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# Learning as Changing Participation: Discourse Roles in ESL Writing Conferences

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This study investigates the acquisition of an unfamiliar discursive practice by an adult Vietnamese learner of English. The practice is *revision talk* in weekly English as a Second Language (ESL) writing conferences between the student and his ESL writing instructor. This research adopts the interactional competence framework for understanding the interactional architecture and participation framework of the practice. It also draws on the theory of situated learning or legitimate peripheral participation in arguing that changes in the student's and instructor's patterns of co-participation demonstrate processes by which the student moved from peripheral to fuller participation. It appears that although the student was the one whose participation was most dramatically transformed, the instructor was a co-learner, and her participation changed in ways that complemented the student's learning. Through close analysis of the revision talk in four successive writing conferences, this study contributes to our understanding of language learning as co-constructed development in situated discursive practices.

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IN THIS ARTICLE WE REPORT OUR RESEARCH on the sociocultural characteristics of one discursive practice and the interactional processes by which the discursive practice is co-constructed by participants. Discursive practices are recurring episodes of face-to-face interaction, episodes that have social and cultural significance for a community of speakers. Participants co-construct a discursive practice through a configuration of interactional resources that is specific to the practice. This approach to language-in-interaction takes a view of social realities as interactionally constructed rather than existing independently of interaction, of meanings as negotiated through interaction rather than fixed in advance, of the context-bound nature of discourse, and of discourse as social action. In conjunction with this under-

standing of discursive practice, we view learning, including language learning, as changes in participation in these practices.

This view of learning as changing participation is radically different from theories of second language (L2) acquisition that frame language learning as a cognitive process residing in the mind-brain of an individual learner (Long & Doughty, 2003). The view that we present here, instead, is of L2 acquisition as a situated, co-constructed process, distributed among participants. This is a learning theory that takes social and ecological interaction as its starting point and develops detailed analyses of patterns of interaction (Greeno, 1997). In this perspective, language learning is manifested as participants' progress along trajectories of changing engagement in discursive practices, changes that lead from peripheral to fuller participation and growth of identity.

Many scholars in the cognitive tradition have accepted a view of language as a set of clearly de-

lineated and internally coherent structures that are best understood as a self-contained system. In this approach, the linguistic system is considered apart from the social-interactive context in which language is used. This approach has given rise to a research methodology in linguistics that pays scant attention to the nexus between language and context. In this view, language and context are in a figure-ground relationship, similar to how a portrait painter might separate the subject of a portrait from the background. In the field of applied linguistics, there have been three attempts in recent years to bridge the epistemological divide between language and context. The first attempt was work in quantitative sociolinguistics initiated by Labov (1966), which took both linguistic forms and features of sociocultural context, such as social class and gender, as existing independently of interaction and made correlations between them. In contrast to treating language and context as separate givens, work in sociology and linguistic anthropology associated with Goffman (1967, 1974) and Gumperz (1982) showed that context does not exist independently of interaction; rather, speakers construct a context for the interpretation of what they say through their use of language forms. Most recently, work in co-construction (C. Goodwin & M. H. Goodwin, 1992; Jacoby & Ochs, 1995; Shea, 1994), communicative practice (Hanks, 1996b), and interactional competence (Chalhoub-Deville, 2003; Hall, 1993, 1995; He & Young, 1998; Kramsch, 1986; Young, 1999, 2002) has argued that language and context are mutually constitutive.

It is this third approach, which builds on the twin traditions of conversation analysis and ethnography and which views language and context as mutually constitutive, that informs our research on discursive practice. One of the earliest linguistic descriptions of a discursive practice was Mitchell's (1957) study of the language of buying and selling in a North African market. More recently, linguistic anthropologists such as Ochs, Gonzalez, and Jacoby (1996) and Hanks (1996a) have developed further the theory of language as action-in-context through their descriptions of discursive practices as diverse as lab meetings among research physicists and Maya divination.

In Young and He's (1998) study, Young examined in detail a single discursive practice: the language proficiency interview, a practice through which an assessor judges a student's ability to speak a foreign language. Through this work, a systematic way of describing discursive practices was developed and has since been applied to un-

derstanding other practices, including office hours held by international teaching assistants (Young, 2003), English as a Second Language (ESL) writing conferences (Miller, 2001), Bible study sessions (Simargool, 2000), prayer meetings (Yanagisawa, 2000), Japanese deer dance, or *Shishiodori* (Traphagen, 2002), and high school science instruction (Young & Nguyen, 2002). The systematic description of these practices examines how all participants co-construct a practice, and it characterizes the interactional structure of the interaction as a configuration of the following six discursive resources that participants draw upon (He & Young, 1998; Nguyen, 2003; Young, 1999, 2002, 2003): (a) the ways in which participants construct the boundaries of a discursive practice (Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1992; Schegloff, 1968; Schegloff & Sacks, 1973); (b) the selection of acts in a practice and their sequential organization (Ranney, 1992; Zimmerman, 1992); (c) the turn-taking system that speakers use to manage transitions from one speaker to the next (Ford, Fox, & Thompson, 1996; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974); (d) how participants construct roles for themselves and others and, in so doing, construct a participation framework for the practice (Cicourel, 1995; Goffman, 1981; M. H. Goodwin, 1990; Shea, 1994); (e) the register of the practice, to be understood as the lexis and syntactic structures that characterize it (Atkinson & Biber, 1994; Bergmann & Luckmann, 1995); and (f) the ways in which participants construct meaning in a specific discursive practice, analyzed using the methods of systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 1994; Schleppegrell & Colombi, 2002; Young & Nguyen, 2002).

