express her expectations was through an assessment scheme. Her assessment worked in conjunction with a standardized feedback form broken into two sections: (1) content and (2) language/readability. Each section contained a number of comments that described in general terms different gradients in the quality of skill demonstration. Beside each section heading and each comment was a percentage,

showing the weighting of how the assignment was graded. Paula introduced the evaluation/comment sheet to the students during class and explained that she would use it to evaluate their work. Further, because “the evaluation sheet is an important part of explicit instruction, I will go through [it]” (Interview, December 1, 2008), Paula explained. However, she added:

the only thing that it shows them is, I think, as a student, they will look at how much they get for content and how much they get for language, and they will see that content weighs heavier than language. (Paula, interview, December 1, 2008)

By standardizing the feedback comments on an evaluation sheet, Paula was explicitly indicating her expectations for what aspects of writing would receive what kind of grade. Unlike her handwritten feedback, which was more learner-specific and formative, the comment sheet was generic and summative. However, within the developmental feedback cycle, learners were still able to use the standardized feedback formatively, guiding the composition of the next journal assignment and scaffolding their learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, the evaluation sheet was also part of Paula’s regularized feedback practice, “a socially motivated typified action” that Paula used “to respond to a recurring rhetorical situation” (Miller, 1994a), the grading of an assignment. The academic writing skills that were addressed by pre-fabricated comments were the same ones emphasized in the SCBI approach. Again, the pedagogical approach was influencing Paula’s feedback.

Evaluation of the LRP

The evaluation of the LRP is an example of how Paula’s expectations and the pedagogical approach came together in influencing her feedback. First, Paula used the

tenets of SCBI to design the LRP. Then she assigned a grading value to each part of the project, including the research journal assignments. Each assignment was weighted to grade a student's expression of content and language. Her expectations of student performance were reflected in the weightings assigned. The feedback she provided was a response to how well the student was able to demonstrate her ability in applying skills to produce the requisite academic text, as well as meeting her expectations. As Paula explained, the LRP began when

they have to formulate a research question, and [then] they have to find sources in the library. . . . They have to do it in whatever manner that I have designed, and they have to do it in the APA style. They have to tell me how they found the source, and that's the easy part, and . . . then information about the author because it has to be a credible source, so that's all very easy. Then the summary, that's a little more difficult and . . . they get three or four points. Note-taking is the highest mark here because I want them to practice taking notes, not copying sentence [sic] . . . and then the discussion . . . this is where the critical thinking comes in. Once a week they submit it. Only the first one, they can rewrite to raise their marks. On the assumption that they do not necessarily understand what I want them to do although it's described in the library research assignment, which has four pages and also kind of describes it. I cannot make assumptions that my students understand me. It takes time to get used to me too and to my expectations.

(Interview, December 1, 2008)

When asked if she explained to the students her responding practices or how she would structure her feedback, Paula said no, " . . . because they should know it from the

instructions, right” (Interview, December 1, 2008). While the connection between instructions and expectations might have been obvious to Paula, it might not have been so clear to some L2 students who were newcomers to the academic culture of a university. For such EAP students, explicit instructions might have been necessary. Other EAP students might have already understood the connection between instructions, assessment, and expectations. Paula’s assumption may be justified, based on her personal views of the learning situation. Such views developed over years of classroom experience, creating a body of practical knowledge that informed her pedagogical decisions (Ellis, 1998). In fact, Paula’s personal views regarding feedback were a contextual factor that also influenced her responding practices.

Personal views of feedback

Paula perceives feedback as being inherently negative, especially from the viewpoint of a student. Therefore, she has developed a responding practice aimed at mitigating the impact any error-related feedback has on the student, a common practice among L2 writing instructors (Hyland & Hyland, 2001). Paula explained that feedback

. . . gives you a personal connection with the student or at least personal attention to the student . . . and, of course, you try to minimize the negative impact of feedback without hedging . . . because you want to encourage [and] at the same time you want to say it’s bad. It’s always a balancing act between criticism and encouragement and praise and suggestion . . . suggestion would be somewhere between criticism and praise. I try; I push myself to, but it’s difficult to praise them for something every time so that they know that not everything is bad, even if it’s not so great. But I’m afraid that sometimes I may miss it because so I’m

focused on underlining and making negative comments that I at least try. And if it's very bad, I tend to write a small note at the end, using their first name. This is another attempt to [say], 'you're a person, and you're learning English' . . . but when someone's totally out of it, I say, 'please come and see me; we need to talk' . . . using the first name. (Interview, December 1, 2008)

To understand if Paula was able to establish a personal connection with her students via feedback, both mitigating negativity and providing encouragement, asking her students was necessary. An was able to shed some light on this issue when discussing the usefulness of Paula's feedback:

She [Paula] said where you write wrong [sic] and . . . I won't make the same mistake next time. Sometimes, she will write some words to encourage me, and I will feel interesting [sic] and feel confidence to, you know, study English and proof-writing very well . . . sometimes I will lose confidence; I think maybe I have no talent to write these difficult writings, but when I get the feedback, I will feel, ah yes, maybe I can. (Interview, November 18, 2008)

For An, at least, the feedback Paula used accomplished what it had been intended for accomplishing, namely mitigating the negativity of the text's errors and encouraging An to keep on practicing writing and revising. Further, An's uptake, using the feedback to (a) avoid like errors in future writing assignments and (b) feel inspired and confident in her abilities to practice writing, was an appropriate response to Paula's feedback.

Establishing a rapport with her students was another function that Paula intended her feedback to accomplish. She did this through personalizing her commentary, using

student's names in the feedback and praising them for their efforts. Her effort to create a positive learning environment through her feedback was not lost on Satoshi. As he explained, "I am good at studying or learning something when I feel comfortable. She gave me a good place to study. She make me relax [sic]. . . . She made that situation" (Interview, November 13, 2008). Creating a rapport with her students, in order to lessen anxiety and encourage learning, was part of the practical knowledge that Paula had gained through classroom experience (Ellis, 1998). Such knowledge shaped her philosophical stance toward feedback, influencing her pedagogical practice of responding to student writing. In perceiving feedback as inherently negative, Paula patterned her feedback so that one of the actions it accomplished was the mitigation of negativity. However, there were other actions she intended her feedback to accomplish as well, which, in turn, influenced how she shaped her responses. Paula explicated that her feedback was given

. . . to signal things, and . . . if I comment too much, it sounds like preaching, and if I write two or three words, I'm hopefully getting their attention to pay attention to something that is here or there. I think it's better for them to figure out why I have a problem, or why did I put a question mark or write 'confusing'. It's better if they can figure it out by themselves, and me being less explicit about it, it's just me signaling what's good or 'what's this?' or 'I don't understand.' (Interview, December 1, 2008)

Using indirect and less explicit form-focused and content-focused feedback, Paula directed her responses at raising her students' level of potential, guiding them in their revisions with the intent that such errors can be avoided on future compositions or in the

LRP, its succession of journal assignments. Scaffolding her students' learning from assignment to assignment opens a ZPD and an opportunity for learning (Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978).

