

DIALOGIC WRITING

— EFL WRITERS NEGOTIATING TEXT AND CONTEXTS —

PART 1 ⁽¹⁾

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Introduction and Literature Review

Throughout my career as an EFL instructor teaching writing in Japanese universities, I have always wondered what constitutes effective EFL composition, who composes effectively in EFL writing, and what kind of writing instruction produces proficient EFL writers. I have long incubated these fundamental questions concerning L2 writing and wished to reach a tentative solution to such questions while sorting out what I have learned through a series of second language writing studies which I have conducted so far, and through interactions with my students in the teaching environment. Thus, I intend to achieve this long cherished objective through the present study.

I have also been fascinated by the exciting work of elucidating the intricate and entangled theoretical aspects of second language acquisition since the first day as a graduate student. The general questions that I have had regarding EFL writing are quite relevant and well-worth investigating for SLA theory building, in consideration of the prevalent heuristics of second language acquisition research generated by Ellis (1994).

Ellis (1994) suggests that the work of SLA researchers deliberates the following four fundamental issues: 1) What does learner language look like?;

2) How do learners acquire a second language?; 3) What differences are there in the way in which individual learners acquire a second language?; and 4) What effects does instruction have on second language acquisition?

Of great relevance to this study are the heuristics of 2) and 3), because this study intends to shed a new light on how intermediate EFL writers compose, while negotiating their texts and contexts, under the influence of variables pertaining to individual learners such as L2 proficiency and educational background. Also, the first heuristic must be explored in the process of probing textual features displayed by the intermediate EFL learners, and the last one must also be clarified in considering pedagogical implications of this study for EFL writing.

At the same time, this study hopes to make a contribution to college English education in Japan where effective writers in English are strongly desired in such fields as business, politics, academia, and cultures. The fact that the number of studies on EFL writing in college English education is rapidly growing in recent years⁽²⁾ may indicate how urgent the demand is.

Thus, the present study has been founded on my never-ending interest in SLA theory and EFL writing pedagogy as well.

Recent Approaches to Instruction and Research in Second Language Writing

Discursive construction of reality, which is one major theme of this study, has been an extensively debated issue in many fields and areas including L2 writing pedagogy, theory and methodology. The following examples in the history of literacy studies show that the discursive construction of reality has been treated as a focal point in each area.

As Canagarajah (2002) notes, pedagogical approaches to writing have

been influenced by philosophical assumptions and intellectual traditions which have been the dominant discourses at different periods in the West (pp. 32-33). The form-focused approach, the first major approach in the trend, which derived from American linguistic structuralism and behaviorist psychology, tended to focus on form disregarding attention to meaning. Thus, the pedagogical focus at that period was on the syntactic structure and rhetorical patterns in the written products while learners were provided with controlled exercises so that they could gain skills in these aspects through habit-formation. Then, the process paradigm, which appeared in the late 1960s, was under the influence of transformational generative grammar and humanistic psychology. Such disciplines as developmental psychology, cybernetics theory, and the cognitive sciences provided the paradigm with its scientific and empirical research orientation. The process approach regards composing as a dynamic cognitive activity which is recursive, generative, exploratory, and goal oriented. The third paradigm, the content-focused approach, emerged, being influenced by the social cognitivists' view, communicative competence in linguistics, and naturalistic or situational research methods. This approach is different from the next one, the reader-focused approach, which is relativistic and takes the social-constructionist view that knowledge and discourses are collaboratively constructed. The reader-focused approach has been closely related to sociolinguistics, ethnography, and discourse analysis. Canagarajah argues that the reality, the history of pedagogical approaches to writing, has been discursively constructed as in these examples.

