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THE WRITER AND THE SENTENCE: A CRITICAL GRAMMAR PEDAGOGY VALUING THE MICRO

A Dissertation Presented

by

SARAH E. STANLEY

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

February 2011

English

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THE WRITER AND THE SENTENCE: A CRITICAL GRAMMAR PEDAGOGY VALUING THE MICRO

A Dissertation Presented

by

SARAH E. STANLEY

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This inquiry was a journey, a journey that included past students, teachers, friends, and family.

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ABSTRACT

THE WRITER AND THE SENTENCE: A CRITICAL GRAMMAR PEDAGOGY VALUING THE MICRO
February 2011

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Lisa Delpit points out that when process pedagogues ignore grammar in their teaching of writing, they further the achievement gap between students of a variety of backgrounds. She then argues for a grammar/skills based pedagogy rather than process pedagogy in order to bridge the language differences students bring to the classroom. On the other hand, progressive-minded educators deeply question if skills pedagogy could ever transform unjust social conditions and relationships. Grammar pedagogy may potentially empower an individual's chance at social mobility, but what about the need for social change and respecting language diversity? Both sides of this important debate assume that grammar is a skill and that to teach grammar to writers is skills-based teaching. I challenge these assumptions in my qualitative teacher inquiry, prompted by this question: What difference would it make if the way I practiced grammar became more in tune with my beliefs about critical literacy practice?

My dissertation takes up this question by arguing for a curriculum that links grammar and critical thinking and reporting on a qualitative study of this curriculum in action in my Basic Writing classroom. For this curriculum, I consciously engage theoretical micro-perspectives informed by a social semiotic view of grammar and

language, explained in my dissertation as Critical Grammar. Such theoretical ground builds on the pedagogical grammars of Martha Kolln and Laura Micciche as well as the critical classroom and research practices of Min-Zhan Lu and Roz Ivanič. I then research Critical Grammar, my theoretical term, through a case study approach to my classroom, specifically through inductive, comparative analysis of how writers discuss sentence-level options and drawn on arhetorical, rhetorical, and critical reasoning in sentence workshops. My case study methodology helps me discover the effects of such discussions on a writer's final draft. Each case traces the process of composing and revising the sentence from first to final draft of an essay, drawing from the writer's process reflections, feedback from me and peers, and class workshop discussions of the sentence. In this way, the mini-cases capture how writers authorized themselves and responded to each other in ethical and resourceful ways.

These case studies challenge notions that a teacher's knowledge of grammar should be in service of identifying error patterns and teaching editing skills. In sentence workshops, writers take responsibility for their sentence-level choices and authorize themselves through their ideas, often resulting in dynamic class discussions that inform their writing in a range of ways, the least of which is error reduction. In discussing choices of wording or arrangement, for instance, they would link to issues of a writer's ethos, questions of who/what has the authority for setting language standards, and cultural beliefs. At the same time, based in this research, errors were found to be implicit in Critical Grammar, leading toward further consideration concerning the function of error in Critical Grammar pedagogy. Finally, Critical Grammar was determined to be

most successful when it complemented the ideological aspects to an existing curricular perspective on language.

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THE WRITER AND THE SENTENCE: A CRITICAL GRAMMAR PEDAGOGY VALUING THE MICRO

The place of sentence-level concerns in critical pedagogy often goes dismissed or ignored, as (macro)[1] discussions of discourse, power, and the social are more likely to fill our class time than class discussions about a writer's (micro)[2] use of a word, a parenthesis, or a grammatical arrangement. This dissertation takes up both the micro and the macro concerns in critical pedagogy through qualitative teacher inquiry of a Critical Grammar pedagogy. Specifically, my project involves scaffolding sentence-level choices within an existing Basic Writing curriculum on multiple literacies, and then, using teacher inquiry, reporting on student-led discussions in sentence workshops. I build on, through qualitative research methods and teacher inquiry, the examples of teachers who have already challenged assumptions of what grammar is and how grammar can be taught. Specifically, I draw on both Martha Kolln's and Laura Micciche's scholarship, and the ways grammar relates to both rhetoric (Kolln) and critical pedagogy (Micciche). Grammar, in my work, becomes a *higher order concern*.

In this dissertation, I argue that sentence-level critical thinking should be developed as an aspect of a writer's language use because language is ideological. Focusing on what is lost and what is gained in terms of the language choices that occur for a writer is also a way of discussing the ideological implications and effects tied to those language choices. This relationship between language and ideology explored in my classroom encourages my students to consider critically language and grammatical choice, resulting in a more conscious and deepened sense of their unique purposes in relation to the world around them. For the people reading this study, I hope that focusing

on sentence-level concerns will come across as a concrete and productive way to talk about social issues and identity: Words, conventions, and grammar needn't be "yet another thing" and dismissed as taking up valuable writing time; instead, sentence-level concerns hold potential to enhance what we already set out to do as effective critical writing teachers.

My first chapter explains the various contexts to which my study responds, making the case for the relevance of scholarship on sentence-level concerns and critical thinking for critical literacy work. There, I tell a story of how the experimental nature of research design, coupled with traditional grammar instruction, forged a tight association between grammar and prescriptive-arhetorical approaches to teaching writing. I also explain how current process approaches and related notions of grammar as an editing skill impose limits on the role grammar could play in critical process pedagogies, particularly those pedagogies interested in forms as well as the politics of language diversity, concluding with grammar's fraught, yet productive relationship to critical literacy work. My theoretical framework and philosophy of language is explained in my second chapter. Here, I argue for a social semiotic approach to language, as this perspective reveals how the macro is already caught up in and concretized by our micro choices of meaning. Chapter three is a detailed description of my Fall 2009 Basic Writing course and my qualitative research design. Drawing from audio-recorded transcripts of class discussions as well as student writing, I tell a unit-by-unit progressive story demonstrating how some students developed rhetorical and critical reasoning surrounding sentence-level choices over the course of our semester. My second analysis chapter addresses my findings in more detail, as I reflect on what was missing in my own

approach as well as what students were taking away from it. My final chapter discusses how this research has moved me to consider the rules of writing, particularly surrounding error, as well as how sentence workshops might be further considered and researched as experiential pedagogy. Throughout my dissertation, I refer to this pedagogy as "Critical Grammar," a phrase meant to pull together macro considerations and micro choice.

Grammar in my research is more descriptive than prescriptive. I draw on structural and functional grammars in order to theorize how grammar can be generative for a writer's thinking. I define grammar as two different things, words and wordings. Grammar here is not a container for a word's meaning independent of its grammatical function. Words are made up of both grammatical and lexical components, and the grammatical function of a word interacts with its denotative and connotative meaning as well. In addition, grammar involves arrangement of these words into wordings. Wordings involve syntactical ordering and arrangement, sentence structures, as well as verbal, noun, and adjectival phrases. In sum, often ignored in our meaning-making, grammar[3] and its components (word and wording) are rule-based systems in context. Unless one is a linguist or a philosopher of language, grammars often go unnoticed until they become visible through perceived error. From this perspective, grammar is widely recognized as a prescriptive *system* and conjures up attitudes about rule-breaking and judgments. In this way, grammar is more closely associated with rules for writing. A systemic knowledge of grammar can provide writers with a meta-awareness of how and why to deploy rules in various situations for both critical and rhetorical effects.

Critical Grammar pedagogy is not a handbook notion of "critically correct" writing; instead, it is foremost a critical thinking guide with and about micro choice. It is

also a pedagogy with an explicit aim for writing improvement, defined as writers reaching a micro and macro synthesis for such choice. In this way, my attempt to free teachers from "handbook" use applied to sentence-level choices is a critical pedagogy, inspired by the thinking of educators John Dewey and Paulo Freire. These theories of pedagogy are important to my project because of two concepts: a theory of education as being based in student experience (Dewey) and the ideological effects of those experiences (Freire).

As this is a teacher-research dissertation, my qualitative classroom research, based on Critical Grammar pedagogy, focuses on how my students in a Fall 2009 Basic Writing class took up Critical Grammar in sentence workshops. Sentence workshops placed emphasis on a writer's purpose from the standpoint of a class workshop. My intent was that my students' sentences would turn into opportunities for their writers to locate the macro in their micro choices, and perhaps with this awareness even make different choices. In this way, I worked to make the workshop a micro-level, social-learning activity—essentially students' choices of words, conventions, and grammars—a critical experience. As their guide, I was interested in what my students could and would offer one another and also what would compel these writers to act in the ways they did. While my systematic teacher inquiry dissertation is not designed nor should it be read as conclusive, it can be understood as a part of a research and scholarly context regarding the social nature of literacy as well as learning. Specifically, I contribute to that conversation by arguing that our assessments of writing improvement should pay more attention to the power of the micro for students' critical thinking and experience in our classroom. Just as my study is in response to scholarship with similar commitments, my

study may also encourage further inquiries into the nature of critical thinking and sentence pedagogy.

More specifically, my teaching interests me as a researcher because my classroom provides a context for conversations happening around the field about notions of language diversity and theories of discourse and identity. By performing research on my teaching, I learn more about the influence I have on my students' language use. The connections I make between how I research and how I teach—and my continuous reflection about the way these activities influence my findings—establish more reflexive practices as both a researcher and a teacher. In this way, my teacher research benefits and humbles my sense of what literacy education involves and why it matters.

These benefits are why I value teacher research, as it validates and challenges beliefs about how we teach and how students learn.

Notes

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[1] The term "macro" is a categorical term for the larger social contexts, discoursal identifications, and ideological power relations of a classroom and a Basic Writer.
[2] The term "micro" is a categorical term for the choices of form in my students' sentence writing, specifically, grammatical, lexical, and conventional choices. I use micro when I want to make reference to the theoretical understanding of these choices as "small."
3 I define grammar through plural systems and components in order to highlight the multiple aspects to it that we draw on for meaning-making.

CHAPTER 1

BELIEFS ABOUT GRAMMAR IN THE TEACHING AND RESEARCH OF WRITING

> "There is no beginning to this story, a bookshelf sinks into the sand, And a language learned and forgot in turn, is studied once again." -Bright Eyes, "Method Acting"

The way we speak about teaching writing affects how we practice our values and what we believe about what we do. It is for this reason that a close look at the figurative language and conceptual metaphors surrounding grammar and writing matters because such a look at language can often reveal the hidden, unconscious assumptions as well as beliefs about language that we do not hold, despite our language powerfully constituting and re-constituting them. Our disciplinary pairs of global versus local revision, surface versus in-depth textual features, and higher versus lower order concerns all map onto the difference we have created between rhetorical meaning-making and grammar. Moreover, all of these pairs are examples of orientational metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson). An orientational metaphor is a type of figurative relationship that reveals how we make use of embodied reason in our day-to-day semantic functioning. The concept of "high" is valued in our semantic system because of its conceptual coherence with our understanding of our bodies in nature, and specifically our heads, being up off the ground.

Specifically, Cognitive Psychologist Benjamin Bloom's ranking taxonomy about "levels" of thinking continues to be applied to our theories about the composing process. Our conventional terms applied to writing such as *Higher Order Concerns (HOCs)* and *Lower Order Concerns (LOCs)* are encoded with beliefs that grammars are distinct from

and *lower* than meaning-making aspects of rhetorical inquiry and critical thinking. Each term occupies the ends of a spectrum of meaning-making processes—where various aspects of composing which relate to critical thinking exist on one side of the spectrum, because of their role in invention and meaning-making, while far away from such generative and rhetorical work is a more superficial skill called editing, or sometimes, simply, grammar. These terms *instruct* us as to how we should conceptualize grammar and writing, grammar and thinking, constituting and reconstituting assumptions every time a higher-lower distinction is invoked. Rooted in these terms is the assumption that grammar is a last (a low) *concern* in the writing process. Of course, the public conceptualization of grammar is the flip side of this orientational metaphor—as grammar is the high (the top; the first) concern. This metaphorical language of the high and the low is invoked everyday in our talk about writing, writing pedagogy, and tutoring writers. And while it helps us to distinguish and order processes and the skills of composing, the binary also concretizes a belief system about grammar and writing—a belief system that is inconsistent with theories and arguments of why language matters, just as this belief system also limits more generative and critical approaches to grammar in the writing classroom and our research on the relationship grammar *can* play in critical pedagogy.

The metaphorical system of the high/low and its assumptions has affected our research questions, methodologies, and our practice. In this chapter, I review the research and scholarly arguments that have persuaded the critical teacher to ignore or dismiss grammar's relationship to writing *and* thinking. While there is more scholarship on grammar and writing than I have room to review in this chapter, I identify in this discussion two beliefs: first, that grammar doesn't improve writing and that it is separate

from writing; and second, the practice of it distracts us from the more important pursuits of a critical literacy practice. In discussing these two beliefs, I also conclude by referencing the critical scholarship that has generated my inquiry and continues to shape my orientation to grammar, the micro, and my classroom.

Grammar is separate from and does not improve writing.

Surface-level, arhetorical beliefs about form and content are dominant lenses shaping our research inquiries into the empirical question of whether or not grammar helps, hinders, or hurts writers. Much of this dominance is tied to the Braddock report, a study that assessed experimental studies of grammar and writing. Its conclusion represents the problem with those studies: They separate grammar from writing as grammar is taught as content— teaching that appears to be based on traditional school grammar—and define writing improvement a-rhetorically. This relationship between research, reports on research, and what teachers believe and teach shares much insight I have gleaned from conversations from those teachers who feel as if this "empirical" answer has been inaccurately applied to any kind of grammar instruction whatsoever (see Brown; also Kolln and Hancock; Tomlinson). David Brown, in a recent article analyzing this empirical, "conclusive evidence," points out that both the Braddock report and George Hillocks' meta-analysis of research in Composition both "too facilely conflate grammar as content with ineffective instructional strategies" (216). Brown is referring to Hillocks' 1986 review of empirical research and his conclusion that "traditional school grammar has no effect on raising the quality of student writing" (Hillocks 248). However, despite the ongoing questioning concerning the methodological nature of such research, its "conclusiveness" is important to emphasize, because the power of such reports and our

interpretation of "conclusive evidence" structures this dominant belief about grammar as separate from writing and ineffective (Rustick-Tomlinson).

In the early 1960s, there was an abundance of experimental studies concerning the teaching of grammar and writing, and yet still no clear sense of what this research offered to the teacher in the classroom, particularly a teacher who knew nothing more than how she was taught writing and how she was supposed to teach writing. The National Council of the Teachers of English (NCTE) recognized the need to assess these many studies of grammar and writing research, specifically inquiring into whether or not instruction of traditional English grammar helped or improved student writing. In 1963, Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer published a report addressing the NCTE's concern. Below is their oft-cited conclusion:

> In view of the widespread agreement of research studies based upon many types of students and teachers, the conclusions can be stated in strong and unqualified terms that the teaching of formal grammar has a negligible, or, because it usually displaces some instruction and practice in actual composition, even a harmful effect on the improvement of writing. (37-38)

Written in this way, the report took seriously its mission and probably did a lot of writers good in the decades that followed.[1] However, the report also circulated an often cited—as well as contested—conclusion about the nature of grammar and writing instruction (Brown; Eaton; *Grammar and Its Place*; Hartwell; Kolln and Hancock; Tomlinson-Rustic). Many teachers and future researchers then generalized the results from experimental studies—closely tied to a kind of current-traditional instruction that the field in general was beginning to question—of formal grammar as grammar in a much broader sense, an association that is still very much with us today. The report, then, not only served to "conflate" grammar with instructional strategies, as Brown argues, but also

helped to conflate any notion of grammar with the notion of grammar in the Braddock report.

A lot of the problem, as Patrick Hartwell examines, is the problem of definition and what "grammar" a teacher has in mind when she considers its relationship to her classroom. In "Grammar, Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammar," Hartwell taxonomizes five distinct definitions of grammar that circulate: e.g., the internalized grammar in our heads that enable us to speak, formal linguistic grammars, linguistic etiquette (usage), common school grammars an amalgam of logical principles and analogies to Latin grammar, and also stylistic grammars (210-211). The concept of rule is fundamental to these definitions; however, there are two orientations to "rule" in linguistics—prescriptive and descriptive.

A grammar rule in a prescriptive sense has an error-focus in relationship to the *usage of a particular form*. Because prescriptions are socially constructed conventions—vis a vis handbooks, dictionaries, and "self-appointed authorities"—they are, in fact, "arbitrary" and important since they are used to construct the notion of "correct" versus "incorrect" writing (Lobeck 12-13). In contrast to the prescriptive orientation of "privileged speaker" or "speakers," descriptive grammars are drawn to the relationship between features of language use and the meaning-making system of a specific grammar. A rule in a descriptive sense is more concerned with *how strings of words mean based on the system of rules* that speakers of a grammatical system use to construct meaning (e.g. Green's *African American English Grammar*; *Hancock's Meaning-Centered Grammar)*. Both orientations to language, however, maintain the fundamental given that there are in fact errors.

In a prescriptive view, the error occurs because of a perceived sense that a user of language has violated a specified set of usage rules; whereas, in a descriptive view, the error occurs because the language use violates the language system, e.g. its grammar. In this way, the prescriptive take on language is associated with a deficit approach to language use(rs), while the descriptive approach is associated with a difference approach in regard to a language use in relation to the language system. While in a prescriptive view, the error is evidence of the writer's deficit, the descriptive orientation views the error as constructing the boundary of the language system, and so, the descriptive orientation is useful to me in that it keeps me from a position that language is an "anything goes" activity. This distinction becomes more clear when I consider the effects of each orientation on the user of language.

Moreover, this distinction becomes more complicated inside the writing classroom. The prescription of one system of grammar (i.e. Standardized English), and how it is presented by a language authority, i.e. a teacher, may present a conflict for those speakers who unconsciously draw on the descriptive grammar of another variety of English for their meaning. One reason this conflict exists is because Standardized English is often constructed as English, rather than as a privileged variety of English. The descriptive grammaticality of a specific language use, when it occurs in a context where Standardized English is privileged, can often be deemed an error.

For just one example, the rule of "correct verb forms and tenses" in Standardized English presents a conflict for a speaker of African American Vernacular English (AAVE).[2] More specifically, a writer of AAVE may draw on the "completive done" in order to do several things semantically: (1) express the perfect meaning of completion;

(2) intensify an activity; (3) emphasize a change of state (Wolfram 119). A writer's sentence, "I done told you not to mess up," which is grammatically correct in AAVE, would be viewed as "incorrect" with a prescriptive orientation of a Standardized English classroom. The "error" occurs because the writer uses "done" rather than "had" in the tensed auxiliary position. However, the prescriptive approach is limited since it cannot offer this occurrence as simply a "difference" between two language varieties; instead, the prescriptive approach goes further and often constructs the writer as lacking important skills regarding how writers construct meaning *in English*. I belabor this point only because it happens so often and because the prescriptive take on language has such a stronghold on our language sensibilities.

By focusing on this distinction of "rules," then, Hartwell's taxonomy can be simplified, as these orientations to grammar relate to how grammar is taught in our classrooms. That is, grammar can either be approached prescriptively or descriptively in its teaching, but is predominately taught as a *singular* prescriptive system of rules rather than the descriptive systems of various difference meanings of grammaticality within language systems. Description, rather than prescription, is concerned with grammatical differences in relation to Englishes. Errors often are constructed because of the relationship between descriptive and prescriptive grammars of Englishes rather than simply being simply "on the page" or "in the head" or "because of a lack of education" regarding a specific writer.

In my review of grammar research, I learned how these ways of understanding grammar and its relationship to the writing classroom were often overlooked or misapplied. In my review of grammar research, I learned how these ways of

understanding grammar and its relationship to the writing classroom were often overlooked or misapplied. Constance Weaver, in particular, takes up the conclusive evidence of past grammar research, in order to argue against any application of a systemic approach in the teaching of grammar whatsoever. By arguing against an instruction of grammar as a system of meaning-making options, Weaver constructs grammar into an editing skill in the context of a writer's pattern of error. I question if approaching grammar as a mere editing skill will first of all empower writers to notice their mistakes in writing and second of all help them to recognize the ideological and social aspects to it as well.

These differences—between what kind of grammar and how it is taught—matter. Such differences become so quickly overlooked that grammar becomes constructed as "skill-pedagogy" and as a "lower order" concern in the writing process. Depending on who you read, such rooted beliefs about what teachers, curriculum, and research mean by the term "grammar" as well as what it means to teach it may be one reason why the report's conclusion incited, and currently silences, the conversation (referred to as the "grammar wars") since the wording of its conclusion is deemed as either conclusive *or* ambiguous (see Hartwell; Kolln "Alchemy"; Tomlinson-Rustick). The formal grammar they were referring to was the rule-based, rooted in prescriptive understandings about such rules, and yet, teaching grammar meant teaching parts of speech as well as sentence diagramming—two traditional approaches that taught grammar as a subject removed from writing and its role in helping writers think through ideas. While such teaching did focus on descriptive rather than prescriptive grammar, the relationship between the two in practice, in research, and in the reviews of research became muddled. Some of the

problem, then, is that teachers tested a descriptive teaching practice of grammar, however that practice taught grammar as content instruction, and then measured such a practice through a prescriptive lens applied to student writing. Then, as this research conversation contributes to our "best practices," grammar becomes further entailed with the metaphorical system of the high/low. We continue to perform this theoretical separation between form and content all the time in how we think of grammar and its relationship to learning to write.

For example, Hillocks refers in a recent article in *Research in the Teaching of English* to some teachers' "obsession with form" and claims that "knowledge of form does not translate into the strategies and skills necessary to wrest from the subject matter the ideas that make up a piece of writing" (238). Hillocks highlights arhetorical notions of form in our field that are still dominant, as he refers to form instruction as "how to" and "model-based," that is, form-as-content instruction. I understand on a surface level the point Hillocks is making here in his own research, his reviews of research, as well as his broader claim that a *formal* approach is not effective for writers because it does not help them *think* or *generate* ideas. This critique about practices that treat form as a container for meaning is an argument for more practices that are idea-centered and generative for a writer's thinking. In this way, I understand my own project as aiming to foster through form a similar kind of critical thinking about content and ideas that Hillocks wants us to develop as literacy educators.

Past studies, despite their provocative conclusions, have not offered teachers, other than sentence combining practice, ways of approaching their classrooms with grammar in mind. Prescriptive and descriptive research models applied to grammar

instruction help categorize our past grammar research. Both strands use experimental research designs to test empirical questions. In a prescriptive research model, the effectiveness of formal grammar instruction is assessed on whether or not error frequency is reduced—the answer to this question is conclusive: Formal grammar instruction does not improve student writing in this regard (Braddock Report). The second strand, the descriptive model, in a break from earlier prescriptive assessment of this empirical question, is assessed on whether or not syntactic complexity increases in student writing. The answer to this brand of research is also conclusive: systematic sentence combining practice helps a writer develop syntactic complexity defined as longer t-unit length (Mellon; Miller and Ney; O'Hare).

The 1964 Bateman-Zidonis study's conclusion links the two strands of grammar and writing research of the field. This study concludes, "knowledge of generative grammar can enable students to reduce the occurrence of errors in their writing" (39). They were able to make this claim by looking at increases in syntactic fluency in "well-formed" sentences that did and did not violate "grammaticality." The notion of "grammaticality" demonstrates the descriptive ground upon which such studies were based. Bateman-Zidonis' conclusion, moreover, slowed down the research interest in using error-reduction as a determiner of whether or not grammar instruction was effective, fueling future studies interested in using "syntactic complexity" as an opportunity to test generative grammar in an experimental framework. For example, Mellon's (1969) study sought to investigate "syntactic fluency" by studying the transformational practice of sentence combining, and concluded that this practice results in statistically significant increases in syntactic fluency. Frank O'Hare (1971) then builds

on Mellon's research as well as Miller and Ney's (1968) study that reinforced written sentence-combining practice with oral drill instruction. Mellon concludes that a "sentence-combining practice that is in no way dependent on formal knowledge of a grammar has a favorable effect on the writing of seventh graders" (68). I cite Mellon's conclusion because it, too, is used to continue a faulty logic that "conclusive evidence" holds in our discussion about grammar's place in the teaching of writing. Weaver, in fact, uses Mellon's point that his practice of "sentence combining" is "no way dependent on formal knowledge of a grammar" in order to focus on the benefits of *her* own perspective that grammar is separate from writing. Mellon's study was not designed to answer if a systemic approach to grammar proves helpful in the empirical manner that Weaver assumes, nor was it designed to promote editing.

While sentence combining practice and transformational grammar offered the field a descriptive and generative approach to grammar in our classrooms; these "breakthroughs" warranted further *experimental* research, rather than teacher inquiry. The small sample size of the sentence-combining studies briefly reviewed, coupled with critiques of what greater sentence complexity really means for middle-school writers did encourage a few researchers to address the limits of these studies. Some of this research was interested in how diverse teaching styles affected earlier studies' conclusions and others were calling for the need for more longitudinal study of the question. For example, Thomas Newkirk argues in the *English Journal* that these empirical studies are *necessarily* flawed as there is no way to account for the particular dynamics between particular teachers, their students, and material. As the research continued, we kept testing that conclusion in a manner that responded to previous studies and their

methodologies, rather than interrogating the experimental nature of such studies in terms of their design (Herrington 120). We turned away from sentence practices that were productive for writers and their meaning-making in part because we were "testing" those practices in methodologies the field was beginning to question. When David Kaufer, Linda Flowers, and John Hayes published their cognitive research on writers' processes of sentence composing, planning, translating, and reviewing in 1986, the field of composition by that time had grown distrustful of this research paradigm and its association with science (see Connors). Specifically, our field's focus was turning away from the interior cognitive notions of a writer in order to focus on the social, rhetorical, and contextual aspects of composing. Scholars such as Berlin were calling for curricular and pedagogical changes, informed by cultural studies and social-epistemic rhetoric. Had the relationship between our practices, theories, and methodologies been more in sync, then perhaps sentences in composition would not have been, in Robert Connors' phrase, "erased" (120). Such is why many teachers who continue to teach grammar for writing in their classrooms do so behind closed doors, and are likely thought of as ignoring our field's "conclusive" research. Similarly, other teachers have likely stopped conducting research into the relationship between grammar and writing because they see the fraught and unlikely effect—researching it won't make a difference to our deeply held assumptions and beliefs about grammar's relationship to writing and writers (see Tomlinson Rustick for a most recent example). Yet, there are still conversations happening about grammar and its role in process pedagogies.

With success, for example, Kolln has used the Braddock report's language to carve out a space for *rhetorical* grammar. Rhetorical grammar is a pedagogical, sentence

grammar designed to foster more effective, that is, *rhetorical*, writing from students. Drawing from her more linguistic-based textbook titled *Understanding English Grammar*, Kolln's *Rhetorical Grammar* handbook, now in its fifth edition, instructs its user to become more aware of the user's internalized grammatical system. It is interested in structural sentence-level options and their effect on audience; it does not teach an externalized system of "rules" for correct/incorrect language use. Kolln, along with the Assembly for the Teaching of Grammar (ATEG)[3] are committed to reclaiming the importance of grammar in the teaching of effective writing. The rhetorical approach advocated by such grammarians necessitates a working knowledge of English structuralist grammar.

There is, however, no systematic, teacher-research involving Kolln's rhetorical grammar; instead teachers who use *Rhetorical Grammar* share their successes and disappointments in professional, peer-reviewed journals (see Micciche). Pointing out the different aspects of grammar and ways we teach it as well as the ways we have studied the relationship between grammar and writing opens up considerable space for my current teacher inquiry. In fact, now is the time for situated teacher inquiry—and not only because this methodology would add to a research conversation about what kind of grammar is being taught and how. Teacher inquiry into grammar's relationship to writing would certainly foster different questions for our continued scholarship. For example, in order to respond to Brown's critique of the "conflation" between a kind of instruction and a type of grammar, I wished to learn more from my classroom environment how a kind of instruction and a take on grammar (critical) worked together simultaneously; I also wanted to know how the approach was shaping our class discussions and collaborative

reasoning about form's relationship to content. By pursuing questions such as these, teacher inquiry also aids educators in the kind of systematic theorizing necessary about our classroom practices and beliefs, as it serves to remind us of the highly contextual and experiential nature of student learning in such classrooms.

Furthermore, our research question about grammar—whether or not it improves writing—has been measured in an experimental paradigm only, and so notions of "writing better" were assumed to be shared across research contexts and researcher purposes. While a writer's improvement in the earliest studies was measured by error count, and in later studies as T-unit length of sentences, both "measures" were formal. That is, the answer to the research question assumed that correct, error-free form *or* longer form would connote improved writing. In this way, improved writing was believed to be quantifiable. Such a claim—the logic of the research—is arhetorical since it divorces form from content. Drawing on Berlin's historical accounts, this current-traditional rhetoric means that grammar would have been associated with a view of form, distinct from a social epistemic interpretation. I'm arguing, however, that grammar at its simplest—form—is inseparable from what we do as teachers of writing. Grammar can only be "removed" if we believe in the separation of form from meaning.

Grammar is Irrelevant to Critical Pedagogy and Curriculum.