Summary of Pedagogical Layer Influences

Three contextual factors originating from within the pedagogical layer have been identified as influencing Paula's responding practices: (a) the pedagogical approach, (b) instructor/reader expectations, and (c) personal views of feedback. Of these, the greatest impact had come from the pedagogical approach she followed: SCBI.

Paula's use of SCBI influenced how she structured the course's tasks and assignments. In the LRP, for example, the journal entry assignment was repeated six times. Even though each entry reported on a different source, together, these sources helped students accumulate content and knowledge on the same topic in addition to recycling language and vocabulary (Pally, 2001). As a result, the students could then focus on practicing key academic skills such as researching materials, synthesizing readings, and summarizing texts—all helping to develop both critical and analytical thinking skills (Pally 2001). Learning these academic skills helped initiate EAP students to practices other students within the university's community of learners participated in (Wenger, 1998).

Repetition of the journal entry assignment imposed a structure on how feedback was given. Paula's form-focused and content-focused responses created a feedback genre (Smith, 1997), used as a tool to guide learners from what they had done on their own to what could have the potential to incorporate into the next assignment (Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). This type of developmental feedback created a unique write-and-

response cycle in the course, regularizing the journal assignment and feedback given. The research journal, a part of the LRP, was part of the class's genre set (Devitt, 1994), consisting of both texts and feedback in a dialogical exchange, responding to each other. Moreover, understanding how knowledge was created using a feedback genre meant looking at the how the genre was used in its naturalistic setting, including the regularization of how this set of texts were composed and the reading practices needed to interpret them (Paré & Smart, 1994).

The journal assignments were assessed for a student's use of the academic skills central to the SCBI approach, thus reinforcing the importance and value of these skills in the minds of the students. Moreover, the assessment of students' practices mirrored Paula's expectations. Such expectations were evident in the assessment schemes she developed to grade the students' work, as a result of her practical experience as an L2 instructor. In addition to the knowledge Paula acquired through her practice, her feedback was also influenced by her personal views of the responses and the actions they encouraged students to take.

While Paula's responding practices have been greatly influenced by the contextual factors located within the pedagogical layer, factors originating within the programmatic layer also influenced the feedback she provided. Such factors are the focus of the next section.

Programmatic Layer

Moving outward from the pedagogical, the next layer of context is the programmatic. Contextual factors originating from this layer also influenced Paula's responding practices. The SCBI approach that greatly influenced Paula's feedback in the

pedagogical layer also has origins located with the programmatic layer. In fact, SCBI strides the boundary between layers because it is one of the shared understandings amongst some EAP program instructors. As such, it may be a contributing influence on responding practices not only in Paula's class but also in other classes adopting it. In the following sections, details concerning what is commonly understood and shared amongst the EAP instructors and how these understandings influenced Paula's feedback will be presented.

Shared Understandings

Amongst some members of the EAP program COP, there exists a shared understanding of how to pedagogically structure their courses. As indicated by Paula, "For five of us, we have, I think, a common understanding of what we are doing, this sustained content approach. I think everybody does it" (Interview, December 1, 2008). Emily, the former program coordinator, corroborated Paula's statement:

There are a group of us who have embraced this idea of sustained content and interpreted it somewhat differently, I mean, we don't all do exactly the same thing, . . . but we sort of agree on the fundamental principle which is that rather than giving students completely isolated little units that have no relationship with each other and, therefore, have no continuity . . . give them content they can get their teeth into and develop . . . giving them language too that develops with them, so if you use sustained content, there's a lot of repetition of vocabulary, structuring of texts, this kind of thing, so it really does reinforce the development of vocabulary and the development of academic structures. Although it's content,

it seems to me that it does an excellent job of developing academic language.

(Interview, December 3, 2008)

Emily, who also teaches EAP courses, and Paula are among the group of instructors who have adopted an SCBI approach in their course pedagogies. Although the operationalization of the approach varies between instructors, Emily revealed that there is agreement on why some instructors use the approach, namely to help students develop critical and analytical thinking skills and academic language. So how then have instructors come to a common understanding regarding the use of SCBI, albeit with individual variations?

Community of Practice

One part of the reason for the adoption of a common approach is that the instructors in the EAP program are members of the same COP (Wenger, 1998). They all participate in common practices that are specific to their identity as members of particular communities such as those of EAP instructors, university instructors, and L2 instructors. Participation in a community's practices does not have to be identical for members to interact with other members successfully, but there must be some common understanding concerning what practices are shared and how a member participates in them (Wenger, 1998). For the EAP instructors working together in this University's EAP program, there are a number of shared practices they participate in that forms their identity. In applying a similar approach to their classroom pedagogies, EAP instructors recognize themselves as co-participants in a shared practice, yet how the approach becomes reified into "thingness" (Wenger, 1998, p. 58) such as course outlines, teaching materials, grade reports, or feedback differs from instructor to instructor. Paula was able to interpret the

approach and apply the approach in her chosen manner, yet by virtue of her using an SCBI approach, Paula's membership in the community is recognized by other members, the other EAP instructors.

This being said, there is another factor involved in explaining why the adoption of a common pedagogical approach is only a tacitly held shared understanding: the EAP program has no formalized curricula for its courses.

Curriculum

Having no formalized curricula, EAP instructors do not have to structure their course or assign tasks in a uniform manner. There is no programmatic policy regarding how each of the courses in the program should be or must be taught. As Paula explained:

Everybody teaches whatever. It [course] is content-based, so the content varies from class to class. We do have this [Emily designed] coursepack. It explains the main concepts of what we are dealing with and that every teacher should be dealing with—there should be framing and citations and how to write . . . but we should cooperate more; we have difficulty writing a curriculum. We don't have a curriculum. (Interview, December 1, 2008)

Having no course curricula does not mean instructors are lawless in their pedagogies. As both Emily and Paula have previously explained, for some instructors, there is a shared understanding of how to approach language learning, using SCBI. However, Paula feels a need for more cooperation and consensus amongst the instructors concerning the pedagogical direction of the program. Further compounding this lack of formalized direction, from Paula's perspective, is the recent dissolution of the program's coordinator

position. Therefore, Paula believes that “because we [EAP program] don’t have Emily, we [EAP instructors] should have a few evaluation guidelines. We [EAP program] don’t have an exam” (Interview, December 1, 2008).

