

L2 Writing Conferences: exploring learner beliefs and strategies

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Declaration

I, Zulfiqar Ahmed Qureshi confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the students in the study who so generously shared their thoughts and experiences with me and from whom I learnt so much.

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Abstract

One to one writing conferences are a relatively recent practice on EAP courses at UK universities. Conference advocates see such interaction as prime opportunities for dialogic feedback to occur about an academic text between student writers and teachers. Yet when the writer is an international student, unaccustomed to the conventions and practices of the western academy, participation during conferences can be challenging. Carrying beliefs about language and learning forged within their own personal, cultural and educational experiences, such L2 writers often approach conferencing with expectations regarding their structure, outcomes and the roles they need to play.

If we wish L2 writing conferences to be more successful, a first step is to better understand what beliefs such writers carry with them about conferencing and how it impacts upon their conference behaviour. However, research in this area has been limited in both number and scope. This study sought to investigate what L2 writers believed about writing conferences, the kinds of strategies they employed during conferencing and the relationship between their beliefs and strategies.

The study followed four international students' writing conferences over 2 semesters of an international foundation programme at a UK university. Their beliefs and strategy use was captured using questionnaires, stimulated recall interviews and audio recordings of their conferences. Adopting a socio-cultural perspective, the data was then analysed in the form of in-depth case studies.

The study both supported and challenged previous findings in the literature. For example, L2 writers were found to hold multiple beliefs about conferences, use a range of conference strategies and there was a link between some of their beliefs and strategy use. Furthermore, students seemed to hold a 'defining' belief that influenced their other beliefs, their use of strategies and indicated a preference towards a more product or process-oriented view of writing and conference behaviour.

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List of Abbreviations

c1, c2 etc.: audio conference transcript

EAP: English for Academic Purposes

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ESL: English as a Second Language

i: initial interview transcript

IFP: International Foundation Programme

l: line number

L1: Speakers and writers who position English as their primary language but may also be bilingual or multilingual

L2: Speakers and writers who position English as their second, third or foreign language. May include students who have spent several years in an English-speaking country and/or attended school there (Generation 1.5)

pci: post conference interview transcript

q: questionnaire questions

SCT: social cultural theory

SRI: Stimulated Recall Interviews

UCLAN: University of Central Lancashire

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 A personal journey towards the focus of this research

I was working as an EAP writing teacher on foundation programmes at two different universities in London during the academic year 2006-7. On both courses, I taught a mix of international, L2 student writers the conventions of academic writing in English, especially essay writing.

Going forward, I use 'L2' as an umbrella term to identify any students who position English as their second, third or foreign language. I do this while being sensitive to the fact that L2 learners are not one monolithic group but represent a diverse range of learners who may have differing relationships and histories with English. For example, learners may have studied English in their own countries in a variety of contexts while others may have spent several years in a native English speaking country such as the US or UK and attended school there – so-called 'Generation 1.5' learners (Rumbaut and Ima 1988).

Similarly, I shall employ the term L1 speaker to refer to students who position English as their primary language, while recognising that such speakers may also be bilingual or trilingual. On a final note, the study also recognises how learners' identities may be bound up in the ways in which they position themselves with respect to English and or how they may use it in different contexts (Preece 2010).

Both programmes had based their writing modules on a process-oriented view of the skill that involved students participating in various stages of planning, drafting and re-drafting their essays prompted by feedback from the teacher at each stage (Flower and Hayes 1981; Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987).

It was during my feedback to students that I first became interested on the path that ultimately led to this study today. One of the courses had made meeting students on an individual basis to offer spoken feedback intrinsic to its writing module to the extent that such 'conferences' often replaced the writing class during particular weeks. In contrast, however, the writing course at the other university made no mention of any such individual meetings and relied solely on giving students written feedback.

The fact that two similar foundation programmes at two prestigious universities in London took such different approaches to offering feedback to L2 student writers, piqued my interest. I gained first-hand experience of both approaches over several months to arrive at my own, anecdotal impressions of what I not only preferred as a writing teacher but also what I perceived to be most useful to my international students. I began to appreciate how useful individual conference time could be with students to deliver feedback. I could explain my written comments to students in greater depth and clarify challenging concepts such as argumentation, structure and referencing using graded language. I also enjoyed hearing what my students had to say about their work – it immediately felt like a more holistic, contextualised approach when compared to simply returning my written feedback without any follow-up discussion. Writing conferences, as far as I could see, placed the L2 student writer at the very heart of the feedback process and offered them an opportunity to have a voice in the development of their own writing.

I carried this interest in conferencing with me when I left London in the summer of 2007 to take up a permanent post as Course Leader for the International Foundation Programme (IFP) at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN)

in Preston. I was immediately tasked with re-validating parts of the programme including re-writing aspects of the writing module. One of the major changes I made to the module was to make one to one writing conferences a part of the course. I also elected to teach the writing module during the first year so that I might further explore my interest in writing conferences.

I began to record and listen to some of my own conferences with students and read more generally around the subject area. I learnt about the history and research that had been conducted on conferencing, primarily in the US. My early thinking regarding my own conferences caused me to ponder over the different levels of participation I had observed from one L2 writer to the next. While in a few of my conferences interaction felt similar to having a conversation at times, in many others I only ever seemed to hear my own voice with little to no interaction on the part of the learner. I remember trying to account for such differences, which initially led me to issues concerned with power and control during conferences.

I knew that conferences were examples of institutional talk that had been characterised as asymmetrical encounters where participants had different kinds of access to affect the on-going discourse because of their relative status within the institution (Drew and Heritage 1992). Further reading from the perspective of critical discourse analysis made me think about how my role as teacher might be perpetuating the wider hegemonic status quo that existed between teachers and students. Yet as I read through descriptions of institutional talk in the literature, I became less convinced that the issues concerning power described in encounters between doctors and patients, police interviews and court rooms adequately accounted for my conference context.

Power and control in such interactions seemed to be highly regulated and emphasised by the participants' roles and status and supported by wider societal norms and expectations. In my conferences, while there was an obvious difference between my role as teacher / expert and my L2 writers as student / novice – our roles felt more malleable, more fluid. Rather than seeking confrontation, I felt that conferences were more about finding ways to collaborate with my student and seek greater equality with respect to our relative participation. As a result, I decided not to examine beliefs and conference interaction through the lens of power and control.

My interest in conferences became more formalised when I was approached by the Dean of the School to apply to do a PhD part-time related to one of the areas in which the school was interested. I wrote a proposal, it was accepted by the School and my journey towards exploring writing conferences on our foundation programme began.

1.2 Why study learner beliefs and strategies in writing conferences?

Me: 'Did you like the conference?'

St: 'It was OK but you don't tell me what I want for my essay – you only want me talk!'

This quote comes from a mini study I conducted with one of my L2 student writers during 2007-8 on the foundation programme at UCLAN (N.B. in this thesis, I leave students' words intact including all of their errors because it offers a more authentic representation of their language and identity). It took place in my office while we were discussing how useful our conference had been the day before. His words struck a chord with me that day and I remember writing them down. They demonstrated how he held certain views and expectations

regarding what writing conferences were supposed to do and when his expectations had not been met, he had deemed the conference as less successful. I also remember feeling rather aggrieved by his reference to my attempts to get him to work things out for himself because they represented my views about what conferences needed to do.

In other words, both the student and I had displayed our own '*beliefs*' in some of the functions that we thought writing conferences were supposed to achieve – his belief that a teacher's job was to offer him answers on his draft and my belief linked to getting the student to become an independent learner. These differences came from our previous social, cultural and educational experiences. This episode started me thinking about the important role beliefs could play in conference interactions and how a lack of alignment between beliefs carried by teachers and students could have an impact on the possible outcomes of writing conferences. This had been highlighted by two prominent researchers in the field of learner beliefs:

'Beliefs are considered one area of individual learner differences that may influence the processes and outcomes of second/foreign language learning/acquisition (SLA). Their significance has been related, first of all, to mismatches between teachers' and learners' agendas in the classroom [and] to students' use of language learning strategies' (Kalaja and Barcelos 2003 p. 1).

The use of the word 'outcomes' in the quote made me think more about the possible consequences of holding beliefs. I started to think about how my own conference interaction and that of my students may be affected by the beliefs we each held about conferences and that it could shape the kinds of strategies we employed during conferencing. I felt there was a need to better understand

these beliefs and the impact they may have on our conference interaction. In order to limit the scope of my research, I began to focus more on my learners' beliefs and actions rather than my own.

1.3 Research questions and outline of thesis

The thesis consists of 10 chapters that take the reader on a journey into discovering what four L2 student writers studying on a foundation programme in the UK believed about one to one writing conferences. Furthermore, it seeks to highlight the kinds of strategies they commonly used during four conferences over two semesters before considering the relationship between their beliefs and strategy use. These aims make up the 3 research questions proposed in this study:

1. What beliefs do L2 student writers hold about writing conferences?
2. What strategies do L2 student writers employ during their conference interactions?
3. How do students' beliefs affect their use of strategies in conferences?

Chapter 2 is an introduction to learner beliefs and to strategy use with respect to learning a foreign language and the little that is currently known about the relationship between the two. It also highlights the socio-cultural perspective this study adopts towards learners' beliefs and strategies. Chapter 3 focuses on the specific context within which learners' beliefs and strategy use is to be examined, viz. the literature regarding one to one writing conferences. This chapter ends with a critical examination of the small literature that refers to what L2 students may believe about conferencing and the kinds of strategies they use while conferencing.

Chapter 4 offers a critical summary of the methodology applied in the study. It begins by offering the epistemological underpinnings for the design and methods selected to find answers to the questions posed by this study. It describes the context, participants and approaches taken to both collect and analyse the data in an ethical manner.

Chapters 5-8 are the heart of this thesis - its 'findings' and offer individual case studies of each of the four L2 student writers: Layla, Alex, Kazumi and Maria (pseudonyms), who took part in the study during the academic year.

Chapter 9 offers a discussion of the significance of the findings in light of the previous research in the field by offering cross-case analyses of the four student participants to show what such students thought about conferences, how they acted during their interactions and the possible links between their beliefs and actions.

Chapter 10 then offers a concise summary of the 'answers' that have been reached to the three research questions before moving on to a brief discussion of the limitations and implications for the wider community of teachers and foundation programmes before ending with suggestions for further study in the area.

Chapter 2 Learner Beliefs and the Use of Learning Strategies

2.1 Introduction

Since the mid-1970s, scholars have been interested in what distinguishes good language learners from those who find learning a new language challenging. In the ensuing discussions over motivation levels, natural aptitude, personality and cognition, the seeds were tacitly being sown for an increased focus on what students themselves thought about language and language learning. While the term 'beliefs' was never actually coined in the literature at this stage, it was implied (Kalaja and Barcelos 2013).

The communicative approach to teaching a foreign language that arrived in the late 1970s and early 1980s, brought a greater focus on the learner and their activity in the learning process. It all resulted in an increased focus on discovering more about what learners did in the classroom, why they did it and how they felt about their learning. This provided the ideal conditions to foster further research into students' thoughts and learning philosophies about language learning.

2.2 Cognitively-oriented approaches to the study of learner beliefs

By the mid-1980s, researchers examining the beliefs that learners held about language and language learning were influenced by the prevailing philosophies of the time regarding human thinking and behaviour. These principally came from the fields of cognitive, educational and social psychology and included such seminal works as Flavell's Metacognitive theory (1979) on human cognition, Gardner & Lambert's work on attitudes and motivation (1972) and Ajzen & Fishbein's theory of reasoned action (1980).

Such works viewed human beliefs as essentially intrinsic, stable entities that resided in the minds of the individual and bore little to no relationship with the environmental context. Beliefs were seen as autonomously created schemata formed on the back of personal experiences that individuals had gone through and stored within their own unique knowledge reservoirs. When called upon, individuals could tap these mental resources to inform and condition behaviour. The cognitivist perspective placed an emphasis on the value of the individual's mental representations of the world, leaving little space for how outside, contextual factors might engage and influence those representations.

As a result, many studies investigating beliefs in the late 1980s and 1990s echoed such etic perspectives in their research designs and goals. Within the field of research into learner beliefs, such lines of enquiry became known as the '*normative approach*' (Barcelos 2003, p. 11) or the '*traditional approach*' (Kalaja, Barcelos, Aro and Ruohotie-Lyhty 2016 p. 10).

2.2.1 Early classic studies in L2 learner beliefs

Horwitz (1985) developed an instrument to measure the beliefs held by undergraduate foreign language teachers at her university in the US about language and language learning known as BALLI (Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory). This questionnaire consisted of 27 statements about learning a foreign language with which respondents had to agree or disagree using a Likert-Scale.

Horwitz (1987) produced an ESL version of BALLI consisting of 34 statements to test how popular certain beliefs about SLA were among her students. Horwitz viewed these beliefs as 'preconceived ideas or notions' (p. 119) or as

'misconceptions' (p. 126) of which some may need correcting. The BALLI statements covered areas such as aptitude for learning a foreign language, the challenges involved, the nature of language itself, the kind of learning and communication strategies that could be used to learn it and motivation. She administered this to 32 intermediate-level students on an Intensive English Program at the University of Texas. Statistical analysis of her BALLI questionnaire showed how the learners in her study seemed to strongly agree with the following beliefs:

- children learnt foreign language more easily than adults
- some languages were harder to learn than others
- it was a good idea to learn the language in the target country
- language learning involved plenty of practice and repetition

Horwitz (1987) also highlighted how beliefs that students held about SLA had the potential to influence their behaviour, especially in the kinds of language learning strategies they may use: 'what students think about language learning can affect how they go about doing it ... [their] use of effective language learning strategies' (Horwitz 1987 p. 120). This was one of the earliest statements in the field about potential links between students' beliefs and their strategy use.

While Horwitz (1987) introduced the field to an effective method (BALLI) of extracting what students believed about language and learning, the study itself was rather limited in nature and scope. It offered students a fixed, generic set of statements chosen by the researcher with the help of experienced teachers rather than coming from students themselves. In many ways, it revealed more about what teachers at the time felt about language and language learning than

the students. The BALLI allows little room for students to offer expansive or individualised responses that perhaps something as complex as beliefs would seem to warrant. It aims to simply discover and describe the beliefs students have and then tries to obtain a picture of the kind of mental representations they carry with them about language and learning. By using BALLI, Horwitz's analysis of the data was more descriptive than inferential and never attempted to link beliefs to actions in a systematic manner.

Other early seminal studies that investigated learner beliefs were undertaken by Wenden in 1986 and 1987. Departing from the BALLI questionnaire methodology employed by Horwitz, Wenden (1987) interviewed her ESL learners using semi-structured interviews to uncover what they were capable of discussing about their language learning. She interviewed 25 adult ESL learners enrolled in an advanced level class at her university in the US and coded the resulting data. Her analysis revealed that her ESL students could discuss the following issues retrospectively:

- the language they were learning
- their proficiency in the language
- the outcome of their learning endeavours
- their role in the language learning process
- the best way to approach the task of language learning

Further analysis of the data using content analysis, revealed how 14 of the 25 students had quite explicit beliefs about language. These included: the importance of using the language they were learning, the importance for some of learning grammar and vocabulary while others highlighted the importance of affective factors such as emotions and self-image.

Wenden's interest in what students could describe about their learning by thinking back and reflecting upon it was related to Wenden's own construct of the nature of beliefs, which differed slightly from Horwitz. She saw beliefs not as simply preconceived notions but as metacognitive knowledge, based on her advocacy of viewing students' beliefs through the lens of cognitive models of metacognition (Flavell 1979). She saw metacognitive knowledge as constituting learners' 'theories in action', which would help them to reflect on their actions and develop their potential for learning (Wenden 1987 p. 112). Wenden (1987 cited by Barcelos 2003 p. 16) went on to define metacognitive knowledge as:

'the stable, stable although sometimes incorrect knowledge that learners have acquired about language, learning and the language learning process' (p. 163).

She also described beliefs as fallible in the sense that they could not always be supported by the evidence from research and as a result could be right or wrong. Like Horwitz, Wenden also offered the potential for links in her early studies between beliefs and the way in which students might act on those beliefs by stating how: 'beliefs seemed to work as a sort of logic determining consciously or unconsciously what they did to help themselves learn English' (1986 p. 4).

Compared to Horwitz's studies of the same era, I feel Wenden's early studies offered more in the examination of beliefs. For example, her studies made use of semi-structured interviews rather than a BALLI style questionnaire that allowed space for her students to say more about the beliefs they held. As a result, the analysis moved from being quantitatively inspired to something more interpretative, which I feel is better aligned to something as complex as

exploring the beliefs learners hold. Wenden also allied her study to a wider learning framework (metacognitive theory), something Horwitz did not do as explicitly. Finally, Wenden's studies also seemed to comment on the potential link between beliefs and autonomous behaviour a little more firmly than in Horwitz's study.

Yet for all this, Wenden's studies still feel limited in their own way too. Beliefs were inferred from learner's statements and memories rather than any actual observations of them in action. As such, the extent to which such indirect methods of capturing learner beliefs could be said to reflect the 'real' beliefs of the student is problematic. Secondly, she seemed to see the relationship between metacognitive knowledge and actions as rather a simplistic one of cause and effect, which perhaps did not reveal the full picture around learner beliefs. Wenden's studies, as did many at the time, also tended to have a somewhat deficit approach in its consideration of learner's beliefs as erroneous or misconceptions - offering a rather top-down view at times of beliefs that were seemingly pre-ordained as either useful or less useful. Kalaja (1995 p. 192) also questioned Wenden's use of the term 'metacognitive knowledge' as a synonym for 'beliefs' feeling the two terms were not so similar by stating how: 'believing is a matter of degree, whereas knowing is not'.

2.2.2 Later studies from a cognitive perspective

During the 1990s, many similar studies were conducted employing this cognitively-oriented perspective to students' beliefs with most using BALLI as their primary tool of methodology but combining elements from the research design of Wenden too on occasion. For example, many took Horwitz's classic

BALLI inspired study and used it as a foundation to build upon and explore further. These later studies included adaptations such as:

- more statements being asked to students (Bacon and Finnemann 1990)
- fewer statements within an adapted version of the original BALLI (Campbell et.al 1993)
- working with larger samples of students (Bacon and Finnemann 1990; Yang 1992)
- working across multiple sites of investigation (Yang 1992)
- different kinds of students at university (Yang 1992, 1999)
- foreign language learners rather than ESL students (Horwitz 1988; Tumposky, 1991)
- comparing student groups across different cultures (Tumposky 1991)
- investigating relationships between beliefs and other learner factors such as strategy use (Yang 1992, 1999), attitudes and motivation (Riley 1997) and anxiety (Kunt 1997)
- validating the use of the BALLI questionnaire by adding interviews (Sakui and Gaies 1999); add-on tasks such as ranking or writing (Cotterall 1999) and observing the students in the classroom (Mantle-Bromley 1995)

The majority of these BALLI inspired studies throughout the 1990s certainly pushed the boundaries of the original questionnaire and in so doing, offered a more detailed picture of the kind of beliefs students held about language and language learning. Some of this research continued to suggest how beliefs were capable of influencing students' approaches to language learning and how their beliefs would be highlighted 'in observable (and unobservable) strategies [that will] directly influence the degree of success learners achieve' (Abraham and Vann 1987 p. 96).

Yet Barcelos (2003), in her review of such studies of the era, highlights the rather dubious premise upon which some of these claims were built, chief

among them that so called 'productive student beliefs' would stimulate more successful strategy use and 'less productive student beliefs' would lead to unsuccessful strategies. As mentioned above, categorising learners' beliefs as either useful or not is too simplistic and fails to recognise how strategy use occurs within complex specific, historical and cultural contexts that play a role in determining the relative success of a specific strategy for a particular learner. In short, there is no easy link between what students believe and what they do.

Apart from the BALLI style studies of the 1990s, some researchers continued to work more within the framework of seeing beliefs as metacognitive knowledge, including Wenden herself. For example, Victori (1992) expanded upon Wenden's original classifications of second language learners' metacognitive knowledge and created a questionnaire to measure her students' metacognitive knowledge in language learning. Cotterall (1995) explored how students' metacognitive knowledge about learning was related to their readiness for autonomy. Wenden (1998) herself explicated further on the nature of metacognitive knowledge or beliefs, describing it as possessing the following characteristics:

- a part of a learner's store of acquired knowledge
- early developing
- a system of related ideas
- an abstract representation of a learner's experience

What all of these studies had in common, be it inspired by a BALLI or metacognitive view of beliefs, was to continue to conceptualise beliefs as internal properties of the mind divorced from the surrounding context. During the late 1980s and early 1990s however, there was an increasing interest in the influence that the environment may have on learning. This prompted some

scholars in the field of learner beliefs to question whether a purely cognitive conception of beliefs was adequate enough to capture the complexity of learners' beliefs and its relationship with the environment.

2.3 Contextually-oriented approaches to the study of learner beliefs

Kalaja (1995) was one of the first scholars in the field of learner beliefs to voice concerns over the prevailing dominance of studies that still viewed beliefs as internal, cognitive entities separated from any consideration of the surrounding context. She viewed beliefs from an alternative perspective:

‘as socially constructed, emerging from interaction with others and therefore they would basically be non-cognitive and social in nature’ (p. 196)

Influenced by the work within the social sciences at the time that foregrounded the social construction of knowledge and viewed language as reality creating and a reflection of the social world (Gilbert & Mulkey 1984; Potter & Wetherell 1987; Edwards & Mercer 1989; Shotter 1993), Kalaja went on to suggest how researchers in the field of learner beliefs might reconsider their methodology. She spoke of a need to collect more ‘naturalistic discourse data from students, either written or spoken ... using discourse analytic methods’ (p. 197) to examine beliefs that arise within the specific contexts of their production.

This more emic or ‘contextual approach’ (Barcelos 2003) to the study of learner’s beliefs began to appear in the late 1990s and the first decade of the new millennium informed by many theoretical frameworks, collecting different kinds of data and using varied methods of qualitative analysis. Such studies have made use of ethnographic classroom observations and case studies (Barcelos 2000; Navarro & Thornton 2011), diaries and learning journals

(Nunan 2000; Mercer 2011), metaphor analysis (Ellis 2001), discourse analysis (Kalaja 2000) and drawings (Aragao 2011). Similarly, the theoretical frameworks informing such contextual studies have been equally diverse including phenomenography (Benson & Lor 1999; White 1999), socio-cultural theory (Alanen 2003; Yang and Kim 2011), Bakhtinian Dialogism (Dufva 2003), Deweyan Framework (Barcelos 2000) and Complexity theory (Mercer 2011). Yet despite their differences, they all shared a common perspective in terms of how they viewed learners' beliefs and the general approach taken to study them, which I have summarised below:

- beliefs are socially-constructed - they are born, exist and transformed through social interaction with the world
- no judgments are made about what are 'correct or incorrect' beliefs
- beliefs are context dependent and context sensitive
- beliefs are complex, dynamic and contradictory
- beliefs can vary across contexts and within the same context
- the relationship between beliefs and actions is complex and not necessarily linear
- beliefs are best studied through a qualitative and interpretative paradigm that examines the situated context in which beliefs arise
- more focus on how beliefs develop, change and interact with the environment rather than just finding out what learners believed

2.3.1 A socio-cultural approach to learner beliefs

Within the contextual approach to investigating learner beliefs about language and language learning, perhaps the greatest influence on researchers in the last 20 years has been the use of Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory of mind (SCT). In their opening article to introduce the second special issue of the journal *System on Beliefs about Second Language Acquisition (SLA)*, Barcelos and Kalaja

(2011 p. 281) describe how 'in sharp contrast to the first special *System* issue on beliefs about SLA [in 1999], most of the studies reported in this issue draw on sociocultural theory'. The theoretical principles derived from this theory have underpinned many of the arguments and discussions made in recent belief studies including a consideration of how beliefs emerge and develop, influenced the kind of data collected and its subsequent qualitative and interpretative analysis. As such, a brief discussion of the primary tenets of Vygotsky's theory is merited.

Since the 1970s, Vygotsky's ideas about how the mind works have influenced a variety of fields including psychology, education, cognitive science, rhetoric and more recently, language learning. While there is no single, prescriptive version of his ideas, many of his principles and terminology have been appropriated to help conceptualise and further understanding in various fields of enquiry, leading to studies being described as adopting neo-Vygotskian perspectives. At the heart of all of Vygotsky's ideas was the central one that higher cognitive development had its genesis in social interaction with others and as such, learning was fundamentally a social act, rooted in the discursive practice of the community.

Vygotsky (1978, 1986) was interested in examining how children developed the ability and awareness to ultimately be able to regulate their own activities. Looking at *self-regulation* as the final goal, Vygotsky described the various stages a child went through to become more mentally independent. He proposed a first step that he called *object regulation* to describe the moment when things in the child's immediate environment may cause them to take action. The next stage of development was called *other regulation*, a time when

the child was supported by a significant other, such as the mother for example, to perform the action, using supportive dialogue termed as *dialogic speech*. Over time, the child would gain greater confidence and responsibility over his or her actions and begin to assimilate parts of the dialogic speech, where it becomes what Vygotsky called *private speech* that can be used by the child to regulate and control their actions. Over time, this private speech becomes internalised into *inner speech* which is used by human beings as a tool to think, plan and execute their own actions. At this point, the child can be said to have reached conscious forms of *self-regulation* and control over their own actions. Self-regulation is seen as something relative - it varies from child to child and is dependent on the activity being done.

This process of gaining higher mental functions is often termed as *internalisation* within SCT, what Lantolf (2000 p. 13) describes as 'the reconstruction on the inner, psychological plane, of socially mediated external forms of goal-directed activity'. Byrnes (2006 p. 8) describes internalisation as a 'movement from social ways of knowing to increasingly internal ways of knowing, a development where imitation and private speech play a crucial role'. Vygotsky himself described the development of such mental functions in the following way:

'every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first on the social level and later on the individual level; first between people (inter-psychological) and then inside the child (intra-psychological)' (1978 p. 57)

As the process begins from outside the individual, SCT argues that the origin of consciousness resides externally and is always anchored in social interaction. This does not mean, however, that the child simply internalises and copies the

mental functions of another but rather transforms and appropriates it to make it its own.

The journey described above from dependence to independence over one's actions revolved around another key tenet in SCT, namely that the human mind is *mediated* in everything that it does. According to Vygotsky, human beings use symbolic tools or artifacts such as numbers, art, music and above all, language to establish an indirect or mediated relationship between us and the environment. These tools are created and developed over succeeding generations of human culture and become adapted to the needs of the present community and individual. For Vygotsky, such mediation helped to shape thinking and developed higher mental faculties in humans such as learning, solving problems, planning, memory and logical thought.

Rejecting the notion of speech simply being an output mechanism by which previously formed thoughts residing in the mind may be released into the world, SCT views speaking and thinking as 'tightly inter-related in a dialectic way in which publicly derived speech completes privately initiated thought' (Lantolf, 2000 p. 7). Thus, to fully understand thought one needs to take into account its manifestation in language which in turn cannot be fully appreciated itself unless it is seen as a realisation of thought.

Further aspects of Vygotsky's writings go on to discuss optimum sites where internalisation might ideally be stimulated during social interaction with others. Perhaps the best known and most widely appropriated construct in SCT is that of the *zone of proximal development (ZPD)* in learning situations. While studying the impact of schooling on intelligence, Vygotsky proposed the construct as a useful metaphor for explaining how mediated forms of the

internalisation process occurred. Vygotsky described ZPD as the difference between what an individual can do on their own compared to what they might achieve with the support of others. Many studies using ZPD have taken it to mean interaction between an expert and novice, such as between a student and teacher but it can also be seen in a less constricted manner as ‘the collaborative construction of opportunities for individuals to develop their mental abilities’ (Lantolf, 2000 p. 17).

2.3.2 Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism

Many scholars working within a socially informed perspective to the study of learner beliefs have also made use of Bakhtin’s (1981, 1986) ideas of a *dialogic philosophy* in attempting to understand language creation and use. While Vygotsky was interested in how a child acquired control over their activities through social interaction, Bakhtin forces us to consider the social spectrum beyond the immediate learning context. For Bakhtin (1986), our relationship with the world is always dialogical because we are constantly in communication with the social and physical environment around us, including the various contexts we experience and the other people we encounter within those environments:

‘our speech, that is, all of our utterances ... is filled with others’ words, varying degrees of otherness or varying degrees of “our-own-ness,” varying degrees of attachment. These words of others carry with them their own expression, their own evaluative tone, which we assimilate, rework, and re-accentuate’ (1986 p. 89)

In Bakhtin’s eyes, we are constantly appropriating the utterances of others. We communicate by utilising our various faculties of perception, sense, speech and

action during our lives to contribute and reinforce this continual dialogical relationship with the environment. For Bakhtin, all discourse is dialogic, recursive in nature and responsive to both prior discourse and prospective discourse to come – his ideas give language a great deal of importance. Such importance is also shared in Vygotsky's ideas on *internalisation* and *mediation*, whereby language acts as the primary tool within social interaction between individuals to help mediate the development of higher mental functions. With respect to utilising Bakhtin's view of dialogism in the field of learner belief research, Aro (2016 p. 27) argues how 'in a dialogical approach to learner beliefs, beliefs are conceptualised as shared: necessarily both social and individual'.

Bakhtin also offers the concept of *voice* (1986), which builds upon his principles of dialogic interaction. It refers to the notion that when individuals speak, their expression cannot only be considered in terms of its linguistic form but also as a carrier of meanings, opinions and attitudes that help to reflect the person's personality and world view that has been accrued over a long time (Dufva 2003). Furthermore, these voices reflect the multitude of past and present contexts within which the individual has been engaged and from which they have appropriated and embedded into their own set of voices. Seen from the perspective of learner's beliefs or *voices*, a Bakhtinian perspective of beliefs would see them as bearing the traces of all the previous contexts that the students have been both involved in and exposed to. As these contexts were varied and involved perhaps different people and discourses, the student's expression of beliefs is 'multi-voiced' or what Bakhtin called *heteroglossia*.

The multi-voiced nature of learners' beliefs also opens up the possibility that learners may carry beliefs which reinforce and complement one another but also hold views which may not always be perfectly harmonious. In fact, Dufva (2003 p. 139) characterises how some beliefs may be 'rather inarticulate, incoherent, inconsistent and/or internally contradictory'.

2.3.3 Viewing learner beliefs through SCT

SCT focuses on symbolic tools such as language to mediate cognitive development with the external social world through interactional means. This offers fresh perspectives on understanding the emergence, nature and development of learner beliefs about language learning.

Within such a framework, learner beliefs may be viewed as a special kind of cultural and psychological tool used by learners to help mediate their learning within specific contexts of social interaction. SCT would prioritise the emergence of such tools as occurring through the use of *dialogic speech* with others during the development stage known as *other regulation*. Such instances of collaboration may have occurred during both formal and informal learning opportunities for learners with a wide range of other people in different contexts. All of these previous experiences would have helped to shape the very nature of the beliefs that they carry with them about language and language learning and in Bakhtin's terminology, made them 'multi-voiced'. With time, some of these constructed beliefs may become part of the learners' internal knowledge reservoir and be used to help 'self-regulate or mediate' (Vygotsky 1978, 1986) their future actions with the environment. At this point, learners would be capable of reflecting on and discussing their beliefs with conscious awareness.

When considering the development of learner beliefs, SCT's construction of beliefs as born through interaction with the social world has much to offer. Such a perspective reinforces the contextual view of beliefs as something dynamic and capable of change. When learners are expressing their beliefs about language and language learning, they are at the very same time shaping and constructing those ideas too. As Alanen (2003 p. 58) writes:

'... language is both external and internal: it belongs at the same time both to the speech community and the individual member of that community. The means that individual members use to mediate their actions, whether internal or external, have a social origin and are influenced by the social, cultural and historical context.'

Thus, learner beliefs seen from this perspective offer us a view of beliefs as malleable entities capable of constant change, fluctuation and evolution through both specific instances of social interaction but also throughout their existence. As a result, the beliefs are in a constant cycle of dialogue with the social world both appropriating and transforming the running discourse (Bakhtin 1986).

Several studies support the view that learners' beliefs are capable of change and not static entities impervious to the outside world. Peng (2011) tracked how the beliefs of a Chinese college student changed over a 7-month period quite substantively as mediated by classroom affordances. Yang and Kim (2011) applied Vygotskian SCT to study belief changes in two Korean students studying abroad – one in the US and the other in the Philippines. They found evidence of how each student, despite being exposed to similar opportunities with respect to learning, differed in terms of how their beliefs developed over time. Yang and Kim suggested that individual differences between the learners

in the way in which they interacted with their relative learning environments played an important role. Zhong (2015) followed two Chinese migrant learners in a language school in New Zealand using a longitudinal case-study approach and found that their beliefs had shifted from being quite analytical towards their learning at the start to becoming more collaborative/experiential with time.

Alanen (2003 p. 79) suggests how some beliefs used to mediate learning may be 'more permanent than others ... [while others will be] constructed in a very specific context of activity to mediate a very specific action and then perhaps to be discarded, never to be used again'. This allows us the possibility of constructing learners as individuals who hold their beliefs about language and language learning with varying levels of intensity and desire, where some are held on to more tenaciously than others and as such, more resistant to change. This resembles Rokeach (1968), who divides beliefs into core and peripheral beliefs and sees the former type as related more to a person's identity and influential to their other beliefs.

In conclusion, beliefs are seen as situated, socially constructed, cultural and psychological tools that learners have developed to help mediate their learning of a second language. They are complex, idiosyncratic and highly personalised artefacts that are polyphonic in nature, echoing the voices of both past and present experiences that the learner has engaged in with significant others including friends, family and teachers in a variety of contexts.

They are also dynamic and capable of change in response to changing contexts and experiences. Learners may reach a state of self-regulation over some beliefs resulting in them being retained and refined over a longer period of time while others will be more ephemeral in nature. Such beliefs are still developing,

less tenaciously held and thus more susceptible to being altered or adapted by the demands of the context. As beliefs as mediation tools are in a constant state of flux, learners can hold opinions on language and learning that are both complementary and contradictory in nature at the same time.

2.4 Connecting student beliefs to student actions

From the very earliest studies into learner beliefs, there has always been an interest in the relationship between what students believed about language and language learning and the relative impact of such beliefs on their subsequent learning behaviour. As stated previously, for some researchers the interest was driven by a desire to discover which beliefs might have a 'positive' or 'negative' impact on language learning. It was hoped that such data would inform pedagogical practice and promote the more positive beliefs and correct the less desirable ones.

Researchers investigating the connection have conceptualised the issue in primarily two ways. Firstly, some have described how a learner's beliefs might affect their overall approach to learning a language in more general terms while others have more specifically looked at how their beliefs may influence strategy use, motivation or attitudes. Researchers working mainly within the '*normative approach*' (Barcelos 2003, p. 11) to learner beliefs have focussed more on simplistic cause and effect relationships between students' beliefs and their actions. However, those working within socially informed perspectives have portrayed the relationship as more organic, complex and reflexive in nature, whereby actions can influence beliefs and beliefs are constructs inseparable from action.

Either way, the importance of understanding how and to what extent a learner's beliefs can have an effect on their language learning behaviour cannot be underestimated. Such knowledge opens the possibility of not only better understanding how the mind of a language learner works but could also help to inform classroom pedagogy so that it might be more effectively targeted in supporting and understanding the actions of learners. As Horwitz (1988 p. 283) states:

'student beliefs about language would seem to have obvious relevance to the understanding of student expectations of, commitment to, success in, and satisfaction with their language classes'

Table 2.1 offers a selection of quotes used by researchers in the field of learner beliefs over several decades. It gives an insight into how the relationship between learners' beliefs and their actions has been conceptualised.

Table 2.1: The relationship between learner beliefs and their actions

Study	Researcher descriptions
Wenden 1986 p. 4	'beliefs ... work as a sort of logic determining consciously or unconsciously what they did to help themselves learn English'
Horwitz 1987 p. 120	'... what students think about language learning can affect how they go about doing it'
Abraham and Vann 1987 p. 96	'learners have, at some level of consciousness a philosophy [beliefs] of how language is learned. This philosophy guides the approach they take in language learning situations, which in turn is manifested in observable (and unobservable) strategies used'
Stern 1987 xii	'learners are active, task-orientated and approach their language learning with certain assumptions and beliefs which have a bearing on the way they tackle the new language'
Cotterall 1995 p. 195-196	'... beliefs and attitudes learners hold have a profound influence on their learning behaviour ... all behaviour is governed by beliefs and experience '
Yang 1999 p. 532	'... learners' beliefs are important determinants of their behaviour'
Kalaja and Barcelos 2003 p. 1	'Beliefs are considered one area of individual learner differences that may influence the processes and outcomes of second/foreign language learning/acquisition'
Hong 2006 p. 58	'it is possible that learner's beliefs may lead to their choice of learning strategies or that the learners' selection of strategies may influence their beliefs about language learning'
Ellis 2008 p. 7-8	'... beliefs influence both the process and product of learning'
White 2008 p. 121	'learners hold beliefs [that] guide how they interpret their experiences and how they behave '
Mercer 2011 p. 57	'... the importance of learner beliefs in guiding learner behaviour seems to be beyond dispute'
Aro 2016 p. 46	'It makes sense for individuals to do the kinds of things they believe are useful and effective in order to learn'

The definitions highlight a picture of the field that claims there is a general relationship between what learners believe and their resulting actions but is less clear about the exact nature of the relationship. The language used to define the bond between beliefs and actions is telling, ranging from beliefs said to just have a *bearing on* (Stern 1987) actions to *guiding* (Abraham and Vann 1987; Mercer 2011; White 2008) and *affecting* (Horwitz 1987) them with a few speaking in terms of a *strong influence* (Cotterall 1995) and *conscious determination* (Wenden 1986).

The variety of phrases used is indicative of the complexity of the task at hand, viz. to understand the relationship between learners' beliefs and their actions.

The complexity, as highlighted in the earlier sections discussing SCT and Bakhtin, derives primarily from seeing beliefs as social constructions, created through social interaction with others in specific contexts and being populated by the voices of the past and present. Add to this the fact that learners bring their own personality traits, attitudes and motivations to language learning as well and one can begin to appreciate the huge challenges present in attempting to trace a clear path between beliefs and learner behaviour amongst the host of other mitigating factors.

2.4.1 Research into learning strategies

Ever since the 1970s, interest in the cognitive workings of the mind replaced behaviourism as the primary vehicle for understanding how people learnt new things, including language. Within SLA, scholars were interested in observing what 'good' language learners did when they were engaged in learning a new language. The aim was to teach best practice to less successful students and improve their success in learning a new language.

Early studies in the field of learner strategies (Rubin 1975, Stern 1975, Vann & Abraham 1990) helped identify lists of language learning strategies that were used by successful learners using mainly observations of the learners in action or self-reporting from the students themselves. Rubin (1975), often considered the seminal paper amongst the early set of studies, highlighted core actions that 'good' language learners undertook. They:

- were willing to guess
- wanted to communicate with others
- took risks
- paid attention to patterns and meanings

- practiced
- had the ability to self-monitor their own speech

Vann & Abraham's (1990) focussed on the strategies used by students struggling with a new language. Their study highlighted how these 'less successful' learners used many of the same strategies used by so called 'good learners' but simply used them less efficiently. Other research into language learning strategies highlighted the positive relationship between the use of strategies and success in language learning (Dreyer & Oxford 1996; Park 1997; Kyungsim & Leavell 2006). What these early studies showed above all else was that all learners utilised learning strategies but differed in the way in which they implemented them.

2.4.2 Defining and categorising 'learning strategies'

Defining the term has been problematic in the field of language learning strategies with Ellis (1994 p. 529) describing how the concept itself remained 'fuzzy'. Even the term 'strategy' which is now widely applied as the default term has previously been given alternate names including *tactics* (Seliger 1984); *learning behaviours* (Politzer and McGroarty 1985) and *techniques* (Stern 1992). Many of the earlier definitions of learner strategies reflected an information-processing model in their attempts to define its nature:

'any sets of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval and use of information' (Rubin 1987 p. 19)

Later definitions imported more personalised aspects into their descriptions of learner strategies emphasising the learner's activity:

‘specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferrable to new situations’ (Oxford 1990 p. 8)

‘activities consciously chosen by learners for the purpose of regulating their own language learning’ (Griffiths 2008 p. 87)

‘the learner’s consciously chosen tools for active, self-regulated improvement of language learning’ (Oxford et. al 2014 p. 30)

Despite the more learner centric positioning of later definitions, learner strategies have still often been viewed by many researchers in the field as being cognitively determined actions that emphasise the taking in of information, acting upon it to bring a semblance of order and storing it for later use. There being no single theory behind strategy use and formation to date, Griffiths and Oxford (2014) recognise that ‘strategy’ theory is built upon a somewhat eclectic foundation that finds room for multiple perspectives that may play a role including sociocultural theory, activity theory and behaviourism. Oxford (2011 p. 60) describes the theoretical underpinnings for learning strategies as consisting of a ‘web of interlocking theories’ that gives rise to the rich and complex nature of learning strategies.

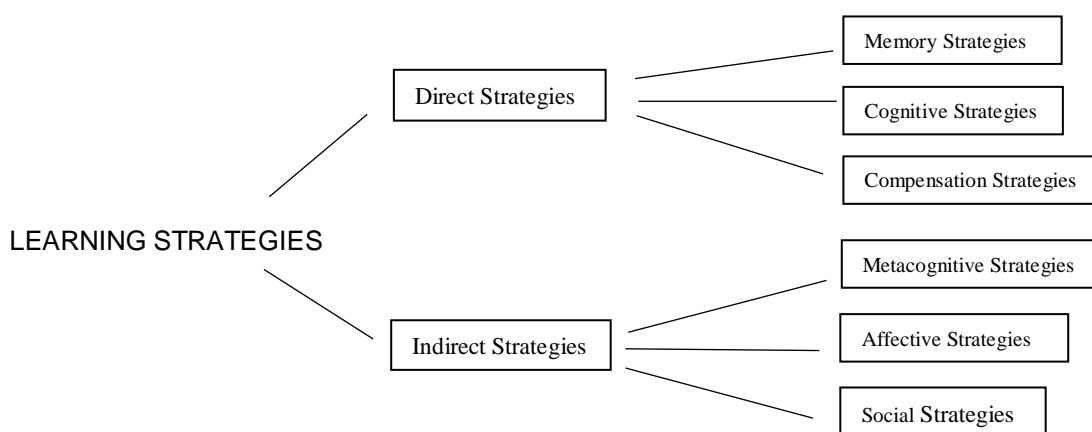
With lists of strategies used by learners at their disposal, the next step for researchers in the field was to attempt to categorise them by the roles or functions they played in learning. As with attempts to define strategies or base their use on any fixed theory, classifying them has also proved to be challenging. Rubin (1981) grouped strategies she found in her research into two main kinds – those that made a *direct* contribution to learning (clarification/verification, monitoring, memorisation, guessing/inductive inferencing, deductive reasoning and practice) and those that made an *indirect*

contribution to learning (creating opportunities for practice, production tricks that included communication strategies). O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Kupper and Russo (1985) grouped strategies into three main categories they called *cognitive, metacognitive and social* with the first two categories equating with Rubin's notions of direct and indirect strategies respectively.

2.4.3 Models of L2 learning strategies

The most widely used and quoted classification system for learner strategies is that offered by Oxford (1990). Building on previous studies, she grouped learning strategies into six groups, as can be seen in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Diagram of the Strategy System: Overview (adapted from Oxford 1990, p16)



The six groups identified focussed on various aspects of the learner's context for learning

- **memory strategies** (how students remember language; e.g. by creating mental links)
- **cognitive strategies** (how students think about their learning; e.g. practising, analysing & reasoning)
- **compensation strategies** (how students make up for limited knowledge; e.g. making guesses)

- **metacognitive strategies** (how students manage their own learning; e.g. planning, arranging and evaluating learning)
- **affective strategies** (how students feel; e.g. managing anxiety)
- **social strategies** (how students learn by interacting with others; e.g. asking questions)

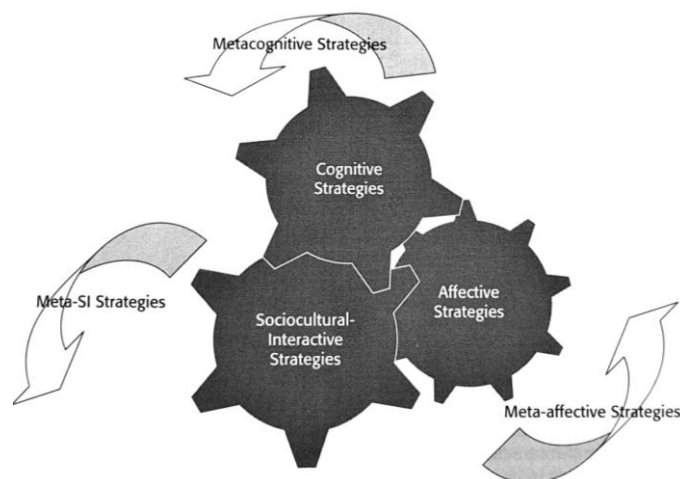
These six categories formed the basis of the *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)* instrument created and used by Oxford and many researchers thereafter to attempt to discover and categorise the kinds of learning strategies their students used. In many ways it resembled the Horwitz's (1987) BALLI instrument in that it too is a questionnaire that used a Likert scale of response. SILL was made up of 50 items detailing common learning strategies and learners were asked how often they used them.

While there have been further attempts at classifying learning strategies (Yang 1999; Schmidt & Watanabe 2001; Cohen et. al 2003), Oxford's system has been perhaps the most widely referenced in the field. More recently, Oxford (2011) developed a new model that has drawn on parts of her original classification (1990). To minimise overlap, include greater integration of theory and emphasise how L2 learning is not solely a cognitively/metacognitively driven exercise, Oxford's new, learner categorisation of learning strategies sits within a more holistic model of language learning called the Strategic Self-Regulation Model (S²R) – (see Figure 2.2 below) that includes 'strategies for three major, mutually influential dimensions of L2 learning: *cognitive*, *affective* and *sociocultural-interactive*' (Oxford 2011, p. 14), each dimension offering support to learning in the following way:

- **Cognitive dimension:** includes cognitive strategies that ‘help the learner construct, transform and apply L2 knowledge’ (p. 14). Example strategy: activating knowledge to do a task
- **Affective dimension:** includes affective strategies that ‘help the learner create positive emotions and attitudes and stay motivated’ (p. 14). Example strategy: generating and maintaining motivation
- **Sociocultural-interactive dimension:** includes sociocultural-interactive (SI) strategies that ‘help the learner with communication, sociocultural contexts and identity’ (p. 14). Example strategy: interacting to learn and communicate

The S²R model also recognises an overall mental ‘manager’ that helps to control and manage all the various strategies that exist - a tool that Oxford calls ‘Metastrategies’. These metastrategies have duties that include ‘Planning, Organising, Monitoring and Evaluating’ L2 learning strategy use within each of the three dimensions (called Meta-cognitive strategies, Meta-affective strategies and Meta-SI strategies).

Figure 2.2: Dynamic interaction of strategies and metastrategies for L2 learning in the S²R model (Oxford 2011, p. 17)



Apart from streamlining her original model from six categories to three ‘dimensions’ of learner strategy use, the S²R model places greater focus on seeing learners’ actions as being ‘*strategic, self-regulated and situated*’. Oxford

employs the word 'strategic' to refer to how learners are able to select the most appropriate strategy from a list of possible strategies available to them in order to meet the challenges of the task they face. She uses the word 'self-regulation' – itself a term commonly applied in SCT from a Vygotskian perspective, to refer to the variety of conscious actions that L2 learners undertake to independently manage and take ownership of their learning. This includes managing not just their cognition but also their affective states and the communicative environment.

Oxford sees learners' actions as 'situated' in that their choice of strategy use may be influenced by their sociocultural setting. The S²R model also sees learners' use of various strategies as flexible: 'Not every learner needs to use every type of strategy at all times' (p. 21). For example, affective strategies may be required during moments of stress or demotivation but may be withdrawn when such emotions subside.

A useful addition to Oxford's S²R model, in particular with respect to this study, is the attention it pays to more theoretical considerations that might lie behind learners use of strategies. In essence, Oxford shares the same socially informed perspective taken in this study to describe learner beliefs as socially mediated tools constructed and adapted by learners through dialogic interaction with others and applies it to learning strategies too. She highlights how her model is based on the assumption that 'strategies can be learned through mediation or assistance' (2011 p. 27) with capable others that assist the learner through their learning (or Zone of Proximal Development - Vygotsky 1986) via dialogic speech (Bakhtin 1981, 1986).

With the *situated context* in this study being the L2 writing conference, the S²R model allows the study to adopt a more socially informed perspective with regard to the manifestation of learning strategies and perhaps conceptualise a relationship between beliefs and strategies linked by seeing both as cultural and symbolic tools that help the learner mediate their learning with their social environment. Learners' beliefs may help to initially facilitate the emergence of specific learning strategies in the conference dialogue. Once out in the open, such strategies may be further directed and moulded through mediated assistance by the writing teacher through dialogic interaction.

2.4.4 Communication strategies vs. Learning strategies

The process of identifying and categorising learning strategies has been challenging for several reasons. The sheer number of possible strategies that exist, issues with strategies that can overlap across category boundaries and the difficulty of distinguishing between what qualifies as a learning strategy or not have all made the task difficult (Ellis 1994; Cohen and Dornyei 2002; Woodrow 2005). The challenge of identifying what is and is not a learning strategy at times has particular resonance for this study, which will be examining the kinds of learner strategies students employ while speaking during a one to one conference. The primary issue in this case is whether *learning strategies* are the same as *communication strategies*.

Some researchers in the field do not always see learning strategies as being the same thing as communication strategies, describing how the latter is 'the output modality and learning is the input modality' (Brown 1980 p. 87). Brown argued that learners could be involved in communication strategies that did not

actually involve any learning, including avoidance strategies, a view shared by Ellis (1986). Cohen (1996) also framed communication strategies as those that 'focus primarily on employing the language that learners have in their current interlanguage' (p. 3) rather than those being used to aid learning.

Other scholars, however take a broader view of the term learning strategies describing how communication strategies can facilitate learners to make attempts to get their message across and in this effort, they are *learning* more about their language abilities. In addition, during communication, they are being exposed to a high amount of input from which further learning may result (Tarone 1980) and the learning process itself involves a degree of noticing and awareness too (Schmidt 1995), which does not necessarily stop while using the language. Rubin (1981 p. 126), in contrast to Cohen (1996), included communicative strategies as examples of learning strategies in her original classification of learning strategies, citing specific examples that included:

- circumlocuting and paraphrase to get message across
- speaking more slowly or more rapidly
- repeating sentence to further understanding

Other research also shows how actively using the language can aid in its learning by helping to build and strengthen schemata into long term memory while a lack of use may promote a loss from our memory (Mandler 2001; Leaver et al 2005). Oxford (2011, p. 92) states how 'most language use strategies allow learners to stay in conversations much longer, have more sustained opportunities to practise, receive more feedback during communication and thus learn more'. As far as this study is concerned, *communication strategies* and *learning strategies* are seen as one and the same.

2.4.5 The relationship between learners' beliefs and strategy use

The introduction to section 2.4 highlighted the interest there has been in the field of learner beliefs regarding the relationship between students' beliefs about language and language learning and their actions or learning strategies. The nature of this relationship lies at the very heart of this study and this section will recount what is already known about it and the gaps yet remaining in our knowledge of how these two variables interact.

Ever since the early studies into learner beliefs, connections were made between what learners thought about the language or language learning and the kinds of activities they were engaged in while they learnt the new language. In Wenden's (1987) interviews with 25 adult ESL students studying part-time in advanced classes at a US university, the students described both the beliefs and activities they undertook to study English. Wenden found that those students who articulated a belief in *using* the language to learn 'would often utilize communication strategies ... [and] attended primarily to the meaning and social purpose of the interaction'. On the other hand, however, those who had expressed a belief in the importance of learning *about* a language rather than in using it 'tended to use cognitive strategies that helped them to better understand and remember ... [and] were much more conscious of language form' (p. 109-110).

Similarly, Horwitz (1987) found in her BALLI questionnaire with adult ESL students at a US university that over 50% of her students agreed that the most important part of learning a new language was to learn its vocabulary and grammar rules. This led her to state:

'a belief that learning vocabulary words and grammar rules is the best way to learn English will almost certainly lead students to invest the majority of their time memorizing vocabulary lists and grammar rules at the expense of other language learning practices' (p. 124).

It should be noted, however, that neither Horwitz or Wenden went on to observe whether their students actually engaged in actions consistent with their expressed statements about learning beliefs and as such, their findings were actually assumptions of what students might do.

Abraham & Vann (1987) reported in their study of two adult ESL learners at a US university using interviews and data from think-aloud protocols of the students doing four given language tasks. They proposed a model of second language learning that showed how the students' *philosophies* might guide their general approach to language learning, including the use of learning strategies. Their model was important because it was one of the first to cite the possible influence of 'variables in the learners' background' (p. 96) on the relationship between their beliefs and the approaches they took to language learning. It served to reinforce the complex variety of variables that need to be considered when examining the relationship between beliefs and actions.

In the 1990s, two important studies outside the US employed the BALLI and SILL questionnaires to find correlations between their students' beliefs and strategy use. Park's (1995) investigation of 332 EFL Korean university students and Yang's (1999) study with 505 Taiwanese university students both found links between what students believed about learning and what they said they actually did during the process of language learning. Park spoke of an overall

moderate to low relationship between beliefs and reported strategy use amongst her findings while Yang offered more specific conclusions:

'language learners' self-efficacy beliefs about learning English were strongly related to their use of all types of learning strategies, especially functional practice strategies. Also, learners' beliefs about the value and nature of learning spoken English were closely linked to their use of formal oral-practice strategies' (p. 515)

Interestingly, Yang went on to say how she felt that the relationship between beliefs and strategies was not always a linear one but rather more of a 'cyclical' nature whereby beliefs not only influenced strategy use but strategy use could help shape beliefs too. This added to the already complex picture emerging about what learners' thought and did with regard to second language learning and how the pathway between the two was fluid and reciprocal.

This less predictable and more organic version of the relationship between beliefs and strategy use fits well into the broader socio-cultural view adopted by this study. As stated earlier, this view sees learners' beliefs constructed and transformed through social interaction with others and their strategies employed in strategic and self-regulated ways within specific contexts. Such a framework advocates flexibility and resists linearity with respect to how relationships might be managed between beliefs and strategy use. It views beliefs and strategies as being in a state of flux and refinement, changing to better fit the environment.

Moving away from a reliance on just questionnaires or interviews to examine beliefs and strategy use amongst L2 learners, Navarro & Thornton's (2011) powerful study collected triangulated data from their 18 Japanese university students in the form of reflective journals, self-reports and recorded sessions

with advisors. With a focus on learning more about how their students self-directed their learning of English, they were able to determine a relationship between the students' actions and beliefs, whereby the former helped to instigate modification of the students' beliefs about learning.

They describe how one learner, Kimiko, refined her beliefs in how to improve her speaking ability in English by actions she experienced during her visits to the conversation practice centre and written feedback from her advisor. Overall, the study reinforced the idea from Yang's (1999) study that a mutual relationship may exist between the beliefs students hold about learning and the actions they undertake. There seems a degree of fluid reciprocity between the two whereby they can affect one another and instigate change.

Li's (2010) study was another to add to our understanding of how L2 learners' beliefs and strategies worked together. Her study with 214 Chinese students at four colleges in China employed the BALLI and SILL questionnaires and concluded that there was a gap between what her students said they believed about learning English and their actual use of strategies. For example, some 90% of the students agreed with the BALLI statement regarding the importance of speaking English in and out of class in order to improve their speaking yet in the corresponding SILL category analysis, the strategy was 'one of the least frequently used strategies' (p. 863). This supports Ellis (2008b) who states how a learner holding a particular belief is no guarantee that they will use it to guide their later behaviour. He goes on to suggest factors that may affect the relationship including conflicts with other strongly held beliefs, the situated context, or more personal issues.

This was also found in a recent study that explored beliefs and strategy use by Zhong (2015) in her longitudinal case studies of two migrant Chinese students at a language school in New Zealand. Using interviews, classroom observations, stimulated recall and written statements from the learner's personal learning logs, she too found that the relationship between the learners' beliefs and use of strategies was not linear. Zhong highlights how despite the fact that one of her student's beliefs evolved over the course of the study from someone who initially held very analytical views on learning and then became more accepting of collaborative type learning, he did not always translate this change into his actions.

The findings from the various studies discussed are summarised below:

- there is a degree of correlation between specific student beliefs and particular strategies used but it is complex and not always clear
- this relationship is affected by a range of other factors including the learners' backgrounds and the situated context within which action takes place
- the relationship between beliefs and strategy use is reciprocal
- beliefs and strategy use should be seen as malleable constructs capable of change
- students' holding particular beliefs is no guarantee that they will be acted upon through their use of strategies
- much of what we know about the relationship has come from BALLI / SILL questionnaire style data rather than direct observation / interaction with students

These conclusions paint an overall picture of a complex, fluid and unpredictable relationship between L2 learners' beliefs and strategy actions that is inter-dependent in nature and affected by a blend of personal and social factors.

2.4.6 Critique of studies investigating learner beliefs and strategies

The studies that have thus far explored the relationship between what students believe and what strategies they apply while learning have primarily used similar methodology. As highlighted earlier, in many cases, this has involved the use of adapted versions of the BALLI and SILL questionnaires. Then quantitative analysis is applied that looks for correlations between the two sets of data to infer relationships between what students believe about language and learning and what they do while learning.

Yet such methodology is flawed for many reasons, not least because such quantitative measures fail to consider any emic perspective – i.e. the students' voices, personal histories and their learning contexts, for example. The responses given in such questionnaires are entirely based on the students' subjective agreements, using a five-point Likert scale, to ready-made statements about language, language learning and strategy use. While researchers have made adaptations to some of the items in the questionnaires, including translation of the items into the learners' L1, the series of statements nevertheless feel decontextualised from a number of perspectives.

Firstly, students have had little to no input in the construction of the items they are having to deliberate over, thereby limiting their investment in answering the items with accuracy. Secondly, both questionnaires are quite long – the BALLI for L2 learners usually consists of 34 items and the SILL some 50 items, which some learners of English may find challenging while maintaining their concentration. This may affect the accuracy of their responses.

Thirdly, many of the studies are *only* based on the two questionnaires with little attempt to collect other data so that the analysis may benefit from a triangulation of data promoting greater levels of validity. Relying purely on students' subjective responses to prepared questionnaire items using a sliding scale allows room for errors to occur. Similarly, students' attempts to accurately recall what it is they believe and do when it comes to learning a language are challenging exercises for them. Instead of taking a student's word for what they say they do, actual direct observation of their strategy use is needed with space, if possible, for them to reflect on what they did.

Another reason why such methods are limited is that statistical correlations can be poor substitutes for examining the complex, organic and reciprocal relationship that seem to exist between beliefs and actions. Contextual approaches to understanding learner beliefs and strategy use sees them both as essentially tied to the very fabric of their sociocultural environment - held and used in often unpredictable ways. Such dynamism simply cannot be captured by a quantitative analysis of numbers alone but rather requires a more qualitative, interpretive perspective to be used that is better calibrated in terms of its sensitivity to noticing details.

Furthermore, accepting the premise that beliefs and strategies are both socially constructed and socially situated, requires that they be examined in *specific* contexts where as many facets of that context may be included to offer a richer, more descriptively detailed picture to emerge of what students think and do. As one of the few studies to study beliefs and actions using triangulated data, Navarro and Thornton (2011) highlight how they were able to:

'interpret learners' statements in light of their actual behaviour, resulting in a more nuanced understanding than statement alone could provide ... we suggest that researchers conducting future investigations into beliefs should attempt to triangulate data from statements with detailed observation of behaviour' (p. 299)

Such an approach seems to echo in some ways the call from Kalaja (1995) for future researchers to seek out data which involves learners actually engaged in discourse rather than self-reporting: 'the researcher could not only try and find out what the beliefs in discourse are but also to what ends students use these in talk or writing' (p. 200)

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter discussed how learners' beliefs used to be seen as static, internal properties of the mind but are now seen as malleable, socially constructed entities emerging from interaction with others using frameworks such as SCT. Beliefs are an example of mediating tools that help the individual to act on and interpret their social environment and in return be influenced by it too. Such influence may lead to changes being made to learners' beliefs over time and research studies seem to support such change.

There has also been interest in knowing how such beliefs impact upon the learning behaviour of students. I have discussed how the relationship between beliefs and actions has been conceptualised as complex, organic and affected by a multitude of factors including the learner's personality and motivation. Studies examining learners' behaviour have focussed on identifying and categorising the kinds of strategies they use when learning a new language.

I highlighted Oxford's S²R model (2011) as one that adopts a more holistic and socially informed perspective to learner strategy use and sees them as strategic, self-regulated and situated entities. I argued that this shared similar traits to how beliefs are theorised, namely as cultural and symbolic tools that help learners to mediate learning with their social environment. I suggested how this offers us a useful basis for further investigation into the relationship between learners' beliefs and strategy uses.

Current research indicates that there is a relationship of substance between learners' beliefs and their strategies but the impact has been observed as low to moderate at best; non-linear in nature; affected by other factors and reciprocal in nature. I highlighted how the subject matter has not been helped by the over-reliance on questionnaires (BALLI and SILL) to establish connections between what learners say about learning and what they actually do whilst learning. Furthermore, I have argued for looking at beliefs and strategy use through the lens of SCT, observing them in specific contexts and using more qualitative data to arrive at a holistic picture of belief and strategy use.

Chapter 3 The Situated Context: L2 Writing Conferences

3.1 Introduction

Over the last 30 years, there has been a shift in seeing writing as less of a product created and limited by its textual features to one that is nowadays viewed as being informed by the social and political practices that surround it, including the social experiences of the writer. Gee (1990) for example, views literacy practices as an intrinsic part of the very fabric of wider social practices that include talk, interaction and beliefs. Indeed, to write today in a specific genre, such as academic writing, is to not only be familiar with the mechanics of using language to create text but, as Angelova & Riazantseva (1999 p. 493) put it, to have 'knowledge of the set of social practices that surround the use of that text'.

Such knowledge is not always present in the minds of some L1 English students with respect to academic writing but at least their expertise in the language provides some grounding for acquiring it. However, this socially constructed view of academic writing may prove more demanding for international students who arrive with educational, linguistic and cultural backgrounds of their own that may conflict with adopting the socially constructed writing conventions common in 'western' universities.

The term 'western' or 'the west' is used in the study to refer to the traditions of thinking and practice emanating from a Socratic/Aristotelean perspective prevalent in Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. It is problematic in describing entire institutions and cultures as either 'eastern' or 'western' (Said 2003) as such terms offer the impression of homogenised

groups and have a tendency to overlook the variety of differences that exist within. Thus, while I use the terms 'western / the west' to refer to generalised concepts of behaviour and convention, I do so with caution and an understanding of the difficulties such terms inspire.

The dominant expression of written literary practice within academia is typically that of 'essayist literacy' (Scollon & Scollon 1981), a conventionalised mode primarily used for assessing student understanding but also as a vehicle for student exploration of ideas and opinions. Yet surprisingly for such a core practice, the conventions of academic writing often remain complex and opaque to many students, who are left to discover the rules of engagement for themselves (Bartholomae 1985; Lea & Street 1998). Lillis (2001), for example, views essay writing as favouring specific ways of establishing meaning such as explicitness over evocation, logic rather than emotion and formality over informality.

Such conventions derive, according to Lea & Street (1998), from an epistemological basis that exists in western culture and relates to what Olson (1977) sees as our unique way of thinking and using language. This may certainly present problems to international students who may assume that linguistic mastery alone will be sufficient for success, without realising the necessity of engaging with the socio-cultural roots of such institutional writing too.

One way in which many language courses at UK universities support international student writers is by offering them feedback tailored to their needs. Such feedback offers commentary on not just language issues but also content, organisation and referencing in an attempt to equip such students with the

requisite knowledge to write academically. One common method of delivering feedback beyond standard written commentary has been to meet such students on a one to one basis for a writing conference.

3.2 Feedback in writing conferences

While conferencing has been part of composition courses at some US universities for over 100 years (Learner 2005), it was not until the 1970s that theorists began to formalise its use in a more systematic manner. Whether it occurs within a classroom setting with a writing teacher (from now on referred to as *conferences*) or in a writing centre with tutors (from now on referred to as *tutorials* – see section 3.4 for more details) or with L1 or L2 students, many advocates have proposed that meeting students face to face to discuss their writing can be a more useful method of response than simply providing written feedback (Black 1998; Bowen 1993; Calkins 1986; Carnicelli 1980; Ewert 2009; Ferris 2003; Graves 1983; Garrison 1974; Harris 1995; Murray 1979; Weissberg 2006; Zamel 1985). With the cognitively oriented model of ‘process writing’ gaining currency in the early eighties and promoting a focus on meaning and ideas over the mechanics of the language, the writing conference was seen as an ideal vehicle for tapping into the student writer’s mind about their evolving text. The teacher was seen as a co-discoverer of this meaning alongside the writer rather than just an evaluator, stimulating both student confidence and thinking (Barnes, 1990; Harris 1995; Weissberg 2006).

Over the years, conferences have been implemented in different ways with Tobin (1990) distinguishing between what he calls first and second generation style conferences. The former he characterises as teacher directed while the

latter, developing at the same time as the shift towards a 'cognitive-process' view of writing, sought to establish a less directive mode which was more student centred. Tobin goes on to argue that such conferences, while espousing liberatory notions of education, were still quite directive in the formulaic manner in which the conference was conducted. He looked forward to a 'third generation' notion of conferences that took more account of contextual factors and the social construction of knowledge.

For early advocates, conferences offered many advantages over written commentary alone. Both Sokmen (1988) and Harris (1995) spoke of how face to face interaction and negotiation between teacher and student could help the emerging text to appear more easily and with greater clarity. Other advocates emphasised how conference talk allowed the possibility for more 'genuine conversation' that differed from that of the classroom (Carnicelli 1980; Freedman & Sperling 1985). Murray (1979 p. 15) even spoke of how he saw himself in a conference as searching for 'the voice of a fellow [writer] having a conversation about a piece of work'. Yet many of these notions of shared talk in conferences were based on studies with L1 writers, where less attention was paid to language issues or socio-cultural differences that might make talk more challenging for example, with L2 writers.

What is undeniable about conference feedback, however, is that complex concepts in academic writing such as argumentation, refutation and referencing for example, are perhaps better served through face to face discussion than in a set of written comments on a page. Rather than focussing on shared talk, this more pragmatic advantage of conferencing has been lauded by other writers, especially with regard to using conferences with L2 writers. For example,

Strauss and Xiang (2006 p. 359) describe how conferences can 'advance, broaden and clarify ... understandings' and thereby lead to more successful revision by students.

Another feature of conferences that has appealed to many concerned with L2 writers has been how it seems to offer the ideal context for Vygotsky's metaphor for learning with assistance from another or ZPD. Patthey-Chavez and Ferris (1997 p. 52) describe conferencing as 'a classic example of a teacher-led Zone of Proximal Development ... knowledge is externalised, mediated through language action ... to give the novice [learner] multiple opportunities to acquire that knowledge'. Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) describe how 'dialogue is an essential component of Vygotskian theory ... Without dialogic negotiation, it is virtually impossible to discover the novice's ZPD' (p. 468). Williams (2002 p. 84) details how 'Dialogue is a way for the novice to stretch current knowledge, as initial reliance on the expert yields to internalisation of new knowledge by the novice and subsequent self-regulation'.

The general popularity of conferences was also confirmed by students and teachers and not just researchers. In Carnicelli's (1980) classic L1 study, 1800 student evaluations of writing conferences offered unanimous support for the practice while another later L1 study by Freedman, Greenleaf and Sperling (1987) asked over 500 teachers to select their ideal method for response to writing. The majority chose conferences as the most effective form of response. As a result of such enthusiasm, key texts from writers such as Calkins (1986), Graves (1983) and Harris (1985) began to appear, offering guidance for conference implementation throughout both schools and colleges in the US.

Despite the support, there were also L1 and L2 conference studies that began to adopt a more critical perspective, especially with respect to conferences being conceptualised as sites for greater collaboration between students and teachers. For example, Ulichny & Watson-Gegeo's (1989) L1 study of sixth-grade US classrooms highlighted how many conferences exhibited 'features similar to other instances of teacher-student classroom talk' (p. 311) where the teacher controls much of the discourse and rarely reflects the characteristics of genuine conversation. They showed how some teachers possessed a fixed framework of references about what the writing should look like and those students who generally agreed with this tended to be assessed more positively than those who did not. As such, the student was writing what the teacher wanted rather than espousing their own voices.

Another L1 study by Wong (1988) investigated talk in technical writing conferences and found that although students arrived with 'expert' knowledge of their respective fields, the teacher still dominated the talk. Black (1998) viewed the language of the classroom as spilling over into the conference, a place where the potency of teacher power remained explicit and the role of the student subordinate and passive. She went on to claim how more equality between students and teachers in the conference was unlikely to occur unless the asymmetry of power displayed in the classroom was addressed. Such studies led to a re-visioning of conference talk as discourse that 'falls somewhere between classroom discourse and casual conversation' (Jacobs and Karliner 1977 p. 503).

In discussing L2 writers, Ferris (2003) highlighted additional affective factors that might affect their conference participation. She explained how simply being

in a one to one situation with a teacher may prove stressful for learners not acquainted with such kinds of instruction. In addition, Ferris stressed how the multi-tasking role demanded of students in conferences to speak, understand and make notes for future revision at the same time may prove difficult for some L2 writers and add to their anxiety.

Despite some of these fears about both L1 and L2 conferences, they are still seen as largely positive vehicles for feedback but viewed through a more critical perspective (Hyland & Hyland 2006). Yet what remains in many studies even until today are traces of the original hopes of the early L1 advocates - to see writing conferences as arenas of liberatory, equal talk between students and teachers and this has even permeated on occasion, studies with L2 writers. In many ways, this hope has become something of a millstone around the neck of every conference investigated, whereby a lack of shared talk has often been taken as a sign of a conference having been less successful.

3.3 The fear of 'appropriating' students' texts

When the teachers in Patthey-Chavez & Ferris's L2 study (1997) discovered how some of them had been using more directive feedback (i.e. telling rather than eliciting) with their weaker students as compared to stronger students, the authors described their reactions as follows:

'The teachers ... expressed some dismay when they first heard themselves ... They realised immediately that the personae they had displayed in those interactions did not fit their goal of affirming students' voices during conferencing' (p. 87)

Such a negative reaction to their feedback style can be linked back to a powerful narrative that has existed within the literature on teacher response to

L1 writing. Since the early 1980s – the fear of ‘*appropriating*’ or taking control of the student’s text has been an ever-present feature of discussion.

As models of writing composition shifted from product to process, teachers were having to re-consider their roles too (Hairston 1982). Previously their main concerns had been related to being involved at the start and end of the writing act by assigning writing and then grading it afterwards, but now they were being asked to intervene while the composition was being created by their students. This change caused many to begin to question the nature of their interventions in the writing process.

One outcome of such deliberation was the feeling that *directive* methods of feedback that sought primarily to offer answers to students’ texts rather than engage them in seeking to take more control over their own writing, was not the best way forward and would hinder students’ voices from coming through in their own texts (Brannon and Knoblauch 1982; Calkins 1983; Harris 1986; Murray 1985; Sommers 1982). Many felt that this would ultimately lead to student texts becoming clones of what their teacher wanted rather than offering a reflection of the students’ own ideas and thoughts.

This view was offered further support by a wider, more critical perspective being taken to the nature of power relations between teachers and students in general. It highlighted how there existed an asymmetry of power between students and teachers in terms of not only knowledge but also discursive rights (Thornborrow 2002). The institution empowered the teacher by virtue of their role and status, which gave them more opportunities to take control of the unfolding talk and shape its outcomes by offering directive feedback. The

feeling was that such teacher behaviour promoted the student in adopting a more subordinate role in terms of the interaction and so reduced their agency.

Such a view quickly permeated the literature on both classroom conferencing and writing centre tutorials in the US too. The consensus was that a *non-directive*, suggestive style of feedback was more appropriate, one that did not aim to ensure that student texts resembled the views of their teacher but rather, attempted to 'facilitate, prompt and guide' conference discussion to encourage students to think for themselves (Calkins 1983; Harris 1986; Murray 1985; Shamon and Burns 1995). Such indirectness also seemed better placed to deal with and avoid potentially face-threatening interactions that may occur between teachers and learners.

Over time, this adoption of a non-directive style of feedback was translated into more specific guidance. It required a focus on higher order concerns such as content and organisation before linguistic aspects and resisting the temptation to 'give answers' or change the learners' texts. It also advocated a collaborative style of feedback that employed Socratic questioning to help students discover more about their own texts, writing processes and revisions (Calkins 1983; Harris 1986).

Yet when it has come to L2 conferencing, studies have questioned whether models of non-directive feedback may be more difficult to employ with such students (Eskey 1983; Ferris 1995; Horowitz 1986). Reid (1994) in her seminal article called '*The myths of appropriation*', argued how views of 'appropriation' and its support of less intervention conflicted with offering effective responses to L2 writers and at times exaggerated the dangers. She spoke of how advocates

of the appropriation argument 'ignored the social contexts for writing' (p. 277) and the challenges L2 writers faced:

'Because their linguistic, content, contextual, and rhetorical schemata differ, they often have problems with the identification and fulfilment of U.S. audience expectations ... These ESL students have extraordinary needs. Teachers must therefore act as cultural informants as well as surrogate audiences' (p. 282)

This view received support from others that sympathised more widely with the challenges faced by international students grappling with westernised notions of academic practice in general and not just conferencing. They felt that notions such as the expression of student voice, agency and identity would be challenging for international students (Angelova and Riazantseva 1999; Grimm 1999; Le Ha 2009; Ivanic and Camps 2001; Ramanathan and Atkinson 1999).

