

Jonathan Lehtonen
 Professor Scott Johnston
 Applied Linguistics 806
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Language of the Classroom Project Part 2

These transcripts record about eight minutes total from two prewriting conferences conducted on June 9, 2014 by instructor Paolo Infante with individual students in his Penn State IECF Level 3 course. The focus of this course is academic writing, and it is the last course in the sequence for incoming undergraduate to pass in order to enroll in courses in the fall. In both segments, the student and the teacher are sitting side by side at a table, looking at a printout of the student's introductory paragraph and outline for an essay. Paolo provides feedback using conventional language about the structure of the paper. The theme of the assignment is the causes of learning a new language and culture.

Key:

T = Teacher/ Paolo

S = Student

(...) = unknown utterances

bold font is used for Conventional language

Transcript 1

In the following transcript, Paolo works with a male student from the Middle East. I chose to transcribe a section of about 5 minutes, which is longer than necessary, to ensure that enough student responses would be included for analysis. The student had several interesting perspectives to share about immigration, and Paolo uses this as an opportunity. Here, Paolo is reading the introductory "hook" or "anecdote" in the student's first paragraph aloud:

1. T: so you introduced a personal **anecdote**: "When I was in primary school I was watching movies a lot in different languages. I was curious to learn language and experience new cultures just for fun. I always imagined how people were lucky to experience new languages and cultures." And then you have a **connecting sentence**. "Recently I learned that learning new language and cultures doesn't... isn't fun only." Hang on, *isn't*" fun only." (He writes a note) (Affirmer: Paolo uses conventional language to acknowledge the students' successful attempt to meet the assignment requirements. Expansion: the teacher rephrases the grammar to correct the error.)
2. S: Uh huh...
3. T: Oh, no worries! (Laughs) (This smoothens over the criticism)
4. S: (Laughs)
5. T So Then you introduce you **thesis statement**: "The causes are more serious besides just fun, which to survive, respect, and...umm... for educational goals." Ok good. So let's look at your first body

paragraph. So it sounds like you have three **predictors**. Everything looks good so far. Umm...

(Affirmer/ Feedback: he praises and accepts the students' use of these rhetorical strategies.)

6. S: Do I have to re... like this one? (...)Here they are not repeat, meaning right now. (The student makes an intertextual link to the rhetorical concept of cohesion through repetition.)
7. T: Ok. And we'll see. The test will be...That's a good point. The test will be when we start going through each of the body paragraphs to see if the **topic sentences** connect to each of the **predictors**. And that's a good step. (Affirmer, Clarifier: The teacher praises the student for his question, and clarifies how to check for effective repetition.) Ahhh. Let's look at the first part Ok. So What I'd like for you is explain to me how the **topic sentences** connect to your **major supports**. And so the first one. Go ahead. (Questioner: Recruitment and Direction Maintenance Clarification Request [DM-CR] Scaffolding Function. Paolo told me later that his goal was to help students explain their logical connections between their thesis, topic sentences, and major and minor supports.)
8. S: Ahh it like the second to survive, and then I picked two: immigration and the tourists. How they want... the language and how it's useful for them to learn it.
9. T: Ok great so it's important for tourists to...well you used the term "survive," for now. (Affirmer/ Paraphrasing) "To not only be, for the tourists to survive, but also for the immigrants to be able to survive in a new context in a new land where they speak a new language." Ok. Great, it makes sense....(Affirmer/ Feedback) Now then let's look at your **major supports**. Umm.. There's part number one: "People who travel from their country to live in other country for different purposes." Ok...What does...hmmm. (Implied Questioner Role)
10. S: And what ahh (...) (Student points at paper but it was hard to understand on the recording when he was asking). (Here the student is actually clarifying something for the teacher.)
11. T: OK So these are travelers. Your **major support** here for the first one is about people who travel to different countries. (Clarifier. Paraphrasing/ Feedback: By paraphrasing this sentence, the teacher actually causes the students to want to clarify this idea in his next turn.)
12. S: Who live therement... not who travel just for other, who live there for real purpose, not for fun or...
13. T: Ok. Ok You can call them, I mean, here, because they have a name right, people who live in a different country who are not living there permanently. (Paraphrasing: he is showing that the phrase the student uses is kind of wordy.) What kind of noun would we use and what would be the name to call those people? (Questioner: Reduction in Degrees of Freedom [RDF] scaffolding function. Paolo is asking a focused question in order for the student to think of other ways to explain this concept, such as using a synonym. Being able to rewrite what you have written is an important part of the writing process that he is intending to teach.)