With no curricula, coordinator, evaluation guidelines, or exit exams, Paula’s view of programmatic cohesiveness is bleak, a similar sentiment shared by Emily as well, who sees the lack of cohesiveness as the “greatest flaw in our program: [the] total lack of the ability to articulate any kinds of standards” (Interview, December 3, 2008). Why do the EAP instructors, as a COP, lack an ability to articulate standards?

Instructor Autonomy

The inability to articulate standards for programmatic practices, including the formalization of curricula or guidelines for classroom practices, including feedback, comes as a consequence of the unionized employees’ collective agreement, ensuring an instructor’s ability to have autonomy in her practices. The interpretation of the agreement by the School in which EAP instructors work is that the program cannot institute guidelines or policies that infringe upon an instructor’s right to autonomous practice. As Emily explained:

Because of the way that contract has been interpreted, certainly over the past in our department [School], which has been this raising of the specter of teacher autonomy at any mention of trying to bring some kind of reasonableness to what we do and articulating what we do. We’ve always got so far and then someone will shout, ‘teacher autonomy,’ and the whole thing collapses. (Interview, December 3, 2008)

The School's interpretation of the collective agreement has created an obstacle for the establishment of formalized guidelines articulating EAP instructor practices. The consequences are felt in all areas of the program, as perceived by Emily:

The lack of any kind of guidelines or any kind of unanimity, I think, impacts the program in all sorts of ways, in terms of not having a kind of coherent curriculum, in having problems with classes at the same level doing very different things, and having very different standards; so you get students who will say, 'oh, I don't want to go into so-and-so's class, it's too difficult, too demanding, but let's go in someone else's class because you don't have to work so hard.' It might be perception, but there might be some truth behind it. (Interview, December 3, 2008)

A lack of formalized standards across EAP courses has been compensated by shared understandings amongst some instructors. Sharing an understanding concerning pedagogical practices has "got to be based on mutual agreement. . . . Because of the collective agreement, it [common practice] could only be on the basis of [mutual agreement]" (Emily, interview, December 3, 2008). Is there a shared agreement concerning feedback practices?

Understanding of Feedback

Despite no formalized feedback guidelines, there is a shared agreement amongst some of the EAP instructors concerning feedback practices. In fact, it is the same group of instructors who have agreed upon adopting an SCBI approach to their classroom pedagogies. Adopting this approach

. . . dictates the kinds of assignments that you ask them to do, so in sustained content, it's also sustained process. Assignments build on each other and reinforce each other, and so you can have a kind of developmental feedback, if you like, which I don't think you can have so effectively with any other method because you develop a vocabulary of feedback. (Emily, interview, December 3, 2008)

The influence that an SCBI approach has on structuring a course through its assignments and feedback, as described by Emily, is what occurs in Paula's classroom. Therefore, by agreeing to adopt an SCBI approach in their classrooms, some EAP instructors have also coordinated responding practices. Sharing an understanding of how to approach language learning has provided them a means of circumventing the lack of program cohesion which strict adherence to the principle of teacher autonomy could have caused.

As Emily also mentioned, the adoption of the SCBI approach allows for the development of a vocabulary of feedback. Such development was seen in Paula's feedback practices, where her responses became regularized, developing a vocabulary of feedback⁷ used to respond to the errors she encountered repeatedly in her students' texts. In typifying her feedback responses, Paula created a feedback genre (Smith, 1997). While instructors do "not necessarily [have] exactly identical ways of responding" (Emily, interview, December 3, 2008), their regularized responses do share similarities, namely pedagogical purpose. Such a purpose, as articulated by Emily, would be "any feedback concerned with what the student is meaning and what language . . . we [EAP instructors] give them so that their meaning can become clearer" (Interview, December 3, 2008).

⁷ For examples of Paula's regularized responses, vocabulary of feedback, see quoted examples on pages 70-71.

Aiming to have all EAP instructors share an understanding concerning how to provide feedback that accomplishes such ends is one way that practices could also become coordinated amongst instructors. For shared understandings to develop, members of a community must socially interact (Wenger, 1998). Emily's testimony suggests through social interaction, shared understandings do become established: "because we [some EAP instructors] talk and we work together . . . we do have some sense of the feedback that we would want to give" (Emily, interview, December 3, 2008).

Learning to respond

Social interaction amongst the EAP instructors has encouraged individuals to learn their community's shared practices from each other through a process of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991). For Paula, who "was kind of raised here" (Interview, December 1, 2008) in the EAP program, learning the valued practices of this community have meant participating in the valued pedagogical practices such as responding to student writing with other experienced members of the EAP COP. Shared participation "through talking, and in some cases working together, where occasionally we're team teaching . . . actually giving feedback on the same assignment" (Emily, interview, December 3, 2008) enabled Paula, as a new instructor entering the program, to learn the responding practice valued by the EAP COP. This created a context for LPP (Lave & Wenger, 1991), a process of learning through shared participation, as exemplified by Emily:

some years ago, we [EAP instructors] sort of devised a master feedback grid. . . .

Not everyone uses it, but quite a number of people use it as a basis and then sort of vary it according to what they want. It's very comprehensive. It [the grid] looks

at the moment of interpreting the assignment correctly to the very final act of, you know, what's the overall impression of the assignment, and it breaks it down into content, into logic, into language, and accuracy in language. (Interview, December 3, 2008)

In establishing a feedback grid, despite individual modifications made by each instructor, the EAP instructors had, through shared participation, reified their community's values into "thingness" (Wenger, 1998, p. 58). However, using such an object can only be mutually agreed upon as enforcing its use could be considered an infringement of the collective agreement.

Summary of Programmatic Layer Influences

Within the programmatic layer, contextual factors influencing Paula's classroom responding practices originated from shared understandings held by some members of the EAP program's community of practitioners (Wenger, 1998). Feedback practices were ultimately influenced by the use of the SCBI approach. Adopting this approach was agreed upon but not formalized due to the EAP program's interpretation of the employee's collective agreement with the University, specifically of the principle of instructor autonomy, barring the ability to formalize curricular guidelines and policies concerning practices such as feedback. As a result, practices learned through shared participation could only be mutually agreed upon, based on shared understandings. The understandings some EAP instructors shared have led to similarities in responding practices, according to the participants' testimonials. As Paula is a member of the subgroup of instructors that share understandings concerning pedagogical practices, her responding practices have been influenced by such membership. Further, as such

understandings are influenced by an interpretation of the collective agreement between the instructors and the institution, the next section focuses on the institutional layer of context and factors originating within it.