The Braddock Report did instruct teachers to put their focus not on the rules, errors, and acontextual forms of written language, but on a writer's ideas and process. However, the Report simultaneously served to justify grammar as separate from thinking, and helped make it irrelevant to a socially-oriented, *process* classroom. Connors has shown us that our field's move out of current-traditional rhetoric into more social-

epistemic understandings of writer processes coincides with an "erasure of the sentence" as a research interest in Composition. Connors' historical reading suggests to me that this erasure is also connected to pedagogical practices that have ignored grammar's generative potential as well as its connection to language, knowledge, and power in student writing in our classrooms. That is, there is a need for qualitative classroom research on grammar more in tune with our beliefs as critical teachers of writing. Without such research, grammar remains an abstract notion about ideology and discourse, separate from the teacher's daily struggle and negotiations with language (Horner "Students' Right").

Specifically, drawing on John Trimbur's discussion of a "tacit English Only" paradigm, Horner argues that this ideology further distances our teaching of writing from a "social material practice" as it approaches the discursive identification of the English language in a non-relational and asymmetrical manner (742). He writes about these assumptions as ones

> … that ultimately support a status quo, lasissez-faire approach to language that helps to maintain the dominance of some languages and language users over others. …the picture that emerges of English (and, by implication, of language generally) is an archipelago dotted with a variety of what Mary Louise Pratt has termed "linguistic utopias": discrete, autonomous, essentially static communities of language uses and users, each associated with a particular sociocultural identity, each at least ideally neither superior or inferior to the others in any way but each sovereign within the sphere of its own community: a place, in other words, for every language, and language its place (see Pratt 49-51). It is acknowledged that individuals may 'travel' from one sphere to another, like island hoppers, and develop fluency in the languages of a variety of these communities, but it is also assumed that these individuals will retain their fluency in and primary identification with the language of their "home" community: people, too, have their place. (743)

Horner's argument challenges a deep belief about grammar and the critical writing classroom: We should not ignore or dismiss its relevance to teaching writing as a social

material practice. Yet, grammar's relationship to the critical writing classroom continues to be a fraught one.

Take, for example, James Berlin's distinction between traditional and critical curricula. Berlin forges a tight association between a grammar-interest and current-traditional rhetoric that makes a connection between grammar and critical perspectives seem counter-intuitive. Similarly, Bruce Herzberg associates "traditional" instruction and its back to basics agenda as opposed to a critical-rhetorical curriculum and its transformation agenda. He defines a critical curriculum as one concerned with student lives, and offers them a space to reflect on the values of their local culture with the University's values (spoiler alert: this curriculum does not involve grammar). The critical curriculum opposes the "hidden curriculum" (which is the curriculum associated with neutralized, skills education) because the critical curriculum "draw[s] the hidden curriculum into the open and fac[es] its consequences" (116). As Herzberg's critical curriculum does not invite us to consider how grammar can be constructed differently, grammar seems as if it cannot become embedded in critical pedagogies—yet at the same time grammar is an always present and significant aspect of our concern as both gatekeepers and liberators.

Grammar's fraught connection to a writer's error and language's politics in the academy continues to be of great interest to the scholarship of our field. Grammar, it seems, has become the sort of thing that a teacher wants to problematize rather than teach (Micciche). On the other hand, Lisa Delpit argues that ignoring grammar in our classrooms furthers the achievement gap between students of a variety of backgrounds. The debate is that Progressive-minded educators stressing process tend to privilege

(albeit unconsciously) a type of student who already shares experiences with the kind of literacy U.S. society values, and so, ignoring grammar actually contradicts what these educators value, educators who believe that literacy has potential to change unjust social conditions and relationships. Delpit's argument to teach more skills is associated with a conservative approach to education (we are back to the first problem that Berlin sets up), and educators deeply question how this pedagogy could be transformative of society in which students live. Grammar might potentially empower an individual's chance at social mobility, yet what about the critical need for social empowerment and change?

Most recently, Canagarajah and Peter Elbow have entered this conversation and represent the fraught connection our field has with "grammar" and its relationship to the social changes necessary in our critical aims of establishing a more equitable and just society. On the one hand, Canagarajah argues for us to take up a textual pedagogy in service of helping writers draw from their language backgrounds. He pushes us to foster support for writers who use English varieties, which would also include grammars, in their texts, not as a way of "nurturing" these writers to eventually learn and follow the rules but instead to "code mesh" so that the nature of their texts challenge the notion of a single standard of writing. On the other hand, Elbow argues for teachers to adopt a time strategy in working with writers from a variety of linguistic backgrounds. It is a process approach that points out historical, albeit slow-moving, linguistic change, stressing the importance of working with the standard for writers from diverse linguistic backgrounds right now. More specifically, Elbow argues that a writer should be taught how to translate the meaning generated from low stakes writing into "academic" writing. His "time" pedagogy insists that we must and should be allowing for "home language" during

process, low stakes, writing, but because the world is the way that it is, and *for the time being*, we must still help writers "translate" their home language into academic discourse.

Elbow's argument has the best of intentions, as he provides us with utilitarian approaches to grammatical concerns for our process classroom with diversity in mind: Teach grammar in context of a writer's own linguistic system's pattern of error as it relates to Standardized English rules. In this way, Elbow's argument relates to Rei Noguchi's "minimal" grammar applied to writing; however, Elbow is more aware of students' linguistic differences and standards in our classrooms. Angela Eaton, for example, mentions how Noguchi's approach assumes a grammar that privileges the innate grammar *native* speakers of English have. Elbow does not privilege this grammar, but is aware of its power. Yet, despite his awareness of language change happening across time as well as his concern for better accommodating language diversity in our classrooms, his treatment of "grammar" is akin to Weaver's position, e.g. teach it in the context of a writer's error, and through that teaching, somehow writers will get empowered to recognize their mistakes. That is, Elbow does not offer us a critical pedagogy. In fact, taken together, Elbow, Noguchi, and Weaver present us with "for the time being" solutions, as our current orientation toward grammar is one of error patterns and error avoidance. Grammar does need to be made meaningful for writing; we should not teach it for its own sake. Yet, at the same time, process pedagogies such as these erase the potential of grammar as a system. Specifically, when we approach grammar as a "last step" we also prevent writers from deeply considering—and potentially then drawing from—the various tensions, politics, and conflicts across multiple grammars and

standards in their sentence-level choices. For these reasons, grammar is necessary for critical pedagogy.

However, there is no systematic teacher research inquiring what might happen if grammar was consciously taught so as to be more in tune with our values of critical pedagogy. Micciche takes this up in a rhetorical and theoretical manner in her article "Making a Case for Rhetorical Grammar." While Micciche does not systematically study her classroom, she provides reasoning as to why grammar could matter for critical and rhetorical writing pedagogy. She writes,

> Teaching grammar is not *necessarily* incompatible with liberatory principles: binaries that suggest otherwise constrain our teaching and our thinking, solidifying and casting as unquestionable rehearsed assumptions about writing. The absence of a sustained contemporary conversation about grammar instruction at the college level does not eclipse the practical reality that nearly every writing teacher struggles with at one time or another: how to teach students to communicate effectively. And effective communication, which entails grammar knowledge, is essential to achieving many of the goals regularly articulated in composition studies. Chief among them are teaching students to produce effective writing that has some relevancy to the world we live in, to see language as having an empowering and sometimes transformative potential, and to critique normalizing discourses that conceal oppressive function. (717)

Micciche's article, in fact, is a part of what Janet Emig calls a "web of meaning," the notion that pedagogical scholarship works together in order to generate learning contexts that are efficacious.

Grammar's fraught connection to critical pedagogy and the need for systematic teacher inquiry into this relationship was the focus of this chapter. In my next chapter, I theorize "Critical Grammar." I also go in-depth with the philosophy of language that informs it. I do so in order to encourage qualitative research that not only involves systematic *inquiry*, but also systematic *theory*.

Notes

[1] I say that it did a lot of writer's "good," because for many writers, "grammar" is associated with error. This is one reason why so many people (not just writing teachers) dislike grammar because grammar is associated with rules, errors, and norms, and it is not about questioning what seems natural, exposing and negotiating the system, and empowering people through their differences in meaning-making. Such is why I worry about how my readers experience the errors that are present in these pages; I assume that writing about grammar somehow makes me more accountable to writing about it correctly, that is, without error.

[2] I draw this example from a descriptive rule mentioned in Walt Wolfram's article "The grammar of urban African American Vernacular English." Wolfram refers to the "completive done" as a "stable feature"; and while Wolfram refers to African American English in terms of the vernacular, the features of a vernacular English are, in my view, very relevant to academic writing in that they offer rich resources for writers to use for their meaning. Wolfram is careful to point out that the "completive done" shows up in other English varieties as well, such as "Carribean Creoles" (e.g. Bahamian English), and it is also a feature of southern vernacular dialects of American English (119).

[3] See also the edited collection *The Place of Grammar in Writing Instruction: Past, Present, and Future*; as well as recent issues of *English Journal* devoted entirely to Grammar.

CHAPTER 2

SOCIAL SEMIOTIC PERSPECTIVE OF LANGUAGE AND CRITICAL GRAMMAR PEDAGOGY

Conventionally, the micro and the macro are understood as differences in scale or size. I argue in this chapter, however, a more unconventional view. Drawing on social semiotic linguistic theory, I aim to show how the macro *is* the micro. My theoretical argument in sum is simple: sentence-level lexical and grammatical choices *are* concretized actualizations of context, social relations, and ideology. By conceptualizing them in this relational and systemic way, I argue how writers can use critical thinking for their sentence-level choices, suggesting too that such a perspective may prove generative for writers' thinking. This chapter is organized into two distinct sections. I open with my theoretical definition of Critical Grammar, quickly followed by unpacking this definition by discussing the critical literacy scholarship that informs it. I also discuss how Critical Grammar differs from two approaches that have been central to it. The distinction is based on a "systemic" notion of grammar. In the second part of the chapter, I go into more detail with this notion and the linguistic perspective that Critical Grammar is based on.

Critical Grammar Theory

Critical Grammar is a descriptive *orientation* to Standardized English . When we are considering a sentence-level choice, we are also considering a political choice about what counts and what does not, according to a writer. Second, Critical Grammar is based in *systemic, experiential* knowledge; it is an approach that expands our meaning potential in context, since this kind of thinking is socially based, and audience as well as the

system of grammar helps invoke other meaning-making options through one specific choice. With this social and systemic knowledge in mind, Critical Grammar is, third, about *relational difference* in regard to institutions, power relationships, and ideologies, as well as to what degree these differences matter in a writer's discerning of relational choices. Critical Grammar is a perspective on the role sentence-level choices play in our highlighting or hiding of certain ideologies when we write. It is process of a writer becoming aware of micro differences, understanding the ideological relationship among these differences, and taking the ultimate responsibility of choosing a difference. It is informed choice-making in order to communicate with others; such choices are understood as actions made through *a grammar*. A writer's choice can be viewed against either the systemic backdrop of other options and their resulting relationships to language, knowledge, and power, or a rhetorical understanding of the implications and effects such choices hold to the writer, her context, and her culture.

Orientation to Grammar and Language

Critical Language Awareness (CLA) is a primary pedagogical movement in my work (for more on CLA, see Clark; Ivanič; Fairclough). CLA began in England as a pedagogical counterpart to Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), referred to by Samy Alin as a "British tradition" (28). While CDA is more familiar in the U.S. research context, CLA is not as well known, though there are strong connections and similarities to New Literacy Studies (NLS; see Alim). It was theorized and applied in England, but South Africa has also been drawing on this perspective in its literacy teaching and case study research (see Jenks). Theoretically similar, CLA involves synthesis between macro structures of language, knowledge, and power and micro

choices of a text as does CDA. That is, critical sociological theory is combined with systemic linguistic theory in order to provide a framework based on how language constitutes, reproduces, and reconstitutes ideology. In this way, CLA and CDA help explain how ideological work happens even through the smallest grammatical decision. However, in contrast to CDA, CLA is interested in not only that critique, but also drawing from that critique so that writers operate with an understanding of power for productive, as well as analytical, ends. That is, while based on the same assumption and means—that power relations and discourse always exist in language use—the ends are distinct since this awareness can be drawn on for *productive* as well as *counter-productive* ends.

More specifically, CLA is a linguistic perspective on language's role in ideologies and power relationships that writers are not always aware of when they write. In fact, a CLA approach encourages literacy educators to base their classrooms on the assumption that regardless of whether or not writers are aware, we always negotiate—through acceptance or resistance—certain ideologies when we write. According to Samy Alin,

> Critical Language Awareness views educational institutions as designed to teach citizens about the current sociolinguistic order of things, without challenging that order, which is based largely on the ideology of the dominating group and their desire to maintain social control. This view of education interrogates the dominating discourse on language and literacy and foregrounds, as in the NLS, the examination and interconnectedness of identities, ideologies, histories/herstories, and the hierarchical nature of power relations between groups. Research in this area attempts to make the invisible visible … (27).

In this way, I teach *grammar* through a CLA perspective in a macro sense in that I understand my literacy classroom in relation to standardized English as well as how grammatical pedagogy is designed to help make the "invisible visible" (for literacy educators doing similar projects see Coffin; Saracini: Schleppegrell). I draw on CLA in

order to practice an approach to grammar rooted in understanding how any treatment of it is also a particular world view and thus has ties to power; moreover, I believe that acknowledging such a relationship may motivate writers to work against such influences that they do not intend in their writing. In addition, I have a specific aim to promote more macro awareness in writers' sentence-level choices.

More specifically, CLA is interested in helping writers develop this "awareness" to their choices when they write. For example, Roz Ivanič theorizes that our experiences are caught up in contested and contradictory ideologies, particularly when discursive choices and positions encode these ideologies. Ivanič reveals this in her case study of John, who is described as "highly involved with Aids campaigning" (197). John's example, really a small detail in Ivanič's larger study regarding relationships between discourse and identity construction, involves a decision-making process in a medical ethics paper, a process that only becomes conscious thanks to Ivanič's awareness. She asks John about his choice to use the word "Aids" in this paper, asking him about his decision to represent Aids as a word rather than an acronym. She explains that she knew there was a difference between how writers use this word, did he? He says that he was not aware of a political difference between the choices. Ivanič shares that she knows that the word Aids is one way to represent the social context of the disease, and not its biological impact/AIDS. After learning about the difference, packaged in the word/acronym Aids/AIDS, he tells Ivanič he will "continue to do so," which I take to mean, he will continue to write the word Aids (197). While John's choice does not change, his understanding of what this choice means in its given context does change, and in this way, John's choice of Aids is a critical choice.

More specifically, my critical perspective is influenced by composition theory regarding how a writer's micro choice relates to macro systems of power. Based on this micro-macro interaction, recent scholarship stresses the importance of deliberate acts of meaning-making in a critically informed way. Suresh Canagarajah and Min Zhan Lu work at both the micro and macro levels in their scholarship. Their *micro* scholarship brings together conversations in our field that matter in terms of serving our student's learning of multiple discursive and linguistic perspectives. For example, Lu's "Essay on the Work of Composition" addresses micro-macro meaning-making by examining the discursive choices in a sign appearing in Beijing that reads "Collecting Money Toilet." This sign is then read by Lu as an example of a new kind of "responsible and responsive" English. Specifically, she draws on the New London Group's framework of design—a Group that combines research in critical literacy, technology, and genre studies—to provide a micro-macro reading of it so that her readers understand how systemic and discursive forces are at work, calling for our choices of English to always become more "responsive and responsible."

Similarly, Lu encourages us to frame our teaching of the micro in terms of a writer's choices. Lu's scholarship has challenged Composition to welcome notions of conflict and struggle into our work with writers, rather than assuming that such conflict is the burden of literacy educators with the goal to help writers assimilate to a "standard." Her almost fifteen year-old essay "Professing Multiculturalism: Politics of Style in the Contact Zone" is a great example of Lu's scholarly purpose. In this essay, she invites the power and ideology of style into her class discussion and consideration of stylistic choices, through a student writer's use of a "can able to" construction. This construction is

presented to her class as one perspective among still other discourse perspectives also present in the "can able to" construction, done through the theoretical framework of Mary Louise Pratt's linguistic contact zone (452). Lu produces a range of discursive choices for this writer. Briefly, the use of "can able to" as reflecting the Chinese; the dictionary correct version; and exposing the ideology of such a choice in the context of the text being written. Her pedagogy in this work encourages her class to discover how linguistic form functions to constitute and reconstitute certain ideological assumptions. The goal, as Lu writes, is that "the decision can no longer be merely one's knowledge of or respect for the authorities of a Dictionary English versus colloquial English, or one's competency in a particular language, but also one's alignment with competing discursive positions" (453). In this article, Lu shows us how "error" is bound up in a notion of discourses, discourses that affect how we *read* error, just as how what is perceived as error can also become a choice of discursive position.

In Lu's classroom the "error" of "can able to" became a choice, just as in Ivanič's case study John's use of "Aids" became a choice, albeit after both writers realized their "choice" as an option among others. What were the effects of this frame of choice in each situation? For Lu's example, the choice of "can able to" was not taken up by the writer; however, the class discussion of the choice did establish a general understanding that Lu was able to build on and use throughout the semester. This is good news for pedagogy interested in the micro, as it suggests that writers *care* about choices of this nature, and benefit from a discussion of choices not necessarily directly applicable to their own text. In Ivanič's study, the choice of "Aids" only had an effect on the writer, as the text itself did not change. The effect is as simple as John telling her he will "continue to do so."

However, John's declaration has always brought me chills. It reveals the effect of critical meaning potential through our discursive positioning, despite us being unaware. These examples are central to my concern of linking sentence-level choices to critical pedagogy.

Systemic & Experiential Knowledge

While the pedagogical moments I have discussed in the previous section are already theorized in Composition scholarship as being "ideological" and "discursive," my purpose here is to show how we both have, and *have not*, developed systematically these methodologies to help us frame and set up our writing classrooms in order to engage with our students' discursive ideologies at the sentence level. This work is fundamental to Critical Grammar pedagogy. Lu bases her pedagogy on discursive conflict and identification through discourse, just as Ivanič's interaction with John is based on her insider knowledge of his experiential discursive knowledge. In this way, both educators draw on their own awareness of discursive conflict to present writers with choices. More specifically, when Lu and Ivanič make discursive and experiential identification as a catalyst for a writer's choice, my questions to such a pedagogy are the following: Would a discursive conflict approach become transferable to other writing situations and choices for students? How does highlighting a specific sentence-level choice facilitate students' wider recognition about the role sentence choices, in general, play in furthering discourses and ideologies, particularly those discourses and ideologies that students may discover are harmful or productive?

Taking up Lu and Ivanič's discursive perspectives based in identity, Critical Grammar also includes a systemic perspective on grammar. It is not that I am disregarding the importance of how writers identify or not with certain choices; in fact, a

writer's identification with a choice is a part of my framework as well. However, this identification occurs after a series of options are generated through a systemic theory of grammar rather than discursive identification helping writers generate such choices. I demonstrate this systemic approach to choice in terms of a mapping metaphor. Where the practice of mapping a single choice to its systemic options connects to other systemic options for consideration. In tandem with this system of "options," I also argue that "choosing" from these options necessitates a critical orientation. The idea of a "map," or an existing framework, via a systemic theory, is something I believe that can be applied to any sentence; in this way, my approach is a methodological one.

By approaching grammar systemically rather than discursively, I am addressing a concern I have in relation to Lu's and Ivanič's pedagogies—I fear that the micro might remain too micro. This occurs because both Lu and Ivanič draw on their own awareness to present the notion of choice to the writer or the classroom. To this end, I draw on language perspectives and social learning activities that scaffold and provide an experience for my students that will serve as catalysts for their micro choices. In this way, I assume that a systemic approach would better position writers to apply a *meta* awareness to their sentence-level choices; yet at the same time, I am not dismissive of the power of Lu and Ivanič's examples concerning discursive conflict and negotiation at the micro-level. In fact, the role that experience and its relationship to discourses play in critical thinking surrounding the micro is also central to Critical Grammar; it's just that experience and discursive identification are not the catalyst for generating options.

Halliday's and Fairclough's Social Semiotic

Halliday first used "social semiotic" applied to language in his 1978 book title *Language as a Social Semiotic.* He was a student of the British linguist J.R. Firth who argues prior to Halliday that meaning is not "achieved" by a unidirectional analysis (184). Halliday, and later linguists in his tradition, develop this notion into a systemic approach to learning more about social interaction and ideology as encoded by language. While this semiotic approach to language diverges in the linguistic tradition into two strands, functional and critical, my reading here converges the semiotic into a systemic framework that draws on both, linking language's role in furthering problematic ideologies and limited social relations with the notion of grammatical choice in sentence writing.

Hallidayian efforts of synthesizing the macro (society) and the micro (choices of language and grammar) in a single theory brought about the interdisciplinary field of Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL). SFL combines sociology and linguistics, and does so by doing both simultaneously. SFL theorists are studying language as much as they are studying the social system. The nature of this social-language study is "functional," a term in this framework that has resonance with the notion of language as "rhetorical" by its nature. Halliday is getting at the functional nature of our language use, and specifically how our "conceptual framework is likely to be drawn from rhetoric rather than from logic, and the grammar is likely to be a grammar of choices rather than rules" (Halliday *Language* 4). It is a view that language is the way it is because it is deeply functional; language has "evolved to satisfy human needs" (*Introduction* xiii).

SFL's theoretical aim is to address the social system and its given instantiations simultaneously in a single analysis. Done correctly an SFL analysis reveals how our linguistic choices work within systems of meaning that both constitute and are constituted by the context in which they occur. Grammar, in this way, becomes a systematic social resource for meaning-making in specific contexts. It is descriptive. However, it is also important to point out that the "functional" view of language is a generative one, with an explanation embedded in it that "a rule" is actually just a "choice" among options. As "choices" become "rules," contexts of our social lives continue to be discursively re-established, and this ultimately is the "functional semiotic."

Critical linguists, however, took up this semiotic idea and applied it to macro concerns of reproductionist ideology (Fowler, et al; see Faigley). These critical linguists, according to Lester Faigley's account, draw on Halliday's social semiotic that was both "functional" and "systemic" in order to infer a third assumption: "if the relationships between form and content is systemic and not arbitrary, then form signifies content" (90). Critical linguistics, in this way, understands the semiotic as a tool for an explicit critique of language's role in furthering social inequalities, since language is directly linked to social structure and ideology. In fact, Norman Fairclough opines that if a functional approach is not interested in building a critical awareness alongside what is functioning, it is an approach that "dress[es] up inequality as diversity" (225). His Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is one example of a critical methodology that projects a *reading* of a text's micro choices through ideological, discursive, and social semiotic perspectives of language. In working with others such as Ivanič, Romi Clark, and Paul Simpson toward developing a critical approach to language in education, they argue that we should

understand social functionality as only *one* part of a critical, decision-making process, rather than *the* part (251; see also Reagan; emphasis mine).

This critical perspective is important; yet, their critique of SFL's analytical focus on the semiotic role of reproduction rather than transformation is itself at risk of a similar critique. Where, for example, does CDA's political interpretation begin and a semiotic analysis end? In this way, I agree with Lynne Young and Brian Fitzgerald's argument that SFL and CDA's relationship is such that in order to reveal power and ideology at the sentence level, analysts must use both methodologies, by beginning with an SFL grammatical approach and then extending this approach with an explicit CDA attention to power of the discourse. Moreover, my take on sentence-level concerns is rooted in understanding how any micro choice reflects a particular worldview, just as worldviews can be considered in micro choices. James Gee writes,

> When we speak or write we always use the grammar of our language to take a particular *perspective* on what the "world" is like. . . . This grammatical perspective-taking process involves us in taking perspectives on what is "normal" or not; what is "acceptable" or not; what is "right" or not; what is "real" or not; what is the "way things are" or not; what is the "way things ought to be" or not; what is "possible" or not; what "people like us" or "people like them" do or don't do; and so on and so forth, through another nearly endless list. (2)

Gee highlights here the orientation we have to grammatical choices; he is not, however, helping us generate these options in his position. I discuss next what I mean by "generativity" and "systemic choices." Then, I explain two components of the semiotic in terms of their related actions, "generative mapping" and "critical choosing."

In order to understand such systemic choices systematically, language's social semiotic *functions* are broken down to various lexical-grammatical systems, with "interwoven" "strands of meaning" (Halliday *Language, Context* 23). In referencing their

inter-connectedness, Halliday is getting at the multi-functionality of language's lexical-grammar through three social meta-functions—the ideational, interpersonal, and textual. These meta-functions, which taken together constitute and reconstitute a context, are also intersecting and influencing each other at the micro level. That is, one meta-function is *always* at work with the other two meta-functions. Put another way, a macro-micro analysis considers the system of options and the interlocking meta-functions as backdrops for a writer's—or a text's— choice. These three meta-functions, which I will describe in more detail in the section on Critical Grammar's application, are systemic aspects to this grammar. They are important because they are categories for even more systemic choices, all of which are taken together to reveal social context through our specific choices, in terms of how the choice signifies the values of that context in terms of social relations, ideological perspectives, and social writing practices.

Choice is a particularly rich concept in a social semiotic perspective. In fact, the functional analyst must begin with meaning and meaning's relationship to form rather than the "bottom up" approach of Transformational-Generative grammar that begins at form (Thompson 4-6). Since a social semiotic begins with meaning, it turns the grammar of a language into choices or options that we select in order to make meaning, rather than viewing grammar as a restrictive system we must follow. Choice, in a social semiotic sense, is not akin to conscious choice made from conscious options; instead, choices are also options available within a given language system and its particular context.

Paul Simpson's example of this functional choice concept in his book *Language, Ideology, and Point of View* reveals how the relationship between choice and context is a functional *and* ideological one (86). Simpson explains one system of grammar, here, the

transitivity system, a system related to passive and active voice. However, transitivity actually involves more than simply two options. I paraphrase his example below.

> Imagine you are waiting in an authority figure's office. While you are waiting you pick up her vase that is at the edge of her desk. The vase slips out of your fingers and is now in pieces on the floor.

The transitivity system plays a role in constructing the choices of how this person will explain the situation when the authority figure comes back into the room. This system has following options for constructing the response:

> I broke the vase.
>
> The vase was broken by me.
>
> The vase was broken.
>
> The vase broke.

First, I am arguing that this range of choice involves more than simply active and passive notions of responsibility. For instance, the active "I broke the vase" versus the passive "The vase was broken by me" is complicated by the gray areas between them, such as the "The vase was broken" and "The vase broke." Faced with all the options and the question of responsibility to the happening, the two gray areas are in fact the two choices where the responsibility of the vase breaking are the most "hidden." For example, "The vase broke" and "The vase was broken" are the only options that have no trace of the I's involvement. This is why examining the choices systemically rather than simply relying on active and passive distinctions opens awareness to the role responsibility takes in sentence choice, largely influenced by a context.

Second, I'm arguing that while such a systemic approach to a small utterance may strike some teachers as taking up too much time, it is through this slowing down that

writers can be encouraged to reflect a bit on the tension between what, on first glance, we choose in response to a situation, and that choice's relationship to why we might, or might not, on second thought, make the same choice. The tension produced between first glance and second thought happens because of the writer's exposure to systemic options with a range of different effects. Conversation about the difference between one option and another one expands the meaning potential for writers, opens up potential for risk-taking, and contributes to a writer's relational thinking.

In this way, specific choices from this system of options become revelatory as to why the context is the way that it is at that given moment. Since micro choices are products of influence from their relationship to context, they are micro examples of the macro. They reveal the social relationships of the participants in the context, the values of those participant's in regard to the specific situation that is recurring through that choice. Moreover, these micro choices, analyzed together, are revelatory for the social assumptions about the text as written. Yet, in our (what I will assume is) quick "choosing" of certain wordings and words over others, we are not considering the effects attached to those choices and the "roles" that our choices play. Moreover, in the multiple grammars, discourses, and languages that are around us constantly, we are not always aware of how differently we are positioned and position them in our various contexts of language use. Such is the ideological component to these micro choices.

More specifically, the nature of these choices is "functional," which means that they can go unnoticed and overlooked as "rules," rather than as "roles." By "roles" I mean the part they play in reconstituting context, particularly those contexts that position the writer in fraught ways. For instance, when we recognize that our "choices" can be

"roles" rather than "rules," then we position ourselves to adopt an orientation to options that might result in choosing a *different* choice. Yet, what is fascinating to me about the relationship between a "functional" perspective and a "critical" one is that the functional can help us better arrive at the "available means," for our consideration of our choices since it allows us to map our first choice onto a system of other possible options. The systemic aspect to SFL is what helps us generate available means at the micro level. However, I am not at all suggesting these systemic options constitute the entire meaning potential for writers, but they do get at options for meaning that may not occur otherwise. Functional grammar's meaning potential relies on systemic application, which can only be applied with a working knowledge of a system of meaning-making options. So, rather than focusing analytical attention on what makes a given utterance grammatical or acceptable in the system like Chomsky's grammar, functional grammar is about theorizing the possibility of meaning through and in the system. A functional grammar analysis might ask: How does an utterance relate to all that was potentially meaningful in the system? (Halliday Intro 38).

More on Experiential Knowledge: Freire and Limit Situation

In social semiotic language theory, our sentences shape how we operate, represent, and relate to our world; moreover, sentences produce and reproduce context. In this view of a sentence, Freire's concept of a "limit situation" helps further explore the macro, particularly in regard to how the macro relates to ideologies and critical consciousness for students' in their own sentence writing. When we invite students to analyze their sentences through a systemic grammar framework, we also open up the Freireian methodology to relate to how our own choices in sentence writing can either

challenge or reproduce specific limit situations. Limit situations, like sentences, involve our lived experience, and our sentences, like our experiences, are often viewed as natural, rather than constructed, and singular, rather than multiple. In this way, I'm arguing that the concept of a limit situation interacts with a social systemic take on sentence choices. Moreover, Freire's concept of a limit situation helps explain why SFL grammar would theoretically invite ideological critique and awareness into students' sentence writing.