14. S: Immigrant
15. T: Immigrant. Right. (Affirmer)
16. S: I used that word, but just I I wanted to make it (...) (Intertextual Link: Here the student is connecting this word choice to the writing concept of using synonyms.)
17. T: To vary your language (Clarifier/ Paraphrasing)
18. S: Yeah
19. T: It's ok to repeat the same word for instance if the word is very critical. "Immigrants" gives us an idea who those people are. So if you repeat that same word describing the individuals that you'll be talking about in your body paragraph, it's ok to repeat the word... (Clarifying: The teacher explains that repetition can be good for cohesion.)
20. S: Yeah
21. T: ...multiple times because it kind of hard to describe immigrants in other words, right. (Clarifying)
22. S: Yes, difficult. But what if I just write immigrant. I will then can't make a sentence without immigrant. It will be difficult. It will be far from my **minor support** like this. So I just make it (...) (Note the student's use of conventional language to communicate his concern about whether he is able to express his main point.)
23. T: Well. Think about it. Let's say we decided to replace here the noun phrase which is...what is the noun phrase in this sentence? (Questioner: Reduction in Degrees of Freedom. This focused question elicits grammatical information.)
24. S: Immigrant.
25. T: Mmmhmm (Affirmer)
26. S: Yeah
27. T: What is the noun phrase in this sentence in the **major support**? (Questioner: Reduction in Degrees of Freedom. Paolo is asking the student to see the relationships between the words and concepts being used.)
28. S: People who travel from their country
29. T: Sure. So "people who travel from their country" is your noun phrase right, And so, if we replace the noun phrase with the noun phrase immigrants, now immigrants live in other countries for different purposes... right? So it wouldn't change the, I think, since your earlier point was that it would change what you wanted to say. (Clarifier/ Answerer: the teacher tries to help reassure the student concerning the issue he raised in turn 22.)
30. S: Yeah Because it would be far from, or more precise, and I cannot write anything about the sentence or something that can make the other. (The student is still concerned that by using the term "immigrant" he would be using the wrong term.)

31. T: Ok, so let's look at that. Let's look at your first **minor support** for the...that way we can see how you want to have this expanded definition of it (Reflector: Paolo is explaining how they can go about addressing the student's concerns.)
32. S: Ok
33. T: Alright. I'll start with people who live in other countries. "Something happens in your country, knowing new culture and languages can get you strong change to survive in other countries, and keep your life fine." (He repeats the same sentence again.) "Something happens in your country, knowing new culture and languages can get you strong change to survive in other countries, and keep your life fine. For example, Syrians who have language, most of them went to Europe countries and USA." Ok... mmhmm. And so that, definitely, here the idea of people who are leaving ...People in Syria, are they leaving, they're leaving their country because they have to, right? (Clarifier: Feedback/ Paraphrasing; also Questioner: Direction Maintenance Comprehension Check [DM-CC])
34. S: mmhmm
35. T: And so that would be a different type of word that we would use right. Not immigrant. What would we use for Syrians that are now fleeing their country because of the war that's going on there? (Questioner: Reduction in Degrees of Freedom.)
36. S: ...Scared people?
37. T: Scared, yeah, *refugees*. A lot of them are leaving, not as immigrants, they're not filling out all the paperwork. They are just leaving their countries for political issues. And so here you're describing not only, here I think the description that you giving of the Syrians would fit the description of the *refugee*, that would be leaving. Why I'm saying this is because we're trying to think about why people travel from their country to another. Right, you have *immigrants*, *refugees*, and what was this one? (Clarifier/ Reflector: Here Paolo introduces what might be a new vocabulary word for a concept of which this student perhaps as direct knowledge, as a native of the Middle East.)

Concluding Remarks

In this exchange, the teacher mainly takes the role of Affirmer (7 instances counted, but more exist), Clarifier (6 instances), and Questioner (7 instances). As an Affirmer, he praises the student's use of formal writing strategies, and as a Clarifier, he explaining the process of checking for consistency between the thesis statement, topic sentences, and minor and major supports. This discussion is mainly a modification of the IRE sequence, because the original assignment sheet was the main Initiation and the student outline was the main Response, so therefore most the dialogue involves Evaluation strategies, such as Feedback and Paraphrasing. As a Questioner, he mainly asks RDF and DM questions to help the student express the logical connections between the different parts of the essay. Using the Affirmer, Clarifier, and Questioner roles, Paolo fulfills his pedagogical purpose of helping students think through the logical connections between each part of the essay.

Transcript 2

Here, Paolo works with a male student from China. In this three-minute segment, the student asks a number of interesting questions about word usage, and Paolo is able to give a meta-linguistic explanation. At the start, Paolo has just read the student's rough draft introduction and is giving instruction on how to expand it.