Institutional Layer

The outer layer of the nest of contexts is the institutional layer. The contextual factors that influence the responding practices of the EAP instructors originate from the unionized employees' collective agreement with the University. One way in which the collective agreement impacts upon responding practices is via the hiring or promoting of instructors within the School. Union stipulations covering such employment processes include an in-class observation of pedagogical practices by administration. During the observation, administrators are able to verify or assess any assumptions they may have formed regarding an instructor's competencies in fulfilling pedagogical responsibilities such as expertise in giving feedback. For novice instructors, classroom observations can also influence how they continue to learn about valued practices within the EAP COP.

Employment

Collective Agreement

While the University is a place for learning, it is also a workplace, more specifically in this case, a unionized workplace. Therefore, employees, including faculty, instructors, and staff, must join an employees' union in order to hold the post for which they were hired. In joining the union, each member is bound by the current terms of their union's collective agreement with the University's administration. The collective agreement strives to ensure that both employer and employee agree to cooperate in working toward a common goal, the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge, through

teaching, research, and service. Further, such a pursuit should foster and encourage freedoms, responsibilities and mutual respect. These concepts are defined in some detail within the collective agreement document, a reification (Wenger, 1998) of the valued practices the University's employees agree to participate within. However, practices and ideas within the document can be interpreted in different ways. For example, the School in which EAP instructors teach has interpreted the document in a manner that disallows any articulation of programmatic standards. However, other interpretations may be possible and indeed entertained by some union members or administrators.

The collective agreement document is a cultural artifact that is shaped by and shapes the community in which it is used and whose values it embodies. From Miller's (1994b) perspective, such a document could be regarded as a genre that is both "resource and product" (p. 70) of the University's rhetorical community. The document is restructured and revised to reflect how employees and employers produce and reproduce collectively bargained aims and goals directed toward developing particular kinds of knowledge.

Administrators can also use the document as a means to ensure that certain procedures and criteria are followed to assess the competence of a newly hired employee. For example, the collective agreement says that a contract employee must be observed, not how their pedagogical practices assessed. By signing the agreement, thereby submitting to its terms, the new employee makes an implicit statement to their employer: I am competent. Similarly, the employer makes certain assumptions regarding the newcomer's ability to participate within the shared practices of the community that the employee has just entered.

Assumptions and Expectations

One of the assumptions that the administration makes concerning a newly hired EAP instructor's abilities is her competence in providing feedback to students. Adam, the Language School's director, explained how the collective agreement supports such assumptions:

The principle that sort of operates at this University, and it has to do with being in a unionized environment—I think the executive director of the union would sort of agree. The idea, to me, seems to be that once you hire somebody into a position, you are making an implicit statement that [the new employee] are [sic] qualified to provide the [right] kind of feedback [that is expected of them].

Somehow they received . . . training before. (Interview, November 12, 2008)

Adam's statement is alluding to the hiring process. For an instructor to be gainfully employed by the University, she must have gone through a thorough application screening and interviewing process. Therefore, it can be assumed that the successful candidate has met the desired qualifications and satisfied the hiring committee's standards for teaching at the University. It can also be assumed that the instructor is competent to successfully participate in the practices valued within the University COP, even if she may have to learn new practices to become a full participant.

In the EAP program, such a rigorous hiring process is also followed. Consequently, similar assumptions and expectations are made concerning the competencies of its instructors. How much can an administrator assume regarding the ability of an instructor to provide feedback? This opens up a range of uncertainty, especially since there is no formalized curricula or standards governing pedagogical

practices in the current EAP program. Yet, with or without formal responding guidelines, giving students feedback is expected. As Adam ascertained, “They [EAP instructors] have to respond to students on their writing” (Interview, November 12, 2008). However, the only time when administration can verify assumptions and expectations made concerning instructors’ practices, including feedback, is through

formal evaluations and those are not really common here. In my view, the University relies . . . very little on things like observations. There are restrictions on exactly how much you can observe somebody without their permission. You can do it when they come up for a promotion or confirmation or tenure and that would be one place to give formal feedback. One of the teaching observations I’ve done—I always have a category of really strong points about the class and then areas for improvement—and actually one of the most significant comments I’ve made, in the year and a half that I’ve been here, in the areas of improvement, was on the question of feedback. It wasn’t written feedback, but it was in-class feedback on language. I mean that’s not really policy, but that is an area where you can have room for feedback for the instructor. The only other place that we do it besides confirmation of promotion is with contract instructors, where we do have the right to say, ‘As part of the condition for your employment, we are going to observe you and see if you’re suitable for remaining on the seniority list afterwards.’ (Adam, interview, November 12, 2008)

The situations in which observations can occur are very specific. As Adam has revealed, they serve particular functions, making an instructor or professor permanent or keeping an instructor on a seniority list for rehire. Therefore, to be granted a promotion or

given a subsequent contract, such University employees must allow administrators to observe their pedagogical practices. Such classroom observations give administrators a chance to evaluate an instructor's practices. However,

. . . when you [administrator] are observing a class, you are not really observing their [the EAP instructor's] written feedback. Right now, I don't think that we give any instruction on providing written feedback to students. In fact, this has also reminded me that it's not a question that comes up on our interview. (Adam, interview, November 12, 2008)

As Adam stated, written feedback is not observable during an in-class assessment of pedagogical practice performance. Therefore, it is assumed that the instructor is competent in their ability to give effective written feedback or that they can learn without explicit training from administration. This assumption is not baseless. For instructors with many years of teaching experience, practices become enriched and informed through continued use. Experienced instructors compile a wealth of practical knowledge over time, as a result of acting in the moment (Ellis, 1998) and responding to situations expertly. For EAP instructors, responding to students' writing is one skill they have many opportunities to practice and build their practical knowledge about, knowing when and how and to whom responses are effective. Further, as previously discussed, for newcomers entering the EAP community, LPP (Lave & Wenger, 1991) allows for shared understandings of valued ways of giving feedback to become learned through participation in shared practices with experienced instructors.