My critical orientation to language informs my understanding of limit situations as sentences; as such, Freire's limit situation is primarily discursive in this framework. The discursive nature of limit situations as sentences matters because of how discourse is entailed with material effects, such as how sentences reflect a writer's awareness of self in relation to others, reconstitute contexts as well as the conditions of those contexts, and also, contain ideological content and values. In relation to a Freiriean limit situation, systemic theory on grammar helps reveal how options in sentence writing relate to multiple contexts, therefore, inviting multiple considerations about contexts for students to draw on when they write sentences. In addition to this connection, for some students and teachers, sentences, as they are made up of language, are understood as "natural" rather than "naturalized." Theoretically, SFL would reveal how such sentences, as well as language more broadly, is always caught up in limit situations because of this relationship to context. Since a sentence entails such important concerns, then analyzing that sentence, and relating its parts to various options within the system of grammar helps *generate* more contexts, or choices, for writers to consider. A multiple understanding of context through sentence choices helps make ideology more visible because it is through contexts relating to other contexts where students understand the ideological nature of

language and grammar. If there were always *one* way to write a sentence, then ideology would be more difficult to "see." However, when there are *multiple* ways of writing a sentence, ideology becomes visible through the differences of how each sentence treats social relations (Interpersonal metafunction), ideological content (Ideational metafunction), and textual organization (Textual metafunction).

In sum, this systemic treatment of sentences would handle components to sentence writing through what Freire refers to as "generative themes." Moreover, the systemic and experiential aspect to Critical Grammar corresponds to CLA's orientation. That is, not only does systemic grammar work to highlight the constructed nature of sentences vis a vis the reality that multiple options exist and one option has been selected, but also through the awareness of such options, writers may *choose* to construct a different sentence-limit situation.

Relational Difference and Pedagogy

Once these choices are generated for writers by their own ability to create options for their sentence-level writing drawing on systemic grammar, I again rely on Freirian and Deweyian notions of critical thinking and consciousness to help writers discern among such options. Critical thinking, according to John Dewey, is a process. His metaphor for critical thinking is a human being faced with forking paths. The paths represent different choices. In Dewey's metaphor of the path, critical thinking is contextual, multiple, and based on reflective thinking about experience. In *How We Think*, Dewey argues that critical action is the moment when choice and judgment are exercised. However, "choice" is a process that involves considering and analyzing

possibility before making a choice, and it is a process that is only considered complete when informed action and reflection take place regarding a particular choice. However, Dewey does not address power relations in the classroom in the explicit manner that Freire does. Freire provides for me the awareness that critical thinking is itself a process that should involve "problem-posing." For example, in Chapter three of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he writes about praxis. Praxis involves a careful balance between acting and reflecting, a balance that results in *new* limit situations for our always-continuing praxis.

Keeping in mind Freire's orientation to the world and his concern with power, I read Freire through a Deweyian lens; reading Freire and Dewey as supplementary highlights the journey or process trope in both Dewey and Freire's notion of critical thinking/consciousness. In fact, Dewey's metaphor of critical thinking and the Freirean pedagogy of problem-posing and praxis complement one another. Both are based in reflecting on our experiences, with Freire providing an important ideological orientation to those experiences. Both value active learning environments, with Freire arguing for a specific way of learning that is about problem-posing. Dewey understands learning as an ongoing process, leading always to "more" truth but never arriving at it either, a notion that demonstrates how my pedagogy does not assume students ever operate with a "false consciousness."

For both teachers, our learning experiences contribute to and indeed impact our future consciousness. While Dewey is not critical in the same way that critical pedagogy is critical—since critical pedagogy involves an explicit acknowledgment of educational literacy and power and asks students to *critique* past consciousness—Dewey's *process* of

the human being on the path, considering choices, informs how I aim to position writers to act out of a critical perspective and assess that action through a critical process of reflection. For me, critical pedagogy of literacy provides the macro sense of how power works in choice-making processes while Dewey provides explanation of that process: specifically, how difference (analysis), action (synthesis), and reflection work together as a process of considering the often unconscious, but nevertheless ideological components of meaning-making. Such a process helps writers position themselves as not only more aware of their choices, but also more aware of how that choice reflects particular values, social relations, and power dynamics in ways that matter to the writer, and most importantly, in a manner that had not been previously as deeply considered as it becomes after my critical pedagogy.

In the next part of this chapter, I apply language's function as a social semiotic and the critical linguistic critique of that semiotic. In this section, I discuss what I mean by "generativity" and "systemic choices," as I explain two components of the semiotic in terms of their related actions, "generative mapping" and "critical choosing." In fact, my framework here synthesizes two "schools" of thought: Dewey and Freire. I do so because how choices are generated is important for why we choose the way that we do. Both aims, mapping and choosing, however, are grounded by the notion of a writer's previously un-analyzed, or deeply considered micro choice.

What I'm developing next is my notion of Critical Grammar. In fact, Critical Grammar as it involves both mapping and choosing relies on a *systemic* (mapping) as well as a *systematic* (critical choosing process) application of functional grammar's meaning potential. To illustrate what an analysis of these interacting metafunctions

generates in terms of meaning potential, I discuss one sentence from the perspective of the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions, in turn. While my analysis is partial, it demonstrates how a systemic theory of the micro can support a writer's systematic critical thinking about sentence-level choices.

Critical Grammar Application

I begin this discussion with a student sentence from a workshop. I choose it because it illustrates nicely both the concept of a sentence limit situation as well as how a social semiotic and systemic theoretical framework offers this writer critical choices in relation to it. Below the sentence, I have provided the coding from SFL that is relevant to this discussion. The terms "participant," "process," "attribute," and "circumstance" written below are SFL's way of referring to nouns, verbs, noun complements, and adjectival phrases. In my view, a social-functional grammatical terminology, invites students to consider the world relationships encoded, and that students encode, in sentences. Identifying a "sentence part" as a participant connotes a more active sense to sentence writing; whereas, a "noun" does not. Another one of my biases is that my theoretical explanation of SFL adopts a strong content focus. Since this writer's sentence involves identity construction, it serves as a clear example of what I mean when I'm arguing that a "sentence is a limit situation." This sentence was generative for my thinking and I've been working on it for several years.

I	became	normal	when I knew who Christina Aguilera was and when to wear capris versus knowing who Sonu Nigram was and wearing a Punjabi dress.

[Participant] + [Process] + [attribute] + [Circumstance].

The “limit situation” here is the sentence as it is written. The writer communicates that the “circumstances” led her to “normal,” a word which resonates as a “generative theme” because it invites multiple possibility, vis a vis the “circumstances” of this sentence; yet, at the same time, since the writer uses the past tense of the relational process, “became,” the participant’s relationship to these circumstances is constructed as static and not fluid. In discussing this sentence as a limit situation, I am not “critiquing” the sentence as written; rather I’m illustrating the range of limit situations that emerge from a micro-macro analysis of the Metafunctions.

Ideational Metafunction and Lexical-Grammar

The Ideational meta-function of language is what helps us construct, represent, and imagine our reality. Words are representative of discourses and certain ways of being in the world, and such words are often associated with “wordings,” where arrangements of words into wordings construct our social perspective or ideology and our social responsibility. In *Discourse and Social Change*, Fairclough writes that “as producers we are always faced with choices about how to use a word and how to word a meaning” (185). Yet, a discursive perspective won’t necessarily help us get to other options.

From an ideational meta-function perspective, sentences we write, and their structures are categorized in terms of participants, circumstances, and processes.
In SFL, processes (verbs) can be categorized in four different types, such as relational, saying, material, and perceiving processes (Thompson). In a similar way SFL has further categorizations for participants, attributes, and circumstances, but again I’m only focusing on processes as one example of systemic explanation. To conduct this kind of generative, systemic analysis, I might have asked this writer to re-envision her sentence

through a different "kind" of process. In this way, I'm drawing on the system of processes in SFL and asking the writer to relate her choice to that system and to think about the differences of meaning and social relationships based on those options. I'm inviting the writer to imagine different limit situations based on these differences. A sentence like this one, "I became normal, when …." would then be mapped as a relational process selection, since "became" *relates* one thing to another. However, applying SFL's lexical-grammar to the process of writing, revising, and critical thinking more broadly, the systemic options of the remaining processes might also be considered. That is, I'm suggesting asking the writer of such a sentence to consider the other systemic verbal processes to further her thinking about herself in relation to something she identifies as "normal." For example, what is the difference between "I said I was normal…I found normal…I felt normal…" Each of these processes can be differentiated through the *kind* of action a participant engages in relation to a given circumstance. These questions offer writers a systematic consideration of their sentence-level choices, and also position the writer in different limit situations.

Interpersonal Meta-function & Modality System

The interpersonal meta-function refers to how language is about social relationships, and the modality system includes the systemic options that help us reveal our attitudes about circumstances, participants, and processes. Simply put, there are contested views on reality; and the modality system gets us thinking not only about the fact that we can't help but write with our point of view and opinion about the world, but also the multiple ways we can think through the other positions we could take on the

world. Modalities have attracted discursive attention, especially in regard to hedging that often occurs in an academic argument (Berkenkotter and Huckin; Ivanič). A modal analysis happens through mapping a writer's choice with a given modal system and then considering the options that were not chosen in relation to it. This method helps writers understand the relationship between the point of view and the discourse, as well as the meaning potential of the discourse's point of view. The modal system is complicated to explain, but in my experience can be invoked easier than the process system. For example, highlighting that the use of the modal "possibly" can be understood in relation to its "system members" such as "definitely" or "not likely" can be a question to a writer about any propositional content in their sentence.

A very explicit connection to the sentence above about "becoming normal," however, can also be made by a pronoun CDA analysis, since pronouns are grammatical ways of conceptualizing our sense of belonging and relationship to others, and so are also part of the interpersonal meta-function. A CDA analysis would look for how a text is using the pronoun system as one way the text conceptualizes itself in relation to other perspectives or discourses. For example, Margaret Price's work, reflected in her dissertation *Writing From Normal: Critical Thinking and Disability in the Classroom* as well as her recent article in *College Communication and Composition* "Accessing Disability: A Nondisabled Student Works the Hyphen," argues how a writer's use of pronouns can reveal important moments of a writer's critical thinking process, as subtle shifts in a writer's way of referring to others or her audience is a way of thinking-in-relation to others and these revisions are significant. Pronouns ground the critical thinking about self-in-relation. Applied to the sentence above, highlighting the nature of

the "I" relating to "normal" and asking about this relationship; perhaps by asking what would be gained or lost if instead of "normal" the writer replaced it with the pronoun "them," as in "I became "them," when…" In this way, the grammatical coding of an "attribute" would be associated with another "participant" in order to encourage a more explicit identification of what is meant by "normal."

Textual Metafunction & Backgrounding/Foregrounding

The Textual Metafunction includes the ways that writers communicate their content in a cohesive and coherent manner so that an audience can understand it. It understands a sentence in two parts, the theme and rheme, where the "theme" is simply the first section of a sentence and the second part of the sentence that relates to that theme, is the "rheme." I draw on this Metafunction as a resource for revealing an ideological perspective about the discourse's values and how the writer identifies with those values. A great example of theme/rheme structural analysis is what Gee refers to as backgrounding and foregrounding. In Gee's view, how a writer grammatically emphasizes is always a discursive choice to foreground or background specific information via the position of theme and rheme sentence structure. In his *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis*, he discusses the "design" choices of the historian Paul Gagnon. In his discussion, Gee first describes Gagnon as someone with a relationship to a certain kind of view on history through how he is sponsored by the American Federation of Teachers, the Education Excellence Network, and Freedom House. Gee explains that through such affiliations, Gee understands Gagnon as taking on a mission to "speak to what he thinks ought to be the 'essential' part of Western history as it should be taught in our schools" (3). That is, Gagnon is speaking from a political

perspective about an historical curriculum. He then shows how Gagnon makes use of foregrounding and backgrounding of historical facts through his grammatical placement. Gee shows how when Gagnon backgrounds an important detail in a sentence, based on the fact that another discursive perspective on history would do the opposite. The point, Gee makes, is that grammar helps "create" his perspective and that grammar does "not allow us to speak or write from no perspective at all" (4).

Backgrounding and foregrounding, while not as systemic as process types or pronouns as shown in the other meta-functions, are still applicable to thinking about sentence-level choices in writing—since some of what we background and foreground may not be consciously held discursive values. Kolln's *Rhetorical Grammar* refers to this grammatical function as "end focus." Rather than arguing that "end focus" works discursively to "value" certain worldviews, Kolln is operating with Aristotelian understandings of rhetoric, in terms of the rhetorical situation, specifically the relationship between the purpose and the writer. Since end focus is the "place" in sentences where writers can most effectively "place" their purpose, end focus is a productive concept to encourage writers to consider placement in their sentence-level writing, particularly as this placement has ideological implications. In "I became normal, when…" for example, consider how the circumstances of the sentence are its "end focus," with the participant's relationship to these circumstances as backgrounded in the sentence. The question to prompt critical thinking might include the following: What changes when she flips these two parts of the sentence around? What is the effect of such a flip? And drawing from Kolln, which way does she *choose* to value these ideas in their relationship to her identity?

Such a systemic, critical framework of choice informs my critical sentence-level pedagogy which I continue to explain in my next chapter. While I assume in this chapter that sentence-level critical thinking is possible, and have also implicitly argued that this perspective on language would necessitate a pedagogy that alerts writers to possible discursive influences previously unnoticed in their writing, these claims necessitate systematic teacher inquiry. Specifically, my teacher research is invested in not only learning more about how the micro brings to students' attention these larger macro considerations, but also—and I think, more importantly—what happened when I specifically attempted this framework of choice in my classroom and what specifically was considered by my students.

As already argued in chapter one, sentence level choices in critical pedagogy are often ignored and dismissed, rather than how they will be discussed in this chapter as encoded aspects of our contexts, ideologies, and social relationships. Moreover, sentence writing contains "generative themes" and "limit situations." Echoing Canagarajah and Lu's micro approach to language and choice in their classrooms as well as Micciche's call for research into the productive link between critical pedagogy and grammar, I next explain how I designed this approach to micro choice alongside an existing critical curriculum for my Basic Writing class in the Fall 2009 semester. Specifically, how are students working with these notions? What sorts of reasoning about grammar and language occur in my classroom?

CHAPTER 3

QUALITATIVE TEACHER INQUIRY ON MY CRITICAL GRAMMAR CLASSROOM

In Anne Herrington's discussion of the "first twenty years of 'Research in the Teaching of English,'" she explains how Composition during the time of grammar research was predominately concerned with the "effects" of writing instruction (129). As a teacher-researcher more than forty years later, I, too, am, of course, concerned with the "effects" of my grammar instruction; however, like many of the studies Herrington was assessing and that I briefly reviewed in chapter one, our research purpose of studying "effects" was caught up in ideological understandings of form—understandings that critical literacy studies has moved well beyond (Canagarajah; Ivanič; Lu). And yet, what has been left behind in this important "revision" of language and ideology has been our understanding of the role grammar might play in the critical writing process (Micciche).

As reviewed in chapter one, our classroom grammar research has been mostly of experimental and empirical design. My study differs from the experimentally designed studies reviewed in chapter one, as I conduct systematic, observational inquiry on sentence-level discussions and writing happening in my Basic Writing classroom. I rely on Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Susan L. Lytle's discussion of "practitioner inquiry" in "professional settings.[1]" They argue that inquiry as stance signifies ongoing commitment; it is not a "project." They understand such inquiry as a "theoretical hybrid grounded more deeply in the dialectic between critical inquiry and practice" (93). I best understand this perspective by locating its roots in Deweyian pragmatist philosophy. Specifically, that as a teacher-researcher, local knowledge (praxis) emerges from a critical process of

doubting beliefs through experience. Cochran-Smith and Lytle write, "the idea is that through inquiry, practitioners across the professional life span make their own knowledge and practice problematic and also make problematic the knowledge generated by others" (131). In this way, the knowledge generated from this systematic study is humble. While I will share evidence that is critical of some of the deep-rooted beliefs about grammar's relevance to critical pedagogy, I also recognize that my study is in service of generating further inquiry into this relationship by doubting some of my own beliefs.

Dixie Goswami and Mary Rutherford refer to this as "systematic inquiry" and it allows teachers "to see the usefulness of the theory" (8). Teacher inquiry becomes our field's "scholarship on teaching," an interaction among research, practice, and theory that Janet Emig refers to as constituting a "web of meaning." Systematic classroom-based teacher inquiry, again always as a "web of meaning," may offer resistance to institutional influences on our classrooms where large-scale assessment practices overlook the subtle meaning-making and sociality of learning in our literacy classrooms.

Setting the Scene: Case Study Write up

I begin with my research questions, which are the lines of inquiry that ground my qualitative teacher inquiry.

1. How are students experiencing this critical approach to grammar and pedagogy?
    a. What kinds of choices come up in sentence workshops?
    b. What kind of reasoning are students drawing on in their discussions about sentence-level choices?
    c. In what ways does this discussion link micro choices to macro concerns?
2. How are students reflecting on this approach to sentences?

My teacher research makes use of qualitative methods to help me answer my research questions. These include on-going data collection and analysis throughout the study, inductive and comparative analysis, and triangulation of my data sources. My aim is to arrive at what George Kamberelis and Greg Dimitriadis point to as a value of qualitative strategies: a macro and micro sense of what data "means" (18-19).

I also answer my research questions through a case study approach. Specifically, I relied on Anne Haas Dyson and Celia Genishi's discussion of case studies as "constructs" rather than "found," which I took up in my Basic Writing class during the Fall 2009 semester (2). While more recent examples of classroom-based research grammar instruction have taken place in elementary and secondary scholarship (Dyson; Potter and Fuller), case study teacher inquiry on grammar pedagogy and practices in higher education is a noticeable absence. Case studies in relation to teacher inquiry are valuable because they both argue for the important role context, including the idiosyncratic aspects to the participants, plays in any learning environment (Dyson and Genishi). My case study write up is both "grounded" and "in-depth," two features that I explain more below.

My two data analysis chapters are each grounded by my two major research questions. More specifically, each chapter is anchored by a different data source. I did this so that I could learn first about the social nature of the classroom, and later apply this contextual case to how students reflected on their sentence writing at the end of the course. In the first data analysis chapter, I present a "case" of the course as a whole, but primarily this is a case of the nature of our sentence level choices and reasoning about form. As such, it is a narrative accomplished by mini sentence cases through each unit's sentence focus, a focus that includes my teaching of sentence choices as well as sentence

workshops and students' process writing. In my second data analysis chapter, in order to complicate this "case," I ground my analysis with end of semester student reflective writing. Their reflections represent the relationship between what I valued in the reflective prompts and how students took it up and expressed what they understood as valuable. Taken together, this case approach helps me better understand how Critical Grammar was being shaped and drawn on by the participants in my class.

In this chapter, I begin establishing this bounded system by providing more context of the course, its curriculum, and finally explain the specific practices and goals of my Critical Grammar pedagogy. I then move on to my systematic look, where I describe my procedures of data collection and analysis. Reporting on these methods reveals exactly how I constructed the case of Critical Grammar, the subject of my next two chapters.

Basic Writing at University of Massachusetts Amherst

The Basic Writing course at the University of Massachusetts Amherst is a 3-credit course that also carries a diversity credit. In order to qualify for this diversity credit, more than fifty percent of course content must cover global or U.S. diversity issues. That is, diversity is viewed in terms of "issues" and further broken down by either a "U.S." or "global" context, a definition which helps the registrar categorize course offerings as issues that primarily "live" in the U.S. or not, coded as "U" for U.S. or "G" for global. Our curriculum earns the "tag," U, helping to fulfill a General Education requirement for graduation. This allows our students to make progress toward a degree, rather than feeling as if they are treading water in a remedial course; the diversity focus also makes the course more politically and academically relevant for these writers as well. The

course uses a program-designed textbook, published through *Pearson Custom Publishing*, titled *Multiple Literacies* (Basic Writing Editorial Collaborative).

I was a member of the Basic Writing Editorial Collaborative that designed and published our current curriculum, which infuses reading, discussion, and writing. We specifically designed this curriculum through notions of language diversity, identity politics, critical race theory, and critical language awareness (CLA). We wanted the curriculum to expose writers to multiple literacies as well as to aid them in discovering how these multiple literacies relate to power structures and institutional contexts. Such a curriculum is meant to introduce writers to academic discourse values in a manner that results with them leaving a Basic Writing semester with both academic skills as well as a critical awareness about literacy and language. Each unit stresses a particular academic skill, just as it also develops the notion of literacies as social material practices. With both aims in mind, we organized the curriculum as separate but progressive units, with a final unit culminating in a critical academic literacy narrative.

The texts were chosen in terms of the unit goals. Writers begin the semester thinking about their own literacy practices so that literacy immediately becomes multiple and diverse. From this starting point, the curriculum widens out so that writers inform these practices based in reading stories of literacy narratives that are often similar to as well as different from writers' experiences in the class. In unit three, there is a similar progression as the curriculum brings in theories of whiteness and critical race theory in order to examine how language and power affect how we construct difference on a daily basis. The curriculum in unit four grounds these theoretical perspectives by focusing on

the institution of schooling and its role in furthering or challenging, silencing or changing our literacies.

Our curricular reading is as diverse in form as it is in content. Writers begin the semester reading a variety of literacy narratives from writers with a range of backgrounds and interests. Starting with the notion that literacy is *multiple*, rather than one thing, initiates the writing semester off enthusiastically, celebrating the rich and diverse backgrounds of the participants (see Carter and "Rhetorical Dexterity"). Once the big idea that literacy is always in relation to other literacies starts to make more and more sense to students, they are introduced to ethnographic analysis of literacy research for the second unit. Applying this framework to their own literacy moment, a classmate's, or one of the texts, students start to become more invested in the course and the curriculum. A discourse about multiple literacies usually emerges toward the end of this second unit, as they start to build inter-textuality with class discussion and reading. Once they have experienced through their own analysis of how deeply meaningful a language practice is in its context, they are then introduced to a theoretical perspective that de-stabilizes and challenges social beliefs about language and literacy that most of us have been brought up with our entire lives. We read articles from writers who challenge the idea of an "equal playing field." We read some critical race theory as well as a text from whiteness studies in order to ground multiple perspectives in their relationship to historical power structures as well as each other. As teachers, we want them to be informed about the larger contexts and constructs that affect their sense of relationship to their writing, to each other, and education. The last unit asks them to put these "lessons" together and to consider how their social identifiers relate to their current experiences as writers at

UMass. We hope to create writers who are aware of how their experiences with, uses of, and attitudes about language and literacy are resources to help them make informed and deliberate choices in their writing.

Before the design of the curriculum, our committee discussed together how we understand writers and diversity. In our view, all writers are implicated in diversity through their social identifications as well as their literacy practices. In past courses I have taught, writers' experiences with literacy have ranged from scribbled handwriting and feeling afraid to speak because of a stutter, to worries about accent and racial prejudice. These experiences constitute the entailment of literacy with social stereotypes and discrimination. Often more than a couple of students have had experience with second language learning in U.S. schools, and most of the students enroll in the course with a belief that a monolingual, English speaker has more resources than a bilingual or multilingual language user (for more research regarding ethnicity, language, and attitudes, see Kells 10-11). This belief is one that the course is meant to counteract and disrupt. In addition, these writers often come with beliefs about themselves as writers who are "bad at grammar" and want to work on their use of "baby words." Past students have hailed from towns and cities in and around New England as well as from Hong Kong to Cameroon; and often there are at least three or four athletes far from home. In past semesters, some of these athletes did not take or even knew about the placement essay, but instead were enrolled in the course because of an advisor who made an assumption about their literacy.

Critical Grammar in my Basic Writing Course Fall 2009

> . . . [W]riting instruction, for all students, ought to be broadly rhetorical, stressing voice, audience, and purpose,

> rather than narrowly grammatical, stressing surface detail and its presumed connection with a spoken standard. Print is a code, not a dialect, and one learns that code best from the top down, not from the bottom up.
>
> (Hartwell 114)

Hartwell's assumption, here, that "one learns best from the top down," is sound rhetorical process pedagogy. However, what would a classroom look like if it were to value the kinds of meaning that Hartwell highlights here, but from the choices writers *do* learn from the bottom up, rather than the top down? In fact, these bottom up strategies, conceptualized as Critical Grammar, were the focus of my pedagogy taught during the Fall 2009 semester. In order to set up the kind of consideration about grammar and language that will help writers critically examine and write their ideas, I implemented a Critical Grammar pedagogy. This pedagogy has two related sentence practices, sentence of the day and sentence workshops. It also involved an assessment practice surrounding sentence-level choices.

First, the table below is an example of my scaffolding of systemic and systematic Critical Grammar, which I drew on in my <u>sentence of the day practice</u> (see Table A). My sentence of the day teaching took up approximately ten minutes of class time on days when students had read a course reading, and I would then facilitate a teacher-led discussion about the sentence. This practice allowed me to demonstrate certain grammatical considerations that emerge out of my theoretical framework. I chose sentences with two concerns in mind: first, how the ideas in the sentence related to the theme of the day and the unit; and second, how the kind of sentence helped me synthesize the systemic and systematic approach I intended to emphasize during that unit. That is, I both chose and taught the sentence with the scaffolding table in mind. In this way, I chose

sentences that used a form and content relationship that helped frame curricular goals. It first involved layering a social semiotic perspective on language with the curricular frame described above. Below is a table that displays the various parts of this framework and how I aimed to use them to work within our existing curriculum. I include under "systemic approach" how I highlighted to my class aspects of grammar that would help them with critical thinking (systematic questions) about sentence choices in each unit.

Table A: Scaffolding Systemic and Systematic Critical Grammar

Type of Essay and Academic Writing Component	SYSTEMIC APPROACH	SYSTEMATIC QUESTIONS
Mapping Literacies through Experience *(a short essay that explores one way they make meaning with others)* observation.	End focus, positioning parts of the sentence (such as phrases and words) to make different meanings.	How does where a word is placed matter to this sentence's meaning? How else could you arrange this sentence?
Bringing Literacies Home through Close Reading *(a slightly longer essay that brings at least one course/perspective to bear on a choice of being silent or speaking)* analysis.	Analyzing a choice of a sentence in terms of its lexical, conventional and grammatical aspects, then mapping that choice onto other options for it.	What is the difference between the writer's choice and another option the writer could have chosen? Why does the choice make sense based on the writer's context?
Examining Literacies of Power through Privilege *(a longer essay that brings in at least three perspectives that relate to a generative theme)* synthesis.	Considering the relationship that choices of sentence structure have to wider ideological contexts and discourses.	In this use, what about the concept is being highlighted and what is not being highlighted? What are the consequences and effects of this choice?
Unschooling Literacy through a Writerly Sense of Purpose *(a reflective essay that applies our curricular reading to Kutz's folk theory concept)* reflection.	Reflecting on a sentence as a whole encoded by its choices and considering how a change to one part necessitates a change to another part.	Why do you think the writer chose to form this idea in this way? What does it reveal and how might you change it?

Second, Critical Grammar pedagogy was also based around a sentence workshop practice. This social learning activity involved each writer selecting a sentence from his or her unit essay for the class to possibly discuss and workshop. Although every student enrolled had at least two workshop experiences, not every writer had a sentence workshopped for every unit. We had a total of four sentence workshops, one for each unit. These workshops could be as long or as short as the writer needed for their sentence, e.g. the first unit and second unit workshops, time allowed for ten writers, but the last two workshops, time allowed for seven. Each sentence workshop happened prior to the unit process due date, with the aim that writers might use the workshop experience to consider more of their choices and options in their writing.

Finally, I assessed their sentence-level writing in terms of choices rather than errors. For example, when I noticed an error, or a pattern of error, in their writing, I addressed it through questions aimed to encourage the writer to think more about their meaning. However, in my questioning I did not refer to their forms as "errors"; I consciously chose to not use this word in my response. As I relied on electronic submission of their work, I provided this assessment through the "add comment" feature on Microsoft WORD. My comments addressed micro choices that I wanted writers to notice and consider in their own specific process and performance in Basic Writing; some of my comments involved rewriting wordings or whole sentences and engaging the writer to consider the meaning differences among these versions. In all cases, I approached my commenting by highlighting a micro component and sharing with the writer what his or her choice made me think about as their reader, at the same time, I generated at least two other options for their consideration and asked them to consider their differences.

Students were also assigned two reflections "bookending" this process. The first asked them to "tell me about a choice you made during this unit"; "why did you make this choice"; and "why did this choice matter." I then used this reflection in order to respond and comment about their meaning-making process. To complete their assessment, I last asked them to reflect on the whole process after reading through and interacting with my comments.

Institutional Context for the Study

My Basic Writing class took place during the fall of 2009, meeting every Monday and Wednesday right around lunchtime in a computer classroom for two hours and five minutes. As College Writing courses meet for two and half hours each week, the four hours and ten minutes of Basic Writing is meant to provide additional support for writers with developing skills in academic language. Although the course is open to any writer, most writers are "placed" into the class based on their placement essay, written in one hour, often during a summer orientation day, and scored by graduate student teachers shortly thereafter. I was a placement essay reader during the summer of 2009. In scoring the writing of most incoming freshman, we were told to pay particular attention to reading comprehension and over-reliance on the prompt, which are often signs of a writer who would be best served by being placed into Basic Writing. Even though enrollment in the course is mostly through this system of placement, there are still those who enroll in the course for self-placement reasons because of the aforementioned General Education diversity credit.