The configuration of these resources may be conceived as an interactional architecture unique to a specific discursive practice. The interactional competence of participants (Hall, 1993, 1995; He & Young, 1998; Kramsch, 1986; Young, 1999, 2002) is defined as participants' knowledge of how to configure these resources in a specific practice.

As we have sketched above, the architectural structures of several discursive practices have been established using the framework of interactional competence. This architectural model of interactional competence, however, does not speak to the important question of how novices acquire expertise in a new practice. Developing expertise in a new practice is a task that faces adults throughout a lifetime of learning, and it is particularly pertinent to those who enter a new community where practices differ from

those they know. Among several theories of learning that have envisioned the learning task as one in which all participants in an interaction change the nature of their participation, the most relevant to the acquisition of interactional competence is situated learning or legitimate peripheral participation (Lave, 1993; Lave & Wenger, 1991). In situated learning theory, learning does not only involve the individual acquiring propositional knowledge; more significantly, it involves all participants in a discursive practice changing their patterns of social co-participation. A relevant model for situated learning is apprenticeship, a situation in which apprentices and their masters change through acting as co-learners. In situated learning, the skillful learner acquires the ability to play various roles in participation frameworks, the ability to anticipate what can occur in certain discursive practices, a prereflective grasp of complex situations, the ability to time actions relative to changing circumstances, and the ability to improvise.

Hanks (1991), who has made significant contributions to the theory of discursive practice, has argued that situated learning is a learning theory appropriate to understanding how novices acquire expertise in a new practice. The situated learning of two discursive practices has been investigated in two longitudinal studies by researchers at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Nguyen (2003) described the development of communication skills by pharmacy interns in patient consultation, and Miller (2001) investigated students and their teachers acquiring interactional competence in ESL writing conferences.

We report here on how a novice learned to participate in one unfamiliar discursive practice. In this case, the novice was an intermediate Vietnamese learner of ESL, and the new practice was *revision talk* in weekly writing conferences between the student and his ESL writing instructor. We observed that the student participated more fully in the revision talk practice over time. In drawing from the model of learning as legitimate peripheral participation in situated practices (Lave & Wenger, 1991), we do not make claims for demonstrated gains in the learner's general linguistic competence in English, the focus of much L2 acquisition research.<sup>1</sup> Rather, we observed that he participated more fully in the revision talk, in his role as student within the participation framework of the practice. Furthermore, his ESL writing instructor changed her participation in ways that allowed for learning and fuller participation on the part of the student. As Hanks (1991) has suggested, the co-construction

of changing participation over time provided the "matrix for learning" (p. 22).

#### EVIDENCE FOR A DISCURSIVE PRACTICE

Before each writing conference, the student wrote a draft of an essay on a topic assigned by the instructor, and, during revision talk, the instructor and student identified problem areas in the student's writing, talked about ways to improve the writing, and revised the essay. We videotaped a series of four weekly writing conferences on July 2, 9, 23, and 27, 1999, and we transcribed and analyzed the participants' interactions in order to discover the processes by which the novice moved from peripheral to fuller participation in the practice.

In coming to understand what made the recurring tokens of revision talk within the writing conferences instances of a single discursive practice, we considered several of the discursive resources that the participants drew upon in their interactions. We looked at the sequential organization of acts that were regularly produced, how the boundaries (the openings and closings) of the practice were enacted, and how the participants constructed roles for themselves and thereby constructed a participation framework.

The process of learning revision talk led the two participants to change their discursive roles over time. In considering, in particular, how the student demonstrated development in revision talk, we saw a change from peripheral to fuller participation in the use of two of the discursive resources: (a) the organization of acts comprising the sequential organization of the practice, and (b) the system of turn-taking managed by the student and the instructor. Although initially the instructor displayed a preference for having the student identify problems himself and self-correct them, the student declined verbal participation in these acts. In consequence, in the first conference, the instructor participated more fully than the student by identifying problems in the student's paper, providing explanations for the need to revise, uttering candidate revisions, and directing the student to write the revisions. The student's participation in the sequence of acts was limited to rewriting the suggested revisions. In later conferences, however, the student took a more active role by identifying problems himself, by providing explanations for revision, and by writing revisions without waiting for the instructor's directive to do so.

In addition, their turn management changed over time as the instructor shaped her turns to

elicit fuller responses from the student. At the same time, the student changed from uttering minimal response tokens to producing complete turns. That is, in the first conference, the student's participation was limited to response tokens, whereas in later conferences his contributions were more substantial, including suggestions for alternative ways of phrasing the text of his essays. The nonverbal behavior also demonstrated changes from peripheral to fuller participation in the practice. In the later conferences, for example, the student demonstrated greater ownership of the revision process by sliding the paper on which his essay was written toward himself and by writing revisions without waiting for a verbal or nonverbal directive from the instructor, whereas in the earlier conferences, the instructor directed him to write revisions.