Still, administration's assumptions that all instructors are meeting their expectations and providing appropriate feedback on writing are not verified through any formalized assessment. In fact, the assumption that new instructors have established a set of responding practices is not even questioned during the hiring process mainly because it is a practice that is hard to assess. This situation, according to Adam, is a risk that the School takes in its hiring practice, especially

. . . when you're [the school] hiring somebody part-time because of a specific short term need. You have more of the chance that you are really hiring a novice, and you really need to assess if they have had some sort of training in that area. That is probably why that [feedback practices] has been a gap on the list of interview questions we have. (Interview, November 12, 2008)

The assumption that a novice instructor may not have been adequately trained to give effective written feedback does not affect their chance of employment. Having met all of the qualifications and standards expected to fulfill the position, administration assumes the instructor can give written feedback to students adequately. There are a lot of assumptions surrounding feedback practices. However, with no formalized curriculum or guidelines in the EAP program, "there is no, absolutely no guidance, for say a new instructor coming in" (Emily, interview, December 3, 2008). A novice employee is left to her own practices while experienced instructors can rely on the practical knowledge they have developed (Ellis, 1998).

Having no formal guidance does not mean a novice instructor is not capable of providing her students with effective written feedback. Without formalized curricular

guidelines or standards that articulate and reify (Wenger, 1998) the feedback practices valued by the community of EAP practitioners, a newcomer may provide feedback not valued or desirable. Adam is worried that “for somebody without proper training, they may just go for the real detailed grammatical problems without giving feedback on the message” (Interview, November 13, 2008). Learning from experienced members of the community is not a formalized training process. Further, shared participation in practices need to be initiated by members themselves. The EAP instructors are not required to work together on projects or assignments often, but “they [EAP instructors] have periodic meetings” (Adam, interview, November 13, 2008). For newcomers to the EAP instructor community, these meetings might be the only time they have to participate with experienced instructors in order to learn what kinds of responding practices are valued.

This said, new contract employees, as newcomers to the EAP community of practice, have their in-class practices assessed through formal observations. Observation reports that point out strengths and weaknesses are a tool that can be used in order to learn valued practices, similar to an apprenticeship model of learning such as GP (Rogoff, 1990, 2003). Further, administrators note what an employee does not do well, their actual level of performance, and give suggestions on how this can be improved. These suggestions are intended to guide the instructor in raising their abilities and learning about what is valued in this community and culture of teaching, again like an apprentice would learn about an expert’s trade (Rogoff, 2003). Whether through assessors’ observations reports that scaffold learning or shared participation in practices with experienced instructors, newcomers to the EAP community have opportunities for

learning valued practices. Such practices are included within, and reified by (Wenger, 1998), the collective agreement.

Summary of the Institutional Layer Influences

Within the institutional layer of context, factors that influence responding practices originate from the collective agreement, a reification (Wenger, 1998) of the valued practices of the University. In signing the document, the instructor, as an employee, submits to a number of assumptions and expectations concerning her pedagogical competencies. In the EAP program, responding practices are not assessed or inquired about during the hiring process. However, assumptions concerning an instructor's ability to provide written feedback are made. Whether gained from practical experience (Ellis, 1998) or learned through shared participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991), providing feedback is a valued practice in this community of practitioners (Wenger, 1998).

Summary of the Nested Contexts

This chapter has discussed how specific factors originating from various layers of a nested learning context influenced the responding practices of an EAP instructor. While some factors were located solely in one layer, others had origins located in two layers, influencing Paula's feedback from different angles. However, all of the factors worked together at the same time, creating one educational context in which Paula's responding practices were embedded. In the next chapter, conclusions drawn from the study's findings will be discussed.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

This study explored how a learning context influenced the written feedback an instructor gave to her L2 students in an EAP class. In taking a multilayered nested approach to the study of context, this investigation probed (a) the influence contextual factors exerted upon an instructor's responding practices, (b) the contextual factors that originated from sources outside of the classroom, and (c) then how such contextually shaped responses helped L2 students learn. Exploring how contextual factors influenced feedback is where this study makes its contribution to the existing body of L2 writing feedback research literature.

To address its queries, this study has adopted a socio-cultural perspective on learning and writing (Lantolf, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985). It sought to see if and how the learning context shaped the EAP instructor's feedback into a cultural artifact that mediated learning. The ultimate objective of undertaking such a view has been to understand where the main influences on an EAP instructor's responding practices originated from and how the feedback provided supported learning.

This study has found that L2 writing feedback is not just a classroom phenomenon but instead a situated practice that is influenced by multiple sources located throughout the learning context. These results support the view that the post-process perspective on L2 writing has taken, encouraging a greater view of feedback as more than just a response to signal error or incoherence but rather as a rich and dynamic situated practice that mediates cultural knowledge and supports learning. Findings have shown that the scope of L2 writing feedback research needs to be widened in order to understand

how textual responses are a part of the larger socio-cultural and situated academic activity of learning to write. It is in such a manner that this study makes its contribution to the field and the existing body of knowledge on L2 writing feedback.

Although the conclusions drawn from this study cannot be generalizable, they do shed light on the pervasive influence of contextual factors beyond the classroom. Sources of influence can be garnered only through case by case research. Discussed in the remainder of this chapter are the pedagogical implications drawn from the results specific to this case: the EAP class and its embedded minicases of an EAP instructor and two of her students. The discussion begins with the first research question: How, and to what extent, do contextual factors located within various layers of a nested learning context influence the responding practices of an EAP instructor?

Pedagogical Implications

Through an examination of the nested learning context, factors influencing the responding practices of the EAP instructor were identified as originating from the pedagogical, programmatic, and institutional layers. Although factors originated in different layers, they all worked together in shaping Paula's feedback.

The greatest influence came from SCBI, the pedagogical approach a sub-group of EAP instructors had mutually agreed upon using to structure their courses. In sharing an understanding toward pedagogy, these instructors circumvented the restrictions imposed upon them by the programmatic interpretation of the collective agreement's principle of teacher autonomy, barring the articulation of standards. This group of instructors also learned to respond in similar ways through a process of LPP (Lave & Wenger, 1991), in this case, shared participation in learning what feedback was valued and how it should be

given. Such a process of learning was needed because of the assumptions administration made of instructor's competencies. The collective agreement, a document established between unionized employees and University administration, allowed administrators to assume that experienced instructors and faculty members had developed practical knowledge over time (Ellis, 1998) or that newer instructors within this specific COP could learn through LPP (Lave & Wenger, 1991) or guided by feedback from post-classroom observations, like an apprenticeship similar to GP (Rogoff, 1990, 2003). Together, factors from all layers created a learning context within which EAP students' compositions were written and to which Paula's textual responses were addressed.