Participants

On the first day of class, I briefly mentioned my inquiry with my class. I told them I was doing my dissertation on sentences. It was important for me to let them know that first day that I would be collecting data on my course design, in case some of them might decide to take another writing section, even though I do realize that to some students there is no other option in their schedule but this particular course. Two students dropped from the course in the first two class meetings. One student stopped showing up to class during the third unit and did not turn in his work from our second unit. With approval from the UMass Internal Review Board (IRB), I only use comments, sentences, and experiences from writers who have given informed consent. I had permissions from the entire class. This was good news but I did consider how I would ethically handle data if not all students gave consent.

My class had thirteen students, and within this smaller group there is a range of linguistic diversity. People came to class with language and dialect backgrounds from different regions and language systems. The languages spoken fluently include Arabic, English, German, Russian, Mandarin, Cantonese, Spanish, and Japanese. They had attended schools in the following countries: Jordan, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Germany, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Dominican Republic, and Japan, as well as in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. Some were the first in their family to attend college, and some, like me, are monolingual and middle-class speakers and writers.

Myself as teacher-researcher

I am a white, highly educated, middle-class woman who was born and lived most of her life in Kansas. I share this detail about birth location with my class because often it

makes me somewhat exotic to those who have little to no sense of where Kansas is on a map. It's one way that I've found I use my own history as a resource for fostering connections. However, my background, including being one of four children to parents who have been married for over thirty years, also contributes to me often feeling quite comfortable (an aspect of my privilege in the context of school no doubt as a straight, white, able-bodied, middle-class woman) in a variety of classroom dynamics. As stated, I was part of the revision of the curriculum and worked hard with the committee to sequence the units so that the writers would end the course with a working sense of relationship to writing in the academy, a relationship that wasn't necessarily about mastering academic skills only.

My inquiry of Critical Grammar is based on a theoretical assumption that these practices will facilitate students' critical thinking and will help them make informed choices in their writing. This belief disposes me to look closely at moments that validate it; however, at the same time I am just as invested in learning whether Critical Grammar is experienced as I theorize it. I have tried to be conscious of this invested perspective while still recognizing other perspectives and views of my data. For example, I used triangulation by testing my inferences by drawing on multiple data sources and sharing my findings with others.

I value case study approaches to literacy education because they so often reveal the linguistic resources of diverse populations. Such research practices inform my teaching and help me recognize the rich, complexity of meaning and purpose in forms that, on first glance, are not often accessible to standardizing sensibilities. Moreover, my teacher inquiry requires my continued reflection about how my role as a teacher-

researcher affected my classroom, data collection, and analysis. Recognizing myself, as what Yvonne Lincoln refers to as, "a human instrument" meant that I took every opportunity to understand my role in the classroom (103). Also, as a qualitative researcher, I include my own relationship to my study so as to ground my classroom inquiry in a research paradigm that understands power, knowledge, and discourse as constituting the generative limits of knowledge construction.

Case Study Research Methodology

Data Collection

I draw on both observational and archival data sources for my study. Observational data sources involve the data that I observed during the class as well as my own reflections in relation to the class. I have arranged each data source according to how I collected it in my research process. In this way, I begin with my journal, followed by my audio recording of class sentence work. I then include my archival data sources, which are mostly student-generated from the semester.

Teacher journal

The teacher journal helped me with reaching, what Lincoln calls, "mature judgment" on my inquiry that is only achieved through "continuous interaction" (194). My journal helped me continuously interact with my inquiry, build my tacit knowledge, and value my subjective experience. I took heed of Dyson and Genishi's reminder of how "[i]nitial responses and curiosities can be forgotten, as can [also] potential avenues for inquiry," and therefore, I also collected a variety of notes, schedules, and observations that occur in the classroom (39). I tried to type my reflections and observations before and after class. I used this binder of handwritten and typed notes as a data source because

I recognize that consistently writing is a way of thinking about an inquiry (reflecting) as well as the note-taking being some material evidence of the class as I experienced it (record). This data source was used for triangulation with other data sources as well as aided continuous interaction with my inquiry, particularly during later stages of my naturalistic inquiry where "persistent observation and more focused approaches" are required in order to get "more in-depth information" about my inquiry (Lincoln 266).

Audio recording of "sentence of the day"

My interest in discovering the nature of our class discourse on grammar and its relationship to my own pedagogical goals necessitated audio recording of classroom activities where such discourse occurs. I audio recorded the first ten or so minutes of class when we discussed a sentence. There are a total of seventeen transcripts. I wanted to have audio recording for a very practical reason—I would be leading the discussion and didn't want to worry about also note-taking and then missing comments. Moreover, this was an important to consider student engagement and the relationship our talk had to the sentence workshops. This data source was comparatively analyzed with the Sentence Workshop Transcripts.

Audio recording of sentence workshops

I audio recorded and transcribed these workshops. I also took detailed notes during the workshop, noting aspects of our discussion not available for audio record. I was "busy" recording names and comments, particularly comments that expose a given reason or value about language use. I inductively analyzed these transcripts to create new data, a table about the choices and reasons that came up in the workshops. I then used the

new data table as an anchor for my comparative analysis of choices from the sentence of the day transcripts.

Student process, final, and assessment of essays

I required the class to keep track of their process (all writing, including reflective writing) for their essays on UMass's class management software SPARK. The pedagogical reason was that they would have a space they could always access when we have class together and that it could be a shared space for them as well as me. The writing process included the responses to this writing by me, done through Microsoft WORD's comment feature and SPARK. SPARK'S storage of data, along with WORD'S comment feature, allowed me to access a series of texts for each unit. As such, this data included exploratory writing, each draft, each peer review, each sentence workshop, and each assessment response and reflection for each unit. This data source underwent a selective content analysis, as only the content that struck me as related to the sentence that was discussed in class underwent an in-depth analysis.

Sentence Histories

Sentence history data was new data that I constructed and pieced together. It included sixteen sentence histories of student writing. The purpose of these sentence histories was so that I could learn more about the micro from the perspective of individual students' writing processes. To construct the histories, I chose four writers for each unit workshop and traced their sentence chosen for workshop through its writing process during the unit. The four sentences I chose for each unit were influenced by my initial assessment of each writer's process in the course, based on my teacher journal and my experience transcribing our sentence discussions. After these experiences, I felt like I

was in a good position to choose the sentence histories that I thought would provide me as a researcher and a teacher with the most understanding of how Critical Grammar was working in my class. Other criteria included using at least one sentence history for every writer in my class. To construct the histories, I started with the sentence chosen for workshop, selected relevant data from the SPARK reflective post, and then traced that sentence backwards and forwards in a student's writing process, including the end of semester reflection assignment. I copied and pasted the relevant aspects to this sentence in a new document and revised these histories throughout my data analysis and case study write-up.

Class activities and peer review

Data are student-generated notes from group work and peer reviews in the forms of letters to the writer. I collected such data throughout the semester. The notes from group work were often in the form of lists and examples based on the goals of the group assignment. These notes were used to triangulate emergent themes, as this data source did not involve me as its instrument. This data source helped me learn more about the effects of peer group interaction in relation to other activities I was able to observe. I was selective about how I consulted this data during the research process. For example, during data analysis for research question one, I did a brief comparative analysis of each workshop writer's peer review data because I wanted to get at the values and attitudes that emerged during time spent outside of whole class discussion.

Students' reflective posts on SPARK

This personal blog post for all participants helped me understand why they made the choices they did as well as what other choices they considered for each unit essay.

Specifically, I asked them the question "Why did you choose the sentence you did for the sentence workshop?" These posts were assigned prior to each workshop and helped me learn what values the specific student was headed into a particular workshop with. I also had an opportunity to then check if these values were shared across the class. Pedagogically, the blog post helped them develop meta-knowledge about sentences and choices. This data source was inductively analyzed through comparative analysis within the data source to arrive at categories; these emergent categories continued to be shaped as the sentence workshops progressed. I stored this data electronically so as to provide easy future contextualization for my unit-by-unit case, particularly to access entries from posts that did not undergo close discursive analysis at earlier stages of my inquiry.

Data Analysis

It was challenging to keep up with transcribing the data, reflecting on my experiences, and engaging in the kind of data analysis that would show me a new perspective on my teaching. I admit to putting my data analysis on the "back burner" for awhile. The distance between my experience as a teacher in the class and my work as the primary instrument analyzing my data though still led to discoveries, particularly as I entered the write-up stage. My analysis for these questions took place over the span of six months, and my emerging findings and my process were discussed in detail, on several occasions, with my advisor.

Identifying Kinds of Choices:

a.) What kinds of choices come up in sentence workshops?

I identified three kinds of choices from my analysis of the transcripts. Identifying these three choices, as lexical, grammatical, and conventional helped me theorize my

understanding of the micro and helped me identify my case, so that a choice from each of these three categories was offered in my write-up.

My conventional data category is for the specific parts of the sentence that refer to punctuation, spelling, or citation practice. For example, in the fourth sentence workshop transcript, Sherlyn asks Ty, "Why is there an apostrophe between the English and the 's'?" Data is *conventional* since it flags punctuation, here, as well as spelling. This category had the fewest occurrences.

Grammatical and lexical data categories, on the other hand, had more occurrences. My theoretical framework, based on Halliday's notion of *lexical-grammar*, meant that I had to separate and distinguish these components when I looked at my data inductively. I limited lexical data to the aspect of a word in relation to that word's semantic meaning outside of the sentence. What is "outside" the sentence could be the connotation or denotation of the word in the mind of the writer or the audience or a social context. In this way, "lexical" data is word-focused, though it is focused beyond the context of the sentence as well, since the grammar of the word form always matters to the sentence's meaning. Words might also be *grammatical data*, if the concern remains on placement, form, and arrangement in a sentence. In simple Hallidayian terms, this is the difference between a word as a concept (lexical) and a word being used as a *wording* (grammatical).

I determined which aspect (lexical or grammatical) was being highlighted from the sentence transcript context. I did so by focusing in on the distinction between the lexis of a concept versus how a writer's form considered that concept through its sentence

usage. For example, in our third sentence workshop, Nick helps point out this distinction through the discussion of the word *rank*.

> **Nick**: I don't know if "rank" is the best word being used; I couldn't really think of another word. I don't know if anyone has an idea or any questions of the sentence…Tejada looks like she wants to say something.
>
> **Tejada**: Laughs, well, I think you're saying when it comes to rank, I mean, I think you are trying to say something about categorization…of people. Or, maybe you're saying they put you into ranks and they construct a hierarchy based on you, right?
>
> **Nick**: Yea.
>
> **Tejada**: Those two words come in mind when you say that.

Nick's question if "rank" is the "best word being used" was grammatical data. Nick's use of "rank" functioned primarily to modify "system of privilege"—this was a system that "ranks and judges us." This coding helped reveal to me a grammatical sense in Tejada's response. When Tejada responds to him, she also changes the word form of "rank" by referring to it in a noun form; "ranks" now involve "categorization" as well as "ranks" that "they put you into." While this part of the transcript represents grammatical coding, she also helps him consider the concept of ranking outside the context of his sentence when she shares with him "what came to mind" when he asked about that word. This perspective is categorized as lexical data.

<u>Identifying Kinds of Reasons</u>

b.) What kind of reasoning are students drawing on in their discussions about sentence-level choices?

To answer my second research question, I first inductively analyzed the sentence workshop transcripts looking for reasons as to why a writer might consider various options. I cut these reasons in little pieces of paper and started to make little piles. For

example, the workshop or the writer might express that a given option would make a sentence, word choice, or wording "stronger." This reasoning I fully expected, but other reasons were not as straightforward as "effectiveness" or "clarity" for a writer's purpose. For example, some reasons were based in a workshop member's experience with language and how the audience responded to the writer's meaning. Left studying these piles of reasons, I used my theoretical framework to help me identify reasoning. As I began this process systematically with the first sentence workshop transcript of the semester—I came across reasons surrounding choices that were not addressed in my theoretical framework. This "finding" revealed to me that my theoretical approach to form and content was not the perspective my students were working with during that first workshop. Instead, reasoning behind sentence options were more general responses to the content of the sentence, as students did not address choice-making or meaning in terms of form. I wanted to track this kind of response throughout the semester, so I named this kind of reasoning or response "arhetorical."

I systematically approached this research question in the same manner as my first, but with a more involved inductive process since "reasoning" for me was not as defined as choices had become. In fact, moving to other data sources (the SPARK reflective posts, Teacher Journal, and my Sentence of the Day transcripts) throughout this process helped me better understand why there were some differences in student reasoning about sentences leading up to each workshop. In fact, I identified three kinds of reasoning from my sentence workshop transcript analysis: arhetorical, rhetorical, and critical reasons. My particular interest in critical reasoning development meant that I would also be looking for this category in my data. Rhetorical reasoning as a category helped me see the

nuances between it and the critical one. Rhetorical and critical reasoning became distinguishable for me by discussions with my advisor and peers about why a piece of raw data could be understood as either, neither, or both. I then went back to the sentence workshop transcripts and worked from examples of this reasoning in context in order to further define each category. In the end, however, I heavily relied on my theoretical framework and focused on the relationship between form and content. Identifying these kinds of reasoning in the context of the transcripts is what became my unit-by-unit story about the class, as there was an obvious progression when I traced them chronologically.

My sustained analysis of arhetorical reasoning further defined this category as a split between form and content, prescriptive attitudes about choices of grammar and convention, and a belief that one word is "just the same" as another word. Rhetorical reasoning ties in with Hallidayian functional grammar which I describe in my theoretical framework, where grammatical choices constitute and reflect context and social relations. My analysis of rhetorical reasoning fuses two perspectives on the term "rhetorical." Primarily, rhetorical reasoning will recognize audience and purpose when it comes to sentence choices. By this recognition, writers are aware that a different form signifies a different content, fusing form and content. Sentences become social action, that is, communicating to others. I discuss this particular kind of rhetorical reasoning in my third and fourth unit analysis in my next chapter. My analysis of critical reasoning also relates to my theoretical framework, where reasoning expresses ideology, social relations, or writerly ethos *and* shows awareness of the effects of a way a form handles such content. I provide some brief examples of these categories in terms of "lexical" data in my definitions below. Critical reasoning was similar to rhetorical reasoning since both

involve multiple ways of thinking about meaning, and both types of reasoning can also relate to a writer's ethos; however, critical reasoning pushes rhetorical reasoning further by considering the effects of these differences. For example, if a writer reasons ethos in relation to a sentence choice but does not express the relationship to language, knowledge, and power, it is rhetorical, but not critical. That is, ethos alone is not sufficient for critical reasoning.

In fact, critical reasoning was difficult to represent in chart form because it often, as discussed in my fourth unit analysis, was a collaborative and contextual endeavor. For example, on the table below concerning the example of critical grammatical reasoning, the comment appears more "rhetorical" than it does "critical" since it shows how audience was challenging the wording in the sentence in relation the overall purpose content of an idea; however, it *is* critical data because what these writers were in fact discussing related to how this writer specifically represented his point of view, i.e. not entirely true, in relation to an ideological perspective on naming and that relationship to knowledge and power. While ideology is always present in any sentence we write, this kind of ideological sentence content and its relationship to form is more explicit than what is often the case in sentences with strong rhetorical reasoning, tied to audience and purpose, such as the example, "cell phone does sounds too formal." Throughout the process, however, these categories were in flux, but I relied on my data to help me define what was and what was not a given type of reasoning. In the table below, I show how this coding worked by sharing some lexical choices and the reasoning connected to those choices.

Table B: Choice and Reasons from Student Discussions of Sentence Workshops

Choices	Arhetorical Reasoning: *Form divorced from content (prescriptive); content without regard to form (small forms don't matter/shape content).*	Rhetorical Reasoning: *Form fused with content. Rhetorical reasoning is aware of audience and purpose in regard to sentence-choices.*	Critical Reasoning: *Type of rhetorical reasoning that considers the effects of micro's relationship to macro concerns about identity and social relations. Critical reasoning is always aware of audience and purpose.*
Lexical	"I'll change it names words all the same."	"Cell phone does sound a little too formal for that sentence."	"If someone from a certain racial group has a name for them, and like, it's simple but giving it said a proper name, they kind of embrace it...Kind of way that the name African American..."
Gramm-atical	"I think it would have the same meaning."	"You don't have to write 'I think that.' Because like you are writing a paper so it's kind like your thoughts are already in it and I think it would make your idea a lot stronger.	Is it somehow true? Because you say not entirely true at the end."
Conven-tional	"That's what [Microsoft WORD] did, the autocorrect when I was writing, cuz without the apostrophe it put a red line on it…"	"Well, I know like, when, here in America you spell color c-o-l-o-r, but in Europe you spell it c-o-l-o-u-r."	"You should take out [the apostrophe] …You aren't saying English is…[Someone interrupts]…It's not possessive."

Constructing the "Case" of Critical Grammar

c.) In what ways does this discussion link micro choices to macro concerns?

After I had my categories of reasons and choices I charted where and when these reasons and choices emerged, a finding that helped with the unit-by-unit write-up. I engaged in comparative analysis with my other data sources after I had reached a general sketch of what had happened in the primary activity of my inquiry, the sentence

workshops. I decided to heavily rely on the transcripts and my student writing so that could highlight the conversation about the micro and the macro as it happened in my class. It was at this point that I had to select one or two sentence histories from each unit. After I had my progression of choices and reasons and corresponding sentence histories for each unit, I selected key "moments" from the unit experience to tell the "case." I also decided to include in each unit a "demonstrative" example of a critical choice, which synthesizes my two research questions. To construct these mini-cases for each unit, I drew on writers' sentence history data. Specifically, I shared relevant aspects of sentence workshop transcripts that served to contextualize these critical thinking moments or experiences with form. I also triangulated these histories with my other data sources to be sure I wasn't missing out on a relevant "piece." Specifically, my teacher journal's notes of each writer, was drawn on to introduce each mini-case study.

Complicating the Case of Critical Grammar

2. How are students reflecting on this approach to sentences?

My second research question was anchored by student end of the semester reflections and my prior analysis and write-up. Student reflections were inductively analyzed, as I looked for patterns across the reflections concerning aspects of the sentence pedagogy students were drawing on and discussing in relation to their experience in the course. For the write-up, I selected aspects of writer reflections that constructed the general take up of the assignment and what students did. Using this as a context, and drawing on the "case" of Critical Grammar, I then focused more in-depth on writers' reflections that offered me a perspective about the class that I hadn't addressed in

my case write-up. I refer to this in the second data analysis chapter as the relationship error had to Critical Grammar.

My next chapter discusses the "case" of Critical Grammar. In this data analysis chapter, I trace how the relationship between form and content developed in my class by focusing on three kinds of reasoning about form—arhetorical, rhetorical, and critical. At the same time I tell this progressive narrative, I am careful to point out when some of my teaching was not taken up and in these moments where it was also resisted. In general, though, I heavily draw on my sentence transcripts from workshops in order to highlight the ways my students engaged each other's meaning-making. In my subsequent chapter, I focus entirely on student end of the semester reflective writing on sentences to complicate the more coherent narrative that emerged from my unit-by-unit qualitative analysis of our class sentence discussions.

Notes

[1] Cochran-Smith and Lytle use language such as “practitioner” rather than “teacher” and “professional settings” rather than “classroom.” This language is valuable because it is shared across research contexts and communicates the values I share across academic disciplines in higher education interested in practitioner inquiry. However, I associate these terms with a “professionalizing” University discourse that for me seems to disembody teaching and learning; therefore, I have decided throughout the dissertation to refer to myself as “teacher researcher” engaging in “classroom inquiry” for this reason.

CHAPTER 4

MICRO CHOICES & ARHETORICAL, RHETORICAL, AND CRITICAL REASONING

In this chapter, I trace how student reasoning about micro-choices developed throughout the semester. I include in each unit discussion an example of how its sentence workshop facilitated critical thinking about a conventional, lexical, or grammatical option. The stories I share in each unit illustrate how micro choices were made relevant and were also influenced by the nature of each unit's workshop. In the first and second units, my choice of writer stories were out of necessity; they were the only writers with compelling workshop experiences that told a story about critical thinking with the micro. However, our third and fourth units offered me several stories, but I chose the ones I did in order to focus on the collaborative and social atmosphere that took place around the micro; as such, I believe that these stories, Nick and AJ as well as Pik and Ty, best reveal my class dynamic. In all stories, my point is that these micro choices would have gone dismissed or ignored had the workshop not examined them, and so, each story presents strong evidence for how my class brought a macro sense to a micro choice. In addition, I show how the nature of student workshop discussions developed alongside the curriculum of the course, and, in this way, I show how students were gradually constructing these workshops, for more and more of their peers, as spaces for a critical negotiation of macro concerns. The two stories I tell from our first and second unit focus on individual writers and how they drew on their workshop experiences in their sentence writing and reflection. As the nature of the workshop experience became more rhetorical and critical in nature, my final stories focus primarily on the social learning environment

that was being constructed. These final stories, which involve collaborative discussion, are strong evidence for the power of the micro in my critical pedagogy.

Unit One

Sentence of the Day Teaching

I came to class the first day fully expecting my students to draw on prescriptive notions of form in our discussions about sentences, so I began the semester with a focus on how form could help us learn more about a writer's ideas and how a choice of form—specifically a writer's arrangement—values and positions ideas. My first sentence of the day session drew on Kolln's concept of "end focus." I chose a sentence from Perri Klass's "Learning the Language": "And I am afraid that as with any new language, to use it properly you must absorb not only the vocabulary but also the structure, the logic, the attitudes" (10). I wanted this sentence, and its end focus, to do a lot of work for my students in the unit. I hoped to foster consideration about language attitudes *and* attitudes of language; at the same time, I prompted them to consider grammatical arrangement and how writers select a focus for that arrangement in sentence writing. I read the sentence out loud, after writing it on the dry erase board.

I asked students to think about the form of the sentence: what four things does Klass highlight about language in this sentence? In a very simple way, I encouraged an attention to form through the sentence's and the essay's purpose. After Klass's four language components were said back, I pushed students to think more about form. I asked about her arrangement and order. A quick reply,

> **Kyle**: Isn't that the order you learn them? You learn vocab first, then how to structure the words, the logic behind the structure, and then attitudes.

Kyle reasons a chronological order of form and content. He assumes that we learn language in a progressive order and then applies that assumption to the sentence; as such, it ignores Klass's verb choice of "absorb." In this way, it is arhetorical reasoning. In order to deepen the understanding of how Klass used form to help her ideas, I highlighted the sentence structure (a "not only/but also" sentence). With explicit attention to structure, two students shared rhetorical reasoning about the arrangement,

> **Nick:** Vocabulary. …because she says not only vocabulary since it's the most obvious.
>
> **AJ**: She's trying to point out the last, these are the last three things that we forget about.

Both Nick and AJ—although they come from opposing beliefs about what is the "most important" in the sentence—reveal that Klass's structure positions ideas in relationship to one another. To push on this reasoning and to show that both Nick and AJ highlight the same meaning, with a different emphasis, I pointed out Klass's verb "absorb." Essentially, I noted here that Klass's components relate to each other because of how we "absorb" them—they progress from concrete to abstract aspects about language. After a six-minute long and teacher-led discussion about this sentence, students were ready for my question about it.

> **Me:** What's the most important abstract that Klass is trying to get us to think about?
>
> **Multiple voices:** [in unison] Attitudes.
>
> **Me:** Yea. And the reason why that's the case is because it's the last thing in the sentence. It's called end focus and it's a way a writer can point to the most important aspect to what they are writing about. So, attitudes is what we are going to be writing about today and also talking about in relation to the essays.

My teacher-ly point when concluding this discussion about Klass and end focus on our first day was not this sentence's "final word." We returned to this sentence in our last unit, with a different aim and with a different discussion entirely. My sentence of the day teaching in this unit continued in this teacher-led manner, and several students participated and engaged one another when they responded to my questions to them about sentences. Despite student engagement, I was surprised to discover how many writers expressed *arhetorical* reasoning when selecting their own sentences for our first workshop.

In general, there was no explicit connection between what was said and how it was said. In fact, thirteen students wrote that they chose their sentence because it was either the "main point" or "main idea" in their paper. In this way, each sentence they chose was expressed as representative of a larger idea and was chosen because of that relationship. This is an arhetorical understanding of their sentence in relation to the workshop. No sentence was chosen because it was "risky" and the writer wanted to assess the risks. No writer expressed that they wanted to clarify their meaning in their sentence by discussing it with the workshop, or that their sentence didn't sound right to them or didn't yet express what they wanted it to. No writer chose a sentence that they thought would help them continue to think and write about their topic. Also, no writer chose a sentence to discuss in terms of its grammatical arrangement. Instead, reasons for why sentences were chosen were *arhetorical* reasons.

De'Shawn is the exception to the class-wide arhetorical responses. When it came time to share his sentence, he varied his voice when expressing a difference in phone greetings.

> **De'Shawn:** Good evening, this is De' Shawn, may I ask who's calling? But when I answer my cell phone I may often howl, *Yero*! People call my cell phone like friends or something a variation of *yo* or *yoo* or *youu*.
>
> Lots of laughter from the workshop.

De'Shawn's oral performance, in this way, recognizes the rhetorical relationship between form, content, and context. In his SPARK reflective post, he writes that he chose this sentence because it "really illustrates the difference between [his] speech, not through face to face conversation but through a phone greeting." Since De'Shawn chose a sentence that "illustrates" his differences in speech, he was using rhetorical reasoning before our first workshop. The workshop provided a space for De'Shawn to perform these rhetorical differences, just as his performance also characterized the nature of our first workshop: lively, engaging; and yet more *presentational* than *workshop-y* for sentence writing and critical thinking.

Our First Sentence Workshop

In our first workshop, we workshopped ten sentences, each of these workshops had a content-focus. I wrote in my teacher journal, post-workshop, that it seemed to me to be "a space for them to talk to each other about what they were pursuing more than it helped them do sentence-level work." After reviewing the transcript from the workshop, there were six discussions concerning *form* and they were all lexical in nature, two of these discussions involved a "saying back" of a writer's syntax, or exact wording, and then asking what the writer meant by its use. This was the nature of the discussion concerning form in our first sentence workshop; it was *arhetorical*.

Saybacks of form & questions about content.

Writers shared their sentences, explained their purposes, and then the workshop asked questions about the writers' content. Sometimes these questions were requests for

more information from the writers about their meaning--as if writer intent is enough for an audience to understand or fix any problems in sentence choices. No grammatical options from peers emerge from the transcripts. No convention choices were considered. In general, there were no suggestions about possible changes to a sentence's form from students. Instead, writers took the first sentence workshop as an opportunity to share their ideas and to answer questions from the class about their approach to the assignment. The excerpt below evidences the disconnect between my own theorizing about the relationship between form and content and the class's beginning understanding of how form relates to a writer's rhetorical, and ideological, perspective.

It is Tejada's turn, the second person in the class to workshop her sentence in our first unit. Tejada speaks and writes both Spanish and English. Prior to Tejada, I had been a quiet listener in this first workshop, during which the class had expressed agreement with the writer content, more or less the main idea of an essay. I listened as one person told the writer that his sentence made sense since "a picture is worth a 1000 words." That was said, a few people agreed, and workshop was over. Tejada's turn, she writes her sentence on the board the same way I have provided it from the transcript.

> **Tejada:** My sentence is 'Language is more than just a means of communication it is also a part of one's identity, the key to the preservation of a culture and played a significant role in the history and development of various countries.' Um, I chose these two sentences because they pretty much sum up what my essay is about. And in my essay, what I'm trying to express is, that language is way more than just communication between individuals. It is also part of someone's identity, um, because through language you can learn more about your culture, which is what one identifies oneself. Yea, I just think that that pretty much sums up what I have to say.

There was a pause. I wondered how her peers would understand this sentence, which Tejada had referred to as two sentences—an indication, perhaps, of how distant form is to

this workshop. Tejada had packaged a lot in one sentence: she was expressing that language is important—that it's *more* than communication. I was determined that I wouldn't say anything during the sentence workshops because I needed to maintain a clear boundary between the sentence of the day teaching and the sentence workshops. I wanted to learn as much as possible about what was taken up and what was not by my students. When her workshop started, I was glad I had made my rule. I didn't need to highlight an aspect of her form and ask her a question or pose a choice; instead, I could sit back and listen to how my class would respond. Through a sayback of her forms, Nick asks her about her paper, "How do you explain that language develops, or that language, and the history of the development of various countries are connected?" Tejada's long response to his question was to explain her paper in detail. But I am still confused. I didn't quite understand how her response relates to her sentence and the choices she was making. I want to encourage her to think more about how she wrote her sentence, particularly the fact that she had chosen a sentence that had a series arrangement.