With respect to conferencing and tutorials, other writers in addition to Reid (1994) also began to question whether the mainstream L1 literature view of 'appropriation' was sensitive enough to the needs of L2 writers (Blau & Hall 2002; Ferris 1997; Harris & Silva 1993; Powers 1993; Thonus 1999, 2004).

They argued how a more 'directive' stance that saw the development of language control as equally important as ideas and organisation might be more appropriate and perhaps even welcomed by such students. As mentioned earlier, Ferris (2003) argued that conferencing placed additional aural and oral comprehension on L2 students who would have less time to process understanding and thus may appreciate more focus on their language skills.

Thonus (2004) in her work on tutorials went further and argued how non-directive feedback that was by its very nature indirect and softened by hedging devices may actually be 'a barrier to comprehension' for L2 writers (p. 228).

Patthey-Chavez & Ferris (1997) felt that teachers may be caught between having to follow an indirect style of feedback to help foster student ownership over their work and at the same time needing to get their students to be able to write 'like a native' (p. 87). Echoing Reid's (1994) call for teachers to take on the responsibility of being 'cultural informants' too, Nan (2012) suggested that tutors should prepare for L2 tutorials by 'exploring the cultural differences between themselves and the writers with whom they work and by considering how these differences affect their writing consultations' (p. 52).

Williams (2002) moves beyond the question of how directive feedback should be. She points out that from a socio-cultural perspective 'it is a matter of providing the level of directedness that is appropriate for each learner' (p. 86).

3.4 L2 writing conference and tutorial literature: a critical review

The study of L2 writing conferences has been few and far between in the literature with Zamel (1985) being one of the first writers to suggest its use with L2 students in the US. If one considers studies that have investigated L2 conferences between students and their own writing teachers in higher educational contexts (as occurs in the present study), the list is even smaller (Black 1998; Eckstein 2013; Ewert 2009; Goldstein & Conrad 1990; Haneda 2004; Patthey-Chavez & Ferris 1997; Strauss and Xiang 2006; Trotman 2011; Young & Millar 2004). However, an additional source of research may be derived from the rich literature on L2 students' tutorials in US writing centres, where the interaction takes place with a tutor who is not the teacher of the student but may often be a graduate student, other writing tutor or even the researcher on occasion (Cogie 2006; Cumming & So 1996; Harris & Silva 1993;

Harris 1995; 1997; Powers 1993; Thonus, 1999, 2004; Blau & Hall 2002; Weigle & Nelson 2004; Weissberg 2006; Williams 2004).

For the purposes of this study where the focus is on the *students'* beliefs and actions and *not* the teacher, literature from both classroom conferencing and tutorials will be pooled together when discussing conferencing. However, one still needs to highlight the fact that the contexts within which conferences and tutorials take place may not always be the same.

For example, the relationship between the classroom teacher and their student is significantly different to that between the writing centre tutor and a student. It is characterised by the shared knowledge of context, purpose and audience that both the teacher and student hold about the written assignment which may often be linked directly to classroom content and feedback. Cumming and So (1986 p. 198) describe it as 'based on a long-term relationship and mutual understanding'.

Such familiarity may help the student to feel more comfortable in participating during the conference too. Eckstein (2013 p. 181) highlights this in his study of L2 writing conferences by stating how 'students who developed a rapport with their teacher may have been more willing to interact and negotiate in a conference and ultimately construct better text revisions'. However, proponents of tutoring also cite how talking to tutors may help facilitate a different kind of talk due to the very fact that learners may feel more 'free' to converse as they wish with someone who has less authority than their teachers (Bruffee 1984; Harris 1995).

On a final note, conference discussions with a writing teacher may be seen as more valid and motivating by L2 students when compared to talking with writing centre tutors. A writing teacher sets, teaches and grades your written work and a conference with them to discuss that same work may feel more 'important' to such students. Writing centre tutors, on the other hand carry no such responsibilities.

In general, studies examining conferences and tutorials have been generally of a small-scale nature involving a few student writers, often of a higher language proficiency, over short periods of time at US universities and investigated mostly within the wider field of composition pedagogy. The focus of these studies has included describing and analysing the participation of either the student, teacher or both to better understand the interaction that takes place; the effects of such interaction on subsequent revision and generally exploring the differences between conferencing with L2 writers versus L1 writers.

The following sections provide an overview and evaluation of the small literature accumulated in the area of L2 conferences and tutorials. It will offer a summary of the findings with regard to three principal areas: interaction, language and socio-cultural issues.

3.4.1 Interactional issues

Interactional features have been explored from the perspective of conversation analysis, discourse analysis and Vygotsky's ZPD in order to learn more about what happens during the L2 conference. The overall interactional architecture, as with L1 conferencing, seems to consist of distinct phases such as 'openings and closings' where typically orientation to the task at hand occurs at the start

with the final section of the conference including a summary, evaluation or target for revision (Ewert 2009; Young & Millar 2004). The 'middle phase' is where the real business of conference talk takes place and may include negotiation, scaffolding, questions and clarifications.

Many L2 studies of writing conferences have commented on the relative distribution and nature of the talk between student and teachers. For example, Goldstein and Conrad (1990 p. 443), in their study of the conferences of 3 fluent L2 student writers at a US university with their teacher 'found large differences in the degree to which students participated in the conferences and negotiated meanings'. They highlighted how their findings did not seem to support the literature which argued that the 'very act of conferencing leads students to contribute input' (p. 455). They put this variance down to a variety of possible factors including the students' own personalities and language proficiencies. They also highlighted how the teacher's approach may have had an impact due to the teacher possibly tailoring their style of feedback based on their prior knowledge of the students' behaviour in class and the students' own cultures. They concluded by reflecting on the dynamic nature of the writing conference that lends itself 'to the myriad influences and interpretations of their participants' (p. 456). I see one of these 'influences' as being the *beliefs* students may carry with them about writing conferences.

Another classic study in the field of L2 writing conferences between students and their own teachers is Patthey-Chavez & Ferris (1997), who offer a quantitative and qualitative interpretation of how stronger and weaker students in writing conferences interacted with their teachers. In their study of 6 L2 writers at a US university, they highlighted how the stronger students generally

spoke more than the weaker students who 'rarely took the initiative during conferences [and] tended instead to play receptive audience to their teacher' (p. 61).

The stronger students' higher contributions were displayed by a greater number of turn initiations, longer turns and an ability to manage and extend conversational episodes compared to weaker students. This resulted in longer conferences between teachers and stronger students. Whether such actions by the stronger students occurred purely due to their ability or because their teachers had approached conferences with them differently compared to the weaker students, was unclear. Patthey-Chavez & Ferris echo Goldstein and Conrad's (1990) suggestion that the teachers' prior knowledge of the students' written work may have led them to adopt different conference strategies with them.

Young and Miller's (2004) study of weekly conference 'revision talk' between an adult Vietnamese learner of English and his writing instructor adopted a socio-cultural perspective to investigating how they interactionally co-constructed their discursive practice. Their study drew upon the theory of situated learning or legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger 1991) to study how the student and teacher's participation might evolve during four successive conferences within an identified participation framework consisting of eight identified sequential acts. These acts included identifying a problem in the text, justifying a need for its revision, making the revision and evaluating the outcome.

Their study found that over time the student seemed to transform his participation from being 'peripheral' to one that seemed better able to participate

more fully in his conferences, which led to a shift in his discursive role and that of the teacher too. In the earlier conferences for example, the teacher had managed the entire conference with little activity from the student. In later conferences, however 'the student took a more active role by identifying problems himself, by providing explanations for revisions and by writing revisions without waiting for the instructor's directive to do so' (p. 521). The student's turns also shifted from being minimal to producing more complete turns that included his own ideas and suggestions and thus by the end of his conferences, he was also speaking more often.

Young and Miller claimed that the student's growth occurred because he had worked to construct participation alongside his teacher, whose own participation had also evolved in order to complement the student's increased participation. Overall the study suggests how recurring participation of writing conferences can help make L2 student writers more familiar with the patterns of interaction used and the way in which discursive roles may operate. Their study offers hope that L2 student writers can change their levels of participation over time and that early inactivity is not a fixed state.

Another study that found evidence of a change in the L2 writers' participation in writing conferences is Strauss and Xiang (2006). They examined the interaction between a teacher and seven ESL student writers enrolled on a basic composition course at a US university. They were interested in finding out to what extent the students' agency might be discursively constructed through dialogic instruction in writing conferences. Working within the frameworks of Bakhtinian 'dialogism' (1981, 1986) and Vygotsky's (1986) concept of 'mediation', they found that many of the students who began with rather non-

agentive stances towards the writing task at hand (such as expressing self-doubt or resistance to teacher suggestions) gradually shifted to adopting more positive, agentive attitudes towards the task and themselves as writers (such as expressing 'can do' statements and initiating problem-solving).

Strauss and Xiang put this change down to the 'semiotic resources' (p. 389) that were available to students, such as the instructor's feedback and written literature offered to the students in class regarding the task genre with model samples to support their learning. Like Young and Miller's earlier study (2004), Strauss and Xiang's research supports the idea that L2 writers' conference participation can improve over time.

Haneda (2004) investigated 'dialogic instruction' in conferences with 9 students studying Japanese as a foreign language at a university in Canada of mixed abilities. She built on the work of Nystrand (1997) who discussed how the standard IRE/IRF pattern of exchange (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975; Mehan 1979) commonly seen in the classroom might be made more dialogic and collaborative if the teacher participated in 'uptake' of the students' responses to extend the on-going exchanges. She found that teachers still dominated the lion's share of initiating exchange of topics but interestingly, varied their use of the IRF pattern to suit their pedagogical goals. This would lead to a lack of dialogic instruction occurring, particularly when the topic of discussion related to language use (the majority of cases) rather than content. She put the paucity of dialogic exchanges down to the 'overall purpose of writing conferences ... the assumption is that teachers have knowledgeable skills from which students can benefit ... and that the teacher's role is to help them become better writers' (p.

212). In other words, teachers were present to transmit information to students rather than be concerned with co-constructing their exchanges.

Ewert (2009) investigated teacher talk during conference interaction. She investigated the talk of two teachers with six low level L2 students with little to no familiarity with university writing at a US university using the combined frameworks of both negotiation and scaffolding. The study stands out because it involved *low level* learners who were *unfamiliar* with US academic writing conventions. Her results did not always agree with the findings of earlier studies (Goldstein and Conrad's 1990; Patthey-Chavez & Ferris 1997) that had indicated how feedback could differ due to teachers modifying their interactional style according to prior knowledge of their students' respective abilities.

Ewert (2009), on the other hand, found that one of her teachers, John, negotiated *equally* with both his stronger and weaker writers irrespective of their ability, suggesting how the 'behaviours of the teacher are not as adaptive to learner proficiency as has been suggested and are more a feature of the teacher's interactive style generally or the stance they establish in the conference as either collaborative facilitator or prescriptive authority' (p. 267).

This study is important because it reminds us how conference interaction is also dependent on the *teacher's* approach to feedback alongside how L2 students might behave interactionally.

Ewert (2009) further highlights how conferences that focussed primarily on 'content and rhetorical issues' (p. 268) promoted greater levels of learner participation rather than those focussed on language problems. This may be because discussing ideational content and rhetorical choices is more complex and open to variation and interpretation on the part of the writer and reader,

leading to longer episodes of 'talk'. Discussion of language forms, which may be characterised by less variation in terms of the correct answer may tend to arrive at a conclusion sooner.

Eckstein's (2013) study also examined his teachers' approaches to conference feedback. Following 5 teachers with some 250 L2 writers at a US university, he investigated if teachers could implement some of the theory driven notions of how to conduct writing conferences. These included making sure that the interaction was collaborative and student-centred, non-directive and focused more on global concerns rather than language mechanics. He found that while some teachers were able to apply this, they also reverted to more traditional roles where they discussed grading and language issues. Some teachers would also use their conferences to address wider goals beyond the text itself including 'to build rapport ... get student feedback on the class ... [discuss] overall learning goals' (p. 178). Eckstein's study highlights how conference teachers play a variety of interactional roles that switch from being more or less directive dependent on the purpose they wished to achieve with their students.

From the literature on writing centre tutorials, Thonus (1999) has cited how L2 writers in many ways contributed to the greater interactional dominance of their tutors by offering less volubility, fewer overlaps, more backchanneling and generally wanting their tutors to act as authorities. She saw this dominance as primarily a result of the institutional context that conferred upon the participants roles that provided greater or lesser authority to enact certain discursive practices such as 'evaluate or suggest' being seen as the main preserve of the teacher.

In her review of a decade of research into tutorials between tutors and both L1 and L2 writers, Thonus (2004) again alluded to how tutor talk in writing centres 'shows many signs of interactional dominance' (p. 229) including longer turn lengths, holding the conversational floor for longer and adopting more of a 'take-charge approach to the tutorial in which tutors direct the course of the session and make the major decisions' (p. 230). She described how tutorials with L2 writers were usually shorter (both in terms of number of turns and clock time) and contained fewer topics than those with L1 speakers. Tutors also seemed to move more quickly to 'evaluation-suggestion' sequences rather than engage in any kind of small talk or attempts to engender more collaborative discussion. Williams (2005) was another tutorial study to further highlight the challenges of tutorial interaction with L2 writers. In her study with 3 writers, she highlighted how the diagnosis phase of the tutorials – viz. working out what issues needed further discussion, usually took longer in tutorials with L2 writers. Students had often not understood the assignment topic or guidelines given and had difficulty in making that clear to their tutor through spoken dialogue. Kim (2015) supports Williams' assertion of the difficulty some L2 writers may have in articulating their needs to their tutors and argues that 'deliberate efforts should be made to help ESL students gain confidence in communicating with tutors by equipping the students with necessary linguistic and pragmatic tools' (p. 73).

In summary, the various studies examining interaction within L2 conferences and tutorials have painted a mixed picture of what happens when teachers and student writers get together. There is structure to the talk that revolves around understanding what the issues are, discussing them and moving on to suggestions for revision. Yet in these phases, it seems that teachers and tutors

are generally in charge, guiding the talk along and speaking more often and for longer. This dominance according to some of the studies is facilitated and perpetuated by many students themselves as a result of their weaker language skills, interactional know-how and a desire on the part of some students for the teacher to take control of the interaction and disseminate knowledge.

Yet the literature also highlights how L2 student writers can become more involved in their conference interactions. They need exposure to conferencing over a period of time and ideally a teacher who adopts a more collaborative and inclusive approach to feedback, which may play an important role in encouraging greater student contributions. The focus of talk also seems to be an important factor in encouraging more student interaction with talk centred around language issues in particular, limiting student input more than discussions over content.

3.4.2 Language issues

Many studies have highlighted the predominance of talk centred around correcting errors during L2 writing conferences and tutorials (Aljaafreh & Lantolf 1994; Cumming 1995; Cumming and So 1996; Goldstein & Conrad 1990; Haneda 2004; Riazi 1992; Saito 1992; So 1992; Weigle and Nelson 2004). Cumming and So (1996 p. 201) for example, highlighted how in many of their case studies of ESL writers 'error correction prevailed ... as the major activity in nearly all situations'. A similar picture emerges from L2 peer conference studies, where most students focussed on language issues (Connor and Asenavage 1994; Jacobs 1987; Mendonca and Johnson 1994).

This attention to language derives not just from the students' own perceptions of their language proficiency but also from the very real challenges they may experience in attempting to articulate their thoughts and ideas about academic writing. Areas such as control over lexico-grammatical features, register, content, organisation, referencing and argumentation in academic writing are complex and challenging for L1 student writers, let alone L2 writers. Minett (2009 p. 74) highlights how L2 writers' texts can seem 'vague and confusing' because they have trouble finding the right words to explain their intended meaning. If this is what they experience when they write, then explaining it in a conference will be equally challenging.

US writing centre literature has also highlighted how L2 tutorials may differ from tutoring with L1 writers because of an additional emphasis on language issues and offered guidelines for tutors dealing with such writers. For example, Powers (1993) described the difficulty tutors had in helping L2 student writers to edit and proofread their texts. The techniques tutors applied to aid L1 writers such as read-aloud and using the ear to edit issues 'seldom work for ESL writers ... Few beginning second language writers 'hear' the language 'correctly'" (p. 42-43). She wanted tutors who worked with L2 writers to better appreciate how such students may be 'struggling with an unfamiliar culture, audience and rhetoric' (p. 45).

Yet this need for error correction in L2 conferences and tutorials conflicts with the broader, mainstream view on such interactions that advocates a more non-directive style of feedback (see section 3.3 earlier) that pays more attention to higher order issues issue such as organisation and content rather than lower order ones such as language issues. Blau and Hall (2002) imply that such

priorities are unhelpful when applied to L2 writers who first need help with their language at the sentence-level before moving on to discussing more complex issues such as organisation and the development of their ideas.

With a focus on error correction being so prevalent during conferences, studies in the field turned their attention to looking at what teachers and tutors were doing in response. Eckstein (2013) found that some of the teachers in his study were still focussing on grammar that their L2 students needed help with despite training that had asked them to avoid a focus on lower order concerns. Avoiding a deficit view of such instruction, Eckstein used recent developments in writing centre theory that advocated how writing conferences might in fact, offer *ideal places* for individualised grammar focus with such writers (Harris and Silva 1993; Blau, Hall 2002; Cogie 2006) to adjust the goals of his writing conference programme to be more inclusive of language issues. His findings supported an earlier study by Weigle and Nelson (2004) that highlighted how tutor roles had been affected by the tutees' genuine need for information about the English language' (p. 219) that led to more directive interactions taking place by the tutors involved.

Other studies have examined the *kind of language* used by teachers and tutors when conferencing or tutoring. For example, in Patthey-Chavez & Ferris's (1997) study, the teachers seemed to offer more directive feedback to weaker students than to the stronger students. Such feedback included more imperative style phrasing such as '*I want you to do it and you have to give ...*' with less use of hedging language to soften the feedback – something not found in communication with the stronger students, where the teachers' feedback was more often mitigated. It seemed as if the teacher, having prior awareness of the

student's linguistic level from either the classroom or the initial exchanges of the conference, felt that a more directive response may facilitate greater understanding and negotiation with weaker students.

In summary, the literature looking at the focus of L2 conference and tutorial talk has found that it is often dominated by a discussion about language and its correction. Issues with vocabulary and sentence construction have tended to make L2 writers' texts difficult to read in addition to grappling with other aspects of academic writing such as ideas and organisation. In response, many teachers and tutors have responded by offering more directive, less-mitigated feedback on language issues, especially with weaker students. This is in spite of the fact that the mainstream advice regarding conferences has been to avoid overt correction and focus more on higher order issues with students. Yet this view is softening with some writers looking at such face to face interaction as being ideal sites to offer bespoke feedback on an individual's language issues.

3.4.3 Socio-cultural issues

With recent moves towards viewing writing as less of a cognitive endeavour but one that takes place within situated contexts influenced by both local and wider social reality, studies have viewed L2 writers attempts to write and speak through a more socially informed perspective (Young and Miller 2004; Strauss and Xiang 2006). This has meant raising the profile of factors such as the L2 writers' cultural backgrounds and experiences, their personality and beliefs about writing and conferencing alongside those of the teacher too.

It can also mean a consideration of the wider institutional context within which conferencing typically occurs – classrooms and writing centres within university

settings that often espouse notions of individualism, critical thinking, argument and textual ownership, especially in the 'west'. While these concepts exist across many cultures, I would claim that they are proceduralised in different ways and can affect the development of the second language text as well as the ensuing discussion of it during a conference or tutorial.

This socio-cultural emphasis on conferences can be seen in the kind of language used in some of the conference literature. For example, Young and Miller (2004 p. 519) view conference talk as 'a situated co-constructed process' while Patthey-Chavez and Ferris (1997) describe conferencing as an 'academic socialization practice' (p. 54) where 'students and teachers ... meet within given institutional contexts and discuss specific forms of writing, themselves the result of institutional practices' (p. 52). Strauss and Xiang (2006) employ Bakhtin's concept of dialogism to see conferences as dialogic interactions that are at once both 'recursive and responsive in that its content ... has occurred in prior discourse in some related form or shape' (p. 358) and where the language used by participants helps to mediate expression of their inner thoughts.

In earlier sections (3.3, 3.4.1, 3.4.2) in which I discussed issues around text appropriation, interaction and language issues, I referred to the cultural practices that L2 writers may bring with them to conference talk. Such culturally influenced beliefs may include seeing teachers more as evaluators than facilitators and having less concern about issues regarding who has control over their conference or tutorial interactions (Harris 1997; Patthey-Chavez and Ferris 1997; Thonus 2004). Blau and Hall (2002) speak of how some L2 students are accustomed to maintaining a respectful distance with their teachers and being asked to collaborate on equal terms with them during

interaction would be difficult. Overall, such views help to perpetuate teacher dominance and student passivity during writing conferences.

From quite early on, Powers (1993) has argued that we need to accept that L2 writing tutorials would be different to those with L1 writers because L2 writers 'bring different contexts to conferences ... therefore [they are] likely to need different kinds of assistance from us' (p. 44). One different form of assistance was Powers' notion of tutors becoming *informants of cultural practices* with L2 writers (a concept taken up by Reid (1994) in her classic article on appropriation – see 3.3) - helping to explain to students how academic practices may differ from what they may have been familiar with previously in addition to their standard roles as tutors. In their study of L2 tutorials over two years, Blau and Hall (2002) found that some 50% of the interactions contained examples of tutors acting as 'cultural informants'. In their study, they applied the term in a broader sense to mean any kind of mutual exchange between the tutor and student about their respective 'political systems, national customs and audience expectations' (p. 30). Blau and Hall felt that such a transfer of information helped to build rapport and collaboration between tutors and L2 student writers.

In summary, studies that have examined L2 writing conferences and tutorials through the lens of socio-cultural theory have raised the profile of factors beyond the talk and text itself. They force us to remember that such interactions take place within specific contexts in institutional settings and may be affected by the personalities, beliefs and cultural practices students bring to the talk alongside teachers. Such factors are not mere additions but intrinsic to understanding the complexities of student-teacher, face to face interactions about writing.

3.5 Learners' beliefs and expectations about writing conferences

The previous section has shown how L2 writers in conferences and tutorials bring with them beliefs and expectations derived from their experiences born of not only different cultures and traditions but also of often having been socialised within different kinds of educational experiences affected by significant others. Added to this, of course, are their own personalities, learning styles and preferences. These L2 writers then need to contend with participating in conferences that are taking place in institutional settings built on prescriptive forms of practice derived from the socio-cultural practices of the wider community that may conflict with some of their culturally informed ways of knowing and learning.

Sat opposite them is usually an L1 English speaking teacher in possession of their own beliefs and preferences that also contribute to the complex milieu of variables influencing conference talk. With the above in mind, one might assume the importance of gathering as much information as possible about the thoughts of the L2 student writer about to enter such a complex arena.

However, as Liu (2009 p. 100) points out 'Little research has been done on students' needs and expectations of the conference'.

Carnicelli's classic study (1980) examined about 1800 responses that had been completed on the standard end of year course evaluation forms by L1 students on a US Freshman English program about conferencing. He found that in general, the students were very positive about conferencing on their writing course with few references made to any critique. He highlighted some of the reasons the students gave for their positive opinions:

- having conferences was more useful than the writing classes
- understanding more of what their teacher meant through talking
- being prompted to come up with answers for themselves
- hearing encouragement from teachers and not just critique
- receiving suggestions for future revisions

However, Carnicelli's study also highlighted how students:

- did not always know what their teacher thought about their text
- were wary of their teacher changing their ideas and text too much (appropriated)

It seemed that some of the students wanted greater clarity from their teacher but at the same time wanted to retain some level of ownership over the ideas in their texts too.

In another L1 study at a US university, Walker (1992) asked students (and teachers) to independently rate the success of each of the 17 conferences they had participated in on a scale from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). Walker postulated that conferences where teachers were most vocal and students least vocal would be the least favoured by the participants. However, her data suggested that this was not the case – students seemed to not be overly concerned by who spoke more or less in their conferences. Walker accounted for this finding by stating that 'what is crucial is not who talks more but what the agenda is (what they talk about)' (p. 72).

Newkirk (1995) used Goffman's Performative Theory to examine the conversational roles taken by L1 students and teachers during their conferences at a US university. During his post conference interviews, he found that both of the students in the study were having difficulty in adjusting to the non-directive feedback style of their teacher, which required them at times to

take on greater responsibility in commenting on their texts and not always getting the answers they expected to receive. As one of the L1 student writers, Gina, said '[I'm used to] having my teacher correct it and tell me what's wrong with it and give me a grade' (p. 205). The other writer, Julie, also picked up on the change in feedback style by highlighting: 'I could tell she was like, 'I don't want to tell you where to put it because I want you to figure it out on your own'' (p. 205).

The study highlighted how some of the beliefs and expectations students bring to writing conferences may not always be met but the student still needed to carry on 'trying to present a 'front' of competence' (p. 213). Overall the study suggested how conference dynamics may be influenced by both the student and teacher's perceptions of their roles during the conference.

Han's (1996) study of 6 US college students was one of the first to investigate what L2 writers believed about conferences. He found that their perceptions were shaped by a variety of factors that included their previous learning experiences, their ideas about the correct teaching approach, social and cultural factors and their perceived self-efficacy. Earlier Arndt (1993) in her survey of students studying at the City Polytechnic in Hong Kong found many of the L2 writers describing conferences as sites where they felt more stress and anxiety. This was echoed in Chen's (2005) study where she interviewed 8 L2 student writers in a university classroom setting also in Hong Kong about their conferences with their teachers. While all the students were looking forward to the writing conferences, some expressed anxieties about the interactions. The idea of talking in English in a one to one setting with a teacher made them

nervous while others were concerned about the kinds of roles they were expected to play during the conferences.

In US writing centre research, Thonus (2004 p. 235) describes how L2 student writers carried expectations of their tutor's interactional dominance: 'these tutees interpreted tutor behaviours such as volubility, directive frequency and forcefulness as consistent with their constructions of tutors as a type of teacher with inherent rights to such behaviour'. Such beliefs amongst L2 student writers attending writing centres has been reported by other studies (Blau and Hall 2002; Harris 1997; Thonus 1999; Williams 2004; Young 1992) but also in teacher-student conferencing too (Haneda 2004). Healy and Boshier (1992) argue how the dominant writing centre theory of collaborative tutoring is based on challenging educational authority to discover one's own authorial voice. L2 student writers, however, often viewed the tutor as the 'expert' which immediately placed themselves in the supporting role of a 'learner' rather than a 'collaborator'.

Young (1992) investigated how politeness strategies operated in writing centre interactions between L2 writers and L1 tutors at a university. She found that her Asian L2 student writers expected their tutors to be professional and socially distant from them, commensurate with their cultural preferences. In addition, they expected to hear unmitigated imperatives that told them what changes they needed to make rather than the indirect, hedged suggestions typical of writing centre philosophy. The students in her study went on to argue how such indirect statements from the tutor were confusing for them.

Liu (2009) conducted a survey with 110 students (45 L2 writers and 65 L1 writers) in freshman composition classes at a US university followed by

interviews with focus groups prior to the start of the students' conferences. She wanted to learn more about what students expected from their upcoming conferences. Liu found that like in Chen's (2005) study, a few of the L2 writers expressed some anxiety about talking in English to a teacher because as some put it 'they did not know what to tell the instructor' (p. 109), though most were looking forward to it. In particular, they held greater expectations than L1 learners of receiving feedback on their grammar errors but lower expectations of having to talk about their essays with their teachers.

Liu argued that this difference was due to the fact that the L1 writers were expected to display their ability and had been in part, socialised during their previous schooling to speak up and perform. L2 writers coming from cultures that may place greater emphasis on hierarchical forms of relationship between teachers and students would find it challenging and even impolite to raise, for example, topics of their own.

In one of the most recent studies investigating L2 student writers' views on the feedback they received, Best, Jones-Katz, Smolarek, Stolzenburg and Williamson (2015) interviewed 20 international writers on their advanced writing course at their US university. They found that the majority were very positive about conferencing with their teachers and preferred it to peer feedback and written commentary. The students used words such as 'useful ... helpful ... important' (p. 347) going on to describe conference feedback as a place where they could receive more detailed and specific feedback and get clarification on problematic areas quickly.

A final study in the small literature on studies examining what L2 students think about conferencing, Maliborska and You (2016) surveyed 100 L2 student

writers about their expectations of writing conferences on their composition course at their US university. Like Best et.al (2015), they found that a large majority of the students preferred conferences to other forms of instruction on their course. Most students thought that conferences helped them to revise their draft and become better writers overall. Many appreciated 'receiving individualized help that targeted their weaknesses and confirming their revisions with the instructor' (p. 16). However, some still wanted greater specificity from their teachers' commentary. The survey also revealed that while most students wanted a balanced discussion with their teachers, a quarter still preferred conferences to be teacher led. When asked for suggestions to improve future conferences, some highlighted how teachers needed to be more patient with them due to their communication difficulties. An interesting quote from a student suggested how a 'Teacher should clearly express their mind and not ask students to accept their idea' (p. 17) – suggesting that some students in the study perhaps wanted teachers at times to take more account of *their* ideas. Thus overall, the literature examining the beliefs and expectations of L2 writers about writing conferences suggests that in general they look forward to conferencing and appreciate the help it can offer them. However, some are nervous about the upcoming interaction – especially in the kind of roles they may be expected to play. The students in general desire the teacher to focus on grammatical errors and offer clear suggestions for future revisions. Their beliefs seem to emanate from their previous learning experiences and socialisation within different cultures that may characterise teacher and student talk in different ways to western style conferences.

3.6 L2 Learners' use of strategies during writing conferences

As we saw in sections 3.4.1, there have been a few L2 studies that have sought to investigate conference interaction. Such research by virtue of its focus has also highlighted the kinds of *strategies* students used while discussing their work and for the purpose of this study are worth revisiting. From the outset, we may assume that L2 student writers face greater linguistic challenges than L1 writers in general and as such we might expect them to use a greater number of strategies involving requests for confirmation and clarification to negotiate their understanding of an issue. Due to differences in their socio-cultural background (see section 3.4.3) we might also raise the possibility that some L2 writers might find less familiar strategies such as offering unsolicited opinions, asking questions and negotiating future revision quite challenging to enact with great frequency, if at all.

Goldstein and Conrad (1990) found that all three of their students were involved in varying degrees in enacting strategies to nominate topics, ask questions and negotiate meaning such as seeking clarification and confirmation of revision suggestions. Two of the students were seen to nominate up to 50% of the topics for discussion and instigate requests for clarification and confirmation more than 50% of the time – actions that demonstrate a strong level of participation. One student, however, used these strategies a lot less. Since all 3 students in the study were deemed to be fluent in English, this suggests that contributing to conference talk could still be challenging for some and was not solely dependent on their linguistic proficiencies.

Patthey-Chavez and Ferris (1997) also found specific kinds of strategies used by their students. The conference transcripts reveal how the stronger students

were better able to display their knowledge about writing essays using appropriate terminology and articulate challenging concepts such as that of the 'hypothetical reader' in explaining why they structured their text in a particular way. Furthermore, they were also capable of self-evaluating their work, eliciting their teachers' feedback and on occasion offering polite objection to revision suggestions by their teacher. Such tasks proved more challenging for weaker students in the study, however. Haneda's study (2004) also found her stronger students capable of employing a wider range of strategies such as offering explanations and opinions about their work than weaker students.

While the above suggests how weaker students may find using strategies more challenging than stronger students, Young and Miller's (2004) study of a lower level student offers hope that such challenges can be overcome. Their student started out as less than fluent in his contributions but as his participation increased over time, so did his variety and use of strategies. These included his ability to identify a problem in his text, being able to explain the need for revision himself and offering possible revisions too. Strauss and Xiang's (2006) study was another centred around the development of L2 writers' participation in their conferences over time. Like in Young and Miller's (2004) study, their students began to gradually use more 'agentive' strategies as their skills in conferencing improved. They were seen to offer justification for their work, complain or resist tasks set, give opinions and even begin to think about the potential reader of their texts as they spoke.

Ewert's (2009) investigation of teacher talk in writing conferences, also highlighted the kinds of strategies the students used during their conferences with their teachers. For example, one of the students, showed an ability to

initiate discussion at times about possible future revisions he might make and was able to explain what he had done and why with his teacher's help using prompts.

Interestingly, some studies have highlighted how student writers can employ strategies to manoeuvre their teachers into offering them *more* advice and direction. Patthey-Chavez and Ferris (1997) highlight how 'some [students] display a strategic skill in evoking that authority in order to profit from it - for instance by explicitly requesting an expert opinion about their writing' (p. 54). Sperling (1991 cited by Newkirk 1995 p. 213) describes how some: 'students can sometimes 'buy' teacher advice with silence, using passivity [as a strategy] to manoeuvre the teacher into a more directive role', which then leads to the teacher saying more. While all three of these researchers are referring to L1 students, it is reasonable to conclude that some L2 writers might also participate in such strategies both consciously and subconsciously. The fact that some of these writers may already hold culturally informed preferences for more teacher direction, may make them more prone to trying to invoke more help from their teachers during conferences (Blau and Hall 2002; Harris 1997; Thonus 1999, 2004; Williams 2004; Young 1992).

Another example of strategy use by L2 writers comes from the writing centre literature. Williams (2004 p. 187) describes how some writers did not always follow their tutor's suggestions. She described the case of one participant who would consistently use the word *maybe* to 'resist or challenge his tutor's advice'. While such cases are few in number, they remind us that L2 writers cannot be characterised as always willing to follow the suggestions and requests of their tutors.

Overall, the little research that has investigated L2 student interaction in writing conferences has shown that they are capable of employing a wide variety of strategies during their conferences including:

- topic nomination
- asking questions
- offering their opinions
- negotiating meaning via seeking clarification
- negotiating meaning via seeking confirmation
- negotiating revision strategies
- displaying their knowledge of the writing process
- self-evaluating their texts
- linking what they had done to something they had been taught previously
- identifying problems in their text
- looking ahead to possible revisions of their text
- offering rationales for future revision items
- offering examples of specific revision that could be made
- explaining what they had done
- offering rationales for their work
- using silence or passivity to encourage greater directiveness from teachers
- offering mild, low-level resistance to revision suggestions

Of course, their use of such strategies in conferences is dependent upon on a variety of factors including their linguistic proficiency, the issue being discussed, the institutional setting, the beliefs they bring about conferences, how comfortable they feel in the conference and with their teacher and their teacher or tutor's style of feedback.

In summary, the limited research on the kinds of conference strategies used by L2 writers points to how stronger students display a wider range of strategy use

than weaker students. There is evidence that L2 students with time and practice of conferencing can increase their range of strategy use and thereby increase their contributions. Some researchers have suggested how conference strategies can be used strategically by L2 writers to prompt more information from their teachers, though I am not entirely convinced by this. In my experience, low level, L2 writers' questions are just as likely to occur because they do not understand something and genuinely need help.

3.7 Overview of studies investigating L2 learner beliefs and strategy use in writing conferences

The greatest limitation in exploring what L2 writers either think about writing conferences or what they actually do during their conferences has been the paucity of research studies in the area. There have only been a handful of studies directly examining L2 students' beliefs about conferencing. With regard to studies investigating strategy use by L2 writers in conferences, the pool has been equally small and suffered from the fact that few of these studies have ever made the identification and categorisation of strategies their main priority of enquiry. Instead, such studies have aimed to achieve an overall understanding of the architecture of the interaction between the student and their teacher or to identify links between conference discussion and later student revision. As a result, I have resorted to studying the transcripts of such studies in order to learn more about the kinds of strategies L2 student writers actually wield during their conferences (see section 3.6).

Another limitation has been the US-centric nature of most of the studies to date, typically focussing on writers studying on composition courses at university.

Such settings naturally bring with them factors related to not only the aims of the individual course or task assignment but may also reflect wider institutional goals soaked in particular philosophies related to ways of doing and knowing that ultimately influence how conferences may be conducted and how teachers or tutors should behave during such interaction. Other settings will undoubtedly bring their own practices and traditions to the table, though within the small field dedicated to exploring L2 student writer beliefs and strategy use during conferences, other settings have not often been explored.

Because UK universities do not share the US tradition of enrolling first year students on compulsory composition classes, there has not been perhaps the same urgency to investigate the use of writing conferences in this country. To the best of my knowledge, no study on L2 writing conferences between teachers and their students at a UK university has been conducted and as such, this study may well be one of the very first.

Due the small number of studies in the field, I have had to look beyond the research that has examined students conferencing with their writing teacher and read the findings coming from the rich literature on US writing centres. This has, in recent times, explored tutorials with L2 writers from its own institutional settings, traditions and philosophies, which may not always perfectly align with the views of more mainstream writing conference scholars. These differences have an impact on the interaction that takes place, the roles that students and tutors play, the kinds of beliefs such students may carry about the impending interaction and the strategies they employ.

Another limiting factor in conferencing studies has been the kind of L2 participants that have been examined. For example, studies in higher educational contexts have typically looked at:

- EFL students with already high levels of English who were deemed ready to enter mainstream US composition courses (Patthey-Chavez and Ferris 1997)
- L2 students who had already spent several years in the US and were deemed to be fluent speakers of English (Goldstein and Conrad 1990)
- L2 students who had attended high school in the US (Goldstein and Conrad 1990; Strauss and Xiang 2006; Williams 2004)

All the above groups share the characteristic of having a good level of English proficiency, especially those who have been raised in the US and attended high school but were perhaps born elsewhere. Such students are often labelled as Generation 1.5 (Rumbaut and Ima 1988) because their linguistic, cultural and social skills place them in-between the first generation of their parents who may have immigrated to the US and the skill set of their naturalised US peers. Harklau (2002) extends this definition to describe such students as those learning English at the same time as they are attending college.

While still learning, such students still possess a good level of spoken English that may help them navigate some of the challenges of their new academic context. Furthermore, these students' previous experiences and levels of acculturation into US/western models of education will most likely help and support the way in which they write, speak and interact during their conferences or tutorial talk. Other than Ewert (2009), however, few studies have investigated

lower level EFL students in writing conferences who have arrived more recently to the US for language study. Kim (2015 p. 73) argues how such students 'may face serious challenges not only in writing but also in expressing their needs'. To the best of my knowledge, no similar studies have been conducted with newly arrived EFL students participating in writing conferences at a UK university either, something the current study hopes to address.

One weakness in studies on L2 students' beliefs about conferencing has been the methodology used. Some have made use of questionnaires to conduct surveys, while others have interviewed students and only a few studies have utilised both methods. Very few have tracked whether students' views about conferencing changed once they had experienced participating in them or if their beliefs had any kind of impact on what they actually did during their conferences. As highlighted at the outset of this section, rarely have studies focused only on the kinds of strategies students used while they conferenced – their revelation has usually been a by-product of other goals. Yet at least in these studies, actual conference data has been collected and transcribed, offering some insight into what students say and do.

The general lack of research into the area of conference beliefs and strategy use among L2 writers, the predominance of the US setting of these studies and the kind of students researched offers plenty of scope to examine new areas. The current study seeks to build upon this existing body of work by looking at what L2 student writers think and do during their conferences in a university setting but one in the UK rather than the US and on a Pre-sessional style foundation course rather than a US composition course. Such differences will offer fresh perspectives about L2 writers studying in different settings and

contexts. Similarly, the four participants in this study are EFL students, where English is their foreign language rather than their second language and they have had little to no exposure to UK educational practices before arrival.

In addition, the conferences studied will take place between the students and their regular writing classroom teachers and not in a writing centre at the university. Finally, previous studies in the field have examined *either* student beliefs *or* highlighted as part of their analysis, the kinds of strategies they have used while conferencing rather than making it the primary aim of the study itself. In contrast, the present study will seek to not just investigate the students' beliefs regarding their conferences but go on to investigate the actual strategies they employ while conferencing as one of its central aims. Furthermore, it will then attempt to see what kind of relationship may or may not exist between their beliefs and the kinds of strategies they use during their conferences. Thus the location, setting, kind of students involved and overall focus of the present study set it apart in many ways from much of the existing research. With this in mind, the current research sets out to answer the following three research questions:

- 1) What beliefs do L2 student writers hold about writing conferences?
- 2) What strategies do L2 student writers employ during their conference interactions?
- 3) How do students' beliefs affect their use of strategies in conferences?

Understanding more about what international students *believe* about writing conferences may allow UK academic writing teachers to challenge any deficit views they might hold about conferencing with L2 writers and see the interaction through the eyes of their students. Similarly, knowledge of the kinds of *strategies* such students might employ while conferencing offers the opportunity

to consider ways in which such strategy use might be supported and developed. Finally, to see whether students' beliefs about conferencing can affect their conference behaviour might point to a need for more dialogue with students about their expectations of conferences before they begin. All three questions, in my opinion, are important to the wider aim of making L2 writing conferences as successful as they can be and places where such students can talk more easily and openly about their evolving texts.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed how conferences were originally seen as idealised sites for greater collaboration between students and their teachers; facilitative in explaining the complexities of academic writing and represented a perfect example of Vygotsky's ZPD. Yet actual studies of conferences contradicted some of these aspirations. They revealed a picture of talk that resembled the classroom more than it did collaborative conversation, where the teacher spoke more and controlled the discourse.

I also highlighted how conferencing has been judged by the concern over 'appropriation'. This has urged teachers and tutors to avoid populating talk with their own ideas and preferences and instead prompt students to come up with ideas for themselves. Researchers investigating L2 writing conferences have questioned this notion, however, highlighting how a more suggestive style of feedback could be too challenging for some L2 writers who arrive with different cultural, linguistic and rhetorical schemata.

The chapter also provided a review of the small literature on L2 writing conferences with respect to their findings on interaction, language issues and

socio-cultural themes, using literature from writing classrooms and writing centre tutorials. Interaction is seen to be controlled by the teacher often with the acquiescence of students themselves. There is a high focus on error correction and greater awareness of interpreting L2 conference talk in relation to the context, personalities and prior experiences and preferences of the L2 writers involved.

The chapter has also discussed L2 writers' beliefs about conferencing with most seeing them as positive though a little anxious about the roles they may need to play. They generally want more details and clarity from their conference feedback. With regard to conference strategy use, the research highlights how L2 writers are capable of employing a wide range of strategies with support and practice over time.

I ended by highlighting that the current body of research examining L2 writer beliefs and strategy use in conferences was limited in terms of the lack of studies, its US-centric base, the kinds of students involved and the methods used. I then made a case for how the current study would address and build upon the existing research.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the methods used in the research. It begins by first highlighting the underlying theoretical basis that informs the research before moving on to discuss the use of a case study approach. It then seeks to establish the context of the research including a focus on the setting and participants involved. It will then critically discuss the methods adopted to collect and analyse the data and end by discussing some of the ethical considerations involved.

4.2 Theoretical approaches taken in the study

Our assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology) tends to encourage other assumptions regarding what might be the best way to understand knowledge and consider questions around 'truth' (epistemology). Such theoretical underpinnings then cause one to reflect upon the kinds of methodological approaches that might be best suited to help investigate such knowledge and be further reduced to include deliberation over which instrumentation needs to be used to gather the data (Hitchcock and Hughes 1995). This hierarchy that flows from theory all the way down to the kinds of research tools that may be used offers a sense of coherence to any research being undertaken.

With this in mind, the study views reality as being *socially constructed*, whereby 'truth is relative ... and is dependent on one's perspective' (Baxter and Jack 2008 p. 545) and 'recognises the importance of the subjective human creation of meaning' (Crabtree and Miller 1999, p. 10). In other words, each person

creates their own social world differently from others and employs their own words and experiences to tell their 'story'.

In order to investigate such 'stories' or what Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) describe as 'the way in which individuals create, modify and interpret the world in which they find themselves' (p. 6), one needs to use an approach that allows the researcher and the participant to work more closely together (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). Furthermore, one is looking for a depth of understanding, ideally suited to an *interpretative* form of enquiry that asks questions pertaining to the 'details' of the social context of the individual concerned and aims to understand it from the perspective of the participants.

Distilling all of this down to the particular study at hand, such a view entails adopting a socially-constructed view of learning a foreign language – one that views it as a socially-situated practice within which meanings are constructed rather than waiting to be discovered; complex and evolving rather than unchanging and where the internal, cognitive world of the learner is in constant dialogue with their external social world to build meaning. I see learners as free agents who are able to determine their own actions, capable of changing their environment and are sensitive to the presence of significant others such as their peers, teachers, family and friends.

Furthermore, as the study aims to understand the learner's *beliefs* about conferences and the kinds of *strategies* they use in conferences, both terms need to be related to the overall theoretical perspective taken. As referred to earlier in the literature chapter (sections 2.3.1; 2.4.3), both beliefs and strategies are viewed as being situated, socially constructed tools that learners have

acquired through interaction with their social worlds to help mediate their learning of a second language.

4.3 Case studies

Thomas (2011 p. 124) describes case studies and interpretative inquiry as ‘natural bed-fellows, since each calls for ‘[a] rich, intensive understanding ...of the multifaceted nature of social situations’. Furthermore, seminal guides to case study use by Stake (1995) and Yin (2003; 2009) are both based on a constructivist paradigm as this study is and as such, the use of case studies seems a very natural fit to explore students’ beliefs and actions in situated contexts. The literature abounds with definitions of the term ‘case study’ and a small sample of these can be seen in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Definitions of a case study

Author	Definition
Stake (2005 p. 443)	‘Case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied ... By whatever methods we choose to study the case’
Baxter and Jack (2008 p. 544)	‘an approach to research that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources’
Simons (2009 p. 21)	‘Case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in a real life’ context. It is research-based, inclusive of different methods and evidence-led’
Yin (2009 p. 18)	‘an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident’
Thomas (2011 p. 23)	‘Case studies are analyses of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions or other systems which are studied holistically by one or more methods ... we cannot generalise from a case study [but] what the case study is especially good for is getting a rich picture and gaining analytical insights from it’

This selection of definitions from the literature reveals key features that contribute to our understanding of what case studies are and what they do.

They are:

- bounded by a particular situation, event, person or argument
- have a preference for 'holism' rather than 'reductionism'
- include a variety of methods to capture data
- explore issues from multiple perspectives
- involve in-depth 'thick description' (Geertz 1975)
- offer insights rather than generalisations

Thus, to use case studies is to implicitly share the worldview that the purpose of understanding phenomena is to see and explore them in their entirety, where the 'whole' is seen as being more significant than the sum of its parts. Rejecting a reductionist view and looking for the interconnectedness between data, however, means that it can be quite easy to look at everything and become lost in the complexities of it all – hence the need for boundaries. Good case studies look to examine specific people in specific settings under particular circumstances using specific perspectives rather than researching everything or everyone, everywhere at any time. Thomas (2011) also argues how case study research needs to have two components – a general 'subject' that provides the focus of research and an 'analytical frame' that not only acts to bound the case but moves it beyond mere description to presenting the particular perspective being taken to study the subject at hand.

A case study is not a method but rather a container or wrapper within which an eclectic mix of methods can be used. These include questionnaires, interviews, observations and image based methods to capture data from different angles and perspectives in order to offer detailed description and analysis of the event, person or institution under focus. Due to the richness of data being sought that is itself tied to the complex interconnections between a variety of variables in

the specific case, generalising findings is limited - a criticism often laid at the door of case study research.

Yet Robson (2002) and Yin (2009) argue that case studies *can* offer what they term as 'analytic' rather than 'statistical' generalisations. They highlight how 'statistical' generalisation often attempts to move from the research sample and explore what significance it may have for the wider population at large. They argue that case studies are less interested in offering representative samples (as each case is seen to be unique to itself) but are still able to contribute to increasing and building our knowledge of theory, which can then help researchers understand other similar cases.

Other criticisms of case study research have included how it often lacks a high degree of control and can be quite impressionistic, with researcher bias an issue (Shaughnessy, Zechmeister and Zechmeister 2003). Dyer (1995) highlights how case studies can often combine knowledge with inference, sometimes making it difficult to interpret the data. Yet these criticisms seem to miss the point about the goals of case study research, viz. the interpretive tradition of seeing things through the eyes of the research participants and not qualifying the significance of observations simply by how often they have occurred. Instead one looks to the relative importance attached to them by the person under study or in the situation being investigated. Case studies seek quality, not quantity, whereby 'significance rather than frequency is a hallmark' (Cohen et. al 2011 p. 294).

Table 4.2 highlights some of the most common ways in which case studies have been categorised in the literature.

Table 4.2: Categorisation of case studies

Researcher	Labels	Core elements of labels
Merriam (1988)	<i>Descriptive, Interpretative and Evaluative</i>	Descriptive: narrative accounts Interpretative: developing conceptual categories Evaluative: explaining and judging
Stake (1995)	<i>Intrinsic, Instrumental and Collective</i>	Intrinsic: area of personal interest without larger purpose Instrumental: case studied to gain insight into wider issue Collective: multiple-case studies
Yin (2003)	<i>Explanatory, Exploratory and Descriptive</i>	Explanatory: explaining what is occurring in depth Exploratory: problem-solving, open-ended, finding out why Descriptive: narrative accounts
Thomas (2011)	<i>Key case, Outlier case and Local knowledge case</i>	Key case: a good example of something Outlier case: something interesting because it's different Local knowledge case: something you are familiar with already

The terms used in the table are based on differing criteria and often apply different labels to very similar things. In attempting to classify the case study research applied here, I am primarily governed by Thomas' (2011) simplified method of trying to provide answers to four core questions about my cases:

1. What is the **subject (what)** i.e. key, outlier or local?
2. What is the **purpose (why)** i.e. intrinsic, instrumental, evaluative, explanatory, exploratory?
3. What is the **approach (how)** i.e. testing or building theory; descriptive, interpretative, experimental?
4. What is the **process (structure)** i.e. single or multiple-cases?

Table 4.3 below applies this framework to my own cases.

Table 4.3: Applying Thomas' (2011) rubric to my case studies

	Case studies
Subject (what)	A local knowledge case: investigating what L2 writers do in their writing conferences with their writing teachers on the foundation programme that I course led at the University of Central Lancashire.
Purpose (why)	Explanatory: seeking to understand in greater depth the beliefs that L2 writers hold about conferencing and their strategy use during conferences. Exploratory: anecdotal evidence suggested that L2 writers on the course did not always seem to find conferences as useful as I expected them to be and I wanted to know why this was the case. Instrumental: To gather evidence regarding how useful writing conferences were for the foundation programme and to feed this into a wider discussion of their use as a teaching tool in the language department as a whole.
Approach (how)	Interpretative: to explore in detail the biographies of individual L2 writers alongside their beliefs about writing conferences. I want to record and analyse what they actually do during their conferences and attempt to relate their actions to their expressed beliefs about conferencing, their previous learning experiences and the situated context.
Process (structure)	Multiple-case studies: Investigating four L2 student writers from different countries, with different English language levels and experiences of conferences.

4.4 Context of study

The study was conducted in the School of Languages and International Studies at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) during the academic year 2010-11. The school ran a wide range of courses that included stand-alone English language courses, an international foundation programme (IFP), degrees in Modern Foreign Languages, TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) and internationally orientated Business degrees. Most of the degree programmes were offered at both undergraduate and post-graduate levels. In addition, the school offered franchised degree programmes with partner institutions in China, which allowed Chinese student to spend time studying in the UK as part of their degree programmes. The school also ran student exchange schemes with universities in Japan.

This study concerns the International Foundation Programme in Academic English Studies (IFP), which I was course leading at the time. The programme primarily catered for international students who did not meet the English language requirements for entry on to their undergraduate courses either at UCLAN or on one of the franchised degree programme in China. Each year there were also a small number of graduate students who were seeking progression on to Masters' programmes and they largely followed the standard IFP course content but took bespoke classes that targeted their specific needs as graduates, including final assessments. Most of the students on the IFP held conditional offers from their respective future courses and upon successful completion of the programme, would be granted progression on to their course the following year.

As a result of the school's links to institutions in China, the majority of the intake on the IFP came from China – about 60% on average in the previous two years 2008-9 and 2009-10. About 10% of the students arrived from the school's Japanese exchange programme, while the rest came from direct recruitment, usually European. The most common nationalities were Chinese, Japanese, Saudi and Polish students with an age range of between 18-30 years and a mix of both male and female students with the majority seeking to progress on to undergraduate degrees and about 10% or less seeking advancement on to Masters' degrees.

The IFP course ran two separate cohorts a year, one in September and the other in January. The students received 20 hours per week of classroom contact time, which was supplemented by additional work including daily homework tasks for each class, larger semester based projects, one to one

conferences with their teachers and essay writing. The programme, tasks and tests were based around the following 6 modules over 2 semesters:

- Academic Reading (4 hours per week)
- Academic Writing (6 hours per week = 4 on writing and 2 hours on English grammar)
- Academic Listening (2 hours per week)
- Academic Speaking (2 hours per week)
- Study & Society in the UK (4 hours per week)
- An option module from several ESP module choices (2 hours per week)

The course was designed to take students entering with an IELTS or equivalent score of 4.5/5.0 overall with a minimum 4.5 in the reading and writing sub-scores and help them improve to a level equivalent to IELTS 6.0-6.5 overall with 6.0 in the writing sub-skill. Most of the materials on the course were made in-house by the teachers and myself, as course leader, and the end of semester tests were graded to reflect the need to meet the University's language entrance requirements.

When students arrived, they were all given a placement test and then streamed into two groups - one of a higher level (approx. IELTS 5.0+) and one lower (approx. IELTS 4.5+). The two levels covered the same materials and tasks required to complete the IFP but the higher group classes proceeded more quickly and were given additional tasks to ensure that they were being challenged appropriately. A typical class size on the IFP was between 20-25 students.

Of particular interest to the aims of this study was the writing class, where the international students were taught about essay writing. The writing classes on the IFP were guided primarily by a process-orientated theory of writing that

asked students to engage with brainstorming for ideas, planning, drafting and re-drafting. However, by way of supporting the international students on the course, many of whom arrived with weak writing skills in English, the process approach was blended with a 'genre-orientated approach' (Hyland 2003) that included the use of models of 'good and bad' essays to raise awareness of the essay genre and by extension the expectations of the wider academy.

Writing class input focussed on the structure and organisation of several essay types, the grammar and lexis of academic writing, academic register and style, the kind of detailed content required at HE level and referencing skills. Students were also required to participate in two one to one writing conferences with their teachers to discuss their drafts in each of the two semesters. The main summative assessment for students on the writing module was to produce two academic essays over the whole course, one in each semester, producing two drafts for each essay. The writing assignments (see Appendix 1) were usually organised as follows:

- **Semester 1:** All students had to write an argument essay of 750 words
- **Semester 2:** Students could choose to write one essay from three types available, viz. a compare-contrast essay, a cause-effect essay or an argument essay of 1500 words

Students received both written and spoken feedback on each draft. The spoken feedback was delivered on each of their two drafts during their one to one writing conferences with their regular classroom writing teacher and lasted for approximately 15-20 minutes each in their classrooms. No rules were given to teaching staff on how conferences were to be enacted with students, leaving it up to the individual teacher to decide how they wished to structure them.

4.5 Participants

4.5.1 Students

A few weeks into the IFP course, I invited all the students to participate in my research study. There were 4 classes running concurrently at the time, 2 higher and 2 lower level groups. I sought permission from teachers to enter their classrooms to offer students a brief introduction of what I wanted to do and then handed out a 'Letter of invitation' to participate in the study with an attached form of consent (see Appendix 2). This was especially important for the lower groups as some may have struggled to understand everything I said and the written information would give them the opportunity to read the information again.

Many advocates for case study research do not feel that traditional concerns regarding 'representative samples' are important (Thomas 2011; Yin 2009). As Thomas puts it: 'the point of a case study is not to find a portion that shows the quality of the whole ... it's a choice, a selection' (p. 62). While one could never seek to represent the wider population of international foundation students at UK universities, for example, I was aware as course leader of the typical profile of students who had been studying on the course over the last few years. The study findings needed to feed back into the school and in order to be useful in affecting future discussions around the foundation programme, my sample of students needed to best reflect a typical intake we had on the IFP course each year – at least in terms of sex, age, nationality and language levels. As such, I made a conscious choice to select such a group.

The plan was to meet all of the students interested in taking part individually to allow them the opportunity to ask questions and for me to check their oral/aural abilities to be able to participate in a study of several months' duration. I also wanted to seek the advice of their teachers to get their opinions on who they felt might make effective volunteers and be committed to the research. In the end, I received 11 expressions of interest, which reduced to 6 after a quick one to one chat with them. Some did not like the prospect of being recorded while they spoke during conferences while others felt the extra commitment to meet for interviews was too much work. Of the 6 that remained, one left the course due to a work issue and another changed their mind after a few weeks, leaving a final 4 participants. Table 4.4 shows the basic profile of the 4 students who volunteered and were selected to participate in the research, replacing their real names with pseudonyms. Brief individual biographies can be found in their individual cases in Chapters 5-8.

Table 4.4: Student participant information

Students	Sex	Age	Nationality	Graduate	Language level group on IFP
Layla	F	24	Saudi	Yes	Low
Alex	M	20	Chinese	No	Low
Kazumi	M	21	Japanese	No	High
Maria	F	26	Greek	Yes	High

4.5.2 Teachers

Four teachers taught on the IFP course as full-time EAP tutors – they were all British, held first degrees from the UK and specific EFL qualifications and had spent time previously teaching EFL abroad. At a staff meeting during the same week that I had planned to seek out student participants, I made staff members

aware of the study, its purpose, my plans to recruit students from their classes and the fact that I would like to record their conferences with the selected students. I gave each teacher a letter that summarised what I had stated and a consent form seeking their agreement to be involved (see Appendix 3).

Two of the four teachers immediately volunteered to get involved with the study and their details are presented below in Table 4.5, with their real names replaced with pseudonyms.

Table 4.5: Teacher participant information

Teachers	Sex	Age	EFL Qualifications	EAP/EFL teaching experience	Writing Class taught on IFP	Student participants in their classes
Joan	F	36	Certificate in Tesol	Over 10 years	Low level	Layla and Alex
Derek	M	37	Certificate & Diploma in Tesol	Between 5-7 years	High level	Kazumi and Maria

Both Joan and Derek had experience of teaching academic writing and conducting one to one writing conferences previously in the IFP course. They would be teaching the academic writing class during the study too. They also taught other skills on the IFP, including academic listening and speaking. The other two IFP staff members cited a lack of time for not getting involved.

4.6 Methods of data Collection

Within an interpretivist tradition of inquiry, a variety of methods are available to collect data for each case study. To reach the necessary depth of detail with regard to what students were actually thinking about their upcoming writing conferences and then follow what they were doing in their conferences, required a variety of tools. Thomas (2011) argues how one feature necessary to elicit the

level of detail required from case studies is to ensure there was appropriate 'triangulation'. Using tools to collect data from different perspectives offers one the opportunity to understand the issue more effectively and 'drill deep, using different methods and drilling from different directions' (p. 68).

Yet such depth does not always lead to obtaining a more complete picture of events, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) remind us, stating how the use of multiple methods can often lead to a rather naive view that the 'aggregation of data from different sources will unproblematically add up to produce a more complete picture (p. 199). Silverman (2010) also asks us to avoid the 'illusory search for the full picture' (p. 135). Yet the fact that complete pictures may never be obtained should not be a hindrance but, in my view, an inspiration to strive to collect as many 'jigsaw pieces' as one can about the area of inquiry. This study therefore sought to collect data using a variety of tools including the use of questionnaires, pre and post conference semi-structured interviews that included the use of stimulated recall and audio recordings of each student-teacher conference.

Each IFP semester lasted for 12 weeks and contained two conference meetings where the students and their teacher would discuss the two drafts they were required to write as part of their final writing module assignment. The data collection period lasted for two semesters between October 2010 until May 2011. Over this period, 4 questionnaires were administered, 16 student-teacher conferences recorded and 20 interviews conducted and recorded. I designed a timetable to collect all the students' data during both semesters, which can be seen in Table 4.6. This had benefited from a small pilot study I had conducted earlier in the year with one IFP student and their writing teacher over a single

semester that had allowed me to test my methods of data collection and begin to formulate my plans. I learned a great deal about the questions I wished to ask in both my questionnaire and follow-up interviews, the kind of transcription detail that might be useful to my later studies and an insight into the logistical issues that occur when collecting data over time.

The plan also highlights how at the time I had decided to additionally collect all the textual data available including the students' draft texts, their final submitted essays and their teachers' written feedback. This occurred because back then I had wanted to include a focus on how conference talk might link to post textual revision. However, over time I became more interested in what students were doing during their conferences and relating it back to their beliefs about conferencing and despite being collected, the texts were never used.

Table 4.6: Data collection timetable 2010-11

Action taken	When
Semester 1 = shorter essay 750 words (handed out in week 5)	
1. Ethics form approved by IOE.	By end of August 2010
2. Letter explaining study sent to students and teachers	Week 3
3. Finalise participants	Week 4
4. Questionnaire handed out to students (returned 1 week later)	Week 5
5. First interviews with students individually and audio recorded (after the essay assignment handed out in week 5)	Week 7 (week commencing 1 st November 2010)
6. Copy of draft 1 collected from students	Week 8 (week commencing 8 th November 2010)
7. Conference 1 audio recorded followed by interview with students individually within 24 hours of the conference. Copy of teacher's feedback sheet collected	Week 9 (week commencing 15 th November 2010)
8. Copy of draft 2 of essay collected from students	Week 10 (week commencing 22 nd November 2010)
9. Conference 2 audio recorded followed by interview with students individually within 24 hours of the conference. Copy of teacher's feedback sheet collected	Week 11 (week commencing 29 th November 2010)
10. Copy of final essay collected from students	Week 12 (week commencing 6 th December 2010)
Semester 2 = longer essay 1500 words (handed out in week 5)	
11. Copy of draft 1 collected from student	Week 20 (week commencing 28 th February 2011)
12. Conference 3 audio recorded followed by interview with students within 24 hours of the conference. Copy of teacher's written feedback sheet collected	Week 21 (week commencing 7 th March 2011)
13. Copy of draft 2 of essay collected from student	Week 22 (week commencing 14 th March 2011)
14. Conference 4 audio recorded followed by interview with students within 24 hours of the conference. Copy of teacher's written feedback sheet collected	Week 23 (week commencing 21 st March 2011)
15. Copy of final essay collected from student	Week 24 (week commencing 28 th March 2011)

4.6.1 Questionnaires

The questionnaire is a widely-used instrument that can be manipulated in a variety of ways through its design and implementation. It can be tightly structured to limit the way in which respondents may answer or allow people to answer more freely by offering space for them to write short responses of their own (Thomas 2011). Its flexibility means that it is not solely the preserve of quantitative style studies but may prove equally useful in qualitative studies such as this one. In designing a questionnaire, I needed to take account of the fact that L2 students were going to read and respond to it. This demanded that the questions be crafted using graded language.

Cohen et al. (2011) offer useful advice about designing questionnaires for case study research by stating how ‘qualitative, less structured, word-based and open-ended questionnaires may be more appropriate’ (p. 382). They go on to argue how open-ended questions, in particular, can perhaps better capture the ‘authenticity, richness, depth of response, honesty and candour which ... are the hallmarks of qualitative data’ (p. 393). As I wanted to employ the questionnaire as a starting tool to begin exploring what students thought and felt (Bailey 2007), I decided that my questionnaire needed to include open-ended questions. However, to ensure structure and focus, I opted to include multiple choice questions that would offer the students discrete responses to consider about the issues involved. At times, I chose to blend multiple-choice questions with an open response box whereby students could explain ‘why’ they had chosen a particular option.

I also designed the questionnaire so that questions were sequenced around topics of interest to the study – (see Table 4.7). The final questionnaire was

piloted with several other students on the IFP to gain feedback as to its comprehensibility and overall ease of use. Feedback led to adjustments being made before the final questionnaire (see Appendix 4) was sent out to the four students.

Table 4.7: Questionnaire questions based on topics

General focus	Questions
Personal information on their English and writing skill in particular	1-7
Feedback on their writing	8-10
Conferences issues	11-18

4.6.2 Semi-structured pre-conference interviews

Kvale (1996) sees interviews as emphasising the centrality of human interaction to the production of knowledge and the socially situated nature of research data. Cohen et. al (2011) see interviews as enabling participants ‘to discuss their interpretations of the world ... and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view’ (p. 409). This focus aligns with the socially constructed view of knowledge that this study takes and makes interviews an ideal form of data collection to apply in case studies. However, I am aware that interviewees’ responses cannot be taken as the unfiltered ‘truth’ but may be offered on occasion as a result of how they have positioned themselves in the unfolding discourse to project certain social images of themselves.

In order to tap into and explore the students’ beliefs about conferencing, I chose to adopt a ‘semi-structured’ style of interview in the first interview that followed up the questionnaire before any of the students had had a conference. Thomas (2011) sees the semi-structured interview, when compared to interviews that

were either structured or unstructured, as offering ‘the best of both worlds ... [it can] provide the structure with a list of issues (rather than specific questions) to be covered and you have the freedom to follow up points as necessary’ (p. 163). Patton (1980) does, however, warn that such interviews may inadvertently leave out important topics and the interviewer’s own flexibility in sequencing or wording questions could affect the kind of responses given and so make it more difficult to offer comparative responses.

To help ensure that I covered the same topics and used similar phrasing, I created a bespoke ‘*Interview Schedule*’ (see Appendix 5) for the initial interview to explore some of the responses each student had given in their questionnaires. Using the areas of focus around which I had based my original questions (see Table 4.7), I further divided them to make 5 smaller topics. I then re-read my original questionnaire questions and thought about the kinds of extra information that I was interested in finding out about at the follow up interview. This gave rise to a new set of questions, which I placed in a second column in the interview schedule. Finally, I read through the students’ responses in each of their own questionnaires and made notes about issues they had each raised that I felt were worth exploring further. I converted the notes into questions and added them to a final third column. I did not aim to follow the Interview Schedule verbatim but rather use it as a guide to help structure the interviews.

4.6.3 Audio recordings of each conference

Each of the 16 conferences that took place during the study was audio recorded to provide a permanent record of the interaction between the student and teacher. Originally, I had intended to video record the conferences. However,

during the process to gain ethical approval for my research proposal, the school made it clear that they preferred them to be audio recorded.

I used a single voice recorder that was supplemented by an external microphone. I piloted it several times in different classrooms to check the sound quality and optimise the settings to obtain maximum clarity. I met with both teachers in the study before the conferences began and explained to them how to use the equipment. Both Joan and Derek took full responsibility for handling the equipment, turning the recording on and off during conferences with their students and returning it back to me after each conference so that I might upload the sound file to a PC.

The audio recordings of each conference were vital to the study because they allowed an accurate representation of what occurred during the writing conferences as compared to written notes made while observing the interaction in person. Silverman (2010 p. 240) highlights how such recordings allow one to 'focus on the *actual details* of one aspect of social life'. They offered a public record that could be shared with others in a way that fieldnotes may not have been able to do so easily. Perhaps most importantly, such recordings had the great advantage of being played back several times to better understand and absorb the intricacies present in spoken interaction.

4.6.4 Stimulated recall post-conference interviews

When it came to the post conference interviews with the students, I wanted them to think back and discuss their feelings about what had occurred during their conferences with their teacher and the kinds of strategies they had used and why. I wanted to be able to, on occasion, pinpoint something interesting

that may have occurred with respect to their interaction and be able to ask them about it. As Table 4.6 of my data collection timetable makes clear, I planned to meet students within 24 hours of their conferences to discuss it. I had set this target for two reasons: to allow me time to listen to the recording and make a note of any interesting points that I wanted to discuss with the student at our post-conference interview and to meet the students as soon as reasonably possible to help maximise their memory of the interaction.

The latter issue of memory when interviewing participants about past events is particularly pertinent as one is relying solely on the abilities of interviewees to be able to recall aspects of a past event with accuracy. To help stimulate the students' memories of their last conference, I took along my audio recording of their conference and played back selected extracts during our interviews before I asked them questions. I hoped that such aural prompts might help them to answer questions regarding their interaction with a greater degree of accuracy and legitimacy.

This style of interviewing is known in the literature as a '*stimulated recall interview (SRI)*' and is often used, as highlighted earlier, to counteract the problems of memory and perspective that might occur in more traditional interviews when asking questions about past events. SRIs belong to a group of methods known as '*introspective research methods*' that aim to gain access to students' inner thoughts about a previous action by offering them a stimulus such as a piece of text, audio recording (as in this study) or a video clip from the past event. First used by Bloom in 1954 to study how well students could remember events from the classroom, stimulated recall is based on the assumption that the stimulus will help take the student's mind back to the

moment of the action being investigated and allow them to verbalise their thought processes at the time more accurately. Dempsey (2010) views SRIs as helping to bring 'informants a step closer to the moments in which they actually produce action. It gives them the chance to listen or view themselves in action, jog memories and give answers of 'I did' instead of 'I might have' (p. 349-350).

Yet questions remain about how accurate such retrospective accounts really are and whether they are truly unfiltered by intermediate reflections and reasoning by students (Lyle 2003). Seliger (1983) went further by questioning whether learner accounts actually represented reality and were not simply verbalisations of what they thought they knew about something. There has also been a concern whether SRIs encourage students to offer *reflections* on past events rather than *recalling* what they were thinking during those past events (Gass and Mackey 2000). Others argue how participants may consciously censor their thoughts while verbalising it to present information they think the interviewer wishes to hear (McConnell 1985). Matsumoto (1993) in reference to L2 learners, expresses concerns over their ability to offer accurate accounts in a second language about such complex cognitive processes while Gass and Mackey (2000) describe how keeping students thinking and talking only about the past can be challenging.

To counteract some of these concerns, SRI is typically implemented with several key methodological instructions in order to maximise its benefits. Gass and Mackey 2000, for example, highlight how we need to:

- conduct SRI as soon as possible after the action being investigated to help aid access to memory of past events

- follow a protocol that clearly establishes guidelines to students upfront about how it will work, what their input is expected to be and how the stimulus (audio, video etc.) will be used to reduce their anxiety
- script the questions carefully to minimise any compromise of recall and to ensure that the student is engaged as much as possible in recalling past thoughts rather than the here and now
- allow the student to freely use the stimulus as they wish

Using the above guidelines, I started by creating a four-column wide '*Stimulated Recall Interview Proforma*' (see Appendix 6) to help structure my 16 post conference interviews and allow me to follow the same protocol with each student during the interviews. In order to script the questions I wished to ask, after each conference had taken place, I retrieved the audio recording and listened through it several times. I focused on how the conference began, ended and what I deemed as 'critical moments' of student-teacher negotiation.

For me such moments were those where I typically heard the student making a contribution to talk, for example in the way the student responded to their teacher's questions, suggestions and explanations or moments when they took the initiative and initiated talk about something. Every time I heard something that I felt was potentially interesting to my study, I made a quick note of the time it had taken place in the recording and a mini description of what had occurred. I then formulated questions that I wished to ask about the incident.

I finished the proforma by adding a standard opening question to find out how they felt the conference had gone and some questions to end the interview that asked them to assess their own performance. I also included another column where I listed some of my early impressions (from their questionnaire and first interview) of each of the students' beliefs and expectations about conferences

as a background reminder – to keep in mind during the interview. Finally, I wrote a paragraph at the beginning of the proforma that explained to students how the SRI would work and I read it out loud at the start of every interview.

4.7 Methods of data analysis

As highlighted earlier, case studies seek to provide a more holistic perspective of the event under study because at its very core is the belief that ‘situations cannot be fractured into variables. We have to study the meanings that people are constructing of the situations in which they find themselves’ (Thomas 2011 p. 171). As such, case studies require an interpretivist approach to not just data collection but also the way in which the data will be analysed once collected. Such qualitative data analysis is defined by Cohen et. al (2011 p. 537) in the following manner:

‘[it] involves organising, accounting for and explaining the data; in short making sense of data in terms of the participants’ definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities’

Qualitative inquiry is heavy on interpretation and often one piece of data may be viewed in multiple ways – thus the aim of the interpretive researcher is to make a sound case for what they think it is they see. To interpret in this way is to be involved in an ‘iterative, back and forth process’ (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009 p. 251) where analysis can sometimes reveal areas requiring even further analysis. Yet at the core of such analysis is the aim to try and reduce the data into smaller, more meaningful chunks by a process often termed as *content analysis* whereby ‘many words of texts are classified into much fewer categories

(Weber 1990 p. 15 cited by Cohen et. al 2011 p. 559) without compromising the quality of the data.

This study wanted to elicit the kinds of beliefs the four students held about writing conferences. It then wanted to see what kinds of strategies they employed during their conference interactions. Finally, it hoped to learn more about the relationship between the students' beliefs about conferencing and their actions in conferences. In order to progress towards such aims, I needed to ensure that my analysis was fit for purpose and would help uncover some of the questions posed by the research. With this in mind, I began my data analysis using transcription to help reveal the first layer of 'raw data' that was available and to gain an early impression of what was being said or what was happening. I then proceeded to apply content analysis, whereby I constantly engaged in a cycle and re-cycle of trying to identify and categorise emerging themes and patterns of interest across the conference and interview transcriptions. Table 4.8 offers a summary of my approach to analysing the data and how it connected to the case study content.