Since all of the factors were connected, the extent to which context influenced Paula's feedback is best seen through the impact SCBI had on the structure of the course and the manner in which the approach shaped her responses. Paula's feedback was inherently shaped by the developmental feedback cycle she used in the LRP, designed to practice academic language and skills, central to the SCBI approach as defined by Pally (2001). In adopting the approach, Paula used her feedback as a textual response to address the learning situation, exemplifying feedback as a situated writing activity (Dias, Freedman, Medway, & Paré, 1999). Although SCBI influenced when and how Paula responded to her students' texts, the approach does not give insight into which types of feedback (e.g. form-focused or content-focused) she provided or why she responded in a particular manner. From such divisions, varied pedagogical implications can be drawn concerning Paula's responding practices.

Paula provided her students with formative feedback. She intended her responses to be used developmentally, guiding the composition of a different assignment. Using her

feedback in such a manner, Paula was able to regularize the writing process across a set of texts (Paré & Smart, 1994). In doing so, she was further able to regularize her feedback through responding to students' texts in the LRP drafting cycle, a recurrent rhetorical situation (Miller, 1994a), creating a feedback genre. The regularization of the writing process allowed students to develop a set of reading practices that not only intimated how to respond with appropriate uptake (Freadman, 1994) but also conveyed culturally relevant knowledge of academic writing conventions. For a student, a learning context that contains regularized assignments and instructor practices may lower their anxiety towards assignments and instructor expectations, creating a more relaxed environment that support and promotes learning. Such a situation may also prepare EAP students for course work post EAP program, especially if the EAP course structure and demands mirror those of non-EAP courses, an argument for using SCBI. Further, by understanding expectations early in their university career, EAP students may have greater success in future courses.

Paula also provided her students with feedback that primarily focused on form issues, drawing students attention to errors in grammar, structure, or organization. While some types of error correction scaffolded learning (Vygotsky, 1978), some of the corrections provided to students were well integrated within the LRP assignment cycle and its developmentally focused responses. The students who participated in this study appeared to have difficulty in responding to the feedback on grammar provided, presumably because they were not developmentally ready to acquire such structures. This lends support to Truscott's (1996) argument that grammar correction should be abandoned. However, correcting grammar, a common type of feedback students want

(Montgomery & Baker, 2007), satisfies students' desires and highlights the importance of accuracy in academic writing. Instructors need to be aware of what grammatical structures students may or may not be able to apply, adjusting their feedback accordingly.

Paula also gave feedback that was aimed at motivating actions. Based on her own philosophical view that feedback is inherently negative, comments she provided aimed to mitigate negativity and encourage students. While such comments do initially result in the desired effect, over time students may become jaded and begin to ignore responses. In fact, students who become used to positive comments may react strongly against any negative feedback, especially if such comments are not expected. Providing students with only positive responses may lead to negative results. Paula also attempted to indicate to students through her feedback what was valued in academic writing in university. While attention to citation and organization may be valued, such aspects of textual construction vary from discipline to discipline. Making students aware of what is valued in particular fields of study may lead to greater and future successes.

Beyond the pedagogical layer, SCBI was an approach that a particular sub-group of EAP instructors had mutually agreed upon adopting. As stated earlier, mutual agreement resulted from a literal interpretation of the principle of teacher autonomy cited in the collective agreement, barring the formalization of guidelines. Any obstacle that impedes the process of working as a collective unit affects how instructors practice and ultimately how students learn. While a small group of instructors have circumvented the obstacle imposed by strict adherence to the teacher autonomy principle through shared understandings of practices, breaking that barrier down could bring better cohesiveness to the program, giving students a more uniform experience in the program. Uniformity in

practice is important especially since students do not have the same instructor all the way through the EAP program. Guidelines could ensure greater consistency in student experience and learning. Also, by having articulated standards, administrators can continue to make assumptions regarding the competencies of the School's instructors, experienced or newly hired. Programmatic standards would guide any newcomers in participating in the practices shared by this COP in a manner that is valued. In lieu of such an event, the hiring process should then include a section that addresses responding practices and feedback, in general.

Overall, the findings of this study have pointed out that despite a lack of articulated standards in the program, the student participants perceived that they were learning academic language and writing skills, which, arguably, are preparing them for university programs. Either way, upon completion of the EAP program, students do satisfy the condition of their acceptance and enter full-time degree program within the University. However, bringing cohesiveness to the program is an issue that should be addressed, especially if the pedagogical approach used to structure classroom practices has been a success in supporting learning. Guiding students in their learning, Paula uses feedback to develop students' writing skills in preparation for course work post EAP. How she accomplishes such an action has been addressed by the second research question: Does the instructor's resulting feedback help L2 students to learn? If so, how?

In regularizing her feedback, socially motivated typified responses to recurrent situations (Miller, 1994a), Paula created a feedback genre. This genre became a part of a set of texts, the LRP journal assignment cycle, sharing a dialogical exchange. Each text in the cycle responded to each other, perpetually modifying the subsequent text, similar to

the tennis match metaphor introduced by Freadman (1994), accounting for the dialogical relationship between multiple texts that comprises one genre, arguably what the LRP assignment cycle produced. Within this cycle, Paula's typified responses were intended for guiding the composition of the next assignment. Paula's intent was to scaffold her students' learning by creating a ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978) with her responses and have her students use her feedback as tool to mediate learning, similar to that perceived of in guided participation (Rogoff, 1990).

As the experienced member of the apprenticeship-like learning situation, Paula guided her students through solving language and structure problems that they could not produce on their own but could potentially incorporate in the next assignment as a result of her help via feedback. This model of learning worked well with the structure of the LRP and its journal assignment cycle, for SCBI and GP complemented each other in developing learning. As SCBI developed language and skills through the extended study of one topic, GP scaffolded exercises that built on previous content and structures, developing students' abilities to incorporate such structures and ideas on their own in future texts. Paula's use of both concepts in her design of the LRP has enabled students to learn academic language and writing skills in her class. For students, SCBI and GP give them support and continued practice of language and skills over the length of the course. SCBI and GP formed the nexus in which response, context, and learning come together in Paula's EAP classroom.

Limitations and Future Work

The main limitations affecting the study's scope were time and size. These two factors controlled how much data was gathered and the length of time participants were studied.

The time spent with student participants was brief, especially in terms of academic skill development through the EAP program. I was only able to view how feedback guided their writing in one of the three courses that they would eventually complete in the EAP program. Therefore, studying their writing and study skill development over one semester does not have the breadth that development over the length of the program would have. Having had a longer time frame to conduct the study, I could have followed their progress through the program, allowing me to view feedback from other instructors in their classrooms. This is a place where future work and continued study could progress, shedding light on the shared understandings that do or do not exist amongst EAP instructors and their responding practices.