The recent trend of second language writing, which divides the research history into two: the process era and the post-process era, may also be indicating another example of discursive construction of reality.⁽³⁾ Here again, as Matsuda (2003) indicates, such key concepts as "current-traditional

rhetoric," "process," and "post-process" have discursively constructed the reality, the recent history of L2 composition studies, while clarifying currents in the intellectual practices of the composition studies. Regarding how we should look at 'the notion of post-process,' he maintains that 'the notion of post-process needs to be understood not as the rejection of process but as the recognition of the multiplicity of L2 writing theories and pedagogies.' (p.65)

Matsuda's argument above seems to be founded on the same premise as Kirsch's (1992) when he considers methodological pluralism necessary to cope with the new research trend. He points out the inevitability of methodological pluralism, as opposed to methodological purism, in dealing with recent issues in composition studies, saying that:

Scholars may engage in a multivocal dialogue, thereby allowing for the possibility of a dynamic tension between multiple research traditions. By articulating their own assumptions and listening to colleagues in the field articulate theirs, researchers may gain a deeper understanding of (and respect for) the working of different methodologies. ——— discoveries of contradictions and tensions can enrich discussions, stimulate new research, open up new areas of inquiry. (p.255)

Recognizing the discursive nature of reality in composition studies and the importance of the multiplicity of writing theories and research methodologies occurring as a result, more challenging studies with original viewpoints and unique research methods should be encouraged in EFL composition studies as well.

In the meantime, many linguistic studies before the post-process era, including composition studies, were founded on the monologicistic epistemology

which is characterized by Cartesian dichotomies; clear distinction between cognition and communication, discourse and context, meaning and expression. (Linell, 1998, p. 26) Furthermore, in the studies done on the basis of this monologistic epistemology, the following three different, but logically interlocking theories are dominant: the information processing theory of cognition and the mind, the transfer theory of communication, and the code model of language structure. (ibid., p.18)

In contrast to this monologistic perspective, dialogism, a dialogic view on communication and cognition, emphasizes 'the interaction of the mind with the physical and social environment in all the activities of perception (intake), cognition and understanding (processing), remembering, and of course, a fortiori, over interpersonal communication' (ibid., p.21). Dialogism portrays conversation as a social and collective process, where the speaker cooperates with the listener as a co-author and both are engaged in sense-making activities while playing their roles.

Given the conspicuous differences between the two perspectives, it is quite certain that studies to be conducted on the latter epistemology will generate results which are quite different from those done in the former perspective, and that they can contribute to the enrichment and refinement of L2 composition theory building from a different standpoint. In addition, the number of studies conducted in the latter epistemology is quite small in comparison to that in the former, and these facts are true of EFL composition studies as well. For these reasons, I believe that a new EFL study in the dialogic perspective will be quite fruitful.

With the ultimate goal of contributing to theory building in second language writing and to educating effective EFL writers in Japan, I will conduct a study which attempts to reveal what the phenomenon of EFL

writer's dialogical negotiation of text and contexts is. Through this study I intend to investigate how EFL writers negotiate textual features and contextual resources in composing and how such process of negotiation influences the quality of their compositions. Furthermore, I attempt to elucidate how variables claimed to affect L2 composition such as L2 proficiency and educational background in L2 composition are related to other critical factors concerning dialogical negotiation of text and contexts.

With respect to theoretical perspectives on second language writing, Cumming (1998) contends that there is a threefold distinction in second language writing research orientation: text analytic, composing process, and social constructionist views of writing. He also notes two other critical elements that should be taken into consideration when writing is viewed from the perspective of second language education; that is, a) a wide variety of biliterate situations such as the differences in individuals' personal histories and proficiency in L1 and L2, and b) SL writing's particular significance shaped in education.

He also introduces the following three dissimilar approaches to comprehensive model building: 1) adopting existing general theories such as neo-Vygotskian's and Bakhtin's and applying them to second language writing (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Spack, 1997); 2) constructing descriptive frameworks to guide future theoretical speculation, using a diverse research findings (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996); 3) constructing explanatory causal path models of second language writer's composing ability (Sasaki & Hirose, 1996; Cumming & Riazi, 2000).