Table 4.8: Overview of analysis plan

Data collected	Data analysis	Contribution to case studies
<p>4 questionnaires (pre-conference)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read through questionnaires • Make notes on students' previous experiences of writing and conferencing • Make notes of first impressions of students' belief orientations towards writing conferencing 	<p>Biographical section</p> <p>Student's beliefs about conferences</p>
<p>4 audio recordings of first interviews with students (before conferences had taken place)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribe audio recordings • Code for patterns and themes to identify core student beliefs about writing conferences • Compare and contrast beliefs emerging here with impressions seen in the data from the questionnaire to create '<i>analytic memos</i>' 	<p>Student's beliefs about conferences</p>
<p>16 audio recordings of post conference interviews with students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribe audio recordings • Code for patterns and themes to identify core student beliefs about writing conferences • Compare and contrast beliefs emerging here with impressions seen in the data from the questionnaire to create '<i>analytic memos</i>' 	<p>Student's beliefs about conferences & strategy use</p>
<p>16 audio recordings of writing conferences (over 2 semesters)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribe audio recordings • Code student actions / strategy use • Several cycles / re-cycles of coding • Write an '<i>analytic memo</i>' summarising the common strategies used by each student 	<p>Student's conference strategy use</p>
<p>All data</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare and contrast the sets of '<i>common beliefs</i>' and '<i>common strategies</i>' found to see if any possible links may exist between the two • Take account of each student's personal histories and experiences when making conclusions 	<p>Linking student's beliefs to their strategies</p>

4.7.1 Transcribing interviews and conferences

The literature on transcription sees it as being 'a process that is theoretical, selective, interpretive, and representational' (Davidson 2009 p. 37). When I transcribed, I was making choices about how best I could represent the data I heard in the audio recordings to fit my study goals. This involved deliberation over the level of detail that needed to be transcribed, what kind of symbols should represent different actions and how closely my transcription should reflect natural spoken speech or be 'literacized' (Bucholtz 2000).

Atkinson and Heritage (1984 cited by Silverman 2010 p. 241) see the act of transcribing as akin to starting one's analysis of the data rather than as a precursor to the 'real' data analysis beginning. With this in mind, I began by listening to one conference recording several times to get a general feel for the interaction and made notes of things that were of potential interest to my study. I also listened to gain ideas about the kind of transcription I wanted to undertake – what level of detail I felt it was necessary to capture to help me achieve my aims. I did know, however, that I wanted to accurately represent the language of the L2 students verbatim, where possible. I reviewed the transcription notation standards commonly applied by Jefferson (1984) and studied the transcription used in other studies on conferences for ideas (Ewert 2009; Goldstein and Conrad 1990; Patthey-Chavez and Ferris 1997; Young and Miller 2004).

I felt that the transcription in many of these papers seemed 'cleaned up' and did not always resemble the kind of 'messiness' of L2 student speech that I was observing. To me, capturing the honesty of L2 student speech with all its errors, hesitations, false starts, long pauses and back channels pays homage to the efforts made by such students to overcome the linguistic and pragmatic challenges to speak. It allows the analyst and reader of such transcribed examples to immerse themselves more fully into the learner's spoken reality and make better judgments about their utterances in context. Thus, I decided to transcribe using normal orthography but to also include the students' pauses, overlaps, hesitations and inaccuracies where possible and sometimes their stressed word or rising intonation if it seemed important to the understanding of a particular utterance. This led to the creation of a simple key of transcription symbols, which can be seen below:

Transcription Key:

-] = end of overlap
- [= overlapping talk
- = self-interruption
- ? = rising tone
- (xxx) = incomprehensible
- (talk) = best guess of what was said
- (()) = contextual information e.g. T laughs
- _____ = stressed item (underlined)
- = = latching (no gap between turns)
- (1.2) = timed pause in seconds
- '*abc*' = reading from the student text or teacher feedback form (italics)

I then applied this key to the remaining conference audio recordings. While I tried to capture as much as I could of the conference interactions, when it came to transcribing the interviews, I chose to *literacize* the transcription to a greater extent and only offer a standard orthography of the most relevant parts of the students' responses as I was more interested in what they said rather than how they said it.

4.7.2 Analysing the questionnaires and interviews for beliefs

I began by applying what Thomas (2011 p. 171) calls a *constant comparative method* - an analysis style that he sees as the:

'basic method of interpretative inquiry ... defined by the simple principle of going through data again and again, comparing each element ... with all of the other elements ... [to] emerge with themes that capture or summarise the essence of your data'

Intrinsic to such an approach to data analysis is the use of 'coding'. Saldaña (2013 p. 3) defines a code as 'a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data'. Coding is the critical bridge between the data collected and the interpretation of its meaning. It is a first step in the analysis to label what is seen and give it a 'name'. It is usually followed by repeated cycles of further coding to not only refine such labelling but also facilitate the emergence of larger categories and themes, which may link to the wider research aims of the study.

With this in mind, I read and re-read each of the student's questionnaires numerous times to gain a first impression of their possible beliefs about writing conferences. I focussed on any indications of what they expected to happen in general, the kinds of roles they needed to play or their teacher would play; what they felt the focus of talk might be and the kind of feedback they would receive. These would all be good indicators of the beliefs they may carry about such talk.

While some of the students' responses about conferencing were made rather explicitly, others required inferencing skills such as reading between the lines of

what they had said to make a judgement. I highlighted any such orientations towards beliefs held using markers and proceeded to colour code similar ones as they appeared. After several rounds, I felt able to write up summary notes of my early impressions of what I thought Layla, Alex, Kazumi and Maria felt about writing conferences and invited them to meet me for a member-check of the accuracy of what I had written. They generally agreed to the veracity of my summaries.

I then moved on to analysing their five interview transcripts. While only their initial interview had taken place before their conferences started, I felt that their 4 post conference interviews still had a valuable role to play in deciphering what they felt about conferences. Sometimes, in the midst of a discussion in these post-conference interviews, usually after having played an extract from their conference – the students embarked upon quite lengthy turns that offered insight into the kinds of beliefs they held about conferencing. The students seemed to open up more when having to discuss specific moments of what they were doing and importantly *why* they did it. It was during these ‘why’ bits that I was often able to make links to their beliefs and on occasion, substantiate earlier impressions I had.

I read through each student’s five interview transcripts (initial interview plus four SRIs) several times and made notes of common themes that seemed to be running through them with highlighter pens. Referring back to my earlier notes based on their questionnaires, wherever I saw something that the students had said during their interviews that seemed to support my earlier ideas about their conference beliefs, I made a note of it in the margins next to their highlighted words. This occurred quite often and I began to feel that I was gradually getting

an insight into the beliefs each student held about conferences. As I collected more examples that seemed to support each belief in successive interview transcripts, the 'picture' regarding each student's set of beliefs gradually became clearer and I could trace patterns from their questionnaire right the way through many of their interviews.

Yet the interview scripts did not only offer support for my earlier assumptions but importantly also offered me new ones too that I had not previously encountered in my notes from their questionnaires. This happened particularly in the SRIs where while listening back and commenting on specific moments of interaction, the learners indicated further beliefs they carried about conferences.

Once I had collected my 'belief codes', I began to group them into larger categories and give them more permanent labels I could work with. I was keen to express the students' emerging beliefs using their own words where possible as I felt it was a powerful way in making sure that their voices were not marginalised in the research. I opted to use what Saldaña (2013 p. 91) describes as 'in-vivo codes' which are 'a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data record'.

After several months of examining and coding the interviews scripts, I felt able to finally combine my notes with the notes I had made about the questionnaires to resemble, what Saldaña (2013 p. 41) calls '*Analytic Memos*', whose purpose is:

'to document and reflect on: [the] coding processes and code choices; how the process of inquiry is taking shape; and the emergent patterns, categories and sub-categories, themes and concepts in [the] data'.

I then reviewed these memos and analysed them further. This led to the creation of a table summarising each student's set of beliefs about conferences followed by my 'evidence' for the beliefs I had found using both the questionnaire and interview data (see Appendix 7). I shared these memos with each participant for a member-check of the relative accuracy of what I had written about their beliefs and received a generally positive response. Final versions of these memos were then used to help write the students' individual case studies and can be found in the third sections of Chapters 5-8.

4.7.3 Analysing the conferences for strategy use

I had 16 conference transcripts to analyse for strategy use. As a starting point, I referred to previous L2 studies that had identified strategy use in conferences (Ewert 2009; Goldstein and Conrad 1990; Patthey-Chavez and Ferris 1997; Young and Miller 2004) in order to get a feel for what I needed to be looking for as I read through each script. They highlighted common strategies such as 'nominating topics for discussion', 'seeking clarification' and 'suggesting revisions' amongst others and I used these as a way into the data. After a few months, I began to realise that I was missing out on a great deal of my data because I had these pre-ordained strategies in my mind and I had been trying too hard to fit the data I saw into the labels I had found from other studies. I had failed to read the data I had collected and interpret it on its own merits.

I made a conscious effort from then on to re-read through the data again and assign my own labels to any examples of students being involved in conference actions in the spirit of grounded research. I still kept in mind the strategies I had read about or experienced in my own conferences but firmly kept these in the

background while I read my data. Another feature of my early search for strategy use was that as I read through the transcripts, ideas about what I had just read and its relative significance to my study would pop up in my mind and I wanted to capture these immediate interpretations in case they may prove useful later on. I did this by inserting a box of prose into the transcripts after any turns of interest and adding my thoughts and ideas relating to it there. In many ways, these inserted boxes were a diary of my early thoughts about what I was reading, while I was reading it.

While not the focus of study or further analysis, I decided to code the teacher's actions too because I felt that it would offer me a holistic picture of what was occurring around students turns of action. Often the strategy that the student applied was linked tightly to the previous turn(s) of their teachers and knowledge of this would help me to interpret more accurately what the student was doing and why. An example of my first coding of a conference transcript can be found in Appendix 8a.

Once I had accumulated a number of coded strategies, I put them into a table (see Appendix 9a) and attempted to categorise them into groups used by the student and by the teacher respectively. Having gone through 16 conference transcripts several times over the course of some 6 months (my first coding cycle), I knew that each conference seemed to have a loose structure that could be generally divided into three parts or what I termed early on as three *phases of talk*:

- Accessing talk: starting to talk about issues in the text
- Negotiating talk: discussing issues in more detail
- Revision talk: considering possible changes to the issues raised

At this stage I paused my analysis to send an example of one coded conference transcript and my table of codes and categories to two different colleagues at the university with experience of EAP. I asked them to read through the script and table and highlight where they did not agree with my interpretations. We met a few weeks later to discuss their views and the degree of inter-rater reliability was suitably high enough (less than 10% disagreement over the script) to give me confidence that what I was seeing and thinking was basically sound.

I also made an important decision at this time about which student strategies to analyse in depth during my second round of coding – a decision not taken lightly nor quickly. Imposing such a limitation may seem a little contradictory to my previous comments about employing a case study approach because it offers the opportunity to gain a more holistic picture to emerge. The decision was prompted by reasons grounded from both a pragmatic perspective and my ultimate aims for the research. I was very aware of the sheer volume of transcript data to analyse and also the desire to be able to make some clearer conclusions and recommendation at the end of my study. I felt both of these issues may be favoured by adopting a more selective approach in my second cycle of coding.

Layla, Alex, Kazumi and Maria used a variety of strategies during their 4 conferences but they did not employ each of their strategies with the same degree of frequency. In order to help manage the large quantity of data, I decided to only examine and comment upon those strategies they had been used more frequently by each student and set criteria for its inclusion in further analysis, viz. strategies had to be used a minimum of 2 or more times in at least

3 of the 4 conferences. I felt that focussing only on their most common ones would give me a good indication of the typical strategies they used in their writing conferences and greater confidence in making a case for what they did later on. A strategy employed just a few times across 4 different conferences over two semesters did not feel as if it was something that the students may have done habitually. While I intended to present *all* of the strategies used by each student, I would reserve deeper analysis for their most frequently used ones.

Encouraged by the inter-rater reliability, I began a second cycle of coding. This involved carefully re-reading each coded conference transcript and aiming to refine my labels and emerging categories. Saldaña (2013 p. 207) speaks of some of the actions involved during a second cycle of re-coding:

‘data may have to be recoded because more accurate words or phrases were discovered for the original codes; some codes will be merged together because they are conceptually similar; infrequent codes will be assessed for their utility ... and some codes ... may be dropped altogether’

As Saldaña writes, I did emerge with *new* code labels that caused other codes to be absorbed under these new titles; earlier codes upon revisiting seemed to have been erroneously coded and were replaced and many codes were re-phrased to more accurately capture the essence of the students’ actions that I was observing. My re-reading also led me to re-label my original three phases of talk (see previous page) that I saw as characterising the overall structure of conferences. I now saw all conference talk as revolving around the discussion of *revisión* and applied the following terms to my three phases of talk A, B and C:

- (A) **Raise topics for revision.** Example strategy - *student selecting the topic*
- (B) **Negotiate and clarify revision topics.** Example strategy - *student reflecting on their work*
- (C) **Finalise future revisions.** Example strategy - *student enforcing further explicitness*

At the end of this organic and recursive process, I was left with conference scripts that felt overall more tightly defined and better understood (see Appendix 8b for an example of my second coding of a conference transcript). I also revised my table of codes (see Appendix 9b) to include the many changes that had been made during the second cycle of coding. In total, I had managed to find 8 strategy categories used by the students during their 4 conferences, which can be seen in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: Common strategies used by students in their conferences

Phase	Strategy no.	My Category Label	My Interpretation
A	1	Selecting the topic (uninvited)	Student raises topic without invitation
B	1	Reflecting on their work	Student offers personalised self-evaluation
B	2	Offering a rationale for their work	Student explaining why they wrote something
B	3	Explaining their process	Student explaining how they wrote something
B	4	Offering an insight to future plans/changes	Student discussing future drafts & ideas about their writing
B	5	Seeking communication repair	Student does not fully understand something and requires it to be re-explained or repeated
C	1	Enforcing further explicitness	Student seeks more information
C	2	Questioning change	Student expresses that they are not entirely satisfied about something

As I had done with my search for students' beliefs in their questionnaire and interview data previously, I began to write memos of each student's use of strategies during their conferences and analysed these further (see Appendix

10 for an example analysis of a strategy memo). Each memo began by offering a table of the student's most commonly used strategies followed by examples lifted directly from their transcripts that offered evidence for their use. Again, like my 'belief memos', these 'strategy memos' were early impressions of student strategy use and changed a little with time and further reading throughout my analysis. Final versions of their use of strategies can be found in the fourth sections of chapters 5-8.

4.8 Ethical considerations

Thomas (2011 p. 68) reminds us that 'It's especially important to consider ethics in case study research since you may be very closely involved with the research participants'. From the outset of this study I had concerns about how my position as course leader of the IFP course may have an impact on my study in the following ways:

- students may not feel able to say 'no' to the course leader with regard to my requests for volunteers to participate in the study due to respect or fear of further consequences
- staff members may not feel able to refuse participation
- student participants may not be as 'truthful' as possible in their questionnaire and interviews – they may try and give me the answers they think I want to hear as course leader
- student participants may feel 'caught in the middle' at times between a sense of loyalty to their own writing teachers and having to discuss and reflect on their conferences with these same teachers to me – especially if there was something they did not feel happy about

I was also wary about other issues too:

- Impeding too much on students' time during a very busy IFP schedule

- The fact that I was a teacher for the academic writing module myself, something I could not continue to do if I wanted to collect data
- The need for L2 students to truly understand what they were being asked to do before agreeing to participate

To address such concerns, I took the following actions:

1. I removed myself as teacher on the writing module and passed on any pastoral duties undertaken with the students to the deputy-course leader
2. I created letter handouts seeking student volunteers that contained graded language and information giving them a clear description of the study, what they would be asked to do and when; that their names and data would be anonymised; their freedom to see their data at any time and their right to withdraw without reason at any stage of the study (see Appendix 2).
3. I repeated all these things to the IFP students in person to help emphasise these points and again to those 11 students who had expressed an early interest
4. I attached a second handout that asked volunteers to give their *informed consent* to participate in the study by signing and dating the form (see Appendix 2)
5. I also ensured that the study did not collect data until week 5 of the IFP to allow student volunteers time to become accustomed to the course
6. I was as flexible as possible when meeting students for interviews

As required by IOE regulations, I received consent from both the IOE Ethics committee before the study took place and from the Dean of the School of Languages and International studies at my university before collecting any data.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter has described the setting, participants and methods undertaken to collect and analyse data about four L2 writers' beliefs about conferences and their use of strategies while they conferenced on a year-long foundation

programme at the UCLAN. A case study approach was employed within which a variety of tools were used to collect data from a qualitative perspective. These included questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and transcribed audio recordings of each conference with stimulated recall.

I demonstrated how the data was analysed using a repeated cycle of coding and re-coding to find evidence for students' beliefs and strategy use. The questionnaires were used to gain early impressions of the students' belief orientations which were then explored in greater depth in the interview transcriptions. The transcribed conference data was similarly analysed and coded to yield the strategies the students employed in their conferences. The analysis led to the discovery of 8 strategy categories.

Chapters 5-8 offer case studies of each of the four students: Layla, Alex, Kazumi and Maria. Each case study will discuss the student's set of beliefs about conferences; their use of strategies in conferences and any links that may exist between their beliefs and strategies.

Each case will include extracts from the data where necessary to better exemplify the points being made. For the sake of clarity, the following system of notation will be used to make clear which data source is being referenced:

- questionnaire questions = **q1**, **q2** etc.
- initial interview transcript = **i**
- four **post** conference **i**nterview transcripts = **pci1**, **pci2**, **pci3**, **pci4**
- four audio conference transcripts = **c1**, **c2**, **c3**, **c4**
- line numbers = **l**

Chapter 5 Case study 1: Layla

5.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by offering a biography of Layla that details her personal history as a student of English including her prior experiences of writing and receiving feedback on it. In section 5.3, Layla's 6 beliefs about writing conferences are discussed and illustrated with extracts taken from her questionnaire, initial interview and post conference interviews. In section 5.4, I discuss her 6 most commonly used strategies in her conferences with Joan using data extracts from her 4 conference transcripts. The final section 5.5 offers possible links between Layla's beliefs and strategy use.

5.2 Biography

Layla was a graduate student in her mid-twenties from Saudi Arabia, where she had completed a degree in English Literature. Layla's dream was to come to the UK to do a Master's degree in Business. Despite her degree subject, she felt that her English still needed improving: '*... in my country I'm not practise English with anybody*' (il9-10). As a result, Layla came to England immediately after her degree had finished and studied English at a language school in Cambridge for six months. After a short holiday back in Saudi Arabia, she arrived in Preston and enrolled at the University in September 2010.

From the very start, Layla's high degree of motivation, both instrumental and intrinsic was apparent: '*I want to prepare the master next year and not stop ... I come this course for IFP to improve myself*' (il12-14). Layla's desire to improve her English before entering a Master's programme was due to her IELTS result in July of 2010, where she scored an overall mark of 4.5. She needed a score of

6.5 to join the Master's programme at the Business School. She chose to describe her current English level as *'Good Intermediate'* (q4) and when I asked her in our follow up interview to explain why, she said *'Because I know where is the weaker skills ... For example, writing, I need improve myself but not easy'* (il7-8).

With regard to writing essays in English, Layla had only been practising the skill for about a year. In her initial interview, she described the kind of essays she had done in more detail: *'argument essay or for narrative essay but very short'* (il18). When asked to assess her strengths and weaknesses in writing essays, Layla comfortably used meta-language to offer a positive assessment: *'I understand everything, how you can put the introduction, the conclusion, what you must put right in the paragraph ... what the main idea, what's the topic'* (il36-38). Later, however, she went on to describe her challenge in using English grammar: *'In academic writing I have a lot of the words but sometimes I make mistakes in the grammar ... some people read ... doesn't make sense.'* (il32; 42-43).

With respect to receiving feedback on her writing, Layla had previously experienced both written and spoken feedback from her teachers. She described spoken feedback as being familiar and looked forward to the upcoming writing conferences on the IFP: *'I think good idea because that it is help me to understand my teacher what is need from me to changed'* (q10).

Early on it was apparent that Layla had a strong concern about the mistakes in her writing and it seemed to colour her opinions about what the main role of feedback should be. In her questionnaire, she discussed the possible reasons for having received both written and spoken feedback on her writing by saying

how *'It helps me to avoid my mistakes and improve my language'* (q8). This focus on seeing feedback as primarily a source of correction was again highlighted in her response to the following question, where she explained why she wanted both oral and written feedback on her writing: *'to understand what are my mistakes and to learn not to repeat my mistakes'*(q9).

More generally, Layla was a very sociable person who was comfortable in expressing her views and asking questions. She exhibited a high degree of motivation in both her class work and homework. She had a good grasp of her relative strengths and weaknesses, especially in her writing and saw the IFP as a key way of improving her writing skills. My first impression of Layla upon meeting her was to see a confident student who was goal driven and willing to learn all that she could to achieve her dream of joining a Masters course. She was keenly aware that her writing needed to improve for this to happen and she seemed to me to have a quite structured and focussed way of going about her learning on the programme.

5.3 Layla's beliefs about writing conferences

Layla's data yielded 6 beliefs about writing conferences, which can be seen in table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1: Layla's beliefs about conferencing

In Layla's own words
1: 'It [written and spoken feedback] helps me to avoid my mistakes' (source: q8)
2: 'I expect [the teacher to] give me more example' (source: pci11260)
3: 'I like it the teacher talk but I think the balance between the teacher and the student [is important]' (source: il128-129)
4: 'I understand but just I want check this sure' (source: pci11396)
5: 'If I need I will [speak up]' (source: il194)
6: 'I feel relaxed because I know my teacher' (source: il233-234)

1: **'It [written and spoken feedback] helps me to avoid my mistakes'** (source: q8)

Layla seemed to display an affinity for seeing her writing through the currency of how many mistakes she had made. In data from her initial questionnaire, Layla mentioned words either directly or indirectly related to correction no fewer than six times and words such as *'mistake, fix, correct, wrong, change and check'* were commonplace in her interviews. In her questionnaire, many responses were related to the theme of being able to understand what the issues or mistakes were from her teacher's feedback, record and understand them and then make the changes required later on (q8; q9; q10; q11).

In our first interview, I probed Layla further about how she viewed the role of feedback and once again she raised her belief in seeing feedback on her writing through the lens of error correction:

'This is very important ... when I receive (this) I write everything where is the weak, where is the mistakes ... I can understand ... I can fix it all the mistakes ... because we international student and this is not mother tongue, this is second language and I can't fix it for myself' (il47-58)

When I asked her to consider whether feedback could be more than just focussing on mistakes, Layla seemed unable to fully understand my question and reiterated her view of feedback being primarily about fixing things (il81-93). This theme continued in our later post conference interviews too. I always asked her at the outset how her conference had gone and in three out of four of our interviews, Layla replied by mentioning errors. For example, in her first post conference interview she stated that it had been *'very good ... because my teacher help me about my mistakes and this is good for me'* (pci1132) while in

her third interview she said *'good for me and useful because I found make some mistakes in my first draft'* (pci3|3-4).

Layla used the term *mistake* to refer to not only language issues but higher order concerns such as organisation and content too: *'Joan say good thesis statement and I'm happy ... but the last line here I make maybe big mistake and she explain for me how I can relate it the opposing idea with my argument'* (il77-79). Layla did not always wait to receive news of her mistakes either and would often prompt Joan about issues that were playing on her mind. For example, in our second post conference, I had played Layla an extract where she had interrupted Joan to ask a question about her thesis statement and she went on to explain to me why she had done this: *'Because I'm worried about thesis statement maybe five times six times every class'* (pci2|20-21). Apart from prompting, Layla would sometimes even pre-empt Joan's turn with the tag question *'not good?'* almost as if she was expecting bad news about her text.

The above extracts highlight how mistakes seemed to preoccupy Layla's mind – she worried about them a great deal. For her the conference was a place where she could hear more about her mistakes and use the information as a springboard for further revision. Such a focus on discussing errors also implied how Layla may have viewed Joan's role in the conference as more traditional - a 'corrector' or 'information giver' rather than someone she might work with in a more collaborative manner to work things out. I viewed this belief in errors as **Layla's core or defining belief.**

2: **'I expect [the teacher to] give me more example'** (source: pci11260)

Layla exhibited a strong expectation that Joan would offer her plenty of information during their writing conferences. In il119-121, she explained how in the conference she preferred Joan to talk more *'because me student - I want collected all the information from her ... because she like instructor for me ... and I put it everything she (want) in my mind'*. This supports my early impression (see Belief 1) of Layla holding a preference for a more teacher led conference where Joan's role is to supply new information and Layla's role was to receive it. As Layla said at our initial interview *'The teacher advise us – you must listen for everything'* (il241).

In our first post conference interview, I played Layla an extract where Joan had prompted her to come up with some formal lexis to replace the ones she had used in her text. Layla could not do this and Joan offered her some examples. I asked Layla if she had expected to be prompted for answers in this way or to be offered examples instead *'No, no, no. I expect give me more example'* (pci1260). Towards the end of our interview, I asked her if she wanted more examples in her next conference: *'I like when she say a lot of examples. Why? Because the idea not leave idea limited but a broad ideas and I can choose what is the best branch for this idea'* (pci1403-404). So, it does not seem to be just a simple case of wanting more for more's sake but rather that more information allowed Layla the space to think, examine and select how to make future changes. I also wondered if this preference for more information was related to her previous learning experiences and this did seem to be the case: *'The teacher just advise and just give the students a lot of examples'* (pci1410).

In our third post conference interview, I played Layla an extract where Joan was discussing unnecessary content in one of her paragraphs. When Layla asked Joan whether she should delete parts, she was told that she had to make that decision. I asked Layla how she felt about this: *'I feel it is very difficult for me ... I'm not sure what I can do ... I want more information'* (pci3l106-110). At the end of our interview, I asked Layla about her next conference and if there might be anything she would want differently *'I hope the teacher give me some information clearly ... more information, more direct'* (pci3l180-182). In our final post conference interview, Layla offered me a more instrumental reason behind wanting more ideas – it would help her make revisions better which would then result in her achieving a higher mark (pci4l64-66).

In summary, Layla's belief in expecting more examples and ideas about her text seemed to be based on a wide variety of reasons. Firstly, she respected Joan's role as her teacher and part of that came from seeing Joan as the primary source of useful information. In addition, Layla seemed accustomed to getting such information from her previous writing teachers and perhaps naturally expected Joan to play a similar role. Finally, the extra information gave her choices from which to select the best way forward with the hope of achieving higher marks at the end.

3: 'I like it the teacher talk but I think the balance between the teacher and the student [is important]' (source: il128-129)

As highlighted in the previous two beliefs, Layla seemed to view conference interaction in quite traditional terms by wanting Joan to make corrections and give more details. Statements such as: *'my teacher have a lot experience ... I*

can't decided 'no this is correct'" (il84-85) and 'different between the teacher and student ... the teacher advise us you must listen for everything' (il239-241)

served to support the notion of how Layla firmly placed Joan in the position of expert and primary information giver and herself in the more subordinate role of novice and passive recipient.

Yet as I reviewed Layla's data more closely, I began to detect that her preference for teacher led conferencing was a little more nuanced than I first thought. At times, she would offer contradictory statements that left the door open to more collaboration with Joan such as *'If I write something and explain it to her we can agree and we both can change ideas together' (q13)*. The use of the inclusive pronoun 'we' was telling in that it implied an alternative view of their discourse roles that seemed more collaborative. Later in q18, Layla selected a description of her ideal conference and chose the following statement *'A conversation between a teacher and student where both discuss the essay'*. The use of the word 'both' further implies how she seemed capable of seeing her conferences as sites for more shared discussion.

Perhaps the key statement Layla made came in the follow up interview to the questionnaire, when she said *'... the most important not that the teacher talk more, I like it the teacher talk but I think the balance between the teacher and the student' (il128-129)*. I felt a little confused at this point about whether Layla preferred Joan to lead or she wanted to share the conference talk. I decided to challenge her to explain the contradiction in some of her statements. She accepted the apparent dichotomy and added how the extent of collaboration depended on *'... the topic, depends on the teacher ... I would like this ...maybe happen this ...I'm not sure – I hope' (il292-299)*.

Overall, I arrived at the conclusion that Layla's desire for Joan to take charge and at the same time have the space to collaborate were not mutually exclusive beliefs. Layla did seem to prefer a traditional, hierarchically driven conference where Joan played a more dominant role. Yet this belief structure seemed to act more as a source of comfort for Layla – something she had experienced in her previous educational environments and perhaps within such a framework, gave her the confidence to try and contribute more often during her conferences. It was a kind of compromise between her past experiences and her present assumptions of how conference behaviour was expected to be in the UK, viz. one where more active participation from students was encouraged.

4: 'I understand but just I want check this sure' (source: pci11396)

Another of Layla's beliefs was the extent to which she required reassurance about issues in her text and suggestions for future revision. This seems related in many ways to her earlier belief of focussing on her mistakes. She was genuinely worried about them and believed that she needed to be as accurate as possible in making sure that she followed Joan's instructions to the letter: *'I'm afraid if here wrong and here wrong'* (pci11100). Layla's anxiety often meant that even when she understood something Joan had said; she would still tend to seek repeated confirmation or clarification of it to be absolutely sure of her understanding.

Layla highlighted this at our first post conference interview. I played back an extract from her conference where she had just asked the same question twice and I wanted to know why she had done this: *'I just want emphasise it – I want sure this is to make it'* (pci11128). Later in the interview, I played another

example of her repetitious questioning: *'this is my habit ... this is normal for myself because when I come back stay with alone and I want working, I remember Joan say'* (pci11292-298). This was interesting because Layla was attempting to justify her need for reassurance - a personality trait and a desire to remember the most salient points of the conference discussion for later revision.

Layla's desire for reassurance was so strong at times that she would even resort to either interrupting Joan's turn to seek clarification or pre-empting what Joan was about to say with an assumption that it might be something negative about her work. For example, at our second post conference interview, I played Layla an example of her interrupting Joan and asked her why she had done it:

'Because I was worried about thesis statement ... maybe five times six times every class 'Joan please can you check for me Joan please' like this ... I afraid maybe thesis statement last line maybe wrong – last draft wrong maybe not (suitable) information ... I'm thinking about (xxx) every day maybe wrong maybe (not) because Joan will put score for every part ... and maybe I lost this part' (pci2114-27).

Here Layla offers yet another reason for her need for to check everything – the very instrumental one of making mistakes, revisions which would lead her to receive a lower mark on her essay – a reason observed in Belief 2 as well.

With regards to pre-emption, I played Layla an extract of her silence to a question posed by Joan (*What about the structure?*). Never someone who was too quiet during her conferences, I was interested to learn her reasons for this: *'I understand [the question] but when she ask me, oh my structure not good. Why the teacher ask me about the structure, maybe I make big mistake'* (pci3186-87).

Here Layla leaps to the conclusion that Joan's open question must mean that something is wrong and in so doing, she shows how she seemed to carry a constant level of anxiety about her writing that almost filtered through everything she wrote and discussed.

Layla's desire for more reassurance spilled out everywhere in her conference talk and was fired by an anxiety over mistakes that she had made or could make during revision. This belief seemed to be derived in part from her own personality, a strong need to remember the details of feedback and ultimately a concern that by not checking, she may make more mistakes that would lead to her text receiving a lower mark.

5: 'If I need I will [speak up]' (source: il194)

Another belief that revealed itself was Layla's willingness on occasion to speak up and offer a view on her work that did not always agree with Joan's ideas. This mostly occurred when Joan was discussing revision. Whilst not her most common belief, it was nonetheless a powerful indicator of Layla's attitude towards the work she had done. She cared about what she had written and was willing to offer an opinion on it.

In our very first interview before the conferences had begun, Layla hinted at being prepared to defend something she had written: *'the teacher maybe she ask for me she want I change this but I think this idea important ... I try to explain for her'* (il181-182). When I challenged Layla by informing her how this statement was different to the one she gave in her questionnaire that had expressed complete acceptance of Joan's feedback regardless of agreeing with it or not (q13), she said *'This is true but sometimes I need this speaking, I need*

say my opinion... if I need I will (speak)' (il189-194). These quotes highlight Layla as a student whose default modus operandi when asked to make revisions was acceptance, yet on occasion, if she felt a level of attachment to something she had written, she was willing to speak up.

A good example of this was seen in our first post conference interview, where I played Layla an extract where Joan was suggesting the removal of a few sentences. Instead of agreeing to the change as she usually did, Layla chose to question it by asking to keep the content and add to it. I was intrigued by this and asked Layla why she had done this:

'I can keep this because this is correct I think ...I like it and I can improve and I can develop my opinion I can add some idea here ... because I built my structure, I built my information - it's very difficult when I want cutting all the idea and putting new idea' (pci11197-204).

Her use of terms such as *'this is correct; I like it; I built my structure [on the idea]* all highlight a variety of basic reasons that may help to explain Layla's resistance to change. Layla had a personal attachment to the text under question (*'I like it'*), thought that it was error free (*'this is correct'*) and had constructed her argument around the idea under question (*'I built my structure'*) - all quite logical reasons to question a teacher's suggestion for revision.

Yet I cannot help but see this as also related to Layla's general level of anxiety about her errors in her work (Belief 1) and wanting reassurance (Belief 4) when discussing possible changes. Layla's whole composing process was based on being accurate – error free with respect to her content, organisation and use of language. Such a path caused her to be in a continual state of anxiety and required her to put in a great deal of time and effort to help achieve such an

aim. It is perhaps understandable then that when she feels that something in her text is 'correct', her first instinct is to resist changing it because to do so would bring even more anxiety to her composition process. In a way, one can see this as a kind of 'ownership' she feels over her work but one premised on more pragmatic concerns rather than any desire to hold on to her authorial 'voice'.

6: 'I feel relaxed because I know my teacher' (source: il233-234)

Layla's relationship with Joan seemed to play an important role in her beliefs about conferencing. Right from the very start, when asked to rank a list of factors she thought might affect the quality of her conferences, she included *'the relationship between the student and teacher'* (q17) in her top three. Joan was Layla's writing teacher as well as conducting their one to one conferences and Layla saw this as a real benefit *'because my teacher everyday with us ... and when she ask about the tutorial [conference] I feel relaxed because I know my teacher. I can say everything for her - all my ideas'* (il232-234). It seemed as if this greater familiarity allowed Layla to feel more comfortable in her conferences and perhaps more willing to participate in the on-going discussion.

I asked Layla what might happen if she did not have such a positive relationship with her teacher: *'maybe just listen, ignore what the teacher say. Maybe not understand – he afraid say, like this'* (il272-273). The negative consequences that Layla provided here served to highlight the importance she placed on forming a good relationship with Joan. For her, a poor relationship could lead to less activity and participation by a student and the adoption of a more passive role during writing conferences.

During our post-conference interviews, Layla continued to cite the theme of familiarity and comfort when talking to Joan. In our first post conference interview for example, she described how she felt able to ask the questions she wanted because she felt comfortable when speaking to her (pci11346). In other interviews, Layla highlighted how each conference familiarised her with Joan's conference style '*second time ... the student can more relax and confident with the teacher*' (pci21320-321); '*I understand the method and with the teacher what I need and how I can say the teacher 'why write this''*' (pci41154-155).

Thus, for Layla, a good relationship with Joan led her to feel more comfortable and perhaps less nervous too – factors that helped her to engage more actively in her conferences. This familiarity came from constant exposure to Joan during their writing classes each week in addition to their one to one conferences.

Layla quickly learnt how Joan structured such interactions and her own role in it. It helped Layla to anticipate what might happen during their conferences together making her mentally ready to engage in the talk with less anxiety.

5.4 Layla's conference strategy use

The strategies that Layla used during her conferences are illustrated in table 5.2 below. Each strategy is labelled using a letter and number system. For example, A, B, C refers to the three distinct phases of conference talk analysed and the number refers to the strategy category. As highlighted previously (see section 4.7.3) only the most commonly used strategies, marked in **bold**, were analysed in depth and are commented upon below. A discussion of the strategy totals appears in the cross-case analysis in Chapter 9.

Table 5.2: Layla's conference strategies (strategy labels shortened to accommodate table – see table 4.9 for full labels)

Phases of talk	Conference 1	Conference 2	Conference 3	Conference 4	Total	Total per phase
	Semester 1: 750-word essay		Semester 2: 1500-word essay			
A Raise topics for revision	-	A1: Selecting the topic (uninvited) (x5)	A1: Selecting the topic (uninvited) (x2)	A1: Selecting the topic (uninvited) (x4)	A1: x11	11
B Negotiate and clarify revision topics	B5: Seeking repair (x5) B2: Offering a rationale (x1) B1: Reflecting (x1) B3: Explaining her process (x1) B4: Offering an insight to future plans/changes (x2)	B5: Seeking repair (x6) B2: Offering a rationale (x4) B1: Reflecting (x2) B3: Explaining her process (x2)	B5: Seeking repair (x5) B2: Offering a rationale (x5) B1: Reflecting (x2) B3: Explaining her process (x1)	B5: Seeking repair (x6) B2: Offering a rationale (x1) B1: Reflecting (x4) B3: Explaining her process (x2) B4: Offering an insight to future plans/changes (x3)	B5: x22 B2: x11 B1: x9 B3: x6 B4: x5	53
C Finalise future revisions	C1: Enforcing explicitness (x2) C2: Questioning change (x2)	C1: Enforcing explicitness (x5)	C1: Enforcing explicitness (x3) C2: Questioning change (x3)	C1: Enforcing explicitness (x2) C2: Questioning change (x2)	C1: x12 C2: x7	19
Total per conference	14	24	21	24	83	

Phase A: Raise topics for revision

Strategy used: A1 - Selecting the topic (uninvited)

During her four conferences, Layla attempted to select the topic of discussion on 11 occasions without any invitation from Joan. Her interventions occurred from her second conference onwards but interestingly, there were none in her first one. This may have happened because it was the first conference and thus something of an unknown quantity to Layla in terms of its format and procedures. In addition to this, she would have been less acquainted with Joan as a teacher too at the time and so perhaps more circumspect in terms of her participatory role. This fits well with her belief about the importance of having a

good relationship with Joan (Belief 6), which helped her to feel more relaxed and perhaps better able to participate.

In institutional talk such as one to one writing conferences, it is usually the teacher who decides what will be discussed, a 'special' privilege based on their greater institutional status. So, when Layla selected the topic 11 times, it was noteworthy because it required a high level of confidence to take charge of the discussion in this way against the 'institutional order' of the teacher initiating the topic.

Layla's interventions to get evaluations from Joan about her written work were often predicated on her general anxiety about her errors (Belief 1) and an eagerness to be reassured if what she had written was acceptable or not (Belief 4). At times, Layla's demeanour during her conferences was one of great impatience – she could not wait for Joan to get around to the topics she wanted to hear about and so took the initiative and asked herself.

What follows is a good example of Layla raising several topics (shown in bold) for discussion during one conference episode.

- 1 J: erm what about your introduction? (2) erm couple of things I thought here
2 L: **thesis statement? not good yet?**
3 J: erm well you're not really telling me what the essay is going to do (1) are you going to look at the causes and effects of the women's movement
4 L: and I put it more for effect because I (don't interest) causes put it more for effect
5 J: yeah so that's kind of like giving a bit of background so then say that your essay is going to look at the causes and effects of it and then it's very clear ... (1.5) what else have you got? (1) erm (1.5) so
6 L: **what is this? ((Student asks about a written comment on the draft))**
7 J: oh just a bit of grammar '*lacking the ability*' ... instead of saying '*as well as lack ability*' (1.5) you'd probably say '*lacking the ability*' it sounds better ... ok so you've got '*traditional roles*' and (1) what else have you got?
8 L: **what about my reference? (it's ok or not?)=**
(Conference 4: lines 127-149)

Joan started by inviting Layla to discuss her introduction paragraph in line 1.

However, her two second pause did not result in any response from Layla and

so she proceeded with her evaluation. In line 2, Layla suddenly intervened to raise her first topic regarding her 'thesis statement' and prompted Joan to offer her an evaluation and gain reassurance (Belief 4). Upon receiving this, the feedback then moved on with Joan signalling that the conversational floor was open through her seemingly rhetorical utterance '*what else have you got*' in line 5. By asking about a written comment made by Joan in L6, Layla raised her second topic for discussion and yet again focussed on errors (Belief 1). Again, Joan obliged by offering feedback before moving on to her own choice of topic with the phrase, '*traditional roles*' in L7 to indicate to Layla that she was now focussed on the content ideas in her paragraphs and asking for help in finding more. Yet Layla chose not to follow and instead introduced another topic of her own – 'references' in line 8 and gain reassurance yet again (Belief 4).

So, in the space of a few minutes, Layla managed to raise three different topics of interest to her simply by being very aware of moments where she could access the talk to raise issues of importance to her. Her *uninvited* topic selections above in lines 2, 6 and 8 were opportunistic to a certain extent but also contained elements of 'pre-planning'. For example, Layla was obviously interested to know if her revised thesis statement was good and when Joan opened the floor to discuss the 'introduction' Layla jumped in to raise her topic. Urged on by wanting reassurance (Belief 4) about the revisions she had made and her general anxiety regarding their accuracy and quality (Belief 1), drove Layla to raise topics on her own. Her interventions placed Joan into the temporary position of *responder* and *follower* – powerful examples of role reversal.

Phase B: Negotiate and clarify revision topics

Strategy used: B5 - Seeking communication repair

Layla's most commonly used strategy was to seek out communication repair.

Over her four conferences, Layla instigated the strategy on 22 separate occasions where she did not fully understand what Joan was saying to her. Her interventions were often characterised by a need on her part to either confirm the nature of an issue requiring change or to focus on the change itself including discussion of possible solutions. Layla's common use of this strategy to support her understanding was strongly related to her belief of focussing on the errors in her work (Belief 1) and seeking reassurance (Belief 4). Yet her frequent questioning of Joan to ensure her understanding was also indicative of someone who could be an active participant in the discussion too (Belief 3).

In line with the traditional definitions of 'confirmation and clarification' offered by Long (1980), one can see similar examples in Layla's interventions that utilise rising intonation questions, standard question types, statements and repetition.

In an example from her first conference, Layla closely follows Joan's turns to identify the issue at hand before seeking repair.

- 1 J: ... when you list your ideas that are in your essay they've got to match up with the paragraph (1) because the first paragraph here talks about language problems=
2 L: =language problems
3 J: you've put new experiences (1) so the first reasons should be something like it offers or students can learn a new language because that's what's in your first paragraph ... isn't it that's your main idea (1) and education erm your second paragraph is talking about culture
4 L: about culture yeah
5 J: so your second [listed idea
6 L: [xxx] global education
7 J: yes so you've put this is culture ... so you've got to include culture in your reasons in the thesis statement do you see what I mean
8 L: yeah yeah yeah I understand [J then goes through the third idea] ... **hmm ok (xxx) are wrong**
9 J: they're just kind of not quite accurate compared to what the paragraphs are about

(Conference 1: lines 36-77)

After listening to Joan spell out how the topics in the body paragraphs did not match her thesis statement, Layla sought clarification in line 8. This was despite the fact that earlier in the same turn she had stated that she *did* understand what was being said and thus the switch to seeking clarification was indicative of wanting reassurance (Belief 4). The fact that Joan had offered a lot of information in a few turns may have played a role in Layla's use of the strategy. Her choice of the single word '*wrong*' served to reduce all the detail heard into something simpler and more generic, which perhaps she could more easily process and understand. It was also telling that Layla chose the word '*wrong*' in that it chimed strongly with her views of conference talk essentially being about discussing errors (Belief 1).

While the previous example highlighted Layla seeking clarification of the nature of the issue itself, she also used the strategy of seeking repair to gain Joan's approval regarding possible revisions. In the conference 3 extract below, she was discussing the problem of an overlong quote in her draft.

1 J: hmm yeah I wondered if you could paraphrase that really (1) ... if you feel it's so
 2 L: important maybe you could just (1) quote (1) the bit that's really really important
 3 J: ok=
 4 J: =do you know what I mean ra[ther than
 5 L: [yeah yeah yeah
 6 J: all this [bit at the beginning
 7 L: **[one line important**
 8 J: yeah ...
 (Conference 3: lines 45-54)

Here again Layla seemed to get the idea that her quote was too long and moves in line 6 to gain approval and reassurance (Belief 4) for how long it should be by offering her own possible suggestion on its length. Specifying a limit on the size here may have acted in a similar way to her intervention in the previously discussed extract on her 'thesis statement', viz. to reduce the

feedback to something simpler that she could mentally process and understand
- a scaffold to hold on to when she came to revising her quote.

Phase B: Negotiate and clarify revision topics

Strategy used: B2 - Offering a rationale for her work

The second most frequent strategy that Layla used during Phase B of her conferences was to offer Joan rationales for her writing, something she did a total of 11 times during her four conferences. Most of these turns occurred as a result of Layla picking up on a statement from Joan that implied a potential problem in her text and intervening to explain her reasons for it (Belief 1). It highlighted once again how Layla's mind seemed predisposed to thoughts about possible errors that she may have made, which then almost compelled her to speak up about them. The strategy also demonstrated Layla's ability at times to read between the lines of what Joan was saying to arrive at conclusions that then guided her behaviour.

When I looked at Layla's 11 rationales more closely, they were either based on a lack of knowledge about writing academic essays or on decisions she had made during the writing process.

A good example of the first kind can be seen in the example below. Here, Joan highlighted a potential problem in a counter argument being longer than the argument itself.

- 1 J: ... the third paragraph the opposing opinion is longer than your opinion (3) so why is that not a good idea (2)
2 L: my opinion?
3 J: yeah the opposing opinion is from here to (1) here ((T refers to text)) and your opinion is just these three lines (1)
4 L: yeah=
5 J: =so the opposing opinion is slightly longer (1)
6 L: **because against er a lot of idea**
(Conference 1: lines 100-108)

In line 1 above, Joan attempted to elicit the issue from Layla but with limited success. She went on to explicitly point out the relative lengths of the argument versus the counter argument, prompting Layla to offer a rationale for writing it in line 6. However, her reason highlighted how Layla did not understand the concept behind why it was less than ideal to have an opposing argument longer than your own in an essay. In other words, her rationale here was most likely derived from a lack of knowledge about writing argument-style essays rather than some conscious decision to write what she did.

In contrast to this, Layla's most common rationales for her work were often expressed in more personalised language about decisions she had made. In the extract below from her second conference, Joan was discussing Layla's 'conclusion'.

- 1 J: don't put the opposite argument alright at the end because (1.5) what do you want the reader to remember? ((Student laughs)) (2.5)
- 2 L: just er (1.5) the summary for all of my paragraph ...
- 3 J: that's right you want them to remember your opinion don't you because here you said why it's a good thing to study abroad ...for students and then you've said oh but they'll miss their family and this that but we don't want the reader to think [about that
- 4 L: **[because I think this is correct I put it [(but I'm not sure)**
(Conference 2: lines 160-172)

Joan asked Layla not to place her counter argument at the end of the concluding paragraph and went on to discuss reasons why through elicitation and explanation. Yet in line 4, Layla offered, without prompting, her reasons for organising her paragraph in the way she did. She offered a quite personally oriented reason for doing so – she thought it was the right thing to do. While such a rationale also highlights a gap in her knowledge about academic writing, it also demonstrates Layla's willingness at times to take ownership and responsibility over her work even when she is unsure about it. Looked at in this

way, such a rationale seems related to another one of her beliefs - voicing her opinions about her writing when she feels it is necessary to do so (Belief 5). The fact that this kind of personally expressed rationale was the most frequent type of rationale offered by Layla is perhaps testimony to such a belief.

Phase B: Negotiate and clarify revision topics

Strategy used: B1 - Reflecting on her work

Layla's third most commonly used strategy during Phase B was to offer reflections about her work. She did this a total of 9 times during her four conferences. Typically, such thoughts were prompted by Joan, most notably at the start of their conferences. Layla usually reflected on the challenges she had faced during her writing rather than any positives, which once again illustrated her belief of viewing conferences as places to discuss her mistakes (Belief 1). The following extracts from the beginning of two of her conferences show Layla's reflections.

1 J: ok L so how did you find doing the essay
2 L: **er the first time I found err the essay not easy especially for the structure er I know the structure uh introduction and body and conclusion but er the introduction include the thesis statement ... And the first time I don't know how I can write the thesis statement I understand but because before I've not practise about this essay and err now I understand**
(Conference 1: lines 1-10)

1 J: ok so how did you find doing this first draft?
2 L: **the first thing er I find something difficult to choose the topic but I decided to choose the woman movement er because erm I er I want to know er how the woman er movement in the past er was in the past and erm (1) er how effects in the future for the womans I want discover this and after this I start to read er some journal and articles about it and er start writing but not easy**
(Conference 3: lines 3-11)

Layla's first reflections typically ranged from between 30 to over 60 words, which demonstrated her ability to think back on the processes she had gone through to write the draft in detail. The challenges she reflected upon were

varied and included issues such as organisation, referencing, researching appropriate content and coherence. She also managed to reflect using an impressive range of meta-language to describe her thoughts and reflections. Overall, the range, length, accuracy and language Layla used to describe her past written journeys showcased her relative strength in being able to understand the different constituents that made up the composition process.

Phase C: Finalise future revisions

Strategy used: C1 - Enforcing further explicitness

In Phase C, the student and teacher exchange information to pin down possible targets for future revisions. The exchange can become quite strategic at times with the teacher wishing to prompt for change without giving away the answer completely and the international student hoping to receive more details about what revisions to make. For Layla, trying to enforce more explicitness from Joan about future revisions was the most common strategy during this phase. Over her four conferences, she attempted to get more details a total of 12 times – her second most frequent strategy overall during any phase of conference talk.

Layla's strategy use here could be linked to up to four of her expressed beliefs. The primary belief linked to this strategy was Layla's belief that it was Joan's responsibility as her teacher to give her more details (Belief 2) and when this was not forthcoming, Layla would ask for more. The strategy of enforcing further explicitness was often used to learn more about weaknesses in her text and thus linked to her belief of seeing conference talk revolving around the discussion of errors (Belief 1). Similarly, Layla's ability to participate in the

conference discussion in this way also linked to her belief of being able to have a voice in her conferences (Belief 3). A final belief that may have also influenced the use of this strategy was Layla's need for reassurance, which gave her the confidence to make the revisions discussed (Belief 4).

In the extract below, Joan asked Layla to bolster the ideas in one of her paragraphs.

- 1 J: ok so what you've got to do is always make sure that in the paragraph your idea is developed more your opinion is stronger
2 L: **I can leave it this is the same and I can er added some more information?**
(Conference 1: lines 111-113)

In line 2, Layla sought more details by offering a suggestion of her own on how she might implement Joan's proposed revision and then tried to get Joan's blessing for it (Belief 4). We see another example of this in Layla's second conference, where the revision centred on the balance between her own ideas and counter arguments.

- 1 J: ok don't go back to the opposite opinion because that's er not what we want the reader to remember ...
2 L: **until here enough?** ((Student points to something in her draft text))
(Conference 2: lines 174-178)

Once again, Layla asked a question to get more information, this time about exactly *where* in her paragraph she might instigate the changes highlighted. In conference 3, we can see Layla twice try to pin Joan down to get greater specificity about the revision suggested.

- 1 J: ... spend a bit more time thinking about how you're going to actually structure these ideas
2 L: **ok I need (xxx) (maybe) deleted some (more) ideas=**
3 J: =well I'm not necessarily I don't know I mean that's up to you to decide what you want if you want to delete something but I think you can't have all that together in one paragraph it's just the paragraph's not cohesive really ...
4 L: **new paragraph (would this go there)?**
(Conference 3: lines 87-109)

In line 1, Joan suggested making a revision to improve the organisation of her ideas. Layla wanted more information and attempted to enforce greater explicitness about the change by offering her own suggestion for revision in line 2. However, Joan did not offer any extra details and instead highlighted how it was Layla's decision alone to decide how she wanted to make the revision. Seemingly undeterred by this, Layla tried again in line 4.

All the examples above highlight how Layla was very active in trying to get the information she wanted from Joan about making future revisions. Her need for such extra detail about how to make the revision rather than try and work things out for herself highlights the level of scaffolding she needed at times. It validates in some ways why she had been placed in the weaker group for writing on the foundation programme.

Phase C: Finalise future revisions

Strategy used: C2 - Questioning change

The second most common strategy Layla used during Phase C was to question changes proposed by Joan for revision. She did this on 7 occasions in 3 out of 4 of her conferences. The strategy most closely linked back to Layla's beliefs of being willing to speak up about her work when she needed to (Belief 5). In the example below from conference 3, Joan was discussing the presence of an overlong quotation in the text.

- 1 J: ... do you remember ... we said we shouldn't use quotations unnecessarily (1) that we only use quotations when we can't explain something any better ourselves ... or what the writer said is so important ... we only tend to make quotations for really really important bits of information
- 2 L: **and this is important**
- 3 J: erm[
- 4 L: [because here I put it this is cause this is the cause idea and here example from er north er caroline and here from arab countries two example about this
- (Conference 3: lines 31-43)

Joan attempted to remind Layla of the conditions under which quotations were to be used in essays with her initial turn. In line 2, Layla picked up on the issue and directly appropriated Joan's own word '*important*' and applied it to her 'defence' of the quotation she had used in her draft. Recycling Joan's language in this way was quite a powerful act on the part of Layla. Her initial defence was then followed up by a rationale in line 4 that offered further details of what she had done, which interestingly interrupted Joan's turn in line 3, marked with the filler 'erm' that typically indicates that someone is about to speak (Thornborrow 2002).

In another interesting example from conference 4, Joan suggested to Layla how she might add more to her concluding paragraph. While the idea was not rejected by Layla, she questioned the timing of the revision.

- 1 J: yeah have you got any ideas about what you might include at the end?
- 2 L: **now I have just to (xxx) and erm I will put it more details for my er essay and after this I will er change my conclusion (put) a bit more er information and summarise all this**
- 3 J: yeah I thought maybe a prediction or something that'd be nice at the end to finish it off you don't have to do that but it's just an idea you know so summarise as you said and then just finish off with a final comment of your own some analysis could be a 'prediction' 'call for action' do you remember doing those different conclusions?
- 4 L: yeah (xxx) conclusion **but I'm not decided (yet)**
(Conference 4: lines 101-122)

Layla's initial response in line 2 highlights how she did not see her conclusion as an immediate priority but rather preferred to work on other issues first.

Instead of being put off by this, Joan proceeded to offer suggestions on what Layla could change in her conclusion in line 3. In line 4, Layla again does not take up the offer to discuss her conclusion by highlighting that at that stage, she had simply not made any decisions about the specifics of what to do with her final paragraph.

Layla's decision not to take up the extra information on offer regarding her conclusion stood out because typically Layla was someone who expected Joan to offer her more examples and ideas about her work (Belief 2) and yet here when Joan was doing just that, she did not take the opportunity to discuss these ideas further. I would have expected Layla to have gone on in fact and asked more questions of Joan to seek reassurance about the changes she could make to her conclusion, in line with another of her beliefs (Belief 4). The fact that she did not act in accordance to her beliefs here highlights that perhaps for Layla, working in a methodical, systematic manner is a very important aspect of her writing process. It hints at a lock-step, more linear style of thinking where everything has its time and place and she needs to be cognitively ready in order to discuss new things.

5.5 Linking Layla's beliefs to her strategy use in conferences

Table 5.3 offers an attempt to link some of Layla's individual beliefs to specific strategies she used during her four conferences. More often than not, her different beliefs were not manifested by a single strategy alone but by a composite of several strategies that were in some way related back to the core tenet of each of her beliefs.

Table 5.3: Linking Layla's beliefs to specific conference strategies (defining belief shaded)

Layla's 6 beliefs	Key tenet of belief	Layla's strategy categories
1: 'It [written and spoken feedback] helps me to avoid my mistakes' (source: q8)	'Focus on errors/problems with text'	B5: Seeking communication repair: x22 A1: Selecting the topic (uninvited): x11 B1: Reflecting on her work: x9
2: 'I expect [the teacher to] give me more example' (source: pci11260)	'More details'	C1: Enforcing further explicitness: x12
3: 'I like it the teacher talk but I think the balance between the teacher and the student [is important]' (source: il128-129)	'Both teacher and student speak'	B5: Seeking communication repair: x22 C1: Enforcing further explicitness: x12 A1: Selecting the topic (uninvited): x11 B2: Offering a rationale for her work: x11 B1: Reflecting on their work: x9
4: 'I understand but just I want check this sure' (source: pci11396)	'Seeking clarification / reassurance'	B5: Seeking communication repair: x22
5: 'If I need I will [speak up]' (source: il194)	'Ownership'	A1: Selecting the topic (uninvited): x11 C2: Questioning change: x7
6: 'I feel relaxed because I know my teacher' (source: il233-234)	'Teacher/student relationship'	No evidence observed

One of Layla's beliefs that translated effectively into the kinds of strategies she used in her conferences was her defining belief of seeing feedback as an opportunity to discuss errors (Belief 1). Three strategies seemed most related to this belief, one directly and two indirectly. Layla's most directly related strategy to Belief 1 was in constantly '*Seeking communication repair (B5)*' - her most used strategy overall. Whenever she was unclear about any aspect of Joan's evaluation of her work, Layla would seek either confirmation or clarification of the issue so that she might better understand it and be able to fix it later on. She used the strategy with remarkable consistency throughout her four conferences – it was an ever-present feature of her conference discourse and in many ways, defined her behaviour during conferences.

Layla was also quite active in using the strategy of '*Selecting the topic (A1)*' without invitation to prompt Joan to give her feedback on areas that she was

particularly concerned about. I feel this was indirectly related to Layla's general anxiety over any errors she may have made and the need to gain approval from Joan that everything was ok. These twin factors made her impatient to hear what Joan had to say about her draft.

Another strategy I feel was indirectly motivated by Layla's belief about errors was that of '*Reflecting on her work (B1)*'. Whenever Joan prompted her to think back about what she had done, Layla usually just focussed on the challenges and problems she had faced while writing her draft, rather than offering a more balanced appraisal of her composition process. This indicated to me how Layla at times seemed to adopt a deficit view of her own writing - holding almost an expectation of making errors that then required fixing during her conferences.

Layla expecting conferences to give her 'more details' about her work (Belief 2) also featured quite prominently in her actions – primarily through the use of the strategy of '*Enforcing further explicitness (C1)*'. Faced with a teacher such as Joan, whose feedback style was more non-directive and expected Layla to come up with answers for herself, Layla seemed to employ this strategy as a way to counter-act this and extract details for revision. The fact that she employed the strategy in every conference and often applied it at points in the talk where Joan had essentially completed her revision suggestions, highlights Layla's conviction in still trying to elicit more information. Such commitment, I would argue, is based partly upon her belief in wanting and expecting more details from her conferences.

Layla's third belief (Belief 3) about conferencing was a rather complex one and seen to have a moderate impact on her strategy use. She generally expected Joan to occupy the role of expert and control the conference but still expected

to have a share of the talk. The quantitative data suggests that Joan comfortably spoke more than Layla on average – occupying some 80% of the talk time during each of their conferences and her turns were on average five times longer than Layla's. Yet such a level of quantitative dominance does not tell the whole story. Layla still managed to enact a variety of strategies that, when seen together, highlighted quite an active role in her conferences, albeit in short bursts of talk.

Layla employed five strategies that highlighted her contribution to a share of the talk: '*Selecting the topic (A1), Offering a rationale for her work (B2), Seeking communication repair (B5), Enforcing further explicitness (C1) and Reflecting on her work (B1)*'. Each of these strategies caused Layla to contribute to the ongoing discussion in some small way. For example, the fact that she selected topics to discuss or offered rationales for something that she had written without ever being asked by Joan to do so, highlights a student who is willing to contribute to conference talk of her own volition. The number of times she would intervene to gain clarity or confirmation over something or ask Joan for more information when she felt she needed it – all paint a picture of Layla's conference activity. Even when she offered reflections, albeit in response to Joan's prompting mostly, her turns were quite detailed.

When it came to Layla's belief in seeking reassurances about what she had either written or had yet to revise (Belief 4), we can see a strong impact on her use of the strategy of '*Seeking communication repair (B5)*'. While she used this on occasions when she undoubtedly did not understand Joan's feedback, many times when she did intervene, it was to gain reassurance of what had been said. This need for reassurance was in part a personality trait, which Layla

admitted to freely but was also linked, I feel, to the general anxiety she felt about making errors (Belief 1), being accurate, and doing what Joan asked her to do.

Layla's belief in speaking up and having a voice over her work (Belief 5) was seen to have some moderate impact on the kind of strategies she used during her conferences. Despite the fact that she actively sought repair and enforced further explicitness quite actively too, she was still able to employ two powerful strategies that highlighted her belief in exercising a degree of ownership over her work: '*Questioning change (C2)*' and '*Selecting the topic (A1)*'. Selecting the topic for discussions on occasion without any explicit invitation from Joan meant that her voice was for a short time setting the agenda of the conference and she was thereby having a direct influence on the interaction as it was unfolding.

Similarly, during phase C of her conferences, when Joan offered her suggestions or requests for future revision, Layla would on occasion question the relative merits of what she had heard rather than immediately moving to accept them. Such interventions were low-key in nature and never lasted too long but the fact that they had occurred in the first place demonstrated how Layla was capable of speaking up for her work when she felt that suggested changes were not always in the best interests of her work.

Lest we forget, these strategies took place within an institutional setting that placed her in the less dominant/novice role during the conference interaction, infused with less interactional and discursive rights as a result (Thornborrow 2002). Therefore, to raise topics and question Joan's advice was a quite powerful act. Nevertheless, I am reluctant to invoke notions of 'ownership' too quickly here as I feel that in part, Layla's questioning was often driven more by

the fact that she had spent considerable time and effort in writing her draft and the notion of having to change parts of it seemed quite daunting and stressful to her. Questioning Joan's suggestions, for example, may have bought her some concessions from Joan, whereby she would have to perhaps make less changes and therefore do less work overall and indeed, this was seen to occur on at least one occasion during her conferences.

Layla's final belief that highlighted the importance of feeling comfortable with Joan as some form of pre-requisite to having a 'good or successful' conference (Belief 6) was not seen to have any impact on her use of any specific strategies in her conferences. However, one could point to the fact that from a more general perspective, her total use of strategies increased after her first conference and then remained rather constant throughout. For example, in her first conference, Layla used a total of 14 strategies and this increased to totals of 24, 21 and 24 respectively in her three later conferences. This may have occurred because her first conference was quite early on during the foundation programme and that at that point, she would not have been as well acquainted with Joan as she might have been during later conferences nor indeed with the conference format itself. Once she had experienced her first conference, however, Layla would have had an idea of how Joan conducted her conferences and an expectation of her own role in it too and this knowledge may have made her feel more comfortable and able to participate to a greater extent.

There is some evidence to suggest that this may have been true. For example, Layla never raised any topics for discussion of her own volition in her first conference and yet went on to raise 5 in her very next conference. In addition,

her strategies of offering rationales and reflections on her work were lower in her first meeting with Joan yet generally increased in frequency during her successive conferences. Taken together, all of this points to some tentative association between her general activity in using conference strategies as a whole and her belief in the importance of knowing her teacher.

Overall, 5 of the 6 beliefs that Layla expressed about conferencing in the study were evident to some extent during her conference actions with Joan (See Appendix 11a which offers an overview of the relationships observed in the study between Layla's beliefs and her conference strategy use). Beliefs 1, 2 and 4 seemed to be realised with a greater degree of consistency during her conference interactions and could be said to have had a *strong impact* on the kinds of strategies she employed whilst in her conferences. Beliefs 3 and 5, however, were seen to have only a *moderate impact* with respect to strategy use. No links were found between Layla's belief in knowing and being familiar with Joan (Belief 6) and any specific strategies.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the beliefs and strategies of Layla, a graduate student from Saudi Arabia. Layla was a sociable, self-aware student who was highly motivated to improve her level of English in order to join a Masters degree.

Layla held 6 main beliefs about writing conferences, one of which was a strong desire to focus on any errors she had made and get them corrected (Belief 1). In many ways, this was her core or defining belief and the other 5 revolved around this and on occasions were influenced by it too. These other beliefs

included feedback being detailed; asking questions to get reassurance; a desire to speak up; questioning change and a belief in the importance of a good student-teacher relationship.

Layla enacted 6 common strategies in her conferences. She raised topics, asked questions when things were not clear or when she wanted extra information and even questioned Joan's suggestion for future revision. Layla also demonstrated her ability to offer rationales for her work and reflect on it to give an opinion.

Apart from one, all of Layla's beliefs had a moderate to high impact on the kinds of strategies she employed whilst conferencing. Her belief in seeing conferences in terms of error correction (her defining belief), getting detailed feedback and receiving reassurance were amongst the strongest to come through in her conference behaviour.

Chapter 6 Case study 2: Alex

6.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by offering a biography of Alex that details his personal history as a student of English including his prior experiences of writing in English and of receiving feedback on his writing. In section 6.3, Alex's 6 beliefs about writing conferences are discussed and illustrated with extracts taken from his questionnaire, initial interview and post conference interviews. In section 6.4, I discuss his 4 most commonly used strategies in his conferences with Joan using data extracts from his 4 conference transcripts. The final section 6.5 offers possible links between Alex's beliefs and strategy use.

6.2 Biography

Alex was a 20-year-old student from China when he joined the IFP in September 2010. He had completed the first two years of a business degree at his Chinese university that was linked to UCLAN. The arrangement allowed students who had passed their second year with an overall mark of 60% in both the subject matter and English language to join the final year of a related degree programme in the UK and graduate. However, those that failed to make the grade, such as Alex, were required to join the IFP to improve their skills before progressing on to their degree. Such a route added an extra year to Alex's study in the UK.

He had been studying English for about 12 years in China and been writing in English for about 8 years. For the last 2 years, he had started to write essays which seemed different from those in the UK: *'something is similar but most is different ... I have to read [books, journals in China] but I don't have to*

discussing about this ... I think this essay [foundation essay in the UK] is more ... academic' (il13; 19; 35). Alex, like many Chinese students, was familiar with the IELTS test and had scored a grade of 5 overall in the last 12 months before joining the IFP.

When I asked him to assess his level of English, Alex chose to describe it as *'weak intermediate'* in his questionnaire (q4). When I asked him to explain his choice he said *'I think my vocabulary is very poor ... I know the grammar but I don't know how to use in the essays'* (il6-7). Despite this, Alex rated his ability to write essays in English as average (4) on a scale from 1-7 in his questionnaire (q7). I asked him about this rating at our follow up interview and he expressed how he felt that the IFP argument style essay he had been given was *'similar to the IELTS second part'* (il23).

Alex had only ever experienced written feedback that focussed on his errors. I asked him what level of importance he attached to feedback: *'if 10 is the top [mark], I just 3 or 4 and if the teacher can give me feedback on writing maybe I can get 5 or 6'* (il45-47). Thus for Alex, feedback had the power to improve his final grade. He had never experienced spoken feedback in China, so conferencing was completely new to him. Yet he seemed very positive about it even before he started, stating how he felt that it might offer something different: *'spoken feedback can show the teacher's mind [ideas / opinions]'* (il68) and help a student to better understand the weaknesses in their writing (q10)

For Alex, the conference also seemed to be a place to discuss ideas about his writing *'face to face ... if the teacher have some different mind and some different idea and the teacher can tell you about this and if you agree with it you can use it'* (il93-95).

Early impressions paint a positive picture of Alex as someone who was able to articulate his thoughts quite clearly and offer an opinion with relative ease. He seemed open to new ways of doing things and was looking forward to speaking with his writing teacher, Joan. His final quote above is particularly revealing, however, especially the last nine words *‘if you agree with it you can use it’* – a small pointer perhaps, to a sense of ownership Alex may have over his work and ideas.

6.3 Alex's beliefs about writing conferences

Alex's data yielded 6 beliefs about writing conferences, which can be seen in table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1: Alex's beliefs about conferencing

In Alex's own words
1: 'tell me what's wrong' (source: il41)
2: 'I must want to know why, why I have to' (source: pci2l81)
3: 'two peoples have thinking and we can get more idea' (source: pci1l191)
4: 'If the teacher tell me everything that essay is not mine - it's the teacher's' (source: pci1l329)
5: 'I want to show my mind' (source: pci1l258)
6: 'Joan ask more question for me – it can help me to remember' (source: pci3l55)

1: 'tell me what's wrong' (source: ill41)

Alex viewed conferences as places to get his mistakes highlighted and corrected. This focus was evident right from his questionnaire, where he expressed a preference for both spoken and written feedback citing how *‘written feedback can show our mistake very clearly. However, spoken feedback can tell us what is the mistake’* (q9). It was interesting how Alex saw both written and spoken feedback as having a focus on ‘mistakes’ but in different ways. At our first interview while discussing the value of feedback, Alex also pointed to the

teacher's role in helping him with his errors *'I don't know where's I take wrong, where is mistake... the teacher can help me to change and tell me what's wrong'* (il39-41). When I asked him if he felt that the primary task of feedback on writing was correction, he agreed (il52).

Alex's focus on 'errors' continued throughout each of our four post conference interviews together. In the first one, he expressed how he liked to listen to Joan talking because she could tell him where he had gone wrong (pci1176) and highlighted his own fears of making mistakes (pci1180) too. In pci3 when I asked Alex to evaluate his last conference, he immediately mentioned error correction by saying how positive it had been because Joan had told him what changes he needed to make (pci3l3-4).

All the examples above highlighted how Alex viewed one of the primary functions of conference talk to be a discussion about his mistakes. In taking such a view, he also effectively endorsed the institutional roles placed upon Joan and himself as those of 'expert' and 'novice' respectively, especially with respect to language issues. Phrases such as *'I don't know here; how can I change it and I'm afraid I will mistake'* all serve to enshrine his role as that of the apprentice seeking answers. Meanwhile using phrases such as *'the teacher can help me ... tell me what's wrong; the teacher can help you to change and I want to hear what teacher to say'* all emphasised Joan's role of knowledge telling expert, passing on her expertise to Alex.

2: 'I must want to know why, why I have to' (source: pci2l81)

Alex was always keen to examine both the reasons behind his mistakes and why he had to revise parts of his text. At times, it almost seemed as if Alex had

to be convinced by a good argument from Joan before enacting any revision, which implied that he thought about issues in his text deeply. I first became acquainted with this belief when I read something in his questionnaire: *'I can make a detailed knowledge of my shortcomings'* (q10). The words 'detailed knowledge' struck me and at our follow up interview Alex explained how a student *'should tell the teacher what they did not understand and what means the mistake'* (il99-100). Again, his use of words such as 'understand' and 'mean' offered evidence of the importance he placed on gaining new knowledge. He wanted to learn more about the possible causes for his written mistakes so that he might use it to help him avoid making similar ones in the future. For Alex, talking about errors did not just mean correcting them but gaining a deeper understanding of them.

This belief often appeared during our post conference interviews. For example, in our second post conference interview, I asked Alex if some written feedback that Joan had given him on a syntactical issue had been clear enough for him to make a change. He expressed dissatisfaction by saying *'I don't know why to move the sentence here ... if I move it in this essay is right but in the next essay I still make this mistake'* (pci2l75, 85). Later in the interview, I played Alex an extract of him asking Joan several times about the number of ideas he should use in one of his paragraphs. I was interested in knowing why he felt the need to ask so often: *'I want to know it because if I have (another) essays and I [can] still use two idea in the one (paragraph) [or not]'* (pci2l226).

These extracts clearly highlight how Alex thought about his errors and conference feedback on them – he was looking for answers, knowledge that he could then apply elsewhere and reduce the number of mistakes he made in the

future. This was powerfully stated by Alex at our final post conference interview, where he told me that if he did not understand the issues in his writing well enough, the problem would remain, like a habit (pci4l65-67).

This view of seeking explanations for issues in his drafts implied how Alex seemed to construct, in some ways, his one to one conference discussions as almost mini-extensions of his writing classroom. The fact that Joan was his writing classroom teacher too may have made such a view more realistic in his eyes. Overall, this belief shows Alex as someone who was very aware of his writing needs and able to use his conferences to gain more knowledge about his writing processes in general as well as feedback on the specific draft in question. Such wider knowledge may serve him well in the long term.

3: 'two peoples have thinking and we can get more idea' (source: pci1l191)

Alex believed that writing conferences were great opportunities to work with Joan. He felt that extra details and examples might emerge as a result of collaboration. Towards the end of our first interview, I asked Alex if he thought his conferences could ever resemble a conversation: *'I think we can – it's the same to friends talk about something or discussing something ... it's good communication and ... we can discussing more things about essays'* (il204-208). Alex had first alluded to this belief in his questionnaire when he wrote about how he would tell Joan if he did not agree with her: *'everyone have their opinion. We can exchange our opinion and discuss it'* (q13). I asked him later if he would feel at all uncomfortable about being so open with Joan: *'No ... if the reason is wrong and the teacher say your reason is wrong and mine is wrong*

and you have to change it. But I want to have a discussion with teacher because I think it's better for my essays' (il153-155).

Alex did not only see the possibility for more discussion with Joan during episodes of disagreement, however. For him, the opportunity to simply question Joan about things and receive an immediate answer also seemed to mean collaboration: *'if suddenly you have questions you can ask the teacher and the teacher can answer you' (il75-76)*. Later in the interview, Alex again highlighted how during conferencing he could *'ask more and more questions about this essay' (il199-200)*.