We first identify salient features of the practice by considering how the participants configured discursive resources to create the practice, and then we consider how the student demonstrated change from peripheral to fuller participation through his and the instructor's use of these resources.

#### REVISION TALK PRACTICE

In analyzing revision talk, we observed that the instructor and student produced the following sequence of acts. We identified the sequence of acts by first examining the data and, after repeated examinations of revision talk across the four writing conferences, we noticed that these acts were produced and reproduced in the sequence noted below. We are aware that the participants probably would not have identified their behavior using the labels we have assigned to their actions. However, the recurrent production of these acts suggests that the student and instructor recognized when it was appropriate to produce a particular act in the locally constructed sequential development of revision talk.

1. ATTEND: Both participants display attention to the student's paper.
2. IDENTIFY: Both participants identify a problem in the student's paper.
3. EXPLAIN: One participant explains or justifies the need for revision.
4. DIRECT: The instructor directs the student to produce a candidate revision.
5. CAND REVISION: One participant utters a candidate revision.
6. DIRECT WRITE: The instructor directs the student to write the candidate revision.

7. WRITE: One participant writes the revision.

8. EVALUATE: The instructor evaluates the revision.

In order to identify a practice, we need to distinguish it from other talk. We do so by means of locating the boundaries of the practice, in other words, the opening and closing moves in the sequence of acts. Revision talk was bounded by the participants' orientation to the initial and final acts listed above. It began when both the student and the instructor displayed attention to the revision task by focusing on the student's paper; evidence for this focusing included changes in the position of their bodies and their gazes, and talk about rhetorical, grammatical, vocabulary, or punctuation features in the student's paper. The practice ended with the production of the instructor's evaluation (either explicit or implicit) of a revision.

#### BOUNDARIES OF THE PRACTICE

##### *Openings: Attending to Revision Talk*

Just before the opening of one occurrence of revision talk, presented in Excerpt 1, the instructor and student discuss a tragic event in the student's life that he had written about in his paper. Years before, he had stepped on a landmine in his native country of Vietnam and, as a result, lost part of a leg. Although the event was mentioned in the student's paper and, thus, we could say the topic of their interaction emerged from the text, their conversation focuses on topics not mentioned in the essay: the student's age at the time of the tragedy, the location of the mine, and the instructor's expression of sympathy toward his suffering. Neither participant mentions the rhetorical or textual features of how that topic was addressed in his paper and, for this reason, we characterized this interaction as informal social talk rather than revision talk. The instructor closes their informal social talk with the comment, "That's very sad" (1). As Figures 1 and 2 show, the participants' reorientation to the written text and their attention to revision talk is displayed by both the student and instructor leaning forward slightly and directing their gaze down to the paper positioned on the desk between them. The instructor reads quietly from the student's paper for approximately 11 seconds (2–4). She then indexes a paragraph from his paper (5–10) and identifies it as a problem because it does not support his main idea (13–14). Participants' display of attending to the paper and the instruc-

FIGURE 1  
Before Participants Attend to Revision Talk in the First Conference, July 2.



tor's (I) identification of a problem to the student (S) are the first two acts in revision talk.

#### *Closings*

Just as the first acts in the sequence signal the opening of revision talk, so the final act signals its closing. In the interaction presented in Excerpt 2, the instructor offers a strong, positive evaluation of the student's just-completed revision, a truncated utterance of *perfect* (3), followed by praise for his awareness of the mistakes he had made in the essay (5–6, 8–9). With the

production of this evaluation, the revision talk sequence ends. It is further marked as complete when the instructor turns the paper over (10) and invokes a new topic by asking the student if he thought he had enough information for re-writing his third and final draft (11–12).

#### SEQUENTIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE PRACTICE

In addition to looking for the boundaries of the practice, we considered the overall sequential organization of the acts that comprised this

FIGURE 2  
Participants Open Revision Talk by Attending to the Student's Paper in the First Conference, July 2.



## EXCERPT 1

Opening of Revision Talk in the First Conference, July 2<sup>2</sup>

1	I: that's very sad.	
2	((Both I and S shift their gaze	ATTEND
3	to S's paper. I reads silently	
4	from S's paper for 11 seconds.))	
5	I: °okay.°	
6	(0.6)	
7	I: this one right here?	
8	(0.4)	
9	I: this little paragraph that you have	
10	right here?	
11	S: yeah.	
12	I: it's very interesting information,	
13	but, (.) it do:es no:t directly	IDENTIFY
14	suppo:rt (.) oh, your main idea.	

practice. The instructor and the student produce a sequence of acts in constructing revision talk as displayed in Excerpts 3a–3d. These excerpts demonstrate the legitimate peripheral participation of the student in this practice. The student's peripheral participation is, perhaps, not surprising given that he had never participated in a writing conference prior to this summer ESL program. Furthermore, this was the very first occasion of revision talk in the very first conference between this student and his instructor.