Among these studies, Sasaki & Hirose's (1996) empirical study conducted has been successful in providing an explanatory causal path model for elucidating L2 writing ability.⁽⁴⁾ Their study seems to take a rather

positivistic stance. However, when viewed from a constructionistic perspective including dialogism, a different outlook may emerge, since truth or meaning is deemed to be constructed, not to be discovered. For example, Matsuda (1997) presents a dynamic model of L2 writing, obviously on the latter epistemology. He claims that a discourse community is shared by both the writer and the reader, and that it is the space surrounding the text which is placed at the intersection of the backgrounds of the writer and the reader. Results to be gained from such studies based on dialogistic or constructionistic epistemology can enrich and refine the contents of the models delineated so far.

The present study takes a constructionist's view of writing out of the three general research orientations above, while applying dialogism, which is a theoretical framework built mainly on Bakhtin's epistemological assumptions about human action, communication and cognition, to model building in second language writing. Thus, this study is expected to provide unique research findings for the enrichment of model building.

Dialogic Writing

Premises of Dialogism

As a first step I attempt to outline the epistemological framework of dialogism, while explaining the critical concepts involved, using Linell's comprehensive works (1998, 2000). Then, I will straighten out the fundamental conceptual framework of this study on the basis of such critical concepts.

Dialogistic and monologicistic theories tend to view the relationships between speakers/writers and listeners/readers in quite different ways. While dominant linguistic and psycholinguistic theories have focused more on speakers/writers in a monologicistic perspective, listener's/reader's roles of

meaning-making are also emphasized in dialogistic theories. This is because dialogistic theories assume that listeners/readers collaborate with speakers/writers in order to achieve communicative interactions. In this view, speakers/writers are continuously listener-/reader-oriented while monitoring their own and others' communicative activities in accordance with their assumptions concerning a social world shared with listeners/readers, whereas listeners/readers are oriented toward speakers/writers, aiming at understanding what speakers/writers intend to be understood. In short, this view presupposes a reciprocal setting and taking of perspectives. I believe that comprehending the reciprocal perspective of speakers/writers and listeners/readers in dialogism will shed a new light on the nature of L2 writing.

Dialogic and monologic theories also treat meaning quite differently. In monologic theories or formalists' interpretation, the meaning of a text is involved in the text and it must be extracted by the readers. In other words, meaning is regarded as something residing in text and to be transmitted from a sender to a passive reader as a receiver. In contrast, in the constructivists' views including dialogism, meaning is constructed (negotiated) in the interplay between text, contexts, writers, and readers. They argue that the meanings of texts are neither completely predetermined nor open and that the process of meaning making is influenced by such factors as a preferred reading of readers and variables in interpretive communities.

Dialogism is defined as an epistemological framework for socio-cultural phenomena including cognition, communication, discourse and consciousness. However, it is not one coherent school or theory, and there is not even anything which all 'dialogists' agree upon. (Linell, 2000, p.2) Rather, it should be interpreted as a name for theoretical and epistemological assumptions about human action, communication, and cognition, for which Bakhtin's

(1981, 1986) theories have provided primary foundations.

The central concepts of dialogism are the following three points; 1) interactionism; 2) contextualism; and 3) communicative constructionism. The first point refers to the fact that communication and cognition always involve interaction with others including other people, systems, and dimensions of selves, and that the basic components of discourse are interactions (exchanges, inter-acts) rather than speech acts or utterances by autonomous speakers. Another premise of dialogism is that discourse is situated and interdependent with contexts. Without relevant contexts, which include co-texts, situations, and activity types, people cannot understand discourse. The third point is that the meaning of discourse and texts is achieved in and through active sense-making of the linguistic and communicative processes, and that knowledge is communicatively constructed accordingly. To put it in Linell's precise words, 'Meaning is dialogically constituted, made in dialogue (cognition and communication), with reference to the world and against the background of the world, which is then dialogically appropriated and dialogically recognized.' (p. 2)