In our first post conference interview, I played Alex a few extracts from his conference highlighting question and answer exchanges between himself and Joan about issues in his text. I asked Alex what he thought about them and he brought up the idea of collaboration again *'...we write about essay ourselves – it's one person. If the teacher help you to change the essays and somethings wrong with that essays and there are two peoples have thinking and we can get more idea about it' (pci11189-191)*.

In our second post conference interview, I played Alex a long exchange he had had with Joan about trying to fit all of his ideas into a single body paragraph. It ended with Alex offering his own ideas about how he might resolve the issue. I asked him why he had done this *'because I'm not sure about the Joan mean ... because I ask her can I ... use two idea in one paragraph or I have to choose one ... [I want to see if] is agree with me or disagree' (pci11163-167)*. Thus, Alex's collaboration here arose out of a need to gain clarification about future revisions by offering up his ideas for Joan to comment upon.

Overall, Alex's version of 'collaborating' did not refer to any common sense notions of conversation between equals but instead referred to the opportunities available to him during his conferences to learn more by working things out with Joan through mini episodes of question and answer exchanges. They were used to resolve areas of disagreement, arrive at common ground or clarify what revisions he needed to make in future drafts. Alex's belief that collaborating with Joan about his work was a positive factor, which would bring benefits to him, highlights his levels of self-awareness about what he knew he could and could not achieve alone. This belief also implied that he did not always expect ideas and answers to flow one way from Joan to him.

4: 'If the teacher tell me everything that essay is not mine - it's the teacher's (source: pci11329)

Alex was someone who felt that he should always try and work things out for himself – he did not want Joan to give him all the answers. In his questionnaire for example, when asked what he would do with the conference feedback he received, he selected the following from a given list: *'make changes to some parts of my draft the teacher highlighted and some of my own'* (q14). The fact that he chose to revise 'some' aspects rather than all of them offered a first impression of Alex as someone who may not always follow everything Joan would say. He emphasised this later at our first interview: *'If the teacher can make some information or some (data) to show this idea is right I can change it. If the teacher can't show something to me and I think my idea is right and the teacher is wrong and I didn't change it'* (il182-184). This statement implied how Alex (much like in Belief 2) wanted to be convinced to some degree by the

argument for change rather than simply paying lip service to Joan's suggestions. Furthermore, it offered evidence that Alex was quite an independent student writer in terms of having ownership over his ideas.

At the end of our first post conference interview, I asked Alex to reflect on his conference and consider whether he would have liked Joan to have given him more examples: *'if Joan give me more examples, it's more than ten, twelve I think it's bad for me'* (pci11325). Surprised by this answer, I asked him why:

'If the teacher tell me everything that essay is not mine – it's the teacher's ... The teacher just give me the examples, one, two and let me know how I can to write it ... it's enough I think ... if you use the teacher's idea, the teacher will feel nothing because it's not very interesting to read that' (pci11329-341).

Such quotes support the argument that Alex sees conference feedback as more of a guiding hand that can point him the right direction rather than a place to get answers to everything. While offering further support for seeing Alex as an independent thinker, it also shows how his mind seems to engage more with the *process* of writing rather than simply producing the final product.

In our third post conference interview, Alex reiterated this belief again and went on to highlight with more detail how exactly he wanted Joan to help him when offering information: *'I want more information (and) how to solve it but I don't want to Joan tell me – I like Joan ask me some questions because that is good for remember'* (pci31143-144). These two examples once again support the idea of Alex being an independently minded student writer who wanted guidance more than answers. In our final post conference interview, the issue arose once more: *'Yes I want more examples ... but (in truth) I don't want Joan to help me get more idea because if she tell me more idea maybe I will use the idea in my*

essay' (pci4137-38). When I prompted Alex to explain why that was such a bad thing, he said *'but it's not mine [the essay] ... I think I can get any other ideas ...myself'* (pci4140). He then ended by highlighting that if Joan helped him too much, the essay really belonged to her and not him: *'You just put some words in your essays but the mind [idea] of the essay is teacher's it's not yours'* (pci4144-47).

These powerful statements from Alex throughout our meetings together of not wanting Joan to appropriate his work through her feedback was significant in that it strongly emphasised his belief in doing the work himself as much as possible. What Alex seemed to want above all else was to be guided, prompted and given the tools to make his own informed decisions about his text. I think he enjoyed and valued the sense of ownership he had over his written work and wanted it to be a true reflection where possible of his own efforts.

5: 'I want to show my mind' (source: pci11258)

Alex was full of ideas and opinions and he wanted to express them during his conferences. He would explain why he had written something or just share his thoughts during on-going discussions, often without ever being asked.

Considering his other beliefs of wanting to generally collaborate (Belief 3) or his sense of independence over his work (Belief 4), this belief was perhaps not too surprising. I first saw evidence for this in his questionnaire. One of the questions asked him to consider who he thought might speak more during his conferences. Alex was the only student in the study to select the choice of *'the student'* (q11) instead of the teacher or a mix of both. In explaining his choice, he went on to write *'Student should tell to teacher what did they not understand.*

And what is mean of mistake, how to change it' (q11). It was noteworthy how Alex placed responsibility here on the *student* to speak, explain and consider revision rather than the teacher.

At our first post conference interview, I played Alex an extract where he had interrupted Joan to speak up about something. I wanted to know why he had felt compelled to intervene in this way: *'I think I know the Joan what say, what things her want to tell me about the next paragraph. I want to tell her I know that and I know how to write it'* (pci11168-169). I found this interesting because not all students would have intervened in this way for such reasons – i.e. to only state what they *did* understand rather than what they did not.

For Alex, offering his thoughts or 'mind', as he phrased it allowed Joan to understand what he meant when he was writing particular sentences: *'I want to show my mind again for Joan ... I'm not sure if Joan understand what I speak, what's my mind ... I'm thinking another way to showed my mind and make Joan understand what the sentence mean'* (pci11258-276). The sheer number of times Alex explained to me how he was simply trying to express his ideas to Joan during a moment in his conferences highlighted to me the importance he attributed to speaking up and getting his message out and understood. He could easily have accepted Joan's request to revise the sentences in question but preferred to make her aware of the original intentions behind his writing.

In our second post conference interview, I played Alex an extract where he chose not to follow Joan and instead moved on to discuss another issue - to an earlier one about his 'conclusion'. I asked him why he had done this: *'Because I'm still very (unclear) about it'* (pci21237). This highlighted how Alex was able to dwell upon an issue of interest to him despite the fact that the discussion had

moved on to something new – he was a ‘thinker’. In our third post conference interview, I played an extract where Alex had intervened again to offer a rationale about something he had written because *‘I want for tell Joan ... that time why I did these problems. I think it’s good for me also it’s good for the teachers because they know why this student do that’* (pci31116-117).

Overall, Alex’s moments of intervention came about because he was willing to share his thoughts and ideas with Joan as and when necessary. Whether it was to offer her rationales, highlight his lack of understanding or just to offer an opinion whenever he felt it was necessary – Alex did it consistently during his four conferences. Perhaps most striking of all was the fact that many of these interventions were not prompted by Joan but occurred because of his own interests in the on-going discussion. His attitude to speaking up during conferences was best summarised perhaps when I asked him if he ever felt that he should be quieter at times during his conferences and listen more: *‘I don’t like this’* (pci11295-297). I viewed this belief in wanting to express his ideas and opinions as **Alex’s core or defining belief**.

6: ‘Joan ask more question for me - it can help me to remember’ (source: pci3155)

Another belief that was evident in his data was Alex’s positive view of being prompted by Joan to come up with answers and ideas for himself. In our first post conference interview, I played him an extract where Joan had prompted him to think back to their writing class and what she had said about thesis statements. I asked him what he thought of such prompting and he said: *‘I think it help me to understand. Maybe I didn’t understand in the class, the teacher*

can tell me at that moment' (pci11110-111). In our second post conference interview, I suggested to him how it might have been easier if Joan had just told him things rather than always prompting. I thought he might agree with me but he did not: *'I liked the teacher ask me ... It can improve my remember these things ... I think if in this programme we have to some thinking ... it's good for us'* (pci2150, 54, 59). These two quotes show how positively Alex framed Joan's non-directive style of delivery that prompted him to think about his writing for himself via a series of mini questions. It linked well with his earlier belief of valuing a degree of independence (Belief 4).

In our second post conference interview, I played Alex a long extract of Joan highlighting an issue over the number of ideas that he wanted to include in a paragraph. Joan did not offer any final answers but instead guided him to arrive at his own conclusions with several prompts in a row. I again asked Alex if he would have preferred clearer direction here because it was a complex issue and the discussion had taken several minutes with Alex struggling to understand the issue. I had again assumed that in such a scenario, he would have preferred greater directness from Joan rather than a series of elicitation cycles but instead, Alex offered me a rather different response that on the surface did not answer my question: *'I think she say it's difficult to do that'* (pci21196).

Seemingly unconcerned about the issue of being constantly prompted, Alex's response was *more* focussed on what Joan has been saying to him rather than any issue over being asked to think for himself. His focus on the problem at hand rather than my concern that perhaps Joan had prompted him too much demonstrated how Alex was someone who preferred to work things out for himself rather than receive more directive guidance from Joan.

Such a willingness to *earn* his understanding of something fitted well with Alex's overall sense of independence and ownership over his work that had emerged from his set of beliefs. He was a student who preferred to be pointed in the right direction but ultimately wanted to find his own way towards the answer.

6.4 Alex's conference strategy use

The strategies that Alex used during his conferences are illustrated in table 6.2 below. As highlighted previously (see section 4.7.3) only the most commonly used strategies, marked in bold, were analysed in depth and are commented upon below. A discussion of the strategy totals occurs in the cross-case analysis in Chapter 9.

Table 6.2: Alex's conference strategies (strategy labels shortened to accommodate table – see table 4.9 for full labels)

Phases of talk	Conference 1 (C1)	Conference 2 (C2)	Conference 3 (C3)	Conference 4 (C4)	Total	Total per phase
	Semester 1: 750-word essay		Semester 2: 1500-word essay			
A Raise topics for revision	A1: Selecting the topic (uninvited) (x1)	-	A1: Selecting the topic (uninvited) (x1)	A1: Selecting the topic (uninvited) (x1)	A1: x3	3
B Negotiate and clarify revision topics	B5: Seeking repair (x5) B1: Reflecting (x1) B2: Offering a rationale (x2) B3: Explaining his process (x2)	B5: Seeking repair (x13) B1: Reflecting (x3) B2: Offering a rationale (x3) B3: Explaining his process (x1)	B5: Seeking repair (x4) B1: Reflecting (x6) B2: Offering a rationale (x5) B3: Explaining his process (x4) B4: Offering an insight to future plans/changes (x2)	B5: Seeking repair (x8) B1: Reflecting (x5) B2: Offering a rationale (x2) B4: Offering an insight to future plans/changes (x2)	B5: x30 B1: x15 B2: x12 B3: x7 B4: x4	68
C Finalise future revisions	C1: Enforcing explicitness (x4)	C1: Enforcing explicitness (x9) SC2: Questioning change (x1)	C1: Enforcing explicitness (x5)	C1: Enforcing explicitness (x6)	C1: x24 C2: x1	25
Total per conference	15	30	27	24	96	

Phase A: Raise topics for revision

Strategy used: A1 - Selecting the topic (uninvited)

During phase A of his four conferences, Alex did not raise new topics for discussion often enough to meet the inclusion criteria set in the study for further analysis, i.e. categories needed to be used 2 or more times in at least 3 of the 4 conferences. In his conferences, he only raised a topic of his own volition on 3 occasions, not raising any in his second conference. Thus, when it came to deciding what to discuss about Alex's drafts, Joan had more or less complete control. This lack of activity on the part of Alex was somewhat surprising considering some of the beliefs that he had expressed during our interviews.

For example, Alex had highlighted his desire to contribute to the on-going discussion of his draft (Belief 3) and I thought that such participation would naturally lead him to instigate topics that he wished to discuss. Similarly, his persistence in not wanting Joan to give him all the answers when it came to discussing future revisions made me see Alex as an independently minded student writer who valued having a sense of ownership over his work (Belief 4). I took his independence as a sign of confidence which would make it easier for him to raise issues or topics when he wanted. Another of Alex's beliefs that I felt might help was his desire to share his ideas and thoughts about things he did not understand or offer rationales for things that he had written (Belief 5). Once again, I saw this willingness to speak up as evidence of his confidence and openness to shared talk with Joan. As a result of all of these beliefs, I would not have been surprised to have seen Alex raise a few topics at times to set the agenda of the discussion. Yet surprisingly, none of these beliefs translated well into his conference actions in terms of using this strategy.

Initially, I was at a loss to explain why Alex had exhibited such little activity during this phase. I then started to consider some of his previous educational experiences. He had mentioned to me how his Chinese teachers would offer written feedback that only tended to point out what was wrong with the text without any further comments or collaboration (pci11346-348). One might deduce therefore that Alex's previous educational context was quite hierarchical and less collaborative, with the teacher very much in control of setting the agenda. Perhaps having been socialised in such conditions, one could easily imagine how Alex may have found raising topics without invitation from his teacher as quite challenging. As we shall see in their case study chapters, both Maria and Kazumi had similar issues. A second reason may lie in his inexperience of writing conferences – he had never experienced any before coming to the UK. Perhaps when confronted by the one to one setting, Alex may have felt uncomfortable in trying something new such as raising topics of his own.

Phase B: Negotiate and clarify revision topics

Strategy used: B5 - Seeking communication repair

The most common strategy used by Alex during phase B was to attempt and seek communication repair, which he did a total of 30 times over the course of his four conferences. In other words, he tried to repair any breakdowns he had in understanding feedback quite actively, for example, by seeking confirmation from Joan about some of the evaluations she had offered on his draft text. For Alex, making sure that he had clearly understood the nature of any issue raised seemed to be of paramount importance. At times, he repeatedly checked what

he had not done so well in his draft and only on the odd occasion did he venture into discussing what future changes might look like.

His confirmation checks were usually quite short – sometimes even a single word focussing on the language used by Joan in her feedback. This often had the effect of prompting her to not only repeat her feedback again but to do so by packaging the same information in a different way, typically with greater exemplification. This offered Alex more information that may have been easier to absorb than the first time around. We can see his shorter confirmation checks in action throughout his conferences. At times, they resembled echoes of final word items in Joan's previous turn, yet on closer inspection were most definitely moments of repair.

- 1 J: ... you've got an opening statement at the beginning to introduce the topic. I think what you just need to do (1) is you need a sentence here ((T refers to text)) to introduce the example of China
- 2 A: **example?**
- 3 J: yeah ... because you kind of go from studying abroad to erm (2) to then business in China without a link...
- (Conference 1: lines 39-46)

- 1 J: when you use words like 'you we us' (2) do you know what I mean it kind of ... your writing starts to sound a bit more informal
- 2 A: **informal?**
- 3 J: mm (1.5) ok?
- (Conference 2: line 122-124)

- 1 A: because in my (head) erm I got (five) idea
- 2 J: ok well that's ok
- 3 A: **this ok?**
- 4 J: yeah as long as you don't go over your word limit
- (Conference 4: lines 135-138)

Alex seemed to need reassurance about what he heard for several reasons. Firstly, it may have been due to not having understood the language used by Joan, as might be the case in the extract from conference 2 above. Or it may have occurred because he did understand the language used but was unclear as to its meaning with regard to any revision he needed to make, as may be the

case in the extract from conference 1 above. Finally, in the example from conference 4, the confirmation check may have been prompted because one of his beliefs was being challenged by the teacher's feedback.

A characteristic of Alex's use of this strategy at times was his persistence in attempting to understand something by asking Joan several times in succession. An example of this can be seen from his third conference, when Joan was highlighting the need for Alex to ensure that he answered the essay question.

- 1 J: yeah so this essay it's very easy to go off and start discussing other things ...
every idea you have in each paragraph you've got to apply it to social skills ...
2 A: so ... **I leave the topic?**
3 J: well you can say they're living in an imaginary world but then show how it
affects them with these social skills ...
4 A: **yeah mm I write er other topics another m- er (2) other ways? ...**
5 J: yeah ... you have to look at your ideas then to see if they relate to the [theme
6 A: **the**
mind is not on the social skills
7 J: [hmm that's what you have to be careful of with
this essay ... [Joan explains more]
8 A: **so I have to (xxx) er stronger the er topic minds in the body**
(Conference 3: lines 154-188)

Alex offered a confirmation check on four occasions (lines 2, 4, 6, 8). In line 2, Alex seemed to pick up on a part of Joan's previous turn, specifically where she said '*go off and start discussing other things*' to offer his response of just four words that accurately pinpointed the issue at hand.

By Alex's second confirmation check in line 4, he had managed to move the discussion forward on to what he could do to change things, a rare foray for him into discussing change. Yet by the time of his third repair intervention in line 6, however, he simply repeated the nature of the issue again, mirroring his first repair intervention. After a long turn from Joan that repeated her earlier assertion of keeping on task with this essay, Alex offered his final repair which

mirrored his second intervention very closely and related to changes that he may need to make. Alex's persistence in essentially repeating or rephrasing the same issue several times here may have served as a mechanism to help reinforce his understanding of the problem. Voicing his thoughts and difficulties out loud may have allowed him the opportunity to test his understanding of the issue and receive instant verbal and paralinguistic feedback from Joan.

This extract also highlighted how at times, Alex's interventions to repair his understanding would lead to a longer series of turns being exchanged with Joan. This kind of 'collaboration' to arrive at a greater understanding fitted well with Alex's belief in working things out alongside Joan in a more active manner (Belief 3). In addition, the fact that Alex rarely ventured during such episodes into what future revisions might look like could also be linked to his Belief 4 (not wanting to receive all the answers from Joan) and a preference to work things out for himself.

Another possible explanation for Alex's frequent use of this strategy could be attributed to his weaker aural skills, which I anecdotally noticed during our interviews together, when compared to the other students in the study. This weakness may have made it more challenging on occasion to keep up with Joan's feedback and thus prompted a need to check his understanding of the issue more often.

Overall, Alex's use of the strategy to repair any communication breakdown he suffered linked back well to several of the beliefs he expressed about conferencing. He was always interested to learn more about the problems in his text (Belief 1) and had a great desire to better understand the reasons behind them in the hope of not repeating them in the future (Belief 2). Furthermore, the

fact that he actively voiced his lack of understanding and need for more clarification so often during his conferences related to another one of his beliefs – Alex’s desire to speak up and share his thoughts about his work (Belief 5) in a collaborative fashion with Joan (Belief 3).

Phase B: Negotiate and clarify revision topics

Strategy used: B1- Reflecting on his work

The second most common strategy used by Alex during phase B of his conferences was to reflect on the work he had done. Over his four conferences, he engaged in such reflection a total of 15 times. Such moments of reflection occurred both in response to direct questions from Joan or by Alex simply picking up on issues raised by her evaluations. Alex’s reflections were always focussed on his text and could be quite personally oriented too. A few examples of his reflections at the beginning of his conferences in response to a prompt by Joan, can be seen below.

1 J: ok hello A (1) so how did you find doing the essay?
2 A: **erm I feel it's (1) similar than er before (xxx) do that essay [in China] ... but also have some different (1) er change before ...**
3 J: did you find anything really difficult or (1)
4 A: **because this is new organisation for me and ... this is my first time to do that and I'm not very clear**

(Conference 1: lines 1-11)

1 J: so er what did you think of your essay when you'd finished your first draft?
2 A: **erm I think this essay is interesting than the semester one essay**
3 J: it's more interesting?
4 A: **yes it's more interesting and I can find more information and more details in the internet but I go to the library erm (2) it's difficult to find some information about this topic ...**
5 J: what did you think of the essay then? (1)
6 A: **mm (1) this it er I think if I write this essays I have too many idea because in my plans I (get) er five idea in the in my plans but er (1) I'm afraid that if I (write a whole) all (1) I say the words is too much so I just er choose three ideas in my [(essay)**

(Conference 3: lines 3-22)

In these extracts, Alex used language such as *'I feel; this is my first time to do it; I think this essay is interesting; it's difficult to find'* that made his reflections feel more personal. Many of his reflections highlighted areas that he had found challenging, thereby subtly raising possible discussion topics that Joan could choose to pick up on and discuss later, which she frequently did. In such discussions, Alex often received more information about the issue raised, which helped him to understand why they were erroneous in the first place (Belief 2). Such a focus on his difficulties during many of his reflections also tied into his overall belief in using conferences to discuss his mistakes (Belief 1).

Such detailed responses to Joan's prompts linked well to Alex's belief of wanting to express more of his opinions during his conferences (Belief 5) and his preference for being asked questions by Joan in general (Belief 6). Such reflections also tended to focus on higher order concerns such as organisation and content rather than language issues, highlighting how Alex was capable of looking at the 'bigger' picture when it came to reflecting on his essay.

Yet perhaps most interestingly, Alex's reflections often included a reference to his previous writing experiences too. In his first conference above (C1), Alex mentioned his prior experience of essay writing in China while in the third conference example (C3), he discussed the essay he did on the foundation programme during semester one. These time arcs offered proof of how Alex tended to view his writing experiences as a continuous process of change and development rather than isolated products fixed by location and time.

Other reflections, as highlighted earlier, also occurred by Alex listening to Joan's feedback and then picking up on something she had said and

intervening to offer a reflection without any prompting. A good example was seen in his second conference.

1 A: ... **I think maybe I have to choose one idea to write is best**
2 J: you might find it difficult to write a paragraph just about the weather though (1)
(Conference 2: lines 239-242)

Alex's single line of reflection above appeared after a very long turn by Joan that attempted to continually prompt him to think about how many ideas he should retain in a body paragraph. Joan never gave a clear direction about what Alex needed to do and instead left it up to him to decide. Upon hearing all this evaluation, Alex seemed to arrive at a conclusion on his own about what revision to make. Essentially, Alex had listened and reflected on what he had heard in Joan's feedback and made up his mind. This chimed well with his belief in wanting to work things out for himself rather than have Joan tell him everything (Belief 4) and also his belief in wanting to share his ideas and opinions with Joan (Belief 5).

Overall, Alex's reflections were common strategies that allowed some useful insight into what he thought about his work. He thought carefully about what he had written and was able to link his past writing to the present and use it as a stepping stone for future change. Alex's reflections were powerful reminders of his self-awareness with respect to his writing.

Phase B: Negotiate and clarify revision topics

Strategy used: B2 - Offering a rationale for his work

The third most frequent strategy offered by Alex during phase B was to offer rationales for his written work, which he offered a total of 12 times. Like his reflections in the previous strategy, many of his rationales were also framed

within quite a personalised narrative that detailed some of the challenges that he had faced during the composition process. In his first conference, for example, Alex offered two rationales for some language errors that Joan had brought to his attention.

- 1 A: **yes because I don't know how to say that and er I checked dictionary and ... show me these things**
2 A: **yeah you tell me er I can't use this but I'm writing and I forget it**
(Conference 1: lines 114-143; 151-157)

In the first example, Alex offered a frank declaration of not knowing how to write a particular sentence in his text followed by the particular method he then chose to try and solve the issue. In the second example, Alex openly admitted to knowing the correct way to go about some grammar but simply forgetting to implement it when he was writing. His explicitness was characteristic of Alex's spoken rationales and chimed well with his desire to share his thoughts with Joan in conferences (Belief 5). His language here offered an impression of Alex as someone who was quite aware of what he could and could not do. Overall, this lent his conference persona a more self-critical, self-aware style that masked little of his personal journey in writing and revising his drafts.

Another example of this transparency was seen in Alex's third conference, where Joan had spent a long time explaining how his draft did not always relate to the essay question. After much negotiation during which Alex had sought confirmation of various points, he suddenly opened the floor to a wider discussion of his errors without any prompting and embarked on a long turn that offered a rationale for what he had written from a personalised perspective.

- 1 J: ... don't go away from this theme ... bring it always back to that because that's what you're trying to prove (1) that it has a [negative effect
- 2 A: **[it's easy] it's easy (xxx) or leave the topic? ...**
- 3 J: it's very easy with this essay yeah
- 4 A: **I know because er (1.5) I know today I have to er to have the (1) er (1) one to one (xxx) to talk about essays and I have to er yesterday er night I have to read again this one because it's a long time I maybe I didn't remember all things ... but I read when I read it and I have to (xxx) copy it another right just to remind yourself**
- 5 J: right just to remind yourself
- 6 A: **yeah mm I didn't find out these problems because I think maybe in my head erm in my mind this is er (3) in my (3.5) looks (1) I can't see that**
- (Conference 3: lines 205 - 230)

In line 2, Alex intervened with his question of it being easy to go off topic that allowed him to offer a more personalised rationale for his work. From line 4-6 he embarked on a very long turn expressing what he had done and contained many examples of self-critique and reflection, highlighting his own weaknesses (*maybe I didn't remember; I didn't find out these problems; I can't see that*), almost chastising himself aloud about not seeing the problems in his text until he seems to run out of steam somewhat towards the end.

Overall, Alex's rationales were quite heartfelt and had a real honest quality to them in the way that he sometimes chose to describe issues in his text. He was unafraid to state when he did not know or remember to do something and this reinforced my view of him as a writer who possessed a strong sense of self-awareness about his writing and was not defensive when discussing any challenges he faced while composing.

Phase B: Finalise future revisions

Strategy used: C1 - Enforcing further explicitness

In the final phase of conference talk, when it came to finalising what future revisions needed to be made, Alex was very active in trying to get more details from Joan. His most frequent strategy during phase C was to enforce further

explicitness about what changes he had to make in his next draft. He attempted this a total of 24 times across his four conferences and it was his second most used strategy overall in any phase of the conference. Such active participation did not surprise me as it seemed to fit well with his wish to discuss his work (Belief 3) and share his thoughts and opinions (Belief 5). In his first conference, for example, Joan tackled his unclear thesis statement.

- 1 J: ... you've got to write a sentence that shows me is it madness or is it courage what do you think 'cos at the moment I just don't know (2) is that clear A?
- 2 A: yeah
- 3 J: and then in your thesis statement you would say 'it is courageous because' and then you would list the three main ideas in your essay
- 4 A: **yeah so er (1) I have to rewrite er three of opposites**
- 5 J: well you've got to have three main ideas in your essay one in each paragraph
- 6 A: **yeah and in this paragraph ((st refers to text)) I have to er discuss discussing er first I have to er say something er (1) if I agree with the er (courage)**
- 7 J: well what you have to do at the beginning of each paragraph you write the opposite idea ...
- (Conference 1: lines 67-80)

In lines 1-3 Joan suggested, rather directly, the need to include a clear thesis statement that would make the reader aware of his argument. In line 3 she went as far as offering the actual phrase he might include '*it is courageous because*' before giving a clear suggestion for the inclusion of three principal ideas. Alex's initial reply in line 2 suggested that he understood what Joan had said and in line 4, he attempted to enforce further details about the change required by asking whether his opposing arguments needed changing too, something Joan did not address in her previous turn. The attempt yielded little reward as Joan simply offered a repeat of her earlier statement in line 5. Alex did not give up, however, and in his next turn in line 6 asked another question, albeit less clearly this time, regarding the organisation of his ideas versus counter arguments. This time, however, his intervention did lead to Alex receiving more details from Joan. Thus, while he did not always manage to phrase his requests with

accuracy, his interventions here did ultimately lead him to receive more information than perhaps Joan had initially intended to give.

Another example of Alex's attempts to extract details from Joan can be seen in the extract below, where the issues included a lack of clarity in his arguments and coherence issues.

- 1 J: ... you're kind of going from legal system here and then you start talking about The weather so I'm not sure if it's legal system or culture that's (2) the main idea in this paragraph
- 2 A: **so I have two idea in this and I have to choose one?**
- 3 J: ... you could maybe have it as a paragraph about culture but include an example about the law as well (1) maybe whereas your opposing argument is definitely about the legal system ...
- 4 A: ... yeah because I want to this paragraph I want to talk about the (1) the (law) and the weather together **so I have to choose one**
- 5 J: ... maybe we could just call that erm (1) adapting to culture and environment isn't it really? ...
- 6 A: **in this paragraph er the first sentence I can said erm er (2) there have many different er (6.5) different culture and environment between (3.5) between different countries**
- 7 J: yeah you could and it can be difficult to adapt (1) to you know a different environment a different culture ...you're jumping around a bit with your ideas in this paragraph so I think it needs to be clearer what the theme of the paragraph is ...
- 8 A: **yeah so I can er put these two idea in the one paragraph?**
- 9 J: erm (2.5) well you could use them as examples ...
- (Conference 2: lines 181-225)

Upon hearing Joan's feedback about his paragraph, Alex first intervened in line 2 to force Joan to give him more of a definitive answer. However, Joan's following turn only offered Alex a possible solution, which implied her preference for keeping just one topic in the paragraph. Undeterred, Alex repeated his earlier question from line 2 in line 4, indicating perhaps that he did not feel that he had received an answer to his earlier question.

Sensing perhaps Alex's desire to retain both of his ideas, in line 5 Joan offered a solution to accommodate both in his paragraph. Her use of the pronoun 'we' is interesting here as it implies joint construction of the solution and in many ways it was created as a result of Alex's need to retain his ideas and her need to help

find a solution that would also meet the conventions of essay writing. Alex seemed to take Joan's suggestion up by enforcing further explicitness from her for a third time in line 6 by offering his own version of how he would write the opening to his paragraph. In her following turn, Joan took up Alex's idea and expanded upon it before reiterating the problem of the paragraph once again. The episode ended with Alex intervening for a fourth time in line 8 to try yet again to elicit a more definitive answer regarding the number of ideas to put in his paragraph.

Alex's repeated efforts to understand what he needed to do was closely related, in my opinion, to his desire to know *why* he had to make the revisions to his text (Belief 2) so that he might gain a better understanding of the issue and be able to self-correct in the future. The extracts above highlight how active Alex was in conferences when he did not receive the level of detail that perhaps he wanted or expected. Such activity might also have been expected due to Alex's belief in working things out with Joan through discussion (Belief 3). Yet, on the other hand, another of his beliefs described how he did not always want Joan to tell him everything (Belief 4) and thus the high frequency with which Alex attempted to elicit more information from Joan was a little surprising and felt somewhat contradictory.

6.5 Linking Alex's beliefs to his strategy use in conferences

Table 6.3 offers an attempt to link some of Alex's individual beliefs to specific strategies he used during his four conferences. Again, his different beliefs were not manifested by a single strategy alone but by a composite of several strategies that were in some way related back to the core tenet of each of his beliefs.

Table 6.3: Linking Alex's beliefs to specific conference strategies (defining belief shaded)

Alex's 6 beliefs	Key tenet of belief	Alex's strategy categories
1: 'tell me what's wrong' (source: il41)	'Focus on errors/problems with text'	B5: Seeking communication repair: x30 B1: Reflecting on his work: x15
2: 'I must want to know why, why I have to' (source: pci2l81)	'More details: why something is wrong'	B5: Seeking communication repair: x30 C1: Enforcing further explicitness: x24
3: 'two peoples have thinking and we can get more idea' (source: pci1l191)	'Exchanging and sharing ideas between the T and St'	B5: Seeking communication repair: x30 C1: Enforcing further explicitness: x24 B1: Reflecting on his work: x15 B2: Offering a rationale for his work: x12
4: 'If the teacher tell me everything that essay is not mine - it's the teacher's' (source: pci1l329)	'Ownership'	B5: Seeking communication repair: x30 C1: Enforcing further explicitness: x24 A1: Selecting the topic (uninvited): x3 C2: Questioning change: x1
5: 'I want to show my mind' (source: pci1l258)	'Giving my opinion'	B1: Reflecting on his work: x15 B2: Offering a rationale for his work: x12
6: 'Joan ask more question for me – it can help me to remember' (source: pci3l55)	'I like to be prompted'	No evidence observed

Alex's belief that conferences were vehicles where mistakes should be discussed (Belief 1) came through in his conference actions quite strongly, primarily through the use of two strategies: '*Seeking communication repair (B5)*' and '*Reflecting on his work (B1)*'. For example, his high level of activity in seeking repair on Joan's feedback about his mistakes was an indication of the extent to which it mattered to Alex to learn more about what he was doing incorrectly. His interventions usually had the effect of prolonging Joan's feedback on the issue and as such, more time and words were spent discussing Alex's mistakes.

Similarly, when he engaged in reflections about his work, Alex tended to reflect partly on the challenges he had faced while writing, which then typically stimulated further discussion with Joan about the issue too. These two strategies alone accounted for just under half of the total number of strategies

Alex used throughout his four conferences, highlighting the amount of time he spent thinking about his errors.

Another belief that had an impact on Alex's conference activity was his belief in wanting explanations for the errors he had made or the need to make specific revisions to his text (Belief 2). This manifested itself in his frequent use of two strategies: '*Seeking communication repair (B5)*' and '*Enforcing further explicitness (C1)*'. For example, during phase B of his conferences, he was very active in repairing any feedback from Joan that he did not quite understand, especially with respect to understanding '*why*' what he had written was erroneous in the first place, before moving on to revision talk. Alex could be quite dogged about this, even asking Joan repeatedly at times about an issue when he failed to grasp why it was problematic.

This belief also surfaced in Alex's active attempts to extract more information from Joan about potential revisions during phase C of his conferences. He needed to be convinced at times about the benefit of making changes and how it would improve the issue under discussion in his text.

Alex's belief in wanting to work things out through discussion (Belief 3) translated strongly into his conference strategy use. Alex made active contributions to the talk in different ways that revolved around principally four strategies: '*Seeking communication repair (B5)*', '*Enforcing further explicitness (C1)*', '*Reflecting on his work (B1)*' and '*Offering a rationale (B2)*'.

The fact that Alex's most commonly used strategy was to intervene and repair something he did not understand was testimony to his belief in encouraging further discussion during his conferences. Such interventions often led to further

exchanges between himself and Joan, which I felt offered Alex a deeper understanding of the issues under discussion. Similarly, Alex's second most common strategy of trying to enforce further explicitness from Joan, especially about potential future revisions, would also tend to lead to further episodes of mutual talk that offered him more opportunities to listen and ask questions about the revision that he may need to make in his next draft.

Even while reflecting on his work or offering rationales for why he had done something, Alex would usually offer quite a balanced, personalised view of how he felt about his work or why he had written something the way he had. Many of his reflections, more so than his rationales, were often given of his own volition rather than as a result of any explicit prompting from Joan, highlighting that he was prepared to make contributions to the talk rather than waiting to be asked to do so. Such reflections and rationales from Alex offered Joan valuable information from which she would often take something up for further discussion in the conference, thereby extending the topic for several more turns.

One of Alex's beliefs that was not well supported in his strategy use was that of not wanting Joan to give him too much information about his text (Belief 4).

While Alex was keen to learn more about his text during feedback, he was quite adamant about not wanting Joan to give him all the answers. To me such a view demonstrated Alex's keen sense of independence and ownership over his work and I was eager to see how it might shape his use of strategies.

Yet the fact that his two most common strategies overall were that of seeking repair and extracting further explicitness about future revisions, both strategies that sought *more* information and detail and not *less* - offered somewhat of a contradiction to this belief. In addition to this, Alex did not employ any strategies

that might indicate a sense of ownership, like Layla did for example, and use strategies such as selecting topics for discussion that he wanted to speak about (A1) or question changes (C2) that Joan had suggested to him for future revision. Instead, such strategies were only employed a total of 4 times throughout his four conferences, indicating that Alex's conferences were largely led and directed by Joan with his support.

A belief that was surprisingly seen to only *moderately* impact his strategy use was his defining belief of wanting to speak up and share his opinions about his work (Belief 5). In practice, however, this did not materialise as often as I had expected it to. Two strategies did, however, offer hints of Alex's own opinions coming through on occasion: '*Reflecting on his work (B1)*' and '*Offering a rationale for his work (B2)*'.

Alex was very astute in listening to Joan and reading between the lines of what she was saying about his draft and then embarking upon a few turns of either reflection or offering rationales for what he had done or not done, as the case may be. His rationales and reflections were usually characterised by being quite personal and almost anecdotal in their style. He would relate, in a very self-aware manner, his own inadequacies about writing academically and could often link this to not just his own ability but also wider factors such as his previous writing experiences in China. Such reflections and rationales gave Joan an insight into what Alex was thinking, doing and why he was doing it, which most likely helped frame her following responses.

Yet I started by stating that this belief had only a moderate impact on his strategy and this was because the two strategies were not the most commonly applied amongst his conference strategies. Furthermore, when Alex did speak,

it was usually only for short time, lasting no more than a single turn or two that when viewed as a whole, did not seem to reflect the same level of intensity with which Alex would speak during out interviews about his desire and belief in wanting to talk and explain his ideas to Joan. The reality was that Alex simply did not enact this often or substantially enough during his conferences.

Alex's final belief of seeing Joan's prompts as a positive in helping him to think and remember more about his work (Belief 6) was a belief that did not manifest itself explicitly in any specific strategy he used but rather in how he generally reacted to her prompts. As part of her non-directive style of feedback, Joan would prompt Alex for different things such as considering why something in his text might be wrong or making him think back to what she had taught him during their previous writing classes together or simply to reflect on his text and writing processes.

In all of these situations, Alex reacted very positively to Joan's prompting for him to come up with answers for himself, certainly better than some of the other students in the study. Alex's responding turns were often quite long, personal and reflective – in other words, he engaged with Joan's prompts to the best of his ability and in many ways, it supported my view of him as someone who did not want all of the answers all of the time (Belief 4). Yet despite all this, Alex's two most common strategies were to *seek repair* and *enforce explicitness* - actions you would not necessarily associate with someone who professed a degree of ownership over his ideas and text.

Overall, 5 out of 6 of Alex's beliefs about writing conferences manifested themselves in some degree through the strategies he employed during his four conferences (See Appendix 11b which offers an overview of the relationships

observed in the study between Alex's beliefs and his conference strategy use). The three beliefs that seemed to have the greatest impact upon the kind of strategies Alex used were Beliefs 1- 3 respectively while two other, Beliefs 4 and 5, were seen to have a low to *moderate* impact on his strategy use. Only Belief 6 did not seem to manifest itself in any observed strategies used by Alex during his four conferences.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the beliefs and strategies of Alex, an undergraduate student from China. He was a chatty student with a relaxed approach to learning and open to new ideas and ways of doing things.

Alex held 6 main beliefs about writing conferences, one of which was a strong desire to offer his opinions (Belief 5). In many ways, this was his core or defining belief and the other 5 revolved around this and on occasions were influenced by it too. These other beliefs included a desire for feedback on his errors; wanting to know the reasons behind things; a belief that talk would help solve issues; not wanting all the answers and a like for being prompted to think for himself.

Alex enacted 4 common strategies in his conferences. He asked questions when things were not clear, offered rationales for his work, reflected on his writing process and attempted to extract more information from Joan when he needed it.

Apart from one, all of Alex's beliefs had an impact on the kinds of strategies he employed whilst conferencing. His belief in seeing conferences in terms of error correction, finding out why something he had written was problematic and

believing that discussion could improve his understanding were amongst the strongest to come through in his conference behaviour. His defining belief (Belief 5), however, only had a moderate impact on his conference behaviour.

Chapter 7 Case study 3: Kazumi

7.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by offering a biography of Kazumi that details his personal history as a student of English including his prior experiences of writing in English and of receiving feedback on his writing. In section 7.3, Kazumi's 7 beliefs about writing conferences are discussed and illustrated with extracts taken from his questionnaire, initial interview and post conference interviews. In section 7.4, I discuss his 2 most commonly used strategies in his conferences with Derek using data extracts from his 4 conference transcripts. The final section 7.5 offers possible links between Kazumi's beliefs and strategy use.

7.2 Biography

Kazumi was a Japanese student in his early twenties who had arrived as part of a student exchange programme that existed between UCLAN and several Japanese universities. He had been studying Intercultural Communication for about 18 months and would now spend a year abroad in the UK in order to improve his English. He was required to pass the IFP course to proceed on to the final year of his degree programme back home. As a student in class, Kazumi came across as polite, quietly spoken and studious. While he did not easily volunteer his opinions in classroom discussion, on a one to one basis Kazumi was more communicative if led and prompted by another speaker.

He had been studying English for about seven and half years, starting in junior high school where the focus had been exclusively on grammar and reading. Kazumi first started learning to write in English when he attended university (il9-10), so had only really started to practise the skill of essay writing for about a

year (q6) before his arrival in the UK. His initial experiences of writing essays at his university were, according to him, quite different to that in the UK. The ones he wrote back home were less academic in style and register and did not require any synthesis of sources from the literature (il17-18). Kazumi was one of the stronger students in terms of language on the IFP and had achieved an overall TOEFL iBT score of 60, which equated to an approximate IELTS score of between 5.5-6. This was supported by his high IFP placement test mark, which placed Kazumi in the higher-level writing class on the programme.

When asked to assess his own level of English in the questionnaire, Kazumi selected choice 'b - *good intermediate*' (q4). Later when asked to rate his ability to write essays, he was equally positive in his evaluation by choosing '5' on a Likert Scale, where 7 was the highest positive value. Such a self-endorsement of his essay writing ability, despite having had only a year of essay writing experience, was further explored in his follow up interview. He described how he felt *'comfortable sometimes when I'm able to use the phrase or like difficult words in the writing essay. So I think most of the students don't feel that so I put 5'* (il23-25). Such comparison with his peers as a way of highlighting his own strengths offers an early impression of Kazumi as someone with a quiet sense of confidence in his own ability. Yet Kazumi also highlighted areas where he felt challenged when writing essays: *'I'm not good at expressing my own opinion ... if it's arguable I can't put my position'* (il28-30). Being able to pinpoint an area so specifically also highlights how Kazumi seemed to have a good awareness of his own strengths and weaknesses as a writer.

Kazumi had only ever experienced written feedback on his writing and he explained how this may have occurred because of the high number of students

in his previous classes, which made it difficult for teachers to offer one to one feedback. He went on to offer another reason, namely the low spoken proficiency of many of his peers back home, which would have made it challenging for them to express opinions about their texts (q8). When I asked him to explain this further in our follow up interview, Kazumi told me how written feedback may have been preferred in Japan due to it being easier for students to deal with because they only had to receive it rather than participate in feedback and that *'matches the Japanese style of teaching'* (il60-63). This introduced a cultural component to the way Kazumi viewed feedback, something none of the other students in the study had alluded to before.

At the same initial interview, Kazumi went on to express how important feedback was, in general, for his writing: *'without those feedback you can't improve'* (il35). For him, it seemed a critical part of his writing process and he looked forward to receiving both written and spoken feedback on the IFP (q9). He highlighted how he saw the function of written feedback as being focussed on pointing out areas that required correction, while spoken feedback *'allows me to argue or discuss with the lecturer'* (q9). Thus, he saw the two forms of feedback as complementary - working together to improve his writing (il67-68).

Having never experienced spoken feedback on his writing before, Kazumi seemed to be generally looking forward to it. Yet he expressed a note of caution by stating how he would feel *'nervous to talk with the teacher one to one'* (q10) ... *'because he's much older than me and he's my teacher so I just feel nervous'* (il76). Despite this hesitation, Kazumi still wanted to ask questions of his teacher, Derek, during his conferences about any issues he did not understand (q10). For Kazumi, his cultural background and previous educational

experiences seemed to colour, to some extent, his expectations and beliefs about what he could and could not do in writing conferences.

Overall first impressions of Kazumi highlighted a relatively strong student of English who possessed a confidence in his own abilities. However, he was a little cautious and measured in his views and expectations about writing essays and receiving spoken feedback. So, for example, while expressing a desire to seek information from Derek during his conferences, he also displayed a level of anxiety about being in a one to one situation too. His cultural habits and previous learning experiences seemed to play a powerful role in shaping his beliefs about the upcoming conferences.

7.3 Kazumi's beliefs about writing conferences

Kazumi's data yielded 7 beliefs about writing conferences, which can be seen in table 7.1 below.

Table 7.1: Kazumi's beliefs about conferencing

In Kazumi's own words
1: 'I think culture could be the problem' (source: il98)
2: 'if the relationship is like close, I think students will be able to talk more' (source: il188)
3. 'The good thing I found is he followed the structure' (source: pci11362-363)
4: 'I ran out of time' (source: pci2188)
5: 'I needed more help' (source: pci31103)
6: 'I thought this is the western style ... it's up to me' (source: pci21190)
7: 'I agreed with this so yeah I change it – it doesn't mean I followed him' (source: pci2128)

1: 'I think culture could be the problem' (source: il98)

Kazumi had highlighted early on, before any conferences had taken place, how he felt anxious at the prospect of discussing his writing in a one to one situation with Derek (*q10; il76*). In his questionnaire, when asked what might be the most

difficult thing for him during his conference, Kazumi selected choice 'c' - *'getting used to being in a one to one situation with the teacher'* (q12). His reasons for holding such feelings could quite easily be related to Kazumi not having previously experienced any one to one feedback on his writing. Yet further examination of the data revealed that there was also a cultural component to this. In question 16 of his questionnaire, he described how spoken feedback was not common in Japan *'because Japanese are usually not used to express their opinion and they tend to accept all thing the teacher told them'* (q16). The implication in such a statement was that one of the reasons why written feedback is dominant in Japanese education may be due to cultural influences. Kazumi revisited this cultural theme several times in his data, suggesting that it was a key issue in how he viewed learning in general. For example, in his first interview, Kazumi highlighted the topic of cultural differences by discussing the issue from a wider scope, beyond just his own country. When asked to consider how conferences might differ between teachers and international students compared to those held with L1 English speaking students, he said:

'the English skills are very different ... I think culture could be the problem because like western and eastern really different ... Asian students are not maybe able to talk a lot ... because in Japan I really receive all the- what the teacher says - there's not many chances to say your opinion' (il95-102).

When I asked him later if he thought that he might be able to exert some control in his conferences, Kazumi again offered a view consistent with his construct of how Japanese or Asian students might behave *'I think that is difficult especially when those students are from Asia because in our countries not really ... we are taught to respect our teachers yeah so I think it's difficult to control'* (il116-117).

After his first conference, I asked him how easy it had been to get his points across during the conversation. Again, Kazumi raised the topic of culture: *'It wasn't easy to interrupt for me ... maybe that's from cultural reasons. Even in the class I see European student say more ... but Japanese students and Chinese student don't'* (pci1 I330-335).

Such views served to illustrate how Kazumi's beliefs about his conferences were shaped strongly by his cultural and educational experiences of being a Japanese student, alongside his own personality. He was the only student of the four in the study to consistently raise the possibility of his cultural background having an influence over his conferences. Yet such constructs would most likely be challenged during his IFP conferences because they were based, like many in western (see 3.1 for discussion of term) education, upon the foundations of Socratic dialogue and empowering students to take charge of their own learning and exercising their opinions freely - something Kazumi had already expressed his discomfort in doing in one to one situations. I viewed this belief in culture as **Kazumi's core or defining belief**.

2: 'If the relationship is like close, I think students will be able to talk more'

(source: il188)

Despite Kazumi's apparent reticence about speaking up during his conferences, he still expressed a view of conferences as being an opportunity for him to talk about his work. In his questionnaire, he had written how he thought that the conference was a good place to ask questions, argue points and discuss aspects of his work with Derek (q9 &10). In his first interview, he described spoken feedback like a *'conversation between the teacher and student'* (il50-51)

where he could better understand the reasons behind any errors that had been indicated in his written feedback (il67-68). He also felt that it was important how much a student spoke: *'I think it could change the goal of the conference if the student talks a lot' (il82-83).*

Yet his wish to talk more seemed linked to a few variables that Kazumi felt needed to be in place for it to work. For example, when I asked him during his first interview whether his view of conference talk as 'conversation' meant that both he could share talk more equally with Derek, he responded by saying *'the personality could affect that I think - if they [students] are passionate to argue with the teacher that would be equal right' (il167-168).* Kazumi also added another factor that could affect how much he might talk: *'if the relationship [with the teacher] is like close, I think students will be able to talk more, like express more but they're not close that would be much formal and I think I will receive much more from the teacher' (il188-190).* This chimed closely with Kazumi's earlier response in his questionnaire, where he had selected the *'quality of the relationship'* between himself and Derek as one of the top three factors that could affect the quality of his one to one conferences (q17).

In summary, while Kazumi viewed conferences as a good place to talk to Derek about his work, he also saw it as being dependent upon the personality of the student speaking and how comfortable they felt when talking to their teacher. With this in mind, Kazumi's description of himself as someone who did not talk a lot (il118) and also someone who felt a little anxious about the prospect of being in a one to one discussion meant that active participation during his conferences could be challenging for him.

3: **'The good thing I found is he followed the structure'** (source: pci11362-363)

Kazumi was a student who liked order and structure. In class, he followed instructions to the letter and seemed to enjoy the various steps introduced in his writing classes to write an essay. Coming from an educational context that he described as largely teacher dominated, it was perhaps not so surprising that Kazumi felt more comfortable when Derek set the agenda both in class and often during their conferences - for Kazumi, such a teacher led model implied 'structure'. In his questionnaire, I asked him to select from a choice of three answers (or write his own) that best described his view of the 'ideal' conference. He chose choice 'b' - *'A place where the teacher tells you what is good and bad about your essay and corrects the errors' (q18)*, which seemed to confirm his more traditional view that sees the teacher take charge in doing things such as 'telling and correcting'.

Kazumi's desire for order also extended into how he wanted his conferences to be structured. For example, in his questionnaire he selected *'the focus of the conference'* as the most important factor that might affect the quality of his conferences. When asked to explain this choice in our follow up interview he explained: *'because if the teacher talks what I don't want to know or what I already know from the written feedback I think that doesn't work' (il179-180)*. Thus, Kazumi saw conference talk as having most relevance when it pertained to writing that he wished to discuss or was perhaps having difficulty in understanding.

He also offered opinions that highlighted his preferences for how his conference might be better structured in terms of the way they started to the kind of feedback he wanted to hear from Derek. During our first post conference

interview for example, I played an extract where Derek had begun by asking him open ended questions regarding the processes he had gone through to compose his essay. I asked him if he had liked how Derek had started their conference but Kazumi was not too impressed: *'No I didn't like that ... because it was too kind of general and I wanted to go straight into the essay'* (pci1140-42). Later when we discussed how Derek would offer both indirect feedback at times as well as more directive feedback with details, I asked Kazumi if he had a preference and why. He explained how he preferred Derek to give him examples that would allow him to gain a better insight into how to revise parts of his essay' (pci11236-237). These two responses highlight how Kazumi had less interest in more personalised exchanges and wanted feedback to focus on providing detailed feedback.

Kazumi also had an opinion on the way Derek managed his questions to him during their conferences, which he did not always like. He proposed a solution of what he thought would be better: *'He asks small question, 'you agree or how do you think' I think it will be better and if he asks me after talking about each paragraph, that will be nicer because I can I remember much what we talked'* (pci11317-320). When I challenged Kazumi that Derek sometimes did do that, he disagreed: *'no ... he only asked questions to me at the beginning and at the very end. So I wanted to have like some kind of question in the middle of the conversation'* (pci11323-325).

Kazumi also felt it would be useful to have time set aside in each conference where he could *'ask questions and he [Derek] answers that with a bit of extra information'*(pci31163-164). In our second post conference interview, Kazumi again alluded to his preference for how Derek structured and managed their

conferences – this time describing how he wanted him to offer clearer examples for revision that he could go away and think about (pci2l110).

So, despite being reserved in nature and a little nervous at the prospect of participating in conferences, Kazumi still had a very clear picture of how he wanted his conferences structured. He wanted discussion to squarely focus on his text alone rather than field more personalised questions about what he did, how he did it and how he felt. Kazumi wanted efficiency from his conference talk - to extract maximum value from it and not waste time on 'small talk'. In many ways, when Kazumi spoke about his preferences for conference organisation, he was discussing his preference for a more teacher led, transmission style of conferences – the kind that he described having experienced before and reflected in his defining belief about culture (Belief 1).

4: **'I ran out of time'** (source: pci2l88)

Kazumi was the only student who raised the issue of 'time' being an important factor during his conferences. In his initial questionnaire, he selected the *'length of the conference'* as the second most important factor that could affect the quality of his conferences (q17). Later in our follow up interview, he offered me an example of what he thought was too short a time for a conference *'If it's very short like 5 minutes that is really not enough'* (il183). When I explained to Kazumi that the IFP conferences were usually around 15 minutes long, he seemed to find this reassuring *'I think that is appropriate'* (il185).

Kazumi's concern over timing continued once his conferences had started and the subject often came up in our post conference interviews, despite not always being the focus of my questions. In our first post conference interview for

example, I started by asking him how it had gone in general: *'It wasn't like what I expected because I didn't have much time to express my opinion'* (pci1128).

The fact that he mentioned the issue of 'time' in his opening evaluation for his very first conference was meaningful. It highlighted how the issue was uppermost in his mind after the conference.

Later at the same interview, I wanted to explore why Kazumi had been so silent during a long turn from Derek about reference issues. Once again, Kazumi raised the issue of time *'Because I felt, I remember that moment when I was there, I felt he speaks really fast and so I don't have any time to talk'* (pci11148-149). His response here seemed to show that Kazumi wanted to speak but needed support from Derek to do so by offering, for example, adequate response time between their turns to allow Kazumi to think and reply.

In our second post conference interview, I played Kazumi an audio extract highlighting how he had offered very little in the way of a response to Derek's question about the revisions he had made to his second draft, despite being given time to answer. Kazumi replied: *'I think I was struggling to answer because ... I remember I changed a lot ... it wasn't easy to explain and yeah I ran out of time and we moved on to the other (things)'* (pci2187-88). This quote suggests how challenging it is for Kazumi at times to cogitate over the ideas under discussion and then formulate a coherent reply in real time. Later, I played Kazumi another extract where he was being continually prompted for answers in quick succession. Again, he had struggled to offer any meaningful responses before Derek moved on to another question. I asked him if he had felt a little unhappy or even annoyed during the exchange to which Kazumi said:

'Not annoyed but I think I was a bit rushed ... I just wanted to clear my mind'
(pci21140 - 142).

Overall, despite Kazumi's desire to speak up and talk about his work, his preoccupation with not having enough time to do so meant that his exchanges with Derek were at times severely curtailed. Kazumi seemed to need more time to process what he had heard before offering a reply. This need is suggestive of both linguistic and cultural issues at play. Kazumi firstly needed time to allow his mind to cognitively process what he had heard and formulate a response in English but also maybe he was accustomed to being given *more time* in his previous learning environments. One study suggests how, when speaking in English, Japanese speakers speak more slowly than other L2 speakers when speaking in English (Yuan, Liberman and Cieri 2006). They go on to suggest how this may be linked to L1 transference issues as well as the cultural rules governing 'politeness' in Japan – again linking back to Kazumi's defining belief (Belief 1). Equally, Kazumi's focus on 'time' may also have been related to his general lack of familiarity with the one to one participation format of writing conferences.

5: 'I needed more help' (source: pci31103)

A topic that came through quite strongly in my interviews with Kazumi was his desire for more information and details from his conferences. In his questionnaire, Kazumi had selected from a list of choices presented how he viewed the ideal conference as a place where his teacher would correct his mistakes and point out his overall strengths and weaknesses (q18) – similar to

beliefs that both Layla and Alex held. I wanted to explore this further in our follow up interview and asked Kazumi to explain his choice. He told me:

'I want to receive more in the conference. The ideal is I think the teacher correct all the mistakes even if it is say small and I ask all the- I think all is difficult ... most of the sentences what I was struggled, I think that is the ideal' (il197-199).

It is interesting to note here Kazumi's focus on seeing Derek correct *all* of his mistakes regardless of their relative importance, despite the fact that he acknowledges that he would be unlikely to ask all of his questions. It reinforces a view of Kazumi, established from the beliefs discussed thus far, especially his defining belief (Belief 1), as someone who constructs the conference as more of a transactional place whereby Derek is doing most of the *giving* while Kazumi does most of the *receiving*. Aligning this view with the fact that Kazumi already felt anxious about the impending conferences and had had no prior experience of them before, all meant that the conference conditions were created for Derek to do most of the talking and Kazumi to do most of the listening.

During our first post conference interview, I wanted to know what Kazumi felt about Derek's habit, at times, of directly pointing out problems in his text compared to other occasions, where he would only imply that there was an issue. After playing an extract illustrating this, I asked Kazumi whether he had any preference on this and he replied: *'I prefer the teacher give me an example because even if I don't use those examples that gives me kind of feeling how I have to change it (pci11236-237)*. The implication here is that the detail Kazumi wanted was not just extra information he could use but could also be used as a sort of mental anchor he could use to shape his own understanding of what needed to be done.

Kazumi echoed similar sentiments in our second post conference interview about wanting more details, citing how a lack of information was detrimental to his understanding *'because if he just say about this phrase [Kazumi you need to change this] and give no example it's not maybe clear enough'* (pci21102). He went on to explain how he would use the extra information given by Derek productively: *'If he gives me an example I can expand it and make it less and change a bit words'* (pci21110).

Kazumi picked up on the issue of wanting more detail again in our third post conference interview. After playing Kazumi an extract of Derek offering him feedback on a lack of clarity in one of his paragraphs, I asked him why he did not say much when invited to comment by Derek: *'I did understand what he said ... I was expecting kind of suggestions ... I needed more help...what he gave me was just basic'* (pci3196-104). When I asked Kazumi why in a later episode he *did* say more when invited by Derek to comment on his feedback, he explained how receiving more detail allowed him to apply it in other ways: *'When I'm given one specific example, I can like adjust them to other things so that's clearer for me'* (pci31125-126). In our last interview, after Kazumi had had his fourth and final conference with Derek, I asked him to evaluate it: *'I think the very last one was kind of the most effective one ... [Derek] give me suggestions and I changed that'* (pci4157).

Overall, Kazumi valued receiving extra information as it allowed him to better understand what the issues were in his text and how he could move forward in making positive revisions. While other students in the study also wanted more information from their teachers, Kazumi's need seemed to be based not just on the amount involved but rather as seeing the extra detail as a stepping stone to

making his own decisions about what he wanted to retain and what he wanted to revise.

6: 'I thought this is the western style ... it's up to me' (source: pci21190)

Kazumi was the only student in the study able to step back from his own conferences to consider how they might generally be organised and framed in a particular way because he was studying in a western educational environment. Since he was the only student to raise the issue of cultural differences (Belief 1), I was not too surprised by this view. Kazumi saw this western style in the way Derek delivered his feedback during their conferences, for example, by the way he would begin their conferences in a personalised manner or use more of an indirect style of feedback that prompted Kazumi to think more often.

Commenting on the personalised openings to his conferences for example, Kazumi was clearly able to understand *why* Derek might be doing this: *'I think it's more natural to first hear my opinion and how I made it to kind of assess me (pci1147) ... I think it is better to say my opinion ... because that's what the teachers want [in the UK/west] - want like know how the students made it' (pci1160-61)*. Kazumi's ability to grasp the bigger picture at times was a powerful skill that he possessed and one which I felt would allow him to better navigate some of the challenges he had raised with regard to possible differences between his previous educational practices and those he faced in the UK.

His sense of awareness about the cultural practices of western conferences was also exemplified elsewhere, in particular, when Kazumi was seen to decode Derek's feedback during their conferences. Kazumi often spoke of how he had to interpret Derek's tentative style of evaluation and requests for revision

to understand what he really meant to say. For example, in our first post conference interview, I had played Kazumi an extract of Derek offering him evaluation and a very mild pointer towards possible revision. I asked Kazumi if he thought Derek wanted him to make a change or not: *'I felt he meant change it but I felt like the reason why he said it is a 'small point' is I think he want to say not bad this sentence'* (pci1192-92). This demonstrated how Kazumi had the skill to not only discern what Derek had asked of him but also offer a possible rationale for Derek's actions, namely to avoid directly giving a negative evaluation.

At the same interview, Kazumi spoke of how, on another occasion, when Derek had used the evaluation: *'it is ok'* that what he really meant was that *'it is not good but I don't want to say directly'* (pci11209-210). I asked him if such indirect language might be problematic for students to understand but he did not think so, expertly illustrating with an earlier example where Derek had taken exception to his use of the adverb 'obviously' by saying: *'all student can understand because Derek kind of stress ... that when he was talking about the word 'obviously' he was talking slower and that made me feel like it is important and I have to change it'* (pci11217-219). Such responses highlight Kazumi's ability to see actions from his teacher's perspective and not just his own.

These interpretations about the feedback he was receiving or why he felt Derek had said what he did, were all tied to Kazumi's belief that in the west, students were expected to take greater ownership over their work. Kazumi expressed a positive view on this emphasis and at our final post conference interview, in summing up his IFP conference experiences, commented further on the issue of Derek's non-directive feedback style that often required him to make more

decisions: *'well I think this way was good... in Japan probably I would be told to 'do this and that is the correct way' but I think in kind of western country it's like more up to yourself'* (pci4|21-22).

This belief supports the view that Kazumi had arrived in the UK with a generalised belief of how western teachers might behave and more importantly, how he would, in turn, be expected to fulfil his role as a student in the UK or *'the west'*. This provided him with a starting framework that he could test every time he was in class or in his writing conferences to help modify his interactions and be better prepared for future talk.

7: 'I agreed with this so yeah I change it – it doesn't mean I followed him'

(source: pci2|28)

Kazumi made many comments about the sense of ownership he felt over his work. The first evidence for this was seen in his questionnaire before any conferences had taken place. Question 14 had wanted to explore to what extent students might follow their teacher's suggestions for revision in their next draft. Kazumi had selected choice 'b' from a list that stated *'Make changes to some parts of my draft the teacher highlighted and some of your own ideas'* (q14). When I asked him to explain this choice in our follow up interview, Kazumi told me that he also wanted to seek advice from other English students about the feedback he had received as a second opinion and if it concurred with Derek's, he would consider making the revision (il134-40). This demonstrated how Kazumi did not view Derek as the only provider of feedback on his text and as such, did not feel an obligation to follow his feedback to the letter. He seemed to

hold a preference for consulting more widely before finally making his own decision on whether to proceed or not with the revision.

Kazumi also demonstrated his ownership over his text by declaring how he did not agree with Derek's feedback at times. In our interview after Kazumi's first conference, I played him an extract where he was listening quietly to a long turn from Derek and then suddenly burst into life to question something he had heard about his use of the adverb '*obviously*'. I asked Kazumi why he had intervened at that moment: '*I think, I remember I didn't agree with him*' (pci1/197). This was quite a bold statement to make and the first time he had expressed anything like this during our exchanges. It showed how Kazumi had a commitment to the words he had composed in his draft.

At our second post conference interview, I played Kazumi an extract of him pointing out the changes he had made to his draft and linking each revision back to something Derek had said in their prior conference. I highlighted how it sounded like he had followed Derek's advice very closely to which he replied '*No just because ... I agree with this so yeah I change it – it doesn't mean I followed him*' (pci2/28). This powerful statement was quite revealing as it supported my notions of Kazumi's sense of independence over his work. Yet it added more detail because it showed that Kazumi made his revision based on consideration of what he had heard from Derek rather than simply paying lip-service to his suggestions, that is - he was making revisions to his draft only when he agreed with the feedback too.

I asked Kazumi to consider which was a more powerful pull on him when considering revision - Derek's advice or trusting his own instincts when he did not agree with what he had heard: '*maybe I don't agree ... yeah but if the*

teacher completely disagree with me it's going to be difficult' (pci2|41-41). I pushed him to say what he might do in the very situation he had described: 'I think I don't change it maybe' (pci2|44). Such quotes clearly highlighted an individual who had a mind of his own and was prepared to trust it at times even though it meant not always completely following Derek's revision suggestions.

7.4 Kazumi's conference strategy use

The strategies that Kazumi used during his conferences is illustrated in table 7.2 below. As highlighted previously (see section 4.7.3) only the most commonly used strategies, marked in **bold**, were analysed in depth and are commented upon below. A discussion of the strategy totals occurs in the cross-case analysis in Chapter 9.

Table 7.2: Kazumi's conference strategies (strategy labels shortened to accommodate table – see table 4.9 for full labels)

Phases of talk	Conference 1	Conference 2	Conference 3	Conference 4	Total	Total per phase
	Semester 1: 750-word essay		Semester 2: 1500-word essay			
A Raise topics for revision	-	SA1: Selecting the topic (uninvited) (x1)	-	-	A1: x1	1
B Negotiate and clarify revision topics	B1: Reflecting (x5) B2: Offering a rationale (x4) B3: Explaining his process (x2) B4: Offering an insight to future plans/changes (x1)	B1: Reflecting (x6) B3: Explaining his process (x5) B2: Offering a rationale (x3) B5: Seeking repair (x2) B4: Offering an insight to future plans/changes (x1)	B1: Reflecting (x5) B4: Offering an insight to future plans/changes (x3) B3: Explaining his process (x2) B2: Offering a rationale (x1)	B1: Reflecting (x7) B3: Explaining his process (x2) B5: Seeking repair (x3) B4: Offering an insight to future plans/changes (x1)	B1: x23 B3: x11 B2: x8 B4: x6 B5: x5	53
C Finalise future revisions	C1: Enforcing explicitness (x1)	C1: Enforcing explicitness (x1) C2: Questioning change (x1)		C1: Enforcing explicitness (x2)	C1: x4 C2: x1	5
Total per conference	13	20	11	15	59	

Phase A: Raise topics for revision

During this phase, Kazumi only raised one topic for discussion of his own volition throughout his four conferences - he always had to be invited to speak by Derek. Being able to choose what you would like to talk about is an act of power because it provides the speaker an opportunity to not just get their concerns addressed instead of the other participant but also be on the front foot, if they so choose, to manage the on-going discussion. Kazumi was never able to carve out such a position for himself, which led him to always be in the default position of *following* rather than *leading* conference discourse.

While Kazumi had expressed the possibility of speaking more under the right conditions (Belief 2) and was very aware of western styles of conference discourse that required him to speak up (Belief 6) – neither of these beliefs seemed to help him instigate topics of his own. To account for such inaction, we need to re-visit some of Kazumi's other beliefs about conferencing. For example, he had often highlighted his previous educational experiences in Japan where his teachers had always led and managed any discourse events (Belief 1). As such, he was accustomed to a more traditional teacher-student relationship where his role was one of listening and following rather than initiating ideas of his own, including raising topics of his own. Furthermore, Kazumi had often expressed in our meetings how he was anxious about being in a one to one situation with Derek (Belief 1) and had described himself as someone who generally did not speak very much anyway (Belief 2). Such views collectively would tend to make it less likely for Kazumi to take the initiative and raise topics of his own.

Phase B: Negotiate and clarify revision topics

Strategy used: B1 - Reflecting on his work

During Phase B of his conferences, Kazumi's most common strategy was to reflect on what he had written in a more personalised and self-critical manner. In fact, he used this strategy more than twice as often as compared to the next nearest strategy in this phase. Such reflections took place both at the start of his conferences where Derek sought to discover what Kazumi had done from a more personalised perspective as well as elsewhere in the conference too. In keeping with his difficulty in initiating talk during his conferences, Kazumi's reflections usually occurred as a result of direct invitation from Derek rather than offering reflections of his own volition. Yet given the time and space to answer, Kazumi could respond quite successfully to Derek's questions in this way - something he himself had alluded to during his beliefs on how he liked his conferences to be structured (Belief 3). The following examples all occurred at the beginning of Kazumi's conferences:

1 D: ... so first of all what how did you find (1) writing this?
2 K: **erm found it not so difficult because this which we are very much involved (1.5) yeah but found difficult to find the references**
(Conference 1: lines 5-7)

1 D: what kind of changes have you made since (xx[x])
2 K: **[the first paragraph (1) the thesis statement (1) because you said it's a bit short (I made it) longer (1) yeah but it was a bit difficult for me**
(Conference 2: lines 6-11)

1 D: ... how far have you got I know you've done seven hundred and three words here erm (1.5) have you got a lot more information to add or are you still in the process of developing this essay
2 K: **erm I think I'm still in the process of developing?**
(Conference 3: lines 18-23)

1 D: ...how did this second draft go then?
2 K: **erm I think I made a couple of changes compared to the last one and I think I've managed to as you said a put a small summary at the end of each paragraph**
(Conference 4: lines 6-9)

Kazumi's reflections at the beginning of his conferences offered a level of insight into his thinking. He mentioned aspects of the writing process that were challenging for him such as searching for references and extending the length of the thesis but also took time to highlight areas which he had found less difficult to complete such as adding summaries. Kazumi also highlighted changes he had made as a direct result of his discussions with Derek in their previous conferences. Language such as *'because you said it's a bit short'* and *'as you said'* explicitly linked his conferences together into one, on-going conversation between Derek and himself. Such phrases also highlighted how Kazumi followed closely, at times, the revision guidance that he had been given. Such action fits quite comfortably with some of his beliefs that had espoused his adherence to a more top-down, teacher led style of conference discourse that offered more structure (Beliefs 1 and 3).

Apart from the very beginning of his conferences, Derek also encouraged Kazumi to reflect on his draft throughout their conferences. Kazumi was able to reflect upon work he had done previously, arrive at self-evaluations and critiques on the spot when asked to by Derek and consider what he might do in the future too. For example, during his first conference about his argument essay, Derek asked Kazumi to consider whether he felt that his draft would be convincing enough to a potential reader or not. Kazumi offered a rather short but to the point reply that highlighted his ability to be critical about his own work *'hmm yes but not yet'* (c1/265-266). In his third conference, Kazumi offered a more positive self-evaluation when asked to reflect on his revised thesis statement *'mm yeah I'm quite happy with that...it's clear and easy'* (c3/53).

Derek also prompted Kazumi to consider future changes that he might make. In their second conference, for example, Derek asked him to consider how his draft would continue to change over successive drafts: *'I think there's going to be (1) mm quite big change ... yeah in terms of language and (1) structure' (c2/399-401)*. In his third conference, Kazumi agreed with Derek's view of a possible future difficulty in being able to expand his ideas enough to reach the word count of the essay: *'yeah that's (one of my) problem I think' (c3/73)*. In Kazumi's final conference, Derek steered the talk on to the use of relevant sources - something Kazumi had had difficulty with in his last draft. His response highlighted his ability to self-critique: *'I think I went (little) lost my way sometimes but I think I found quite a lot of sources compared to the last one and yeah I think I'm quite happy with that' (c4/83-86)*.

As can be seen from the examples above, Kazumi's reflections were usually precise, focussed and to the point and he had a good sense of awareness of what felt right and what did not. Whenever he felt there was still work to do, he was committed to the process of re-drafting his text until he arrived at something that he was satisfied with. This fitted well with Kazumi's earlier expression of ownership over his work, where I got the impression that he knew his own mind with respect to what he wanted his draft to be (Belief 7).

Phase B: Negotiate and clarify revision topics

Strategy used: B3 - Explaining his process

The second most frequent strategy Kazumi used during Phase B was to offer explanations about how he had crafted his text - in other words, explaining the 'process' that he had gone through to write it. Being able to explain what you

have written using the correct terminology can be quite a challenging task but Kazumi, who had a good level of spoken English, was able to acquit himself well in this regard. As with his earlier strategy of reflecting on his work, Kazumi only offered explanations about his writing process when prompted to by Derek. Again, this was in line with his cultural background of having experienced only teacher led events (Belief 1) and his own reticence in speaking up, despite seeing the conference as an opportunity to speak (Belief 2). The following extracts offer some examples of Kazumi's explanations:

1 D: ... how did you find writing it did it all flow quite easily did you have a plan?
2 K: **yeah I made a plan first and (2.5) mm made short sentences of each paragraph and extended it**
(Conference 1: lines 13-18)

1 D: ... have you ... made (xxx) changes to the main idea in the body paragraphs?
2 K: **I changed here because you said (1.5) I just went straight away to the my idea so I just put (1) the reference evidence that one report said (1) that makes it sixty seven (percent) students find ((Student reads reference from his draft)) using websites is a useful so I put that reference there**
(Conference 2: lines 53-61)

1 D: yeah (I think) they [extra references] sort of seem to work better they seem to be more supporting employment and self employment more than last time it seems to me as if you've done quite a bit of work on this draft have you spent some time on it ...
2 K: **um (no) at first draft I was still in the process of researching (though) there was a lot of like favourites of my laptop not being used so this time I just used them**
(Conference 4: lines 87-96)

The examples highlight how Kazumi's writing process included several stages such as planning, writing, re-writing, researching and revising his text. The first extract clearly identifies Kazumi's methodical approach during the planning stages. The second extract connects Kazumi's revision of his text with something Derek had mentioned previously, as seen by Kazumi's use of the phrase '*I changed here because you said*'. The third extract emphasises his preparation before writing – reading to understand his topic and ideas further before writing. All of these stages had been taught and discussed in the writing

classes on the IFP course and Kazumi followed them quite systematically. Such adherence to what he had studied in class fitted well with Kazumi's preference for order overall and helps explain his desire for structured conferences led by Derek (Belief 3).

Phase C: Finalise future revisions

In the final phase of his conferences, where Kazumi had the opportunity to pin down what he had heard from Derek about possible future revisions of his draft, he was very quiet. He only attempted 5 interventions over his four conferences, 4 of which were to ask for more details about the revisions highlighted. Overall, Kazumi had the lowest count of conference strategies used during this final phase of the revision talk when compared to the other students in the study.

Similar to his inactivity in phase A of his conferences, where he struggled to raise any topics of his own volition, likewise towards the end of his conferences - he again found it challenging to intervene. Once again, the source of such inactivity may lie with the prior educational and cultural practices that Kazumi had raised. His experiences may have habitualised him in accepting the passive role of listener to Derek's more dominant role of lead and guide. Added to this was Kazumi's respect for Derek's status as his teacher, which seemed to be of paramount importance to him. This meant that any actions such as raising topics that he wished to discuss that Derek had not selected or questioning his teacher's ideas was challenging for him. This resulted in Kazumi playing a role during his conferences that largely stuck to the principles and experiences with which he felt most comfortable (Belief 1) and the kind of structured discourse that he preferred (Belief 3).