The opening of revision talk presented in Excerpt 3a requires negotiation between the student and instructor, quite possibly because it is the first instance of a practice not yet familiar to the student. The student had been pointing out items from a checklist that he had completed

for the assignment at hand: finishing a prewriting task, writing the main idea, and writing a list of supporting details. The instructor, however, seems to want to close this topic of their conversation when she comments that they will attend to the list of supporting details "next" (4, 6). Even though an opportunity is made available for the student to take a turn after the instructor's comment in line 6, he chooses not to take a turn (7). The instructor then produces another turn, initiating the revision talk practice by identifying a problem with the main idea in the student's paper (8–10). At this time, both the student and instructor display mutual attention to the student's paper by leaning forward and gazing at the essay on the table between them. The student's stance to-

## EXCERPT 2

Closing of Revision Talk in the Third Conference, July 23

1	S: ((S writes a short revision on his	WRITE
2	paper.))	
3	I: perf-	
4	(1.0)	
5	I: tsk Chuong you're great. You're	EVALUATE
6	very conscious,	
7	S: yeah huh huh ((S smiles broadly))	
8	I: of the mistakes that you make. it's	
9	a wonderful trait to have.	
10	((I turns paper over to first side.))	Shift to
11	I: is this enough information for	new topic
12	your third draft?	
13	S: yeah.	
14	I: I think this is good for no:w.	

## EXCERPT 3A

The Student's Peripheral Participation in the First Instance of Revision Talk, July 2

- 1 I: mhm?[okay we'll talk about- ]  
 2 S: [(do it) (.) yeah ]  
 3 (1.3) ((I looks at the checklist.))  
 4 I: the supporting detai:ls?  
 5 S: yeah.  
 6 I: next.  
 7 (0.7)  
 8 I: because you still need some help IDENTIFY  
 9 he:re, ((I taps paper twice on 'here'.))  
 10 with your main idea.  
 11 S: ((S shifts his head slightly forward ATTEND  
 12 and down to the paper to which I is  
 13 pointing.))  
 14 S: yeah.

ward and understanding of the instructor's topic shift is not clear, given his lack of uptake (7). After the instructor identifies a problem with the main idea, however, he shifts his head slightly forward and down toward the paper (11–13) and produces the continuer token *yeah* (14). Even though this brief utterance in con-

junction with his nonverbal display of attention does not necessarily show his agreement with or understanding of the shift to revision talk, the turn is sequentially relevant and can be seen as making a claim of understanding or “cooperating” (Schegloff, 1981), or both, with the ongoing talk. In any case, the revision talk focusing

## EXCERPT 3B

The Student's Peripheral Participation in the First Instance of Revision Talk, July 2 (Continued)

- 15 I: u:m, the people who helped to raise me,  
 16 S: yeah.  
 17 I: u:m it's u:h (.) it's a goo:d a::h  
 18 a good subject,  
 19 S: yeah.  
 20 I: but it's too::: tsk general. EXPLAIN  
 21 S: yeah.=  
 22 I: =all right? you nee:d to narrow it,  
 23 S: yeah.  
 24 I: to make it more specific.  
 25 S: °yeah.°  
 26 I: and- so: the people who helped raise  
 27 me, you:'re talking about one EXPLAIN  
 28 person, ri:ght?  
 29 S: yeah,  
 30 I: and- [who:'s]  
 31 S: [his- h]is name.  
 32 I: yeah.=  
 33 S: =yeah. [(Same)]  
 34 S: ((S turns to look at paper.))  
 35 I: [and- ] and you're talking about:  
 36 (.) the pastor.  
 37 S: yeah.=  
 38 I: =right?

## EXCERPT 3C

The Student's Peripheral Participation in the First Instance of Revision Talk, July 2 (Continued)

- 39 I: you can say maybe:, ·hh one of the CAND REVISION  
 40 mo:st important people:::,  
 41 (0.4)  
 42 I: who helped to raise me:,  
 43 S: °yeah.°  
 44 I: wa:s my pastor.  
 45 S: °yeah,°=  
 46 I: =okay?  
 47 (0.5)  
 48 I: does that make sense?  
 49 I: it- it's a little more specific.=  
 50 S: =ah- >°(I see) ye:s.°<  
 51 I: so: could you rewrite that for us, DIRECT WRITE  
 52 and see:,  
 53 (0.2)  
 54 I: go ahead an- and rewrite this,  
 55 and then we'll look at your supporting  
 56 details. could you rewrite it? why  
 57 don't you put it right down here.  
 58 (0.6)  
 59 I: °oops° ((I clicks her pen.))  
 60 I: °main idea.°  
 61 S: °mhm.°  
 62 (2.6)  
 63 I: °sh- you can write it right down here.°  
 64 (0.4)  
 65 I: take your time.  
 66 (1.7)  
 67 S: mhm  
 68 ((S writes revision)) WRITE

on the main idea in the student's paper continued in the turns following Excerpt 3a.

After producing the opening moves of the practice, led by the instructor's problem identification (Excerpt 3a, 8–10), the instructor demonstrates her full participation in this revision talk

practice by continuing to produce most of the acts in this interaction. She next provides an explanation for the revision by noting that the main idea is too general and needs to be narrowed (see Excerpt 3b, 20–24). She then supplies a justification for narrowing the main idea,

## EXCERPT 3D

The Student's Peripheral Participation in the First Instance of Revision Talk, July 2 (continued)

- 69 S: I can write it, the people who have  
 70 raised me, is my pastor.  
 71 I: ·hh alright? EVALUATE  
 72 S: yeah.  
 73 I: um he helped raise you,  
 74 S: yeah.  
 75 I: but do you thi:nk um do you think  
 76 he was the mo::st important?  
 77 S: yeah.

noting that the student was writing about only one person, his pastor (26–28, 35–36).