Linell asserts the applicability of this dialogical epistemology to written texts and individual cognition as well, which are to be investigated as major foci of this study, as follows;

Dialogism uses *talk-in-action* (dialogue in a concrete sense, Swedish: *samtal*) as a model and metaphor for human communication and cognition. However, with suitable accommodations of the dialogue metaphor, dialogical analysis can be applied also to written texts (their production as well as consumption), Internet-and-computer-mediated communication, use of artifacts (e.g. in work activities, learning situations) by both

individuals and in teams, distributed cognition, individual cognition ("solitary thinking"), as well as to public discourse in society and culture on a particular issue/domain over long periods (from, say, a few days to several centuries). (ibid., p. 3)

It is understood from the description above that the dialogue metaphor is quite applicable to the production (writing) and consumption (reading) of written texts and to individual cognition (solitary thinking) which are closely related to the research concerns of the present study. Linell also describes in detail the relationship between dialogism and written texts as follows:

The production of meaning takes place in interactions, on the one hand in the writer's struggle with thoughts and words in conceiving and formulating the text, and in her interplay with the text so-far produced, and, on the other hand, in the reader's efforts in assigning meaning to the text and in using the text as a vehicle, as a means of activating semantic potentials of words and text chunks, in the service of creating an understanding which somehow fits the contexts given and the purposes which are relevant for him. (ibid., p. 268)

That is, dialogues are possible through text and contexts not only between writers and audience readers but also, in the case of solitary thinking, between writers and the writers themselves or between readers and the readers themselves. Such dialogues are assumed to be constantly taking place in the composing and reading process. In addition, written texts, which are basically monological speech events, are dialogically built up because the discourse involved in the texts is other-oriented and designed for virtual recipients.⁽⁵⁾

Linell (2000) notes that there are the following four abstract conditions to be met when the concept of talk-in-interaction is used as a model or metaphor for human communication and cognition. These conditions seem critical in building up the conceptual framework of the present study.

- (a) meaning is produced in a dynamic interaction between parties to communication and in their use of contextual resources; thus, communication is situated interaction;
- (b) communication is mediated through language and other symbolic resources;
- (c) communicative practices are socioculturally produced and reproduced;
- (d) communication is not symmetrical between parties, but rather asymmetrical; it is made possible when parties complement each other. (ibid., p. 3)

Using these critical conditions for the dialogic metaphor, I will portray the premises of the conceptual framework of this study.

- (a) meaning is produced in a dynamic interaction between parties to communication and in their use of contextual resources; thus, communication is situated interaction;

In the monologicistic framework, communicative interaction is delineated as a series of individual actions by speakers who take turns, while the listener's role is portrayed as that of recovering the present speaker's intentions. Thus, the speaker's role as an active interlocutor is clearly separated from that of the passive listener, and the utterance is regarded as the speaker's own product which is to be transferred to the listener.

In contrast, in a dialogical perspective, the utterance is looked upon as

socially, collaboratively, constituted and generated, and communicative actions are considered as contextual and dialogical. (Linell, 1998, p.92) In this perspective, speakers talk so that they can be understood by their interlocutor, and, at the same time, in order for them to understand what they themselves say and think. Thus, speakers are recipients of their own utterances at the same time. They gradually realize new meanings, make new associations, and recognize new features or problems with respect to their topics, while they are making utterances about the topic or after they have said something related to the topic. This process goes on from the basic understanding to the enriched one, or from one contextualization of the things discussed to a recontextualized version. The listener in this perspective is not only a recipient but also a co-producer of thought and meaning, because communicative acts and their interpretations are constructed by audience's response. It is through these dynamic interactions between the speaker and the listener that meaning is constantly produced.