Other explanations for Kazumi's inactivity in Phase C might also be linked to his stronger level of English. Perhaps he understood more and therefore did not need to intervene as much when Derek raised areas for revision in order to ask for more clarity or detail. Another reason may also have been that at times, Kazumi's drafts were quite complete meaning that there were often less revisions to discuss and thus less opportunities in general for discussion.

7.5 Linking Kazumi's beliefs to his strategy use in conferences

Table 7.3 offers an attempt to link some of Kazumi's individual beliefs to specific strategies he used during his four conferences. Often, his different beliefs were not manifested by a single strategy alone but by a composite of several strategies that were in some way related back to the core tenet of each of his beliefs. In the case of Kazumi, due to the low number of strategies he used on a frequent basis overall (just two), I have tried to consider how *all* his strategies, regardless of their frequency, might be related to his beliefs. This has meant considering beliefs that may have played a role in suppressing or avoiding the use of particular strategies, leading to their underuse.

Table 7.3: Linking Kazumi's beliefs to specific conference strategies (defining belief shaded)

Kazumi's 7 beliefs	Key tenet of belief	Kazumi's strategy categories
1: 'I think culture could be the problem' (source: il98)	'Cultural influence'	B5: Seeking communication repair: x5 C1: Enforcing further explicitness: x4 A1: Selecting the topic (uninvited): x1 C2: Questioning change: x1
2: 'if the relationship is like close, I think students will be able to talk more ' (source: il188)	'Possible for both teacher and student to speak'	B1: Reflecting on his work: x23 B3: Explaining his process: x11 B5: Seeking communication repair: x5 C1: Enforcing further explicitness: x4 A1: Selecting the topic (uninvited): x1 C2: Questioning change: x1
3: 'The good thing I found is he followed the structure' (source: pci11362-363)	'I prefer structured conferences'	B1: Reflecting on his work: x23 B3: Explaining his process: x11
4: 'I ran out of time' (source: pci2188)	'Length of conference'	No evidence observed
5: 'I needed more help' (source: pci31103)	'More details'	B5: Seeking communication repair: x5 C1: Enforcing further explicitness: x4
6: 'I thought this is the western style ... it's up to me' (source: pci21190)	'western style conferencing'	B5: Seeking communication repair: x5 C1: Enforcing further explicitness: x4 A1: Selecting the topic (uninvited): x1 C2: Questioning change: x1
7: 'I agreed with this so yeah I change it – it doesn't mean I followed him' (source: pci2128)	'Ownership'	A1: Selecting the topic (uninvited): x1 C2: Questioning change: x1

Kazumi's defining belief about culture (Belief 1) seemed to have the greatest effect on his strategy behaviour during conferences. He believed that his Asian culture, which favoured a more hierarchical relationship between teacher and student and to which he was accustomed, would make it challenging for him to participate in his conferences. This belief had a *strong impact* on the strategies he used, especially in suppressing the use of others during his conferences.

For example, more agentive type strategies were all used very infrequently by Kazumi. So, taking control of the agenda of his conferences at times by '*Selecting the topic (uninvited) (A1)*'; pushing Derek for extra information about future revisions by '*Enforcing further explicitness (C1)*', '*Seeking communication repair (B5)*' when he did not quite understand something said or '*Questioning change (C2)*' when he was unsure of Derek's suggestions were rarely seen. His

combined usage of these 4 strategies that might demonstrate some activity on his part only totalled 11 times, which was the lowest amongst any of the four students in the study (Maria, the second lowest, offered a total of using these 4 strategies 29 times).

Such low strategy use seemed to support Kazumi's views about how his conferences might be influenced by his cultural background that prioritised a more teacher led, transmission model of conferencing that saw Derek set the agenda of what would be discussed, ask the questions that he wanted and offer his evaluation and suggestions for revision. On his part, Kazumi seemed quite comfortable playing the more passive role of student recipient, waiting for Derek to pass judgement over his text and guide him on what to do next. In many ways, one might argue that Kazumi *helped* facilitate a more hierarchical style of feedback during his conferences.

Kazumi also believed that it was possible to share conference talk if there was a 'good' relationship with Derek (Belief 2). However, as mentioned previously, he also seemed to set other conditions that needed to be in place for this to occur. For example, Kazumi cited how the personality of the student could have an influence on how much talk was shared. With Kazumi being the quietest of the four students and expressing how he did not speak much as a rule, his prospects for sharing talk were not promising. This proved to be the case in his low use of certain conference strategies that required him to initiate talk.

So once again, his low frequency of employing strategies such as: '*Selecting the topic (uninvited) (A1)*'; '*Enforcing further explicitness (C1)*', '*Seeking communication repair (B5)*' and '*Questioning change (C2)*' were quite evident and reduced the number of occasions when he was able to share talk with

Derek. However, when Kazumi was directed by Derek to speak up and offer reflections on his work (B1) or explain how he had done something (B3), Kazumi demonstrated much better spoken contributions. This is most likely because he was accustomed to working in this way with a teacher, who would lead and direct the discourse.

Considering his defining belief regarding cultural influences on conference interaction (Belief 1), Kazumi's preference for having structured conferences (Belief 3) was perhaps not too surprising and it had a *moderate* impact on the kinds of strategies he used or did not use. Kazumi, as highlighted earlier, was used to interactions with teachers where both parties played fixed roles, typically those of expert and novice and limited their talk to focussing on the text. So, for example, when Derek asked him questions that aimed at uncovering his 'feelings' about his writing, these were quite novel areas of engagement for Kazumi and his instinct was to have a negative opinion about them. Instead, he valued discourse that kept to the task at hand, namely evaluation and correction of his draft text and was led and directed by Derek.

Thus, when Derek did this by explicitly asking him to reflect on his work at the start of each of their conferences, Kazumi was able respond effectively, utilising the strategy of '*Reflecting on their work (B1)*' 23 times – his most commonly used strategy overall. Similarly, when asked to explain how he had gone about composing his draft, Kazumi could offer solid responses in the form of the strategy '*Explaining his process (B3)*'. In responding to Derek's questions in this way, Kazumi was playing a role that he was accustomed to based on previous experiences and he was good at it.

A belief that did not seem to have much impact on his conference conduct was his issue around 'time' (Belief 4). There was always the sense that Kazumi needed more time between conference turns to absorb what he had heard and offer an answer if required to do so. His conferences were at times a sea of backchannels that worked well in letting Derek know that while he was not always actively talking, he was at the very least engaged in the topic. Kazumi was familiar with more structured patterns of discourse with his previous teachers that allocated fixed spaces to speak and ask questions.

His conferences with Derek, however, were different and contained very few transition points whereby Kazumi was given time and space to talk – other than at the start of his conferences. Instead, the conferences had characteristics that often resembled conversation-like exchanges where one had to sense upcoming transition points quickly to exchange turns and speak up or the opportunity was lost. Kazumi found this a challenge but never seemed to use any other kind of strategy to help give him the extra time he needed.

Kazumi's belief in wanting more help from Derek in general (Belief 5), gave the impression that getting more details and examples was important to him. Yet throughout his four conferences, he made very little attempt to actually ask for more information using the twin strategies of '*Seeking communication repair (B5)*' and '*Enforcing further explicitness (C1)*'. He enacted both strategies just a total of 9 times during his conferences and seemed to prefer to wait and 'collect' the information being offered. This belief was another example of where he held a belief about something but it did not seem to have an impact on his conference actions.

Another of Kazumi's beliefs that was not evident in his conference actions was his expressed awareness of how conferences in the UK/west would be more student centred than perhaps what he had been accustomed to before (Belief 6). One might expect such awareness would offer Kazumi an advantage as he may be more willing to modify his behaviour to better accommodate the needs of both the task and match the expectations of his teacher – he was certainly competent enough to do this. As such, strategies that would see him speak up and contribute to the unfolding talk, such as '*Selecting the topic (uninvited) (A1)*'; '*Enforcing further explicitness (C1)*'; '*Seeking communication repair (B5)*' and '*Questioning change (C2)*' might be employed more often because that was what he would be expected to do in 'western style' conferences but instead such strategies were used infrequently. It almost seems as if Kazumi's habit of occupying the more passive speaking role when interacting with his teacher, most likely based on his previous educational experiences, was too well ingrained to allow him to depart from it at times.

Kazumi's final belief of giving an impression of ownership over his draft (Belief 7) was another belief that was not observed in any of the strategies he employed during his conferences. The most powerful markers, perhaps, of ownership style strategies would have been the use of the two strategies of '*Selecting the topic (uninvited) (A1)*' and '*Questioning change (C2)*' – the kind that Layla used so effectively at times. Kazumi, however, only employed them a total of 2 times during his four conferences and instead would usually follow Derek's suggestions for revision quite closely. Any sense of implied independence or ownership was simply not observed during his conferences.

Overall, only 3 out of 7 of Kazumi's beliefs about writing conferences manifested themselves in specific strategy use during his four conferences (See Appendix 11c which offers an overview of the relationships observed in the study between Kazumi's beliefs and his conference strategy use). His defining belief (Belief 1) seemed to have a *high* impact on his strategy use, another had a *moderate* impact (Belief 3) and Belief 2 had a *low* influence. His remaining 4 beliefs were not observed to have any real influence on his use of conference strategies in general. I felt this was primarily due to overspill from Kazumi's defining belief (Belief 1) about how his cultural influence may play a role in the way he would behave during his conferences. In the end, his familiarity with teacher-led interaction that offered him structure within which to operate and contribute was a system that he was accustomed to and he felt comfortable playing the more passive role that it engendered. Despite holding beliefs that questioned this and hinted at the possibility of different behaviour, Kazumi's defining belief held strong and ultimately had a pervading influence over everything he did during his conferences.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the beliefs and strategies of Kazumi, an exchange student from Japan. He was a quietly spoken student with a studious and systematic approach to his writing.

Kazumi held 7 main beliefs about writing conferences, of which the most prominent one was his belief in the cultural influence his Asian background may play on his conference interactions. He was the only student in the study to express such a belief about the role of culture and in many ways, this was his

core or defining belief and his other 6 revolved around it and on occasions were influenced by it too. Kazumi's other beliefs included a willingness to discuss his writing under the right conditions; a desire for structured conferences; wanting more time to speak; wanting more details; an awareness of western expectations of student independence and a sense of ownership over his draft.

Kazumi only enacted 2 common strategies in his conferences. He successfully offered reflections on his work and explanations of his composition process.

Only three of Kazumi's beliefs had an impact on the kinds of strategies he employed whilst conferencing. His defining belief about culture had the strongest influence, while his need for his conferences to be structured and his desire to share talk was evident but to a lesser extent. His remaining four beliefs were not seen to have any real impact on his strategy use.

Chapter 8 Case study 4: Maria

8.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by offering a biography of Maria that details her personal history as a student of English including her prior experiences of writing in English and of receiving feedback on her writing. In section 8.3, Maria's 6 beliefs about writing conferences are discussed and illustrated with extracts taken from her questionnaire, initial interview and post conference interviews. In section 8.4, I discuss her 4 most commonly used strategies in her conferences with Derek using data extracts from her 4 conference transcripts. The final section 8.5 offers possible links between Maria's beliefs and strategy use.

8.2 Biography

Maria was a graduate student from Cyprus (Greek Cypriot) who had been studying French at a university in France for the past year. She was in her mid-twenties and having completed her course was keen to spend a year improving her English in the UK. Unlike most of the other students on the IFP, who were taking the course as a pre-requisite to secure a place on their respective degree programmes, Maria had no such ambition other than a strong interest in languages. She had an intrinsic motivation to improve her written and spoken proficiency in English to as high a level as she could reach in 12 months. She had chosen the foundation course rather than a general English programme because she felt that the academic nature of the IFP would focus more on her reading and writing skills - areas of particular interest to her.

Because she had lived abroad on her own, Maria required little time to settle into her new life and quickly became accustomed to the daily routines and

practices of the IFP. She volunteered opinions in class and worked well with other students but always in a low-key manner, consistent with her quietly spoken nature. She was well acquainted with many of the study skills that many others were learning for the first time and quickly became someone that other students looked to for support on the course.

Maria had been studying English for about seven years in total (q2) but she had not attended any formal classes in the language since high school (il8). She had been learning to write in English for five years with specific attention paid to essay writing for four of those years. Such experience immediately placed Maria at the top of the IFP cohort that year as the student with the most experience in writing essays. Her essay experience echoed some of the writing syllabus of the IFP in that she had written both descriptive and argumentative essay types previously (il12). As she told me at our initial interview: *'I know how to write a summary, introduction, conclusion, main body ... for me it's easy' (il16-17)*.

Despite not having taken any formal international English test, her placement test placed Maria in the higher level classes on the IFP.

Despite her strength in English and in particular writing in English, Maria still assessed her current level of English as 'weak' (q4) and her ability to write essays as average - '4' on a Likert Scale where 7 was the highest positive value. At our initial interview, she explained the reason for her rather low self-assessment as being due to her having not studied the language for many years (il3). She was worried about her speaking ability, citing it as a source of difficulty for her (q12). With regard to her writing ability, she explained how she had *'some problems in writing especially with the vocabulary' (il4-5)*. Maria did,

however, feel that her understanding of grammar and 'syntax', as she put it, was less of an issue (il5-6).

With regard to receiving feedback on her writing, Maria expressed how important an act it was in helping her to improve her writing skills and avoid making the same mistakes again (il21). As a student, Maria had only ever received written feedback from her teachers when she studied English in Cyprus. She felt its prevalence as compared to spoken feedback was '*because it is the most easy and practical way to correct the writing skills of students ... the spoken feedback ... needs a lot of extra time*' (q8).

However, she had experienced what it was like to receive one to one spoken feedback on her writing too though in a different language, when she was taking private lessons in Standard Modern Greek after school. Her experience of such interaction lasted three years for about twice a week (q15). As such, Maria was in a good position to offer her opinions about both styles of feedback on her written work, which she saw as performing different functions:

'The written feedback, I will have the written comments and the corrections of my teacher written. This will help me to go back and study them at any time ... the spoken feedback will give me the opportunity, if I have some questions or if I don't agree with him to have a discussion' (q9).

Thus, Maria valued the permanent record that written feedback offered her and saw the value of spoken feedback as residing in its immediacy in allowing her to discuss issues on the spot. She was certainly looking forward to the conferences on the IFP course (q10) and never expressed any trepidation.

In many ways, Maria was not typical of the international students that took the IFP course each year. She was older, a graduate, had already been living

abroad for a year, and was not interested in learning English for instrumental reasons. Her maturity and experience made her one of the stronger students on the course and a target from very early on for peers who needed advice. Maria always demonstrated a humility about the language skills she possessed, no doubt aided by her view that she still had a lot to learn in English. These differences made her an interesting student to explore with respect to her beliefs and strategy use in writing conferences.

8.3 Maria's beliefs about writing conferences

Maria's data yielded 6 beliefs about writing conferences, which can be seen in table 8.1 below.

Table 8.1: Maria's beliefs about conferencing

In Maria's own words
1: 'spoken feedback is an opportunity for both to talk' (source: il147)
2: 'the aim of the feedback to know what is wrong with my essay' (source: pci1I91-92)
3: 'the aim of these conferences is to resolve my questions about writing' (source: q13)
4: 'I can't accept my teacher's feedback if I don't agree with him' (source: q13)
5: 'it is not clear if I have to change it' (source: pci2I99)
6: 'I want [him] to give me more examples' (source: pci1I228)

1: 'spoken feedback is an opportunity for both to talk' (source: il147)

Maria saw her conferences as potential sites for sharing talking with her teacher Derek about her draft. In her questionnaire, she described how writing conferences were a good idea because '*it will help me to have a discussion with my teacher*' (q10). In fact, in her written responses to other questions about conferencing, Maria used terms such as *discussion*, *discuss* and *conversation* a total of four times - terminology that implied the participation of both student and teacher. In question 11, Maria was asked to consider who might talk more during her conferences. She was the only student in the study to select option

'c' - *'We will talk more or less equal amounts'* and then proceeded to explain how she saw it working in practice with Derek explaining mistakes and herself asking questions. When asked to select from a list of possible descriptions that best described her 'ideal' conference, Maria again selected a response that implied student-teacher talk: *'A conversation between a teacher and student where both discuss the essay'* (q18).

At our first interview, I picked up on some of these points. I asked her if it mattered who spoke more during their feedback sessions: *'No ... because this is not the most important because if I have understand what my teacher has said if I have ask him what I wanted, there's no matter if I spoken little or much than the teacher'* (il57-59). Thus, for Maria the term 'discussion' meant that both Derek and she would have *opportunities* to say what they wanted rather than worrying about how much they had spoken. This highlighted Maria's more functional, practical sense about conference talk and what it entailed. This was further seen when I asked her who might lead their conferences. Again, Maria took a more functional view of how no one would exhibit any clear control over the discussion as it would primarily be dictated by the needs of the draft being discussed, which the teacher either had to explain or the student needed to question (il78-83).

Maria was also clear about the parameters of conference discussion in that while it was *'an opportunity for both to talk'* (il147), it was not the same as having a conversation with a friend: *'he is a teacher at the university, me I am a student, we don't have equal'* (il130-131). She understood that conference talk was goal oriented and placed constraints on both her and Derek in terms of their participation and roles. Maria also recognised that talk could veer between

very focussed moments of talk discussing issues in her text to less focussed ones, where, as Maria put it *'it's nice to have a small conversation with your teacher for your topic and not for mistake. It gives you the opportunity to give more explanation without thinking a mistake'* (pci21144-145). Unlike Kazumi, she particularly enjoyed the start of some of her conferences where Derek would ask her more personalised questions about her draft: *'It was a real discussion ... and useful I think'* (pci3115-18).

Overall, Maria viewed conference talk very positively as it provided space for both herself and Derek to get their views across. She was not concerned about issues around control of the talk or who spoke more or less but rather just wanted there to be clear opportunities where she could hear what Derek had to say about her draft and in return ask questions of her own.

2: 'the aim of the feedback to know what is wrong with my essay' (source: pci1191-92)

Like Layla and Alex, Maria also viewed conferences as sites where she might learn more about the errors in her text. In her written responses in the questionnaire about spoken feedback, Maria used phrases such as *'I will have the opportunity to ask him ... my mistakes'* (q10); *'teacher will explain the mistake'* (q11) and *'I want to know if my way of ... writing is correct or wrong'* (q13) to highlight her belief that conference feedback would contain a discussion about the weaknesses in her draft.

In our follow up interview, Maria continued this line about correction: *'if I make a mistake in my essay I want to know it and I want to improve it'* (il98). I asked Maria how important she thought conferences could be in improving a student's

draft text and again she brought up the idea of correction as being central to this: *'the feedback will give them the opportunity to understand their mistake'* (il105). At the beginning of our first post conference interview, I asked her generally how it had gone and Maria immediately mentioned errors again: *'we talk about the essay, my mistake yes - it was like I (imagined)'* (pci1136). In fact, Maria offered similar replies focussing on error discussion to each of my opening questions in her second and third post conference interviews too (pci215-6 & pci313). As such, it seemed quite central to her thinking as a tool to measure the relative success of her conferences.

Maria also offered details regarding *how* she preferred Derek to help her with errors: *'I prefer [him] to say me here there is a mistake here you should change it because it is not clear enough'* (pci21101-102). Such preference for a teacher-led style of managing her errors may have been due to her previous experiences of how her own teachers used to correct her written work: *'They show us there is a mistake, why there is a mistake and how we can change'* (pci21190-191). She offered a more personalised reason too for the value she placed on error detection and correction: *'by telling me my mistakes give me knowledge to know'* (pci11155) – suggesting, like Alex, how such knowledge could give her the tools to avoid making the same errors again.

While a strong student of English, Maria was always keen to improve further. Focussing on the errors in her drafts was something tangible she could see, correct and remember and she was interested in having all kinds of errors corrected by Derek from higher order concerns such as content to lower order issues that dealt with vocabulary. This focus on errors also implied how Maria viewed both her and Derek's roles within conferences, viz. Derek leading and

giving information and herself listening and following - akin to a more traditional, transmission style of teaching and learning.

3: 'the aim of these conferences is to resolve my questions about writing'

(source: q13)

Maria believed in using her conferences to ask further questions about the issues raised as well as more general ones about academic writing. Her questionnaire responses offered early evidence of this: *'the spoken feedback will give me the opportunity if I have some questions'* (Q9); *'I will have the opportunity to ask him my wonders [things I don't understand]'* (Q10) and *'the aim of these conferences is to resolve my questions about writing'* (Q13).

Maria continued this emphasis on asking questions during her conferences in her follow-up interview too. When I asked her how important it was to receive feedback on her writing she replied: *'very important...if I have questions to the teacher it's an opportunity to ask him'* (il21-22). Later in our interview, Maria defined the kind of questions she would ask: *'I will ask him ... what does mean or why I make this mistake, if I change it like this way or to ask him my new idea'* (il52-53). Towards the end of the interview, Maria also described how students could ask wider questions that did not always pertain to the specific draft at hand (il149-151). For Maria, questioning was a mechanism to better understand not only the weaknesses in her writing but also an opportunity to probe Derek about future revisions and more generalised writing topics.

For example, at our first post conference interview, I played Maria an audio extract that highlighted her actively asking Derek about a stylistic issue that had been raised regarding her overuse of the pronouns 'we / you'. I asked Maria to

explain her engagement here: *'it's a question that will help me for my other essays in the future. ... I wanted to know if it's correct way of writing'* (pci11210-212). Here, Maria used questions as a tool to extract information that would not only help her now but also in the future. At the end of our interview, I asked Maria to reflect on her participation in the conference, where her reply suggested a hint of personal pride in asking questions: *'I wasn't embarrassed to ask him some questions. I think yes I participated in the dialogue'* (pci11248-249).

As far as Maria was concerned, asking questions in her conferences was an important part of learning more about her writing in general. It offered her the space to find out more about the things that *she* was interested in. She also saw her questioning as representative of her relative participation during conferences and she would often rate her discussion with Derek as more successful if she had asked the questions she wanted.

4: 'I can't accept my teacher's feedback if I don't agree with him' (source: q13)

Maria also exhibited a degree of ownership over her ideas and writing. This was first noticed in her questionnaire, when she was asked to consider what she would do if she did not agree with her teacher's feedback (q13). She selected option 'c' from a list of options: *'Tell the teacher you don't agree with their opinion about your essay draft'*. When asked to provide a reason for her choice she wrote: *'I can't accept my teacher's feedback if I don't agree with him or to ignore it because it will not help me to improve my writing'* (q13). This sense of independence was also seen in the way she discussed her revision methods.

For example, in question 14, she was asked to select from a list what actions she would take on her draft after feedback. Instead of opting to implement all of the suggestions given to her by Derek, Maria chose to make changes that came from both her teacher's feedback and some of her own ideas too. Thus, whether she was talking or writing about her draft, Maria wanted to ensure that her ideas were always included.

In our follow up interview, I wanted to explore Maria's sense of ownership further, especially her response citing how she would tell Derek when she did not agree with something he had said. I asked if her such disagreement would not prove uncomfortable:

'Personally, no because I came here to learn English, this is my aim, this is my goal for this year. That's why if I make a mistake in my essay I want to know it and I want to improve it ... I will accept his opinion and I will tell him what I really believe about what he said to me and I think I would discuss with him to find a middle equilibrium' (il97-101).

This powerful statement highlights not only Maria's high level of confidence in herself as a student writer but also demonstrates her strong faith in the goals she had set herself for the year. Maria was not satisfied in just following what she had heard but rather wanted to *understand* more deeply what had been said. As a result, whenever she did not feel comfortable with what she had heard, she needed to speak up and question it. I asked Maria about her questionnaire response that highlighted how she would make revisions that incorporated *both* Derek's ideas alongside her own rather than making use of just his ideas. She explained: *'If I agree with him I will change them...if I don't want I will not but I will read again, think again what my teacher has said me...if I really agree with him and it's ok for me, I will change it' (il115-119).*

Maria's use of phrases such as *find a middle equilibrium* and *think again what my teacher has said to me* highlight someone who was willing to compromise and revisit her initial assumptions about what had been discussed. Any disagreements were not based on stubborn or sentimental attachment to what she had written it but rather a need to be convinced of the merits of what she had heard. This highlighted once again, her sense of ownership over her drafts and a strong belief in her own abilities as an essay writer.

In our second post conference interview, I played Maria an extract of her explaining her revisions to Derek. Keeping in mind her expressed sense of ownership over her work, I highlighted how the changes she had made were very closely aligned to what Derek had suggested at their first conference. Maria's response offered the impression that she had not entirely agreed with the revisions that she had made: *'Yes I follow [Derek' advice] but as I said if there was not word limit I would not change a lot of things ... it was the word limit that (obligates) me to change, minimise my essay not the teacher'* (pci2|21-22). It was interesting how she highlighted that changes were made primarily due to the need to adhere to the word limit and *'not the teacher'*. Her emphasis of these points again demonstrates her sense of ownership and decision-making responsibility for her text.

Maria's ownership over her work can perhaps be best summed up in one of her final statements while reflecting on all of her conferences: *'it's important that student have his own point of view or to think by himself about the subject ... he [the teacher] will give me his opinion, his advice – depends on me if I will change them or not'* (pci4|1 16-132).

5: 'it is not clear if I have to change it' (source: pci2199)

A strong theme that emerged from Maria's interviews was her dissatisfaction with not always obtaining enough clarity from Derek's spoken feedback. More specifically, she struggled to come to terms with Derek's less directive style of delivery where he often refrained from directly expressing the need for a change or evaluating something as problematic. Instead, he would couch his feedback in tentative terms that were more suggestive in tone and required a degree of inference from Maria. While many students struggle with understanding hedged comments (Hyland and Hyland 2001), what made Maria's beliefs on the matter interesting was her strength of feeling about not receiving enough clarity and what she was prepared to do to get more.

In our first post conference interview, I played Maria an extract of Derek offering tentative feedback on her introductory paragraph that while implying there were issues, did not go on to request revision. I asked Maria if she would have preferred more direct evaluation or requests for revision here: *'yes ... because I ask later if I have to change it or not but he doesn't give me an (exact) answer. He told it's ok, it's a nice introduction, it's a little long ... but he didn't give me if I have to leave it like that, it's ok or not' (pci1179-81)*. I asked Maria how important such clarity was to her: *'I prefer this because I want to know if I am wrong or if I am right ... this is the aim of the feedback to know what is wrong with my essay and if I don't have an idea exactly for my essay I will not improve it' (pci1183-92)*.

In the same conference, Maria had received Derek's tentative evaluations and then offered a rationale for her paragraph. I was interested to know why she had done this and asked to explain: *'Because he didn't give me a response, answer exactly if I have to change or not and I tried to make him answer me to*

my question to find a solution' (pci1197-98). Maria's sense of dissatisfaction in these examples is evident as is her effort to extract more clarity from Derek by offering a rationale to prompt greater explicitness.

Maria's frustration with Derek's non-directive approach was given voice several more times during our interview: *'I believe that this way of the teacher is a little confused for the student because first he said, it's a little long but then when I read your thesis statement it's ok'* (pci11131-132); *'I wanted more direct response'* (pci11184-185); *'I wasn't very sure if I got what he wanted to say to me'* (pci11192). I ended the interview by asking Maria to assess her first conference as a whole and once again she brought up the issue of wanting greater clarity: *'to tell that this feedback was successful I would prefer to give me more direct answer of, 'correct this one or don't correct' '* (pci11274-275). It was obvious that she did not feel that her conference had been successful.

I was interested in where this strength of feeling came from as Maria had not made so many references to a single issue in any of her other beliefs. Perhaps it challenged her previous experiences of such interactions where teachers had been far more explicit about her text and the changes it needed: *'From my (years) experience when I was in high school and during my private lesson it was more direct'* (pci21189-190). As suggested earlier (Belief 2) Maria was accustomed to a more teacher led style of feedback, where the teacher essentially told her what was wrong and what to do next.

Her earlier expressed beliefs in the study of wanting to learn more about her errors (Belief 2) and a desire to get answers to her questions (Belief 3) were also challenged by Derek's non-directive, tentative style of delivery that hinted and suggested rather than committed to explicitly pointing things out. The

ambiguity of not clearly knowing the way ahead and having to figure things out for herself caused Maria a great deal of stress. It highlighted, in many ways, how she had quite a fixed way of working and was unable to adapt or read between the lines of Derek's feedback (as Kazumi had done for example).

The issue remained a concern for Maria in our other post conference interviews:

'I was a little confused ... I wasn't sure if I have to change the word ... or to leave it like that' (pci2186-87); 'it's not very transparent' (pci2193); 'the way that he doesn't say something directly and he continues with something else ... he gives me the impression ... that it is correct ... from the other side the way that he does ask me directly give me the impression that maybe you should change it. That's why it's not good, not clear' (pci4165-69)

Despite finding Derek's feedback style challenging, Maria did make attempts on occasion to try and rationalise why he may have offered feedback in this way:

'Maybe he didn't want to make me feel this is wrong ... or maybe he want to see what I would do by myself for the next draft - the decision that I will take (pci1186-88). Yet this feeling was short-lived as Maria increasingly began to view Derek's feedback style as something negative: *'personally I don't believe that it's good ... I would prefer direct answer that will help me to improve my essay' (pci21171-172).* A little worryingly perhaps, Maria had even begun to form the opinion that Derek's reticence in offering direct answers at times was akin to not wanting to help her: *'he gave me a little bit (impression) I don't want to help you a lot so I said to myself 'ok don't ask him answer him again' because I don't believe that he would give me an answer like I want' (pci2176-178).* Such a feeling would have impacted upon another of her beliefs, viz. to ask questions (Belief 3).

Another reason for Maria's possible resistance to Derek's non-directive style of feedback other than a lack of familiarity with such an approach, may have been because she was critical of the idea that by offering less feedback, a teacher was encouraging a student to become more independent:

'it's important that the student have his own point of view or to think by himself... during the IFP we have to help him to improve his way of writing but we cannot do the two together...maybe it is more important for the international students to learn how to improve his way of writing and not push him to think, think think. That's why it [teacher feedback] should be more directly... it would be better to give more attention to the way of writing at the beginning and then to push students to think more (pci411 16-125).

I viewed this belief in wanting greater clarity in her feedback as **Maria's core or defining belief**.

6: 'I want [him] to give me more examples' (source: pci11228)

Maria's desire for more focus on her errors (Belief 2), getting her questions answered (Belief 3) and the feedback she received to be more directly expressed (Belief 5) all seemed to feed quite naturally into another of her beliefs, viz. that Derek should be giving her more 'detailed feedback'. Whenever Derek evaluated her text or offered ideas for revision, Maria wanted him to go on and offer further exemplification after his initial announcement that an error existed or the text required change.

At our first post conference interview, I played an extract of Derek offering a critique about an aspect of her paragraph content and Maria asking him further questions about it. I asked Maria why she had done this: *'I was trying to make him to give me more explanations'* (pci11192-193). This showed how Maria was

active in her attempts to get the answers she wanted when they were not forthcoming. Later, I played another moment in her conference where Derek did deliver several concrete examples of how she might change some language in a paragraph. I wanted to check if this was the kind of detail that she wanted:

'Yes ... I want to give me more examples of what he said to explain me how I can correct this mistake and which way I can correctly to use some other words like passive voice' (pci11228-229).

At our third post conference interview, I played Maria another extract that saw her asking Derek questions: *'I wanted more specific answer to give me an advice not tell me my introduction is a little long or no not my main body but I wanted more specific ... I try to get some answers' (pci3178-79).* Interestingly, here Maria explicitly points out what she does not consider as helpful details, viz. generalised statements that only allude to the 'length of her introduction' without going on to explain where the unnecessary information lay or to speak about the 'main body' in her draft but not refer to which parts exactly. Later in the interview, Maria qualified her need for more details by explaining how she did not mean that she expected to receive all the answers: *'I prefer to be more specific not to tell me 'put it here' exactly but be more specific to give me more help' (pci3190-91).*

Maria believed that her conferences should offer her enough specific details to allow her to make progress with her draft text. When she felt that she was not getting this detail she had the confidence to ask Derek questions to try and extract further information. While many students want extra details, not all would be prepared to actively seek it out through questions, as Maria often did during her four conferences.

8.4 Maria's conference strategy use

The strategies that Maria used during her conferences is illustrated in table 8.2 below. As highlighted previously (see section 4.7.3) only the most commonly used strategies, marked in **bold**, were analysed in depth and are commented upon below. A discussion of the strategy totals occurs in the cross-case analysis in Chapter 9.

Table 8.2: Maria's conference strategies (strategy labels shortened to accommodate table – see table 4.9 for full labels)

Phases of talk	Conference 1	Conference 2	Conference 3	Conference 4	Total	Total per phase
	Semester 1: 750-word essay		Semester 2: 1500-word essay			
A Raise topics for revision	-	-	-	-	-	0
B Negotiate and clarify revision topics	B1: Reflecting (x6) B2: Offering a rationale (x4) B3: Explaining her process (x4) B5: Seeking repair (x3)	B2: Offering a rationale (x7) B3: Explaining her process (x6) B4: Offering an insight to future plans/changes (x3) B1: Reflecting (x1)	B1: Reflecting (x3) B3: Explaining her process (x4) B2: Offering a rationale (x3) B4: Offering an insight to future plans/changes (x2) B5: Seeking repair (x1)	B3: Explaining her process (x5) B1: Reflecting (x4) B4: Offering an insight to future plans/changes (x1)	B3: x19 B1: x14 B2: x14 B4: x6 B5: x4	57
C Finalise future revisions	C1: Enforcing explicitness (x7)	C1: Enforcing explicitness (x5) SC2: Questioning change (x1)	C1: Enforcing explicitness (x7) SC2: Questioning change (x2)	C1: Enforcing explicitness (x2) SC2: Questioning change (x1)	C1: x21 C2: x4	25
Total per conference	24	23	22	13	82	

Phase A: Raise topics for revision

Strategy used: None

Maria never raised any new topics of her own volition throughout her four conferences. Instead she only ever reacted to something that Derek had

chosen to speak about in his feedback. Her inability to start a new discussion was surprising because many of Maria's beliefs suggested that she might be able to initiate talk in her conferences. For example, her overall view of conferences being places where both she and Derek could share talk (Belief 1); her belief in asking questions (Belief 3); her need for more details (Belief 6) and her general level of confidence in being able to speak up for her work when she did not agree with something Derek had said (Belief 4). Every one of these beliefs contained aspects that taken together, offered an impression of Maria as a student who would have little difficulty in starting a new discussion.

Yet in practice, Maria never did. While she asked questions in her conferences, they were always linked to already established topics initiated by Derek's on-going evaluations. A possible reason for her inability to raise topics for discussion might lie in her personality, the act of *'initiation'* itself and the other beliefs she held. In the classroom, Maria while knowledgeable was generally a quiet student, who did not offer advice voluntarily to her peers despite being looked upon by many of them as an additional source of guidance and explanation about writing. Being a 'peer leader' was not a mantle she held comfortably.

In addition to this, her other beliefs combined, especially her focus on errors (Belief 2), her desire to resolve questions she had about her text (Belief 3), a need for directive clarity in the feedback given (Belief 5) and her need for more detailed feedback (Belief 6) all pointed to someone who places the teacher in a more active role and herself in a more passive role. Within such a framework, she would be less likely to raise new topics for discussion without invitation and

in so doing, place oneself in the primary role of managing the unfolding discussion.

For all her beliefs that hinted at greater agency in her conferences, ultimately Maria's concept of conferences was still rather traditional, whereby Derek was the initiator and leader of the discourse and she would occupy the role of receiver and follower. She may also have been socialised into these roles as a result of her previous educational experiences in her home country that favoured a more teacher directed style of interaction where she was given the detailed information she needed unambiguously.

Phase B: Negotiate and clarify revision topics

Strategy used: B3 - Explaining her process

Maria's most frequently used strategy during phase B was to offer descriptions of what she had done and how she had done it (B3). She used this strategy a total of 19 times over her four conferences. Most of her explanations occurred in response to Derek's questions, as might be expected from her difficulty in initiating topics for herself (phase A) and as previously discussed, her comfort in a more teacher led model of delivery. When she was asked to explain however, Maria offered a good level of detail about the processes that she had engaged in to craft her essay drafts.

- 1 D: how did you feel about writing this? (1.5)
2 M: **erm (2) actually I had many ideas points of view but I (had) to organise them err and I have little problems with my organisation (1) but then I start from the introduction and then I chose three arguments and I analyse them**
(Conference 1: lines 6-12)

- 1 D: ... I see a lot of research ... have you spent a long time?
2 M: **yes actually I research in journals and in books and in the internet and er when I was finding an information that was interesting for me I noticed in the paper with the reference and after I have done my plan I (1.5) I wrote them in my essay**

(Conference 3: lines 6-10)

Maria's turns above highlighted a core feature of her writing practice - her methodical approach to writing her essay draft. She mentioned how she had engaged in planning, organising, researching, note-taking and revision in order to arrive at her completed drafts. Her responses demonstrated Maria's strong awareness of the skills necessary to craft an academic essay. In addition, her ability to use terminology to accurately describe what she did with words such as 'organise, analyse, argument, research, introduction, paragraph' further showcased her relative depth of understanding about the various processes of writing an essay. Many of Maria's explanations were quite long too, reaching some 40-50 words at times - something not often seen in the data of the other participants and highlighted how she was able to take full advantage of the opportunity to speak (Belief 1).

Phase B: Negotiate and clarify revision topics

Strategy used: B1 - Reflecting on her work

Maria used two strategies an equal number of times as her second most commonly used strategy during phase B. The first one was to offer Derek personalised reflections about what she had done (B1). In total, Maria used the strategy a total number of 14 times over her four conferences. Some of these opportunities to look back and consider her draft were prompted by Derek, especially at the start and end of his conferences but many others emerged quite naturally during the negotiation of the topic under consideration. When she

did reflect, she was quite self-critical and would discuss the various challenges she had encountered.

- 1 D: you've given me the first draft erm how did you feel about writing this? (1.5)
2 M: **erm (2) actually I had many ideas points of view but I (had) to organise them err and I have little problems with my organisation (1)**

(Conference 1a: lines 5-9)

- 1 D: ... obviously you've put things like '*we you we you and your*'
2 M: **it (was) a problem that I was thinking while I was writing my essay what I have to say '*this students*' '*we*' '*people*' errrm '*you and I*' when I somebody (1.5) read this essay is a student?**

(Conference 1b: lines 142-150)

- 1 D: I'm very happy with that how do you feel now? (1.5)
2 M: **erm I prefer the first essay ((Student laughs)) which was (1.5) a little longer err but I feel ok with this one I (guess) if I haven't the word limit I would be my (other) I would (prefer) my first (xxx)**

(Conference 2: lines 164-172)

- 1 D: ... this draft is very good how did you feel when you finished this? ...
2 M: **erm good happy but a little serious because I'm always (worried) about the result ... I was feeling ... less stressful because I finally (1) mm er write my essay**

(Conference 3: lines 352-367)

- 1 D: ... how do you feel now that we've got rid of all those statistics? were you happy doing that?
2 M: **yes maybe it's more clear but I have only one statistic general one not many**
3 D: hm you feel ok about that? you didn't feel 'ohh I want to keep it'?
4 M: **no no no if I wanted to keep it I will keep it**
5 D: (Teacher and student laugh) ... ok good well I'm glad about that because that Shows you're in control and that you know what you want

(Conference 4: lines 100-109)

The extracts highlight the different issues Maria raised when reflecting on her work. For example, at the beginning and end of her conferences (C1a and C3 above) when Maria was asked more open ended questions by Derek, her usual pattern of response was to begin with something positive before embarking on a more self-critical reflection of her process. Her use of the phrase '*I'm always worried about the result*' (C3) was telling because it offered a glimpse into Maria's concerns about the final grade, which I had not seen before. Coupled with her sense of relief when she had completed her draft is also indicative of

the fact that despite being one of the strongest writers on the IFP, she still harboured doubts about the quality of her work.

Example C1b above offered an instance where Maria did not offer a reflection in response to a question from Derek. Instead this reflection arrived rather organically from Derek's preceding evaluation, which had triggered a prior concern that Maria had experienced while writing her draft. It demonstrated her ability to read between the lines of Derek's evaluation that something was not right and reflect on what she had been thinking while she had been writing. Her response offered a fascinating glimpse into her mind as a writer - how she questioned herself about what she was writing and whether it might work or not.

In the example from her second conference (C2), Maria was unafraid to voice her preference for her initial draft compared to her second one and offered a reason for it too. This attitude of knowing her mind when it came to thinking about what she had written chimed well with one of her expressed beliefs - her sense of ownership over her writing (Belief 4). This was seen more clearly in the extract from conference 4. Here Maria suggested she was a little concerned about having removed many of her statistics but when prompted about this, she was quite robust in indicating how she was very much in charge of deciding what to keep and what to remove. Her strength of her expression here linked well with her belief in taking ownership over her text (Belief 4).

Phase B: Negotiate and clarify revision topics

Strategy used: B2 - Offering a rationale

The second strategy that Maria used on 14 occasions during her conferences was to offer some of the reasons behind what she had written. She came up

with most of her rationales of her own volition upon hearing Derek's critical evaluations or suggestions for change rather than in response to a question from him. This was quite different to the majority of her interventions in her other strategies during phase B of explanation (B3) and reflection (B1), where her responses had been mainly driven in response to Derek's questions. Maria's willingness to volunteer reasons so freely fits well with her belief in seeing conferences as an opportunity to speak up (Belief 1). Maria's rationales could be divided into those that were based on more *personalised reasons*, others related to *factual reasons* such as assignment limitations or a lack of knowledge and a few that had a *strategic* flavour to them.

1 D: ... erm you put '*in addition*' ... I was just thinking in addition to what? ... I'm just thinking you know what am I going back to another idea whereas I think what you're doing is introducing
 2 M: first idea
 3 D: yes=
 4 M: =I didn't know that '*in addition*' we put only in (xxx) paragraph
 (Conference 1: lines 104-116)

1 D: ... erm thinking about (the) topic sentence when you say '*it can present many challenges*' (1.5) yeah I just put here what (1) and then you the rest of the paragraph tends to talk about (the) linguistic ... so at that stage I was thinking ... what challenges ... are we talking about linguistic challenges are we just talking about all (1) the general challenges here ...
 2 M: I wanted to mm write a general sentence and then tell a
 3 D: be more specific
 4 M: **yes**
 (Conference 2: lines 93-107)

1 D: ... why did you choose this particular topic internet use
 2 M: **actually my first topic was about the er equal er right of womans but I couldn't find a lot of information about this subject so I then decided to write this (1) it was more interesting and I could find more- I can find more information there is a lot of (research) that's (why)**
 (Conference 3: lines 34 - 40)

In the first example above (C1), Maria offered a rationale for her work based on more factual reasoning rather than any personal desire or decision making process that had occurred during her writing process. Maria admitted to not knowing how to correctly use the linking phrase '*in addition*' in her essay. Thus,

her rationale here was predicated on her lack of knowledge with regard to language usage. She would have learnt something new after this exchange, which most likely would have pleased her because one of her beliefs about conference feedback was that it was a good place to learn more about her errors (Belief 2).

On other occasions, Maria offered more personalised reasons for her work that came directly from the processes in which she had been engaged while writing her draft. In example C2 above, Maria listened to Derek's struggle, as a reader, to create coherence between what she had written as her paragraph topic and later content. Her response was to offer a clear rationale for the way in which she had laid out her text - to move from the general to the specific. It offered valuable insight into her decision making processes as a student writer. The fact that Derek could accurately complete her rationale with his use of the words '*be more specific*', meant that at some level, he too could understand the logic behind what Maria had decided to do.

The final extract above (C3) highlights Maria's pragmatic side in selecting her essay question. Her rationale for choosing her current essay title and rejecting her initial choice was based on strategic reasoning that prioritised access to information above other factors. She naturally wanted to complete her essay task successfully and had reached the conclusion that another essay title would offer her a better route to success based on her initial engagement with the literature. She had made this decision alone without any prior consultation with Derek and it highlighted once again her sense of autonomy over her writing (Belief 4).

Phase C: Finalise future revisions

Strategy used: C1 - Enforcing further explicitness

In phase C of her conferences, Maria had the opportunity to discuss Derek's requests or suggestions for future change. During this phase, Maria was quite active. Over her four conferences, she prompted Derek for further answers and clarification on his requests and suggestions for future revisions a total of 21 times. In fact, regardless of the phase of talk (A, B, C), it was Maria's most frequently used strategy overall. Its high frequency may have been strongly linked to her belief of finding Derek's feedback lacking clarity at times (Belief 5) and a desire to ask questions (Belief 3). As a result, she used this strategy to enforce further explicitness from him frequently to get the detail she needed.

1 D: ... I've written (1) *'quite a long introduction'* (1.5) and that's not necessarily a criticism ... it is quite long but erm what happened you did actually manage to give your thesis statement here at the end (1) so I thought it was very important that you managed to do that in the end ... like I say that's not really a criticism I just thought ok it is a long introduction but (1) you know you don't need to have a certain sized introduction

2 M: **should I separate the paragraph from the here ((student refers to text)) I put my (xxx)**

(Conference 1: lines 45-50)

1 D: I guess probably that final page might (1) stretch down to there I suppose that would give us

2 M: **so it need more words?**

3 D: well erm (1) you obviously need to reach the word count (1) ... and in order to do that (1) I mean because you've got all the main points ... there's no new point to add so we'll have to decide you know perhaps you can expand some of these areas I do like that idea about erm psychology and erm

4 M: **(related to) stress?**

(Conference 3: lines 259-266)

1 D: you don't need the 'www.' there all you need is the name (1.5) person or organisation ...

2 M: it was a site where I found it that's why I have err I don't know how to write it ...

3 D: ok probably just need to put ... that title there 'ijenetwork' and if possible is there a date? if not then just the name of the organisation there ... (2) erm

4 M: **if I have read any book I will put it in the bibliography?**

(Conference 2: lines 202-226)

Example C1 clearly highlights the issue that Maria had expressed about wanting more clarity from Derek's feedback (Belief 5). The lack of clarity here for Maria arose primarily because Derek switched quickly between different parts of his evaluation. He initially began by offering a hedged evaluation '*it is quite long*' that would immediately have caused Maria to view the length of her introductory paragraph as a possible focal point for future revision. Yet instead of continuing to discuss this point alone, Derek instead proceeded to offer further evaluation that pointed out a positive in Maria's paragraph, viz. her inclusion of a thesis statement before making reference to how his evaluation about the length of her paragraph was not meant to be a critique. He ended his turn by almost arguing against his own initial evaluation '*you don't need to have a certain sized introduction*'. Essentially, Derek was implying that the issue was not of great importance.

Yet for Maria, this message would most likely have seemed unclear. She had read and listened to Derek say that her introductory paragraph was long and then quite suddenly heard him say that in fact it was fine. Her lack of clarity caused her to enforce more explicitness by intervening to offer a possible solution to the apparent transgression, which was effectively a question to find out if Derek wanted her to make a change or not. While Derek may have hedged his critical evaluation in order to comply with common sense norms of politeness by 'softening the blow' of his critique, the result was actually more confusion for Maria, who perhaps might have fared better by receiving a simpler and direct response from him that would have told her what the issue was and what needed to be revised.

At other times, Maria enforced further explicitness from Derek not because his feedback had been unclear but because she simply wanted more specific information. She wanted more details on why it was wrong or what she could do to correct it satisfactorily. This desire for extra information was consistent with her expressed belief of wanting more details and examples from the feedback she received (Belief 6). It highlighted how Maria was willing to act in order to get the extra detail rather than sit and passively accept what she was being given.

Extract C3 above offers a good example of this. Maria heard Derek initially mention a possible future revision that implied that her text may have been a little short in some areas - though he never used those words. Upon hearing this, Maria intervened in order to seek clarity and confirmation that what he really meant was that she needed to increase her word length. Then later when Derek offered a rather generalised suggestion of the kind of content she could exploit further in her essay, Maria asked him another question that served to pin down the topic he was alluding to '*(related to) stress?*'.

On a few occasions in her conferences, Maria would also seek further explicitness from Derek about issues that did not seek to pick up on any specific utterance that he had made previously but rather sought more general information about the issue. In the C2 example above, Derek was helping Maria to accurately reference an internet source she had used. With Derek wanting to move on to another point, signalled by his use of the filler '*erm*' after a 2 second pause in line 3, Maria raised a more general question about referencing books in her text. This linked well with another one of her core beliefs about conferencing, viz. that it was a place to ask questions to learn more about her writing (Belief 3).

Perhaps one of the possible reasons why *'enforcing further explicitness'* was the strategy most employed by Maria was because the strategy encompassed so many of her beliefs all at once. In total, three of her six beliefs (Beliefs 3, 5 & 6) could be used in some way to account for her behaviour in using this strategy. Maria was interested in knowing about the weaknesses in her text in an unambiguous manner with greater details. When she did not feel this was forthcoming, she was prepared to intervene and ask questions of her own in order to get this. This will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

8.5 Linking Maria's beliefs to her strategy use in conferences

Table 8.3 offers an attempt to link some of Maria's individual beliefs to specific strategies she used during her four conferences. Many times, her different beliefs were not manifested by a single strategy alone but by a composite of several strategies that were in some way related back to the core tenet of each of her beliefs.

Table 8.3: Linking Maria's beliefs to specific conference strategies (defining belief shaded)

Maria's 6 beliefs	Key tenet of belief	Maria's strategy categories
1: 'spoken feedback is an opportunity for both to talk (source: il147)	'Both teacher and student speak'	C1: Enforcing further explicitness: x21 B3: Explaining her process: x19 B1: Reflecting on her work: x14 B2: Offering a rationale: x14
2: 'the aim of the feedback to know what is wrong with my essay' (source: pci1191-92)	Focus on errors/problems with text'	B1: Reflecting on her work: x14 B2: Offering a rationale: x14
3. 'the aim of these conferences is to resolve my questions about writing' (source: q13)	'Answer my questions'	C1: Enforcing further explicitness: x21 B5: Seeking communication repair: x4 C2: Questioning change: x4
4: 'I can't accept my teacher's feedback if I don't agree with him' (source: q13)	'Ownership'	C2: Questioning change: x4
5: 'it is not clear if I have to change it' (source: pci2199)	'I want clarity'	C1: Enforcing further explicitness: x21
6: 'I want [him] to give me more examples' (source: pci11228)	'More details'	C1: Enforcing further explicitness: x21

Maria had expressed from the outset how she believed that conferences were good places for shared talk about her drafts (Belief 1) and this had a *strong* impact on her conference activities. While she did not raise any topics during Phase A, she did participate quite extensively during Phase B and C of her conferences through the use of 4 strategies that helped her to make contributions: '*Enforcing further explicitness (C1)*', '*Explaining her process (B3)*'; '*Reflecting on her work (B1)*' and '*Offering a rationale (B2)*' – four strategies alone that accounted for 68 occasions during her conferences when Maria was involved in the on-going talk.

Maria was very active in asking Derek for further information when she did not clearly understand something he had suggested about possible future revisions (C1) – the second highest use of this strategy after Alex. Maria was equally willing to speak up when prompted by Derek to explain how she had gone about doing something (B3) or in prompting her to reflect (B1), especially at the start of their conferences with respect to how she felt about her draft at that point in time. She was also very adept at picking up on something Derek had stated about her draft and then intervening without his prompting to offer rationales (B2) for what she had chosen to do. Her contributions were further highlighted by the fact that when she did speak, she had the longest mean turn lengths in words of all the students – an average of 12.1 words per turn (cf. Kazumi: 11.8; Alex: 10.3; Layla: 7.1).

A belief that had a *moderate* impact on her conference behaviour was Maria's preoccupation with error correction (Belief 2). It was always present during our post conference interviews as a feature around which she often hung many of her observations. Maria set herself a high standard when it came to writing and

was always looking to minimise errors in her text. Two of her frequently used strategies (B1 and B2) both offered evidence of Maria's focus on errors. Many of her reflections (B1) were self-critical about her work and focussed on areas that she felt were still weak and needed improvement. Meanwhile, some of her rationales (B2) also pointed towards actions she took while writing that were based upon her relative lack of knowledge regarding composition. As she already possessed a good level of written English, error discussions were typically related to higher order concerns such as content issues and establishing coherence within the word limits set by the essay task.

A belief that did seem to translate *strongly* into her conference actions was Belief 3 – asking questions to learn more about her writing. Maria was seen to question most during Phase C of her conferences, when Derek had highlighted areas in her draft that could be improved and Maria wanted greater specificity in how she could make the changes. Her questions to get more information (C1) were her most frequently used strategy throughout all her conferences. She also occasionally used questions to gently probe Derek about his suggestions for change when she was not entirely convinced of their merits (C2).

Maria did employ questions during phase B of her conferences as well, for example by seeking repair (B5) about something Derek had said that she did not clearly understand but this only occurred a handful of times as her aural comprehension of English was very good. Despite this, combining her three main strategies that involved asking questions meant that she questioned Derek for various reasons a total of 29x during her four conferences, which was high.

One belief that had a *low* impact on her conference behaviour was Maria's sense of ownership over her work (Belief 4). In her data, she had highlighted

how she was comfortable in telling Derek when she did not agree with him about something and valued making her own decisions about her drafts. Yet in practice, Maria's sense of ownership was not readily observed in her conference behaviour. She employed the strategy of 'Questioning change (C2)' only a handful of times during her conferences and nor was she able to impact the agenda of the conference in the way Layla had by selecting topics for discussion during Phase A. In contrast, Maria tended to follow most of Derek's suggestions and advice for revision quite closely. Her preference for a more teacher led style of conference delivery (hinted at in Beliefs 2, 3, 5 and 6) with Derek leading and guiding conference feedback seemed to be a more stable and perhaps important belief to her when compared to any notions she had about ownership.

Maria's defining belief in this study has been her desire for clarity from her conference feedback (Belief 5) and it had a *strong* impact on her strategy use. She had trouble in dealing with Derek's non-directive style of conference feedback that left the main decision making up to her. In needing more clarity over her future revisions, Maria would typically bombard Derek with questions whenever he discussed revision. The result was that Maria engaged in the strategy of '*Enforcing further explicitness (C1)*' frequently (21 times) – often to get Derek's blessing that she should go ahead and make a revision. Her strong use of this strategy fits well with her expressions of frustration and annoyance at times to me about what she perceived as a lack of clarity from Derek's feedback that she felt was detrimental to her work.

Another related consequence of Derek's non-directive style of feedback was that when he did make revisions suggestions, he would not always offer too

many details about it – again leaving it up to Maria to work out the details for herself. Maria believed that conferences were good places to get more detailed information than written feedback alone could provide (Belief 6) and thus was not particularly pleased when Derek often refrained from offering such extra information. As a consequence, she attempted to extract more details during her conferences by using the strategy of ‘*Enforcing further explicitness (C1)*’ again to get Derek to say a little more about how she might revise her draft. As such, this belief had a *strong* impact on her conference behaviour. Taken together with Belief 5 above, we can see that Maria used the strategy (C1) in two ways – either to seek clarity that a revision had to be made or not (Belief 5) and at other times to try and get more details from Derek about the revision under question (Belief 6).

Overall, all six beliefs that Maria expressed about conferencing during our interviews were evident to some extent in her actions during her four conferences (See Appendix 11d which offers an overview of the relationships observed in the study between Maria's beliefs and her conference strategy use). 4 out of 6 of Maria's beliefs about writing conferences appeared to have a *high* impact on her conference actions in the form of her using particular strategies: Beliefs 1, 3, 5 and 6. Belief 2 had a *moderate* impact on her conference strategy use while Belief 4 was seen to have a *low* influence on her behaviour.

8.6 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the beliefs and strategies of Maria, a graduate student who had joined the IFP to improve her level of English rather than use it

as a stepping stone to gain entry to a higher degree. She was an experienced writer who enjoyed learning new languages and living abroad in new cultures.

Maria held 6 main beliefs about writing conferences, of which the most prominent was a belief that spoken feedback should offer clarity about future revisions that needed to be made (Belief 5). In many ways, this was her core or defining belief and the other 5 beliefs revolved around this and on occasions were influenced by it too. Maria's other beliefs included a willingness to share talk; learn more about her errors; ask questions; retain some ownership over her text and a desire for more details from her feedback.

Maria enacted 4 common strategies in her conferences. She was able to explain how she had composed parts of her draft; offer reflections on her work; provide rationales for her writing and attempt to enforce greater explicitness about revision issues from Derek.

Unlike the other students in this study, *all* of Maria's beliefs had some impact on the strategies she employed during her conferences. Her beliefs about conferences as places to talk with Derek, get her questions answered, gain more clarity over revision issues (defining belief) and be provided with examples of what to do were amongst the strongest beliefs to be seen to affect her use of conference strategies.

Chapter 9: Discussion

9.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings from chapters 5-8 about the students' beliefs about writing conferences, their use of learning strategies during conferences, and links that may exist between their beliefs and actions.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part (9.2) offers a discussion of the students' beliefs about conferencing. It begins by briefly discussing how the study views the concept of a *defining belief*, its relative influence on the students' other beliefs and strategies and how it may indicate more widely the views each student may hold about writing and conferencing as a whole. This is followed by a closer examination of each student's defining belief in turn before moving on to look at four common beliefs that were shared by the students.

This section offers answers to my first research question (RQ1): 'What beliefs do L2 student writers hold about writing conferences?'

The next part (9.3) discusses the spoken strategies the students employed during their conferences. The discussion begins by examining the frequency with which strategies were employed both within and across the students' four conferences before examining the 5 most common strategies that were used.

This section offers answers to my second research question (RQ2): 'What strategies do L2 student writers employ during their conference interactions?'

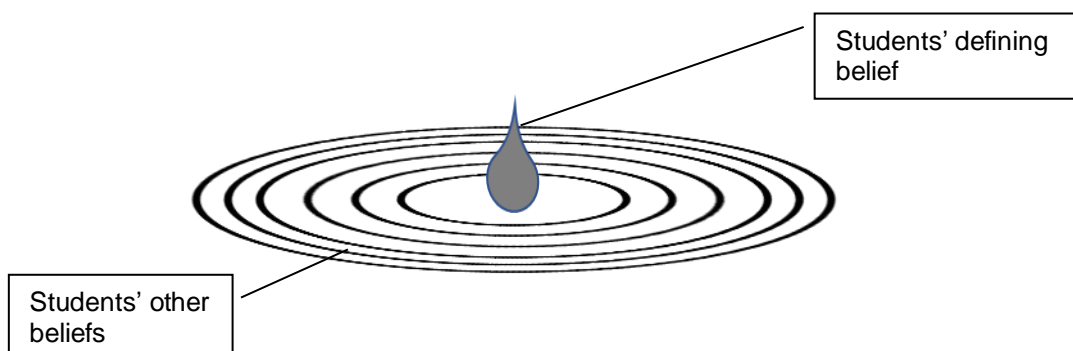
The last section (9.4) illustrates how students' beliefs and strategies may interact with one another by offering a model of the relationship. This model highlights the significance of the students' defining beliefs, their relative product/process orientation and the range of internal and external factors that

can affect the relationship. This section offers answers to my third research question (RQ3): ‘How do students’ beliefs affect their use of strategies in conferences?’

9.2 Discussion of the students’ beliefs about conferences (RQ1): ‘What beliefs do L2 student writers hold about writing conferences?’

Similar to the notion of beliefs held by individuals as being either core or peripheral (Rokeach 1968), I use the term ‘defining’ here to highlight a core belief that seems more pervasive within the student’s set of beliefs about writing conferences. It wields a stronger influence on the student’s other beliefs and may either facilitate or constrain their mediation. Within such a system, therefore, beliefs are not seen as being held with equal centrality but differ with respect to the degree of influence they have over one another.

Figure 9.1: The effect of the students’ defining belief on their other beliefs



From a Vygotskian perspective, they appear to have been more strongly internalised and reached a state of mature ‘self-regulation’. Barcelos (2015) sees such centralised beliefs as linked to one’s identity and emotions. I see such defining beliefs as also playing a prominent role in mediating how each

student in the study *thinks* about their writing and then *interacts* when discussing it during their conferences.

However, defining beliefs are not isolated actors that affect other beliefs without any kind of reciprocity. Barcelos (2003) reminds us of how beliefs do not operate in a linear or structured fashion but rather exist in a more organic, complex and interconnected systems. Rokeach (1968) describes such defining beliefs as being more interconnected than others and more resistant to change. As such, while each belief may influence the other, the defining belief is more central to the belief system of the student.

9.2.1 The influence of defining beliefs

Layla, Alex, Kazumi and Maria all seemed to hold a defining belief within their set of beliefs that seemed to:

- influence some of their other beliefs about conferencing
- inform their choices of what strategies to use or avoid in conferencing
- indicate how they viewed writing more widely by leaning towards, what I call, either a more 'product or process orientation' that may also influence their behaviour during conferences

The first two points will be discussed in the following sections that look at each student's defining belief in turn (sections 9.2.2 – 9.2.5) and discuss the potential relationship between the students' defining belief and strategy use (section 9.4).

The third point, however, requires some further explanation. I appropriate the terms, 'product and process' from the literature on teaching L1 and L2 writing (Flower & Hayes 1981; Hairston 1982; Zamel 1983). Briefly speaking, a process

approach to writing emphasises a focus on writers discovering their own ideas through writing and re-writing multiple drafts. It encourages a more free-thinking approach which does not need to always arrive at a pre-determined destination. By contrast, the product approach is more traditional and encourages students to study and imitate models of given texts. It encourages conformity to given genres and thus is more concerned about the final product.

Moved to the context of the one to one writing conference, such beliefs about writing can allow us to speculate upon the possible actions of the students when speaking about writing. For example, a student holding a more product-oriented view of writing may expect more teacher direction during their conferences and adhere closely to teacher feedback that can help them imitate a model of writing similar to that which the teacher desires. In such cases, the student may tend to employ strategies that facilitate the teacher's role to lead and direct.

In contrast, a student holding a more process-oriented view of writing may expect to discuss their writing more often and seek answers through dialogue. Feedback is seen as an additional option to use but not the only option that exists. In such cases, the student will tend to employ strategies that promote the teacher's role to suggest and explain.

For example, as we shall see in the following section, Layla's defining belief centres on discussing the errors in her conferences. This core belief seemed to influence some of her other beliefs about conferences such as seeking clarification of her errors and wanting more details about them. Taken together, such beliefs seemed to impact upon the kinds of strategies she then chose to employ during her conferences in order to further her goals and interest (e.g. by seeking reassurance about her errors using questions – see section 5.5).

Layla's focus on errors, its impact on her other beliefs and strategy use may offer us a window into the kinds of views she may hold more generally about writing and discussing her writing. In other words, all of Layla's thoughts and actions would encourage an interpretation that she holds a more product-oriented perspective with respect to writing that values accuracy and close adherence to teacher models of 'good writing'.

9.2.2 Layla's defining belief: 'Errors' (Belief 1)

Of all the students in the study, Layla was perhaps the most anxious over any mistakes made in her writing. It was her defining belief and she required a great deal of reassurance about them from Joan during their conferences. When such feedback was not forthcoming, Layla would seek out clarification whenever she felt unsure about the topics being discussed. Maria and Alex both sought more information on their errors too but never with the sense of urgency seen in Layla's conference actions and post conferences statements. A focus on errors was not a primary focus for Kazumi.

Layla's concern over her errors may have derived in part from her personality (she described herself as a constant worrier) but was also related to more practical concerns that equated less errors with achieving a higher final mark. This offered an impression of Layla carrying a more product-oriented view of writing composition that carried over into how she viewed writing conferences too (a trait she shared with both Kazumi and Maria) and meant that she saw Joan's feedback as representing an idealised model of what her essay needed to be. This made Layla highly motivated to follow Joan's advice to the letter.

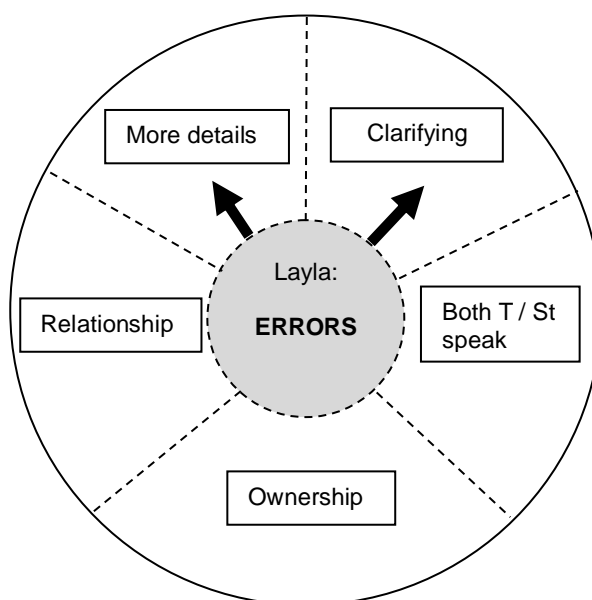
The difference compared to Kazumi and Maria, however, lay in the fact that both of them were more proficient writers than Layla with better levels of English. This meant not only that their work contained fewer errors to begin with, but also that their greater skill set gave them the confidence to listen to feedback and decide how much of it they wished to use. Layla, on the other hand, did not seem to have the confidence to make such decisions so tended to be more dependent on the feedback she received.

Layla's strong orientation towards the final grade and desire to follow Joan's feedback is supported by Best et. al (2015) in their interviews with ESL student writers. A quote offered by one of their students summarises quite well Layla's own sentiments '... it's like in my mind, I want to get an A ... so I'll do whatever ... [the instructor] says' (p. 342). Liu (2009) reported how the L2 writers in her study had a high expectation of their conference instructors telling them about the specific requirements of the essay task so that they might follow it closely. This implies a heightened sensitivity to wanting to 'get things right' on the part of L2 students in line with what their teacher, course and the assignment required and in many ways reflected Layla's feelings too.

While all four students sought clarification over their errors during their conferences, for Layla it was the central driving force behind her belief and understanding of conferences. From a sociocultural perspective, Layla's belief about errors seems to be the one she had most internalised or appropriated, most likely from her previous cultural and educational experiences. It influenced some of her other beliefs, especially a desire for more details about her errors and wanting reassurance about them too (see Figure 9.2).

As mentioned previously, Layla's internalisation of this belief was also aided by a powerful emotional component - her constant state of worry about her textual errors. This emotion affected and shaped her belief, making it ever stronger and central to how she viewed writing conferences overall. This supports Aragao's (2011 p. 307) view of how there is a 'tight relationship between beliefs and emotions in foreign language learning'. Barcelos (2015 p. 301) goes further by describing beliefs and emotions as 'intrinsically and interactively related'.

Figure 9.2: The influence of Layla's defining belief (centre) about conferencing on her other beliefs



9.2.3 Alex's defining belief: 'Giving his opinions' (Belief 5)

Alex's defining belief about conferencing was his willingness to share his opinions and ideas. He was the only student in the study who thought that the student would talk more than the teacher during conferences. Layla's focus was more on getting feedback rather than any desire to speak up while Kazumi was not much of a speaker by his own admission and unaccustomed to having a free voice during his discussions. Maria certainly had the confidence to speak

up and give her opinions but only did so when she felt strongly about an issue being discussed. Alex, on the other hand, believed in talking about all the issues raised where possible and learning through talking about them with less of a focus on error correction or following fixed models of how writing needed to look. In many ways, this hinted at more of a process-oriented view of looking at his writing which then carried over into his conference discussions.

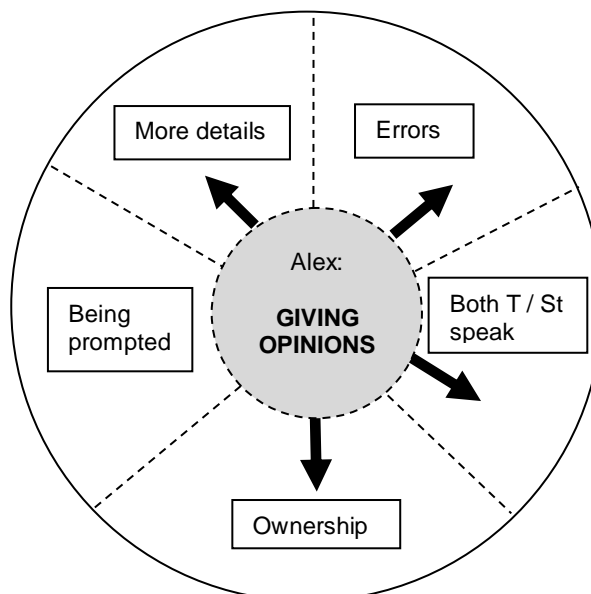
Alex felt it was important for Joan to understand the reasons behind aspects of his composition and the message he was trying to get across to the reader. By doing this, Alex felt that it would help Joan give him better feedback because she could understand what was going on in his mind. He saw the conferences as almost a spill-over from the writing class - a place where he could pick up new ideas about writing alongside feedback on his draft. His belief in speaking up during conferences influenced some of his other beliefs including his need to understand the reasons behind his writing issues (asking questions), finding out more about his errors (actively talking about them), his views on ownership (explaining what he wanted to write and why) and his belief that speaking with Joan would offer him more ideas about his writing (see Figure 9.3).

His willingness to speak up, however, is quite different from the few studies that have investigated what L2 student writers believe about conferencing. Liu's (2009) survey found that 'Fewer ESL students expected to tell the instructor their intention and meaning in their essay ... most of them did not think this as important' (p. 107). Maliborska and You (2016) in their survey of 100 L2 writers found that while a majority of them expected to share talk with their teachers, several commented on the difficulties they felt in communicating their ideas. These findings are supported by the wider literature in L2 conferences and

tutorials, which has painted a picture of reticence on the part of L2 students to speak up and get their voices heard. Reasons for this reluctance have been typically attributed to language issues, lack of conference experience or cultural differences. Often studies highlighted what L2 students expected to ‘receive’ rather than what they were willing to ‘contribute’ (Best et. al 2015; Goldstein and Conrad 1990; Liu 2009; Thonus 2004; Young 1992).

Alex’s example also highlights how some L2 student writers internalise beliefs that on the surface, may not seem to be the most obvious one based on an examination of their previous contexts. Alex had no previous experience of conferences, possessed a lower level of language proficiency and had been educated in a culture that according to his own descriptions promoted a more hierarchical discourse pattern between teachers and students – nothing that might predict Alex’s strong belief in contributing to his conferences. Yet in spite of all this, he did hold such a belief and used it to mediate his relationship with Joan quite effectively.

Figure 9.3: The influence of Alex’s defining belief (centre) about conferencing on his other beliefs



9.2.4 Kazumi's defining belief: 'Cultural influence' (Belief 1)

Kazumi was the only student in the study to explicitly voice a belief that his cultural experiences with respect to both social and educational practice in Japan may affect his conferences in the more western setting of the UK.

Kazumi came from a Japanese's educational system that he often described as being formal and hierarchical with respect to student and teacher roles. While Alex, who experienced a similar style of education, tended to seek out the things in common between his previous experiences and the new things he saw on the IFP - Kazumi had a tendency to accentuate the differences at times. As for Layla and Maria, they never raised the issue of culture.

Essentially, Kazumi's views about culture gravitated around two concerns - his potential difficulty in speaking during his conferences and his awareness of the differences that may exist between his culturally influenced education and the expectations of a more western setting on the IFP.

With regard to speaking, Kazumi expressed to me early on his belief that Japanese students (as well as other Asian students on the IFP), would face greater challenges to speak up and engage more actively during conferences. He based his opinion on the fact that most would be too accustomed to receiving feedback from teachers without offering their own opinions in return.

While such a generalisation about Asian students' reticence to participate has been challenged in the literature (Cheng 2000), the L2 conference and tutorial literature has suggested how previous cultural and educational experiences may play a role in the way students interact (Blau and Hall 2002; Goldstein and Conrad 1990; Harris 1997; Liu 2009; Powers 1993). Kazumi's sentiments did,

however, echo the Asian students in Young's (1992) study that articulated how they expected their writing centre tutors to behave in a way commensurate with their cultural preferences.

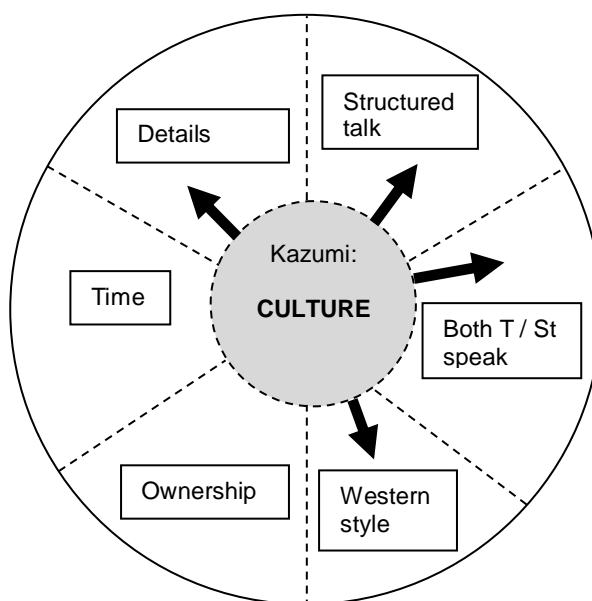
Yet Kazumi went much further than any of the above literature by offering his own rationale for such difficulties. He spoke explicitly about his cultural background and how that might make it more challenging for him to engage actively during writing conferences due to the differences that existed between eastern and western educational practices. I was impressed by his ability to make such connections and in particular, by the way Kazumi was able to offer concrete examples of this after experiencing a few conferences with Derek.