After uttering an explanation and a justification of the need for revision, the instructor does not direct the student to supply a candidate revision of the main idea in the essay, but supplies one herself (see Excerpt 3c, 39–44). She suggests that he could write the sentence as, “One of the most important people who helped to raise me was my pastor.” She repeats her justification for the change, reiterating that it is a little more specific (49) and then directs the student to write the candidate revision (51–57, 63). Up until this point, the instructor had performed all the acts in the practice and the student had participated by observing the instructor’s performance and producing continuers. At line 68, however, the student begins to write the revision, producing his first act in the revision talk sequence.

After nearly 40 seconds of rewriting, the student slides his paper closer to the instructor and then reads his revision aloud to her (see Excerpt 3d, 69–70). He changed the main idea sentence to say, “The people who have raised me is my pastor.” Unlike the candidate revision the instructor had suggested, his revision does not include the phrase “one of the most important people.”

The instructor responds to the student’s written revision with *abright* (71) but it is preceded by a short intake of breath, perhaps indicative of a slight hesitation on her part, and it is uttered with rising but not final rising intonation, suggesting more talk to come. She then repeats part of his main idea sentence (73), and the revision talk sequence focusing on changing the main idea is recycled (75–76). In this case, the absence of an overt evaluation combined with a return to the same revision topic suggests that the instructor’s evaluation is negative. The student’s written revision appears to be inadequate, requiring further attention.

#### PARTICIPATION FRAMEWORK

We notice that the instructor not only produces more of the acts comprising the sequential organization of revision talk in the first conference, but that she also appears to take a different role from that of the student. For example, we observed that the instructor makes frequent use of the second person pronoun *you*, indexing the student and features of his paper. In one such example, she comments, “You still need some help here with your main idea” (Excerpt 3a, 8–10). The student, however, never reciprocates by using *you* to index the instructor. In part, the fact

that the student does not index the instructor reflects the nature of their topic and task: They are looking at the student’s paper and not at the instructor’s. However, the instructor’s use of *you* helps to construct her institutional role as instructor in these interactions. She has license to identify the student’s problems and successes in his writing. The absence of *you* in the student’s utterances positions him, not as an equal, but as the recipient of the problem identification and the suggestions for revision.

Although the student participates more fully in later occurrences of revision talk, he never utters directives to the instructor to produce a verbal or written candidate revision (DIRECT and DIRECT WRITE acts), and he never utters an evaluation of the revision (EVALUATE act). These acts are reserved for the instructor role. However, in the acts that are not specific to the instructor role, we find evidence that he participates more fully in later occasions of revision talk. That is, he jointly displays attention to the paper along with the instructor (ATTEND), he sometimes identifies a problem in the text of his paper (IDENTIFY), he sometimes explains the need for revision (EXPLAIN), he often utters a candidate revision (CAND REVISION), and he almost always writes a revision (WRITE). Even as the student demonstrates fuller participation, the interactional architecture of revision talk practice remains the same. Both he and the instructor jointly construct the same sequence of acts.

#### CHANGING FROM PERIPHERAL TO FULLER PARTICIPATION

##### *Act Sequence*

As demonstrated in the excerpts from the very first occurrence of revision talk in the first conference, the student’s legitimate peripheral participation is marked, in part, by his limited performance of acts. He participates only by writing the revision, and then only after verbal and gestural prompting from the instructor. In contrast, the instructor’s fuller participation is demonstrated by her identifying a problem in the student’s paper, providing an explanation and justification of the need for revision, uttering a candidate revision, directing the student to write the candidate revision, and supplying an implicit negative evaluation.

However, in the revision talk 2 weeks later during the third conference, we see evidence of the student participating more fully than before in the practice. In Excerpt 4, taken from this con-

## EXCERPT 4

## The Student's Fuller Participation in the Third Conference, July 23

1	I: °in Vietna:m, which has a system	ATTEND
2	that is still° huh ba(hh)ckward.	IDENTIFY
3	and there are (1.0) uncomplete,	
4	(1.0)	
5	°right here you want to say incomplete.°	CAND REVISION
6	S: this this very strong?	EXPLAIN
7	it might be [behind. ]	CAND REVISION
8	I: [backward?]	
9	it is pretty stro::ng hhh.	
10	S: yeah,	
11	I: it is- I I would suggest that you put behind.	
12	S: yeah,	
13	I: i(hh)nstead of backward.=	
14	S: =yeah I-	
15	I: cuz backward [means comple:te]ly	
16	S: [I think- ]	
17	I think so.	
18	I: go ahead, [you can] change that if	DIRECT WRITE
19	you want.	
20	S: [yeah. ]	
21	((I slides paper slightly toward S.))	
22	I: huh [huh huh]	
23	S: [huh huh]	
24	(7.0) ((S marks his paper.))	WRITE
25	((I continues reading quietly.))	EVALUATE
26	I: °there are traffic signal control signs,	
27	okay u:m°	
28	(1.0)	
29	S: I- I- [incomplete ( )]	
30	I: [what can you put he:re,]	
31	S: (uh)	
32	I: yeah [it's in]complete,	
33	S: [yeah. ]	
34	I: instead of uncomplete. [huh huh] huh	
35	S: [yeah. ]	