> **Me:** Ok, I'm going to say something. [laughs] I think Nick, and if you don't want to say the word that's fine, he's getting at end focus in your sentence, I think. So he's just saying…I think maybe he was asking you what you found to be the most important of the parts of your sentence.
>
> **Tejada:** Oh.
>
> **Me:** And if it's identity, you might think of rearranging it differently.
>
> **Tejada:** Yea
>
> **Me:** I mean that was good, I liked the lecture. [Tejada laughs] It was good and we can keep going however it is, but that might help in just the way we are talking about the sentence and if you are trying to get a writer thinking about where they are placing emphasis, you might think of it that way….I don't know Nick if that's what you are after…but…

> **Nick:** I kind of was. At first, I didn't really connect the language to the development of various countries. But I understand it now.

I broke my rule because I realized how important it was that I facilitate the discussion to focus on the formal aspects of the sentence. I realized that while my "rule" had good intentions—I wanted to allow the writers to make their own discoveries—at the same time, remaining silent also prohibited the students from knowing the real purposes and goals of the workshop. The workshop continued in this manner, and very few writers revised their sentence or essay post-workshop. However, one writer did. This writer's (Carol's) sentence was the last one workshopped. Its story demonstrates two things: first, that the students, with my pushing, were getting more experience sharing critical perspectives grounded by the sentence; and second, that these workshops could function as a rhetorical and experiential basis for writers to realize that micro choices matter.

Forked Road 1: Carol's choice to write "fortunately" or "luckily."

We still have twenty minutes of class left, and it is Carol's turn to head to the dry erase board. Carol, fluent in both Mandarin and Cantonese, shares this sentence, "In my hometown, women had to have dinner after all the man in family finished eating. Fortunately, my grandpa allowed me to sit beside him when having dinner." The sentence prompts questions to Carol about cultural differences and traditions. I felt a little anxious during this back and forth because it seems off topic, and a little too centered on Carol's cultural differences. At the same time, she maintains her poise, gives great answers, and encourages the discussion. For example, when a workshop member wants to know if the tradition also included her mother waiting for dinner, Carol responds,

> **Carol:** Yea, because my mother is from [Chinese village] another part of China, but it's the old rule in our village. So my grandma and my aunts were following that rule so they had to sit or eat after all of us were finished eating.

Sherlyn, who has lived in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the U.S. and is likely more familiar with the context, poses an insightful question that reveals to the entire workshop Carol's position in relation to her subject.

> **Sherlyn:** So they don't force your mom to get into your culture, so it was ok for your mom. How did you feel when you first found out that, it's in your town and not other places?
>
> **Carol:** Disgusting.
>
> **A voice:** Really?
>
> **Carol:** Sometimes, um…
>
> **Me:** Did you say disgusting?
>
> **Carol:** Yes. Sometimes, um, my grandmother and my aunts were not allowed to receive some higher educations, yea. So, it's totally unfair to the women and the men in there.

The workshop asks a few more questions regarding if Carol will follow these rules when she goes back and if she plans on returning to her village. I stop the questions when I jump in and ask Carol about her choice of "fortunately" in her sentence.

> **Me:** You might think about fortunately.
>
> **Carol:** I was thinking it must be changed.
>
> **Me:** It not, no, I'm not saying it must be changed or not. I'm saying that when you answered disg—like that that made you feel bad that there was these…that it worked out for you but it was a part of this tradition that makes you feel bad, that makes you feel disgusting. When you write fortunately, that…that goes against that. So, what…what could Carol do?

Carol may have understood that she should change "fortunately" already, but at the same time, my quick response shows that I was concerned that she may have misinterpreted why I wanted her to reconsider "fortunately"—the suggestion came out not because I was her teacher and she was "wrong"; instead, it had everything to do with helping Carol

infuse her perspective about this tradition into her sentence. The interaction also represents my genuine interest in trying to construct the micro as choices rather than rules.

> **De'Shawn:** Fortunately for me? [continues, after I pushed him for more information] Well, if she says that it's fortunate for her. It's not necessarily for other people or other women that she knows.
>
> **Dom:** You could say like, luckily? [continues, after I push him for more explanation and people say they agree with his suggestion]. …like I don't, it's kind of like an abstract thing. Where it's not…I don't really know how to explain it.
>
> **Someone**: They are really synonyms, they both relate to luck.

De'Shawn, Dom, and another voice provide arhetorical and critical reasoning for Carol to consider. Arhetorical reasoning views the relationship between fortune and luck as synonymous, and synonyms are not worth thinking about in terms of their semantic difference unless they are made distinguishable. De'Shawn, on the other hand, is critical in his reasoning about Carol's forms because he encourages Carol to highlight the absence of the other person who is not as "fortunate." He also wants Carol to write that relationship in her sentence by lengthening the phrase "fortunately for me, unfortunately for them." Dom provides some rhetorical reasoning, though it was difficult for him to express fully. Thankfully, De'Shawn helps him out.

> **De'Shawn:** [with my pushing to think about difference]…I'll give it a shot…Luck is something that you really don't have control over, it's sort of like fate. It plays more on fate. But like good fortune is kind of inherited maybe. I don't know, just taking a shot.

At this point, there is a distinction between these words, and I choose to make it clearer for Carol, who I assumed has been listening to us carefully.

> **Me:** But if you are fortunate there's something about an inheritance of something or you have a blessing. Or, you have something like that. You are fortunate. Fortune. You have a fortune. Versus like you had good luck. Luckily, you. [Then, to Chris who had a laptop] Is there a difference there that gets at that?
>
> **Chris:** Um, yea. I just looked it up. Lucky and uh fortunate are synonyms for each other, uh but fortunate would mean having a good fortune receiving good from uncertain or unexpected sources; um bringing or indicating good fortune resulting favorably; auspicious. And lucky was having remarked by good luck, fortune.
>
> [Everyone laughs.]

Carol, in her final draft, changes her essay. She chooses to replace "fortunately" with "luckily," and in another part of her essay that she did not share with the workshop, she replaces "luckily" with "fortunately." She also incorporates "disgusting" into her essay, to modify "old rules." My question to the workshop prompted a collaborative discussion of the differences between "fortunately" and "luckily," a discussion that may have been a catalyst for her deeper consideration and might have also been a reason why she flipped these two "synonyms." "Fortunately" now appears in a section that discusses social change involving gender roles and carries with it a "fortunate" sense that times are changing in China, just as gender roles changed in the curricular reading she was drawing on, Edwidge Danticat's "Women like Us." She ends her essay with the statement "And I always believe one thing: Tomorrow will be better." While her choice in flipping these two words may seem too synonymous in terms of their semantic connotations to an audience outside of our class, her sense of these words is different. Carol writes in her end of semester reflection that she learned in the first unit how "even a word in a sentence may show the author's attitude…[s]o we must pay attention on the word's choosing." She provides further reasoning for her choice of taking out "fortunately," when she writes, "having a chance to sit with them and having a meal can't be seen as

fortune…[since] I don't like the rule." Although both luckily and fortunately have positive connotations, Carol is working out their distinctions in regard to how she relates to these attitudes about gendered experiences. Her choice of "luckily" in the context of our class becomes *critical* because she flips two lexical forms that help distance herself from a custom that she viewed as "disgusting." Part of this choice has involved Carol's consideration of the effect it had on her own identity as a woman that could choose to view this custom as either "fortune" or "luck." That is, the reason why this is critical rather than rhetorical reasoning for Carol's ethos has to do with the ideological content of her sentence and how her original lexical choice actually went against her identification as a woman who did not identify with the custom. Carol drew on her workshop experience, reflected more on her attitude toward this social custom, and then made a choice, on her own, to infuse her attitude regarding that custom in her essay. Her original forms did *not* produce this meaning for her or her audience at first, a finding that also indicates the often unrecognized—and, in some ways, unconscious—ideological relationship between lexical form and a writer's attitude.

Unit Two

Sentence of the Day Teaching

In our second unit, students began to pay more attention to form in sentence writing. At the same time, as students increased their attention to form, they did so without articulating how form differences affected a writer's content, and so, their reasoning about form remained, for the most part, arhetorical. And, in this way, the stories I tell of this unit correspond nicely to those of unit one, including how, despite the

predominant arhetorical reasoning about form and content in the workshop, they were also becoming a social learning community within which micro perspectives were offered, suggested, and in Tejada's case, in a post-workshop reflection, negotiated.

In my sentence of the day teaching, I stressed the notion of choice in unit two by highlighting the ones writers were making. I provided a range of choices that were conventional, lexical, and grammatical, such as sentences with passive rather than active voice, notions of sentence and phrasal boundaries via punctuation, and the aspects of meaning in verbal phrases. For example, a David Wallace sentence I presented read, "In the *Order of Discourse,* French literary theorist Michel Foucault argues that we do not speak as much as we are spoken by the discourses in which we participate*"* (46). We discussed how Wallace's lexical choice of "argues" is an example of how Wallace represents Foucault's claim. Students generated other options as well such as "points out" and "illustrates" and we discussed these options in terms of their difference to each other, rather than approaching them as synonymous.

I also introduced some SFL grammar, (i.e. the verb processes and the modal system) during this unit. For example, Maxine Hong Kingston's sentence "We American-Chinese girls had to whisper to make ourselves American-Feminine" focused on the verbal phrase "had to whisper to make." My first question was asking what the verbal phrase was; their first response was "whisper." I pushed them to make "had" and "to make" a part of it as well. We talked about the meaning-making options of this verbal phrase, such as Kingston's reasons for using the modal "had to whisper" and the infinitive "to make." De'Shawn responded that "had to whisper to make" means "forced." The modal sense of "had" is the form that helped De'Shawn with his

interpretation. I wanted them to map "to make" onto the other systemic possibilities concerning process verbs.

> **Me**: …[T]he fact that it's "make" and not something else. …Hong Kingston chose a material process, what does that do? If you think about all these other ways that she could have chosen from different verbs that get at different kinds of relationship to people and to herself. What does "make" do? What does it make you think about?

Students responded it wasn't a choice. This response is interesting because it shows the complexity of this idea by investigating the verbal phrase. The "had to" carries with it the sense that Hong Kingston is suggesting that a choice was not made, but at the same time the concept of "to make" suggests conscious action.

In addition to scaffolding some SFL grammar, I also focused my teaching on choices concerning sentence boundaries. I selected a sentence from Shirley Brice Heath's *Ways With Words* to think together about why Heath might have been including the information she did. The students had read an excerpt from Heath's ethnographic account of the Trackton community, and we focused on her sentence, "A postcard from a local mill announcing days which the mill will be accepting new employment applications will not be shared aloud but kept secret because of the competition for jobs" (61). All parts of this sentence reflect and reinstate the literacy context of Trackton, one subject for Heath's ethnographic approach to literacy practices in the Carolinas. Since the focus of unit two in our curriculum was context, my first question asked them about context in the sentence—about which parts of the sentence relate to Trackton—and was answered with silence. I followed the content question by asking a form only question—what is the "skeleton" of the sentence? How can we make this sentence as short as possible? The sentence they came up with was "A postcard will not be shared aloud." Once we had this

“root” sentence, we discussed how Heath constructed the economic context surrounding the literacy practice of the postcard. The discussion included their consideration of the difference between a postcard that is not “shared aloud” and the postcard that is “not shared aloud but kept secret.”

I had hoped that the unit’s focus on identity and literacy, as well as our daily sentence work, would translate to selection of sentences reflecting a variety of discourses and even language varieties. However, my analysis from the SPARK reflective posts found that instead, students approached the workshop with a focus on content, rather than form, for their sentence selection. Only Sonya and Taquana provide reasoning for sentence selection that reveals a slight rhetorical awareness to form’s relationship to content. Sonya writes that she hopes her “sentence can become stronger” and Taquana chooses her two sentences because “they have a lot of hidden meaning.” If Sonya thinks her “sentence can become stronger,” then she understands that sentences and their forms can be more or less effective and that there isn’t just one way to write ideas—a productive recognition that her sentence can be manipulated and developed in the workshop. Similarly, Taquana’s “hidden meaning” refers to her content that form can reveal or not to her audience.

Also, the experience of our first workshop, really more presentation than workshop, likely produced recognition of a passive workshop *audience*. A passive audience is in contrast to an active audience. Rather than conceptualizing audience as generative in helping writers shape, generate, and develop ideas, audience in the examples below is a passive medium that receives information only. In the SPARK reflective posts that follow, students had a passive understanding of audience.

Passive understanding of audience (emphasis mine).

- I chose this sentence because it is my introductory sentence and it *tells* the reader what the rest of the paper is going to be on. I hope that everyone *understands* what I am trying to get across in the writing and how I view silence as the social norm, not talking. (**Jessica**)

- I chose this sentence, because I feel that it sums up the essay. I hope that *my audience would agree* with my purpose, mentioned in question two. Also, I hope *they can relate* to my essay and share personal experiences. (**AJ**)

- I choose this sentence to show the moment of me being in the situation of having to face my fear, and how it had a great impact on me. I hope that by sharing my own experience, it *would help the class to understand* how different people learn languages in different ways. (**Sherlyn**)

- I chose the aforementioned sentence because it gives a preview as to what my essay is about. I hope that during the workshop, *people enjoy the sentence* that I have chosen (**Kyle**)

—Responses include "What do you hope happens in the workshop today?"

These examples assume that an audience relationship to form or sentence choices is something that audiences will "enjoy" or "agree" or "understand."

Our Second Sentence Workshop

We workshopped eleven sentences in the second workshop sessions; five of these workshops remained content focused, during which the workshop discussion was focused on the writer's ideas rather than form's choices and how they impacted ideas. However, the discussions primarily highlighted an aspect of form to the writer, often still involving a lexical choice or saying back an awkward syntax or wording. One workshop addressed sentence length, two workshops asked about conventional options, and another concerned arrangement and placement of the word "sometimes." This increased attention to form helped the workshops achieve more clarity about a writer's ideas, despite no students

reasoning on their own how these choices of form affected a writer's meaning. So while more attention to form occurred in our second workshop, this attention to form was primarily arhetorical. Next, I briefly show some "key" moments of reasoning in the workshops, since because these three workshops reveal how students began to bring rhetorical and critical awareness to the ways in which form shapes a writer's meaning.

Highlighting of form.

In our first workshop, if a form was considered, it was only because I prompted it, since most writers led a discussion or answered questions about their content. In the second sentence workshop, though, students begin to understand my interest in form and attempted to address it. Unlike the first workshop where students talked primarily about content in the absence of form, in this workshop, they focus more on form *and* remove it from a writer's content. Dom's workshop shows this feature; in fact, it is our first example of a sentence about which the workshop points out a grammatical option, in this case, arrangement. Dom is a monolingual English speaker and has gone to several schools along the East Coast. He begins his workshop, our sixth workshop of the day,

> **Dom**: So my quote is, 'Speaking is sometimes not an option.' And it kind of sums up my essay because in my essay I showed... how through my own experiences that... sometimes speaking, and I did this through, the examples were: Freshman year in high school when I went to a Spanish class and I had no idea what was going on so I really couldn't speak as much as I wanted to. I couldn't. And then my other example was when I went over to Germany with a soccer team … […] you couldn't interact with anyone because you had no idea like what to say. So, I mean, I *wanted* to say stuff but you just couldn't. So I just wrote about that and how speaking sometimes is just not an option.
>
> **Taquana**: If you put the 'sometimes' before the 'speaking' would it like change your meaning of your sentence or is that an option for you?

The conversation here produces no rhetorical or critical reasoning to help Dom consider a different arrangement and the ideological effects of his current arrangement. We discuss

the "difference" in meaning and there is some disagreement about what the movement of "sometimes" would do for Dom's sentence. Dom responds first with arhetorical reasoning, "I think it would have the same meaning." One student says that the proximity of "sometimes" and "speaking" provides an "alliteration." Another student says that where he has "sometimes" makes the sentence "stronger." However, rather than a comment about his sentence being more "effective" leading to rhetorical reasoning about form and content, the comment maintains "sometimes" as a stylistic consideration of "what sounded better" or "seemed stronger." The reasoning in this way remains arhetorical, because no one in this workshop provides a rhetorical or critical reason for Dom to think differently about his sentence form and how it affects his content.[1]

The next workshop writer is Sonya. Sonya is mostly a monolingual English speaker, but likely knew some Arabic, as she chose in both her first and second essays to write about her relationship to her Lebanese grandmother, a later in life immigrant to the U.S. Sonya wrote about her grandmother's refusal to speak English in unit one, and she wrote about her grandmother's death in unit two because she wanted to continue her "theme." She initiates her workshop with a rhetorical awareness to her lexical choice.

> **Sonya:** "Since I wasn't thinking my thoughts I just put them down in my journal, it seemed easier that way." I chose this sentence because I feel like it summed up what my essay was about. And my essay was about after…I was really close to my grandmother and…after she passed away…I became quieter. Not silent, but just quieter. And I wouldn't talk as much at home or I wouldn't talk as much at school. And then I decided to journal and actually wrote down all my thoughts in there. And at first, in my essay, I called it my diary but I feel like diary is like a little girl thing. I was like fourteen, but still…I like the word journal better.

Sonya distinguishes between her two connotations of the words "journal" and "diary," sharing with us that she prefers journal to diary because a diary is "like a little girl thing." When she refers to a diary as a "little girl thing," she briefly acknowledges the gendered

connotation of diary in relation to journal, but does not explore more broadly the implications or effects of that choice. Her reasoning is rhetorical because she contrasts the difference between these two terms in regard to how they position her as a certain kind of writer who writes in either a journal or a diary. This reveals how her rhetorical reasoning is tied up in her own ethos as well as how that ethos relates to her class audience. In fact, Sonya's rhetorical reasoning in relation to Carol's critical reasoning in our first unit diverge into these categories because while Carol prompted the collaborative discussion of the difference between luck and privilege and further looked into the distinction introspectively and also through a dictionary, Sonya does not. While Carol furthermore had a conversation involving the effects of such a custom, such as feeling "disgusting" and hoping that the future for women in this village changes, Sonya does not. She recognizes the difference between journal and diary, but does not expand on that difference or engage it in terms of its effect on her ethos. In contrast, Tejada's following workshop sentence, taken up in her end of semester sentence reflection, reveals critical reasoning about her own ethos.

Forked Road 2: Tejada, Parentheses, and Whispering

Tejada's sentence chosen for workshop, she writes in her SPARK reflective post "is very important," offers something to her classmates about how the topic affects "many people's choices to speak or remain silent." Her reasoning about her form is arhetorical, as she does not address it at all in her reasoning. It is only content. She wrote the sentence below on the dry erase board.

> ...I, (as part of a minority group) have witnessed and experienced how a single word or action on the part of those who are not categorized within the dominant

culture, has contributed to the growth of stereotypical racial views as well as the choices of expression among those who are victimized by prejudice ideologies.

The first thing she said after she wrote this sentence down was "yea I know it's long. It has a lot of stuff." While she acknowledges her form here, she also reveals more arhetorical reasoning since she is not making a claim that the sentence is long because it is complicated, or because it's performing a tangled sense of relationship (which it does); instead, it's "just" long because "it has a lot of stuff," e.g., form is a container for content. She begins her workshop with a summary of her paper. After she sums up her purpose, she ends with how she can relate to it "as a minority." She continues,

> **Tejada**: I chose it because my essay is about things that influence us and our choices on whether to express ourselves or, you know, remain silent. And this sentence is really referring to the... the quote that I said earlier…in earlier classes about Wallace in which he says that, you know, things that are said...basically society…who...those people who are not part of the dominant culture are basically-- it's hard for them to express themselves. In some cases when they do they're rendered invisible. You know? Not heard. Not understood. And I can actually relate to this because I am a minority group and if we... whether we want to accept it or not, race is extremely influential in today's society and there have been instances in which I have been kind of... you know... scared of expressing myself. Because-- for example... I... I tend to sometimes speak in a loud voice, sometimes. And this gives other people an impression of Hispanic people as being loud. And stuff like that. I also refer to the Kanye West thing at the VMA's [suppressed laughter] where his act, which was-- he was very rude and everything, but because of what he did, and I have encountered many people on campus... students.. who have told me that black people are insensitive and-- or... rude actually. So this is an example of how, you know, one action or a single word can contribute to this view. And how these prejudice ideologies kind of, you know, affect our decision on whether to remain silent or speak and express ourselves.

I map Tejada's use of "kind ofs" and "you knows" in this transcript excerpt onto the use of parentheses in her sentence. Her various pauses and shifts of tone reveal a rhetorical context that Tejada was still formalizing, both in her paper as well as her relationship to her peers. Her words reveal her strong conviction, and yet, the presence of hedging above

illustrates her awareness that she might be speaking to an audience who likely needs to be convinced of the reality behind her words. This relationship to audience is formed in her use of parentheses in her sentence. And, it comes through in her description of her paper's purpose.

When AJ asks her to explain again how stereotypes affect speaking or silence after she introduces her paper, note the audience cues in this excerpt. She continues,

> **Tejada**: Oh, well. Like I said it's like... The way you feel... I'm sorry. I'm sorry... I believe it relates to that because I, myself, have been in situations in which things that I've said or things that I do have actually contributed to my entire race as a whole. Some people are kind of, I don't know, I'm just saying there are just some people who take your actions... This is just directed towards people who are a part of minority groups, obviously, who are permanently affected by this but... I just feel like there are situations in which one is presented with... pretty much anything you say or anything you do is actually, you know, judged and how that [AJ: So...] fear of being judged [AJ: So...] kind of affects how you express yourself.

Tejada's sense of relationship here becomes more defined. She tells AJ that her sentence is pretty much "just directed towards people who are a part of minority groups." Such an audience, however, is not invoked in her choice to place her minority group membership in parentheses.

As her workshop was heading toward a close, I felt like I had to say something about the parentheses or the length, something to help Tejada perform a direct sense of her insight. I want to connect form and content together, as well as to prompt Tejada to consider more critically what her parentheses could mean for her relationship to her audience. My focus when encouraging her to both shorten and expand her sentence is revealed in my question to her. I asked, "Do you want help making this sentence more—do you like it…was it just the idea?" I wanted to encourage her critical thinking rather than discourage it by focusing too much on a given part. At the same time, the sentence

was long, and I had a hard time keeping in mind the various relationships. Tejada responds, in a polite, albeit uncritical manner, "If anyone has any suggestions I will gladly take them." She gets a response from AJ, who tells her "Maybe make two sentences out of that." She jokes with him, "Two? And that still wouldn't be too long? Oh I know I tend to do that." At that point, Sonya speaks up with an immediate suggestion.

> **Sonya**: As a part of a minority group, in parenthesis, maybe you could just start with that. Then you could do a comma, I and then you could…
>
> **Me**: Yeah, you're parenthesis 'as part of a minority group' is kind of interesting for what you're saying.
>
> **Taquana**: Yea.
>
> **Tejada**: Okay…Any other…
>
> **Me**: Don't you think? I mean…
>
> **Sonya**: Yeah, no no.. Because I think that is a big part of the sentence..
>
> **Me**: Yeah, and yet it's in parenthesis which is like I'm being kind of... [whispering] *I'm whispering*
>
> **Sonya**: Yeah...

After this exchange, Tejada thanks us all and says that she will take it "under consideration." She reflects on this sentence and what she learned from the workshop in her end of semester reflections. She writes,

> In the sentence workshop for Unit 2, I used an elongated sentence "...I, (as part of a minority group) have witnessed and experienced how a single word or action on the part of those who are not categorized within the dominant culture, has contributed to the growth of stereotypical racial views and also limits the choices of expression among those who are victimized by prejudice ideologies.". In this sentence I discuss the manner in which social hierarchy affects the "growth of stereotypical racial views" and how it limits "the choices of expression" of those who are "victimized" by it. Within this sentence, I noticed that I wrote "as part of a minority group" within a parenthesis, which seems as if I am refusing to express

> it completely or almost whispering it. In a way, I also begin to think about how society affects me instead of writing about it in a more general form. I also described the sentence as one of crucial importance throughout my essay and directly associate the "growth of stereotypical racial views" as affecting the choices people make on whether to speak or remain silent. Now that I think about it, I believe that in a way, I am expressing a form of silence by enclosing the fact that I am a minority within parenthesis.

While it is interesting to me that Tejada does not mention the sentence workshop explicitly here as the context that brought her attention to this conventional choice, she does use critical reasoning in relation to this conventional option. Her consideration occurred in a collaborative context regarding the effects of her conventional option. Her choice illustrates how she also chose to make her position in the sentence more direct and open in her relationship to audience, since she no longer chose parentheses to package that relationship. Finally, she reflects that this choice, "[n]ow that I think about it," was "expressing a form of silence." Applying Tejada's reasoning behind this choice suggests to me that her micro consideration of how she relates to her social identity vis-à-vis the parentheses is one that helped her strengthen her voice and speak from a position of relationship. This is critical reasoning because Tejada becomes aware of how her initial ethos—and her initial representation of that ethos in parentheses—implicates her in a manner that she ultimately does not wish to choose, silence. Tejada, like Carol in unit one, recognizes the effects of the relationship between form and content and chooses a different form—a different way of negotiating—that content.

Unit Three

Sentence of the Day Teaching

Student understanding of the micro and the macro increased significantly in unit three. Another difference between this unit and our previous ones is that their discussions

in the sentence workshops were rhetorical. However, the nature of this workshop is not rhetorical in terms of a dominant reasoning about form being rhetorical; instead it became a rhetorical situation. They took the workshop up as an opportunity to discuss with each other the curricular reading about privilege and racism, grounded by the sentence. They challenged each other in a manner that engaged how a writer's form choice was caught up in a writer's purpose, but this purpose was always in the context of a unit that engaged the relationship between language, knowledge, and power. Furthermore, their discussion shows how important the class as audience was to how they formulated and valued their own ideas. Moreover, because the relationship of form to content shared a curricular context, students discussed form in ways that I think helped them realize attitudes of and responses to our curriculum. Students were introduced to a vocabulary of terminology, lexical choices that they were asked to define in exploratory writings, and likely this experience of encountering a new lexis may be one reason why so much of our discussion in this unit involved both generative *and* critical thinking about the micro and macro. Essentially, students were trying out ideas and asking for feedback. While rhetorical reasoning about form occurred, the rhetorical situation of the workshop became a context that provided them a space to explore and engage with their audience about their sentence content. The stories I tell of this unit depart—and justifiably so—from the first two units, as my write up here is afforded by my student discourse about sentences, in which sentences and their discussion are responses to various contexts—including our own classroom context—about race and education.

Our first sentences in unit three sentence of the day teaching came from Gloria Anzaldúa's "How to Tame a Wild Tongue." In the excerpt from *Borderlands* that

students read, she uses varieties of Spanish and English to reveal how languages affect identity. Anzaldúa's sentence was our first for the unit. I chose it to serve as an example of how a writer used both English and Spanish to get them thinking about how she uses resources of grammar to *perform* a perspective on colonization. That is, I wanted to show them that such purpose could not only be expressed or argued, but also *performed* through a sentence's structure as well as lexical choices. She writes, "*El Anglo con cara de inocente nos arrancó la lengua.* Wild tongues can't be tamed, they can only be cut out." After we acknowledged that one sentence was in Spanish and the other in English, I asked about the translation differences in these sentences. We first went word for word in the sentence.

> **Me**: Anglo. Never heard that word? Tejada, what does that word mean?
>
> **Tejada**: Um, They use it to refer to just people, basically.
>
> **Me**: Ok, people of color?
>
> **Tejada**: Um, yea. Actually, it depends. You know how like they use to like, like Anglo Saxon people, that's what they are trying to say.
>
> **Me:** Oh, so old white people?
>
> **Tejada:** Yea.

Tejada, as evidenced in her unit two sentence history with the parentheses, was aware of race; however, her initial answer to my question "what does Anglo mean" is interesting as it reveals how white people were "just people" in the initial response to the question. The "race" of the Anglo was something I made explicit. I did so because I wanted to focus on relationships between race and language—the lexical choice Anglo is very important in the Spanish sentence, both because of its social meaning *and* its grammatical function. We then go back to our word-by-word translation.

Tejada: [Interrupts] *con cara de inocente*…is like with an innocent face *nos arrancó la lengua*…basically like he snatched her tongue…that's what it says.

Me: Ok, so the Anglo snatched her tongue? That's what the Spanish says.

Tejada: [agrees]

Me: So, the next sentence is "wild tongues can't be tamed, they can only be cut out." What's the relationship between those two ideas? So, would you say it's in the same, like, meaning space?

Tejada: [Shakes head no.]

Me: Ok**,** why? What does it make you think about?

Nick: Who. Who cut her tongue out.

Nick's response reveals the power of this sentence, since it is the Anglo who becomes connected to the reality of the English sentence of "wild tongues" being "cut out."

In this way, my sentence selection in unit three maintained students' content-centered reasoning for sentence selection before workshops.