For example, he highlighted how he had found Derek's attempts at personalised openings to their conferences as something he did not particularly welcome – he preferred to move on to the evaluation immediately. Yet he understood *why* Derek had acted in this way, putting it down to the expectation of teachers in the UK or, as he called it, the *west* for wanting to hear what their students thought about things.

Kazumi's feelings about westernised notions of conference practice chime well with the larger questions posed by studies that have investigated how L2 students, in general, have dealt with studying and writing in foreign classrooms. Many describe a need for such students to find a middle ground between what they are accustomed to and what they are expected to do when studying in a foreign context and gradually, over time develop a distinctive authorial voice of their own (Angelova and Riazantseva 1999; Ivanic and Camps 2001; Le Ha 2009; Ramanathan and Atkinson 1999).

While the other students alluded to culture as playing a role in the way in which they had previously experienced feedback, none expressed it so explicitly and consistently as Kazumi did during the study. His belief in cultural influence was central to how he mediated his conference environment and strongly influenced his other beliefs in terms of how he viewed the teacher/student talk, required structured conferences, his need for more details and how he felt he had to navigate western-style interactions in an attempt to fit in (see Figure 9.4). Overall, it gave Kazumi a more product-oriented perspective on how to approach his writing and how to participate in conferences, especially with respect to teacher and student roles.

Figure 9.4: The influence of Kazumi's defining belief (centre) about conferencing on his other beliefs



9.2.5 Maria's defining belief: 'Clear feedback' (Belief 5)

Maria's defining belief centred on demanding clarity from Derek in terms of exactly what aspects of her draft needed revision and why. Whenever such clarity was lacking in her eyes, Maria deemed the feedback as less than useful.

This low tolerance for ambiguity may have been derived in part from Maria's previous experiences of essay writing and teacher feedback that may have given her fixed expectations about how to write and what feedback to expect. It offered the impression of Maria holding a more product-oriented view of writing and conference interaction. Her defining belief regarding clarity influenced her other beliefs too, including her belief that conference feedback needed to answer her questions, offer more information, a focus on her errors and involve talking to her teacher (see Figure 9.5). Neither Layla, Alex or Kazumi ever displayed such a strength of feeling about clarity. Layla and Alex had Joan as their conference teacher and due to their lower English levels, she offered them more direction at times where needed. Kazumi, like Maria, had Derek as his teacher but rarely raised the issue of clarity.

As Derek's style of conferencing was indirect and tentative when it came to evaluation and offering suggestions, perhaps due to the fact that he was conferencing with stronger students, Maria often found the information he provided lacking in enough clarity. Derek would usually not point out explicitly what was wrong or why and even, on occasion, whether it merited revision or not – everything was left up to Maria to decide. Maria did not like this style of feedback and believed that it was unhelpful for international students to be prompted to think while they were still learning how to write essays.

She found doing both confusing at times and not conducive in helping her to improve her draft. Instead, she expected greater clarity over whether something was good or bad and more directive guidance regarding revision. Such feelings have also been reported by other L2 writers discussing conferencing (Best et. al 2015; Liu 2009; Maliborska and You 2016) while there has also been support

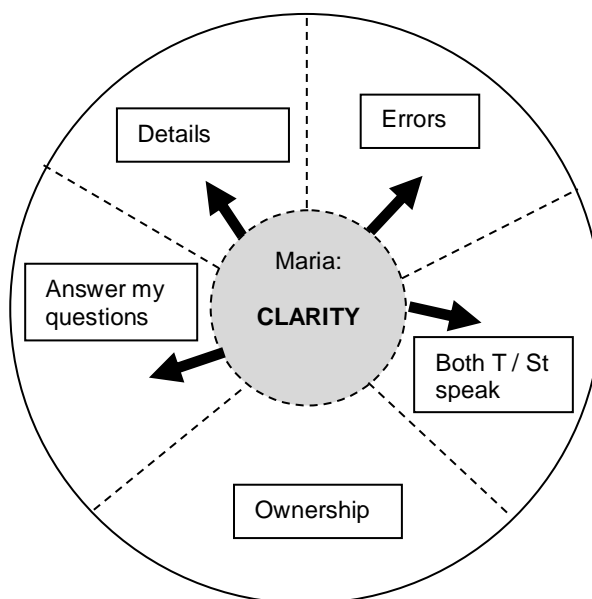
for the idea that L2 writers may at times require conferences better adapted to their specific needs such as more guidance on occasion (Harris and Silva 1993; Powers 1993; Reid 1994; Thonus 2004; Williams and Severino 2004).

Maria often complained that she felt unsure at times what Derek thought of her text, which left her unsure whether to revise something or not. This is similar to the finding by Young (1992) who described how her L2 writers found indirectness in tutorial feedback confusing while a student in Maliborska and You's (2016) study pleas for teachers to 'clearly express their mind' (p. 17).

Unlike Kazumi, Maria seemed less able to interpret Derek's meanings and read between the lines of what he was saying to arrive at her own conclusions.

While Maria understood that Derek's feedback style was linked to his desire to make her think for herself - she still found it very frustrating. Instead of gradually becoming more accustomed to it, her beliefs about wanting more clarity became even more entrenched as her conferences went by. In fact, her emotions on the issue built up to the extent that she began to feel that Derek was deliberately avoiding in helping her and there was little use in raising questions during their conferences because he would not answer them. On the one hand, this highlighted the extent to which her belief in 'seeking clarity' had become so centralised to her belief system about conferences and became a primary tool to mediate her conference interactions. On the other hand, however, it also demonstrated a certain inflexibility on the part of Maria to adapt to Derek's feedback style, as Kazumi had been able to do. Perhaps the reason for this lies in her developing a strong negative emotion about the issue quite early on in her conferences, which may have strengthened her belief in the issue and made her less open to adaptation during her later conference interactions.

Figure 9.5: The influence of Maria's defining belief (centre) about conferencing on her other beliefs



9.2.6 Shared beliefs: 'Places to get their errors corrected'

While defining beliefs helped to differentiate between the belief systems of the four students, they still shared some beliefs in common. For example, Layla, Alex and Maria (not Kazumi) all believed that a primary function of writing conferences was to receive feedback on their errors. They all used this belief as a tool to mediate their interactions in their conferences including the kinds of questions they asked, topics they followed up and revisions they would discuss. Their views support findings from the small literature that has directly examined what L2 student writers expect from their conferences - a belief that conferences were ideal places for corrections to take place (Best et. al 2015; Liu 2009; Maliborska and You 2016; Young 1992).

Furthermore, when Layla, Alex and Maria were asked to evaluate their conferences, they typically used the currency of how much error discussion there had been as one of the ways to positively evaluate the relative success of

their conferences – even if it meant that their teachers had spoken more than them. This seems to generally support Walker's (1992) finding, albeit with L1 students, which highlighted how for many of them, what seemed to matter most in terms of conference success was the nature of the *agenda* of the conference talk rather than any concern over who spoke more or less. If the agenda met their expectations, they were more satisfied.

The fact that three out of four of the students in the study expected error discussion also supports the characterisation of L2 writing conferences and tutorials in general as containing high amounts of talk centred around errors (Cumming and So 1996; Goldstein & Conrad 1990; Haneda 2004; Saito 1992; Weigle and Nelson 2004) including in L2 peer conferencing too (Connor and Asenavage 1994; Jacobs 1987; Mendoca and Johnson 1994; Stanley 1992). Error discussion is usually high because L2 student writers are often very aware of their own language needs and *want* to talk about them (Cumming and So 1996).

Interestingly, in the case of Layla, Alex and Maria, discussion of lower order concerns such as spelling and word order seemed to be as equally important to them as talking about higher order concerns such as organisation and referencing. In other words, feedback on their errors often meant discussing *everything* that was wrong in their texts. The three students also discussed how spoken feedback offered a greater advantage than written feedback because it offered the potential for *more* feedback and the ability to discuss issues on the spot. This aligns with some of the advantages often cited by advocates of conferences (Black 1998; Elbow 1998; Ewert 2009; Ferris 2003; Harris 1995;

Weissberg 2006) as well as the positive evaluations of L2 students about conferencing too (Chen 2005; Liu 2009).

As highlighted earlier, Layla's defining belief was focussed on dealing with errors she had made. She would often wait impatiently for news of how many or how few errors Joan would find in her text and feel an instant sense of either gratification or stress depending on what she heard. Layla relied on Joan to point out her errors and believed that it was her teacher's duty to do this as she was the expert writer and an L1 English speaker. Her view of Joan's role in the conference is similar to findings in the literature that highlight how L2 student writers typically preferred their tutors to act as authorities on their texts and play the more dominant role (Thonus 1999; Young 1992).

While Alex also shared Layla's enthusiasm for receiving error feedback, he did not seem to share the same expectation that it was an intrinsic part of Joan's role as conference teacher. Instead, Alex felt that receiving such spoken feedback on top of written feedback about his errors was a real bonus that would help him to understand more about his work.

Maria, however, shared more of Layla's drive in desiring error feedback, despite the fact that her level of written English was the strongest of all of the students in the study. She expected evaluations of her text to include a focus on any errors that she may have made in a clear and unambiguous manner. As alluded to earlier (9.2.5), perhaps due to her former experiences of writing and conferencing, Maria had quite a rigid perspective of receiving error feedback with preferences for *how* the feedback should proceed and *what* it needed to focus on. Patthey-Chavez & Ferris (1997) highlight how the stronger L2 writers in their study also placed greater demands on the teacher.

This contrasted with Layla's more scatter-gun approach of getting as much feedback as she could on everything or Alex's more laid-back attitude to gratefully receiving error feedback as it arrived during talk. Layla and Alex's relative inexperience of conferences and essay writing in general perhaps contributed to them being less prescriptive than Maria about how they believed error feedback should be.

Overall, Layla, Alex and Maria all saw conferences as places where they would receive feedback on their written errors and be able to discuss them with their writing teachers. Their belief in error talk is supported strongly by the literature that describes L2 conference talk as revolving around error discussion, facilitated by the wishes of many L2 writers themselves.

9.2.7 Shared beliefs: 'Places to speak about their texts'

Another belief that all 4 students used to mediate their understanding of conferences was to see them as places to talk with their teachers about their work - no one characterised it as a place to 'get' information from their teachers without participating themselves. This view of mutual activity supports the findings by Maliborska and You (2016) in their survey of 100 L2 writers on a composition course at their US university. They found that up to three-quarters of the students surveyed preferred to have a more balanced discussion with their teachers during conferences, though it must also be stated how a smaller but significant number (22%) also expressed a preference for conferences that were teacher-led.

Yet apart from this study, it has been difficult to find further support for my findings. The literature, in general, has highlighted how L2 students seem to be

wary of the need to contribute to their conferences. Thonus (1999) highlights how L2 student writers often wanted their tutors to take the lead during tutor/tutee conferences. Liu (2009) highlighted how the L2 writers in her study did not hold expectations of talking too much with their teachers about their text as they were unsure of exactly what to say to them.

Perhaps an explanation for the difference found in this study may lie in examining more closely what Layla, Alex, Kazumi and Maria actually mean when they say they expected to talk in their conferences. What we find is that there are differences in the way they have constructed such participation compared to our common sense notions of what it is to 'talk' in a writing conference. These range from reducing conference talk to a series of question and answer exchanges in a rather, fixed and transactional manner with information moving mainly from the teacher to the student (Layla, Maria and Kazumi to a lesser extent) to those students who believed in freer discussion that went with the flow of whatever was being discussed at the time, exhibiting a more conversational quality to it (Alex).

None of the students were concerned with how much they spoke in their conferences when compared to their teachers. The early conference literature spent a considerable amount of time advocating rather 'romantic' notions of conferences as sites that would allow students the liberty to speak up and have an equal say on their texts (Bowen 1993; Freedman & Sperling 1985; Murray 1979; Zamel 1985). This did not occur in this study but all the students *did* manage to get their voices heard effectively during their conferences despite the warnings of some that described how L2 student writers in particular, may

find it challenging to speak and share talk (Blau & Hall 2002; Ferris 2003; Thonus 2004).

Layla, for example, resembled these L2 writers that found it challenging at times to share talk more freely. Instead, she had a strong preference for Joan to lead and do most of the talking but would still intervene to ask questions about revisions she had made or to seek clarification when required. Layla respected Joan's greater expertise and felt that by listening and asking questions when she needed to offered her the opportunity to get the information she needed. Layla's conference contributions were thus very transactional and functional in nature, in keeping with her product-oriented view of conferences overall.

By contrast, Alex exhibited a stronger preference to contribute to conference talk than perhaps any of the other students and arrived at his one to one sessions with Joan almost pre-disposed to talk. For him, the possibility that fresh ideas and perspectives about his essay draft might appear through engaging in discussion was motivating and often inspired him to explain his writing and thinking further. Like Kazumi, Alex highlighted on occasion how his Asian background displayed a more hierarchically based system of education where students did not speak much with their teachers but unlike Kazumi, Alex never seemed held back by this and instead displayed a more free-spirited, less regulated view of collaboration. His contributions to conference talk felt the least transactional of all the students and offered evidence of his more process-oriented view of conferences.

Kazumi's belief in the cultural differences that existed between east and west when it came to speaking with teachers made it more challenging for him to speak during his conferences. In addition, he often described himself as

someone who was not much of a talker and certainly during the study, he was the quietest of all four of the students. Han (1996) describes how some of the L2 writers in his study held beliefs about conferences shaped in part by perceptions of their own self-efficacy as learners and writers, and this may well have been the case with Kazumi.

Perhaps that is why Kazumi attached such importance to having a good relationship with Derek - it had the power to influence his contributions to conference talk. Liu (2009) described how half of her 110 ESL students referred to conferences as being useful in developing a 'relationship' with their teacher. Perhaps from Kazumi's perspective, a way to override the cultural conventions he held and his own reticence to speak was to feel as comfortable as possible with Derek in their conferences. Kazumi's overall views on conference contributions fitted well into his more product-oriented view of conference interaction, albeit a softer version of that held by both Layla and Maria.

Maria viewed the opportunity to speak during her conferences as a positive one like Alex but where she differed from him was in the way she filtered such talk through a lens of practicality and function, similar to Layla. Maria expected to share talk that allowed her to hear more about the weaknesses in her text and get her questions answered clearly. As highlighted earlier, Maria knew exactly what she wanted from any questions she might ask and had a low tolerance for ambiguity. Her view on sharing conference talk displayed much of the transactional, product-oriented flavour seen in the views indicated by Layla and to a lesser extent Kazumi.

Overall, Layla, Alex, Kazumi and Maria all expressed the view that they should contribute to conference talk, despite the fact that the literature has often found

L2 writers to be wary of the need for such contribution. The answer for this difference may lie in many factors including their individual personalities, spoken proficiencies in English but perhaps more importantly in the way they had each constructed their own version of what it meant to 'talk' in a writing conference.

9.2.8 Shared beliefs: 'Places to receive detailed feedback'

One belief that all the students used to help mediate their conference feedback was that it should be detailed. They all believed that teacher feedback should contain specific examples and explanations rather than general guidelines and evaluations. In fact, most of them viewed the extra detail as being pivotal in helping their respective drafts to improve.

Such beliefs, however, would not be in tune with the traditional narrative emanating from the L1 literature on conferences and tutorials. This advocates that teachers offer a non-directive style of feedback that guides and prompts students to work things out for themselves rather than giving them extra information, for fear of *appropriating* their students' texts (see section 3.3). Yet the four students' beliefs that conferences should give them *more* information – not less is supported by L2 conference researchers, who have questioned the notion of appropriation when it comes to dealing with L2 writers.

They have stressed how participating in a one to one discussion in a second or foreign language can be very challenging for L2 writers. Thonus (2004) reminds us how non-directive feedback may be 'a barrier to comprehension' for some L2 writers (p. 228) while Williams and Severino (2004 p. 167) confront the notion of

prompting L2 writers for answers by stating that the ‘tutor cannot elicit what the writer does not know’.

Layla, Alex, Kazumi and Maria each offered slightly different reasons for wanting extra ‘detail’. For example, Layla and Maria expressed the view that more detail gave them a better understanding of the issue being discussed, which then armed them with greater confidence to pursue future revisions. Alex and Kazumi believed that the extra examples they received would offer them a starting point upon which to build and construct their own ideas.

The four students’ beliefs in wanting more detailed feedback from their conferences is supported by the literature. Best et. al (2015) found that L2 writers viewed conferences positively when they were more specific, detailed and offered clarification. Likewise, Maliborska and You (2016) found in their survey of 100 L2 writers’ views on conferencing that many expressed a desire for more specific and detailed commentary than they were currently receiving.

Apart from these two studies, one is required to make inferences about students’ feelings on the matter from other conference research. Liu (2009), for example, described how her L2 writers wanted their teachers to give them suggestions and tell them what they needed to do to get a high grade implying that some level of detail in the feedback was expected. Thonus (2004) highlighted how L2 writers expected their teachers to be more directive in their feedback while Young’s (1992) study suggested how her L2 writers found indirect statements difficult to process, implying that perhaps they would have preferred a more directive style of feedback.

In the case of Layla, any extra details she could get from Joan about her work was always gratefully accepted. She was accustomed to receiving detail in her previous experiences of writing feedback and thus expected the same from Joan. Layla lacked experience of a more independent style of learning and at times would begin to worry about what she needed to do next if she was not provided with enough guidance. This links more generally to findings about the anxiety that some L2 writers at university may feel about conferences and their roles within them (Arndt 1993; Chen 2005) but also to Layla's more product-oriented view of conference interaction.

Unlike Layla, Alex saw any extra information about his text as an opportunity to better understand the problems in his writing issues. He wanted to learn more about his weaknesses as a writer in English and apply the knowledge to help him avoid making the same mistakes again. This linked well with Alex's view of his writing, where progress might be made through practice and discussion. It supported the impression that he held a more process oriented perspective about writing that then impacted his conference interactions.

Kazumi's view about getting extra details from Derek was more in line with Layla's than Alex's. He expected Derek to correct as many of his mistakes as possible and offer him concrete examples and suggestions about possible future revisions. For Kazumi, examples allowed him to better picture what he needed to do and offered him a hook upon which he could hang more of his own ideas and revisions. He described receiving extra examples as helping him to see the different ways in which he could tackle the issue under question. Whenever Kazumi did get the kind of details he wanted, he would evaluate the

conference as 'more effective' and when such information was less forthcoming, he used terms such as 'basic' to describe the feedback.

Maria's desire for more details mirrored in some ways aspects already highlighted in the passages above for the other students. She frequently pointed out how she expected the feedback to go beyond merely pointing out that she had made an error or where it was located but rather that it needed to move on to explaining how she might correct it with appropriate exemplification. Like Kazumi, she did not expect to be given the revision but simply detailed knowledge of how she might go about revising it herself.

Maria's strength in writing meant that she did not typically make as many low order style errors as the other students but instead had more complex issues including her language style, the cohesiveness of her argumentation or the relative integration of referencing. These higher order concerns do not naturally lend themselves to solutions that can be elucidated by non-directive teacher prompting alone (Williams and Severino 2004). Instead, their complexity is perhaps more easily unravelled through detailed feedback, which is what Maria was seeking from her conference feedback.

9.2.9 Shared beliefs: 'Places to keep some ownership over their text'

The previous section highlighted how issues of appropriation were less clear when it came to L2 writing conferences and how L2 writers themselves may often prefer more directive forms of feedback (Best et. al 2015; Maliborska and You 2016; Thonus 2004; Young 1992;). In addition to this, many L2 writers may come from cultures where teacher/student relationships are more hierarchical in nature and teachers are expected to take the lead (Goldstein and Conrad 1990;

Liu 2009; Young 1992). From such views, one might reasonably expect L2 writers to not place as much importance, as scholars seem to do, regarding how much ownership they may or may not have over their work. Yet despite these assumptions, all four students in this student *did* express opinions and beliefs related to ownership over their work.

Layla, Alex, Kazumi and Maria all highlighted beliefs in being able to exert some degree of ownership over their texts. These included being prepared to question feedback if they felt unsure about its usefulness, reflecting on requests for change before making any decision to revise and even a need to be convinced by the argument for revisions on occasion.

It is difficult to compare or contrast these findings with the literature, as there do not seem to be any studies that have directly examined L2 writers' beliefs about ownership of their texts in writing conferences at university. Maliborska and You's (2016) study findings with 100 L2 writers on a composition course in the US does, however, hint at how such writers may feel about ownership issues. As part of their survey to gather their students' perspectives about writing conferences, they asked for any suggestions that might help to improve future conferencing. Their data suggested that a few students wanted teachers to take more account of their ideas at times.

Layla viewed Joan's suggestions for change as 'hard work' that required her to dismantle parts of her text and re-write it, which would take her a long time. While her default behaviour was to pay lip service to everything Joan said, on occasion, Layla would question such requests for change. This was typically born out of her worrying over the time it would take her to make the revision and the investment she had already made in writing the text in the first place. Layla

had indicated to me her willingness to challenge Joan's ideas on the odd occasion when she felt that something in her text merited it but this did not occur very frequently. Of the four students in the study, Layla offered the weakest indication of 'ownership' over her texts - it certainly mattered to her but getting a good mark was more important and she felt that this was perhaps best achieved by following Joan's feedback as much as possible.

In complete contrast to the other students, Alex was perhaps the student who most expressively voiced his belief in wanting to ensure that his text was always a reflection of his own ideas. Ownership of his text seemed to be very important to Alex - he did not want Joan to appropriate it to the extent that it ceased to be his own. While Alex wanted detailed feedback to help him improve his text, he seemed to want to make that journey on his own, using Joan's feedback as guidance to help him navigate the way forward. Alex believed that revisions did not always have to come from Joan but also himself. He expressed how he wanted to be convinced, at times, of the merits for making changes and when he was not persuaded, he was unlikely to make the revision. It all served to reinforce how Alex seemed to hold more of a process-oriented view about his writing, with the *journey* seeming to matter more than the final destination.

Kazumi, like Alex, but to a lesser extent, also placed some value on retaining a level of ownership over his words and ideas. When making revisions, Kazumi preferred to take his time and think before he acted. He also expressed the view that he would not always be acting upon every suggested revision offered by Derek but preferred to consult significant others such as his peers before making any decisions to revise. It highlighted how Kazumi was open to appropriating the ideas of others and not just his teacher. While Layla would

soak up her teacher's suggestion for revision almost immediately, Kazumi seemed to have a fixed set of 'filters' that included friends and peers as well as his own deliberations, which the information he had been given needed to pass through before he would make a decision to act. This need to feel comfortable or convinced about the proposed changes mirrored that of Alex to some extent. Maria's view of ownership over her text resembled in many ways, Alex and Kazumi's approach though unlike Kazumi, she did not consult any peers for advice, as far as I am aware. However, like both of them, Maria also needed to be convinced by the merits for change put forward by her teacher before taking any action. Maria also articulated her belief in disagreeing with Derek's suggestions if needed because to follow him when she was not comfortable would be detrimental to her writing. She did, however, express a willingness to compromise at times when she did not agree.

Layla, Alex, Kazumi and Maria in many ways have showcased the wide spectrum of attitudes L2 writers may hold about questions of 'ownership' over their writing – it is not one, monolithic whole. The inference at times from the wider literature is that L2 student writers experience less consternation about being closely directed by their teachers to revise aspects of their texts – indeed, we are told that some may, due to their cultural and education background, come to expect such directive guidance. While there is undoubtedly some truth in this, Layla, Alex, Kazumi and Maria still exhibited varying degrees of ownership beliefs about their texts. Interestingly, they also wanted their teachers to check their errors and give them detailed feedback on their work but, in their eyes, receiving such help did not necessarily mean they had suddenly abdicated any responsibility of ownership over their texts.

I would argue that gathering such extra information from their teacher allowed some of them to make better, more informed choices about what future revision pathways they may wish to follow. Having this freedom to choose the way ahead is, I would suggest, an example of L2 student writers retaining a degree of ownership over their work.

Overall section 9.2 has highlighted how the four students all held defining beliefs about writing conferences that had the power to influence some of their other beliefs, affect their use of strategies and indicate their overall views of writing being more product or process oriented. While these defining beliefs served to differentiate the students with respect to their belief systems, they were bound closer by the beliefs they shared in common about writing conferences.

9.3 Discussion of the students' use of conference strategies (RQ2): 'What strategies do L2 student writers employ during their conference interactions?'

Navarro and Thornton (2011 p. 291) remind us how 'the contemporary understanding of beliefs presents them as a construct inseparable from action itself'. Having discussed the beliefs held by the four students in the study in the previous section, I now move on to a consideration of this action - the kinds of strategies they employed during their conferences. This section begins by first offering a brief quantitative overview of the students' use of strategies both within and across their conferences. It then moves on to discussing the 5 most common strategies applied by the student's during their conferences.

9.3.1 A quantitative overview of student strategy use

Table 9.1 below provides an overview of the frequency with which the 8 strategies observed during the analysis were used during the students' four conferences.

Table 9.1: Students' overall strategy use by frequency

Strategies used by students	Frequency	No. of students who used the strategy according to the criteria set *
B1: Reflecting on their work	x61	4
C1: Enforcing further explicitness	x61	3
B5: Seeking communication repair	x61	2
B2: Offering a rationale for their work	x45	3
B3: Explaining their process	x43	2
B4: Offering an insight to future plans/changes	x21	0
A1: Selecting the topic (uninvited)	x15	1
C2: Questioning change	x13	1

* viz. used strategies 2 or more times in at least 3 of the 4 conferences

If one considers frequency of use as the main organising factor, 3 possible groups are revealed:

- a **top group** of three strategies (B1, C1 & B5)
- a **middle group** of two strategies (B2 & B3)
- a **lower group** of three strategies (B4, A1 & C2)

But if we consider how many of the students applied the strategies, a different picture emerges. For example, the three most frequently used strategies in the top group whilst numerically equal (61 times each) cannot be judged as being equally used by all the students. They are differentiated by the important fact that **only** the strategy of '*student reflection (B1)*' was actually used by all four students on a frequent enough basis to meet the criteria. Strategies C1 and B5 respectively, owe their high frequencies to their use by either 3 or 2 of the students in the study but not all 4. Organising the data according to the number

of students who used the strategy in accordance to the set criteria (used them 2 or more times in at least 3 of their 4 conferences) offers the following groups:

- **All 4 students:** B1: Reflecting on their work
- **3 students:** C1: Enforcing further explicitness; B2: Offering a rationale for their work
- **2 students:** B5: Seeking communication repair; B3: Explaining their process
- **1 student:** A1: Selecting the topic (uninvited); C2: Questioning change
- **No student:** B4: Offering an insight to future plans/changes

We are left with a set of 5 strategies that were used consistently by at least half of the students in the study, viz. **B1, C1, B2, B5, B3** and these will be discussed in greater depth in the next section.

From an individual perspective, the students did not use strategies in equal numbers. For example, Alex used the most throughout his four conferences (96) while Kazumi enacted the lowest number at just 59 in total. Layla and Maria used similar numbers of strategies overall at 83 and 82, respectively. These numbers suggest that amongst all four of the students, Alex seemed to participate the most actively in his conferences while Kazumi the least, with both Layla and Maria contributing somewhere in the middle of these two in terms of their relative contributions. This variation in participation levels is supported by several studies in both L1 and L2 (Freedman and Sperling 1985; Goldstein and Conrad 1990; Jacobs and Karliner 1977; Patthey-Chavez & Ferris 1997).

The numerical impressions here fit well with the beliefs expressed by, in particular, Alex and Kazumi respectively. Alex's defining belief centred around

wanting to express his opinions and have a voice at his conferences and the quantitative data would suggest that he did manage to do this. Meanwhile, Kazumi spoke of his belief that speaking during conferences may prove challenging for him and indeed, he did end up speaking the least. The disparity between the two students however, seems to contradict the findings of Patthey-Chavez & Ferris (1997) that showed how stronger students contributed more to their conferences than weaker level students. In this study, Alex had a weaker level of English than Kazumi yet overall, spoke more during his conferences.

I feel that Kazumi's deficit view of himself with respect to being 'quiet and not a speaker' linked to his defining belief that Asian students did not easily speak up almost seemed to fix his levels of contribution before he had even entered the conference. In other words, Kazumi expected to contribute less and so he did. Bandura (1986) highlights how people have a tendency to confidently perform tasks that they judge themselves capable of managing but avoid those they believe may exceed their abilities – this may have been the case with Kazumi. His defining belief regarding cultural differences, may have reached a state of maturity and self-regulation whereby it felt quite resistant to change. In other words, Kazumi may have resorted to a *fixed mindset* (Dweck 2006) regarding this issue.

With respect to the phase in which each strategy contribution was made, most of the students' participation occurred during phase B of their conferences (231 strategies employed in total regardless of frequency criteria). This was perhaps no surprise as this phase formed the very 'heart' of conference talk, where topics that had already been raised were discussed in detail. It was characterised by the teacher offering explanations and exemplifications and the

students seeking further clarification and commentary. Phase B of the conferences also prepared the ground to move forwards and consider future revisions. Layla, Kazumi and Maria were fairly consistent in their participatory strategies during this phase, exhibiting similar efforts. Alex, however, offered the most with a total of 68 strategies – some 11 more than Maria in second place. Once again, this tentatively supports Alex's defining belief in willing to share his ideas and opinions during conferences.

Raising items and setting the agenda of what would be discussed (Phase A) was not something the students collectively were able to enact with any degree of proficiency (only 15 times in total). Writing conferences between students and teachers are examples of what the literature terms as 'institutional discourse', where the rights of interactional access and contribution are usually conferred upon the roles each participant plays (Drew and Heritage 1992; Thornborrow 2002). The teacher's status in terms of knowledge and institutional position tasks them with leading conference feedback, which gives them first option about what they would like to discuss. The students would then need to overcome this 'hurdle' if they wanted to choose topics for discussion.

Maria, Kazumi and even Alex seemed unable to instigate topic choices of their own, unless they were explicitly invited to do so by their teacher. Layla, however, managed to raise topics up to 11 times during her four conferences – 8 more times than the second highest attempts to do so by Alex. Her success may have been related in part to her worries about problems in her text, which meant that she was continually motivated to seek reassurance about what she had written. This combined with her impatience to receive feedback often prompted Layla to jump in and ask Joan about specific areas that she was most

concerned about during her conferences. It is interesting to note that Layla's higher activity in such strategies occurred despite her lower level of English proficiency, especially compared to Kazumi and Maria. It highlights how student conference activity is not only dependent on linguistic factors but also a range of internal factors including the personality, motivation and beliefs of the student involved.

Overall, however, the low proficiency with which the students were able to raise topics did not match the efforts described in some of the literature. Patthey-Chavez and Ferris (1997) highlighted how the stronger students in their study were able to take the initiative to start their own topics. Goldstein and Conrad (1990) described how two of the three students in their study were found to contribute to 'roughly half of the topic nominations' (p. 450). The caveat in both studies however is that the participants involved were 'strong' students.

In the case of Patthey-Chavez and Ferris (1997), all the international students they studied had been deemed ready for mainstream (non-ESL) composition classes while in the case of Goldstein and Conrad (1990), the students were described as having all lived in the US for 6 years and were fluent speakers of English. Such factors may have contributed to the higher occurrence of topic nominations in their study. The findings in this study with respect to topic nominations better align with those by Thonus (2004) who describes how tutors interacting with L2 writers tend to 'direct the course of the session' (p. 230), facilitated in part by L2 writers' acquiescence of such tutor actions.

Phase C refers to the final exchanges between the students and their teachers about a topic. Usually, discussions here were characterised by ideas and suggestions put forward regarding future revisions by the teacher and the

student asking for further clarification. This phase of the conferences saw the students quite engaged in the conference talk - it was the second most utilised phase by the students (74 times in total) though not equally so. Layla, Alex and Maria exhibited similar levels of engagement during this phase with Kazumi contributing the least (just 5 times).

Looking at strategy contributions in each of the students' own four conferences, some basic patterns were observed. For example, Layla and Alex posted low numbers in terms of their strategy contributions during their first conferences (14 times and 15 times respectively) before increasing in their subsequent contributions – Alex, for example, doubling the number he used between his first and second conference. Their increased use of strategies was also generally maintained throughout their later conferences too.

Perhaps it was a case of initial nerves and being unaccustomed to the conference arena that caused their earlier contributions to be lower. Once they had experienced it and seen how Joan delivered feedback and what expectations she had of their roles, they perhaps felt better prepared to participate in the next one. Their increased participation supports the literature that has tracked L2 writers from one conference to the next and seen their relative participation increase as they became more familiar with the routines of the conference (Strauss and Xiang 2006; Young and Miller's 2004).

Maria, on the other hand, was the only student in the study to offer a stable number of strategy contributions throughout her four conferences, before tailing off in her final conference, where her draft was essentially complete and thus did not invite much commentary. Maria's level of consistency was probably due to her relative strength in writing essays and prior experiences of conferencing.

Kazumi's overall profile of strategy use in his four conferences suggests that he found it more challenging than the other students to actively contribute to his conferences. In three out of four of the conferences, his numbers were the lowest amongst the students. As mentioned previously, I feel this was largely due to his beliefs about his own speaking ability and wider views on cultural differences.

9.3.2 'Reflecting on their work' (B1)

O'Malley et. al (1985) highlighted in their study evidence that strategies such as self-evaluation were infrequently used by L2 learners of English in general. Yet in this study, every student used the strategy in each of their own four conferences from as little as just once up to a high of 7 times in any one conference. Overall, Kazumi offered the most reflections on his work (23 times) with Layla offering the least (9 times). Both Alex and Maria offered reflections in-between these two (15 times and 14 times respectively). For Kazumi, the strategy of offering reflection on his work was also his most used strategy overall, which suggests a real strength in being able to self-monitor and evaluate how well he had been doing and what still needed to be done. It matched his more introspective style as a thoughtful student writer.

This high frequency of self-evaluation mirrors the actions of the 'strong' students in Patthey-Chavez and Ferris' (1997) study of L2 writers, who were also capable of reflecting back on their work and offering an evaluation of it. Yet such self-evaluation was not solely the preserve of stronger students - Young and Miller's (2004) study of an adult Vietnamese man of intermediate level

English who was new to conferencing, highlighted how with time, he was also able to reflect on the weaknesses in his writing.

Layla, Alex, Kazumi and Maria's reflections usually arose in response to prompts from their teacher but sometimes of their own volition too. Layla and Kazumi, for example, offered reflections derived primarily from being asked questions, especially at the start of each of their conferences – they rarely if ever volunteered their thoughts freely. In contrast, Alex and Maria's reflections occurred as a result of both their teacher's prompts and of their own volition. For example, Alex and Maria would listen to their teachers giving evaluations on occasion, pick up on any negative issues raised and intervene at the next turn to offer a reflection. Though many reflective self-evaluations were prompted by their teachers, it does not diminish the students use of this strategy in any way. Being prompted is just the catalyst - each student still has to take up the baton and offer a relevant self-evaluation of the issue under discussion and all of them did this effectively.

The content of each student's reflections differed in some respects too. For example, Layla's reflections were usually focussed on the challenges she had faced to write her draft while the other three students gave more balanced views that included both positive and negative reflections. Another difference observed was the way in which Layla and Alex would often include reference to their previous experiences of writing, especially how a lack of experience in some aspects of composition had caused them difficulties in their current writing. This ability to refer back to previous learning experiences was also noted by Patthey-Chavez and Ferris' (1997) in their study with the stronger students. Kazumi and Maria, on the other hand, never gave voice to such prior

experiences during their reflections to account for their present writing challenges.

The students' reflections also shared some similarities too, such as the way in which they all seemed to focus more on higher order concerns such as paragraph construction, referencing and content than lower order concerns such as language issues. I found this surprising as the literature on conferencing and tutoring is overwhelming in painting a picture of how L2 writers seemed to be ever-fixated on language issues (Aljaafreh & Lantolf 1994; Cumming and So 1996; Goldstein & Conrad 1990; Haneda 2004; Riazi 1992; Saito 1992; So 1992; Weigle and Nelson 2004) and yet the students in this study when engaged in reflective self-evaluation, rarely focussed on language issues. Perhaps this occurred because the writing classes on the IFP paid great attention to concepts such as essay structure, content and referencing, which led to them thinking and reflecting about them more often.

Interestingly, the students' reflections were also quite lengthy affairs, ranging anywhere from 20 words up to 60, highlighting an ability to voice their thoughts in a sustained manner. Perhaps most striking of all was how the majority of the students' reflections were so personalised, describing their own journeys through the composition 'maze' of writing, re-writing and revising with details of what seemed to work and what did not. Their reflective descriptions helped to reveal the degree of cogitation and deliberation they had gone through or were still going through to arrive at their present draft. The fact that *all* the students engaged in this, even those such as Layla, Kazumi and Maria, who largely seemed to hold tendencies towards a more product-oriented view of writing (which was geared to consider the end product rather than the journey)

demonstrated the four students' ability to reflect quite deeply at times about their work.

9.3.3 'Offering a rationale' (B2)

Most of the students were able to look back at their work and offer reasons for what they had written. While all four students used this strategy in their conferences, Kazumi did not use it enough for it to be included in the criteria for further analysis, (i.e. a minimum of 2 or more times in at least 3 of the 4 conferences). With regard to the other three, Maria offered the most rationales for her work (14 times), closely followed by Alex (12 times) and Layla (11 times).

All three of the students usually offered their rationales without any prompting from their teachers. Instead their interventions were usually prompted by hearing their teachers' evaluations about problems in their text. Such strategy use is supported in the literature on L2 writing conferences that has shown students capable of offering reasons for the choices they made whilst writing (Ewert 2009; Strauss and Xiang 2006). The rationales offered by all three students were at times either very personal in nature, linked to the parameters laid out in the task assignment or an honest appraisal of their lack of knowledge about the issue under discussion.

Layla offered rationales without being prompted by Joan. On occasion her rationales could be construed as defensive reactions to hearing negative feedback – a way to mitigate the feedback heard. This especially occurred when Layla had more of a personal attachment to parts of her text that were under threat of revision and she offered some mild resistance to making

changes. Layla's more product oriented style of viewing her writing and conferences meant that she preferred to minimise changes where possible unless she could see that it would improve her text and help her achieve a higher grade. By offering rationales at these moments, Layla was also able to win concessions on occasion from Joan about what had to be revised, which led to her having to revise a little less than was originally requested.

Alex's rationales were quite chatty and candid in stating how he did not know how to do things, forgot about things or found aspects of writing challenging because it was so different to what he had experienced before when studying in China. This fitted well into his more process-oriented view of conferencing that saw talk as an opportunity to express his ideas about his writing journey.

Maria's rationales were also usually based on either her lack of knowledge about aspects of essay writing or something more personal. An example of the latter is seen when she offered her rationale for reducing the length of her draft to meet the assignment guidelines at Derek's request. She openly declared how she did not want to do it but was obliged to do so by the rules and was obviously not happy about the revision. Her level of dissatisfaction not only showed how much she cared about her text but also indicated a level of mild resistance to making changes that she did not believe in.

Such mild resistance to making suggested revisions by Layla and Maria is reflected in the literature with both L1 and L2 writers. For example, Patthey-Chavez and Ferris (1997 p. 70) described how one of the L1 speakers in their study 'politely objected' to their teacher's suggestion for revision while a strong L2 writer 'felt quite free to alter the suggestion from the teacher', while they were speaking. Strauss and Xiang's (2006) study of L2 writers on a basic

composition course at a US university also highlighted how some of them displayed resistance to their teacher's suggestions at times.

9.3.4 'Enforcing further explicitness' (C1)

Another commonly used strategy employed by three of the four students was during Phase C of their conferences when they attempted to seek more information from their teachers about possible future revisions. Once again, all four students were seen to use it but Kazumi again failed to utilise it enough to meet the criteria for further analysis. Of the three students who did use it frequently, Alex (24 times) and Maria (21 times) used it the most – almost double the efforts from Layla (12 times). For Maria, enforcing further explicitness was her most used strategy throughout her four conferences.

In Oxford's (2011) classification of learning strategies, the strategy that I have coded as 'enforcing further explicitness' would most likely be an example of what she calls a 'Sociocultural-Interactive' strategy where the learner is attempting to interact to overcome gaps in their knowledge, for by example, asking questions. This was certainly the case when Layla, Alex and Maria sought further explicitness from their conference teachers about their requests or suggestions for revisions, typically in the form of questions asking for more details on what they should do and how.

The students may have used the strategy with such high frequency in part due to the conference styles of their teachers, Joan and Derek. Both offered variations of non-directive feedback that centred around offering suggestions and prompts regarding revisions rather than offering more directive instructions

to change something with specificity. It was a style premised on wanting the students to become more independent and think for themselves.

However, Layla, Alex and Maria seemed to struggle with this approach and were accustomed to receiving more direct instructions of what they needed to revise. As a result, they all sought to extract more information and clarity over possible future revisions from their teachers. Their need for greater explicitness supports the general findings of L2 student writers' views in the literature as holding a preference for teachers to lead and be more directive in their conferences or tutorial feedback (Best et. al 2015; Han 1996; Maliborska and You 2016; Young 1992) alongside similar concerns raised by L2 writing scholars (Blau and Hall 2002; Harris and Silva 1993; Powers 1993; Reid 1994; Thonus 2004; Williams and Severino 2004). Yet few studies mention L2 student writers *actively seeking information* when it is not forthcoming, as seen in this study.

Layla's typical modus operandi for getting more information was to first listen to Joan's generalised suggestions for revision and then offer her own examples of a specific revision that she could make and attempt to get Joan's approval for it. This was successful on occasion while at other times, Joan would tell her that it was her decision to make. Most of Layla's statements for approval were very specific in nature, even down to where exactly in the draft the revision might start or end, which reinforced my view of Layla's need to have explicit models to follow and reinforcing her more product-oriented view of writing and conferencing.

While Alex used a similar approach to Layla in trying to get more detail from Joan, he was less concerned about the detail. Alex was more interested in

learning about the bigger picture of what needed to be done rather than being fixated about the mechanics of making the changes themselves. Once he could understand what he needed to change, he would go ahead and revise it in his own way – indicative to me of his more process-orientated view of conferencing and writing.

Maria's attempts to get more information from Derek was her single most used strategy throughout any of her four conferences. Part of the reason for this perhaps, as indicated earlier (section 9.2.4) was the frustration she expressed in not getting the required level of detail she expected from Derek. Like Layla and Alex, she would listen to suggestions for revision and then offer her own version to Derek for approval. She did not require the level of detail that Layla desired nor did she repetitively request more information in the way that Alex would do – Maria simply wanted clarity, nothing more.

The use of this strategy highlights how L2 writers can be quite strategic in how they attempt certain strategies in order to further their own goals. Patthey-Chavez and Ferris (1997) highlighted how from their experience 'some [students] display a strategic skill in evoking [teacher] authority in order to profit from it - for instance by explicitly requesting an expert opinion about their writing' (p. 54) and I would argue that all three students' use of this strategy would support this assertion.

9.3.5 'Seeking communication repair' (B5)

While all the students used this strategy, only Layla and Alex used it extensively during their conferences. For them, it was their most frequently used strategy throughout their conferences – Layla using it 22 times and Alex 30 times in

total. This strategy would also fall into the 'Sociocultural-Interactive' category in Oxford's S²R model (2011), whereby students ask questions seeking either clarification or verification about areas of difficulty. Goldstein and Conrad (1990) found L2 students to apply this strategy when the meaning of what had been said needed to be clarified further rather than using it to discuss revision items. Whenever communication broke down between Layla and Alex and their conference teacher Joan, they were both very active in asking questions on the spot to gain confirmation and clarification of the issue being discussed. In contrast, Kazumi and Maria used the strategy appreciably less often, 5 times and 4 times respectively. This stark contrast was most likely due to the fact that Kazumi and Maria had higher levels of English proficiency than either Layla and Alex and as a result, rarely struggled to understand the meaning of the feedback they were given.

With regard to Layla and Alex, the breakdown in understanding usually occurred for a variety of reasons. For example, sometimes certain words or phrases that Joan used were not easily understood by them. At other times, they simply lost the thread of what Joan was saying about their work, perhaps due to mentally switching off momentarily and then intervened to reclaim understanding. On other occasions, Joan's feedback on an issue was quite lengthy and Layla and Alex struggled to deal with the volume of language so quickly – supporting Ferris' (2003) claim of additional cognitive burdens being placed on L2 writers in one to one conferences.

Sometimes the indirectness of Joan's feedback caused Layla and Alex to ask questions to clarify their understanding. This is supported by the literature that highlights the extra challenge presented to some L2 writers of making sense of

indirect teacher statements during conferences and tutorials and their need for more direction (Best et. al 2015; Blau & Hall 2002; Han 1996; Hyland and Hyland 2001; Maliborska and You 2016; Williams and Severino 2004).

Layla generally had better aural skills than Alex and this could be seen in the kind of prompts they both used to seek repair. Layla would listen to the feedback and then intervene with a short sentence that either sought repetition from Joan of what she had uttered or Layla would present 'her version' of what she thought Joan had meant and seek confirmation of its validity. Alex, on the other hand, sometimes struggled to decode Joan's speech at all and this led to many of his repairs being short echoes of the final words used by Joan in her previous turn to which he applied raised intonation to indicate that he was lost.

9.3.6 'Explaining their process' (B3)

This strategy was used by two of the students to explain how they had gone about writing parts of their text. While the previous strategy of repair seemed to be favoured by Layla and Alex, (the two students with lowest levels of English language proficiency) this strategy of explanation was favoured by both Kazumi and Maria, the two students with the highest levels of proficiency. Maria used this strategy the most (19 times), followed by Kazumi (11 times), Alex (7 times) and Layla (6 times). Neither Alex nor Layla used the strategy enough to meet the criteria for further analysis but for both Maria and Kazumi, this was their second most commonly used strategy overall during their conferences. The occurrence of this strategy in conferences is supported by the literature (Ewert 2009; Haneda 2004).

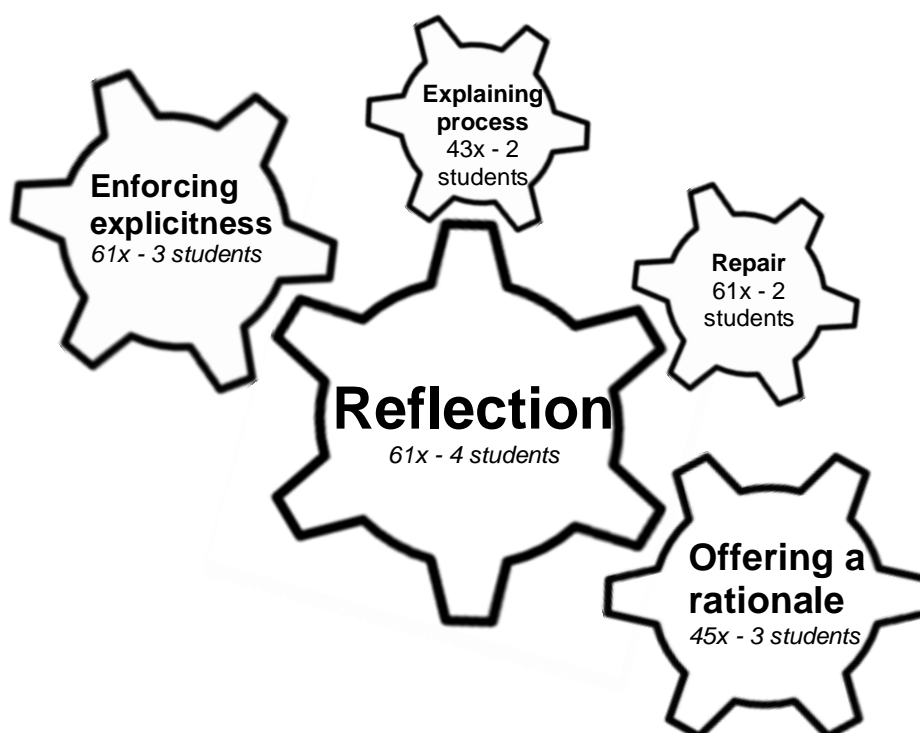
Both Kazumi and Maria only tended to offer explanations when prompted to by Derek. Both could offer quite lengthy explanations at times using appropriate terminology to outline how they had gone about their various stages of composition from planning, to writing, re-writing and researching topics. They also on occasion referenced how their actions had been predicated on something previously discussed in a conference, thereby weaving their conference discussions into their overall composition journeys.

Kazumi and Maria's high frequency in using this strategy might be explained by referring to their drafts. Due their stronger language proficiency, their texts generally contained less errors than those of Layla and Alex. This may have encouraged Derek to spend more time during their conferences to prompt Kazumi and Maria about the processes they went through rather than having to focus on lower order concerns. Joan, who conferenced with Layla and Alex, had more language issues to deal with alongside helping them to understand how to construct an academic essay - something Derek did not need to worry about. This difference in Derek and Joan's feedback approach to better align with their students' abilities and the texts they produced is supported by the literature on conferencing (Goldstein and Conrad 1990; Patthey-Chavez and Ferris 1997) though notably Ewert (2009), for example, did not find this to be the case.

Overall, this section has highlighted the five most common strategies employed by at least half of the students according to the criteria set for strategy analysis. The four students were quite effective at reflecting, explaining and rationalising their work and when required were able to actively repair any communication breakdown or seek out more details. Figure 9.6 summarises the strategies used, employing cogs to represent the mental choices students made about

selecting which strategies to use in their conferences. The largest cog represents the most commonly used strategy by all four students, the two smaller cogs show the strategies used by three students and the two smallest cogs highlight those strategies used by two students.

Figure 9.6: 5 strategies most consistently used by at least half of the students



9.4 Discussion of the links between students' beliefs and strategy use

(RQ3): 'How do students' beliefs affect their use of strategies in conferences?'

The small literature on L2 writers' beliefs about conferences and tutorials and the kinds of strategies they are seen to use in them has given us some insight. Yet very few studies if any have attempted to directly investigate the relationship *between* these beliefs and strategies. Furthermore, I am unaware of any study that has conducted research with EFL students conferencing with their writing teachers on a foundation programme at a UK university. With this in

mind, the path ahead with regard to my third research question is somewhat uncharted with limited support available in the literature against which to benchmark my own claims and conclusions.

Nevertheless, there is a small set of studies that has investigated links between L2 learners' beliefs about language and learning in general and their use of strategies though, crucially for this study, none concerning writing conferences. Such studies support the notion that there is a degree of correlation between what students seem to believe and what strategies they use (Kim 2001; Li 2010; Park 1995; Suwanarak 2012; Yang 1999) and the relationship is not a linear one but more organic and inconsistent in nature (Ellis 2008b; Li 2010; Navarro & Thornton 2011; Yang 1999; Zhong 2015).

9.4.1 Modelling the relationship between beliefs and strategy use

Barcelos (2003 p. 26) reminds us how 'belief systems are not linear or structured but complex and embedded within sets of beliefs forming a multilayered web of relationships'. Oxford (2011 p. 40) strikes a similar tone when discussing how strategy use incorporates 'the complex web of beliefs, emotional associations, attitudes, motivations, sociocultural relationships ... and power dynamics' that exist in language learning. Furthermore, an emerging line of research in applied linguistics in recent years has been the so-called 'complexity turn' (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron 2008), which encourages us to replace linear models of understanding and embrace a view of things related to one another using 'organic, complex and holistic models composed of dynamic systems' (Mercer 2011 p. 337). Add to this the socio-cultural perspective this study has adopted in seeing student beliefs and strategies as socially situated

constructs that are both individual and social in nature and malleable to contextual changes.

All of these views leave one with a rather daunting prospect when attempting to investigate how complex and dynamic systems such as learners' beliefs and learners' strategy use may *relate* to one another in the context of writing conferences. We also need to consider the situated context within which the four students in the study expressed their beliefs and enacted their strategies. This would include the influence of a range of factors that can broadly be divided into internal and external factors

- **Internal factors include:**

- the students' language proficiencies, personalities, emotions and prior histories of writing and conferencing

- **External factors include:**

- the conference setting, the students' relationship with teachers, peers and significant others and the teachers' feedback styles

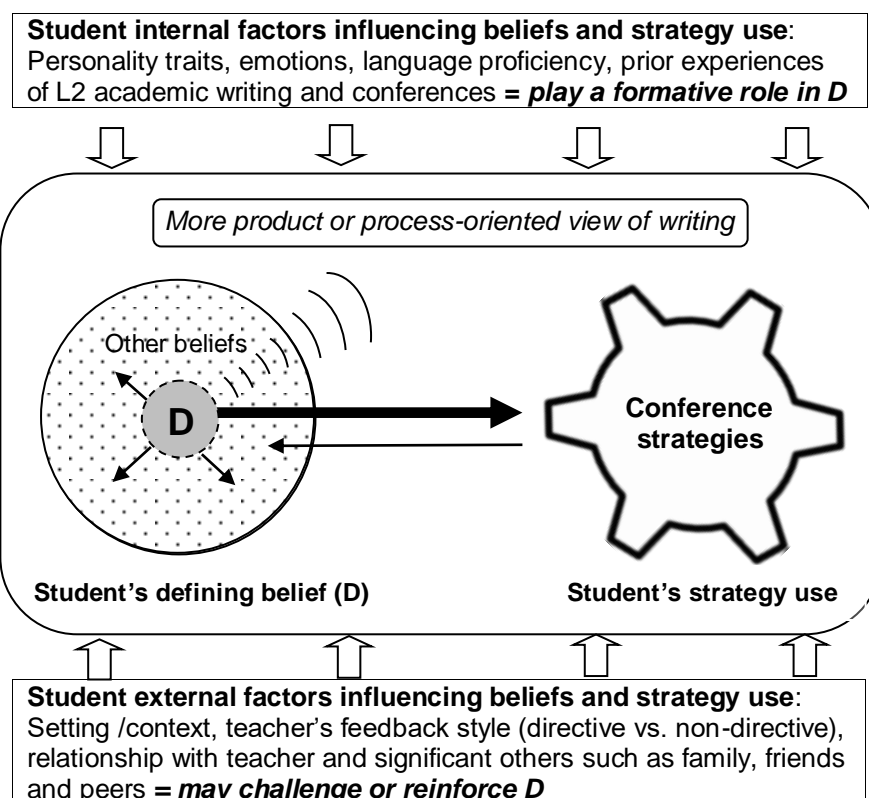
To these factors, I add two previously discussed concepts with regard to beliefs:

- students' defining beliefs
- process / product orientations of the students' beliefs

The internal factors play a more formative role in centralising the defining belief within each student's belief system, giving it durability and influence. Yet once the student is exposed to a new context, such as the writing conference, the range of external factors come into play and may challenge or reinforce the defining belief and indeed their other beliefs too.

Figure 9.7 below offers a view of how all of these beliefs, strategies, factors and concepts may relate to one another.

Figure 9.7: Overview of the relationship between defining beliefs (D), strategies and internal/external factors



I place the students' defining belief (**D**) in the centre of the circle to represent its 'core' function in relation to their other beliefs and arrows pointing out from it to represent its influence on the students' other beliefs. I use a thick arrow to highlight the defining belief's greater impact on strategy use than the students' other beliefs. I see the defining belief as being more resistant to adaptation from the student's use of strategies and highlight this fact by using a thinner arrow going the other way. The student's defining belief may also offer subtle indications (shown as an echo in the figure) as to whether the student's overall view of writing and speaking about writing is more product or process-oriented. Both the internal and external factors influence this complex system and the defining belief within it.

Figures 9.8 - 9.11 apply this model to each of the four students in the study, adding details specific to their contexts, beliefs and strategy use. The central defining belief circle and the belief circles around it are shown as interconnected and porous (dotted lines) to emphasise how beliefs are unlikely to operate as discrete items but rather as related to one another in a more organic and mutual fashion. The influence of each student's defining belief on some of their other beliefs is shown by short arrows pointing outwards from the defining belief and into the circles of their other beliefs. Each belief's relative impact on strategy use is highlighted by the size of the circles and font within (bigger circle & font = greater impact). See Table 4 in each case study chapter for more details on this. Each cog lists the strategies the students used in order of frequency from top to bottom. Finally, each student's beliefs and strategies work in such a way as to facilitate and be facilitated by the more process or product-oriented view of writing and conferencing the student may take overall.

Figure 9.8: Overview of the relationship between Layla's conference beliefs, strategies and internal / external factors

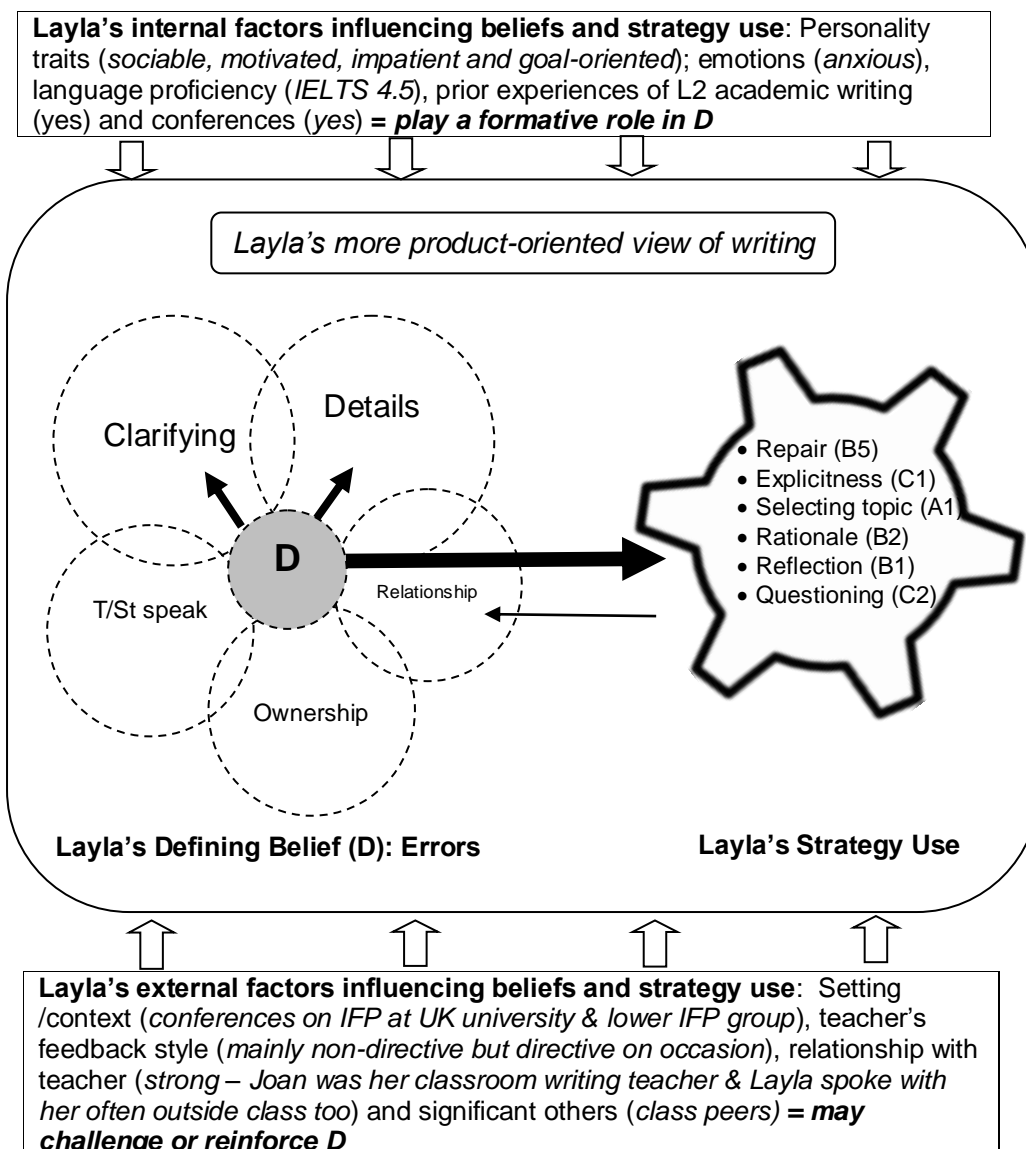


Figure 9.9: Overview of the relationship between Alex's conference beliefs, strategies and internal / external factors

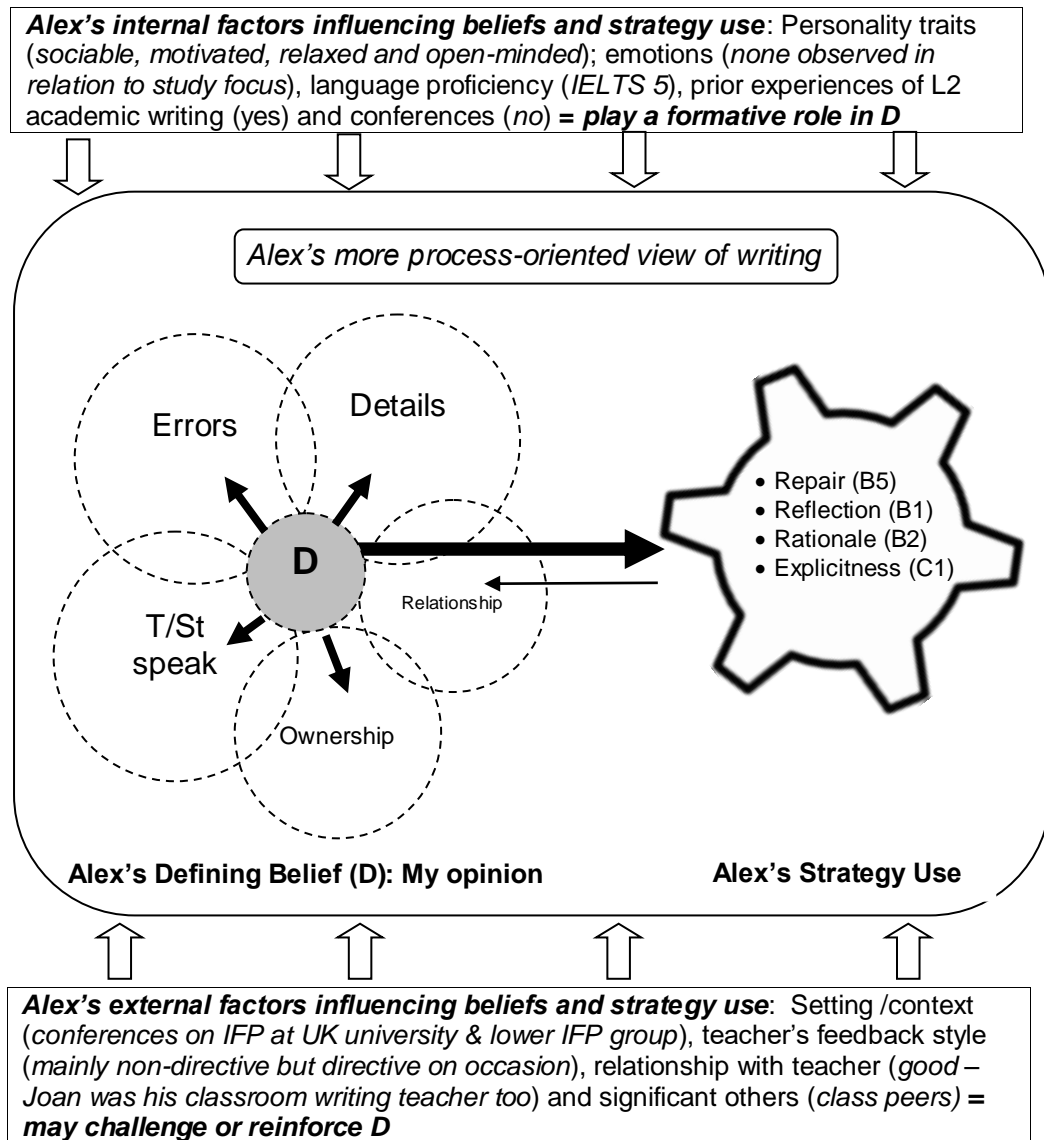


Figure 9.10: Overview of the relationship between Kazumi's conference beliefs, strategies and internal / external factors

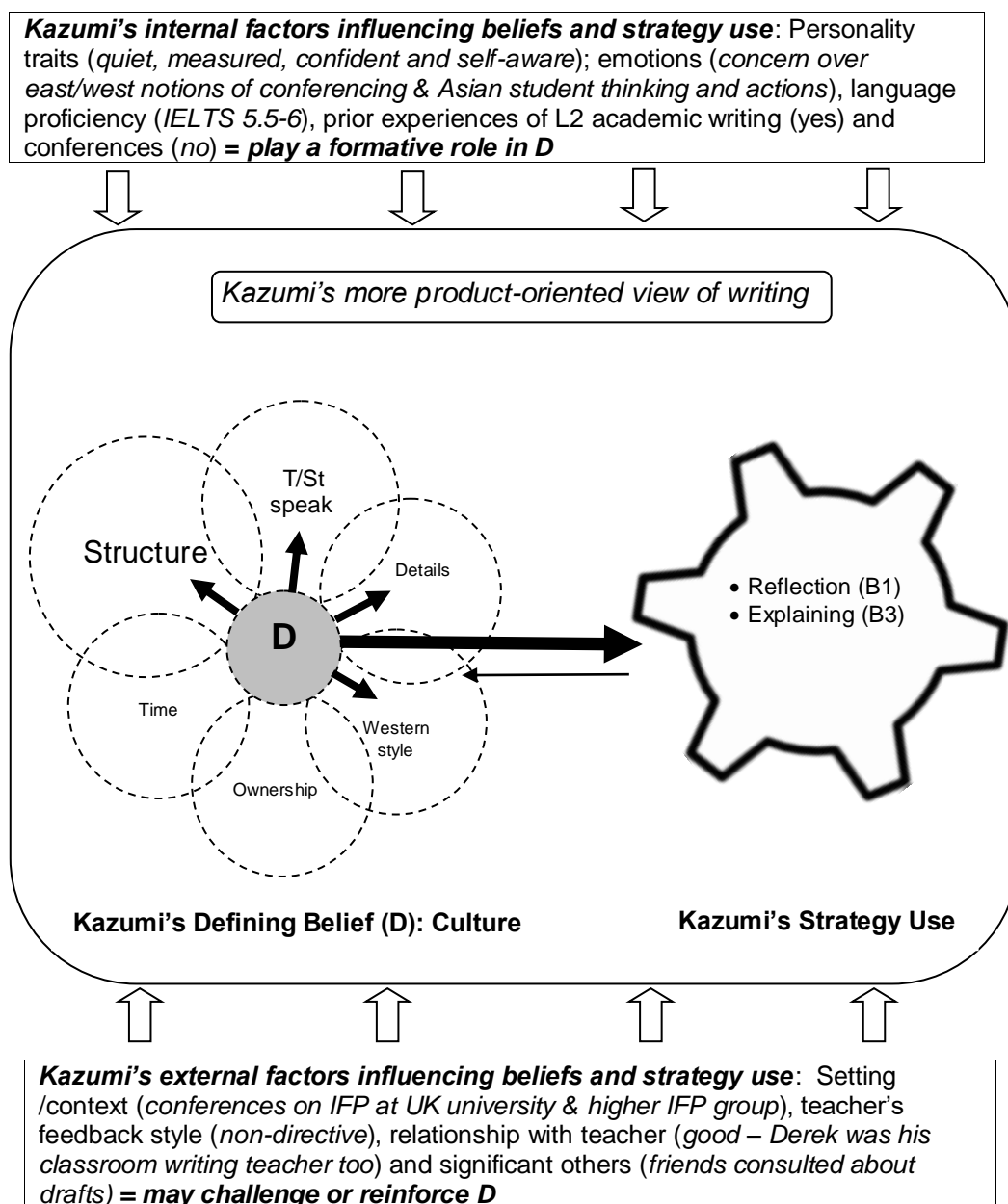
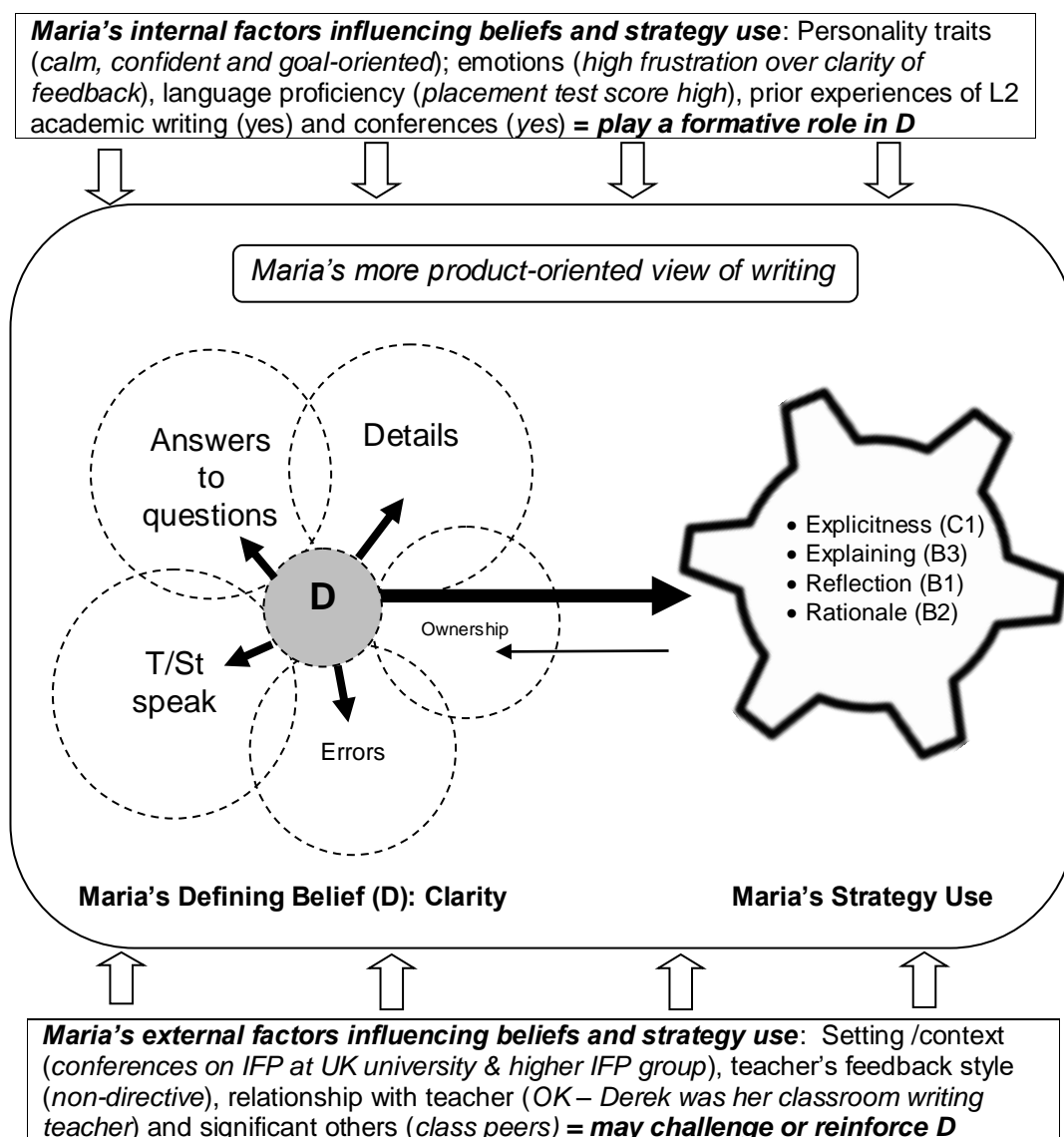


Figure 9.11: Overview of the relationship between Maria's conference beliefs, strategies and internal / external factors



9.4.2 The impact of students' beliefs on their strategy use

In general, the students' beliefs were never fully realised during their conference actions in the form of related strategy use, as Table 9.2 below highlights.

Table 9.2: Overall relationship between students' beliefs and strategy use (%)*

Students	No impact	Low impact	Moderate impact	High impact
Layla	17%	0	33%	50%
Alex	16.6%	16.6%	16.6%	50%
Kazumi	57%	14.3%	14.3%	14.3%
Maria	0	16.5%	16.5%	67%

*rounded to the nearest approximate decimal where possible

Maria was the most successful student at putting into action what she believed about conferences with 4 out of 6 of her beliefs (67%) being observed as having a high impact on her strategy use in her conferences while Kazumi was the least successful with just 1 of his 7 (14.3%) beliefs seemingly realised during his conference actions. This might be explained by looking at Maria's personal history: she had more experience of essay writing and conferences than any of the other students and was the only one to have studied a language abroad previously. This made her a very confident student writer who was goal-oriented and knew what she liked and did not like.

Her previous experiences of conferencing had been cast within educational settings where her teachers usually took the lead and gave her more direction about her writing. This had most likely been an important factor that led to Maria holding a more product-oriented view of writing and conferencing overall. Her frustration at not receiving similar levels of help in her conferences on the IFP drove her to enact strategies that sought out more details wherever she could

and this led to her relative success in bringing to life some of her conference beliefs through her actions.

Kazumi, on the other hand, despite having a good level of English and experience of essay writing, had never experienced conference feedback before nor had he ever studied abroad previously. Added to this was Kazumi's deficit view of his ability to collaborate in conferences and a strong belief that cultural differences between his Japanese background of learning and 'western' ways of learning would hamper his conference efforts. This all meant that occupying a more vocal, independent role in his conferences proved challenging and may help explain Kazumi's lack of effectiveness in linking what he believed with what he actually did in conferences.