ference, the instructor very quietly reads aloud a sentence from the student's paper (1-3). As she does so, both the instructor's and the student's gazes are directed at the student's paper, displaying their attention to revision talk. The instructor seems to have initiated a minimal problem identification when she breaks off her reading of the student's sentence and produces a laugh token (2) just before uttering *backward*, as written in the student's paper (2). Her production of the first syllable of *ba(hh)ckward* is marked by more breathy laughter. This brief break in her reading and the laughter tokens suggest that she encounters something unexpected and humorous in reading the student's paper. After this minimal,

and potentially ambiguous, problem identification, the instructor continues reading the next clause in the student's paper. She again initiates a problem identification, this time more overtly, when she pauses briefly before and after uttering the word *uncomplete* (3). She then produces a candidate revision by commenting that he should write *incomplete* (5).

Despite only a brief break in the instructor's reading and minimal laughter when she utters *backward* (2), the student seems to recognize that this perturbation in her turn signals a problem identification. He produces an explanation of the problem when he utters, "this this very strong?" (6). Although he initiates this act, he ut-

ters it with a soft, tentative voice and quickly glances over at the instructor upon uttering *strong*. Both his glance and his rising, questioning intonation suggest he intends to elicit the instructor's confirmation that his explanation is correct. Even though she does not confirm his explanation, the student produces a candidate revision, offering the word *behind* as an alternative to *backward* (7). The instructor indicates her return to the problem when she repeats *backward* in overlap with the student's utterance of *behind* (7–8). She then shows agreement with his explanation that it is *pretty strong* (9) and demonstrates alignment with his candidate revision by suggesting *behind* as a substitute for *backward* (11, 13). The instructor comments that he could change the word and slides the paper toward him, offering both verbal and nonverbal directives to write the candidate revision (18–19, 21). The student produces the written revision (24), and the instructor continues to read the next sentence of the student's paper. No overt evaluation is uttered, but, in this case, the participants seem to have oriented to its absence as a positive evaluation because the revision talk on that problem is not recycled.<sup>3</sup>

As the instructor quietly reads the next sentence from the student's paper, the student references the second problem the instructor had identified earlier (Excerpt 5, line 5), repeating the instructor's candidate revision *incomplete* (29).

The student's utterance of this second candidate revision (29), although a repetition of the

instructor's earlier utterance (5), indicates his awareness that a revision is needed after a problem had been identified. It is interesting that the instructor appears to have moved on to a different problem (30), but she nonetheless utters a positive evaluation of his candidate revision and confirms his suggestion that he should change *uncomplete* to *incomplete* (32, 34).

Unlike the student's peripheral participation in revision talk in the first conference, 2 weeks later in this third conference the student produces an explanation for the need to revise, and a candidate revision for the problem word *backward*, and he repeats the instructor's candidate revision for the problem word *uncomplete*. The student's production of these acts points to his fuller participation in this instance of revision talk in the third conference. The instructor's role is to provide a scaffold for the sequential structure of the practice by producing the acts in a sequence appropriate to the practice and by modeling performance of seven out of the eight acts in earlier occurrences of revision talk. In so doing she enables the student to participate more fully in revision talk.

#### Turn Management

One of the most noticeable characteristics of the first occasion of revision talk (Excerpts 3a–3d) is the student's minimal or peripheral participation. His utterances are almost all limited to the production of *yeah*. Most of the instructor's turns are completed with falling and often fi-

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#### EXCERPT 5

The Student Begins to Produce a Candidate Revision in the Third Conference, July 23

1	I: °in Vietna:m, which has a system	ATTEND
2	that is still° huh ba(hh)ckward.	IDENTIFY
3	and there are (1.0) uncomplete,	
4	(1.0)	
5	I: °right here you want to say incomplete.°	CAND REVISION
	...	
25	((I continues reading quietly.))	EVALUATE
26	I: °there are traffic signal control signs,	
27	okay u:m°	
28	(1.0)	
29	S: i- i-[incomplete ( )]	CAND REVISION
30	I: [what can you put he:re,]	
31	S: (uh)	
32	I: yeah [it's in]complete,	EVALUATE
33	S: [yeah. ]	
34	I: instead of uncomplete. [huh huh huh	
35	S: [Yeah.	

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nal-falling intonation, which helps establish potential turn transition relevance places (TRPs) within the turn-taking system (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). TRPs occur at points of potential turn completion and allow for a change of speaker. In this first instance of the revision talk practice, however, these TRPs do not seem to create a strong relevance for speaker transition. That is, the student can claim a turn at the TRPs, but he is not obligated to do so. His minimal responses of *yeah* seem to be examples of continuer tokens that yield the right to speak to the interlocutor (Schegloff, 1981). Although it seems that the student's minimal participation is constructed, in part, through the instructor's lack of elicitation of fuller turns from the student (in particular the absence of a directive to produce a candidate revision), we also note that his *yeah* utterances show him as complicit in producing the instructor's extended turn. His continuer tokens show he is engaged in the interaction and, as Schegloff (1981) noted, these tokens can signal the listener's recognition that the speaker is producing an extended turn. Thus, the student and instructor co-construct the asymmetric production of turns in this first occasion of revision talk. The student's peripheral participation is legitimated through the instructor's production of an extended turn.