Generative and rhetorical, content-focused notions prior to Workshop (emphasis mine)

- I choose this sentence because it is the main idea in my whole essay. Language and racism affect the way people have power to name. I hope I can see how others think about this essay topic. (**Pik**)
- I chose this sentence because it pretty much sums up my entire essay in one sentence, it conveys the growth in my thought process from elementary school to now. And I hope that after workshopping this sentence people will understand the difference as well. (**De'Shawn**)
- It's the concept that you have to lose apart of your culture, yourself, your voice just to be accepted as an American. I used this sentence to show the risks that people take to be accepted in society. I chose this sentence to because it outlines what my paper is about. (**Taquana**)
- I chose this sentence because before this sentence I show one of experience about group and *I use this sentence to connect my experience to general idea*. I still struggle with what should I put in the essay. So, *I hope everyone gives me some idea or shape what I want to say in my essay* (**Cecilia**)

In these examples, these students are focusing on a discussion of choices within a given sentence; their aim is more to discuss content/ideas of their overall paper and that unit. That is, they choose sentences for their peers to discuss in the workshop. These excerpts reveal how the curricular context impacts their sentence selection, as writers are "hoping" their sentences will help them "see how others think" and that "people will understand," just as their selection is "used" to "show the risks" and to provide a "connection." Taquana writes about her sentence selection more in terms of her own paper's idea, but also writes about how she "uses" it for the purpose of affecting her class audience since its purpose is to "show the risks." In this way, Taquana's reasoning is critical in terms of its content since she chooses a sentence that she intends to "instruct" her audience with regarding the effects of this discourse, and is also responding to the unit three curriculum which encouraged all students to "make the invisible visible." In other words, her sentence selection performs a curricular goal of the unit. All of these posts, however, reveal that prior to the workshop, students were expecting and ready for a rhetorical discussion with their class audience about their own understanding of, and relationship to, curricular *ideas*.

Our third workshop was being constructed as a rhetorical situation for my students, further evidenced by what Sherlyn writes before that workshop.

> I choose this sentence because it represents the idea I wanted to express throughout the essay. I hope the sentence will give connection between the class and me, but I do not feel comfortable sharing how racist I can become when talking about my negative feelings towards Hongkonese. I wanted to make connection between my sentence and Wildman and Davis' sentence, "We all live in this raced and gendered world, inside these powerful categories, that make it hard to see each other as whole people" (Wildman and Davis 139). It is hard for me to judge the Hongkonese fairly because of my own personal experiences; therefore, I see them with my opinions and stereotypes.

Sherlyn's reasoning is complicated, but primarily rhetorical because it is based on how she understands the workshop as a place where writer's ideas about the unit are discussed and debated, and where a writer's ethos and relationship to their peers also matter. Her discomfort with sharing how "racist I can become" ultimately means that she did not share her sentence. Sherlyn's sentence that she did not share for workshop was the following:

> No one had ever told me how Hong Kong people can be very racist, but after so many experiences with the changing in attitudes, I started to believe how most people in Hong Kong are like that.

This sentence and its "content" reveals that there was a tension between what students had been taught to believe about prejudice and race and how they were beginning to question it and acknowledge their own positioning in such discourse.

Our Third Sentence Workshop

We workshopped seven sentences in our third workshop, all of the sentences were in response to the curricular unit and discourse about racism and privilege. In this way, we were in conversation with a greater sense of the "macro" than in previous units. For example, the first three sentences workshopped addressed how a writer chose to word a concept from the unit, and so involved lexical choices. Sentences workshopped involved prolonged discussion about grammatical choices, specifically, concerning the use of hedging (3), the modal system (2), juxtaposition (2), and grammatical arrangement (2), all of which revealed writers' individual relationships to our curriculum. Their discussions were so form-focused that it was hard to quantify these discussions as most sentences workshopped involved several kinds of choices. For example, Nick's workshop

was not focused specifically on the lexical or grammatical—it was both. All of the workshops were fascinating because of how students were speaking to each other about complicated ideas in specific ways, and applying them to sentence writing. In all cases, students were interested in discussing and complicating curricular ideas in their conversations. In order to show the nature of this discussion, I've chosen to tell the first and last sentence workshop of unit three. Nick's workshop set up the collaborative, rhetorical nature and results in critical choice making.

Forked Road 3: Critical Reasoning & Nick's Critical Choice-making

Nick was quite literally the leader of our class *and* the workshops; he was always the first volunteer. He is a monolingual white English speaker from Martha's Vineyard and is currently pursuing a degree in Education. Rather than sharing a sentence and waiting for a question, Nick asked the workshop a question about his sentence. Several writers after Nick took up this strategy. His sentence was "Privilege comes from a system formed of power, designed to rank and judge us, based mostly on our race, language, and gender."

> **Nick**: I don't if "rank" is the best word being used; I couldn't really think of another word. I don't know if anyone has an idea or any questions of the sentence…Tejada looks like she wants to say something.

I relaxed right away. Already, I felt my role during this workshop as more of participant than facilitator.

> **Tejada**: Laughs, well, I think you're saying when it comes to rank, I mean, I think you are trying to say something about categorization…of people. Or, maybe you're saying they put you into ranks and they construct a hierarchy based on you, right?
>
> **Nick**: Hierarchy I like that….What else do you think besides race, language, and gender contribute to this system?

Nick's question prompts some generative consideration from the workshop, as students answer religion, sexuality, age, education and "maybe class." These responses evidence critical reasoning as they are all example of students providing the effects of the system of privilege for Nick to consider in his list. Nick continues to leadhis workshop, when he asks directly, "Anything you guys would change about this sentence?" At that point, I jump in because I want to present a grammatical arrangement to Nick,

> **Me**: Ah…There's that huge list that's on a lot things, right, like, we don't discriminate based on…It might be interesting to think about order, what you are including when you asked the class what else, the ordering of those things. What you think is the most invisible or the most important. How do you do that? You have a list. That would be kind of interesting. Right now you are saying gender. I mean, if you want to apply our principle, I don't know.

As soon as I'm finished, Taquana jumps in with a question about his wording.

> **Taquana**: Wait, I have a question…is it privilege comes from a system of power or by power?
>
> **Tejada**: By or based upon or…

While suggesting two different ways of referring to the "system of power" and its relationship to "privilege" evidences rhetorical reasoning, the differences between "of" power and "by" power are not explored; as neither Taquana nor Tejada are helping him think about the differences between these options. This happened throughout the unit three workshop where choices were being generated which show a rhetorical awareness to form and content, but students were not articulating the differences between these choices and why one might matter over another and for what reasons. So, I asked,

> **Me**: Do you have a suggestion that could help him?
>
> **Taquana**: It depends on what you are trying to say.

Taquana's rhetorical response is interesting because it assumes that Nick knows the difference between the two options. It further reveals that rhetorical reasoning is not going far enough to articulate for the writer *for what reasons* he might change his wording. At this moment, there is more of this quick fire collaboration concerning Nick's form choices and its relationship to his idea.

> **Nick**: I'm trying to say that the power…I think I could change it to privilege comes from a system, based upon the powers that…
>
> **Tejada**: …based upon or based on…
>
> **Nick**: based on powers formed
>
> **Tejada**:…or influenced by…anything that you would want to say.

AJ jumps in. He wants to bring the conversation back to the list of privileges. His response reflects how he intersects with this curriculum, as he argues for a certain kind of arrangement in the structuring of the privileges.

> **AJ**: And, uh, uh, back to the list, I didn't know if you could put like language first, then race, then gender. Cause, if gender and race are like visible kinda, like language isn't, until you speak. You know? You might think someone is from a certain race until once he speaks.

At this point, in the absence of strong reasons being provided for Nick's revision, Taquana may have noticed that AJ is changing the sentence away from Nick's initial purpose. AJ understands visibility in a literal way, rather than the ideological notion of visibility and the privilege of being unmarked, or white.

> **Taquana**: What exactly are you trying to focus on?
>
> **Nick**: The essay or the sentence?
>
> **Taquana**: The essay. Like, is it more on like how on your race, language, and gender; or it more of like how privilege ranks and judges us?

> **Nick**: Um, my essay is about this system that we like live everyday in and it like ranks you, judges us. Not exactly the system, but everyone contributes to the system that is unconsciously doing it.
>
> **Taquana**: Ok, so you think the part that says race, gender, and language is more of like an insight in the sentence instead of like necessarily being the focal point of the sentence, kind of? Like, I feel like if you are trying to get that across, then you might want to rearrange that a little bit, like kinda move that into the middle…
>
> **Nick**: Move?
>
> **Taquana**: Privilege comes from a system formed…or based on power, or something like that…influenced by power, based mostly on our race, language, and gender designed to rank and judge us. So that it's like, it's more of the point this is what the system does. It ranks and judges us. So you could kinda talk more on that.

Taquana's critical reasoning to Nick, her careful say back to him of what his intent was offers him a way of addressing his concern, shows an awareness of how he can think about his purpose in terms of arrangement. She suggests a new arrangement, evoking the critical reason—since it involves the effects of form—that by focusing the sentence on what the system *does* rather than what it *is* will set up his focus. This is critical reasoning because it allows for the writer to reveal the effects of the system by what it does, rather than how it is "set up." Taquana's critical reasoning, however, is not drawn on by Nick, but likely impacts his new sentence revision. His sentence revision is below his initial sentence.

> Original:
>
> Privilege comes from a system formed of power, designed to rank and judge us, based mostly on our race, language, and gender.
>
> Revision:
>
> Being privilege in America comes from a system of power. This system is set up, designed to rank and judge us, based on our language, gender, and race.

Nick's revision, in my reading, shows that he made six different choices of form. Based on the relationship between his initial sentence for workshop and his revised sentence, I notice that his initial sentence now becomes two sentences (difference 1). I interpret this as an important move, as it enables his sentences to use end focus twice, and so, both sentences reveal emphasis about the system. In the new arrangement of these sentences, the relationship between them reveals a more specificity about the system of power (difference 2). The new sentence also starts differently than the initial sentence, because it expands "privilege" to the concept of "being privilege" (difference 3). He writes in his essay reflection, "I talked a lot about how white males are the dominant race and hold power." Nick did not add a "d" on privilege—and this might reveal how this form helped him also put focus on the experiential aspects of "privilege" as it is "being privilege." In my reading, I like that I can think about the differences between "being privileged" and "being privilege"—a difference that helps me locate an emphasis on the present reality of privilege as Nick's experience. In this way, I understand this move to be a critical one since it works to highlight a particular positioning in this system for reasons which he made explicit in his reflection; furthermore, since this is a content that implicates Nick's own identity in the sentence the effect of this choice is critical, rather than *only* rhetorical. Another choice related to my impression of Nick working to specify this experience is his adjectival phrase "in America" which shows up in the revision. In the sentence workshops, students often discussed experiences that were not located in a U.S. context. Nick draws on this rhetorical awareness happening from the workshop and likely realizes he should limit his claim a bit by adding an aspect of context to that noun phrase.

More related to the sentence workshop I provided, Tejada and Taquana both engaged Nick on some rhetorical and critical options he had to write the relationship power has to the system. "Upon," "based on," and "influenced by" were all micro choices suggested by the class. Perhaps this talk made Nick more resolute that this was a system of power, as he shortens the length of this noun phrase (difference 4). Rhetorically, to build cohesion, Nick likely chose to add "This system is set up" which helps him explicitly "set up" two aspects of this system of power, rather than assume their relationship to the system by putting commas between these two parts (difference 5). Now, we can clearly read that first the system is "designed to rank and judge us" and second that it is "based mostly on…" His choice to add this verbal set up helps him put emphasis not on "what the system *does*," as Taquana had suggested, but instead more about how this system is "set up." While this idea is present in the sentence workshop sentence, the relationships between the three parts are not as defined as what Nick ends up with in his revision. Finally, Nick re-arranges social identities and chooses an end focus on race (difference 6). This choice created cohesion for his entire text, as he was addressing "white male privilege" in his paper, more so than he was discussing the design of the system through "rank" and "judgment"; Nick ultimately wanted to show the role race and gender, and to a lesser extent the way language interacts in this system. Taken together these choices reveal to me how Nick was engaging in critical and rhetorical reasoning after his workshop experience, drawing on his peers' suggestions, but ultimately keeping in mind his own purpose in the sentence which was to put the focus on the most invisible notion of power in the system, and therefore also the most important aspect to his sentence, white male privilege.

AJ's workshop, on the other hand, reveals how the shared values of the workshop participants that Nick valued and drew on, were not shared by AJ and his sentence.

Forked Road 4: AJ's Solution to & the Workshop's Problems of Racism

AJ immigrated to the U.S. from Jordan when he was just beginning middle school. He is fluent in Arabic and English, and he always took part in our discussions, often providing counter-points and argumentative banter. His workshops always got the class, as he wrote in his SPARK reflective post, "worked up on his notion." He wrote these two sentences on the dry erase board.

> I know that racism has been existing for a long time, probably as long as humans existed, but there is always a solution to every problem. There must be a solution to this problem, and changing the language, the law and the way we think are definitely the key to solve this problem.

After AJ explains that the sentence is from his conclusion, the workshop immediately gets to work. In this exchange occurring right after AJ's explanation of his sentence, Tejada points out in an arhetorical way a problem she has with the sentence.

> **Tejada**: There must be a solution to this problem. That "and" I feel like that "and" is unnecessary there.

AJ's "and" and her reason that it is "unnecessary" is related to a discussion that happens later in the workshop between Taquana and AJ concerning the relationship between the "problem" and the "solution" components of his sentence.

> **AJ**: Where?
>
> **Tejada**: After problem.

Nick also takes up Tejada's arhetorical pointing to this part of the sentence, as he points out the grammatical necessity of "key," becoming "key*s*." No other sentence workshop

begins with such a sudden address of a form that is "unnecessary" and incorrect. Almost immediately after Nick asks AJ to think about "key*s*," Tejada comes in with another suggestion, followed by Taquana.

> **Tejada**: The last part, language, laws, you could switch it around. You could say the key to solving this problem at the beginning and then list.

Tejada's suggestion, which is not explored by the workshop, applies a foregrounding and backgrounding principle, revealing how she wants him to flip his emphasis. Taken together, these suggestions reveal the rhetorical nature of the workshop, as Nick, Tejada, and Taquana almost assume that AJ is in agreement with their suggestions and understands why they are suggesting them. The rhetorical nature of this exchange is revealed by Taquana's comment,

> **Taquana**: I have a suggestion…you could possibly say that by changing the language, the law, and the way we think, that we could possibly solve this problem. Kind of like, I don't know…because…It's like, I feel like the last part is kind of wordy. Definitely key to solve this problem. You kind of say it in a way…[later she finds out that this is his last sentence] I definitely think you could make the sentence more strong.

At this point, AJ has a lot of options to consider, but the only reasoning coming from the workshop so far has been prescriptive. Tejada mentions that his "and" is unnecessary, Nick has pointed out an error, and Taquana has told him his sentence should be stronger by taking out "definitely" and replacing it with "possibly," also that his sentence is "wordy." These suggestions highlight form, but because of their *prescriptive* nature, they are arhetorical. Form is being discussed but it is discussed as divorced from content. The arhetorical reasoning, however, has rhetorical undertones. That's when I interrupt,

> **Me**: You said that it's wordy but when you suggested a change, you said possibly as opposed to definitely. [Taquana agrees.] So, I wanted to know more about that. Why are you saying possibly?
>
> **Taquana**: I don't know it just came to mind.
>
> **Me**: There's a difference right. I mean there's a different between poss—
>
> **Someone**: Yea.
>
> **Taquana**: There's definitely a difference.
>
> **Nick**: Definitely is more strong
>
> **Taquana**: Yea…I didn't mean to like…So, ok take the possibly out of my thing. In my mind, I'm just making a suggestion.

There is some anxiety coming from Taquana here about her own reasoning. She knows why she suggested "possibly," but I don't think she fully recognizes why she has the reaction she does to AJ's use of "definitely." For that matter, the entire workshop is reacting rhetorically to a sentence that claims a "solution" to a "problem" that they have spent over three weeks learning the complexity of, as well as how they are all implicated and affected, and this sentence is actually so strong in its claim that it makes it less rhetorically effective for this audience. I asked about the lack of agent in his sentence, and he responded that the agent is mentioned before or after, but that it's "you and I." AJ continued to stand up for his sentence and his belief that it was true. Perhaps by my prompting to consider more the solution and who is behind the solution, Taquana is able to recognize that AJ's sentence backgrounds important parts of the "problem" in order to foreground its "solution." Such a reading becomes clearer in AJ's dismissive response to Taquana's next point.

> **Taquana**: But are you saying this is a realistic change? Like, are you saying that there's a solution to this problem. But is this solution that you are bringing up…

> **AJ**: I said that racism has been existing for a long time, probably as long as humans existed, but there's always a solution to every problem, right?

I wanted to focus on form's choices. So, I brought up AJ's use of the modal "must." AJ's "must be" was interesting, as it wasn't definitive in a different way from the rest of his sentence content.

> **Me**: So, there must be a solution to this problem. That immediately gets me like, yes, let's figure it out. Let's try to figure out a solution to this problem, there must be one...but then the next thing is…and these are definitely the solutions…

Then there was a brief exchange. I was interrupted by AJ correcting me that it was not "solutions" but "the key."

> **Me**: Ok, but do you see what I'm saying? There must be a solution to this problem. Like mathematically, it has to exist, right? [AJ: Yea] If you are thinking about solution that way. And then you say but we definitely have the keys. Then maybe there's another sentence that's like, ok, so why haven't we solved it?
>
> **AJ**: We have the keys, but we haven't solved it yet.

He does not engage the "must be" meaning of his sentence, insisting on racism being a problem with a solution. The workshop is continuing to challenge him to recognize the significance behind the problem he is writing about.

> **Me**: Why?
>
> **AJ**: We haven't solved it yet. Because no one has…
>
> **Me**: No one has a calculator big enough.
>
> **AJ**: Yea, maybe one has solved it. But like…It's…I don't know…I don't think anyone has solved it yet. Because no one has put enough effort to solving it maybe.

At the time, his reason that maybe we just haven't put enough effort into solving it may have made some people in the class quite angry. Also at this point, the reasoning coming from the workshop turns more critical, as Taquana engages AJ to consider the "so what"

of his argument. I include the exchange below to show how students experienced this particular unit workshop and also to show how they were negotiating and constructing positions about race, all thanks to a sentence being shared for discussion.

> **Taquana**: But are you sure it's something that can be solved?
>
> **AJ**: Yea, because every problem has a solution. That's true.
>
> **Taquana**: That's not true.
>
> **AJ**: It is true.
>
> **Taquana**: Even in math, they're some undefined things.
>
> **AJ**: Yea.
>
> **Taquana**: The problem that you are talking about is racism, right?
>
> **AJ**: Right.
>
> **Taquana**: And, what I'm saying is that through what we've read people it's become more and more invisible. I guess those are potential ways of them trying to solve the problem, covering it up and making it seem like more of a cultural norm, but when they do that, it's not necessarily, like, making the problem, like finding a solution to the problem…[…]
>
> **AJ**: I never said that.
>
> **Taquana**: What I'm saying is that, like, because they say, um, brought to people's attentions that certain things might be racist or something like that that's a reason why people might try to make it invisible. Since this is a problem, since this is racist, then let's make it something people can't see.
>
> **AJ**: That's not the case here.
>
> **Taquana**: Then what's the case?
>
> **AJ**: The case is, so I…Privilege, racism exist, right? They both exist, right? We made them visible right? I felt that Tatum and Wildman and Davis were trying to make us think of privilege and racism, to make them visible to people, now you've made it visible, now what? You know? They put a lot of effort to make racism and privilege visible, but what good does that do to us, you know? You made it visible, now what? Now, that it's visible you have to change the system. And in order to do that, I think we have to like, we have to go through this. It's just what I think.

AJ's workshop transcript reveals how his peers, specifically Taquana, worked to address the conflict they had with his content. Initially, this was done through his form choices in a prescriptive, arhetorical manner, but as the workshop addressed them and AJ provided more of his reasoning behind the unit conversation, Taquana better understood her initial suggestion of changing "definitely" to "possibly." In this way, the workshop likely provided AJ with a rhetorical experience of defending his sentence because he related so differently to the curricular context. At the same time, it helps us learn how Taquana's reaction and arhetorical reasoning about his choice of "definitely" needed to be unpacked and examined, as it led to a critical discussion concerning the differences in these ways of relating to the discourse, and more specifically, AJ's thinking about racism and her own. What began as arhetorical suggestions about AJ's sentence turned into a rhetorical conversation about his purpose in relation to his audience and the context of our workshop. While their discussion ended with Taquana articulating critical reasoning about the "possiblility" of that sentence in relation to the curriculum, it was not enough of a reason for AJ to revise.

The implication of this mini-case is that when the workshop used arhetorical reasoning of form to challenge AJ's content, they did so for rhetorical reasons. Such a finding helps me see how these categories of reasoning about form interact as well as take place within the context of this learning environment. However, AJ's awareness of the workshop's rhetorical reasons for challenging his content may have led to his ignoring of their critical reasoning as well. That is, rather than considering what Taquana reminds him to consider—the effects of his sentence—he took the "easy" road and did not revise his sentence just as he did not reflect on this experience in workshop.

Unit Four

Sentence of the Day Teaching

In Unit four, students spent a lot of time working together in small groups discussing folk theories and attitudes about language that affect educational literacies. The unit conversation and idea of a "folk theory" set up and shaped how students began to think about language in more conscious and deliberate ways. In this way, our class understanding of form's relationship to content was also heading toward more rhetorical and critical considerations. In general, students were becoming, on their own, more aware of the need to reason out the differences of form since these differences shaped content. The two stories I share from our last workshop explain two writer's choices of form, choices that would have gone ignored or dismissed had the workshop not examined them, and are strong evidence for how my class brought a macro sense to a micro choice.

In terms of critical thinking about language, conscious and unconscious choices about language use held prominence and led to a *shared* understanding between the students and myself. My sentence of the day teaching during this unit involved collaboratively revising a sentence by substituting one word for another. I wanted to learn if, once I substituted one word for another, whether they would recognize how a *small* change would also cause "ripple" effects in the sentence, both in terms of its content *and* form. To do this, I revisited Klass's sentence from the first unit: "I am afraid as with any new language to use it properly, you must absorb not only the vocabulary, but also the structure, the logic and the attitudes." I wrote this sentence and changed its purpose, by crossing out "properly" and writing "critically" on the board. Then, I asked what else

should change in the sentence. Immediately they wanted to know what "critically" meant. I hesitated.

> **Me**: How do I define it?

Sonya and AJ's responses below are interested in why and how. Such a request was provocative to me; they were interested in my motives as their teacher.

> **Sonya**: Yea, how do you define it using…
>
> **AJ**: Why do you think….why did you replace it with…why did you like…why critically instead of properly?
>
> **Me**: Properly, ok? What's the difference between being proper and being critical? That's a great question. Um. Does that make sense as a distinction, first, I guess, is my first question to you? Proper, using a language properly and using a language critically. Does that seem like a distinction? Or does that seem like, you understand what using a language properly means, but using a language critically is…

AJ's response was that "we've learned how there isn't like a right and wrong literacy, so there's not a proper and improper" one either. But then I asked, if that's true, then how are you supposed to use language, if there's all these different literacies? Ty responds,

> I can see how you used critically because like there's you said there's like so many different forms of language and like there's different language that you use with your friends and there's a different language that you use at home or a different language that you use in class and every time that you go into a different environment you have to critically think about what words you are going to use.

I said back that I understood his response to be interested in "audience," and the class agreed. I decided to push him a bit.

> **Me**: You could also say that's just proper use, right? Because oh well you are in this setting so you use this, this is the proper language to speak with these people in this setting. So, when you are in this setting, this is the proper language. So, there's a difference in terms of "properness" in each of those contexts. So, then, pushing that, what does critically then mean?

> **Ty**: But there's also like different people inside of that one setting, it could differ, there could be, um, you know, someone from Ireland, or you know International students or something and then you would have to then use something, a different form of language, a different substitute words you would use so that they could understand.

Again, Ty reasons critically that critical use of language is tied to our social relationships, suggesting that our relationship to our audience is complicated since he highlights that our audience involves multiple and diverse language backgrounds. Sonya next brings up the use of texting, because that's not a proper sense, but then someone else responds that it's not a "critical" sense either. At that point, she again asks for my definition of "critically."

> **Me**: Like I said there's many different definitions of it. Um. The definition that I'm…drawing on myself, through years of reading [laughs] and putting it together is, um, well it's, it's, there's two parts to it. Um, the first part is that critical is a process. So, process that involves observation, experience—it's experience-based—and you have to think about that experience, you have to think about where it comes from, you have to analyze, and then you have to kind of put that analysis together in terms of the choices that you have. So, critically always involves choice. And then you have to act on a decision.
>
> **Sonya**: I see where you are coming from.
>
> **Me**: So what happens is when you make that choice you understand why you did it. You have a good sense and understanding of what was important and what was highlighted to you about why you were choosing to make that choice and it, it can involve a sense of propriety but it doesn't, it doesn't, necessarily involve it.
>
> **Sonya**: Yea.
>
> **Me**: Then it also involves reflection and looking back. So you can see how that definition of critical as a process is sort of the way that I was asking you to write your essays throughout the class, right? And why I was asking you about choices. The other thing about critical is that it can also be a perspective. It can be a perspective about power and language and knowledge. So, you have like critical perspectives about identity. So, it's not just that, 'oh I'm you know, I'm me, and I'm unique, and I'm blah-blah-blah-blah but I'm also these other identities, the others relationships to other people that influence that experience that I have.' So, that's being critical about understanding how your role. …

After students said they understood the definition and didn't need another example, I asked if "everything else still right in the sentence in terms of that idea?" Nick said back what Ty had said about the "environment" because it sometimes calls for a different form of vocabulary. I wrote environment on the board and said that I thought we might want to use it to rewrite the sentence. Then I asked, "Is there anything that just must be taken out, that doesn't make sense?"

> **Taquana**: I don't like absorb. I don't know why. [Another voice agrees.]
>
> **Me**: Why?
>
> **Taquana**: It just makes me feel like you should just have to take it all in, but just because you take it all in doesn't mean that you understand it. Like, I don't know.
>
> **Ty**: Like you are being forced.
>
> **Sonya**: Yea.
>
> **Taquana**: Yea, just because you are being taught something or you surrounded by something doesn't necessarily mean you are embracing it, or, you are actually trying to understand it.

Students' collaborative, critical reasoning about "absorb" here recognizes semantics—how certain verbs construct or deny agency. It also provides evidence for the distinction between conscious and unconscious understanding. The definition I provided, and students understood, did not agree with the notion of "absorbing" aspects of language; or, as Taquana puts it, "[absorb] doesn't necessarily mean … you are actually trying to understand it." The meaning of "critically" affects other choices in the sentence, and while I found this form and content discussion productive, most important was for me to get them to actually choose to revise the sentence. I ask,

> **Me**: Can anybody help move from this perspective, understanding it to get to…I mean do you want to replace "absorb" with "understand," at this point? Does

> someone want to change the whole structure of this? I like it. So, you are pointing out that absorb has an unconscious element to it, as a verb. Right?

Some collaboration happens, and the transcript becomes harder to decipher as a lot of people are discussing the options and thinking about what may need to be taken out and how to write it. Jessica speaks up and says that analysis is important for a critical use. She suggests the revision, "To use a language critically, you must analyze the choices not only of the vocabulary" and then to continue with the sentence. But Taquana says that "'structure, the logic, and the attitude' kind of enforces the vocabulary and how you use the vocabulary." She elaborates,

> **Taquana**: You must I don't know you also have to understand the social logic that goes with the vocabulary. Because I think that, like, vocabulary is just words, but it's the way that you use it, the way that, um, the way language uses the vocabulary that makes it, kind of, distinct.

When Taquana mentions "the way language uses the vocabulary," it connects with her earlier insight in the course when she told Kyle in unit three to pay heed to alternative perspectives about language not only being harmful, but also valuable. For Taquana, meaning happens in context and matters since it affects social relationships; a writer's intention is not in word alone but is, in fact, discourse. I write down these ideas as best I can, and start to realize that we will not be writing a sentence on how to use a "language critically" because we don't have the time or space to do so. I decide to ask AJ, who is being quiet, but also often speaks up, what he thinks of our sentence so far.

> **AJ**: No, I don't know. I don't, I….I kind of liked absorb more.
>
> **Me**: As a critical use?
>
> **AJ**: I don't know. I was just like, it was simple kind of easy to understand. It just goes with it, you know?

> **Me**: To use it critically, you must absorb?
>
> **AJ**: No, I wasn't thinking of that. I was thinking that, like, just absorb vocab, structure, is….I don't know.

It is hard to define and form critical meaning, and yet also easy to distinguish it from a notion such as "absorb." AJ expresses his discomfort with "critical" language, by distinguishing it from the flow of the initial sentence, "it just goes with it." His comment makes me reflect that this concept was difficult for him, some of that had to do with its form, more specifically its aesthetic, or at least that's his response.

But it also makes me reflect about the reactions I often receive about a micro-macro pedagogy—are students really writing better? At the same time that he makes a version of this argument to our class, it's possible he's expressing some discomfort with the content behind what we were doing as well. As my role was more of a sounding board for the class discussion, I didn't dismiss his response about the appeal of the initial sentence, despite it not being our focus at the time. I suggested keeping Klass's sentence as is, and writing another sentence with a "critical" use right next to it. My suggestion was intended to free us from Klass's structure about "critical" use. When I said that, Taquana says,

> **Taquana**: I mean to use it critically, the only thing that popped into my head was like "logically." You have to…I don' t know. I was thinking of a situation where you like really want to speak properly but sometimes it's not the best thing, so you have to like um pick and choose what you want to, like use that's proper, and then like, I don't know, I just like related critically to logically. Like, I don't know. It's like everything you have to do, you have to do for a reason to get a certain point across.

At that point, I stopped trying to collaboratively write our sentence, the board was full of arrows, cross-outs, dry erase marks of varying squished and vertical handwriting, and students needed to get to work on their essay about folk theories. But I also wanted to

stop the discussion on Taquana's point about critical being deliberate, purposeful, and conscious.