It is assumed, in a dialogic perspective, that meaning is constructed between such parties in their use of contextual resources, and that there are intrinsic relations between discourse, understanding, and contexts, which mutually constitute, select and elaborate each other. Focusing on the contexts in a dialogical perspective, Linell (1998) argues that it would be better to assume that 'a given piece of discourse is embedded within, or activates, a matrix of different kinds of contexts' rather than dealing with the concept of 'context' which is fuzzy, multi-faceted, and hard-to-define (p. 128). He also suggests that 'nothing is a context of a piece of discourse in and by itself,' but that 'we have contextual resources, which are potential contexts to be made into actual and relevant contexts through the activities of the interlocutors in dialogue.' (ibid, p.128) The concept of contextual resources is critical for the

conceptualization of this study, and it will be deliberated in detail in the later section.

According to Linell, such contexts do not only concern specific referents in the concrete setting but also abstract and more global conditions described in terms of premises of communication, situation definitions, activity types, and communicative genres. (ibid., p.115) Furthermore, he mentions 'that these conditions are not linked to linguistic expressions or singular utterances, but to the practices of communicating in specific ways (in activities with specific purposes); when the utterance is embedded in an activity, it is situated.'"(ibid., p.115)

(b) communication is mediated through language and other symbolic resources;

Communication is made possible through a common language even in a dialogic perspective. However, the focus of the dialogic approach is not on language structure but on language use. In a monologicistic perspective, a fixed common linguistic code and contexts as external factors fixed in each case play a critical role in sense-making, with the help of speaker's intentions as determining utterance meaning.

In contrast, in a dialogic perspective, linguistic meanings are regarded as open potentials, rather than as fixed coded meanings. Linell (1998) makes the following explanation on this point:

The meaning potentials in language are never sufficient for determining communicative meaning. Instead, intelligibility and intersubjectivity have to be accomplished, negotiated and completed by actors in the various communication situations. They are projects and products of discursive activities in contexts. --- It is possible to create a situated

understanding of, in and through discourse only because actors use linguistic meanings as resources for ('cues to') interpretations in contexts. (p. 113)

Thus, in a dialogic perspective, communication is negotiated and accomplished in language use, i.e., situated discursive activities, not in a linguistic structure or fixed meanings.

(c) communicative practices are socioculturally produced and reproduced;

Linell (1998) claims that dialogism should be construed as 'social (re)construction' in nature. This is because 'actions, meanings and contexts are situationally constructed, but they are filtered through socioculturally sedimented meaning potentials and social representations.' (p.58) He elaborates this point, saying that 'social constructionism emphasizes two dialogically related phenomena: the constructive and reconstructive practices in interactions and the sedimented routines and cultures, which are 'global structures superimposed on interactions and embodied in traditions of relatively long-term continuities of practices (cultural traditions), these long-term practices building systems of sedimented, cultural knowledge.' (p. 61) It is new generations of language users who can modify these practices, and such processes are assumed to continue.

(d) communication is not symmetrical between parties, but rather asymmetrical; it is made possible when parties complement each other.

Linell (1998) introduces the notion of a 'communicative project' to which he refers as collective activities performed by interlocutors in order to solve 'problems of establishing an interpretation or a shared understanding of something, of having something "done through language" --- of creating a

communicative fact (that something has been said, made known and possibly understood).' (p. 218) Here he uses the term 'project' to refer to 'different aspects of a talk, an action or an accomplishment: plan, process and/or product.' (ibid., p. 219) Such communicative projects are partly planned or anticipated, but open and indeterminate.

Besides, a communicative project must be collective (or at least 'social'). That is, 'it cannot be performed and completed by only one person, but it always involves another (or others), i.e. it is other-oriented (and mutually other-oriented).' (ibid., p. 219) This is because 'communication involves (per definition) (attempts at) achieving some kind of shared understanding, and a recipient must therefore take part to secure the felicitous completion of the project.' (ibid., p. 220)

In this way, communicative projects are characterized by asymmetry of participation by interlocutors and their complementary roles in communication.