An additional factor that limited the scope of the study was the number of participants involved. As Paula indicated in her interview, students who volunteered to participate in the study were "good ones" (Interview, December 1, 2008), meaning they were attentive in class, motivated, demonstrated high proficiencies, and received high grades. These students understood how to use feedback for developing their academic skills. Having participants from various ranges of proficiencies would have presented a wider range of student uptake in response to Paula's feedback practices. Additional instructor participants would have allowed for comparisons between classes and/or tier of the program to be studied as well. How similar programmatic and institutional influences

affected the responding practices of other instructors at the same level or in different tiers would have been beneficial. Such findings could lead to a better understanding of how contextual factors from the affective domain (i.e. personality) influence responding behaviours and practices.

The future trajectories for continued studies exploring socio-cultural perspectives of L2 writing feedback should be aimed toward understanding the textual dialogue that occurs between an instructor and her student. Such investigations would enable a deeper knowledge of teaching and learning, leading to an even greater understanding of why responding to L2 students' writing is so important: an idea explicated by one of the student participants in my study.

Student: It [receiving feedback] is really, very important because the EAP teacher knows about English very well, much better than I know because she has lots of experience. It's always good to know, and it helps me a lot, raising my English skills by getting those comments and feedback. (Interview, November 12, 2008)

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ethics Approval Certificate

Carleton University Research Office
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1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, ON K1S 5B6 Canada
Tel: (613) 528-2516
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Ethics Approval Form

This is to certify that the Carleton University Research Ethics Committee has examined the application for ethical approval. The committee found the research project to meet appropriate ethical standards as outlined in the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* and, the *Carleton University Policies and Procedures for the Ethical Conduct of Research*.

X New approval

Renewal of original approval

Original date of approval:

Date of approval	October 30, 2008
Researcher	David Cooper
Status	M.A. Candidate
Department	School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies
Supervisor	Guillaume Gentil
Title of project	Situating teacher written commentary in an English for Academic Purposes Classroom: How context shapes feedback designed to aid second language writing development

Ethics approval expires on: 30 April 2009

All researchers are governed by the following conditions:

Annual Status Report: You are required to submit an Annual Status Report to either renewal approval or close the file. Failure to submit the Annual Status Report will result in the immediate suspension of the project. Funded projects will have accounts suspended until the report is submitted and approved.

Changes to the project: Any changes to the project must be submitted to the Carleton University Research Ethics Committee for approval. All changes must be approved prior to the continuance of the research.

Adverse events: Should any participant suffer adversely from their participation in the project you are required to report the matter to the Carleton University Research Ethics Committee. You must submit a written record of the event and indicate what steps you have taken to resolve the situation.

Suspension or termination of approval: Failure to conduct the research in accordance with the principles of the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* and the *Carleton University Policies and Procedures for the Ethical Conduct of Research* may result in the suspension or termination of the research project.

Leslie J. MacDonald-Hicks
Research Ethics Committee Coordinator
For the Chair of the Carleton University Research Ethics Committee
Prof. Antonio Gualtieri

Appendix B: Classroom Observation Protocol Sample

Day 6
page 1

Descriptive	Reflective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T collects portfolio assignments from Ss in the class → explanation of its grading 35% of mark • Students ask questions T reiterates <u>ALL</u> instruction again • Ss get into groups to work on case 1 from homework • T circulates amongst groups to look at progress of ideas • Asked to write a paragraph with a very specific rhetorical pattern 	<p>← again oral instructions and explanations are not written on the board or handed out in note form → note-taking skill reinforcement?</p> <p>← This is cyclical reinforcement of the instruction what her expectation are.</p> <p>reinforces the overall structures she feels are necessary.</p>

Appendix C: Instructor Interview Questions

Feedback – *These questions focus on the nature of feedback*

As an EAP instructor, how important is providing feedback to your students, specifically on their writing? Why?

Please explain your philosophy or beliefs about feedback.

Please explain how you developed your philosophy and any changes, if any, that it has undergone.

Instructor written commentary – *These questions focus on the specific type of feedback under investigation in the study*

Do you provide written commentary to your EAP students' texts? Why?

Please explain to me how you compose your comments.

In your opinion, to what extent do students utilize your comments effectively? Please explain why you feel this way.

Do you feel that providing commentary is an effective means of aiding second language writing development? Why?

Text-based Discussion – *Specific questions regarding the written texts, their subsequent drafts, and the instructor's written comments being analyzed in this study*

Looking at original draft's commentary:

Please explain to me why you wrote these comments.

Please explain to me how you intend the student to use these comments to revise or rewrite this text.

How might these comments help this student become a better writer? Why?

How different are these comments from comments that you provide on other assignments? If they are different, why do you think they are different?

*I will ask these questions about each of the student participant's original drafts

Classroom Context – *These questions ask about the relationship between classroom practices and teacher written commentary*

Do you explain to your students how you will respond to their writing? What do they tell them about your feedback practices?

Does the written commentary you give to your students' assignments help them to understand the lessons you teach in your classes? If you think they do, please explain

how you think they are connected. If you don't think so, please explain why there is no connection.

Do you make comments on your students' assignments about ideas, topics, or issues you cover in your class's lessons? Please tell me about some examples when this has happened.

Are the comments that you write on your students' assignments always the same or are they different? Please explain why do you this. Can you give me example to help me understand your answer?

Rapport with the students:

Please explain to me the type of rapport you have with your students in the class.

Does this rapport affect your commenting practices? How?

EAP Program Context – *These questions ask about any perceived or direct influence on classroom practices*

Are there are programmatic guidelines or policies regarding how you must or should respond to students' texts? If so, please explain them to me. If there are none, do you think there should be some established? Why?

What is the general feeling or philosophy in the department toward the provision of written commentary on students' texts?

Institutional Context — *This question asks about any perceived or direct influence on classroom practices*

Is there a feedback policy or philosophy held by the School? If so, could you please explain it to me?

Appendix D: Student Interview Questions

Feedback – *These questions focus on the nature of feedback*

As a student, how important is receiving feedback on your writing from your EAP instructor? Why?

Do you use your EAP instructor's feedback to improve your writing? How?

What kind of feedback is the most useful for you as a second language writer? Why?

Instructor written commentary – *These questions focus on the specific type of feedback under investigation in the study*

Does your EAP instructor write comments on your written assignments? Please describe these comments to me.

Please explain to me what you do with these comments.

In your opinion, how useful are these comments in helping you become a better writer? Why?

Why do you think your instructor gives you these comments?