1. T: One thing, if we look at the **hook**. We kind of want to get away from writing just one-sentence **hooks**. (He uses Conventional Language to explain a stylistic element required in the assignment.)
2. S: Yeah yeah, I just wanted to talk about that.
3. T: Oh ok! (Affirmer.) What are you thinking of talking about in your personal **anecdote**? (Questioner: Reduction in Degrees of Freedom. Conventional Language.)
4. S: Talk about story my father how he would write a letter and take a long time to send it to his family. It (.....) complete...
5. T: Ok. (Affirmer)
6. S: ...take a long time.
7. T: So you just sort of put a stamp on the letter? (Questioner: Direction Maintenance-Clarification Request [DM-CR])
8. S: So, so it will it will come about that the text the text will come text message is really fast and convenient.
9. T: So the idea of speeding up time of communicating to one another. Ok! That works well, and I can see how that becomes a very good **connecting sentence**, because you are saying, "this is how it was in the past..." (Paolo uses the Affirmer role to emphasize the Convention that the student used correctly. Paolo also paraphrases the student's connecting sentence.)
10. S: mmhmm
11. T: "but now let's look at today." Great. (Affirmer.) So let's now look at your body paragraphs. So you have your three **predictors**: there's "communication skills, body problems, and language has changed." So let's look at the first **topic sentence**, ok, first paragraph: "First thing is text messaging, because people have worse communication skills." Ok! So let's find out how! How did you do that? (Affirmer: Feedback acceptance. This last question is more of a rhetorical question that positively communicates that Paolo is engaged with the student's writing.)
12. S: mmhmm
13. T: "Some children and teenagers always stay home because of text messaging." (Feedback: Simply reading the student's sentence aloud causes the student to ask a question in the next turn.)

14. S: Oh I'm confused about the "texting" word. Is this a word or..?
15. T: Yes, so if we say "text" "to text" yeah, it's become a verb, because of changes in our language.
(Answerer)
16. S: Can we can we say "texting"?
17. T: Yes, yeah, "because of texting." (Answerer)
18. S: How does a word always...?
19. T: You can say both, you're right. (Answerer/ Affirmer)
20. S: (...) I write it a lot, if I write "texting."
21. T: You can say "text" or "text messaging." That definitely works....So let's look at the **minor supports** here. "Text messaging can help people to communicate with others, but it makes them become close".... (Simply reading this sentence aloud slowly and pausing gives the student the chance to explain, so this turn could be an implied Direction Maintenance-Clarification Request [DM-CR])
22. S: Yeah I mean with their relationship.
23. T: So can you tell me about that? (Questioner: Direction Maintenance-Clarification Request [DM-CR]. The student's claim as it is written is intriguing, since perhaps people feel closer while texting across far distances. However,)
24. S: Ahhh.....what's it mean...oh! *not* close. (Here the student corrects his own mistake. Thus, in Turn 23, Paolo did a great job of simply giving feedback without correcting the truth value of the statement, and the student corrects himself.)
25. T: O ahh! *not* close (they both laugh) So it becomes... ah...(Affirmer/ Clarifer. By paraphrasing this revised version of the sentence, Paolo invites the student to give further clarification.)
26. S: So some teenagers like a friend of mine always stay at home and text to other friends and don't go outside to talk with others. just stay home and text.
27. T: Ok. Is that your second? In your second **minor support** you said "Students stay at home for a week during holiday." (Questioner/ Clarifier: Direction Maintenance-Clarification Request [DM-CR]. His use of conventional language also Affirms the student's structure.)
28. S: This is someone
29. T: Ok your friend that you're talking about. Ok! I think, I like this so far, and I know this is an outline... (This is said to smoothen the criticism to come.)
30. S: mmhmm
31. T... and you're sort of just putting down your main ideas. Umm... Be very descriptive, you in a sense, tell me more, as many details as possible. (Direct instruction.
32. S: ahh (.....) it was a tough outline,

33. T: I see (Affirmer)
34. S: ...write my idea.
35. T: entirely possible. ..But I like this. The structure is good so far.... (Affirmer. He shows understanding of the student's explanation.)

Concluding Remarks

In Transcript 2, Paolo uses mostly the role of Affirmer (10 instances counted), and occasionally plays the role of Questioner (4 times) and Answerer (3 times). The questions he asks are mostly DM-CR (3 times), which harmonize well with his Feedback technique of echoing the student's words so the student can evaluate and explain them himself. As a result, the student feels comfortable to self-correct and elaborate on what he intends to include in the essay even though he did not write very much detail down on the outline. Thus, Paolo achieves his goal of helping the student think through the logical connections between the sections in the outline, and the student now knows what to include in the upcoming draft of the essay.