This conscious attitude about language and deliberate action carried over to our last sentence workshop. Students were predominately choosing sentences based on content that they wanted to share with the class. In this way, the rhetorical, content-focus of our unit three workshop and my students' experience of that workshop as a rhetorical situation was being reflected in the socio-critical content of writers' sentences chosen for workshop. That is, writers were now choosing sentences for workshop that evidenced socio-political critique; sentences were not chosen, like they were in unit one, because they were the "main point" or held the "main idea" of a writer's paper. Instead, these sentences were provocative in terms of their idea and its relationship to our curriculum. Take, for example, Jessica who discusses at length how her sentence constructs her "view." She writes,

> [T]he educational system has not found the correct way to talk about different folk theories but just shows how to make our writing and reading that of the "standard" English and that of the dominant culture. I hope that through this workshop I will be better able to describe my paper, so that it makes sense to all.

Jessica's reflection demonstrates that the sentence workshop continued to function as a social learning environment that helped her understand her audience and purpose in relation to her sentence content. Jessica's discussion of the "educational system" in her SPARK post also evidences a socio-political critique, since her sentence content strongly relates to the unit curriculum, and thus, shows a synthesis of these ideas. While her reasoning here does not evidence a form-content relationship, her understanding of "folk theory" and her macro connection suggest that there is a space for micro consideration prior to workshop. Another indication of this finding regarding sentence content

reflecting curricular goals was Sherlyn, the writer who chose not to share a sentence in unit three. She shares her sentence for our last workshop. Like Jessica, Sherlyn uses the SPARK reflective post to share a synthesis she has reached through the curriculum. She writes that her sentence expresses how "we are categorized into different categories" despite what we consciously want. She hopes that "people would understand" that "we are strongly influenced by the social norm," and that while "we all love to say that we are neutral on many things, but in reality we really cannot" be. Sherlyn's content gets at the unconscious effect on our choices, and so, by choosing to express it, she is highlighting and deliberately choosing to make this point for her audience through a sentence.

Our Last Sentence Workshop

Just like our previous workshop, we workshopped seven sentences. Just like in our third workshop, students collaborated and negotiated how to word a unit concept in three different workshops. At least one conventional, lexical, or grammatical choice came up in each workshop. These conversations were focused on micro-level forms such as a verbal phrase and its arrangement and a writer's use of hedges such as "I think." Students initiated most of these conversations about these options. The only time they did not was when I suggested passive and active structural difference for one writer's consideration. Students understood passive and active difference as a productive way to think about content, evidenced in my sentence of the day teaching—but while they understood the relationship, they still did not choose to make it an emphasis during the workshops on their own accord. No workshop generated a *new* option for a writer. The connections between a writer's choice of form and the writer's content were direct, developed, and

reasoned in this workshop. In fact, the workshops were focused so specifically on the differences of form, and students interpreted those differences in such rich and meaning-centered ways, that I reached a new understanding of "critical" in my analysis. These stories, in fact, evidence the experiential and social nature of critical thinking to an extent I had not theorized at the beginning of this study. Moreover, I'm arguing that the collaborative spirit of this workshop, where they discussed micro and macro concerns seamlessly, contributed greatly to these "critical" moments. The following two stories are cases of the "macro" being brought on by the "micro." Both stories are evidence for an additional perspective on critical reasoning and its experiential, collaborative nature in these workshops.

Forked Road 5: Pik and Identifying with English Prepositions

Pik, a junior Psychology major, is a multilingual speaker of Mandarin, Cantonese, and English. She was soft-spoken, but when she led this workshop, her voice was clear and strong—it was easier to transcribe than her previous workshop. In what follows, I divide up her workshop into two parts, the first is the conversation we had about her content and the second is about her form. I share both aspects to the workshop because the order in which they took place not only sets up the experience, but content being addressed prior to form likely provided Pik more authority for her sentence. She started by reading her sentence out loud, which I provide below.

> The more I write my Chinese English on the paper, the more I learn how to write formal English in my paper.
>
> **Pik**: …My essay talks about, like, when I first write my English paper, I just write down my Cantonese, the Chinese words, on a piece of paper and then I translate this into English. Then, I give my paper to my sister to correct my grammar. She says like I shouldn't use my Chinese English first, I should just put English down but yea but after that I accept her comment, but, I try to, like, put my English

> down into my paper. It's really hard, I just, I don't know, like, much vocabulary about English. It's hard for me to put the English down on paper. So, I just do it my way to, um, write my Chinese down and just translate the Chinese words to the English. Yea, and I think that it is just good to learn in this way so that I can know how to make my Chinese words to be English words, yea, so, and this is the whole idea that I write in my paper for this unit. Any questions?
>
> **Nick**: I have a question. What is "Chinese English?"

This content-focused question opened up the floor for several students, including Pik to imagine what was and was not Chinese English.

> **Pik**: It's Cantonese.
>
> **Nick**: Oh, so it's like….
>
> **Taquana**: Is it the equivalent of writing Spanglish?
>
> **Pik**: I just like, when I know the topic of the paper, I just write down Cantonese.
>
> **Taquana**: All of it, or?
>
> **Pik**: Yea, all of it.
>
> **Taquana**: Oh.
>
> **Pik**: And then I translate it to English. I know it's not formal English, it's just Chinese.
>
> **Nick**: Isn't it not "Chinese English" cause there's no English.
>
> **Pik**: Yes, it's English. But the meaning is Chinese English. It's not…really English.

I include the beginning part of this discussion to show the level of interest monolingual speakers had about Pik's literacy process of writing formal English. While I'm not sure Nick and Taquana understood the distinction, and I'll admit I was and still am confused myself on what exactly Pik is calling Chinese English, it was interesting that we, as monolingual speakers, were so interested in it. At the same time, for the students who came from multilingual backgrounds they understood completely what Pik was talking

about. In this excerpt, AJ, Ty, and Sherlyn jump in explaining that Chinese English is likely the trans-it.com equivalent to a Cantonese concept, and often the grammatical forms of the Chinese don't make it to the English translation. The whole time Pik was smiling, looking like she was enjoying this. Here's the contrast from the multilingual speakers.

> **AJ**: So.
>
> **Sherlyn**: Like the translated essay is…
>
> **Ty**: Yea.
>
> **Sherlyn**: …is English but it doesn't make sense in English because it's…
>
> **Abdul/Tyler**: Chinese. Oh.
>
> **Ty**: It's kind of like when you go onto google or something and translate it…
>
> **Sherlyn**: [at the same time as Ty] So, if you translate it word for word, it doesn't make sense, but it makes sense to us because that's how we get…
>
> **Me**: But it's not Cantonese?
>
> **Sherlyn**: It's in the format, like, the grammar and the word choice…
>
> **Ty**: Yea, it's…
>
> **Sherlyn**: It can be in Chinese, but if you translate it, you would see it, oh they are in English.
>
> **Ty**: Yea, it's like on trans-it or something and you take Cantonese directly from a paper or something and try to translate it into English. It…it's Cantonese, but in English it doesn't make any sense at all. Because the words not the right translation.
>
> **AJ**: The word, it doesn't like use any forms.

At this point the content part of the conversation stops, as the students are more familiar with Pik's process. The next voice is Sherlyn. She asks a question to Pik that sets up the form discussion.

> **Sherlyn**: I have a question: What's the difference between "on the paper" and "in my paper"?
>
> **Pik**: Um…I don't know.
>
> **Me**: Could you say what the difference is to you?

My question was directed at Sherlyn because I wanted to know more about why she picked up on this difference—I hadn't noticed the on/in difference.

> **Sherlyn**: Like, "in my paper" that's your paper but "on the paper" it's just paper.
>
> **Me**: Ok [laughing]

Even at this point, the distinction wasn't clear to me. I likely had not heard the subtlety of "my" and "the" in Sherlyn's response, and laughed since I thought she used the same reasoning for both options.

> **Ty**: Maybe like "on the paper" is like kind of a rough draft but "in my paper" is like your final? Your final draft? I don't know….maybe… […] Like "on the paper" is like her idea page, just to see how things are…but when she writes her final paper it actually goes into the final draft page?
>
> **Me**: So, surface versus depth understanding. So on is like on top, but in is like…
>
> **Ty**: In it.
>
> **Me**: I can dig that.
>
> [Tejada and someone else groan.]
>
> **Tejada**: Sounds like my mom's joke.

Ty's pointing out to Pik the difference, to him, of how she may have used "in" and "on" and their differences to reveal a deeper meaning about how she writes her papers was an important moment for her. She chooses to reflect on it in her end of semester reflection, expressing that this sentence "can point out that [she] struggled *in* between my home language and school language." Pik writes,

> After I discuss [this] sentence in class, I receive a helpful comment from my classmate. When I am writing this sentence on my essay, I find out a problem on myself about the word using between "on" and "in". I do not know why I use "on" at the first half of the sentence, and then I use "in" at the other half of the sentence. Therefore, when I hear Sherlyn ask me the difference between "on the paper" and "in my paper", I feel surprise about it. I cannot imagine that she sees what I see from the sentence. I am strongly agreed with Ty's explanation about the use of word "on" and "in". I think I am trying to show the different writing style between Chinese English and formal English. I do not think my essay is perfect if I write Chinese English on it. I use the word "on" to describe how poor my essay is and the word "in" mean a good writing on my essay.

For Pik, "in" and "on" are symbolic of the different Englishes as well as the social attitudes about these Englishes, e.g. "poor" versus "good" writing. Pik chose to incorporate both relationships (between Chinese English and formal English) and highlights the difference between how she identifies with them by her preposition use. Her acceptance that Chinese English *on* her paper is "poor"—perhaps, viewed as a problematic internalization about English Language Learning—is not so problematic from the perspective of the writer. Pik understands the differences between "in" and "on" for her own writing processes, and chooses to maintain the distinction. She cares about the effect of her writing, and for that to happen, she figures out a way to negotiate her ideas on paper, in paper. Her sentence identifies with "formal English," albeit only through initial Chinese English as well as Chinese English's closer connection to her ideas. What's more is that such a use of prepositions may have been considered wrong, since as Pik admits she often confuses the meaning of the two in her writing. However, she now has experienced how the preposition system helps her metaphorically imagine her meaning and process, and such an encounter takes her meaning-making seriously. Since the "on" and the "in" are both part of the same writing process, the satisfaction Pik likely received from this workshop helps her continue to interpret this micro choice's macro relevance.

This finding encourages me to revise my understanding of critical reasoning because while Pik is *not* addressing a relationship between language, knowledge, and power. Her choice to maintain the distinction between "in" and "on" in her use of the English language, argues for the need to understand this choice as critical. It is "critical," that is, and important moment in her language-learning process.

Forked Road 6: Ty and Owning Englishes

Ty shares his sentence, "I think that having so many "standard" English's we sometimes lose ourselves in what "standard" English that we need to speak in." His sentence does not get a suggestion; instead Sherlyn asks "Why is there an apostrophe between the English and the 's'?" Her question prompts Ty's reasoning, which is arhetorical.

> **Ty**: Well, English is…well that's what it did, the autocorrect when I was writing, cuz without the apostrophe it put a red line on it so I right clicked and it said put the apostrophe, possessive or something. Is that correct to use? I don't….

Ty does not know why the "s" with an apostrophe is connected to English and neither does Sherlyn, because she says, "I just don't know what it means." The confusion of what this convention means takes up a considerable amount of his workshop. I quote at length our discussion.

> **Ty:** I've never used apostrophes before, so….because in Germany you don't need the apostrophes, you don't have…my mom was telling me the use of them, the possessive or something like…when you say "someone's dogs" or whatever you put the apostrophe because that's their dog or whatever.
>
> **Me:** Hmm….
>
> **Ty:** So, is it like that? I don't know.

Throughout this workshop Ty often is looking for confirmation or security in his discussion of his reasoning. I can see this anxiety throughout our exchange. I am purposefully withholding answers because I wanted to investigate the reasoning behind his choice.

> **Me:** Ok, so you are understanding the rule of the apostrophe…
>
> **Ty:** Yea.
>
> **Me:** And, Microsoft WORD's grammar checker told you to put it there, but is there a possession, I mean, what did….your application of it, Ty?
>
> **Ty:** Is wrong?
>
> **Me:** What's wrong?
>
> **Ty:** The apostrophe where I put it?
>
> **Me:** How do you understand what the rule is supposed to mean…and..
>
> **Ty:** Well English belongs to the Standard, doesn't it? No?

Ty, however, doesn't seem that convinced; the reasoning of Microsoft word's grammar checker, coupled with his mom's advice, likely constructs his paradoxical, and philosophical, statement, "English belongs to the Standard, doesn't it?"

> **Me:** I mean, I think, you are making Standard English plural, right?
>
> **Ty:** Yea.

At this point, I became explicit regarding the difference in context, meaning-making, and reasoning between Microsoft WORD's grammar checker and our Basic Writing curriculum.

> **Me:** And do you think that Microsoft WORD understands the radical nature of making Standard English plural?
>
> **Ty:** I don't think so….

Me: Probably other people, but anyway, so, the….the….pluralization of English isn't going to be understood by Microsoft WORD. But what Microsoft WORD is able to do, oh, you put an "s" on a word that I don't think ever has an "s" it must be a possessive use and so it gave you the red squiggle and you looked at it, and thought, get this off my screen. Accept change.

Ty: Yea, that's pretty accurate…

Me: Ok.

Ty: So, no apostrophe?

Me: I don't know.

I said "I don't know" because I refused to "answer" Ty's question about what to do. If I had offered him an answer, I feared that I would not be helping him reach his critical reasoning about his micro choice.

Ty: I don't know either, that's why….it looks cool but…

Thankfully, the workshop saves Ty (and me) from answering his question about what he should do.

Taquana: You should take it out.

Someone: Hmmm….

Taquana: You aren't saying English is….

Tejada: It's not possessive.

Our collaborative exchange, prompted by Sherlyn about the apostrophe-s, essentially tells Ty what he should do based on what his intention is and what he *means,* which is distinct from a prescriptive, arhetorical reasoning about this same choice. In this way—given my prompting that Microsoft WORD is based on *standardized* English and therefore would not understand Ty's meaning-making—the reasoning behind Taquana and Tejada's suggestion to "take out" the apostrophe can be understood as critical. While I initiated the critical reasoning for Ty's choice, they realize and made clear to Ty that his use of

"English's" is *wrong*. In fact, my students were also responsible for my own critical experience in which I recognized how grammar as a system and its rules could be descriptively and collaboratively applied and reasoned out in relation to a choice.

Meanwhile, Sherlyn is relentless, because after Tejada states for Ty that he should not be using the apostrophe, she brings up a related issue. How should he spell it?

> **Sherlyn:** e-s or just s.
>
> **Me:** So, if you are trying to make a word that the dictionary in Microsoft WORD is not getting, right? In some ways, this is maybe bringing our context, your purposes of English into this sentence, right? How are you going to write Standard Englishes so that we know what that is? And…Sherlyn just said you could write "s" or "e-s." So how do you know which one you should spell?
>
> **Ty:** But I…
>
> **Me:** you are going to have to think and apply…
>
> **Ty:** Spell it myself?
>
> **Me:** How would you spell it?
>
> **Ty:** Like that, without the apostrophe.

Taquana helps him out again by bringing up about the stylistic nature of spelling in his case. He gets to choose how he wants to spell it.

> **Taquana:** but if you write it e-s, isn't that a style factor or whatever. Like, when you are making up a word, not, kind of making up a word, you have as a writer you can choose how you want to spell it or not, so it's not necessarily wrong.

Ty, now, starts to perhaps apply his own rhetorical reasoning, as he remembers that there are conventions to spelling that relate to the place of English.

> **Ty:** Well, I know like, when, here, in America you spell color c-o-l-o-r, but in Europe you spell it c-o-l-o-u-r.
>
> **Taquana:** Really?

> **AJ:** Yea.
>
> **Me:** Yep that's British English versus American English. […] So, I think that using your multilingual background, Ty, think about the spelling. I will say "s-h" as an ending of a word that gets an "s" the rule is?
>
> **Sherlyn**: e-s.
>
> **Me:** So, think about that. Or, Google it and see if other people are using "Englishes" and how they are referring to it and choose it that way. Just because you can't find it in Microsoft WORD telling you what to do, doesn't mean that you can't have a principle for what you are choosing.

Throughout this exchanges, there is evidence of arhetorical, rhetorical, critical reasoning concerning Ty's choice to remove the apostrophe, keep it, and how to spell "englishes." Ty's peers push him to consider the options before he simply chooses in regard to the spelling of the word. This occurs when he answers my question regarding how he would spell it, with his initial spelling prior to the auto correct on WORD. Taquana pushes him to consider the stylistics behind spelling, just as AJ and Ty himself remember that spelling can also identify an English speaker as a specific type. In this way, the rhetorical consideration opens Ty up to not only consider correctness and communication, but now also the contexts of English as well as audience. In this way, the collaborative atmosphere of the workshop kept Ty's purposes in mind, and yet, also worked to extend those purposes by considering the effects his choice of spelling and punctuation had on his audience. As I join in the discussion, I deliberately ask him to consider context and to better own his intention to make "English" plural.

This kind of collaborative critical and rhetorical reasoning does not show up much in Ty's writing process. He wrote essays by adding to, not revising from, his rough draft throughout the semester. While he did not *revise* this sentence or his paper based on the workshop, his writing post-workshop does use the concept "Englishes." However, his

choice to write “Englishes” is reduced in critical effect by the continued presence of “English’s” in his final draft. Despite this workshop not changing so much Ty’s process, and possibly introducing a more noticeable “error” in his final essay since he is not consistent when referring to this word, his sentence workshop was valuable nevertheless, since it provided an explicit consideration of the role Microsoft WORD often plays in the writing process and how *wrongly* a software shapes a writer’s meaning. Moreover, it was the most memorable workshop for me the entire semester because it was through it that I started to recognize the limits of my teaching of grammar as a theoretical social system, and in this teaching, I left out the relationship of “rule-breaking” and “rule-following.” The absence of error in my theorizing of Critical Grammar, in fact, also highlights that my theory of critical thinking and pedagogy should have been more social. I had ignored the notion of error in my teaching of sentences. And yet, my own dismissal of errors did not mean that my students weren’t interested in it as a reality of our classroom. This reality, in fact, is the subject of my next data analysis chapter.

Notes

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[1] Dom's placement of "sometimes" can also be engaged as an unconscious grammatical strategy: While it helps Dom connect to the theme of "silence," at the same time it reveals how he diverts his attention to the places, contexts, and relationships that create a "sometimes" for his speaking choices. For example, "sometimes" was not connected to the occasions that Dom mentioned in his ability to speak or not. These occasions, in fact, might have provided him with some critical thinking about his relationship to language, as a monolingual English speaker. His arrangement, specifically, when he positions "sometimes" next to the relational verb "is," places grammatical focus on the "not speaking" rather than the occasions where he *sometimes* speaks.

CHAPTER 5

STUDENT REFLECTIONS ON THE EFFECTS OF CRITICAL GRAMMAR

This is a data analysis chapter about the effects of my sentence pedagogy, discovered through an analysis of students' end of semester reflective writing about sentences. In this chapter, my analysis grounds itself on student reflections, the final writing assignment of our semester. From this perspective, my inductive analysis revealed three findings related to my Critical Grammar pedagogy. First, the reflections provide further evidence for a claim in the last chapter that students understood the sentence workshops as a social learning environment. Second, most of my students continued to use arhetorical, rhetorical , and critical reasoning about form in their reflections. Last, by reading closely what students were and were not revealing and by applying that to my own assumptions and values in the prompt, I discovered two aspects to their sentence-writing experiences that I had not taught them explicitly: students were writing reflections that revealed a connection to academic writing values, including the role of error and their own academic ethos.

End of Semester Reflections

At the end of the semester, students were assigned a sentence reflection. I told them that my prompts were flexible and I didn't assign a minimum or maximum word count. Most reflections ended up being a single-spaced page, with one reflection far shorter than that. The end of the semester final stress and my lack of communicating explicit expectations for this assignment likely contributed to the brevity. The assignment included these prompts about their sentence writing and choice:

a. Analyze your writing for this class. As you do so, notice if you can if there are any "sentence patterns" in the way that you write, that you either broke or developed over the course of the semester. Then, choose one of your sentences based around this "habit," and explain what this sentence says about your process.

b. If you engaged serious sentence level revision in this class, show and teach me the various thinking steps you took in the writing of this sentence. You could use track changes as well as explain the various things that "occurred" to you as your wrote.

c. Choose a sentence that you are proud of and explain how you intend it to work in either that paper's argument or for an idea you think is important. Argue why it works the way you intend, by "rewriting" the sentence with other techniques and discuss the differences in meaning.

d. Drawing from our sentence workshop transcripts, discuss the "critical thinking process" and "perspective" that you relied on for the writing of this sentence? What was important to you? What was not that important?

e. I shared throughout the semester "sentence" concepts that I thought would help your critical thinking about this curriculum and language. Some of these included: end focus, the differences between passive and active sentences, how writers foreground and background information which relates to how writers make assumptions, arrangement within a series, discursive metaphors and how writers represent them—discussion of Portez and "English Only," using the word "is" to define, how we can find context clues in sentence-level writing, by a writer's use of modals like "probably" and pronouns which get at relationships [there are more, but that's just to get you thinking]. Choose one or more of the concepts and apply it to your writing by discussing how it helps you think through your ideas in your sentence-level writing.

f. Choose a sentence that would function as a nice example of how a "sentence" is only a part to the whole. See if you can argue that composing a tight, well-written sentence helps you in thinking through your main idea in your paper; or, contrastingly, argue the opposite.

Most students blurred these suggestions in their reflections, with all thirteen students reflecting on specific sentences from their writing. Seven writers chose sentences that we had workshopped, five writers selected sentences that had not been workshopped but illustrated a point they wanted to make about their learning, and one writer used sentences for both purposes. No students took up question e or drew on the discussions from sentence of the day teaching, but four students did draw on the sentence workshop

discussions specifically. Since I did not include a prompt that asked them to reflect on the role peers or I played in their sentence writing process, the fact that six writers discussed this reveals how a social learning environment supported their sentence process. At the same time, writers also took the reflective assignment as an opportunity to discuss up close how they understand sentences from a personal and/or a socially-influenced perspective.

Social Learning Environment

Most of these reflections drew on the social nature of our class workshops and discussions. Four writers brought up specific aspects of our class sentence discussions, all involving the social learning environment and the extent to which the class audience played a role in generating, challenging, and shaping these writers' ideas. For example, Sonya values how her peers "challenged" her ideas rather than just her teacher. Nick, more specifically, highlights the diversity of our class participants and its effect on his writing:

> The sentence workshops in our class English 111 were very helpful for me because of the ranges of ability and knowledge of literacy in our class. Certain words and sentences I choose for the sentence workshop were easy to understand for someone in our class and harder for others. By having sentence workshops in the class, I feel like my writing has improved to a cleaner, simpler, form of writing which still gets my point across without confusion.

AJ and Sherlyn also draw on the role that the social conversation surrounding sentence-level choices had for their process. Sherlyn writes,

> The purpose of my changes is to focus a little more about how the environment influenced my behaviors […] to make my statement "there are really no choices" stronger than my unit four essay. I also wrote it this way because I felt that I had some newer ideas developed that is slightly different than the past, and this is also because my thoughts were influenced by the environment, discussion and comments I had received from class.

The constructing influence Sherlyn received from the class contrasts with AJ's discussion of our collaboration in regard to how it affects his ideas; audience is not *as* generative for AJ. AJ writes,

> One thing that I have learned in this sentence revision process is to always ask others about their opinions about the structure of a sentence. Even though some suggestions are too silly to be taken into consideration, they can still open one's mind about the other various options of restructuring a sentence, in order to help the reader understand the point you are trying to get across easily.

AJ writes "they can still open one's mind," but he limits the "purpose" of this openness since it is about getting readers to understand a point that has already been articulated by its writer. That is, audience helps you write more effectively and with clarity, but ultimately it does not shape your ideas at a deep level.

Reasoning about Form and Content

Dom shares this surface-level understanding of form, as he writes about "flow." The sentence Dom selected he identifies as the "most important sentence he wrote all semester in Basic Writing 111,"

> I actually really like how this sentence looks and sounds. … If I did this reflection and thought about this sentence earlier while I was writing my unit one essay I think I would have re-wrote my sentence in this form. *It has the same meaning but I just think the order of the words are in a better flow of order of events.* (Emphasis mine)

Dom's strong identification with this sentence, a sentence that he spends over a page discussing the multiple ways it can be written, remains for him the "same meaning" but his interaction with it helped him achieved a "better flow" for this idea. His reflection, in fact, indicates the importance of reflection with teacher inquiry, because if he had changed his sentence, I would not have made the claim as to "flow" being the reason

why; instead I would have spent time discussing the differences in meaning, in terms of what he was valuing in the revision, based on its arrangement.

In contrast, however, other students reached a deep rhetorical reasoning about form, content, and their ethos. Three students used rhetorical reasoning about academic form, which they wrote is transferable to other writing situations. Since I did not approach the class with prescriptive notions about language or academic rules, I supplied neither Sonya nor Kyle with this reasoning. Instead, it came through in the sentence workshops where students would highlight these aspects of the sentence and challenge the writer as to why they were "necessary." Sonya writes about this in terms of a pattern, and , in the second passage, Kyle refers to it as a "habit."

> As I review all four unit essays I realize that the pattern I use is "I believe" or "I think." After I use those sayings I always state an opinion that I have. It makes my sentences passive, therefore my essay isn't as strong and projective that I want it to be. For one of the sentence workshops, I remember that my sentence was "I believe that prejudice is a subconscious characteristic. I think that people are prejudice not because they want to be but because they already are." Someone told me that I should remove the "I think" and "I believe" because it will make my sentence stronger. And when they heard that sentence, they thought I was scared to say what I really meant. Like the "I believe" was holding me back because I was afraid of peoples' responses. For that essay I took out those two sayings, and it turned out to be much better sentences. This helped my unit four essay because I tried to not say "I believe" or "I think" as much. This time when I wrote a sentence, it sounded like my opinion was right. By doing this I made my essay stronger. Now when I write, I am conscious of the way I project my opinions.

Below, Kyle shows a similar reasoning and expresses a similar value of "stronger" writing:

> The first thing that I notice is that I use the phrase "I believe that." I tend to want to use phrases such as "I believe" and "I think" in my writing because I am not confident in my own opinion. I feel that if I express something as only an opinion or personal belief, I can't be accused of being wrong. But, it is obvious that the statement is my own idea because if it were someone else's idea, I would quote it

> and cite it. I don't need to tell the reader that the idea is my own. I think that this was referred to as "hedging" during one of the sentence workshops. I had to look up hedging to make sure that I understood what it meant. To hedge means to use "a mitigating device to lessen the impact of an utterance." Typically, they are adjectives or adverbs, but can also consist of clauses. A hedge can also be words like "probably," "sometimes," "might." I like to use these types of words a lot, but I realize that I need to take a stand in my writing and avoid using them. Instead, I should use precise, powerful, and persuasive language. This is one habit that I am now aware of and I will start looking for these types of words and phrases in my writing and delete them or choose stronger words.

Kyle and Sonya reveal how our class brought them a heightened sense of how to write their ethos for their academic ideas and claims. Both writers revealed a rhetorical awareness as to the nature of academic writing, evidenced by these reflections.

A complication to this view about the writer's perspective in academic writing is Tejada's reflection. Rather than share, like Kyle did, how she deals with this perspective, she instead discusses why, in choosing to write "I like to think," she breaks her pattern of positioning herself behind another's words. She also discusses a sentence pattern that she has noticed in her writing that affects both what she writes about and how she writes. The pattern, according to Tejada, is that she writes about "social issues" in an "extremely formal [and] extended manner." She concludes her reflection by showing how she has disrupted the pattern a bit by the end of the semester. While she is still writing about social issues, she now "[goes] from extremely long, formal, and general sentences to more direct, short, and thought related sentences." One of her examples of this pattern is her sentence workshop during unit two. Another example is from our third unit. She writes,

> During the sentence workshop for Unit 3, I shorten the sentence that I chose. 'I like to think of the society within America as a cultural paradox of equality.' The theme of society is presented again. Not only did I shorten the length of the sentence but I am also doing something I didn't do in previous workshops. I have a sentence in which I challenge the ways in which America is supposed to be

> equal but really isn't. Within our society, there are underlying elements that grant privilege to people, by which they benefit or are victimized by it. I also explore the different ways in which people are affected by privilege. In the essay I wrote for this Unit, I explore the ways in which privilege is carried out through the language we use with one another. Also, in this sentence, I directly express my thoughts writing "I like to think" instead of stating it in a general form without establishing the idea with my thoughts like in previous units.

Tejada's reflection reveals Critical Grammar helped her develop more critical awareness of her audience and how this awareness is shapes decisions in not only what to write, but how to write.

Students were also showing deeper critical understandings between form and content in their reflections. Taquana writes,

> When writing this essay, I have realized how important the placement of sentences is. Once I started to focus on the sentence "Silence was essentially me," I noticed the different meanings that could be derived from it, especially when I changed the *was* to an *is*. Was implied that that was how I felt and no longer feel that way. But by changing it to is, I am saying that it continues to affect who I am. (Emphasis mine)

Taquana's "focus" on a specific sentence and how it helped her connect to her writing was something that other students connected to as well and explained in their reflections. In fact, Dom and AJ's view of form as containers of meaning for the *same* content was an exception rather than a rule.