Text-based Discussion – *Specific questions regarding the written texts, their subsequent drafts, and the instructor's written comments being analyzed in this study*

Looking at original draft's commentary:

Please explain to me why you think the instructor wrote these comments.

Please explain to me how you used these comments to revise or rewrite this text.

How useful are these comments for helping you to become a better writer? Why?

How different are these comments from comments that you receive on other assignments? If they are different, why do you think they are different?

*If the participant provides more than one text, questions will be repeated for additional texts.

Classroom Context – *These questions ask about the relationship between classroom practices and instructor written commentary*

Does your EAP instructor explain to you how she or he will respond to your writing? What do they tell you about his or her style of feedback?

Does the written commentary you receive on your assignments help you understand the lessons your instructor teaches in your classes? If you think they do, please explain how you think they are connected. If you don't think so, please explain how they are different.

Does your EAP instructor makes comments on your assignments about ideas, topics, or issues that he or she covers in your class's lessons? Please tell me about some examples when this has happened.

Are the comments that your EAP instructor writes on your assignments always the same or are they different? Please explain why you think this way. Can you give me example to help me understand your answer?

Rapport with other students:

Do you receive any help with improving your writing from your classmates? How do they help?

Rapport with the teacher:

How often do you speak with your EAP instructor? Why?

How much does your EAP instructor help you develop your skills as an academic writer? How does he or she do this?

How comfortable do you feel about talking with your EAP instructor about either positive or negative experiences you have in your EAP class? Why?

EAP Program Context:

Does the EAP program help you become a stronger and more effective academic writer? How?

Institutional Context:

Does the School help you become a stronger and more effective academic writer? How?

Appendix E: Program Coordinator Interview Questions

Feedback – *These questions focus on the nature of feedback*

How important is it for an instructor to provide feedback to L2 students, specifically on their writing? Why?

What is your personal philosophy or beliefs about feedback?

Please explain how you developed your philosophy and any changes, if any, that it has undergone.

Instructor written commentary – *These questions focus on the specific type of feedback under investigation in the study*

In your opinion, what kind of written commentary is most effective for helping L2 students develop as academic writers? Why?

In your opinion, to what extent do L2 students utilize their instructor's written commentary effectively? Please explain why you feel this way?

Programmatic Policies / Guidelines – *These questions ask about programmatic policy*

Are there are programmatic guidelines or policies regarding how an instructor must or should respond to students' texts? If so, please explain them to me.

If there are programmatic guidelines or policies, how are they enforced?

How are students made aware of such policies if they exist?

If there are no programmatic guidelines or policies regarding responding or feedback practices, do you think there should be? Why do you think so? Please explain what this policy or guideline would entail.

Programmatic philosophies – *These questions ask about the existence of an established philosophy towards feedback*

Is there an established philosophy towards responding or feedback practices that is supported by the program? If so, please explain it to me.

If there is an established philosophy, how explicit is it?

How was it established?

If there is no programmatic philosophy, do you think there should be? Why do you think so?

Professional development – *This question asks about feedback as a topic of professional development*

Has the topic of feedback, specifically written commentary practices, ever been a topic of professional development in workshop attended by instructors teaching in this program? If so, could you please explain the parameters of such an event? If there hasn't been one created, why not?

Institutional Context – *This question asks about any perceived or direct influence from the school on programmatic policies that, in turn, affect classroom practices*

Is there a feedback policy or philosophy held by the School? If so, could you please explain it to me? How does it impact your program?

Appendix F: School Director Interview Questions

Feedback – *These questions focus on the nature of feedback*

How important is it for an instructor to provide feedback to L2 students, specifically on their writing? Why?

What is your personal philosophy or beliefs about feedback?

Please explain how you developed your philosophy and any changes, if any, that it has undergone.

Instructor written commentary – *These questions focus on the specific type of feedback under investigation in the study*

In your opinion, what kind of written commentary is most effective for helping L2 students develop as academic writers? Why?

In your opinion, to what extent do L2 students utilize their instructor's written commentary effectively? Please explain why you feel this way?

Departmental Policies / Guidelines – *These questions ask about departmental policy*

Are there departmental guidelines or policies regarding how an EAP instructor must or should respond to students' texts? If so, please explain them to me.

If there are departmental guidelines or policies, how are they enforced?

How are students made aware of such policies if they exist?

If there are no departmental guidelines or policies regarding responding or feedback practices, do you think there should be? Why do you think so? Please explain what this policy or guideline would entail.

Departmental philosophies – *These questions ask about the existence of an established philosophy towards feedback*

Is there an established philosophy towards responding or feedback practices that is supported by the School? If so, please explain it to me.

If there is an established philosophy, how explicit is it?

How was it established?

If there is no departmental philosophy, do you think there should be? Why do you think so?

Faculty guidelines and philosophy – *These questions ask about the greater institution in which this School is a part of*

Are there are faculty guidelines or policies regarding how an instructor must or should respond to students' texts? If so, please explain them to me.

Is there an established philosophy towards responding or feedback practices that is supported by the University? If so, please explain it to me.

Appendix G: Interview Coding Sample

INTERVIEWER	RESPONDANT - G	DESCRIPTIVE CODE	CONCEPTUAL CODE
So, we'll just go through the questions in the order and ... just, if there isn't any question that you don't want to answer or you're not sure how to answer, just tell me that and that's okay. So, the first part of the questions are about feedback, in general, so this is any kind of feedback	Okay		
As a student, how important is receiving feedback, specifically on your writing from your EAP teacher?	Well, I think it is an important part of our course because if you don't get your feedback you won't know how you did your writing and what is the ... what is the mistake you made in the writing and next time if you write ... if you write the same kind of writing you will make the same mistake and you don't know ... are you did the wrong way or you did well or not	she views feedback as a measure of effective and accurate composition - as a judgment and assessment of the writing she is explaining that feedback is a tool for showing you where your mistakes are and as a way to not make those same mistakes in the future	view of feedback - tool of assesment view of feedback - measure of accuracy
Right. When you say mistakes, what kinds of mistakes do you mean?	For example, the grammar I use and the format, for example, you will miss the head ... the subheading ... and yes, sometimes, for example, you will miss the APA style you write is wrong, something like that	she explains that she is equating mistakes to errors in linguistic form and accuracy	view of feedback - indication of error in form
Do you think one type of mistake is more important to have feedback on than other types of mistakes?	What does that mean?		
For example, is grammar more important than say APA or...	I think maybe APA is more important... grammar ... um... yeah, grammar is also important because you write the academic writing so...	she is aware of the importance of accuracy in academic writing	view of accuracy in writing