Text and contexts in the dialogic perspective

Based on these fundamental concepts of dialogic negotiation discussed above, I attempt to illuminate several focal points to investigate how EFL writers negotiate texts and contexts including audiences in composing texts in the target language while clarifying the relationships between key factors such as dialogic negotiation, contexts, texts, and variables related to L2 writing. Toward the end of this section, these focal points will be provided in the form of research questions for this study.

In order to explain the relationships between the key factors above, I will first elaborate on the concept of 'contexts' in the dialogic perspective, because understanding contexts is mandatory in conceptualizing L2 writing in the dialogical perspective. Probing contexts provides us with useful insights

into the essence of the dialogic perspective in writing and helps us clarify the links between texts, contexts, and dialogic negotiation. As I will discuss later, texts and contexts are inseparable in constructing meaning in the dialogic perspective, and thus, the concept of text in this perspective will also be clarified in the process of elucidating what contexts are.

As Linell (1998) puts it, 'a given piece of discourse is embedded within, or activates, a matrix of different kinds of contexts' (p. 128), and that this complex matrix of contexts is assembled from an array of contextual resources such as co-textual (discursive) resources, situational resources, and background assumption resources. (p. 133) In other words, contextual resources are 'made into actual and relevant contexts through the activities of the interlocutors in dialogue.' (p. 128)

The following is the list of contextual resources portrayed by Linell. (pp. 128-131) As he notes, the items on the list are not always organized hierarchically and some of them shade into each other, but understanding contexts through these contextual resources will help us realize the important premise of dialogic negotiation. Brief examples are added to the original explanations by Linell, assuming a situation where each type of contextual resource is employed in writing in the dialogic perspective.

Immediate contextual resources

a) the prior (up to the simultaneously occurring) discourse in the encounter, i.e. co-text

Although what Linell defines in this item is not concerned with written text but with spoken discourse, it seems possible that written text, which is being constructed or has been constructed already, can be a contextual resource to generate further text when the concept of dialogic negotiation is employed

metaphorically. That is, it is plausible to postulate that a writer can negotiate with his intended audience or with his own 'self,' a fictitious interlocutor, in his inner thought, using clues involved in such text.

b) the surrounding concrete situation, or concrete circumstantial setting

This means something spatially and temporally embodied in the immediate perceptual environment including physical spaces, persons, objects, artifacts such as papers and computers. For example, a prompt to be used to motivate a writer to compose could be categorized as this type. Linell suggests that things with a high degree of perceptual salience tend to be topicalized in discourse.

Mediate (abstract) contextual resources

According to Linell, these contextual dimensions are not directly and publicly apparent in the perceptually available situation and behaviors. The following items are included in this category.

a) model of discourse-in-context

This refers to what the actors already assume, believe, know or understand about the things talked (written) about in the discourse in question, and this is to be updated through discourse. This is what Linell calls 'topical episodes.' He uses the term 'episodes' in referring to 'relatively bounded sequences within the more comprehensive speech event or encounter as a whole,' (ibid., p. 185) saying that most 'episodes are "about" something specific in the world: they are focused on, attend to and move within some kind of 'topic.' (ibid., p. 187) He refers to such episodes as 'topical episodes.' Other researchers use different terms for similar concepts, including van Dijk & Kintsch's (1983) 'situation model' and Clark's (1996) 'discourse representation.' It is highly imaginable that writers are dependent

on such 'topical episodes' in composing coherent text, and that these 'topical episodes' tend to be transformed in the process of generating ideas. Even the 'knowledge-telling' (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1987) process of a writer could be interpreted differently if we assume that the writer is in the very process of searching for the model of discourse-in-context in generating his text.

b)actors' models of their current and upcoming communicative projects

Linell defines a communicative project as the action as planned and anticipated in order to solve communicative problems such as establishing an interpretation or a shared understanding of something, having something done through language, and creating a communicative fact. (ibid. p. 218) This model is also updated through discourse. A communicative project is something accomplished collectively in oral discourse, but this concept could be applicable to written text if we assume, in the dialogic metaphor, that the communicative project can be achieved through collaborative interaction between ourselves asking about communicative problems and designated audiences whose actual roles are played by another 'ourselves' offering solutions to the problems. This process could be compared to the L2 writer's strategy in composing which is termed as 'problem identification and heuristic searches' in Cumming's (1989) study.