Layla and Alex shared mixed success in terms of how their beliefs about conferences related to actual conference behaviour with 3 out of their 6 beliefs being seen to have a high impact on their strategies (50%). Layla was a graduate student who had previous, albeit short, experience of having studied in the UK previously and some experience of writing conferences. This gave her a head start in some ways but it was her constant anxiety about making errors, fixing errors and talking about errors that really drove her to enact many of her conference strategies.

Such a focus gave her a strong product-oriented view of how to write which then affected how she discussed her writing in conferences. The motivation to learn more about her errors, combined with her talkative personality, made Layla someone who pushed to get answers in her conferences. This accounted for her ability to implement some of her beliefs into associated strategies during interaction. It is worth repeating how Layla was the only one of the students to

'select topics' without any invitation from her teacher - a powerful strategy to enact with consistency by any student, let alone a lower-level EFL student writer.

Alex's open-minded and relaxed attitude to his conferences allowed him to 'go with the flow' with regards to conference talk and he was consistent in being quite an active contributor. Despite never having experienced conferencing before, he always exhibited an infectious enthusiasm for them. Yet allied to his care-free attitude there was a steely determination to find out the reasons for his errors and to get more details about his work that would help him make better decisions about his future drafts. These characteristics combined to give him a more process-oriented view of writing and conferencing.

Disappointingly however, his beliefs on wanting to collaborate during his conferences and have greater ownership over his text, never quite materialised in his strategy use. It was almost as if despite having the most positive of intentions, when it came to the actual craft of conference participation, Alex's low level of English and lack of prior conferencing experience weighed his efforts down to a degree. It meant that he spent more time trying to understand things which gave him less time to speak up and assert his own voice.

The most interesting observation to come through about the possible links between conferences beliefs and strategy use in the study was the quite powerful role of *defining beliefs*, highlighted earlier in the chapter (see section 9.2 – 9.2.1). The students' defining beliefs seemed to correlate quite strongly with their strategy use, either having a moderate to high impact on their strategy use. Layla, Kazumi and Maria's core beliefs, for example, were all seen to have a high impact upon their use of strategies, while Alex's defining belief had a

moderate impact on his strategy use. This supports the notion that certain beliefs may be held on to more strongly than others (Rokeach 1968) and have a permanent quality to them compared to other beliefs that may be constructed to mediate a particular action in a specific context and then discarded (Alanen 2003).

Returning to the earlier section in this chapter that highlighted beliefs that were shared by the students (see section 9.2.6 – 9.2.9), three were seen to have either a high or moderate impact on the students' resulting strategy use. The beliefs regarding *error correction*, *conference participation* and *wanting details* were all realised quite effectively. For example, the positive relationship between students' interests in discussing errors and then going on to use strategies such as asking questions to repair understanding of an issue or reflecting on their errors supports studies that highlight how L2 writers expect conferences to include discussions on their errors (Best et. al 2015; Liu 2009; Maliborska and You 2016; Young 1992).

Perhaps one of the most interesting findings is how the students in the study all viewed conferences as places where they needed to participate and then went on to actually do it (see section 9.2.7). In the literature regarding L2 writing conferences, only one study, a survey by Maliborska and You (2016) suggested how L2 writers expected to speak up during their conferences - in contrast to the many studies that find L2 students either unaware of a need to participate or disinclined to do so during their conferences (Chen 2005; Haneda 2004; Liu 2009; Thonus 1999). However, this study not only supports the findings of Maliborska and You (2016) but goes further by highlighting how the students were able to *enact* such participation in line with their expressed beliefs. Of

course, we are not saying that the students had an equal share of the talk or were always able to initiate conversational turns of their own but when they were called upon to speak, they made consistent contributions through strategies such as reflecting, offering rationales and explaining their writing process.

Another interesting finding has been the activity with which the four students pursued more details from their teachers (see section 9.2.8). Wanting more details from their teacher was a feature found in conference studies by both Best et. al (2015) and Maliborska and You (2016). Students were more likely to rate their conferences positively if they received detailed information about their work and future revisions. Indeed, many studies of L2 conferences and tutorials support the view that such students need more details rather than non-directive forms of feedback, like Joan and Derek often used (Blau & Hall 2002; Ferris 1997; Goldstein and Conrad 1990; Harris & Silva 1993; Powers 1993; Thonus 1999, 2004). This study supports the view that L2 writers do want more details from their studies and goes further by highlighting how some are prepared to actively seek such details by using strategies such as seeking repair of communication when it breaks down and attempting to enforce further explicitness from their teachers when necessary.

With regard to the students' shared belief about wanting a degree of ownership over their work (see section 9.2.9), this never really materialised in the actual strategy actions of any of the four students in the study. Studies with L2 writers have shown in general how they seem to prefer more directed feedback from their teachers either personally or due to cultural influences (Goldstein and Conrad 1990; Liu 2009; Young 1992; Thonus 2004) and discussions regarding

'ownership' were not uppermost in the minds of such students. Only in Maliborska and You's (2016) recent survey with 100 L2 writers on a composition course in the US, did they find hints of some L2 writers highlighting a need for teachers to respect their views too. The data in this study supports this finding but goes beyond Maliborska and You's survey responses by presenting students, in their own words, at the very least highlighting the importance of retaining some degree of ownership over their work with detail. While such declarations were seen to have either a low or no impact on their strategy use during their conferences, their existence still bears testimony to the fact that each of the students in the study was thinking about the issue.

9.5 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted how each student seemed to have a *defining belief* about conferences that was held on to more strongly, influenced some of their other beliefs and had a moderate to high impact on their use of strategies. Furthermore, such beliefs were also able to hint whether the students held either more product or process-oriented views of writing, which then affected how they spoke about writing too. The chapter also described 4 beliefs about conferences that were shared by the students and 5 strategies frequently used by most of them during conferences.

The nature of the relationship between beliefs and strategies was conceptualised as complex, dynamic and operating within a socio-cultural context where it was affected by a variety of internal and external factors. This relationship was captured in a general model followed by more specific models for each student in the study.

The chapter ended by highlighting the overall impact of students' beliefs on their strategy use. Half of Layla and Alex's beliefs were seen to have an impact on their strategy use while Kazumi's beliefs were not often observed in his strategies. Maria, however, had the strongest relationship between her beliefs and her strategy use.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

10.1 Introduction

This study set out to explore the beliefs and strategy use of international EFL students on a UK university foundation programme. It wanted to learn more about what happens between such students and their teachers during academic writing conferences. More specifically, it focused on examining the kinds of beliefs that L2 learners carry about conferences, the kinds of spoken strategies they may use during the interaction and to better understand the relationship between their beliefs and strategies.

10.2 Overview of findings

The study aimed to find answers to the following 3 research questions posed in the study:

- 1) What beliefs do L2 student writers hold about writing conferences?
- 2) What strategies do L2 student writers employ during their conference interactions?
- 3) How do students' beliefs affect their use of strategies in conferences?

Each question will be addressed in turn by offering a review of the findings which sustain and support previous ones in the literature and those that may contribute towards 'new' knowledge in the field. A summary of the findings to each question can be found in the tables in Appendix 12.

10.2.1 Research question 1

This study supports many previous findings regarding the kinds of beliefs L2 student writers hold about writing conferences. These include the belief that conferences will focus on their errors and feedback will be detailed and unambiguous. Conferences are also seen as places led and guided by teachers primarily. I also found support for the role that a student's previous cultural background and experiences may play in the kinds of beliefs they express about writing conferences.

The study also offers some conclusions that extend our knowledge of L2 student writers' beliefs regarding conferences. Firstly, all the students in the study view conferences as places where they can talk to their teachers rather than just listen to them. Secondly, all the students express a desire to retain a degree of ownership over their work. Both these findings are interesting because they force us to view L2 writers in slightly different ways from their general portrayal in the L2 literature. For example, their often 'easy' acquiescence to teacher guidance and suggestions for change should not always be mistaken for an inability to speak up or a lack of concern for their content and ideas.

Another finding that builds upon previous findings in the literature was Kazumi's explicit citing of his cultural and educational background as being an essential factor in how his conferences might fare. It is a strong reminder of the powerful influence that an L2 writer's background may play on their conference talk. Previous studies have suggested the influence culture may play in conferences (Blau and Hall 2002; Goldstein and Conrad 1990; Harris 1997; Liu 2009; Powers 1993) but rarely has this influence been so openly described in the

words of an L2 student. It suggests how we need to spend time helping some L2 writers unpack some of their cultural experiences and concerns through discussion. This support would allow them to discover their own path of accommodation between what they already feel and know about conferences and what they may need to do differently in conferences in the UK/west.

Thirdly, students' beliefs did not seem to be held with equal intensity. Certain defining beliefs were held more strongly than others and seemed to influence their other beliefs. This echoes Rokeach (1968) who viewed belief systems as consisting of core beliefs that were more resistant to change and had the ability to affect other beliefs. Alanen (2003 p79) also spoke of beliefs as mediational tools of which 'some are more permanent than others'. This study has gone on, however, to highlight the relative impact such defining beliefs may have on a student's other beliefs in practice. For example, Layla's defining belief on errors influenced some of her other beliefs regarding the kind of feedback Joan should provide and how it should be delivered. Kazumi's defining belief about culture had a strong impact on his other beliefs too with respect to wanting more structured events, more details and time to respond. On IFP style courses, it would be useful to uncover students' defining beliefs and make them more aware of how they may fit or challenge their success in writing conferences.

My characterisation of students' beliefs as generally being either more *process* or *product-oriented* is another concept that can help us to understand the kinds of beliefs students bring with them about conferencing and what it may mean for the kinds of strategies they may employ once in conferences. For example, early signs of students wanting teacher-led conferences containing pre-packaged answers for revision or difficulty in participation should alert us to the

fact that such students most likely hold more product-oriented views of not just writing but also conferencing. This could then prompt discussions with the student to explore their beliefs regarding conferences and make them aware of alternative modes of participation and the inherent choices available to them in the way they speak and use feedback.

10.2.2 Research question 2

This study arrived at many similar conclusions to the findings revealed by previous literature on L2 conference strategy use. I also found that students used a variety of strategies in different ways and at different times. My data also highlighted how there was an increase in strategy use for most students as they moved from one conference to the next. This was most prominently seen between their first and second conferences, perhaps as a result of gaining familiarity with the procedures and protocols of conferencing. All the students in the study were able to evaluate their work and progress as well as being able to explain why they had written what they had. Most of the students were also seen to display some mild resistance to their teachers' suggestions for revision by not always immediately acknowledging acceptance or agreement with it. Furthermore, all 4 students at different times found it challenging to deal with the indirect and tentative style of feedback offered by both Joan and Derek, preferring a more direct style of delivery.

However, the study also came to some conclusions that may extend our knowledge of how L2 student writers used strategies in their conferences. In contrast to studies that highlighted how such students were able to select topics for discussion (Goldstein and Conrad 1990; Patthey-Chavez & Ferris 1997),

most students in this study, apart from Layla, struggled with this strategy, including the stronger students too. The literature also describes how many L2 writers focus consistently on the lower order mechanics of their writing during conference interaction (Cumming and So 1996; Goldstein & Conrad 1990; Haneda 2004). Yet in this study, I found all 4 students to be very adept at asking questions about higher order issues such as argumentation or essay organisation - sometimes more often than just focussing on grammar or lexical issues. Stronger students like Kazumi and Maria made fewer mistakes so perhaps in their cases, less focus on lower order issues was expected. Yet this was also the case for Layla and Alex, who had weaker proficiency levels and made more mistakes.

The study also found that L2 writers were capable of strategically eliciting more information when they needed it – something previously highlighted for L1 students (Patthey Chavez and Ferris 1997; Sperling 1991). In addition, the study also documented the negative affect that receiving indirect feedback may have on some international students. Maria found it challenging to deal with and it ended up affecting her level of motivation for her conferences. It highlighted the link between personal beliefs and emotion.

10.2.3 Research question 3

The few studies that have attempted to find links between learning beliefs and learning strategies in general (none about conferences that I am aware of), typically employed questionnaire/survey instrumentation such as BALLI and SILL to explore students' beliefs and use of learning strategies. My study supports their findings in also highlighting how there is a link between what L2

learners believe about learning a language and the actions they take to learn and this is also true with regard to one to one writing conferences. However, the relationship is not of a one to one nature – simply put, students do not always act in a way during conferences that is consistent with some of their expressed beliefs about conferencing. Similarly, language learners' desire for a focus on their errors and more detailed information has also been observed in my study in the context of conference interaction.

I also found evidence to support the notion that there exists a reciprocity between beliefs and strategy use, whereby each part can affect the other (Navarro & Thornton 2011; Yang 1999). Actions during conferences do seem to have an impact on the beliefs that students hold about conferencing. For example, the non-directive feedback style of Derek caused Maria to become frustrated by what she saw as a lack of clarity in opposition to her belief that feedback needed to be unambiguous. Maria expressed this belief minimally before her conferences started but it became strengthened once conferencing began and she experienced Derek's indirect style of feedback. This caused, in my opinion, her belief about the issue to become further entrenched.

With no previous literature of a similar focus and context to compare with, this study tentatively offers four findings that may extend our knowledge of the relationship between what L2 writers believe about conferences and their actual conference actions. Firstly, this study found that what L2 student writers believe does have an impact on the kinds of strategies they use during their conferences. As mentioned earlier, while such links have been highlighted in the literature previously about language and language learning in general, I believe this study may be one of the first to highlight that a similar relationship

exists with respect to the context of L2 writing conferences in a university setting.

Secondly, I found that each of the students' so-called defining beliefs about conferencing seemed to impact quite effectively on their conference strategies with three of the four students' defining beliefs seen to have had a high impact on their strategy use.

Thirdly, while it was interesting to hear the students in the study highlight their desire to retain some level of ownership over their emerging texts and not follow every piece of advice given to them— their actual strategy use did not back this up. Instead, the students' actions offered little to no resistance to any feedback suggestions offered and at times students would prompt for even more detailed feedback.

Lastly, all the students stated their desire to participate in their conferences and to a certain extent, they did all engage and contribute to their conferences. Yet such 'engagement' needs to be carefully defined, as it did not refer to equal contribution to the conference interaction with respect to the teacher nor did it refer to constant, conversational like initiation of topics and turns. What it did mean, however, was that each student was actively engaged at all times in answering questions from their teachers when asked something, providing substantial response turns on occasion; asking questions of their teachers when they needed to and, in general, following the ebbs and flows of the spoken interaction in an active manner with backchannels.

10.3 Research limitations

Reflecting on the study, I can see areas where they may have been limitations. Firstly, conference actions by the student are intrinsically linked to those of the teacher – students act in reaction to what they hear and see their teacher do and position themselves in ways that may shape the content of what they say next. By deciding not to examine the teacher's actions during the conference meant that my interpretations of what the students did was impoverished to some degree and not as holistic as it could have been.

This may have had a wider impact on the study, especially one that is framed within a SCT approach to the data. By excluding the teachers, meant that analysis of how the students' beliefs and strategies were co-constructed with their teachers within the one to one conferences became more challenging. While I included the teacher in the mini extracts in sections discussing the students' strategy use in each case study chapter, my singular focus on what the students were doing and saying caused the teachers' equally important role to be reduced and secondary at times in the analysis.

As a result, the analysis does not always focus enough upon how the mediating tools of beliefs and strategies are constructed and (re) shaped in dialogue between the teacher and student. Furthermore, the focus on just one party (the student) in the interactional data served to reduce the possibility to gather even richer data than was collected and explore more of the *how* instead of the *what* (though in a field with such limited research in the first place, more knowledge of the 'what' with respect to international student writer interaction in conferences was still valuable). To compensate for this, I focussed more on my stimulated recall data in the post conference interviews, where students would

self-report on actions they undertook in their previous conference and often elucidate further on how their actions were typically predicated on the prior actions and turns of their conference teachers. In this way, I gained some insight into the co-construction that may have occurred, albeit from only the students' perspectives and in the form of self-reports rather than examination of the interactional data in its own right.

Secondly, the fact that I was the course leader of the IFP at the time and conducting the research too was always a source of concern for me. I was worried that the responses that the 4 students were giving were partly made in response to them seeing me as the 'course leader' rather than as a 'researcher'. Viewed in this way, I may have received answers that the students thought I should hear rather than simply answering the question I had asked.

Thirdly, while case studies can offer a richness and depth to the analysis of a situated context by the same token, case study samples tend to be few in number, making it challenging to extrapolate any findings beyond the immediate context analysed.

Fourth, while the data was captured across a 6-month period across 2 semesters, I was concerned whether it was sufficient time to accurately log the beliefs and actions of the students. There were large gaps between the first two conferences and the last two and during these intervals, the contexts and goals placed on each of the students had altered somewhat on the IFP as well their levels of familiarity with both the course and studying abroad. I felt that their beliefs and actions may have altered or adapted in small ways too.

Fifth, despite using stimulated-recall interviews to help the students recall what they were thinking during a conference episode – it is perhaps inevitable that some of the responses the students gave would have been made as a result of reflections during the interview there and then rather than what was in their minds at a previous point in time.

Sixth, some of the students struggled at times to express themselves clearly or understand the meaning of some of my questions during the interviews. As a result, I would adjust and reformulate my questions, often grading the difficulty down in order to make them easier to understand. However, by doing so, perhaps the meanings of the questions became altered on occasion and may have unwittingly directed them to give me answers to slightly different questions than were originally intended.

I was also concerned of an over-reliance at times on interviews to elicit and uncover students' beliefs about conferencing. I am aware that interviews are not transparent windows into the student's beliefs and that what they say is not an unfettered copy of their inner beliefs. Their responses need to be seen as emerging within a specific institutionalised setting with an interviewer who was the dominant participant in the specific social activity of an interview. Hopefully, I have treated such data with the caution that it deserves.

Another limitation may have been that my questions in both the questionnaire and the successive interviews throughout the study, planted either consciously or subconsciously issues pertaining to conference talk, participation, control and student activity overall. With these in their minds, the students may have behaved differently during their conference interactions and thereby had an impact on my observations and subsequent analysis of what they did during

their conferences. This is an example of the Observer's paradox (Labov 1972), whereby my intervention as a researcher may have had an impact on the very behaviour which I was trying to observe.

I was also conscious that I may not have collected enough data regarding the students' personal histories and experiences and relied perhaps too much on the data collected in the present. From the socio-cultural perspective that this study has adopted, more data about their past within which some of their beliefs may have been created, shaped and reinforced may have added more depth at times to my interpretations and claims. At the time when the initial questionnaire and interviews were being designed, however, I was still debating the relative merits of what theoretical approach may guide my research. This meant that I was less aware of the importance of collecting richer histories of each student that would later help to account for what they believed about conferences, why they believed it and how their beliefs might be shaped during interaction.

In chapter 9, I offer a model of how the beliefs and strategies may be related for each of the students. These models were designed solely to aid the reader in gaining an overview of the findings that were covered across several pages in prose. They do not represent an aim to conceptualise a testable model for how beliefs, strategies and a range of internal and external factors unique to the individual student behave. The study has outlined previously how beliefs and strategies are organic, complex and interconnecting constructs that are too dynamic to be reduced to simple figures. As such, the reader is encouraged to look at figures 9.7-9.11 as aids to their comprehension and nothing more.

A charge that may be levelled at some of the data analysis may be the reliance at times on the use of some quantitative elements within a study that is largely framed as qualitative and interpretative. While small, its use at the end of the case study chapters 5-8 and in chapter 9 to account for the overall relationship between beliefs and strategy use requires some explanation.

Firstly, I do not view qualitative or quantitative positions as being mutually exclusive but rather on a continuum, where a study may lean primarily towards one but leave space for the use of the other on occasion to help interpret the data. Secondly, the small literature examining the interaction between beliefs and strategy use has often relied upon studies utilising the dual questionnaires of BALLI and SILL (Park 1995; Li 2010; Yang 1999) and describing the relationship between the two from a more quantitative perspective in addition to judgements made about the quality of strategies used. Indeed, some of these studies have gone on to describe the connections between beliefs and strategies using simplistic terms such as 'low, moderate and high' (Park 1995). As such there is a precedent in the field for using counting and measuring in the research.

As far as this study is concerned, I felt the use of counting at times to determine the frequency with which certain strategies were used a useful ally in making decisions about what to analyse in greater depth later on, when discussing the more important issues of how students used their strategies during conferences and why. They acted as a point of entry to the bigger questions in the study. However, I acknowledge how their presence may be interpreted as a limitation by some in a study claiming to use a more contextualised approach.

Another limitation revolves around the acceptance the study has made of the construct of 'learning strategies' without acknowledging some of the challenges that remain in the field. Over the last 30 years, strategy research has not been immune from criticism and debate around several issues including defining the term 'strategy' itself, its relationship to proficiency, the lack of a consistent theoretical basis, categorisation, the methodology used and the role context and individual learner differences may play in the formation and use of strategies (Cohen and Macaro 2007; Dörnyei and Skehan 2003; Griffiths and Oxford 2014; Kyungsim and Leavell 2006). Dörnyei (2005) and Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) have even questioned whether strategies really exist at all and can be made distinct from how learners generally go about the business of learning a language, though this charge has been refuted by others (Cohen and Macaro 2007).

Such debate, as it has been in the field of learner beliefs, is indicative of a lively field grappling with difficult questions about complex phenomena. The plethora of literature output in strategy use, headlined by a recent special issue dedicated to strategy research in *System* 2014 does not ignore the issues in the field but discusses how more contemporary research is seeking to address some of the concerns that have been expressed. As may be gathered from Chapter 2, the present study sees 'learner strategies' as conscious activities learners use to regulate their conference behaviour but I do so with caution in light of the above discussion.

Another limitation of focussing singularly upon the student writers, their beliefs and strategy use, has been the lack of discussion of the wider picture with regard to the role the conferences played as a whole on the students' writing

processes and achievements. While I did collect each successive draft produced by the students and could have examined the impact of each conference on their following texts, I made a decision early on not to do this but rather limit my analysis to the three research questions I had set myself, viz. to better understand the beliefs students held about conferences, the strategies they used in conferences and the relationship between their beliefs and strategies. These proved more than adequate as research aims for a doctoral study

A final limitation was the usual change in focus that one often finds during PhDs, of which I was not immune. My focus changed a few times over the years as I wrestled with pinning down exactly which aspect of conferencing I wished to examine. The data, ultimately, facilitated my decision making as to what I wished to focus on and how to analyse it. While not having any significant impact on what I collected and analysed, the re-focussing of study goals may have inadvertently affected my questioning during interviews on occasion.

10.4 Implications for teachers and foundation style programmes

One of the key findings to emerge in this study is that L2 student writers, who arrive in the UK on to university foundation style programmes carry beliefs that can shape their interactions with teachers in events such as the writing conference. For providers of such programmes, we may need to re-examine our assumptions of what we think they already know and be more active in offering awareness-raising tasks to help support such students. For example, prior to conferences starting, introductory sessions about what conferencing is and how it works could be designed to stimulate discussions with new L2 students.

These could include reference to the roles they may be expected to play during such interactions using video clips to support discussion. Students could also be encouraged to keep learner journals once conferences have started to document their evolving experience.

EAP writing teachers need to reflect on their beliefs about conferencing with L2 writers and examine the impact such beliefs may have on their style of feedback delivery. Such consideration may lead some to adapt their conference feedback in small but significant ways that better align with the expectations of some of their L2 student writers. There is also a need for course leaders of foundation style programmes and EAP staff to remember that L2 students are individuals with their own unique mix of backgrounds, experiences and cultures channelled through their specific personalities. They will hold beliefs about many aspects of their learning and of learning events they will face on the course, such as writing conferences. This requires course leaders and staff to be more flexible and less dogmatic about the way in which they deliver writing conferences to L2 writers premised on the understanding that a one size approach to conference feedback is unlikely to be successful for all students.

10.5 Recommendations for further study

This study hopes to inspire several other strands of related study. First and foremost, more studies investigating writing conference interactions between EFL students and their EAP teachers at UK universities need to be conducted. It is telling that I was unable to find a similar study and needed to look to research conducted primarily in the US and elsewhere. As writing centres and conferencing become more integral to foundation programmes at UK

universities, there is ample need to begin to explore the one to one interactions that occur between EFL student writers and EAP teachers or tutors.

There is also a need to investigate the thoughts and actions of UK EAP writing teachers. We need to learn more about the beliefs they carry into writing conferences and how they may impact upon their conference feedback. One could also track revision suggestions first offered to L2 writers during conferences and see to what extent they appear in students' post written drafts. This would offer a better understanding of the relative impact of teacher revisions suggestions on students' written work. Do L2 writers appropriate every single teacher suggestion or are they more selective in what to revise? Longer studies might track the extent to which L2 writers' beliefs or actions change over time and consider the possible causes behind such shifts in the way they think or act during conferences.

Instead of just audio recordings of writing conferences, one could also employ video recordings too – not many have been conducted with L2 writers. This would offer the potential to investigate a variety of paralinguistic cues that are brought to bear on the interaction by both the teacher and the L2 student writer. While not a focus of this study but raised by one of the students in the study, is the question of how long conferences should be to maximise their potential for learning. Is there an optimum or minimum length needed on foundation programmes with L2 student writers?

One might also investigate the success of very structured conferences where student writers are expected to prepare beforehand with those where they are not asked to prepare at all – like in this study. Finally, as spoken conference feedback is often used to supplement written commentary of a text, research

might examine how both forms of feedback complement one another and which one ends up having a greater influence on post feedback drafts and why.

In short, the possibilities for further study on writing conferences that take place on foundation style programmes in the UK are endless for the simple fact that so few, if any, studies currently exist.

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Appendix 1: IFP Writing Assignments

EF1498: WRITING: Short Essay Assignment: Semester 1 (20% for final essay)

Title: *'To take a degree in a foreign country with a foreign language and a foreign culture is a decision of either great madness or great courage.'*
Discuss.

N.B

You will draft the assignment twice during semester 1 and hand in the final version of the essay in week 12.

You need to write an argument style essay with your own ideas supported by evidence. Try to include both your arguments and some counter arguments.

The essay must be typed in Times new Roman Script with font size of 12 and 1.5-line spacing.

Leave a double line space between paragraphs with no indents.

Please add a word count at the bottom of the essay.

Put any references you have used in your essay on a separate last page and make sure they are correctly formatted in Harvard Style.

When you hand in the final version of your essay, please attached an, 'assignment cover sheet' and fill it in correctly. These are available on e-learn or the school office

Marking criteria for the assignment is available in the MIP

Plan for essay: due week 7 in class

Draft 1: due week 8

Draft 2: due week 10

DEADLINE:

Week 12 / Friday by 4pm in the IFP pigeon hole outside the school office and an e-mail copy sent to your teacher and cc to Zulfi by 5pm

Please note:

1. All deadlines must be met. Late essay plans and drafts will NOT be marked
2. If the final essay is handed in late than it will only receive a maximum of 40% as per university guidelines

EF1498: WRITING: Long Essay Assignment: Semester 2
(5% for each draft and 30% for final essay)

Choose ONE of the following titles and write an essay of 1500 words:

- **Discuss some of the main causes and effects of the movement for women's equal rights.**
- ***'Internet use has a negative effect on young people's social skills'*.
To what extent do you agree with this?**
- **Compare and contrast working in a company with working for yourself.**

Important points to remember:

- Ensure that your essay is well **organised** and **relevant** to the question
- All ideas put forward must be **supported by evidence** – opinion alone is not enough!
- All evidence must be **clearly referenced** in text and in a bibliography in Accordance with **Harvard Style**
- Use either Times New Roman **font** 12 or Arial 12
- Leave 1.5-line **spacing** and double line spacing between paragraphs with no indents
- Please include a **word count** on the last page of the essay
- **E-mail** a copy of your essay to your teacher and cc Zulfi
- Attach an '**assignment cover sheet**' and fill it in correctly. These are available from the top drawer of the trays outside the department office
- You will be required to write a **plan, 1st draft and 2nd draft**

Plan for essay: due week 19 in class

Draft 1: due week 20

Draft 2: due week 22

DEADLINE:

Week 12 / Friday by 4pm in the IFP pigeon hole outside the school office and an e-mail copy sent to your teacher and cc to Zulfi by 5pm

Please note:

1. All deadlines must be met. Late essay plans and drafts will NOT be marked
2. If the final essay is handed in late than it will only receive a maximum of 40% as per university guidelines

Appendix 2: Letter of Invitation to Students to Participate in the Study

Dear student,

I wish to do some research on essay writing in the Foundation programme during semester one and two and am looking for volunteers* from the class to participate in the study. During the IFP course, you need to write two essays, one in semester one and another in semester two. To help you with this, your teacher will ask you to write some draft* versions of the essay, hand them to him/her and later after looking at them, your writing teacher will speak with you one to one about your writing drafts in a conference*.

My research wishes to look at how you and your teacher speak about your writing drafts during your one to one conferences and to see if there is any possible effect on your revision*. I intend to do this over the course in semester one and two.

I am looking for 2 students from your writing group to take part in the research. I need one male and one female student of different nationalities and with language levels that best represent your class.

In semester one, I wish to

- **find out what you think about writing and feedback using a questionnaire (week 5)**
- **record your conversation with your teacher during the conferences (week 9 and 11)**
- **collect copies of all of your drafts and your final version of the essay (week 8, 10 and 12)**
- **interview you 3 times and record it (week 7, 9, 11)**

In semester 2, I will repeat the same things but there will be no questionnaire and one less interview.

The study has been organised to make sure that it does not cause any extra inconvenience* to your usual studies on the Foundation programme. All essay drafts will be collected at the *usual time* required by the course, conferences recorded at the *same time* you would have them as agreed with your teacher and all interviews will take place at a time *agreed by you and myself*.

In addition, your personal identity and all data collected from you during the study will be kept private and only known to me - your name will not be used at any time. You may also view the findings of the study at any time upon request.

Please note that there is no obligation for you to take part in the study and participation or not will have no effect on your foundation results. You must decide on your own to volunteer because you are interested in the study.

If you do decide to volunteer, please remember that you are making a commitment* to participate in the research study during the course and will do

your best to complete all of it. However, you may withdraw from the study at any time by simply letting me know by e-mail.

If you are happy to volunteer, please read the attached form, tick the required boxes and sign and date at the bottom. Please return the form to me when completed. If I receive many applications, then I shall select 2 students for the research in discussion with your writing teacher and inform you of the decision by e-mail or in person.

If you have any questions you would like to ask me about the study then please e-mail me at ZAQureshi@uclan.ac.uk or come and see me in my office in FY308 during my student hours.

Thank you for reading this and I hope that you are interested to take part in the study.

Regards,

Zulfi

Glossary:

***volunteer** = a person who chooses to do something because they want to – not because of money, rules or any obligation

***draft** = a practice version of your essay which helps you think and improve your essay over time

***conference** = one to one tutorial you have with your teacher about your essay drafts

***revision** = changes you make in your writing after speaking with the teacher

***inconvenience** = when something exists that makes your life more uncomfortable

***commitment** = a strong intention to do something

Agree to Participate Form - student

- I have read and understood the letter explaining what the study is about and how it will be conducted over the course

- You have my permission to record all of my one to one conferences with my writing teacher, all our interviews and collect all my writing drafts. I understand that my name will not be used in the study nor will my data be made public without my permission

- I am happy to volunteer to take part in the study and intend to be available for the whole study where possible

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 3: Letter of Invitation to Teachers to Participate in the Study

Dear colleague,

I wish to do some research in your writing class on the Foundation programme during semester one and two. Specifically, I wish to look at the way in which the spoken interaction evolves between a student and the teacher in the one to one conference you have with them during the course and its effect, if any, on their revision.

I am hoping to study this with four volunteer students from the course, with some students possibly coming from your writing class. Ideally, I am looking for one male and one female student of different nationalities that best represent the language level of your class. I would very much appreciate your advice, based on your knowledge of your own students, about possible candidates that might best fit the criteria above. I will endeavour to meet all the students in your class briefly this coming week at convenient time of your choosing to talk to them about the research and hand them all a separate letter explaining what the research entails and what will be asked of them.

With regard to your participation, I require your permission to record the one to one writing conferences you will have with the four selected student participants using a mini voice recorder that will be given to you to operate. You will only need to press a button to start recording at the start of your conferences and another to stop recording once the conference has ended. I will then come and collect the device at the end of the day.

The study has been organised to make sure that it does not cause any extra inconvenience to you or your students on the Foundation programme. All essay drafts will be collected from students at the *usual time* required by the course, conferences recorded at the *same time* you would have them as agreed with your students and all interviews will take place with your students *outside class time*.

In addition, your personal identity and all data collected from you during the study will be kept private and only known to me - your name will not be used at any time. You may view the findings of the study at any time upon request.

While there is no obligation for you to take part in the study, I hope the benefit of learning more about how writing conferences are enacted on the foundation course will interest you and potentially prove useful in helping you reflect on the feedback you offer your students. If you do decide to volunteer, please remember that you are making a commitment to participate in the research study during the course and will do your best to complete all of it. However, you may withdraw from the study at any time by simply letting me know by e-mail.

If you are happy to participate, please read the attached form, tick the required boxes and sign and date at the bottom. Please return the form to me when completed.

Thank you for reading this and I hope that you are interested to take part in the study.

Regards,

Zulfi

Agree to Participate Form - teacher

- I have read and understood the letter explaining what the study is about and how it will be conducted over the course

- You have my permission to record all of my one to one conferences with the selected student participants. I understand that my name will not be used in the study nor will my data be made public without my permission

- I am happy to volunteer to take part in the study and intend to be available for the whole study where possible

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 4: Initial Questionnaire Handed Out to Students

Student Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out more about your experience and ability in writing academic essays in English. It also wishes to find out what you think about receiving spoken feedback from your teacher about your essay drafts in the one to one conferences in week 9 and 11 on the IFP and how this may help you to revise your writing.

- Please do not write your name on the questionnaire
- Please take some time to complete your answers and be as honest as you can
- Please write all your responses on the questionnaire itself. Try and answer all of the questions. All your responses will remain confidential and anonymous at all times
- If possible, please return the questionnaire to me by Wednesday 27th October in my office – FY308

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire

1. What is your first language and country of origin?

2. How many years have you been studying English?

3. Have you taken an international language test such as IELTS or TOEFL in the last 12 months? Please circle one answer below.

- a. Yes
- b. No

If Yes, please indicate below when you took the test, what type of test you took and the scores you obtained in each skill:

--

4. In your opinion, what is your current level of English? Please circle one answer below.

- a. Advanced
- b. Good intermediate
- c. Weak intermediate
- d. Elementary

5. How many years have you been learning to write in English?

6. How many years have you practised writing essays in English?

7. How would you rate your ability to write essays in English? Circle a number on the scale below. (Think about how difficult you find it to write essays in English)

Very weak
strong

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8. What kind of feedback did you receive about your English writing from teachers in your own country?
- a. Spoken feedback
 - b. Written feedback
 - c. Both
 - d. Neither
 - e. Other:

—

If you did receive feedback, why do you think you received that kind of feedback?

9. If you could choose, what kind of feedback would **YOU prefer** to receive from a teacher on your essay writing? Please circle one answer below.
- a. Spoken feedback
 - b. Written feedback
 - c. Both
 - d. Neither
 - e. Other:

Can you give a reason for your choice below:

10. On the IFP, you will have one to one meetings with your writing teacher to talk about your essay drafts in addition to your normal written feedback. These meetings are called 'conferences'. What do you think about this?
- a. I like this - it is a good idea
 - b. I don't like this - it is not a good idea
 - c. I am not sure about if this is a good idea or not

Can you give a reason for your choice below:

11. During these one to one writing conferences with your teacher, who do you think will talk more? Please circle one answer below.
- a. The teacher
 - b. You - the student
 - c. We will talk more or less equal amounts

Can you give a reason for your choice below:

12. During the one to one writing conferences with your teacher, what do you think might be the most difficult part for you? You may circle more than one answer.
- a. Speaking clearly in English
 - b. Understanding the teacher's feedback (speed, language used)
 - c. Getting used to being in a one to one situation with the teacher rather than in a class with other students
 - d. Other:

-

13. During the one to one writing conferences with your teacher, if there is something the teacher says that you do not agree with, what would you do?
- Say nothing and accept the teacher's feedback
 - Say nothing during the conference and afterwards ignore the opinion when revising your essay
 - Tell the teacher you don't agree with their opinion about your essay draft

Can you give a reason for your choice below:

14. After the conference has finished, what do you think you will do with the spoken feedback you have received? Please circle one answer below.
- Make all the changes to my draft the teacher highlighted
 - Make changes to some parts of my draft the teacher highlighted and some of your own ideas
 - Only make changes you agree with or want
 - Make few or no changes at all
15. How often before the IFP foundation programme at UCLAN have you had a one to one spoken conference with a teacher about written work - in English or in your own language?
- Many times
 - Sometimes
 - A few times
 - Never

If you have had conferences before, when and where?

16. From your own knowledge and experience, how common are one to one spoken conferences between students and teachers about writing in your own country? Think about school, college and university level.
- Very common
 - Only in some places
 - Not in many places
 - Never used

Can you give a reason for your choice below:

17. In your opinion, what factors might affect the quality of one to one conferences on essay writing between an international student and teacher? Rank the following (**1** = has the greatest effect / **7** = the least effect) by writing a number next to the factors listed.
- Language used by the teacher or student (speed, words, grammar used etc.)
 - The difference in culture between the student and teacher
 - The amount of talk by the teacher or student (who talks more or less)
 - The relationship between the student and teacher (very formal / less formal)
 - The gender of the teacher and student (male / female)
 - The length of the conference (how long it is)
 - The focus of the conference (what is discussed – language problems, organisation etc.)
18. How would you describe the 'ideal' writing conference between an international student and their English teacher?
- A conversation between a teacher and student where both discuss the essay
 - A place where the teacher tells you what is good and bad about your essay and corrects your errors
 - A place where you ask the teacher questions about your essay and they give you the answers you want - you are in control
 - Other:

—

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

PLEASE RETURN THIS TO ZULFI BY NEXT WEDNESDAY 27th OCTOBER AT THE LATEST OR EARLIER IN PERSON

Appendix 5: Example of an Interview Schedule for the Initial Interview

First Interview Schedule: Layla - November 2010		
Topics	Questions to guide the semi-structured interview	Extra questions raised by student's questionnaire responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Background information ➤ Personal facts <p style="text-align: center;">Qs 1-7</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You describe your level of English as... (Q4) - why? • Q5: What kind of writing have you practised before? • What kind of essay writing have you done and at what level? (Q6) • You describe your ability to write essays as... (Q7) - why? What do you find most difficult / easy about essay writing? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Feedback on writing: experience and preferences <p style="text-align: center;">Qs 8-10</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How important do you think it is to receive feedback on your writing? • What do you think might be the effect if there was no feedback provided on writing? 	<p>Q8: You say Ts in your country gave both written and spoken feedback on your writing. Did these different feedback methods help your writing in the same way or different ways?</p> <p>Q9: It seems as if you see the main purpose of feedback as a way to help correct your mistakes in writing – is this right? Can feedback offer more than just correction?</p> <p>Q10: You say that having conferences with your teacher is useful because it helps you to understand what the teacher wants more clearly? So does this mean that written feedback alone cannot do this? Also you say that conferences offer <i>more time with the teacher</i> too. What do you mean by this?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Conferences: specific issues <p style="text-align: center;">Qs 11-13</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does it matter who talks in a conference? • Do you think having a conference between an English teacher and an international student is different to having one with a L1 student? • In a one to one writing conference, the teacher holds a lot of power in terms of control of the talk. Can the international student also have some power? How? Does it matter who has control? 	<p>Q11: You say that the T will talk more than you in the conference and you like to listen to your teacher – why?</p> <p>Q12: You say that 'speaking clearly' is the most challenging for you in the Conf - why?</p> <p>Q13: You say that in the writing conference if there was anything you didn't agree with you would say nothing and accept it because the teacher has more experience than you. But then you say <i>that '...if we can agree ...we can both change idea together'</i> – this sounds quite different to the things you've said before where the teacher talks and control the conference more. Here it sounds like you are both working together – is this right?</p>

<p>➤ Revision after the conference</p> <p>Qs 14</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How important do you think feedback is in helping students to revise their written drafts and make them better? • Do you think that conferences offer a better chance of revision than other kinds of feedback? 	<p>Q14: You say that you will make ALL changes the teacher mentioned – why? It is your essay and your ideas – won't you also decide what changes to make?</p>
<p>➤ Conferences: general issues</p> <p>Qs 15-18</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think it is true to say that a student will get more out of a writing conference as they become used to doing them? • Can a writing conference ever be a <u>genuine or real conversation</u> between a student and teacher (by real I mean that both sides have more or less equal rights to say what they wish)? 	<p>Q15: You say you have had many one to one conferences with a teacher about written work? Where / when – can you tell me more about this?</p> <p>Q16: You say that Confs are common only in some places in your country, such as universities – is this right? You seem to suggest that this occurs because studying at university is different from school – can you explain what you mean by this?</p> <p>Q17: You chose 'focus/language used/relationship between the T & st' as the 3 factors most likely to affect the 'quality' of a conference - why? You put 'culture' at no. 6 – quite low. So you don't think culture plays a role in how the conference will be?</p> <p>Q18: In the final Q you seem to see the ideal conference as a place where a conversation occurs between you and the teacher about your essay. This sounds like a more equal relationship between you and the teacher. Yet previously, you seem to view the conference as a place where the teacher is in control, corrects your mistakes, where you listen and revise everything they say. This seems to be 2 different ideas? Which one is true?</p>

Appendix 6: Example of a Stimulated Recall Interview Proforma

Stimulated Recall Interview: Alex – Conference 1

1. Briefly remind participant of main goal of research study: **to better understand the interaction that takes place between a teacher and an international student during a one to one writing conference**
2. Explain how the SRI will work:

'I will begin first by asking you a general question about the conference. Then we will listen to the recording of the conference you had and stop it from time to time to explore particular points of interest. I will stop it at certain times to ask you to explain **what you were doing, what you were thinking** at that moment and also **why you were doing that**. This may, of course, lead to a wider discussion. I also invite you to feel free to stop the recording at any time you like to discuss any points or actions that you feel may be significant. Finally, please do try when listening to think back to the conference and talk about what **was** happening there rather than what you're thinking now. Once the recording has finished, I shall end by asking you some final general questions'

3. My own specific questions for SRI

Time of 'critical point'	Action in conference	My Questions	Student ideas about conferences
55 sec	T begins by asking a few open Qs about the process of writing and what he found hard	<p><u>General Q:</u></p> <p>1. How do you think the conference went yesterday?</p> <p>*****</p> <p>2. At the start, the T does not give feedback about your essay but rather asks you questions about how you did the essay. What did you think of this?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sees the conf as a collaborative event • Ok to disagree with T feedback • Thinks he will speak more in the conf • Factors affecting conf: 'language/focus of conf/relationship bet T & st' • 'ideal' conf – a place where the T tells you what is good/bad and corrects errors
1.31	St backchannels (~ohh) when the T explains that he needs to reference the source in the paragraph	3. Why did you make this noise here?	
2.03	St explains that he knows what referencing is	4. You explain quite well – were you confident that your right here or were you checking with the T?	
2.48	T explains that some information missing at the start of the introduction	5. Here you are very quiet - why?	
3.15	St asks a Q about thesis statement	6. What were you thinking at that point – were you clear what she was saying or not?	
3.49	T reminds st of related class content	7. When the T spoke about the class, did it help to make it clearer or not?	

4.07	T asks st 'if it is clear'	8. Why do you think the T needed to ask you this? Was she not sure? What made her think this?
4.28	T highlights the need to have 3 ideas in thesis yet st asks something else (topic shift)	9. Why did you ask this Q – it seems different to what she says?
4.32	St attempts to interrupt x1 – not successful but more success a few secs later	10. You tried to speak once and then had to wait to say something later. Was it easy to speak when you wanted or not?
4.50	St explains what he thinks he needs to do	11. What were you trying to do here – you seemed a little confused? Did you want more information from the T. Was it clear enough?
5.47	T explains what st needs to do in more detail offering more specific egs	12. Did you prefer this kind of detailed feedback from the T?
6.02	T mentions 'need for more evidence' but st ignores this and asks about his 'grammar mistakes' (Topic shift)	13. Why did you do this?
6.22	T mentions probs with tense usage	14. What were you asking here – not clear to me? Seemed like you were unclear what the T meant? Is that right?
6.45	T says she understands what he means but not natural English expressions. St seems to agree and giggle	15. You seem to laugh a little when you here this - why?
7.11	T indirectly asks st to change poor expression and st asks a Q – 'so change another...sentence'?	16. Why did you ask this – did you not understand what she meant?
8.20	Lovely eg of st and T working together to achieve a common goal	17. What was the problem for you here? Did you want/expect the T to correct it for you?
10.52	St explains the reason why he uses personal pronouns	18. Do you think it is important to explain the reason why you do something in your writing?
		<u>Final Qs</u>
		19. How well do you think you participated in the conference?
		20. Who controlled the conference in your opinion? How did they do it?
		21. Did you feel that you had opportunities to say what you wanted or felt about your essay?
		22. Do you think the conference will help you to write a better 2nd draft?
		23: Overall, would you say that your conference was 'successful or less successful? Why?

Appendix 7: Example analysis of a memo about a student's beliefs

Kazumi (based on his questionnaire, first interview and 4 SRIs)

Potential In-Vivo codes that came up in Kazumi's data analysis (i.e. questionnaire, first interview and 4 subsequent SRIs)
In-Vivo Code 1: "I think culture could be the problem" (where from: First interview p2)
In-Vivo Code 2: "I would like to ask my teacher at the conference" (where from: Questionnaire p2)
In-Vivo Code 3: "the good thing I found is he followed the structure" (where from: SRI 1 p8)
In-Vivo Code 4: "I ran out of time" (where from: SR2 p2)
In-Vivo Code 5: "I needed more help" (where from: SRI 3 p3)
In-Vivo code 6: "I felt he meant change" (where from: SRI 1 p2)
In-Vivo code 7: "Yes I think it does matter [who talks more]" (where from: First interview p2)
In-Vivo code 8: "I agreed with this so yeah I change it – it doesn't mean I followed him" (where from: SRI 2 p1)

In-vivo code 1: "I think culture could be the problem"

K compared to the others seems to view the one to one conferences as a challenge for him personally. We know from his questionnaire that he never received spoken feedback in Japan so it would be a new experience for him in the UK. This sense of anxiety is first expressed in Q10 of his questionnaire, *"I feel nervous to talk with the teacher one to one"* and the theme is later picked up again when he selects, *"the relationship between the student and teacher"* in Q17 to be a factor that may affect the quality of the conference. When asked in the follow up interview about his response to Q10 and feeling 'nervous', he offers the following reason, *"because he's much older than me and he's my teacher so I just feel nervous"*. This seems perhaps to be related to not only his own personality but the culture in which he has been educated and socialised. This is implied later in the interview when he is asked to compare how conferencing with an international student like himself might be different to one with a L1 English speaking student. He replies, *"I think culture could be the problem because like western and eastern really different ...Asian student are not maybe able to talk a lot"*. Such words imply how K seems to carry a rather negative belief of his conference behaviour from the outset.

In his first interview he is later asked whether a student could have some control over his conference. He again offers a reply consistent with his earlier beliefs about cultural influence, *"I think that is difficult especially when those students are from Asia ... we are taught to respect our teachers yeah so I think it's difficult to control"*. Yet he goes on to point out an important point of differentiation, namely that much depends on the personality of the student and not just the culture, *"I think it depends on the personality. For example me I don't talk much so it is difficult for me but if someone talks a lot then it would be much easier"*. Towards the end of the interview K does concede that familiarity with the conference will help students, *"I think they will be less nervous and they would know how it works"*. In SRI 1 when discussing whether he felt able to intervene in the discussion with his teacher to ask questions he responds, *"It*

wasn't easy to interrupt for me ... maybe that's from cultural reasons. Even in the class I see European student say more ... but Japanese students and Chinese student don't".

Yet despite these beliefs of the power of cultural upbringing to affect his conference behaviour, by the time we reach the end of the programme and he has had all his four conferences, there are signs of change. These changes seem to pervade not only his own performance in the conferences but his attitude towards the style of conferencing he has been exposed to on the programme. When asked in SRI 4 what he felt about his teacher's use of providing 'suggestions' for change rather than categoric 'requests' for change, he offers the following regarding his attitude towards conferencing, *"well I think this way was good ... in Japan probably I would be told to 'do this and that is the correct way' but I think in kind of western country it's like more up to yourself"*. When asked if he liked this style directly he replies, *"Yeah I think so"*. Later in the interview he is asked if culture has played an important role during his conferences. His answer is rather illuminating, *"Yeah I think it did ... at first time he [teacher] kind of talked eighty-ninety percent in the conference but I didn't talk very much. I think that was kind of difficult for me"*. When asked if he spoke more in his final conferences he says, *"yeah I think so ... because I just myself I know more"*. These quotes from the interview are an incredibly powerful statement as they imply that with time and familiarity, not only can conference behaviour adapt but beliefs about conferences have the capacity to change too. This has so many implications for protocols in establishing conference feedback systems in UK university courses with international students. (*NB I have used the words 'attitude' and 'belief' above interchangeably – need to define both in write up in more concrete terms)

In-Vivo Code 2: "I would like to ask my teacher at the conference"

Despite the issue surrounding confidence above, K views the conference as a place to ask questions about his work. In his questionnaire (Q10) he writes how he often struggles to write in English and, *"I would like to ask my teacher at the conference"*. In his first interview when asked to compare written versus spoken feedback, he offers a positive aspect on spoken feedback, *"I think spoken feedback is better because it is a conversation between the teacher and student"*. This is interesting as it implies that he sees the conference as a more dynamic, two way process despite registering his anxiety in being in a one to one situation (In-vivo code 1). Later he goes on to mention once again his desire to seek answers during the conference, *"In the spoken feedback I think I will ask why is this not correct"*. Again later he reiterates this desire yet again when asked if the conference might lead to better revision of the draft than just written feedback alone, *"Yes ... as I said I can ask the teachers why I'm not sure"*. Later in SRI 3, having experienced his third conference by that point, he is asked if it felt better. He offers the following reply, *"yeah it was easier for me because I could manage to ask questions (more than last time)"*. K seems to use his ability to ask questions as a tool to measure his success in the conference. This is perhaps not surprising considering his responses in In-vivo code 1, where he expressed nervousness about doing conferences based on his own personality traits and of a wider belief it seems about the inhibitory influence of culture.

In-Vivo Code 3: "the good thing I found is he followed the structure"

K seems to have a preference for a 'structured' conference – a system that is followed with some level of regularity. In his questionnaire (Q17) he selects *"the focus of the conference"* as a possible factor that might impact in the quality of the talk. In his follow up interview when asked to explain this choice he says, *"because if the teacher talks what I don't want to know or what I already know from the written feedback I think that doesn't work"*. This gives the

impression of someone who has a fixed idea of how he expects or would like the conference to play out.

This is hinted at later in his SRI 1 when he is asked whether as a student he needs a teacher to prompt him in order to speak in the conference, *"I think they should, not should but if they ask question after they speak it's better"*. Later when discussing his relative participation in his first conference, he seems a little disappointed in not participating enough. He goes on to offer a possible solution to this, *"He asks small question, 'you agree or how do you think' I think it will be better and if he asks me after talking about each paragraph, that will be nicer because I can I remember much what we talked"*. When challenged that this was what the T did do he replies, *"no ... he only asked questions to me at the beginning and at the very end. So I wanted to have like some kind of question in the middle of the conversation"*. Towards the end of the interview he is asked if he hopes for anything different in his next conference. He offers the following, *"Yeah as I said I expect more questions, opportunity to express my opinion"*. Later he goes on to express the positive structure the teacher did follow in his first conference, *"The good thing I found is he followed the structure. He went in a chronological order from the first and the second – I think that was good"*. Perhaps this 'structure' affords students like K a sense of comfort because they can then expect and reply upon it which in turn may help in nurturing more confident and willing conference participation.

Again in SRI 3 he expresses a desire for wanting the conference structure to be in a particular style. When asked if he liked the way the teacher towards the end of the conference reverted to a more personalised style of asking him how he felt about his essay etc., K replies with, *"I think if we start from general kind of personal ... think it would be more natural but personally I prefer just (go to the text)"*. At the end of the interview he is once again asked if he'd like to see any changes in his next conference – *"sometimes it would be useful if I can like (only) ask questions – that might be useful. I ask questions and he answers that with a bit of extra information"*. So despite his apparent lack of confidence (In-vivo code 1), K certainly has a range of views on how he would like to see his conferences structured. It highlights an important area of investigation for teachers in perhaps trying to find out more about student preferences for conference talk and then being more adaptable in their approaches to accommodate this. If it leads to students feeling more comfortable and hence able to better participate in the on-going talk then it may well be worth considering.

In-Vivo Code 4: "I ran out of time"

'Time' seems to be of importance to K. From his questionnaire you get a glimpse of the issue right away in Q9 when he offers a reason for him having a preference for both written and spoken feedback, *"I chose both because written feedback gives me lots of correction in less time ..."*. Later when asked to pick factors that might affect the quality of a conference he is the only student to select *"the length of the conference"* in his top three choices. When asked in his follow up interview about this choice he offers the following, *"If it's very short like five minutes that is really not enough"*. When pushed if say fifteen minutes would be better he replies, *"I think that is appropriate"*.

Why this preoccupation with timing? In his SRI 1 there lies perhaps a reason for this. When asked in the opening question of the interview how his first conference had gone, K offers the following evaluation, *"It wasn't like what I expected because I didn't have much time to express my opinion"*. This gives the impression of someone who wishes to contribute to the conference talk and needs or expects the time to have his say. Later in the interview when asked why he

did not ask any questions during a long turn from the teacher (audio extract played) he again brings up the question of time, *"Because I felt, I remember that moment when I was there, I felt he speaks really fast and so I don't have any time to talk ... space"*. In SRI 2 he is played an audio extract highlighting how the T asks him a question to which he offers little and then a few seconds later the T fills in the gap by continuing with his feedback. K offers the following reason, *"I think I was struggling to answer ... it wasn't easy to explain and yeah I ran out of time"*. Later when discussing another similar event in the conference, he is asked if was unhappy or annoyed that he didn't get the opportunity to speak at that moment. K replies, *"Not annoyed but I think I was a bit rushed"*. At the end of the interview K is asked if he felt overall that he got sufficient opportunity to speak during that conference to which he replies, *"Yeah I think I didn't have enough opportunity to talk"*. Similar comments regarding a lack of time are again found in SRI 3, *"I needed time to make a response"*.

This concern with 'time' suggests a student who might be lacking in confidence and familiarity in dealing with the role of a one to one participant and the discursive responsibilities that come about in-situ. This perhaps is not surprising considering his earlier comments on one to one talk being a source of anxiety for him. He is trying to get accustomed to it all and at times it is representing a real challenge for him to get up to speed.

In-Vivo Code 5: "I needed more help"

A common request of the participants thus far analysed is to get more information and details from their conferences and K is no exception to this. In his first interview when asked to explain his response to Q18 in his questionnaire about the 'ideal conference', K makes plain what he expects, *"I want to receive more in the conference. The ideal is I think the teacher correct all the mistakes even if it is say small and I ask all the- I think all is difficult ... most of the sentences what I was struggled"*. The emphasis to get detail is further reiterated in his SRI 1. K is asked to comment on how his T opened the conference, namely with more general, personalised questions to which he offers the following reply, *"I didn't like that ... because it was too kind of general and I wanted to go straight to the essay. Yeah it was difficult because not specific"*. There is a sense of urgency to get to the task at hand, perhaps linked to his general concern about the availability of time in the conference. Later in the interview when discussing an instance whereby the T offers more directive feedback compared to his earlier non-directive feedback (i.e. lacking details), he is asked which style he prefers. K is fairly clear in his view, *"I prefer the teacher give me an example because even if I don't use those examples that gives me kind of feeling how I have to change it"*.

This is echoed in SRI 3 when the topic of the teacher's feedback style comes up again while discussing if he had been bothered by his teacher's very long feedback turn at one point in the conference. K says, *"It wasn't a problem ... he gave me a lot of like examples and suggestions but what he was saying was alike a straight line"*. Later on the same point he is played audio highlighting how he remains pretty quiet in response to the T's confirmation question regarding whether he had understood the feedback (in the long turn). I ask him that his reply doesn't sound as if he did and ask him to recall the moment. K says, *"I did understand ... I was expecting kind of suggestions ... it was a bit different from my problem"*. When prompted to consider what the T could have done better he replies, *"probably shorter ... I needed more help I can do ... what he gave me was jut basic"*. Finally in SRI 4 towards the end of the interview when asked to look back over all his conferences and consider if he had liked to have seen any

changes, K adds, *“I think the very last one was kind of the most effective one ... give me suggestions and I changed that”*.

It is quite obvious from his quotes above throughout that K wants more specificity, ideally through the use of examples. Like all of the students thus far analysed, examples provide a concrete way of highlighting what needs to be done more clearly compared to explanation that may simply offer more spoken words from a teacher to decode and make sense of in real time – a challenge for lower level international students.

In-Vivo code 6: “I felt he meant change”

An interesting feature of K’s conferences is the times when he has seemingly had to interpret what the teacher’s feedback has meant for his draft. With his teacher D employing a more indirect/suggestive style of feedback commentary that does not always directly state what must or must not be changed, much is left in the student’s hands as to what to do next. While instinctively such a code does not fit in to the aim of revealing a student’s belief, due to his own comments during interview, it has come to suggest something that K may hold a possible view on. It does not appear in either the questionnaire or first interview but arises in discussion during his SRIs.

In SRI 1 upon playing a short audio extract of T commentary about an issue, he is asked whether he understood if the teacher had asked him to make a change or not make a change. K offers the following reply, *“I felt he meant change it but I felt like the reason why he said it is a ‘small point’ is I think he want to say not bad this sentence. Again later about a language issue involving the use of the word ‘obviously’, K is again asked if he thought the T had stated that it was ok or not ok. K says, “No I felt it was wrong ... ‘it is ok’ sounds for me like it is not good but I don’t want to say directly”*. When prompted that as a student he is able to interpret such a message, he replies, *“Yes... and the words ‘be careful’ was a bit strong”*. When asked if such indirect/suggestive language used by the teacher might present difficult for students, K thinks not, *“all student can understand because D (his teacher) kind of stress his that when he was talking about the word ‘obviously’ he was talking slower and that made me feel like it is important and I have to change it”*.

These few examples are fascinating in themselves as vehicles that showcase how even lower level international students are actively engaging in real time interpretation of their teacher’s feedback commentary. The mental processing involved in order to do this is high and to continue to stay involved during the length of the conference talk must be very challenging for many students. It shows that while on the surface students may not offer much verbally at times, cognitively they may well be very active indeed. It also highlights what tools a student may use to arrive at their conclusions - attention paid to the actual words used by the teacher to frame his/her response and any indicative stress placed on particular words.

In SRI 2 we once again see K engaged in interpreting what the teacher may want him to do or not regarding another language issue. He receives somewhat conflicting about whether a change should be made or not from the teacher and is asked about this in the interview. He offers the following, *“Yeah I was confused because yeah (I thought) doesn’t make sense ... because he said it was a bit wrong and finally he said, ‘I accept that’. So yeah but I thought the previous talk was his idea”*. When prompted that he would change it even though the teacher had said ‘it was ok’, K replies, *“because like I kind of was convinced by him this is not clear ... and not strong enough”*.

In SRI 4 when looking back over all his conferences is the moment when I first became convinced that he may have an established belief or opinion on this issue or evolved a pre-existing belief he may have held. When asked directly if he would have preferred less suggestion and more clarity in the changes he needed to make by the teacher, K seems to reveal an opinion on the matter, *“well I think this way was good I think... in Japan probably I would be told to ‘do this and that is the correct way’ but I think in kind of western country it’s like more up to yourself”*. When prompted if he liked this he says, *“Yeah I think so”*.

This code highlights something quite useful about the concept of belief systems. Instinctively we see the term ‘belief’ as something ‘long lasting, ingrained, and matured’ - something perhaps not always easily adapted. With writing conferences being new to all of the student participants, they are essentially learning as they go and this is bound to have an impact on their thinking and views on the new processes they are engaging in. Out of such new experience is born new beliefs or the adaptation of pre-existing ones (N.B. Just because the ‘belief’ was not captured in the data explicitly, i.e. questionnaire or initial interview, does not necessarily mean it did not exist!).

Perhaps the real surprise for me has been the quantity and quality of thinking and reflection about the process these students have been able to show – something I had not expected from low level international students.

In-Vivo code 7: “Yes I think it does matter [who talks more]”

From his questionnaire I got the impression that K had a preference for more traditional roles to be played out in the conference, viz. the teacher leading and him following. His response to Q13 about what action he would take upon hearing feedback that he did not agree with was a first pointer to such a view, *“say nothing and accept the teacher’s feedback”*. Later when asked to select a sentence that best described for him an ‘ideal’ conference he chose, *“A place where the teacher tells you what is good and bad about your essay and corrects your essay”*. These substantiate the impression of a student who like or expects the teacher to control the conference and give information. Yet this is not entirely true.

In his follow up interview K expresses a different view that is inclusive of him offering more participation. In the first interview he offers the following sound bites in discussion, *“I think spoken feedback is better because it is a conversation between teacher and student”*; *“in the spoken feedback I think I will ask why is this not correct”*. Later when directly asked if it matters who talks more in the conference, he states, *“Yes I think it does matter... I think it could change the goal of the conference if the student talks a lot that makes the student more comfortable”*. When prompted further how he might feel if the teacher spoke most of the time he says, *“if that teacher’s speak is answering the student’s questions that doesn’t matter”*. This then helps to qualify his view, viz. that a student needs to contribute if possible but if this does not happen then as long as the teacher is focussed on responding to the student’s needs that is acceptable. This seems to be a quite sensible view of conference talk and control. The number of words spoken seems to matter less than the focus and relevance of those words.

In-Vivo code 8: “I agreed with this so yeah I change it – it doesn’t mean I followed him”

We can see from earlier in-vivo codes that K does possess a sense of knowing what he likes/doesn’t like – viz. wants to ask questions, prefers a set structure to the conference and

wishes to contribute to conference talk. While this sense of independence may not be as strongly expressed as some of the other students (A & M) it does provide a hint of someone who knows their own mind. For example in response to Q14 in his questionnaire that asked him what action he might take after the conference, K selects, *"Make changes to some parts of my draft the teacher highlighted and some of your own ideas"* as compared to another option on the list that offered following ALL of the teacher's advice for change. Further interview analysis shows that K possesses more of an independent streak than merely contribution to the talk. In SRI 1 he is asked why after staying quiet for so long during teacher feedback on an issue he suddenly offers a response. He says, *"I think, I remember I didn't agree with him"*. This sense of having a mind of his own arises again in SRI 2, when after expressing that he followed the teacher's advice about making changes to his first draft, he is asked if it was important to follow the teacher's feedback. K offers the following reply, *"No just because ... I agree with this so yeah I change it – it doesn't mean I followed him"*. He is prompted further to consider whether following the teacher vs. disagreeing was the more powerful incentive for him. K says, *"maybe I don't agree ... yeah but if the teacher completely disagree with me it's going to be difficult"*. I again prompted him to say what he might do in the very situation he describes, *"I think I don't change it maybe"*. These quotes clearly highlight an individual who has a mind of his own and is prepared to trust it at times even though it may mean not completely following the teacher's advice for change. There is a measure of confidence here that belies his earlier statements of feeling nervous about the conference process.

In his final two SRI, he again returns to the notion of the student contributing more to the conference. In SRI 3, he is asked how well he thinks he had participated in his last conference. K says, *"Not equal (to the teacher) but more than before"*. This highlights how contribution during the conference is of importance to him and that he consciously monitors this about himself. In SRI 4 towards the end of the last interview when reflecting back over all of his conferences, he is asked to consider how important student participation is in the conference, *"I think as long as they understand it's fine but I think at least kind of thirty percent they should have to talk"*.

Appendix 8a: Example of a Conference Transcript (first cycle of coding): Maria

- D: could I have your name please?
- M: yes I'm M
- D: ok M right so today we are discussing your first draft of your essay in response to the question '*to take a degree in a foreign country with a foreign language and a foreign culture is a decision of either great madness or great courage*' now you've given me the first draft erm how did you feel about writing this? (1.5)
- M: erm (2) actually I had many ideas points of view but I (had) to organise them
- D: mm hmm
- M: err and I have little problems with my organisation (1) but then I start from the introduction and then I chose three arguments
- D: mm hmm=
- M: =and I analyse them (1)
- D: mm hmm and I noticed did you actually have a plan? before you
- M: yes=
- D: =you wrote=
- M: =err yes the plan is from a book (xxx) I wrote my arguments (xxx) I had and later I start writing my essay
- D: ok erm (1) and when you finished (1) how did you feel when you finished were you (1) satisfied were you happy how did you feel at the end?=
=yes er I feel because for a first
- M: draft it was er ok for me (1)
- D: ok (2) did you read my comments here that I gave? ((T turns pages of draft)) erm do you have anything to say I mean about my comments there=
=erm here where it say
- M: '*however you present a clear*' erm no '*I would like to see a few more*'? ((student reads teacher's written comments))
- D: references
- M: I have to find some journals because I went to the library and I (said) if I can find book or journal with er (1.5) about this subject but I couldn't find somethin[g
- D: [hm yeah was it quite difficult to find [something specific
- M: [yes] yes
- D: yes well (1) what I meant when I said that you have included one quote ((T refers to text)) which is actually er I think quite a relevant quote it's the one from coca cola?
- M: yes I find this erm (2) this message who said this person from the internet
- D: ah that was from the internet?=
=yes
- D: ok obviously what you need to do is to get the exact reference for that the website=
- M: =the website
- D: the name of the website the date if possible and the name of the ac[tual perhaps page or
- M: [ok]
- D: article where it actually came from
- M: mmm ok

Interesting here because in his written comments he only writes one word 'reference' in the margins highlighting a possible change yet upon the point coming up for discussion in the conference, he is now able to expand on that and give more details. This example highlights the power of conferencing to provide more detailed information that written commentary cannot match. This opening has been quite interactive in terms of the number of questions asked by the T (5 in all) and the amount of student contribution. Based on this early extract, M obviously talks more than K did so it will be interesting to see what effect this has, if any, on the conference dynamics.

- D: erm ok well you also see from the comments there I've said I think it's quite a well written essay with a clear argument (1) erm well let's go through this so from the start there you'll notice I've written (1) 'quite a long introduction' (1.5) and that's not necessarily a criticism erm (3) it is quite long but erm what happened you did actually manage to give your thesis statement here at the end (1) so I thought it was very important that you managed to do that in the end because you actually (1)
- M: yes I have done a general introduction talking about er (1) er without taking any point of view
- D: hm
- M: a position from the=
- D: =yes=
- M: =(xxx) and later I said my point of view and what I will write (xxx)
- D: yes yeah I think that works actually what you- yes you've done some background haven't you=
- M: =y[es
- D: [you've made some general comments[about the growth of international education
- M: [xxx]
- D: and (1) you seem to have (xxx) it with globalisation which is fine (1) yeah that's ok I think it was ok erm like I say that's not really a criticism I just thought ok it is a long introduction but (1) you know you don't need to have a certain sized introduction
- M: should I separate the paragraph from the here ((student refers to text)) I put my (xxx)
- D: well (1) to be honest that thesis statement is actually just one- well it's two sentences as we might expect it's quite short (1) I don't think there's any need to put it actually into a separate paragraph I think what I was talking about there was perhaps the background was going on for a while
- M: ok
- D: because what I thought was you've got seven hundred and fifty words
- M: mm
- D: and I was just a bit worried that maybe it was just getting a bit long but then when I noticed that you put your thesis statement in I thought ok fine
- M: [ok
- D: [you can accept that but it's quite well written the point is (1) what you've written there is quite relevant so it's not as if you were digressing or going off the point so I thought ok (1) we're ok with that now

Ultimately this may have caused a little confusion for the student because on one hand the T starts by saying that something is not quite right but then later mitigates that evaluation by saying that it's now ok. Interesting to see what the student makes of this later in her post conference interview. J's more forceful, explicit feedback style maybe better suited at times when it comes to discussing change because it may be clearer/more decisive but then there is the charge often levelled at such directive feedback of it not allowing enough student contribution, freedom of choice in terms of revision and ultimately the danger of the T appropriating the text.

- D: the rest of it what I noticed is (1) erm (2.5) quite good language I think your vocabulary seemed to be very (1.5) formal and academic quite good did you?
- M: ah[

D: [use dictionaries?=
M: =yes
D: ah[
M: [because why er when I'm home I can do many (way) to use (xxx) the dictionary and in the class I can't do this
D: ((T chuckles)) (1) it shows it certainly helped it really sounds academic and the vocabulary is very (1.5) well chosen I mean there one or two times I've written wrong word which may be a translation problem I'm not sure but[
M: [yes maybe (xxx)
D: could b[e
M: [maybe
D: I've just written one wrong word there ((T refers to text))

Another episode in which we see D offer plenty of praise. He does, of course, have better students who have produced better drafts than J's so perhaps there is MORE to praise than J had.

D: but what I think let me just say what I think is good about this is that it's very clear that each paragraph does actually contain (2) a main idea with a topic sentence certainly the your second paragraph is very clear topic sentence (1.5) you know '*choosing a foreign country to study in can present many challenges*' and then you give me the challenges (1) which is fine then of course you give me the counter argument when you say '*however it's actually a good thing and not a bad thing*' so that's quite good that's your first body paragraph then your (1) second body paragraph that's right is here and then you talk about another difficulty here which is the cultural difference er the problems with culture and culture shock and again (1) you give us quite a bit of analysis and some comments about that (1) erm and again the quote from coca cola there but again the counter argument is there as well '*however*' so again it's very clear that you are agreeing for studying abroad erm (1) was that very clear to you did you make sure each paragraph had a main idea that was very clear? (1) yeah the only thing is I would just say that on the third body paragraph I've just written here erm you put '*in addition*' that's- I think you're just starting the paragraph there but I just thought 'in addition' is when you're starting a new paragraph (with
M: [(xxx)]
D: a new idea I was just thinking in addition to what? you know I was thinking
M: ahh
D: (xxx) you know what I mean it's almost as if (1) I think that would be probably better used as a new sentence if you were continuing the paragraph (but) that just seems to me I'm just thinking you know what am I going back to another idea whereas I think what you're doing is introducing
M: first idea
D: yes=
M: =I didn't know that 'in addition' we put only in (xxx) paragraph
D: ah [yeah
M: [(xxx)
D: [ah yeah] ok so you're just using 'in addition' by- another way of saying here's another idea=
M: =yes=
D: =yes ok erm maybe just think about rephrasing that erm and again then you talk about financial (1) issues here the topic sentence seems to introduce financial background all I'd say was that I think it was ok here because again you put the- again very good counter argument is there your saying look it is (1) costly but you know you can't buy that experience etcetera which is (1.5) ok then I just thought I just

- wondered whether you drifted away from 'financial and money' when you get to the (xxx) here ((T refers to text)) I'm not sure if you're still talking about that topic of financial and money (1) erm (1) little bit ((T reading text)) I just thought there maybe towards the end I was thinking are you still talking about money and finance and (1.5)
- M: err I put money financial with the experience erm (1.5) I don't know if it's wrong or correct to put them together
- D: yeah ok erm (2.5) it's not right or wrong it's just that I think when you say (in) the first line 'studying in another country needs financial background to pay high tuition fees and living expenses' then I thought ok that's good and you're going to tell me now that yes erm (1) cost of living is expensive books are expensive travel is expensive de de de however there are certain things that money you can't put a price on and these things are a b c and d that's all I just think that it just went a little bit away from that idea that I'm arguing against cost that's all I think those ideas are fine but I think just get them in the context that these this is something to do with cost and money just bring that back in a bit that's all
- M: hm

As we have seen in several places now in this episode alone, D's feedback is always very mitigated and I still wonder what effect this will have on the student's ability to understand what needs to be done and the actual revision that takes place. In terms of power, one would not necessarily expect the more powerful, dominant participant in an institutional event to do this so much. The institutional function/purpose of the conference is to offer evaluation of the work done and offer suggestions for improvement to the student. While this purpose does not, of course, dictate how that spoken feedback is delivered, the fact that we are now seeing two teachers offering differing kinds of feedback (D = less directive / 'the interested reader' vs. J = more directive / 'the evaluator' role) in terms of how directive it is, this is an important question to ask and is linked to perhaps the success of the conference.