In addition, Figure 3 shows the ways in which the nonverbal behavior of the student and instructor is coordinated with their verbal turn management. For example, in line 1 of Excerpt 6 (taken from the first conference, expanded from

Excerpt 3c, 51–61) the instructor nudges the student's paper toward him, and then in line 2, she requests that he rewrite his main idea sentence. The slight shifting of the paper toward the student seems to anticipate the instructor's verbal request. She follows the request with another slight nudge of the paper toward the student (3) and then immediately produces a directive for him to rewrite the sentence (4), followed by a request to rewrite it (5–6). After this third verbal directive to rewrite the sentence, the instructor points to the bottom of his paper with the outstretched fingers of her right hand as she simultaneously comments, "Why don't you put it right down here" (6) and proceeds to label the revision space on his paper with the words *main idea* (11). She repeats the directive a fourth time (14) and points once again to the location where the student should write (15). In line 19, the student finally displays his orientation to this battery of verbal and nonverbal directives by beginning to rewrite the sentence.

In contrast to the turn management adopted by the student and the instructor in the first conference, in Excerpts 7a and 7b taken from the fourth conference 3 weeks later, we notice that the student produces no continuers, and that he participates more fully in the revision talk. There is also a shift in the prosodic and syntactic shape of the instructor's turns that seem to provide for fuller participation by the student. For example, the instructor produces a turn structure (Excerpt 7a, line 5) that is particularly powerful in eliciting the student's participation in revision

FIGURE 3

The Instructor Directs the Student to Write a Revision in the First Conference, July 2.



## EXCERPT 6

Instructor Provides Multiple Directives to Write a Revision in the First Conference, July 2

- 1 ((I shifts paper slightly toward S.))  
 2 I: so: could you rewrite that for us, and see:,  
 3 (0.2) ((I again nudges paper toward S.))  
 4 I: go ahead and- and rewrite this, ((I points to top of paper))  
 5 and then we'll look at your supporting details. could you  
 6 rewrite it? why don't you put it right down [here.  
 7 [(I points to  
 8 bottom of paper with extended fingers of her right hand.))  
 9 (0.6)  
 10 I: °oops° ((I clicks pen.))  
 11 I: °main idea.° ((I writes these words at bottom of paper.))  
 12 S: °mm.°  
 13 (2.6)  
 14 I: °sh- you can write it right down here.°  
 15 (0.4) ((I points to bottom of page.))  
 16 I: take your time.  
 17 (1.7)  
 18 S: mhm  
 19 ((S writes revision))

talk. Koshik (2002) has called the kind of utterance that the instructor produced “a designedly incomplete utterance,” or DIU, and noted that these utterances are designedly incomplete in order to position students’ responses as the completers. Thus, DIUs can be seen as utterances that assist students in producing revisions themselves, but they also allow both the instructor and student to co-construct a candidate revision.

In Excerpt 7a, taken from the fourth conference, the instructor utters a statement but with

rising intonation (3), and her stretched production of *sa:ve* and *ve:rb* allows her to highlight these words. The rising intonation of *verb* along with its stretched production, followed by the contrastive conjunction *but* (5) suggests that the instructor is seeking something contrastive to *verb*. However, she does not complete the clause signaled by *but*. Instead, she utters the transitive verb *wa::nt* with a stretched vowel and falling-but-continuing intonation (5). By not supplying the missing object of *want*, the instructor

## EXCERPT 7A

The Student Completes the Instructor’s Designedly Incomplete Utterances in the Fourth Conference, July 27

- 1 I: yup, and is this (.) sa:ve that you wrote here?  
 2 S: save.  
 3 I: this right here sa:ve (0.8) is a ve:rb?  
 4 (1.0)  
 5 I: but- (.) you wa::nt,  
 6 (1.0)  
 7 S: adjective.=  
 8 I: =an adjective, so-  
 . . .  
 26 I: safely a::nd,  
 27 S: easily.  
 28 (2.0)  
 29 I: °great.° see you’re finding all your own mistakes. that’s  
 30 great.

produces a DIU, thereby seeming to select the student to supply it. After a brief pause, the student utters *adjective* (7), completing the clause by supplying the missing object of *want*, and uttering a word that also provides a contrasting word category to *verb*. Another example of a DIU can be found just a few moments later when the instructor produces the first half of a coordinated adverb phrase *safely a::nd* (26). The student then co-constructs this candidate revision utterance by completing the adverb phrase with the word *easily* (27).

The student's nonverbal participation in this same interaction demonstrates fuller participation, along with his increased verbal participation, in that he displays greater awareness of when it is appropriate to produce a written revision (Excerpt 7b, continued from Excerpt 7a). Even though the instructor produces no verbal or nonverbal prompts directing the student to write a revision, after the student utters a candidate revision (9) in this interaction from the fourth conference, he immediately pulls his paper toward himself and begins writing the revision (11–12), as shown in Figure 4. On two subsequent occasions, he demonstrates the same behavior after verbalizing yet another candidate revision (18), and he then slides the paper back toward the instructor after completing this written revision (23).