c) specific knowledge or assumptions about persons involved

This is background knowledge based upon shared experiences and knowledge about each other's biographies. According to Linell, when actors do not know each other, they treat each other in accordance with culturally relevant assumptions about memberships such as men or women, young or middle-aged. Although what he defines here is designed for participants in oral interactions, this definition could also be applicable, in the dialogic metaphor, to writers composing text by themselves (i.e. without any

assistance from their interlocutors in the dialogue). In this case, the writer is assumed to be addressing his composition to designated audience readers while providing appropriate attributes for them.

d) the abstract situation definition, or the 'frame'

According to Linell, the frame defines what is going on in a situation, and it allows us to define the encounter as an instance of a certain activity type or situated activity system or communicative genre such as a court trial or a speech therapy session. The frame sets up the expectation structure among actors.

Here is an important point to be noted in relation to communicative genre: that is, when writers cognitively negotiate, in their inner thought, with their audience readers, who are assumed to be the members of a discourse community, the genre knowledge plays a critical role in their communication. This is because, as Jones (1997, P. 37) suggests, reading and writing tend to become much more efficient when writers and readers share genre knowledge with each other. The postmodern notion of audience as community, as defined by Porter (1996, p. 48), points out that the writer's text is guided by the conventions of communities and the writer is a borrower of texts who constructs texts out of the community intertext. In addition, Swales (1990) maintains that such a discourse community is characterized as possessing one or more genres. Therefore, it is imperative to clarify what constitutes the genre knowledge to be shared by writers and audience readers in the discourse community.

According to Johns (1997), shared genre knowledge can be classified into the following categories: 1) a shared name, 2) shared communicative purposes, 3) shared knowledge of roles, 4) shared knowledge of context, 5) shared knowledge of formal text features (conventions), 6) shared knowledge

of text content, 7) shared register, 8) shared cultural value, and 9) shared awareness of intertextuality. It is assumed that such genre knowledge to be shared by writers and readers can be effective clues to realizing features of designated audience readers who comprise the core of contexts.

e) the specific organizational context

This includes 'sociopolitically determined working conditions, documents, regulations, hierarchies and divisions of labor among (professional) role incumbents, and educational backgrounds surrounding the actors, especially those who act in their professional roles. Of importance to this study is educational backgrounds of EFL writers in terms of their composition training.

f) the sociohistorically constituted contexts of institutions and subcultures surrounding d) and e)

g) knowledge of language, communicative routines and action types

This means 'what actors have become acquainted with as a result of their acculturation within a linguistic and interpretive community.' (ibid. p.130) It relates to textual and conventional knowledge to be employed in achieving communicative actions. Thus, textual features of compositions are considered to be influenced by such knowledge.

h) general background knowledge; general assumptions about the world

This refers to 'fundamental or general assumptions about the world which may be said to belong to the culture's 'collective memory' and, therefore, are usually taken as given by actors.' (ibid. p.130)

Linell characterizes contextual resources d)~h) as background knowledge, assumptions and expectations or as socio-cultural contexts, as opposed to more discursive and situational contextual resources in a)~c).

The contextual resources in the former group are not so salient and not as

easy to be consciously realized as those in the latter.