In summary, the reflective assignment generated a range of responses such as the ones I shared. While two writers drew on surface-level understandings of form and content for their reflections, most students did not. In fact, there was also a recognition that the critical understanding of form and content could affect their literacy practices beyond the writing of sentences. Nick writes,

> In a larger situation than just the change in one sentence, every time I find my self writing, whether it is a list, an essay, or a text message, I am choosing certain

> words over others which I had not done before. Often with text messages, I question each choice of each word. I think the main reason I do this is because of how my text message in read to who I am sending it to and my judgment on their opinion of the text message. I think this ties back into my idea that literacy is something that represents a person in society. The words they choose to speak and the words they don't.

Nick, again, highlights for me the importance audience had for my students and the role that audience played in helping them discern micro choices. Nick also connects the social nature of communication with the ideological aspects regarding literacy, specifically in terms of the relationship between literacy and social identity, and also, social judgment.

Building off Nick's point about "representation," I found a thread of writers reflecting on the role "mistakes" and "errors" play in their writing process. Sherlyn writes,

> Mistakes that are made in the drafts are often forgotten, because we always like to think that we will go back and see the mistakes. Most of the time we do see them, but I found that revising my work really makes it clear for me, what I really want to share to the readers are most obvious to tell. I also question my writings on how they are really making sense for others- are they American English, or are they Chinese English? I became more aware of word choice but more of the usage of grammar, different tenses. I have learned that the incorrect use of tenses may mislead people on what I really wanted to say. I found that when I am incapable of letting others fully understand my English, I am incapable of having an attitude.

Sherlyn draws on her experience of her final sentence workshop in the class, a workshop where the class discussed her tenses and options for her tenses based on her purpose in writing the sentence. We discussed them in a manner that was similar to Ty's workshop discussed in my last chapter, where a descriptive discussion of a choice through possibility occurred, but ultimately the decision was left to the writer. In chapter four, my story highlighted the collaborative, descriptive-influenced conversation concerning "rules" of English that resulted in a "prescriptive" claim for his choice-making. Put

another way, his conventional choice of "English's" became constructed as *error* based on a number of critical and rhetorical reasons.

At the same time, the last workshop suggests how a descriptive approach to the "rules" that govern standardized English meaning-making affords critical thinking. In fact, this collaborative moment, where we were bringing our socio-linguistic perspectives together and offering Ty new ways to represent his idea and to re-write his relationship to the grammar checker, is now the way I understand error's "place" in Critical Grammar pedagogy. In order to have errors matter in the way they mattered from our last workshop, the error must be discussed and made important in terms of its potential meaning. Most importantly, however, this discussion did not begin with "here is an error" or "what do you mean by this construction?" but instead, by Sherlyn's question during that workshop, "why did you write this in the way that you did?"

Next, in my the second discussion of this chapter, I discuss the notion of "error," from a Critical Grammar perspective. Error is both lexical and grammatical, and it is a social as well as a *personal* phenomenon. Most importantly, errors impact a writer's meaning-making and meaning potential. In this discussion, I critique my role as a facilitator of meaning-making and do so in order to reflect on the effects of my pedagogy.

Error and Its Relationship to Critical Grammar

Looking back at my relationship to our workshop discussions throughout the semester, I notice how I had de-railed our class from going more in-depth about a writer's error, because I hadn't figured out what the effects of an error might mean for my students' experience. For myself, this is most apparent in the first sentence workshop

when Cecilia, a multilingual speaker of Mandarin, Japanese, and English, had shared these sentences:

> Language is important tool for communicate each other, but each language has its own expression based on its culture. Sometimes people will misunderstand the meaning by its expression.

These sentences have grammatical errors that affect Cecilia's meaning to our class audience. Taking a descriptive view, the first sentence uses a verbal phrase that is ungrammatical, that is, within the grammatical system of Standardized English. For example, Cecilia writes that language is a tool "for communicate" and strictly grammatically speaking "for" followed by the infinitive form of a verb is not permissible, that is, *meaningful,* in Standardized English.

By focusing on this error of her sentence, I am able to discover some meaning potential that Cecilia should negotiate. First, how does she want to view language? Her sentence shared for workshop first draws on language as a concept, but in the second sentence language becomes more concrete as it relates meaning and use. Language begins the sentence and is structured so that language is a "tool." Is language a tool? Are languages tools? Are language's tools what Cecilia wants us to focus on? Language's function as tool has something to do with communication because it is "for" the action of it as well as involving others. Nick asks her "When you say you misunderstand the meaning by its expression? What do you mean by expression?"

> **Cecilia:** Uh, I don't like. Right now, I'm still confused about writing in my essays. So, it's just like, which words and the ways they talk to you and express what they want to you. Sometimes, just because we have different cultures, different, we grew up, we have different backgrounds, sometimes the words, just like, how do you say it, the attitude, is kind of different, for you to catch the words, and for me, to understand the words.

When Nick asked her about the lexical choice "expression," he chose a concept in her sentence that was repeated twice, and this was a good strategy. By asking Cecilia "what she means by expression" we were able to learn more about what Cecilia was writing about and what she thought was most important about her sentence, and she was able to describe that to an interested audience, which helped her develop a deeper understanding about her sentence content.

I interrupted. I felt that Cecilia was getting frustrated. I did not encourage the conversation by making it more explicit that Cecilia knew three languages and that some of the problem might be that she was trying too hard to make a generalized statement about "language," In fact, her experience with languages always meant that languages, audiences, and expressions were never singular. My response below reveals how concerned I was that workshops would make English Language Learners like Cecilia feel overwhelmed by feedback about their errors.

> **Me:** Ok, just to kind of push what's happening in these workshops. So, Nick asked you that question and culture came up. And you answered that question also when Sonya asked it. So, it sounds like that last sentence isn't fully coming across in everything that you talk about. And you could say, "oh well I talk about it so it's fine" Or, "I never talk about that any other time except during the sentence workshop so how can I… that's actually what I mean." That's the kind of thing I'm thinking will happen as you guys…because I have you revise the essay again after this. So, that's all. But you kept talking about culture, so I just wanted to say that to you, Cecilia. So you do know what that means and it gets at cultural differences, which is a good idea.

My response does not engage Cecilia's sentence-choices. Instead I assumed she understood that expression was a strong lexical choice and that she should build on her workshop experience throughout her essay. I did not focus on the sentence.

> **Cecilia:** Yea, but you just, like, you know, struggle with what words to write for the essays.

Me: Well, and this is a sentence, I mean come on.

Part of my hesitation was informed by my own belief that bringing up error—even descriptively—would carry with it prescriptive notions of writing that I thought would derail us from considering the generative, social, and critical aspects of form and content relationships. In fact, I operated with strong arhetorical reasoning in regard to writers' errors. However, when I read Pik's reflection, which draws on her experiences discussed in the last chapter, her reasoning helps me interrogate this belief. In fact, she argues to me that bringing up error, particularly in a social learning environment, is productive and generative for writers.

Pik writes, "My English skill will improve when every time I make an error on my paper. It is the most effective way for me to learn English." She then goes on to discuss the "error" discussed in our last sentence workshop where her classmates helped her understand what her use of *on* and *in* might signify for her own process as well as her audience. Such an experience positions her to draw on this conversation for her own purposes and "revision." Pik writes,

> After I discuss my sentence in class, I receive a helpful comment from my classmate. … I cannot imagine that she sees what I see from the sentence. … *I can revision my sentence differently after I finish the discussion to my classmate.* (Emphasis mine)

Pik ends up with a critical experience from the workshop that will afford a greater attention to her meaning-making with English in the future. For contrast, I draw on an earlier sentence workshop of Pik's in order to show how differently I am now understanding how to discuss error in Critical Grammar. I had previously ignored the reality of her error and its relevance to her meaning-making.

Pik's sentence chosen for workshop was "I never thought silence would be a problem since I got used to it when I was little. It turned out to be a tradition rule in our family." The descriptive error in this sentence, which is both lexical and grammatical, is the noun phrase "tradition rule." Pik's error, in fact, makes visible a boundary of Standardized English since she places the noun "tradition" in front of, so as to modify, the noun "rule." However, this placement challenges our grammatical sense that in Standardized English nouns modify other nouns when the relationship of modification has meaning in the system of language that speakers use. That is, while it is permissible to say "family tradition," since family, a noun, modifies tradition by semantically breaking tradition down as a "type, of it, nevertheless it is not permissible to modify "rule" with tradition in the same way, because these two nouns are not, systemically, able to modify each other.

The first question after she shared this sentence was "What do you mean by tradition rule?" Someone else asks her about the "rule," if the rule is "in your family" or is it a "rule where you are from?"

> **Pik:** I think it is like a rule in my family.

The difference between "in your family" and a "rule where you are from" was not pursued by the workshop; instead, the workshop asks her about her attitude toward the rule. Then, the workshop is over because people applaud, and I interrupt. I attempt to address the "error," but I do not use the term explicitly; instead I say back the "right" wording, assuming that this implicit correction will be taken up.

> **Me:** Tradition, I think, suggests larger than just a family a tradition. So I think you might need another adjective in there, like: it turned out to be a family

> tradition. Period. Because when you say traditional rule we are sort of thinking, "oh it's even bigger." But you're really talking about your family tradition.

I felt good, at the time, about the distinction I provided between these forms. When I saw how Pik revised her sentence, however, I realized that my attempt at addressing the error did not help her think critically about form and content. Some of this is likely due to how I did not ask Pik about her intention in the sentence and what role tradition in particular was playing in regard to her meaning. Pik used the information I provided her, but since I did not explicitly address the error between form and content, neither could she.

> Original*:*
>
> It turned out to be a tradition rule in our family.
>
> Revised:
>
> It turned out to be a tradition rule in my family.

Pik's sentences can be read as an example of a writer drawing on the kind of feedback they received in a workshop; however, in this case, it seems more obvious to me that our communication, that is, between what I asked her to consider and how she took up that consideration, resulted in her meaning remaining unclear, and yes, *wrong* for English writing. More importantly, without framing my responses in terms of providing multiple options for the sentence and discussion in a social learning environment the differences between these options and how they relate to the meaning the writer was negotiating, this writer could not take work at a deeper level with form and content. For instance, Pik might have experimented with the wording of "tradition rule" and been able to get at other possibilities with the micro that I, as a monolingual speaker of English, could not have anticipated. This sort of play is only possible, however, with an explicit awareness of the rules of a language system and that this system is a lexical-grammar.

Taking a social perspective on literacy, via Sylvia Scribner, Horner theorizes the need for using our writing classroom as a space for negotiating and understanding what is and is not an error in a specific context. Using Horner's definition of error as a social fact, I now understand the relationship between Critical Grammar and error to be one of negotiation involving not only how to "address" the error, but also the "reality" of the error itself. That is, errors for Critical Grammar become errors not because of their relationship to one particular abstract system of language and its rules. Instead, errors become errors in Critical Grammar because the social nature of the context has decided on this language use as an "error." Some of this determination is the teacher's responsibility, but not all of it. The point is to open up the space for a discussion about error so that students in the social environment of a classroom can discuss it in relation to what it affords and what it does not. I share Cecilia's third sentence workshop experience next. In this example, the social learning environment addressed error.

Since I did not make error explicit, I privileged the awareness to it that I as a monolingual teacher of writing had in relation to my students. I drew on my understanding of their errors, and reframed this understanding implicitly in my response to them. By the third sentence workshop, when Cecilia shared another sentence, I was starting to realize that dismissing errors and encouraging English Language Learners to just keep writing was not necessarily helping them develop and negotiate meaning at the sentence level. Yet, I still believed in the power of talking through ideas with the workshop and had the assumption that this talk would result in writing that drew on form and content that conveys the writer's, as Sherlyn writes in her reflection, "attitude." Cecilia's sentence was,

> We join the group without thinking why we want to belong to that group except want to get benefit from it.

Nick asks her what she means by "group"? In the context of unit three, this question is consistent with how writers discussed concepts from our course readings. Nick's question reveals the nature of the workshop where writers were negotiating the unit's terminology and how to draw on that terminology in their own writing. She says she is still confused by the wording and Taquana asks her a more direct and meaning-centered question.

> **Taquana:** Are you saying that people don't realize what they want when we join the group? You say without thinking why? Is it more subconscious? You are trying to be a part of the group but you just don't know exactly know…can't exactly say this is why I want to join the group, but it's kind of like in the back of your mind. I want to join because of this…

Taquana, who was in Cecilia's peer group for review highlights one way of helping a writer negotiate their meaning by asking them more about it, suggesting forms, and not being afraid of saying what is "wrong" about the construction, provided this conversation is interested in the meaning-making of the writer. This kind of conversation that took place I provide below.

> **Cecilia**: Yea.
>
> **Taquana:** Is that what you are trying to say?
>
> **Cecilia:** Yea, kind of.
>
> **Taquana:** So, maybe say, subconsciously?
>
> **Cecilia:** Subconsciously.
>
> **Taquana:** So you'd say like, "we subconsciously join the group."

Taquana does not simply provide Cecilia with the lexical choice "subconsciously" because she also gives Cecilia a wording, revealing how word function, or can function,

in a sentence. That is, she did not just provide a word, she provided also how to use that word in a sentence.

Next, when Cecilia explains why she can't articulate what she wants to say, she highlights a part of her sentence that she doesn't like and feels is "unnecessary." Taquana simply says that she thinks that that "except part is kind of like wrong." Cecilia's quick response is "ok, so." The interaction below reveals how my class made error more explicit, but needed at the same time a strategy for how to engage with it once it became explicit. That is, the transcript reveals a need for developing Critical Grammar so that students are better positioned to help each other not only notice errors, but also generate choices through an awareness of those errors. That is, there is a need for teachers to alert writers to consider the limits and boundaries on language use in order to help writers better understand the context of their choices.

Taquana furthers her explanation.

> **Taquana:** I was thinking in my head was that, keep the first part, we joined the group without thinking why we want to belong to that group, but like subconsciously or unconsciously realize that …kind of expand on it in a way where it's not as…[someone says "um"] Except, it's just like, you definitely have to add some words around that to clarify the meaning.
>
> **Someone says:** Yea.
>
> **Taquana:** It's like, you leave me hanging, want to belong to that group…except.
>
> **Me:** Yea, what's it in relation to?
>
> **Cecilia:** oh ok.
>
> **Taquana:** Because it's like, the way that you have it, you are saying that people join the group without thinking why, but the second part is like, you are saying, this is why you really want to do this. So it's like you kind of have to tie it in more like that, you have to write it the way that you actually mean it.
>
> **Cecilia:** Ok

> **Taquana:** Because like what you are trying to say, isn't exactly coming across; it's not exactly there.

Such is why so many writers did not end the semester with a better understanding of their own errors and how they might productively negotiate error in their future writing situations. We should have spent more time discussing together how to make error more productive in our workshops; we could have helped each other learn ways to make our errors more generative for critical meaning. Indeed, this is the benefit of Lu's classroom and the "can able to." This social atmosphere is what I wanted to bring out and use to help students' critical thinking about the micro. That is, I should have handled error differently. First, error should have been a reality that informed students' choice-making. One way to do this is discuss with students the reality of error when it comes to using language and draw from those experiences, inviting them to use them to the shape our workshop discussions. I no longer assume that discussing errors with students necessarily would connote a prescriptive view about language and keep them from considering other meaning-making options; instead, error might be the impetus for risk-taking and recognizing the relationship between form and content.

Now, it seems that a notion of error might be central to Critical Grammar, especially in regard to larger assessment contexts where errors are treated dominantly as matters of correctness rather than critical thinking. In order to make errors relevant to critical thinking, errors should differ from mistakes. Errors differ from mistakes not because there is a pattern to errors, where there is no pattern to a mistake; errors differ from mistakes because errors are unconscious until identified, whereas mistakes are simply that, mistakes. A writer may or may not recognize a mistake, but if that mistake was brought to a writer's attention, it would be simple enough to fix. Part of why

discovering errors can be so alarming is that when faced with an error, and not a mistake, the writer might not know what to do. Such a definition of error is important to ground in Ty's workshop experience, since without viewing error from the writer's perspective, an analyst might assume that "English's" is a mistake, rather than an error. In fact, Ty's writing of "English's" *is* an error. He did not, at the beginning of his workshop, understand his options well enough to make a choice as to how to represent the pluralization of English. He tried to fix his mistake, and ended up with an error. Pik's last workshop, on the other hand, started out as an error, but thanks to the workshop, she turned that error into a choice, since both she and her audience now recognize the deep meaning conveyed in her use of prepositions.

A notion of error, however, is not incompatible with my theoretical framework of language as a social semiotic. While error is not the focus of the framework, since the framework privileges choices, rather than rules, error can still be understood as part of its dynamic, specifically since errors would be understood as language use *outside* the system of meaning. This notion of error is in fact what Sherlyn is referring to when she writes in her end of semester reflection that she has learned that "I found that when I am incapable of letting others fully understand my English, I am incapable of having an attitude." The boundaries around Critical Grammar are important. Without these limits, without a theory of error, Critical Grammar remains an "anything goes" free-for-all. Something that does not draw on the linguistic resources of students that fill our classrooms. In fact, errors and their relationship to systems of grammar might be easier to map for students than choices. Furthermore, as Horner argues, the notion of error is itself a fact of social contexts, a reality that invites, rather than overlooks, difference in the

classroom. Error now seems central to this pedagogy. In workshops, students who shared a sentence with an error likely did not recognize it, and so to ignore it, now seems unbelievably hypocritical and contrary to my beliefs about the ideological power of language.

However, despite what I recognize as a limitation regarding how I approached error with my students, the discussion in this chapter does show again the social and collaborative learning environment that Critical Grammar afforded, just as it also shows students' developing a rhetorical awareness of the form-content relation. Indeed, their end of semester reflections and discussions of style and "error" show the potential of a Critical Grammar pedagogy for prompting thoughtful choice-making, instead of rote following of prescriptive rules.

My student reflections showed me the relationship Critical Grammar had to its own context, Basic Writing. In this way, the academic writing values that emerged argued that sentences helped my students negotiate in a variety of ways their ethos in relation to academic writing. Most students reflected explicitly on the importance of multiple perspectives and experiences when it comes to language and how the experience of a sentence workshop shaped their understanding of language use more broadly. Also, these reflections are evidence for the benefits of a social learning environment for writing, particularly ones designed to focus on a particular aspect of the writing process. Such findings from the reflection assignment are interesting as they reveal the values of our context, which was a Basic Writing class and as such did involve academic literacy. Moreover, it also reveals the values of my own assumptions about language and Critical Grammar. This is because errors, which could have been treated as micro choices, went

ignored by me in how I discussed students' sentence-level meaning-making in workshops as well as outside of workshops. For example, I consciously chose not to use "error" or "mistake" at all in my assessments of their writing; I framed assessments entirely around the notion of "choices." Since I was never explicit concerning the rules of language and how to use them in a writer's meaning-making process, I did not operate with a "theory of error" in mind that was consistent with Critical Grammar pedagogy.

CHAPTER 6

THE POWER OF THE MICRO IN MY CRITICAL GRAMMAR PEDAGOGY

This study validated my belief that Critical Grammar pedagogy could lead students to consider the macro in the micro: that is, in discussing choices of wording or arrangement, for instance, they would link to issues of a writer's ethos, questions of who/what has the authority for setting language standards, and cultural beliefs. In sentence workshops, students gradually developed rhetorical and even critical reasoning concerning sentence choices. The transcripts also show students developing longer and more nuanced discussion about workshopped sentences, revealing the social learning environment and rhetorical nature of these workshops. In student reflective writing, writers demonstrated awareness of how this approach will transfer to their future writing situations, in both their academic writing as well as one writer's day-to-day writing, such as text messages. Errors were found to be implicit in Critical Grammar, but by our last workshop were treated in a descriptive and analytical manner, leading toward further consideration of the function of error in Critical Grammar pedagogy.

These findings are all evidence for the synthesis possible between the micro and the macro. That is, we should attend to micro concerns in a critical pedagogy and do so without de-centering our classrooms from notions of the social. In fact, the relevance discussions about power relations, ideological critique, and identity construction hold to a writer's process and sentence-choices are crystallized in these mini-cases of writers' forked roads. However, Critical Grammar was most successful when it complemented the approach of a curricular focus and ideological perspective on language shared across reading. Such a finding is revealed in my discussion of the third and fourth units. Unit

three's theoretical reading about "privilege" and language as a "veil" over "systems of privilege" complemented my approach to micro choices in sentence writing. Not only did students reach a grounded understanding of how language furthers systems of privilege, but also students applied this understanding in our workshop. In this way, my study might instruct teachers in curriculum development that ideological positions on language must be weaved throughout a course readings as well as practices inside the classroom. Moreover, it argues that my students discussed the nature of their critical curriculum, particularly when it challenged their sensibilities, and were able to do this alongside and perhaps because of a sentence workshop practice. The micro did make a difference to my critical pedagogy.

Critical Grammar pedagogy worked in tandem with an existing curricular framework—a framework that was collaboratively developed, based in current scholarship on teaching, and particularly the teaching of Basic Writing, drew on diversity as not only content but as a discourse for developing the course's progression, and took an explicit ideological position on the relationship between language, education, and race. Critical Grammar, in this way, was entailed, implicated, and relevant to what was already set in motion inside the Basic Writing classroom.

When I began this research, I defined Critical Grammar as a systemic and systematic process *as well as* an orientation to language, knowledge, and power. In that discussion, I argued for a descriptive approach to grammar that synthesized grammatical choices and context, by showing how Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) can generate—as well as attend to the ideological effects of—systemic options for sentence writing. Since my analysis does not show that these writers

explicitly approached grammar as systemically and systematically as I argued *could* happen, I now know that in order to learn more about my theoretical assumption (as well as my argument for the "generative" nature of a systemic theory), my teaching and research design would have had to have been different. My presentation of SFL as a descriptive grammar and CDA as an ideological perspective for this grammar was not the focus of my sentence teaching. Instead, I chose to frame SFL and CDA as "applied linguistics" in sentence of the day teaching. However, the question, to what extent is knowledge of SFL grammar warranted in critical pedagogy, is an important one. My answer to this question, after reflecting on both the results and the experiences of this teacher research, is that my findings should not be used to argue for or against explicit use of SFL in a writing classroom.

I do not have case studies that show SFL or CDA specifically being drawn and applied by student writers. Nevertheless, my argument is that these frameworks were helpful for students in providing them with a heuristic for choice. In this way, SFL and CDA are pedagogical tools, ones that could be instructive for other writing teachers as well since prescriptive and arhetorical beliefs about grammar should no longer be critiqued in our scholarship and then ignored completely in how we practice critical pedagogies. In this way, my study does argue that teachers should draw on linguistic methodologies that are consistent with the ideological perspective of their pedagogy.

Revising my definition of Critical Grammar, I would highlight the importance of Critical Grammar as a social endeavor, and one that necessitates discussion about these systemic options. In this way, Critical Grammar would more explicitly build on the linguistic resources in the classroom. After systematically completing my inductive

analysis and thorough review of what my students did with this Critical Grammar pedagogy, I am now in a position to also "doubt" my theoretical position on grammar and critical pedagogy. I am positioned to argue more strongly that grammar as a system of rules should have been made more explicit in my classroom and in my assessment of their writing. This position on error is still in contrast to Weaver and Elbow. Grammar taught in the context of student writing remains primary, but on the other hand, I maintain my belief that grammar should not be so narrowly contextualized as "editing" and as "skill." Instead, grammar as a meaning-making system should still be presented to our students, but at the same time the boundaries surrounding that system need to be made clearer to students than my study provides. However, in my current understanding, which is in contrast to how I began this study, I now realize that "error," like grammar, need not be so narrowly understood. Errors, in the way that Lu argues, have generative potential for writers to consider the various influences on their writing choices. In this way, error should have been more central to helping writers recognize the effects of their micro choices *and* better facilitate the social process of meaning-making.

I could have helped frame for my students a notion of error within Critical Grammar pedagogy. We could have worked together to highlight the parts of the sentence where meaning was outside of the systemic understanding of grammar readers draw on to understand English writing. Workshop participants, with my leadership, could have asked writers explicitly how they understood their own sentence and which parts sounded unfamiliar or "strange" to them. I could have drawn explicitly on my theoretical framework by asking students to highlight to the writer if the error was lexical, grammatical, or both. Once this was established, we would all have been better poised to

discuss the options radiating out from this awareness. We could have mapped the error onto the emerging awareness of grammar as a system of meaning-making option. If we had all been more clearly aware of *how* the sentence was not working, we could have discussed in a more dynamic way *how* the sentence could work. The diversity of my classroom was a strength to this study, and yet, at the same time, I needed to scaffold better for writers how to draw on their linguistic backgrounds to help them in generating as well as choosing based on these perspectives.

While my classroom case study of Critical Grammar is not conclusive, I am proud that it will contribute to a scholarly context about teaching and learning that is socially-based and learner-centered. More broadly, Critical Grammar's mini-cases offer other teachers and practitioners stories of college writers, from a range of literacy backgrounds, stories of how there are experiential aspects to our class discussions that inform the choices writers make in their texts, and that for some writers, at different points in the course, these choices matter and can inform their sense of relationship to the world around them. This connection is not directly related to Critical Grammar pedagogy and my study's "findings"; instead, this connection is possible because of its relationship to the other scholarship on teaching in our field that reveals a similar finding about the nature of this social conversation surrounding the "basics" or "style" or "grammar" (for examples, see Dyson; Lu; Micciche). Moreover, my study offers another example of the importance for writers and teachers to keep form and content working in tandem in our classrooms, and specifically, in our work with English Language Learners. The ideologies about form and content affect us in different ways, but teachers should not let

that stop us from serious micro-macro engagement in our literacy classrooms, even if we mostly engage the micro through "error."

Future Research

Any systematic scholarship on teaching risks being dismissed as "insignificant" as it is, after all, only one teacher, one classroom, and a specific group of students. With such a limited context and no matter how big the finding, how does this scholarship translate to other learning environments and sites of knowledge production? Teacher inquiry and teacher-research *do* affect literacy and education in ways outside of the participants of given studies. Studies such as mine may position other literacy educators to ask questions about their own practices which relate to a central question: What difference can the micro make to critical pedagogy? In addition, as large scale, computerized assessment continues to "enter" our classrooms and assess our students' writing, further research is needed to address how attention to grammatical forms relates to critical thinking. While this study was bounded by my classroom, future studies need not be. With the increasing popularity of life writing and online writing, students are encountering language and grammar in contexts beyond the classroom at an increasing rate: What might these contexts offer our scholarship on the relationship between grammar and critical thinking?

For myself, I question now which errors might prove to be more productive for critical thinking. Which errors are particularly relevant to this pedagogy and which errors are not? While my findings should be understood as a part of our scholarly context about

the sociality of learning and the ideological power of language in our classrooms, I hope that my study contributes to these conversations specifically in terms of how this study provides an example of the need for paying close attention to the diversity of language resources our students bring to our classrooms, and how, in our teacher position, these resources must be explicitly called on and brought out. I would welcome learning from future studies about the power of the micro in students' critical thinking and experiences in our classrooms, specifically those studies that were more in tune with error studies.

APPENDIX:

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Participant:

Researcher: Sarah Stanley, Department of English, University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

Title of Research Study: Critical Thinking and Grammar

I am studying how and why student writers choose to write their papers. You are being asked to participate because you are in my Basic Writing class. Specifically, I am interested in why you chose to write a sentence in the way you did and how this decision relates to our class conversation about sentence level choices.

I am doing this research because I want to know how the sentence workshop is working in the revision process for your papers. This project will help me be a more effective teacher; it will also I hope encourage other teacher-researchers to examine the sentence-level choices their students make.

By agreeing to participate, you agree to allow me to read your writing, both the final draft and the process drafts, to inform my study—using particular moments in your text and process. I will also be audio recording and transcribing some of our class time in order to analyze the way our class conversation about choices is being used by you as a writer. I will be audio recording the sentence workshop days and the first ten minutes of our class time together. However, I will not transcribe any comments from anyone not participating and everyone has a write to stop the recorder at any time.

The results of this study will appear as my dissertation. In this research, if I quote something you say in the class or on paper, I will ask you how you prefer to be identified.

I do not foresee any risk to you in this study. I hope it will improve your writing because often being asked to make choices about meaning gives you more control over your ideas. I will keep this consent form, the classroom transcripts, and the texts associated with my study where others cannot access them.

Your decision to participate in this study will not affect your grade in this course. Further no one else will be participating in the analysis of the research information. Also, you can change your mind regarding participation. You can notify me by email or phone and I will withdraw all information related to you from my study.

If you have any questions about this research study or any other matter related to your participating in it, please feel free to contact me, Sarah Stanley at sstanley@english.umass.edu, (913)488-9950.

If you would like to discuss your rights as a participant in a research study, or wish to speak with someone not directly involved in the study, you may contact the Human Subjects Administrator at humansujbects@ora.umass.edu; (413)545-3428. You may also contact my advisor for this research project Anne Herrington at anneh@english.umass.edu, (413)545-2575.

By signing yes on this form, I am agreeing to voluntarily enter this study. I have had a chance to read this consent form, and it was explained to me in a language which I use and understand. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers. A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been given to me.

YES, I agree to participate in this study:

_____
Signature

_____
Date

_____
Printed Name

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