The appropriateness and success of the student's verbal and nonverbal participation in this fourth conference are reflected in the expres-

sions of pleasure on the faces of the student and the instructor. They both smile frequently, and the instructor utters several positive assessments throughout the revision talk (22 and 24), culminating in her high praise (30–31) of the student's ability to find all of his own mistakes.

There seems to be clear evidence that the instructor and student co-construct the student's fuller participation in the revision talk. She selects him to produce fuller turns by uttering DIUs or direct questions (16), and he participates by completing the turns. Furthermore, at the appropriate moment in the sequence of acts, the student pulls the paper toward himself and writes revisions instead of waiting for a directive from the instructor to do so. The student's fuller participation in the management of turns, including his nonverbal behavior, demonstrates the development of his interactional competence in this practice.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

To summarize our longitudinal observation of revision talk, we have observed that the participation framework changed over time. Although the sequence of acts that comprise the interactional architecture of the practice remained relatively constant over the 4 weeks of our observation, the participation of both instructor and student changed, and changed in a way that showed mutual co-construction of their roles. In the initial conference, the instructor

FIGURE 4

The Student Prepares to Write a Revision without Direction from the Instructor in the Fourth Conference, July 27.



## EXCERPT 7B

The Student Anticipates Writing a Revision without an Instructor Directive in the Fourth Conference, July 27

- 8 I: =an adjective, [so- ]  
 9 S: [safe.]  
 10 I: safe.  
 11 ((S pulls paper toward himself, and puts pen to paper to  
 12 begin writing.))  
 13 I: oh, I'm sorry, it's an adverb, cuz you're talking about  
 14 walking and bikely?:? biking? so it's an a:dverb.  
 15 S: m[mm]  
 16 I: [so ] what is it going to be:.  
 17 (0.3)  
 18 S: safely.  
 19 ((S lowers body toward paper and begins to write.))  
 20 I: safely.  
 21 S: huh huh  
 22 I: yeah:.  
 23 S: ((S slides paper back toward I.))  
 24 I: °okay great.°  
 25 (1.8)  
 26 I: safely a::nd,  
 27 S: easily.  
 28 S: ((S slides paper back toward himself and begins writing.))  
 29 (2.0)  
 30 I: °great.° see you're finding all your own mista:kes. that's  
 31 great.

laid out the sequence of eight acts that constitute revision talk, performed seven of the eight acts herself, and directed the student to perform the final act of revising the essay. When we looked at the conference 4 weeks later, however, we saw that the student was now performing many of the acts that were initially performed by the instructor. He identified the problem, he explained the need for a revision, he suggested a candidate revision, and he wrote the revision to his essay without being directed to do so by the instructor. Although the instructor's directive role in requiring that the student suggest a candidate revision and directing him to write it was never assumed by the student, it was hardly necessary for her to utter these directives because the student was ready to perform the required acts without direction. What is more important than the fact that the quantity of the student's talk increased through the series of four conferences is that he showed he had mastered the interactional architecture of the practice by performing all acts except those that uniquely construct the role of instructor. It is in this sense that

we can say that the student has acquired interactional competence in the practice of revision talk.

The acquisition of interactional competence, however, is a very different process from acquisition as construed by L2 researchers working within a cognitive framework. The locus of learning is not the individual mind that acquires mastery over linguistic forms or processes of reasoning. Learning is a process that takes place in a situated practice, not in an individual mind. In the case of the situated practice of revision talk, the instructor and student jointly construct the changes in participation that we observe as the student develops from peripheral to fuller participation. It appears that the student is the one whose participation is most dramatically transformed, but the instructor is a co-learner, and her participation develops in a way that complements the student's learning. In fact, the effectiveness of the instructor is precisely in how she manages a division of participation that allows for growth on the part of the student.

The framework of interactional competence

that we have used in order to analyze learning has allowed us to identify the discursive practice of revision talk by means of its interactional architecture. Our analysis has focused on changes in the participation framework that are brought about by changes in the ways that participants use the system of turn-taking in conversation. The means we have used for this analysis include the methods of conversation analysis and microethnography involving close attention to the social-interactional context of the participants' talk, their gestures, and body movements. By identifying changes in those systems over the period of this longitudinal study, we have extended the situated perspective on learning to L2 acquisition.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The question of whether learning involves the acquisition of abstract knowledge or the increasing participation in relevant discursive practices was debated in articles in *Educational Researcher* (Anderson, Reder, & Simon, 1996; Greeno, 1997). Two different ways of conceptualizing learning (the cognitive view of learning and the view that we espouse here of learning as participation) were described by Sfard (1998) as the *acquisition metaphor* and the *participation metaphor*.

<sup>2</sup> See the Appendix in Markee and Kasper's introduction to this issue for transcription conventions.

<sup>3</sup> Given that in teacher-student interaction, the default sequence in teacher-led speech events is the three-part Initiation, Response, Evaluation sequence (IRE), even when an evaluation is not present in the interaction, both the teacher and student orient to the evaluation slot in the default IRE structure (Cazden, 1988). In many analyses of classroom interaction, when the teacher does not produce an evaluation it is understood as a positive evaluation.

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