One important feature that Linell indicates regarding this point is that 'contexts and contextual resources vary and overlap considerably' (p. 132). This fact is similar to the distinctions between 'situational and cultural,' 'local and global,' 'immediate situation and living cultural tradition,' 'context-of-situation and context-of-culture' which result from what he terms as 'the double dialogicality of discourse.' That is, these distinctions derive from the fact that 'Contexts anchor discursive events both in social and physical space at some point in time (the given situation token) and in cultural history.' (ibid, 132)

Linell argues that the relative importance of different contexts get shifted as we move from spoken interaction to written text; that is, immediate (situational) contexts get less important and socio-cultural contexts tend to be highlighted in the case of written text (ibid, p. 132). However, it should be noted that situational contexts also play a critical role even in composing text, for example, in the form of a prompt utilized for a writer to generate new ideas or even in the form of the writer's own text to be read to generate further text. Rather, situational contexts, which usually include more salient clues for the construction of meaning, could provide useful information to explore the truly dynamic nature of dialogic negotiation in composition. Studies focusing on global and cultural aspects of contextual resources may not be able to portray so vividly the truly 'dynamic' nature of composing which is observed in the process of negotiating meaning (constructing texts) as those emphasizing situational and local contextual resources which involve dynamic processes of contextualization, decontextualization, and recontextualization. I believe that careful analysis of situational and local aspects of contextual resources in the dialogic perspective can help us delineate a clearer image of the dynamic

process of meaning construction in composition, which is one of the major objectives of the present study.

Another important feature concerning contexts is the recontextualization of the things already contextualized which was briefly mentioned above, and this feature is closely related not only to contexts but also to text in that the recontextualization process inevitably influences the change in text structure. The dialogical perspective assumes that the recontextualization process of things that have been contextualized (i.e. action and discourse) always takes place in communication situations across which discourse and discursive content travel. To put it in other words, it is possible that contextualized text in certain contexts will be decontextualized and further recontextualized in other contexts in communication situations including writing.

This feature regarding contexts influences textual features at the same time, as the following process shows. That is, when parts of texts and discourses are relocated through this process of recontextualization, they are subject to textual change in the form of simplification, condensation, elaboration and refocusing (ibid, 154), and parts of selected discourses and their meanings in the previously 'quoted' discourses-in-context are used as resources in creating new meaning in the 'quoting' of text and its communicative contexts (ibid., p.155). Thus, textual forms must be always considered in combination with contextual factors.

Definition of Dialogic Negotiation for the Present Study

To sum up, what I have portrayed above is the application of the dialogue metaphor to writing. In this dialogue metaphor applied to writing, meaning is constructed, using different contextual resources, between writers and audience readers of the speech community. In this perspective, the writer

negotiates with his intended audience readers in a speech community or with his own 'self,' a fictitious interlocutor, in solitary thinking or in inner thought, so that he can be understood by the audience of the intended discourse community or so that he can understand what he says and thinks to himself. In doing so, he gradually realizes new meanings, makes new associations, and recognizes new features or problems about the topic. This meaning-making practice is enhanced through contextualization and further recontextualization of text which continues transforming throughout the entire process. This is what I define as dialogic negotiation of texts and contexts in writing, and it is quite different from the dialogic negotiation between actual interlocutors which is inferred to be present in studies involving peer revision (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1992; Zhang, 1995; Carson & Nelson, 1996; Villamil & De Guerrero, 1996; Nelson & Carson, 1998) or collaborative work between teachers and students. (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Bloch, 2002; Adam & Artemeva, 2002)

Notes

- (1) This paper covers the first part of the entire study, which deals with its theoretical foundation mainly on the basis of Linell's (1998, 2000) perspective on dialogic negotiation of meaning.
- (2) For example, about 10 percent of the total number of presentations and symposia were concerned with EFL writing in the JACET annual conference in 2002.
- (3) Matsuda (2003) suggests that it is quite difficult to delineate a clear line between the process era and the post-process era after having traced carefully the recent research trend in both L1 and L2 composition studies.
- (4) Kroll (2003) points out that there is no perfect theory of second language writing capable of explaining the role of and interaction among key variables.
- (5) However, as Linell (1998) indicates, there are also different views on the relation between the interpretation of spoken dialogues and that of written texts (e.g. Crowell, 1990), and the differences between talk-in-interaction and the reading of texts must be carefully investigated because of other constraints and opportunities brought into written texts.

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