- D: and I thought the conclusion was fine but what I've said here is ((T refers to his written comments)) obviously you've put things like 'we you we you and your'[
- M: [that it (was) a problem that I was thinking while I was writing my essay what I have to say 'this students' 'we' '
- D: hm
- M: people' errr[m
- D: [different expressions= ((T chuckles))
- M: ='you and 'I' when I somebody (1.5) read this essay is a student?
- D: hm
- M: or in your [erm (xxx) to
- D: [mm hmm] hm
- M: person who is reading
- D: mm hmm
- M: this essay
- D: (xxx) it's like almost directly[addressed to the reader erm I mean it's not (1) a mistake to say
- M: [yes]
- D: say things like 'in conclusion we can remark' because some academic papers do that err but they often do that when it's joint authors in other words definitely speaking from the plural you know we me and my co-authors it just seems a bit strange when there's one writer saying 'we' it's ok if you use it
- M: I [put myself and I write (the reader) that's why I said 'we'
- D: [not too often] hm yes yeah yes exactly me

[and
M: [yes]
D: you yeah ok I just thought yeah it's ok that=
M: =I have to change them
D: (no no no) I just wanted you to know you know make you aware of that so- not so it's used too often I think it's ok if you use it I think your just about ok because looking back you haven't [overused it but I think to just introduce it at the end is ok again the same thing with 'you you
M: [yeah]
D: *you you and your'* ((T refers to text)) 'you' there's quite a few examples of 'you you and your' again (1) yes obviously your addressing[
M: [erm yes to the reader=
D: =[yes
M: [that's why er
D: ok=
M: =I give him it's way to (xxx) him that I am er
D: [hm
M: [correct about something
D: addressing [you direct erm (1.5) ok erm (2.5) I would just say that perhaps I'd try to
M: [yes]
D: [think of passives or other ways of saying it just because it's just so many of them
M: [xxx passive]
D: that's it and I think in the academic convention probably I'd stay away from 'you you your you you'
M: hm=
D: =and just go with you know a passive or just students or you know 'students who study abroad' even if you want to make the phrase slightly longer and change it a little bit 'foreign students' 'international [students' student- you know try and think of as many
M: [mm hmm] ok
D: kinds of [phrases
M: [(xxx) (pronoun)]
D: yeah different ways of saying it maybe and if maybe you can try to use the passive if possible just to get rid of all those there's just quite a few of them that's all I think if you use a pronoun (1) I would use it (1) certain times not every sentence
M: [ok
D: [because that conclusion's quite a lot of 'you's and you know it's a small point and it doesn't make the essay any less
M: [ok

This episode has brought to light many interesting things such as the student's positive, active contribution to the talk and D's unclear, overly mitigated feedback style that perhaps did not leave the student at times with the greatest of clarity. Due to the student's contribution, this episode was less dominated by the T and D's long turns seen in his other conference with a quieter student have not yet appeared.

D: [erm I think in terms of (1) achievement (1) erm but like I said overall I think you've actually written a very strong draft here (1) erm (2.5) ((T flicks through student text)) it was very clear to me to read I found it very clear to read erm (1) it was quite interesting you know I thought your ideas were well articulated you know erm good level of language (1) erm only some small problems obviously you can see I've written things like spelling wrong form ((T refers to text))

M: mm hmm

D: such as 'chose choose' those kind of things you'll need to have a little look at those just quite small things but I like the fact that you've given me (1) erm a clear argument (1.5) paragraph with a topic a clear topic sentence and then you've analysed and explained and commented on that topic sentence and you've put the counter arguments in each

M: mm hmm

D: paragraph (1.5) so I think it read very well and I also liked the level of vocabulary I mean you've got things like '*foreign language proficiency*' and '*language competences*' erm (1) the good level of vocabulary here and also I like your sentence (words) like '*moreover furthermore although however*' (1) that builds up an argument (1.5) erm so (2) as far as improvement is concerned (2) nothing major (1) I don't think ((T chuckles)) actually did you feel when you finished it did you think yes that's qui- because you can feel sometimes can't you that it's I quite like that

M: yes ((Student chuckles))

D: did you you [were quite happ[y? yes

M: [yes yes yeah

D: because I thought it was good I liked it a lot you know I've said references if you could find another ref- I know it's not easy (1)

M: something that another person have [said (xxx)

D: [yes yes] if there's something in your writing there that you can support like that and maybe that would be a way to you know improve the way you put across the arguments the language is very appropriate it's very clear the arguments are very clear it's very it's coherent it's well connected it's got a good- it's clear structure it's got everything that I would expect like I said maybe just the quotes there are one or two small language errors is there anything you'd like to ask me about that?

M: erm so I have to correct the pronouns here to [(xxx) change it ((Student refers to conclusion))

D: [yeah again yeah again I don't I wouldn't (1) it's not a huge point but it's just really a stylistic point really thos[e pronouns because you can

M: [yeah]

D: think of a different way a different language to describe that than yes if not

M: ok=

D: =it's not a huge problem (1) erm but I don't think you need to make any- I don't think you need any major changes do you? I don't think that you- you don't need to [(find)

M: [no I

D: actually to say the truth I (xxx) the essay (xxx)=

D: =yeah you're quite happy with that=

M: =yes

D: yeah like I said I think for the second draft (1) small changes really erm (1) really just one or two

M: yes

D: [words

M: [last paragraph

D: yes last paragraph maybe just have a look at the third body paragraph I'd just think about the cost again there ((T refers to text)) just so you don't go away from the topic sentence that's all but the rest of it I think it's very good and you know your language like '*by immersing ourse-*' I mean you've got words like 'immersing' (1) erm (1) '*immersing ourselves in a new language*' '*intuitive*' '*resourceful*' '*more tolerant*' I mean

you've got a great range of language here (2) so that's very impressive (1.5) '*self esteem*' '*stress related disorders*' the vocabulary is extremely good here and works very well (1) so good structure like I said on my comments here '*sophisticated response*' (1) I do think it's very sophisticated have you erm had experience of writing essays before?

M: I actually because I have been studying in France (xxx) in language (xxx) and some teacher of French (xxx) how to I know how to organise an essay (1) the vocabulary to use

D: mm hmm

M: maybe that it help me

D: yes I think it has well it's clearly a good piece of work er you've got all your content there and you've got your structure it's just a very small improvements from this first draft to the second draft (2) so (2) I liked it

M: is there any problem with the longer of my essay because I have (xxx) more than

D: oh erm did you do a word count?

M: no but [(xxx)

D: [I think

M: this

D: it might be slightly over I mean be[cause you've got three pages there so we're probably

M: [mm]

D: talking about three hundred and fifty three hundred fifty it's probably (1) over the word count (1) I would imagine I would have a look at that if it's getting over the word count seven hundred and fifty so we can go ten percent either way (1) certainly if it's over eight hundred and fifty (you know) the max the very very max (xxx) you might need to try to get rid of some and that won't be easy to do

M: hm

D: so once you've written something like that and you're happy with it'll be quite difficult doing that

M: [yes

D: [do have a look at the word count (1) I think you might just be ok (1) for eight hundred and fifty

M: if no if it's more than hundred

D: mm

M: I have to minimise (then)?

D: mm I would yeah (1) it's usually ten percent either way that you can be within the range (1) it'd be a shame because it's almost I'm not exactly [sure what you'd take out there

M: [because] I try to minimise it but I couldn't ((Teacher chuckles))

D: yes it's one of those essays where every (1) sentence seems to be right (1) and it would be quite a shame to start taking sentences out (1) but let's hope you don't have to do that but first of all find out on the second draft at least tell me how many words you've done on the second draft then we'll have another look at it and see if there is anything you can take out before the final draft but yeah (1) I liked that I think it's really good (2.5) ok

M: thank you

This first conference between M and D has highlighted a number of features. Firstly M contributes to the conference far more actively than K did and as such the conference has not been littered by the long T turns we saw in his conferences with K. There has been a better balance of interaction in this conference, albeit still controlled by the T as one might expect, but not to the extent as seen in the other conferences. M has offered her own explanations of her work, asked questions, interrupted the T's turn, completed his turns at times and brought up her own previous learning experiences. D still exemplifies the 'interested reader' role that he has shown in all

of his conferences here with plenty of praise, mitigated feedback and offering insight in to how he felt as he read the text. Yet the level of his mitigation has been queried in this conference due to it making the call for change unclear at times for the student. This has time and again thrown up the question of validity against such a style of feedback in terms of whether it offers the necessary focus or clarity to a student in order for them to make successful revision in a later draft. Might directive feedback, while perhaps sacrificing the desire of more egalitarian conferences where participants share equal rights of access and participation, offer greater success in helping students to achieve their aims of a better second draft? There seems to be a tension here between these two aims, 'the function of the conference vs. desire for more equal talk' - to gain one is to lose the other? Is there a possible middle ground here?

Appendix 8b: Example of a Conference Transcript (second cycle of coding): Layla

J: ok L so how did you find doing the essay

Due to her institutional status as teacher, she exercises her right to control the topical agenda. As such a Q+A sequence is initiated right from the very first teacher turn. Discursively speaking, the questioner is in a more powerful role here as they restrict the freedom of the student here to the role of answerer and then get the right to speak after the answer has been submitted and comment on that answer. Yet the Q is open ended and genuine in that it allows the st space to respond more freely rather than a 'display Q' seeking only confirmation.

L: er the first time I found err the essay not easy

J: hmm=

L: =especially for the structure er I know the structure uh introduction and body and conclusion but er the introduction include the thesis statement=

J: =that's right=

L: =and the first time I don't know how I can write the the[*sis* statement

J: [hmm]

L: I understand but because before I've not practise about this essay and err now I understand and you help me er because I write before two times introduction and you correct for me and er you puted some comment and er I rewrite it and I understand the (xxx)

The student begins her response in L2, '*er the first time I found err the essay not easy*'. The T backchannels in L3as the student answers which may be seen as encouraging the student to continue their relatively long turn. This is in line with the institutional context of such teacher-student talk in that it is a central aim to get the student to talk about their writing. The student then begins a rather long turn commenting on her first draft efforts (L4-12) using 'language of the academy' such as, '*structure; introduction; body; conclusion; thesis*'. The student's use of the terms, '*you help me; you correct for me; you puted some comment*' all serve to clearly define how the student herself views the relative institutional roles of the T and herself, thus reinforcing their legitimacy in the academy.

J: ok alright well erm (1)

L: and another thing [I used (xxx) vocabulary not academic vocabulary

J: [ok] hmm=

=and err second time I change it=

J: =yeah

that's right ok you have sent me a couple of er

L: yeah

In L 13, the T seems to assume that the st turn is complete and is about to begin her turn, implied by the use of the 'continuer' '*erm*'. Yet the (1) pause leaves the conversational floor temporarily available and the student self-selects as 'continuing speaker' and begins a new turn (L14-17). On the surface this would seem to violate the T's right to access the very next turn after an answer to her question but her backchannels to the student's further turn indicate that she seems comfortable with what has occurred. On the student's part, this shows how an institutionally weaker participant can take control during the interaction at unexpected points.

J: pieces of work before that's true well I thought overall it was quite a good first draft

L: ah o[k

J: [ok] there are a couple of things that I want you to work on for next time ok but overall it was quite well organised

L: o[k

J: [ok you've got your paragraphs organised well correctly erm and your introduction erm(1) was good it was organised correctly there's a couple of things that I want you to have a look at for next time

L: [ok

J: [but they shouldn't be too difficult to correct ok

L: yeah

The teacher's institutional status grants her permission in her discursive role to offer praise and critique, roles not afforded to the student. The linguistic phrasing of 'I want you to' is quite directive in nature and leaves little room for student choice. Yet the coupling of positive and negative feedback by the T is a classic feedback device that helps to mitigate the force of her critique and maintain the 'face' of the student. The T then offers another such device to offset the critique by suggesting in L29 that, 'they shouldn't be too difficult to correct ok'. By claiming that the 'weaknesses' in the student draft can be improved fairly easily, she again minimises the impact of her feedback here. Such efforts by the T suggest that she is aware of the possible effects that such critique may have on the student's motivation and seeks to counter balance this using a combination of both 'praise and mitigation devices'.

J: so erm you have given some background information [in the introduction so you've

L: [ok]

J: introduced the topic quite well erm (2) I think your thesis statement is good because your opinion is clear you think it's courageous

L: yeah courageous my opinion yeah

J: ok what you have to just do just to correct it finally is when you list your ideas that are in your essay

L: yeah=

J: =they've got to match up with the paragraph (1)

L: hm

J: because the first paragraph here talks about language problems=

L: =language problems

J: you've put new experiences (1)

L: yeah

J: so er the first reasons should be something like it offers or students can learn a new language because that's what's in your first paragraph

The T's feedback varies in its directiveness here in terms of its phrasing, 'you have to just do; they've got to match up; the first reasons should be something like'. The student offers simple backchannels such as, 'yeah; hm; yeah' in response to this. However, in L40, after a (1) pause the student only offers 'hm' rather than the token 'yeah' which may suggest less acceptance or understanding on her part of the feedback. This may have prompted the T's longer 'justification turns' from L41, which progressively provide more detail than perhaps the teacher may have wanted to give at the outset, ending with the turn in L45.

L: ok=

J: =isn't it that's your main idea (1) and education erm your second paragraph is talking about culture

L: about culture yeah

J: so your second [listed idea

L: [xxx] global education

J: yes so you've put this is culture

L: yeah

J: so you've got to include culture in your reasons in the thesis statement

L: ok

J: do you see what I mean

L: yeah yeah yeah I understand

The T begins to provide another example of the problem when in L52 the student overlaps the teacher's turn with her own response. On the surface this violates the turn taking sequence and suggests the student is capable of voicing her ideas rather than simply offering receipt tokens. This overlap and the 'self selection' earlier in L14 (though there was a (1) pause available there when no speaker had the floor) suggests a student capable of more agency in the talk. In addition to the overlap, the student completes the T's turn with her own words, 'global education' in L52. This is often a common trait of ordinary conversation and less common in institutional discourse. In L53 the T's 'yes' demonstrates her 'uptake' or 'repair' of the interactional sequence. In L53 the T states a proposition that in essence points out the contrast or error here and acts as a 'justification' for change. Perhaps she wishes to prompt the student to come up with her own answer. But after the student only offers a backchannel in L54, 'yeah',

the T continues with a directive 'action' turn in L55, 'you've got to include' but unlike in L45, does not go on to offer any specific examples. The T has primarily received only backchannel cues from the student and needs more clarity whether the 'message has got through or not', which may help her modify her feedback in terms of how much detail to offer.

- J: and then your third paragraph which you haven't written ye[t
L: [I know but I want to ask
about the family err how the person depend er(theirself)
J: so how the person becomes independe[nt
L: [yeah
J: so that would be your third reason then
L: yeah
J: ok so what's missing really is culture and independen[ce
L: [independence
J: so you just need to correct this fo[r
L: [xxx
J: yeah yeah because you could say well you need to correct language as well
L: [xxx] ok
J: because you called it new experiences but really you're talking about language and education aren't you
L: hmm ok (xxx) are wrong
J: yeah there just kind of not quite accurate compared to what the paragraphs are about
L: [ok
J: [so they've just got to match up with the paragraphs
L: ok ok
J: ok
L: yeah ok
J: alright but hmm apart from that that was ok I mean your introduction could possibly be improved by finding some material from a reference you know when your doing your reading
L: hmm
J: because you talk about more students going abroad so maybe a statistic? (1) or something like that you know just to add a bit of strength
L: ahh=
J: =to what you're saying to support what you're saying
L: I need find er some evidence just strength and put it in the [introduction?
J: [well yeah I'm not saying
you have to do it but it would make your introduction more interesting if you did
L: ok

T makes use of a wide variety of directive language ranging from obligatory like directives (e.g. *I want you to; you have to*) to much less directive language used here (e.g. *could possibly ... you know; I'm not saying you have to*). This serves to highlight the complexity of conference talk and how it cannot be reduced simply to 'directive or less directive' conferencing styles on the part of a teacher. It is a discursively sensitive, in-situ phenomenon depending on the feedback point being made and the needs of the student. Perhaps such less directive language here compared to earlier more directive phrases about other feedback issues possibly highlights the T's relative lack of concern about this point.

- J: ok so when you're doing your reading if you come across a statistic to say in 2009 so many students studied abroad you could include it
L: ok
J: ok
L: [ok]
J: erm so I thought your paragraphs in your body were well organised you've got your opposing opinion first
L: hm

- J: ok and then you've got your opinion so that's good erm (2) sometimes say in this paragraph((T refers to text)) the third paragraph the opposing opinion is longer than your opinion (3) so why is that not a good idea (2)
- L: my opinion?
- J: yeah the opposing opinion is from here to (1) here ((T refers to text)) and your opinion is just these three lines (1)
- L: yeah=
- J: =so the opposing opinion is slightly longer (1)
- L: because against er a lot of idea

This sequence illustrates just how much effort is made by the T in talk with her low level international student in order to negotiate meaning. It also presents a contradiction between the often prescribed 'student centred philosophy' so ingrained in the training of western EFL teachers and the explicitness that lower level international students may require. Such a tension can often lead to the T using more words, time and holding the conversational floor for longer, yet working hard in their discursive roles to meet the needs of their students. L's final response either indicates that she still does not fully understand the point being made by the T or she does and this is a form of low level 'resistance' on her part, a way to stand up for her text.

- J: well what you've got to do you've got a lot of ideas for your opposing opinions y[eah
- L: [yeah
yeah
- J: ok so what you've got to do is always make sure that in the paragraph your idea is developed more your opinion is stronger
- L: I can leave it this is the same and I can er added some more information?
- J: yeah that's right yeah you need to do some reading really I've put that in your er feedback
- L: ok
- J: so you need to do some reading and get some material to support your ideas
- L: ok
- J: so (1) if you do that you know that obviously will help you to develop your opinion more
- L: ok
- J: because the purpose is that the reader agrees with you
- L: [yeah
- J: [isn't it
- L: yeah
- J: ok
- L: ok
- J: so just be aware of that don't have your opposing arguments longer than your arguments

In L109-112 the T requests a change, '*well what you've got to do you've got a lot of ideas for your opposing opinions y[yeah ok so what you've got to do is always make sure that in the paragraph your idea is developed more your opinion is stronger*'. The language here is quite directive and repeated twice in L109-111, '*what you've got to do*'; '*what you've got to do is always make sure*'. The use of the turn initial '*well*' in L109 acts as a powerful discursive device by the T to show that her opinion on the matter remains unchanged (Thornborrow p55). This together with the repetition of her phrasing may be in response to her failing to elicit an adequate response from the student. In L113 the student asks for detail on how to manage the change, '*I can leave it this is the same and I can er added some more information?*' This can be seen as both an attempt to get more information and an example of low level resistance where the student is holding her own against the T and protecting the integrity of her text by not wishing to remove but rather add to it on her own terms.

- J: ok but it's a first draft so you know you've got lots of words to deal with yet (1) erm so I put in your feedback to look for some source material to help you develop your arguments erm and I thought you could develop paragraph two perhaps by getting sources and saying how this can benefit students so you say that students have to struggle=
- L: =yes struggle very hard er (xxx)

J: and develop that idea
 L: ah h[a
 J: [and say you know it's difficult it's a struggle but what are the benefits of that
 L: ok
 J: how can that help them (1)
 L: ah[h
 J: [with their studies and you know maybe in the future as well so a bit more
 development and analysis
 L: ok
 J: there ok
 L: ok

From the backchannels offered by the student with no real challenges made to the T's point, it may suggest that the student had little problem with it in regard to understanding the issue or in perhaps agreeing with it. Interestingly in contrast to the earlier attempt by the T in L102 to elicit a feedback point from the student which was not successful, this more directive, detailed response seemed on the surface to work more successfully. Again this indicates a tension between the 'student centred' paradigm of conferencing held in the literature with the reality of talk, in-situ with low level international student writers that suggests the value of a more T centred approach.

J: alright erm (1) and I think that's what I put for there ok ((T refers to text)) yes so
 paragraphs need more development really (1.5) erm ok do you want to ask anything (2)
 J: oh yeah vocabulary what's this I think you mean rash?
 L: ahh (1) er to do something quickly erer quickly for improvement for the language=
 J: =so
 without thinking do you mean? do something quickly without thinking about it
 L: yeah
 J: so you put rush but I think what you mean is rash maybe (2)
 L: [hmm
 J: do you know this word?
 L: rush
 J: rash yeah if you behave in a rash manner it means you do something quickly you're not
 thinking properly about what you're doing (1)
 L: and this isn't quickly ((St refers to text and giggles))
 J: yes but that's rush means you know when you're hurrying [maybe you're late for
 something
 L: [ahhh] ok
 J: so I'm not sure if that's the word you're [looking for or not so yeah I put a question
 mark ok
 L: [xxx]
 J: ((T refers to text)) so you can check that

In L143 the T refers to her written comments before opening the floor to the student, '*alright erm (1) and I think that's what I put for there ok ((T refers to text)) yes so paragraphs need more development really (1.5) erm ok do you want to ask anything*'. Here after a (2) pause, the T asks another question, '*oh yeah vocabulary what's this I think you mean rash?*' On the surface, it is highly unusual to ask a question, wait and then ask a different question rather than opt to rephrase the same question. Perhaps the open ended nature of the initial question made it more challenging for the student to respond quickly in real time talk. On the one hand, open questions may be seen as more 'positive' than closed or display questions in educational interaction but with lower level international students, open questions may be more challenging as you need to select a topic yourself, which can be demanding during the interaction itself. The fact that the student goes along with the new second, closed question in L145, may highlight the fact that more closed or specific questions may be easier to understand by low level international students than open ones. From L145 to L152, the meaning of a word used in the student's text is negotiated between teacher and student, initiated by mini T questions. This sequence again highlights how the T employs a student centred strategy, despite its mixed results earlier in the conference. This may suggest a belief on her part in such a strategy. This is surprising as her discursive role would allow her to simply direct the student to make a change here. This extract does highlight a quite collaborative sequence of talk between T and student, both involved in negotiating the feedback point and power is enlisted more collaboratively.

- J: ok so you're language was ok erm overall [but there's a few informal expressions such as 'get']
- L: [hmm]
- J: do you remember we said don't use 'get'
- L: [hmm]
- J: [I think it came up in one of the lessons so could you think of a word you could use instead of 'get' so 'get a high position (1) in a company' (1.5) could you think of a different word for 'get' because it's very informal (1)]
- L: 'get' very in[formal?]
- J: [mm yeah ((1) you could maybe use something like 'achieve (1) or gain']
- L: [ooh] ah academic vocabulary=
- J: =yeah you've got to try and focus obviously so 'gain or achieve' or maybe (2) you know other alternatives which are much better
- L: ok

The frequency of this strategy (i.e. prompting the student to come up with ideas for herself) in the conference does certainly point to a personal belief in such a strategy on the part of J.

- J: ok erm (1) and there's a couple of vocabulary errors so here ((T refers to text)) your using 'difficulties' instead of 'differences' and a little bit with[word you know just swapping the
- L: [ooh]
- J: order of words but it's only minor (1) ok most of your language is er ok erm just in the introduction I thought maybe you could think of a synonym for studying abroad
- L: because I writ[e
- J: [you keep writing it a lot
- L: yeah yeah ((St laughs))
- J: so maybe you could think of a different phrase? (1)
- L: ok [(xxx) studying abroad sometimes today sometimes
- J: [studying abroad] so maybe look at the synonyms for studying
- L: ok=
- J: =abroad you could you use 'in a foreign country' maybe instead of 'abroad' all the time (1)
- L: 'foreign country'?
- J: 'in foreign country' just to give it a bit more variety because the language in the introduction was a little bit repetitive really
- L: ok

This sequence seems to fall into a familiar pattern of short backchannels from the student in response to a question that leads to the T offering more specific examples at the end. This now familiar pattern can be seen in two ways. One, as suggested earlier, it is a tactic used by the student to 'enforce explicitness' from the T about feedback points, which would suggest greater 'agency' on the part of the student. Another view might suggest that the student has difficulty in processing such questions in real time talk, which then forces the T to respond with ever more specific details – in essence answering her own questions, perhaps due to time constraints or her own conference goals. The student's repetition with raised intonation in L190 does suggest her difficulty in understanding the issue or language point being made. The T here only offers an example, less than in earlier such cases and ends by providing justification for her feedback point. J does not have to offer justification for her actions but we have seen throughout the conference how she has often given such explanations for her feedback points.

- J: ok (2) so overall I thought it was a good start (1) ok but er I think you've got to develop your opinion now
- L: yeah
- J: so some reading is very important now (1.5) have you done any reading yet or?
- L: reading about (xxx)er this is the first time I er I put I imagine situation myself ((St laughs)) [how because I graduate college er (1) studying [abroad and I imagine some people against

J: [yeah] [hmm]
 L: (xxx) this and I want to write (1)
 J: yeah so these are your own ideas really
 L: yeah
 J: yeah so do some reading and try and find some evidenc[e that supports your ideas
 L: [evidence] for
 introduction or?
 J: I mean it's more important for these two paragraphs ((T refers to text)) and the third
 paragraph
 L: yeah [and change (xxx) reason?
 J: [ok] yeah just make them fi- yo[u know
 L: [match it for every paragraph=
 J: =match
 each paragraph yeah
 L: ok=
 J: =and you know that will be better then because you have got a good thesis statement
 it's clear it's just this needs to be
 L: yeah
 J: corrected ok
 L: ok
 J: err yes so for language try to use some synonyms [more erm avoid the informal
 language
 L: [synonyms]
 J: which there's not much of it but just a few expressions yeah and erm some vocabulary
 errors but I have actually more or less corrected those for you but check this one
 L: ok
 J: ok make sure it's the word you want to use (2) ok
 L: ok

The student 'enforces explicitness' in a series of second turns to clarify and confirm what she is hearing as the T recaps feedback points. It's almost as if the student works in tandem with the T as she runs through her feedback points to check the things that may require her attention.

J: do you want to ask anything about this draft or about the next draft (3)
 L: no the next draft I will complete iter third body
 J: mm hmm
 L: and conclusion
 J: yeah that would be good if you could complete it (2)
 L: and followed by my [opinion here ((St refers to text))
 J: [yeah] yeah and here
 L: and here and er change er the end of the thesis statement=
 J: =yeah
 L: and put some evidence because make the introduction stronger
 J: if you can find something you know I thought maybe a statistic or something but you
 know focus more on your body it's more important erm and in class next week I'm
 going to show
 L: [ok]
 J: you how to do referencing in your paragraphs
 L: yeah
 J: and hopefully we'll do the conclusion as well
 L: ok
 J: (xxx) try and finish off for the second draft
 L: ok
 J: ok

L: ok
J: any questions?
L: no thank you very much
J: alright thanks

The T completes her turn by inviting the student to speak, *'do you want to ask anything about this draft or about the next draft?'* The fact that she has not ended the conference at the same time as her recap of feedback points came to an end highlights, as in earlier parts of the conference, an apparent belief or commitment to offering space to the student to ask whatever she wants (L227). Earlier it did not seem to work well (L143) but here the student recaps what she intends to do (L228-236) which is essentially a repeat of what the T stated earlier. It seems the student is once again involved in checking and confirming what she has heard with the teacher, just as she did before. Yet the only difference here is that she takes more of the lead (rather than the T) with five longer turns from L228-236 while the T offers more minimal /backchannel cues. She has the conversational floor now and the tide turns back in L237 when the T adds a few final specifics/reminders.

Appendix 9a: Table of Codes (early version)

N o	Category (2)	Sub-category (6)	Codes (28)	Example from transcripts
i	Teacher Strategies	A) Teacher accessing talk (<i>'accessing'</i> the means to get their voice or concerns heard) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic Selection • Evaluation (inc praise) • Using written comments • Invoking the classroom • Interruption <p style="text-align: center;">Teacher takes centre stage</p>	1 Teacher selecting or inviting the topic 2 Teacher offering evaluation* <i>face issues in critique</i> (directive: D ⁺ (=praise) / D ⁻ (=critique) (hedged: H ⁺ (=praise) / H ⁻ (=critique)) 3 Teacher explicitly refers to their written feedback (as a 'script') 4 Teacher invokes the 'voice' of the classroom 5 Teacher interrupting the student's turn	<i>T: ...the rest of it what I noticed is (1) erm (2.5) quite good language or T: erm ok do you want to ask anything</i> <i>T: I've written (1) 'quite a long introduction' (1.5) and that's not necessarily a criticism erm (3) it is quite long (M1); T: I think your thesis statement is good because your opinion is clear</i> <i>T: ok A so I've written some comments <u>here</u> ...</i> <i>T: I think we did this in <u>class</u> didn't we ...</i> <i>St: I I [T: [I kind of felt there was a lot of <u>ideas</u> in this <u>paragraph</u></i>
		B) Teacher negotiating talk (<i>'negotiating'</i> the content of their voice or concerns through dialogue) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trying to understand • Prompts • Up to the student • Laying foundations for change • Adopting different roles • Offering pastoral support • Compromising <p style="text-align: center;">Teacher and Student share the stage</p>	1 Teacher seeking communication repair 2 Teacher prompting to extend student talk 3 Teacher implies that the decision to make a change lies with the student 4 Teacher giving justification for change/no change 5 Teacher adopts the role of 'interested reader' 6 Teacher offering support: advice, validation, encouragement, reassurance, understanding 7 Teacher compromising on action to take	<i>St: [but I will not write a new idea (or) T: I see ok yeah so no nothing major to ad[d extra to this</i> <i>T: yeah <u>why</u> do we usually use <u>quotations</u> can you remember? what's the <u>reason</u> for using a quotation L: to <u>evidence</u> er to my idea for the main idea (L3)</i> <i>T: ...(1) because remember I'm just recommending I know [you've taken my comments and done them ... (1) but they are (of course) suggestions recommendations (K2 – e.g. 1)</i> <i>T: I'm not saying you have to do it but it would make your introduction more interesting if you did</i> <i>T: ...so that's what you need at the end of your paragraph you've got to write a sentence that shows me is it madness or is it courage what do you think 'cos at the moment I just don't know. (reader)</i> <i>T: I think in your desire to include references I think sometimes you've just put something in which I understand ((T chuckles)) ...but don't worry about that you're trying to put references in (1) (e.g.)</i> <i>T: ...if you feel it's so important maybe you could just quote the bit that's really really important</i>

		<p>C) Teacher revision talk (<i>'revision'</i> = asking for change)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asking for change Giving the answer Giving more details Reformulation: 'we did this together' <p>Teacher takes centre stage</p>	<p>1 Teacher requesting or suggesting a change * face issues (directive: D or hedged: H)</p> <p>2 Teacher 'giving the answer' i.e. the actual correction or language required</p> <p>3 Teacher giving details about the change but not the answer</p>	<p><i>T: what you need to do is reference the website in the paragraph</i></p> <p><i>T: ...the first reasons should be something like it offers or students can learn a new language...</i></p> <p><i>T: the suffragettes and everything erm and then you could compare it with what happened in other countries</i></p>
ii	<p>Student Strategies</p> <p>A) Student accessing talk (<i>'accessing'</i> the means to get their voice or concerns heard)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Topic selection Interruption Utterance completion <p>Student takes centre stage</p>	<p>1 Student selecting the topic (uninvited)</p> <p>2 Student interrupting the teacher's turn</p> <p>3 Student offering a completion of the teacher's utterance</p>	<p><i>St: ... and how about <u>thesis</u> statement?</i></p> <p><i>T: yeah I thin[k St: [because I'm not <u>sure</u> yet until now</i></p> <p><i>T: so your second [listed idea St: [xxx] global education</i></p>	
		<p>1 Student reflecting on their work or the essay task (~ self-evaluation / more personalised look back)</p> <p>2 Student offering rationale for their work (why)</p> <p>3 Student offering an explanation of their work (i.e. 'how I did it')</p>	<p><i>T: ... I mean how do you feel about this first draft? ... St: I'm happy but I think I have to correct the grammatical er fault er mistake? err and maybe I will I don't know if it needs some more information or to (write) change something... (M3)</i></p> <p><i>St: and this is <u>important</u> T: erm[St: [because here I put it this is <u>cause</u> ((Student refers to her draft)) [this is the cause idea and...</i></p> <p><i>St: yes actually I research in journals and in books and in the internet and er when I was finding an information that was interesting for me I noticed in the paper with the reference and after I have done my plan I (1.5) I wrote them in my essay' (M3)</i></p>	
		<p>B) Student negotiating talk (<i>'negotiating'</i> the content of their voice or concerns through dialogue)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> offering reflection offering rationale offering explanation offering future plans/ideas being aware of their role seeking clarification 		

	Student and Teacher share the stage	4	Student offering an insight to future plans/changes	<i>St: I'm thinking of a expanding each paragraph [to like about four hundred and if I can (1.5) add probably one more paragraph [short paragraph[(xxx probably) that will be good I think'. (K3)</i>
		5	Student makes reference to their subordinate role	<i>St: I write the first time and you check for me and you find some mistakes</i>
		6	Student seeking communication repair	<i>T: [this paragraph I kind of felt there was a lot of <u>ideas</u> in this paragraph (1.5) St: a lot of things?</i>
	C) Student revision talk ('revision' = dealing with the teacher's request for change) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking for further detail • Low level resistance • Highlighting their identity • Dispreferred response Student takes centre stage	1	Student enforcing further explicitness from the teacher with regard to changes	(Continued from dialogue above in (iiB6)). <i>T: ... you know what I mean you've obviously got lots of <u>ideas</u> which is <u>good</u> (1) I think you've got to think about <u>how</u> maybe spend a bit more time thinking about <u>how</u> you're going to actually <u>structure</u> these ideas St: ok I need (xxx) (maybe) deleted some (more) ideas</i>
		2	Student defending / resisting change to their work	<i>T: ... did you think that's ok now because sometimes when somebody tells you 'take that out' or 'we don't need that sentence' and it's your work sometimes you feel 'oh but I want to keep it' how do you feel now that we've got rid of all those statistics?... St: [no no no if I wanted to keep it I will [keep it(M4 - e.g. 1)</i>
		3	Student bringing up previous learning or cultural experiences to emphasise their identity	<i>St: [(first] [time] I was er write essays one thousand seven hundred [words but it's something about my er my subject =(so) it's easier and because erm I study[the engineering I can use many teachers...</i>
		4	Student not offering the required/expected response (dispreferred)	<i>T: so I'm no- which is the <u>surname</u> here? 'gao jian right' St: oh I'm sorry here comma (1) ((Student laughs))</i>

Appendix 9b: Table of Codes (revised version)

Participant (2)	Phase of talk (3)	Conference Strategies (21 Categories: 13 teacher & 8 student)	Examples from the conference transcripts
Teacher (T)	A) Raise topics for revision Teacher takes centre stage	1 Teacher selecting or inviting the topic	<i>T: ...the rest of it what I noticed is (1) erm (2.5) quite good language or T: erm ok do you want to ask anything</i>
		2 Teacher offering evaluation (directive / hedged)	<i>T: I think your thesis statement is good because your opinion is clear</i>
		3 Teacher invokes the 'voice' of the classroom	<i>T: I think we did this in <u>class</u> didn't we ...</i>
	B) Negotiate and clarify revision topics Teacher and Student share the stage	1 Teacher seeking communication repair	<i>St: [but I will not write a new idea (or) T: I see ok yeah so no nothing major to ad[d extra to this</i>
		2 Teacher prompting to extend student talk	<i>T: yeah <u>why</u> do we usually use <u>quotations</u> can you remember?</i>
		3 Teacher implies that the decision to make a change lies with the student	<i>T: I'm just recommending I know [you've taken my comments and done them ... (1) but they are suggestions</i>
		4 Teacher giving justification for change/no change	<i>T: I'm not saying you have to do it but it would make your introduction more interesting if you did</i>
		5 Teacher adopts the role of 'interested reader'	<i>T: ... write a sentence that shows me is it madness or is it courage what do you think 'cos at the moment I just don't know. (reader)</i>
		6 Teacher offering support: advice, validation, reassurance, understanding	<i>T: I think in your desire to include references I think sometimes you've just put something in which I understand ((T chuckles)) ...but don't worry about that you're trying to put references in (1) (e.g.)</i>
		7 Teacher compromising on action to take	<i>T: ...if you feel it's so important maybe you could just quote the bit that's really really important</i>
	C) Finalise future revisions Teacher takes centre stage	1 Teacher asking for change	<i>T: what you need to do is reference the website in the paragraph</i>
		2 Teacher 'giving the answer' i.e. the actual correction or language required	<i>T: ...the first reasons should be something like it offers or students can learn a new language...</i>
		3 Teacher giving details about the change but not the answer	<i>T: the suffragettes and everything erm and then you could compare it with what happened in other countries</i>

Student (S)	A) Raise topics for revision Student takes centre stage	1	Student selecting the topic (uninvited)	<i>St: ... and how about <u>thesis</u> statement?</i>
	B) Negotiate and clarify revision topics Student and Teacher share the stage	1	Student reflecting on their work (i.e. self-evaluation / more personalised look back)	<i>T: ... I mean how do you feel about this first draft? ... St: I'm happy but I think I have to correct the grammatical er fault er mistake? err and maybe I will I don't know if it needs some more information or to (write) change something...(M3)</i>
		2	Student offering rationale for their work (why)	<i>St: and this is <u>important</u> because here I put it this is <u>cause</u> ((Student refers to her draft)) [this is the cause idea and...</i>
		3	Student explaining their process in writing the draft (i.e. 'how I did it')	<i>St: yes actually I research in journals and in books and in the internet and er when I was finding an information that was interesting for me I noticed in the paper with the reference and after I have done my plan I (1.5) I wrote them in my essay' (M3)</i>
		4	Student offering an insight to future plans/changes	<i>St: I'm thinking of a expanding each paragraph [to like about four hundred and if I can (1.5) add probably one more paragraph [short paragraph](xxx probably) that will be good I think'. (K3)</i>
		5	Student seeking communication repair	<i>T: [this paragraph I kind of felt there was a lot of <u>ideas</u> in this <u>paraqraph</u> (1.5) St: a lot of things?</i>
	C) Finalise future revisions Student takes centre stage	1	Student enforcing further explicitness from the teacher	<i>T: ... you know what I mean you've obviously got lots of <u>ideas</u> which is <u>good</u> (1) I think you've got to think about <u>how</u> maybe spend a bit more time thinking about <u>how</u> you're going to actually <u>structure</u> these ideas St: ok I need (xxx) (maybe) deleted some (more) ideas</i>
		2	Student questioning change	<i>T: ... did you think that's ok now because sometimes when somebody tells you 'take that out' or 'we don't need that sentence' and it's your work sometimes you feel 'oh but I want to keep it' how do you feel now that we've got rid of all those statistics?... St: [no no no if I wanted to keep it I will [keep it(M4 - e.g. 1)</i>

Appendix 10: Example analysis of a memo about a student's strategies

Alex (based on his four coded conferences)

Alex's most commonly used strategies*					
Student strategies	Conference 1	Conference 2	Conference 3	Conference 4	Total (in order of frequency)
Accessing Talk	No strategies used that meet inclusion criteria				
Negotiating Talk	C6: Seeking repair (5x) C2: Offering rationale (2x) C1: Student reflecting (1x)	C6: Seeking repair (10x) C2: Offering rationale (3x) C1: Student reflecting (2x)	C6: Seeking repair (5x) C2: Offering rationale (4x) C1: Student reflecting (4x)	C6: Seeking repair (7x) C2: Offering rationale (2x) C1: Student reflecting (2x)	C6 = 27x C2 = 11x C1 = 9x
Revision Talk	C1: Enforcing explicitness (2x) C3: Bringing up previous learning (4x)	C1: Enforcing explicitness (9x)	C1: Enforcing explicitness (2x)	C1: Enforcing explicitness (1x) C3: Bringing up previous learning (1x)	C1 = 14x C3 = 5x

Key: C = Code (see table of conference codes) / * standard inclusion criteria: codes used 2 or more times in at least 3 of the 4 conferences. Exceptions: a code appears with a high frequency or is of particular interest

Compared to Layla, Alex's use of strategies is both similar and different. He did not use any **accessing** strategies in enough frequency during his four conferences to meet the inclusion criteria set. In addition, those that were employed to gain access, were only used on 14 occasions compared to the 40 attempts by Layla with the same teacher, Joan. Thus gaining access to the conversational floor was either not possible or desired by Alex for whatever reason – personal conversation style, language ability or cultural/educational background.

When it came to **negotiating** issues in the conference he reaches similar levels of use to Layla with regard to the same two strategies of *'seeking repair'* and *'offering a rationale'* while overall, negotiating issues more often than Layla did (on 74 occasions vs. Layla's 56). Yet he did not always employ the strategies in exactly the same way as Layla. These will be discussed in the relevant section later.

Finally coming to **emphasising** strategies, Alex used less strategies compared to Layla (2 vs. 3) - sharing only one in common, *'enforcing explicitness'*, though overall employing emphasising strategies in similar numbers to Layla (40 vs. 42). With regard to the only shared strategy of trying to extract more information from Joan, Alex used it nearly four times as often compared to Layla. As such it implies active participation on the part of Alex to get the information he wanted to complete his understanding. Yet Layla used the strategy of *'defending/resisting'* her work while Alex did not use such a direct method of arguing for his work often enough to merit its inclusion in his case study. Similarly while Layla did not always offer a preferred response to Joan's questions, such a strategy was rarely used by Alex. Instead Alex brought up his *'previous learning experiences'* to the conference talk with Joan. Thus it could be argued that when it came to projecting their voice in the conference both Layla and Alex were capable of doing this but went about it in different ways. Layla, for her part seems to have been able to ensure her

voice was heard in a variety of ways including directly standing up for her work, pushing Joan to give more details and not always offering the required response to Joan's questions. Alex, on the other hand, seemed to employ a less directive stance in general characterised by being more discursive and personalised rather than offering any direct challenges to Joan. Despite this, however, Alex still attempted to gain information from his teacher where possible.

Negotiating Strategies

Alex used three strategies to negotiate talk during his conferences. The first and most commonly used was to '(1) repair instances of communication difficulty where Alex did not fully understand' Joan's feedback during the conference. Another commonly used strategy was to '(2) offer reflection' on his text. A final strategy employed by Alex was to '(3) offer a rationale' for his work.

1) Seeking Repair

Compared to Layla, Alex's attempts at repairing dialogic turns with Joan centre more on seeking confirmation over the weaknesses in his draft. Whereas Layla would often move onto discussing possible solutions and changes to remedy the weaknesses highlighted, Alex sticks firmly to ensuring that he has understood the nature of the problem at hand. He is seen to constantly check what has happened and only on the odd occasion does he venture into discussing change. These confirmation checks tend to be shorter in form than those used by Layla – sometimes a single word focussing on the language used by Joan. Such confirmation checking tended to prompt Joan to not only repeat her feedback but sometimes offer extra information couched in a different way. This maybe have made the feedback more manageable for Alex to process and was something seen in Layla's conferences too.

We can see his shorter confirmation checks in action throughout his conferences. On the surface they may resemble echoes of final word items in Joan's previous turn, yet on closer inspection of the context and the raised intonation used, are most definitely moments of repair.

- 1 J: ...so you've got an opening statement at the beginning to introduce the topic
2 A: yeah
3 J: I think what you just need to do (1) is you need a sentence here ((T refers to text))
4 A: yeah
5 J: to introduce the example of China
6 A: **example?**
7 J: yeah so China Chinese students studying abroad because you kind of go from studying abroad to erm (2) to then business in China without a link so you need to say something about more Chinese students...

(Conference 1 / J / A / p2)

- 1 J: when you use words like 'you we us' (2) do you know what I mean it kind of it tak- your writing starts to sound a bit more informal
2 A: **informal?**

(Conference 2 / J / A / p6)

- 1 J: =but remember yo- it's got to always be related to social skills
2 A: **social skills?=-**
3 J: =yeah so this essay it's very easy to go off and start discussing other things

(Conference 3 / J / A / p7)

- 1 A: because in my (head) erm I got (five) idea
 2 J: ok well that's ok
 3 A: **this ok?**
 4 J: yeah as long as you don't go over your word limit that's ok (1)
 (Conference 4 / J / A / p6)

Alex seems to need reassurance about what he hears for perhaps several reasons. Firstly, it may be due to the fact that he simply doesn't understand the language or terminology used by Joan, as might be the case in conference 2. Or it may occur because he does understand the language used but not the concept, as in conference 1 and 3 perhaps. Finally, as in the example in conference 4 above, the confirmation check may occur as a result of a belief he has being contradicted by the teacher's turn. Whatever the case may be, Alex seems to need reassurance of what he has heard and intervenes with a repair sequence.

At times when discussing a single problematic issue in his text, Alex will seek repair several times – almost in a repetitious manner that essentially remains dedicated to being sure in his own mind of what the issue is that needs to be resolved. Interestingly, as mentioned earlier, unlike Layla, such turn sequences never seem to evolve into discussing the solutions. A good example of this can be seen in conference 3, when Joan is highlighting the need for Alex to make sure that he answers the essay question and avoids irrelevance.

- 1 J: but remember yo- it's got to always be related to social skills
 2 A: **social skills?=-**
 3 J: =yeah so this essay it's very easy to go off and start discussing other things=
 4 A: yeah
 5 J: because there's- we can think of a lot of th- ideas related to the internet but every idea you have in each paragraph you've got to apply it to social skills how it shows the negative effect
 6 A: so=
 7 J: =so you=
 8 A: **=I leave the topic?**
 9 J: well you can say they're living in an imaginary world but then show how it affects them With these social skills don't just leave it there
 10 A: ok
 11 J: you've got to apply it so if somebody's living in an imaginary world how's that going to affect their relationships?=
 12 A: **=yeah mm I write er other topics another m- er (2) other ways?**
 13 J: yeah=
 14 A: =so
 15 J: yeah so you're go- you have to look at your ideas then to see if they relate to the [theme
 16 A: **[the mind is not on the social skills**
 17 J: [hmm that's what you have to be careful of with this es[say that's what's [ok]
 18 J: happened to a lot of students in the past (1) you know as long as you can relate- as long as you can show how it applies to social skills
 20 A: (ok)
 21 J: alright and you can do some analysis that's ok as long as it's relevant=
 22 A: =yeah
 23 J: but just be careful not to go off into other areas where the internet has a strong influence
 24 A: hm
 25 J: ok so you've got to keep really focussed with this

- 26 A: maybe I am write very fast and (1.5) forgot to catch the title [(xxx)
 27 J: [well that happens a lot
 you know with this one so I think I mentioned that at the beginning when we gave out
 the essay titles again *here* as well ((Teacher refers to body paragraph three)) how does
 it relate to social skills how does it affect them (1)
 28 A: **so I have to (xxx) er stronger the er topic minds in the body**
 29 J: well you [s- well
 30 A: [each paragraph (xxx)
 (Conference 3 / J / A / p7)

Alex offers a confirmation check on five occasions (in bold). The first time he seems to not clearly understand the term used by Joan, 'social skills' but Joan does not offer an explanation in her following turn. Alex seems to pick up on a part of Joan's long turn that follows where she says, 'go off and start discussing other things' and then offers his second confirmation check based on this it seems, 'I leave the topic?' Modifying the language used to relate to the same concept indicates that Alex is seeking to understand what is being said by reducing Joan's language into terms he can understand. Layla was also seen to do this in her conferences with Joan. This confirmation check is focussed on the nature of the problem. His third confirmation check attempts to move the discussion forward by shifting the focus onto what he could do, a rare foray for Alex into discussing change, 'yeah mm I write er other topics another m- er (2) other ways?' However, he does not offer up any detail as to how he might do this – something Layla was seen to do. His fourth intervention reverts to type by focussing on the nature of the problem once again, 'the mind is not on the social sk[ills]', which mirrors his second repair intervention. Joan then goes on a long turn and essentially repeats her earlier assertion of the need to be careful about keeping on task with this essay. This prompts Alex to offer his final repair intervention in line 28, 'so I have to (xxx) er **stronger the er topic minds in the body**'. This mirrors his third intervention very closely and relates to change that he needs to make.

This sequence encapsulates Alex's strategy when it comes to seeking repair during the conference. He is not as bold or direct as Layla in suggesting possible solutions but rather seeks a level of continuous reassurance over what has gone wrong. He does not offer any suggestions for tackling the issues, like Layla was seen to do. At times his repair interventions can be seen to serve the purpose of reducing the information offered by Joan and re-packaging it into a form that he can understand. Perhaps this greater need for reassurance may have been due to the fact that he was a less fluent speaker in English than Layla and it was challenging enough for him to simply establish what errors he had made.

2) Offering Reflection

Like Layla, Alex offers reflection typically at the start of his conferences in response to his teacher's opening question. He offers quite balanced responses that highlight areas he understands alongside those he is finding problematic. Here is a list of his first reflections in each of his conferences:

- 1 J: ok hello A (1) so how did you find doing the essay?
 2 A: **ermm I feel it's (1) similar than er before (xxx) do that essay [yeah hmm but also have some different (1) er change before**
 3 J: did you find anything really difficult or (1)
 4 A: **erm because this is new organisation [for me and er I have er this is my first time to do that and I'm not very clear about it**
 (Conference 1 / J / A / p1)

- 1 J: ok A so how did you feel about this draft? (1)
 2 A: **erm (1) I feel erl have some idea about er (xxx) and other (two opposing arguments) [and but I didn't have (1) more idea about (the) conclusion (1) I don't know my conclusion is right[or**

(Conference 2/J / A / p1)

- 1 J: so er what did you think of your essay when you'd finished your first draft?
 2 A: **erm I think this essay is interesting than the semester one essay**
 3 J: it's more interesting?
 4 A: **[yes it's more interesting and I can find more information and more details in the internet but I go to the library erm (2) it's difficult to find some information about this topic**
 5 J: what did you think of the essay then? (1)
 6 A: **mm (1) this it er I think if I write this essays I have too many idea because in my plans I (get) er five idea in the in my plans but er (1) I'm afraid that if I (write a whole) all (1) I say the words is too much so I just er choose three ideas in my [(essay)**

(Conference 3/J / A / p1)

- 1 J: ok so um what did you think about your second draft? Do you think it was better?
 2 A: **um yes because in my er first draft (1) it tell me about the organisation problems and er vocabulary problems and I have to change the (other) things and I think (1) it's better than the draft one**

(Conference 4/J / A / p1)

As can be seen, Alex offers a good level of detail in his reflections of his work. In most of his responses he relates his reflection to something that has occurred before. In his very first conference, Alex mentions his prior experience of essay writing while in the third conference, he discusses the essay on the programme from semester one. These time arcs provide some proof of deeper thinking skills on the part of Alex and his ability to connect ideas together.

It is also notable that, like Layla, the general focus of his reflection pertains to so called, 'higher order concerns' such as organisation, content and planning and less focus on lexicogrammatical aspects of his writing. His use of appropriate meta-language to describe such features highlights the extent to which Alex has been able to grasp conceptual aspects most likely learnt in class and successfully manipulate them in order to describe his thoughts about his work.

Overall, such reflection bodes well for his engagement in the multiple drafting process on the course where input from the conferences is designed to spur improvement over successive drafts.

3) Offering Rationale

There were 11 instances of Alex offering a rationale for the work he had done in his draft. Upon analysis, they resemble Layla's use of this strategy in two areas, viz. **(1) *factual reasoning and*** **(2) *personalised responses***. But where for Layla offering a more personalised narrative for her work made up some 50% of her rationale responses, Alex used it as his primary method of providing such responses (>80%).

In his first conference he is discussing language errors with Joan, both lexical and grammatical.

- 1 J: so 'you can come upon the stage earlier than other people. It is good for social competition then you can catch the chance will go easy' (1) I kind of get the idea of what you're trying to say but in English it's not the way we would say it in English so I'd [like to see if you could try
- 2 A: [xxx]
- 3 J: to improve (1) this sentence here ((T refers to text))
- 4 J: yeah ok so that's much different than 'come upon the stage' do you know what I mean? Even though I kind of got an idea of what you mean=
- 5 A: =yes because I don't know how to say that[and er I checked dictionary and
- 6 J: [yeah I know]
- 7 A: **dictionary show me these things**
- (Conference 1 / J / A / p7)

Alex offers a very personal response to help explain why he had made some errors in his lexical expression. The response offers a frank declaration by him of not knowing how to do it followed up by the particular method he then chose to try and solve the issue. Such openness regarding the challenge of writing the essay draft seems to be a characteristic of Alex's spoken rationales. He offers another similar response later in the same conference.

- 1 J: erm there's a couple of there are some language errors but I have corrected those don't use this kind of personal language ((T refers to text)) like 'our' and 'I think' and 'we'
- 2 A: yeah
- 3 J: you know use nouns so ['people person students' which you do sometimes but try not
- 4 A: [(person) yeah]
- 5 J: get into that
- 6 A: **yeah you tell me er I can't use this but I'm writing and I forget it**
- (Conference 1 / J / A / p9)

Here again Alex is very open about his own weaknesses and does not hesitate to express where he feels he may have made a mistake. While Layla also used personalised rationales to help explain her writing, hers were typically couched in a more assertive style that demonstrated her thinking about something (*I think it is correct, I want, I decide*). They did not explicitly express a fault in her own knowledge or awareness of something. Alex seems more aware of what he can and cannot do and this lends a more self critical style to his conference presence.

We can see this in an extract from a different conference with Joan, where once again Alex offers a personalised rationale for his errors. In conference three, Joan has spent a long time explaining to Alex how some of his draft does not relate to the essay question. After much talk and negotiation with Alex, who has sought confirmation several times of various points made, he suddenly opens the floor to a wider discussion of the errors he has made without any prompting from Joan.

- 1 J: that's right yeah (1) and don't go away from this theme
- 2 A: ok
- 3 J: you know bring it always back to that because that's what you're trying to prove (1) that it has a [negative effect
- 4 A: [it's easy] it's easy (xxx) or leave the topic?
- 5 J: it's what sorry?
- 6 A: easy to lost or=
- 7 J: =it is
- 8 A: [leave
- 9 J: [yeah very easy=
- 10 A: =the topic

- 11 J: it's very easy with this essay yeah
- 12 A: **I know because er (1.5) I know today I have to er to have the (1) er (1) one to one (xxx) to talk [about essays and I have to er yesterday er night I have to read again [this one**
- 13 J: [(yeah)] [mm] mm=
- 14 A: =because
it's a long time I maybe I didn't remember
- 15 J: ye[ah
- 16 A: [all things
- 17 J: all of it
- 18 A: **but I read when I read it and I have to (xxx) copy it another ((Student flicks through his draft))**
- 19 J: right just to remind yourself
- 20 A: **yeah mm I didn't find out these problems=**
- 21 J: =mm
- 22 A: **because I think maybe in my head erm in my mind this is er (3) in my (3.5) looks (1) I can't see that ((Student struggles to find the right expression))**

In line 4 Alex asks the question, 'it's easy... or leave the topic'. This feels rhetorical in many senses as it cannot be a real question considering that several minutes have passed having discussed that very point. Instead it seems to act as a pre-cursor to Alex wanting to offer a more personalised rationale for his work and the issue at hand. From line 12-22 he embarks on a very long turn expressing what he has done and once again, it contains many examples of him mentioning his own weaknesses (*maybe I didn't remember; I didn't find out these problems; I can't see that*). As already stated, such expression reveals a picture of a student who is very aware of his strengths and weaknesses but perhaps more importantly, highlights a lack of confidence in his own ability too. This stands in contrast to Layla's more assertive, confident conference style.

Emphasising Strategies

The first strategy Alex uses to emphasise his voice during the conference is '**enforcing explicitness**' – i.e. trying to get more information from Joan about an issue being discussed that has hitherto, not been given. There does NOT seem to be any question of a breakdown in communication on the part of the student (whereby a different code would be required – 'seeking repair') but rather the intention by the student to get more details.

1) Enforcing explicitness

In conference 1 Joan is looking at some organisational problems in Alex's argument essay draft, especially focussing on his introductory paragraph and the lack of a clear thesis statement.

- 1 J: so that's what you need at the end (1) of your paragraph (1) you've got to write a sentence that shows me is it madness or is it courage what do you think 'cos at the moment I just don't know (2) is that clear A?
- 2 A: yeah
- 3 J: and then in your thesis statement you would say 'it is courageous because' and then you would list the three main ideas in your essay
- 4 A: **yeah so er (1) I have to rewrite er three of opposites**
- 5 J: well you've got to have three main ideas in your essay
- 6 A: yeah an[
- 7 J: [one in each paragraph
- 8 A: **yeah and in this paragraph[((st refers to text)) I have to er discuss discussing er first I have to**

9 J: [hmm]
 10 A: **er say something er (1) if I agree with the er (courage)**
 11 J: well what you have to do at the beginning of each paragraph you write the opposite idea
 12 A: yeah?
 13 J: so you have done this here ((T refers to text)) but I think maybe it's a little bit long (1)
 14 A: ok
 15 J: ok so what you have to do here ((T refers to text)) I think you're talking about being independent (1) so what you have to do is you would have maybe one or two sentences to say why erm you know people students cannot adapt to independent living because they rely on their parents so much that would be your opposite argument
 14 A: yeah
 15 J: and then the rest of the paragraph you would develop yourself
 (Conference 1 / J / A / p3-5)

In lines 1-3 Joan suggests rather directly a change that Alex needs to make to his draft regarding the inclusion of a clear thesis statement that makes the reader aware of his argument. In line 3 she goes as far as offering the actual phrase he might include, *'it is courageous because'*, before again giving clear suggestions of the inclusion of three principal ideas. Alex's initial reply in line 2 suggests that he understands and in line 4, he attempts to enforce further details from Joan about the change required by asking whether his opposing arguments needed changing too, something Joan did not address in her previous turn. This attempt yields little reward as Joan simply offers a repeat of her earlier statement in lines 5-7. Alex does not give up and in his next turn in lines 8-9 asks another question, albeit less clearly this time, *'yeah and in this paragraph I have to discuss discussing first I have to say something if I agree with the (courage)'*. This time Alex wants to know more about the organisation of his ideas versus opposing ones. This time Joan directly offers an answer in a long turn that gives more details with an example of what he might write. Thus despite being phrased poorly at times, Alex's interventions have inadvertently provided him with even more information than perhaps Joan had initially intended to give.

Like Layla, Alex also 'fishes' at times for more information from his teacher Joan. In Conference two, Joan is discussing a body paragraph in his draft where his argument is failing to come through clearly and there is a lack of coherence with regard to the presentation of the ideas that he has written.

1 J: but this one definitely ((Teacher returns to third body paragraph)) would benefit from (1.5) more (1) er of your opinion (1) coming through more strongly ... at the moment it's not really so you're looking at different legal systems erm (1) so it's kind of a cultural thing isn't it this one? (1) erm you're kind of going from legal system here and then you start talking about the weather so I'm not sure if it's legal system or culture that's (2) the main idea in this paragraph
 2 A: **so I have two idea in this [and I have to choose one?**
 3 J: [well] erm I think (1) maybe you could you could maybe have it as a paragraph about culture b[ut include an example about the law as well (1) maybe whereas your opposing argument is definitely about the legal system and breaking the law and being punished and then all of a sudden you start saying (1)
 4 A: the weather=
 5 J: ='the weather in your home town [is warm' do you know what I mean its
 6 A: [yeah] because I want to
 7 J: (xxx) different
 8 A: **yeah because I want to this paragraph I want to talk about the er (1) the (law) and the weather together so I have to choose one**

- 9 J: so are you- right ok so maybe we could just call that erm (1) adapting to culture and environment isn't it really? (1)
- 10 A: culture environment?
- 11 J: culture and environ[ment a little bit so it's er maybe like adapting to new circumstances
- 12 A: [and environment]
- 13 A: **so the- in this paragraph er the first sentence I can said erm er (2) there have many different er (6.5) different culture and environment between er between (3.5) between different countries**
- 14 J: yeah you could and it can be difficult to adapt (1) to you know a different environment a different culture
- 15 A: [yeah]
- 16 J: [yeah you could do that (1) because here it's kind of erm you're jumping around a bit with your ideas [in this paragraph so I think it needs to be clearer what the theme of the paragraph is and er you know and your ideas need to be more together (1)]
- 17 A: ok=
- 18 J: yeah but I think you need to decide what's the theme of this paragraph (1) is it the law or is it to do with the environment (1.5) ok?
- 19 A: **yeah so I can er put these two idea in the one paragraph?**
- 20 J: erm (2.5) well you could use them as examples you could have a paragraph that says it's difficult to adapt to different circumstances
- 21 A: yeah
- (Conference 2 / J / A / p9-10* edited transcript to save space)

In line 1, Joan expresses her lack of clarity of the topic presented in the body paragraph but does not offer any solution at this early stage. In his following turn, Alex pushes for one by directly asking the question, 'so I have two idea in this [and I have to choose one?'. Joan hedges a great deal in reply with words and phrases such as, 'well, erm, maybe you could', implying perhaps that she is not keen to offer a direct answer to Alex's question. Yet she does go on to suggest a possible solution that essentially implies a preference for keeping just one topic in the paragraph. In line 8, however, Alex asserts that he wants to keep his two topics present, ending with a repeat of his earlier question, indicating perhaps that he did not feel he got an answer to his earlier question (which he did not directly). This example highlights how indirect feedback relies on the conversational partner to be able to read between the lines of what is being said to discern an answer. This is a highly demanding task for low level international students conducting spoken feedback in their L2. Once again, Joan does not directly answer. This turn is a rare example of Alex resisting his teacher's suggestion (one of just two instances seen in his four conferences) and emphasising his own opinion to retain control over his work. Sensing this, Joan is quick in her next turn to offer an alternative suggestion that could encompass what Alex wants to do and retain both of his ideas, 'so are you- right ok so maybe we could just call that erm (1) adapting to culture and environment isn't it really?' Her use of the pronoun 'we' is interesting here as it implies 'joint construction' of the solution, when in fact it is really her who is offering possible solutions alone. In line 13, Alex seeks further information about the new suggestion and offers his own version of how he could write an opening to the paragraph, 'so the- in this paragraph er the first sentence I can said erm er (2) there have many different er (6.5) different culture and environment between er between (3.5) between different countries'. In her following turn, Joan takes up Alex's idea and expands on it before reiterating the problem of the paragraph once again, ending by making it clear that it is up to Alex to decide what the topic will be in the paragraph, 'yeah but I think you need to decide what's the theme of this paragraph (1) is it the law or is it to do with the environment (1.5) ok?' This is a little odd due to the fact that earlier she had taken up Alex's desire to keep both of his ideas in the one paragraph by offering a phrase that would encompass both, 'culture and environment', yet now it returns to an either/or question again. Unsurprisingly, Alex once again asks whether he can

include his two ideas in the paragraph in line19. The use of 'erm' followed by the long pause at the beginning of her next turn implies that Joan remains unconvinced.

This extract highlights a number of issues. First it shows Alex pushing on four occasions to get more details and answers about what he wants. He is persistent in attempting to enforce explicitness from Joan about the matter at hand. Furthermore, Alex is seen to offer a little resistance to removing one of his ideas and as such, showcases a student with a belief in his own work and the ability and confidence to defend it if need be. Yet the episode also reveals an issue that has been seen in other conferences with Joan. Her desire, it seems, to not offer concrete answers at times to student enquiries are made with best of intentions and perhaps a belief in trying to engender student autonomy and limit herself to pointing out issues alone rather than mobbing onto offering the solutions as well. Yet international student writers, struggling with the challenge of composing academic essays in another language, perhaps crave *greater* direction and specificity as they are not always able to decipher meaning hidden in tentatively couched feedback. The fear of appropriation by teachers over the texts of their students may well be doing a disservice to the very student they are trying to help. This issue will be taken up again in other conferences.

2) Bringing up previous learning experiences

One strategy used by Alex in some of his conferences is to project his identity as a student writer thorough mentioning what he has done previously. This was something hardly ever seen in Layla's conferences. Alex not only relates what he has done but compares it to what he is being asked to do now. This offers up points of similarity and contrast, the latter serving as possible justification for the errors that he has made. Either way, they serve to tie his past experiences to his present learning and offer a valuable insight into the on-going changes and struggles that the international student writer undergoes in UK foundation courses. Furthermore, they help to construct Alex's identity as someone who possesses experience and knowledge worthy of recognition. In conference 1 we can see Alex make mention of areas of **similarity** between his writing back in China and the present.

1 J: ok hello A (1) so how did you find doing the essay?

2 A: **ermm I feel it's (1) similar than er before (xxx) do that essay ...**

(Conference 1/J / A / p1)

1 J: right ok well what you need to do is reference [the website in the paragraph which we haven't done yet

2 A: yeah

3 J: I'm going to show how to do that next week

4 A: **yeah er I think it's the same (1) er (1) er the same er between before I have to do that we have to er write down the er (1) address where I find it**

5 J: yeah=

6 A: = **in the end**

7 J: yeah

8 A: **in the essay's end**

(Conference 1/J / A / p2* edited transcript to save space)

In other instances, Alex highlights areas of his current writing which differ to what he has done before.

1 A: **erm because this is new organisation [for me and er I have er this is my first time to do that and I'm not very clear about it**
(Conference 1/J / A / p1)

1 J: erm there's a couple of there are some language errors but I have corrected those don't use this kind of personal language ((T refers to text)) like 'our' and 'I think' and 'we'...
2 A: **because er (1) before this essays er I'm writing (other) essays usually use the first er (2) person to (xxx) use 'I' and 'you are' er our because is er (1) the best essay is similar to the er IELTS writing it's so you have to show (your) opinion and so should be use 'I our'**

(Conference 1/J / A / p9* edited transcript to save space)

1 A: **yeah erm (1.5) I first time to write academic writing essay one thousand five five hundred=**

2 J: it's quite long yeah [well everybody's er

3 A: **[(first]**

4 J: th[e same don't worry

5 A: **[time] I was er write essays one thousand seven hundred [words but it's something about my er my subject**

6 J: yeah so it's easier isn't it=

7 A: **=(so) it's easier and because erm I study the engineering I can use many teachers or they think that**

8 J: yeah this is harder= ((Teacher laughs))

9 A: **=this (sentences) I just can use the words do that so**

(Conference 4/J / A / p10* edited transcript to save space)

In the first example Alex offers a reason for his struggle in organising his essay paragraphs by linking it back to his lack of experience in structuring the work in the way required on the foundation course. Later in the same conference (second example above), he offers a detailed explanation of why he has become accustomed to using first person pronouns, namely his IELTS training that he did in China. The final extract above has Alex directly contrasting the differences in writing in a subject he knew about before compared to one where so much is new for him. All these examples emphasise Alex's identity as a student writer and how it is something not static but fluid. His struggle to make sense of the new 'rules' for writing in the UK with what he has been exposed to before, is a great challenge.

Yet such explanations by him, allows Joan to better understand his evolving text. It helps to prevent her adopting a default reductionist view of his writing, one that slides too easily into viewing the written drafts as weak due to a lack of effort. Alex's openness about his previous learning experiences instead offer great potential to better understand why he makes mistakes and a greater appreciation of the challenges he faces when writing. This in turn can impact upon the feedback he receives in terms of it being less judgemental and more sympathetic. In addition, it also offers the possibility of the teacher taking up discussion of such prior learning experiences when they arise during the conference, in order to make them more explicit and a source of greater understanding between teacher and student. This can only be a good thing.

Appendix 11: Overview of the Relationship between Students' Beliefs and Conference Strategy Use

Appendix 11a: The general impact of Layla's beliefs on her conference behaviour (defining belief shaded)

Layla's beliefs	No impact	Low impact*	Moderate impact*	High impact*
1: 'It [written and spoken feedback] helps me to avoid my mistakes' (source: q8)				✓
2: 'I expect [the teacher to] give me more example' (source: pci11260)				✓
3: 'I like it the teacher talk but I think the balance between the teacher and the student [is important]' (source: il128-129)			✓	
4: 'I understand but just I want check this sure' (source: pci11396)				✓
5: 'If I need I will [speak up]' (source: il194)			✓	
6: 'I feel relaxed because I know my teacher'(source: il233-234)	✓			

***Low:** evidence noticed sporadically over 1 or 2 conferences / **Moderate:** evidence noticed with some consistency over 3 or 4 conferences / **High:** evidence noticed consistently over all 4 conferences

Appendix 11b: The general impact of Alex's beliefs on his conference behaviour (defining belief shaded)

Alex's beliefs	No impact	Low impact*	Moderate impact*	High impact*
1: 'tell me what's wrong' (source: il41)				✓
2: 'I must want to know why, why I have to' (source: pci2181)				✓
3: 'two peoples have thinking and we can get more idea' (source: pci11191)				✓
4: 'If the teacher tell me everything that essay is not mine - it's the teacher's' (source: pci11329)		✓		
5: 'I want to show my mind' (source: pci11258)			✓	
6: 'Joan ask more question for me – it can help me to remember' (source: pci3155)	✓			

***Low:** evidence noticed sporadically over 1 or 2 conferences / **Moderate:** evidence noticed with some consistency over 3 or 4 conferences / **High:** evidence noticed consistently over all 4 conferences

Appendix 11c: The general impact of Kazumi's beliefs on his conference behaviour (defining belief shaded)

Kazumi's beliefs	No impact	Low impact*	Moderate impact*	High impact*
1: 'I think culture could be the problem' (source: il98)				✓
2: 'if the relationship is like close, I think students will be able to talk more ' (source: il188)		✓		
3. 'The good thing I found is he followed the structure' (source: pci11362-363)			✓	
4: 'I ran out of time' (source: pci2188)	✓			
5: 'I needed more help' (source: pci31103)	✓			
6: 'I thought this is the western style ... it's up to me' (source: pci21190)	✓			
7: 'I agreed with this so yeah I change it – it doesn't mean I followed him' (source: pci2128)	✓			

***Low:** evidence noticed sporadically over 1 or 2 conferences / **Moderate:** evidence noticed with some consistency over 3 or 4 conferences / **High** evidence noticed consistently over all 4 conferences

Appendix 11d: The general impact of Maria's beliefs on her conference behaviour (defining belief shaded)

Maria's beliefs	No impact	Low impact*	Moderate impact*	High impact*
1: 'spoken feedback is an opportunity for both to talk (source: il147)				✓
2: 'the aim of the feedback to know what is wrong with my essay' (source: pci1191-92)			✓	
3. 'the aim of these conferences is to resolve my questions about writing' (source: q13)				✓
4: 'I can't accept my teacher's feedback if I don't agree with him' (source: q13)		✓		
5: 'it is not clear if I have to change it' (source: pci2199)				✓
6: 'I want [him] to give me more examples' (source: pci11228)				✓

***Low:** evidence noticed sporadically over 1 or 2 conferences / **Moderate:** evidence noticed with some consistency over 3 or 4 conferences / **High:** evidence noticed consistently over all 4 conferences

Appendix 12: Summary of the Findings to the Research Questions

Research question 1: What beliefs do L2 student writers hold about writing conferences?

Table 10.1: Summary of findings: Beliefs about writing conferences

Seminal literature on L2 students' beliefs	Study findings: <u>supports</u> previous literature	Study findings: <u>extends or contributes</u> 'new' knowledge
Young (1992) Arndt (1993) Han (1996) Thonus (2004) Chen's (2005) Liu (2009) Best et al. (2015) Maliborska and You (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • L2 writers hold a variety of beliefs about conferences • L2 writers see conferences as places to get errors corrected • L2 writers see conferences as supplementary to written feedback • L2 writers see teachers as 'in charge' of conferences • L2 writers see conferences as places to get details • Conferences may be affected by students' cultural background • L2 writers want clear feedback • L2 writers feel anxious about conferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • L2 writers see conferences as places to speak with their teachers • L2 writers express a desire for a degree of ownership over their work • One L2 writer explicitly foregrounds the impact of his cultural/educational background on conferences • L2 writers do not carry all beliefs equally – some more important than others that <i>define</i> their beliefs • L2 writers' beliefs can be characterised as either more process or product-oriented

Research question 2: What strategies do L2 student writers employ during their conference interactions?

Table 10.2: Summary of findings: Strategies used in conferences

Seminal literature on L2 students' use of strategies in conferences	Study findings: <u>supports</u> previous literature	Study findings: <u>extends or contributes</u> 'new' knowledge
Goldstein and Conrad (1990) Harris & Silva (1993) Powers (1993) Reid (1994) Cumming and So (1996) Patthey-Chavez & Ferris (1997) Blau & Hall (2002) Haneda (2004) Thonus (2004) Weigle and Nelson (2004) Williams and Severino (2004) Young and Miller (2004) Strauss and Xiang (2006) Ewert (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • L2 writers use different strategies • L2 conference participation may increase over time • L2 writers able to self-evaluate their work • L2 writers refer to their previous learning • L2 writers able to offer rationales for their work • L2 writers able to offer mild resistance to teacher suggestions • L2 writers seek repair when they do not understand • L2 writers become 'overloaded' by too much feedback • L2 writers struggle to understand indirect & hedged feedback • L2 writers can raise topics • L2 writers can explain their writing process • L2 writers can offer opinions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most L2 writers in this study struggled to raise topics • All L2 writers were equally focussed on higher order concerns and lower order concerns • L2 writers able to strategically elicit more information • L2 writers struggling with hedged feedback can become demotivated

Research question 3: How do students' beliefs affect their use of strategies in conferences?

Table 10.3: Summary of findings: Linking students' beliefs and strategy use

Literature on the relationship between L2 students' conference beliefs and their conference actions	Study findings: <u>supports</u> previous literature	Study findings: <u>extends or contributes</u> 'new' knowledge
<p><u>To the best of my knowledge, no such studies have been conducted with this single focus in mind</u></p> <p><i>However, there is literature looking at the relationship between L2 students' beliefs about learning and strategy use in general (not conferencing)</i></p> <p><u>BALLI & SILL surveys:</u> Park (1995) Yang (1999) Kim (2001) Li (2010) Suwanarak (2012)</p> <p><u>Other (not BALLI & SILL):</u> Navarro & Thornton (2011) Zhong (2015)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a link between L2 students' beliefs about learning and their learning actions • L2 students do not always do what they say or think they will do • L2 students' beliefs in error focus often translate well into actions • L2 students' desire for more details links quite well to learning actions they use • Reciprocity between beliefs and actions in both directions seems to exist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a link between the beliefs students have about writing conferences and their actions during such conferences. • Students' defining beliefs about conferences impacted effectively on their conference actions • L2 student writers' beliefs about wanting a degree of ownership over their texts did NOT translate effectively into their conference actions • L2 student writers' claims to want to contribute to conference interaction was observed during their conference actions