Responding to Writing Fluency: An Activity Theory Analysis of Teacher Preparation and Practices

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RESPONDING TO WRITING FLUENCY:
AN ACTIVITY THEORY ANALYSIS OF TEACHER PREPARATION AND PRACTICES

DALIBORKA CRNKOVIC PADON

Doctoral Program in Rhetoric and Composition

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Dedication

To my parents, Marija and Stjepan Crnković, who showed me what it means to be humble, respectful, and kind.

I can only hope to follow your example and always be the best version of myself.

To my wife Gail, who supported me wholeheartedly, who talked through my endless doubts, and who is literally the reason I got onto this PhD journey.

You deserve—and have—my eternal gratitude and love.

To my friend Dominga, who kept me grounded and kept things in perspective.

Tale je za najine sanje, curo!

To my friend Alauna, who said, “I would be blind if I didn’t see the grammar behind it.”

I would be blind without your wise and deep insights.

~~~~~~

Thank you for your unconditional love and friendship.
RESPONDING TO WRITING FLUENCY:
AN ACTIVITY THEORY ANALYSIS OF TEACHER PREPARATION AND PRACTICES

By

DALIBORKA CRNKOVIC PADON

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at El Paso
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for the Degree of

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Abstract

This case study examines eight first-year writing teachers’ practices, philosophies, and preparation with a specific focus on responding to students’ writing fluency. The data is illustrated through the theoretical framework of Activity Theory (Engeström, 1987, 2005), showing various contradictions between the expectations of the Composition Studies field and the actual responding practices. To understand these contradictions, I also examine the position statements issued by the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA), and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), as well as the bestselling writing teacher preparation books and first-year writing student textbooks. I discuss these results through the theoretical lens of Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998) in order to explain how the field of Composition Studies as a community of practice has affected the aforementioned contradictions. The results show that the shift from product ideologies to process ideologies in the field of Composition Studies has caused a shift from one extreme (focusing almost strictly on grammatically sound products) to another extreme (focusing almost strictly on idea development). Consequently, the examined writing teacher preparation materials show a significant lack of models for teachers to assist students in the development of their writing fluency rhetorically and in the context of writing. I conclude the project by proposing three basic principles that writing teachers and writing teacher preparation programs should follow in order to facilitate and enhance responding to writing fluency issues in our linguistically diverse college composition classrooms.
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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. The Problem

A common sight for most writing teachers and students are teachers’ comments to students’ drafts along the line of “this is an incomplete sentence,” “be mindful of writing fluency issues,” and “revise for clarity.” These comments are clearly less cryptic than the infamous “awk” and “frag” comments, yet they still leave plenty of room for students to wonder about what the teacher meant by them. While unfamiliar readers are allowed to wonder what these comments mean, how to address them, or why these issues matter at all, students in our college composition classrooms are expected to know what a complete sentence is, they are expected to understand which writing fluency issues are occurring in a particular sentence, and they are expected to be able to revise their writing for clarity. In reality, we know that students often struggle with how to address the above comments, but we also know that they can ask for help from their instructor or the university writing center, or—if everything else fails—consult Google. Problem solved.

So why bring up something that is not a problem? For a variety of reasons: many students may not seek help from the writing center, they may not be resourceful enough to consult Google, or they may not understand the necessity for doing either one. These students may only have their writing teacher as a resource for any issues relating to grammar or writing fluency. While grammar and writing fluency are not quite the same concepts, they do have a close relation to each other. Grammar, on the one hand, is typically understood in terms of the forms or structures that a language takes, including concepts such as parts of speech or sentence diagramming; the concept of grammar typically refers to adhering to standard language conventions without considering the rhetorical effects of specific grammatical structures or
grammatical errors. Writing fluency, on the other hand, relates to the quality and clarity of the message that the writer is trying to get across; the concept of writing fluency, then, is highly rhetorical because it considers how certain grammatical structures and styles help writers achieve particular rhetorical effects, instead of simply avoiding errors for the purpose of adhering to standard language conventions. My study focuses on writing fluency and thus explores whether and how writing teachers consider the rhetorical effects of their own comments and of the grammatical structures used in their students’ writing. However, since the concepts of grammar and writing fluency are closely related, and more importantly, since the existing scholarship rarely (if ever) addresses writing fluency and instead focuses predominantly on grammar, some of my terminology reflects such usage of traditional grammatical concepts where necessary.

The need for writing fluency may be the reason why most policies and statements on what writing teachers should do include developing an awareness of linguistic structures in the context of writing (see Chapter Four for a detailed analysis of position statements issued by the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA), and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)). The field of Composition Studies has come a long way from the current-traditional approach of addressing writing fluency in isolated drill exercises; in fact, the field of Composition Studies today recognizes the need for treating language issues through the lens of various rhetorical situations. However, the aforementioned sample comments would not be exemplary testimonies of the progress in the field. The comments are prescriptive and do not provide any clues to the student writer about the rhetorical considerations surrounding such writing issues. And yet, these types of comments are still quite frequent in today’s college composition classrooms. What are the reasons behind the split?
Writing fluency may be disregarded or neglected in the teaching of college composition for a variety of reasons, such as: it is often assumed that students come to college with already developed language skills relevant to writing; teachers lack the time necessary to address issues of grammar; many college students may not need this instruction; the role of grammar in writing/rhetoric is perceived differently by different schools of thought; teachers may not know how to “teach” it, and so on. Most of these reasons seem to derive from the split between attitudes on whether college composition courses should include attention to grammar or not. A few scholars have claimed that teaching grammar does not have any effect on the improvement of writing (see Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, & Schoer, 1963; Elbow, 1973; or Hartwell, 1985), while other scholars have posited that attention to grammatical structures should be included in the context of writing by utilizing a rhetorical lens (for example, Kolln, 2003; Micciche, 2004; or Schleppegrell, 2009). Issues of grammar and writing fluency have been addressed more in detail by authors such as Bartholomae (1980), Rose (1989), and Shaughnessy (1977); however, these authors discussed issues of grammar from the point of view of basic writing, and not in terms of mainstream college composition classrooms. The research that does provide insight into the treatment of grammatical issues in college composition comes mainly from the field of Applied Linguistics and L2 composition (see Ferris, 2003, 2007, 2011; Silva, 2013; or Horner, Lu, Royster, & Trimbur, 2011)—a perspective that is only slowly making its way into first-year composition classrooms and into teacher preparation programs.

In the last few years, more and more scholars have pointed out that the growing linguistic diversity in U.S. colleges calls for writing teachers’ attention to developing student awareness of how linguistic structures affect the rhetorical purposes (for example, Matsuda, 2006; Roberge, Siegal, & Harklau, 2009). One of the latest progressive methods of developing a linguistic
awareness comes from scholars who propose a translingual approach that views linguistic heterogeneity as “a resource for producing meaning in writing, speaking, reading, and listening, […] as resources to be preserved, developed and utilized. Rather than respond to language differences only in terms of rights, it sees them as resources” (Horner, Lu, Royster, & Trimbur, 2011, pp. 303-304). The same approach could be applied to both L2 and L1 speakers and writers; however, there seems to be a persistent separation of research relating to L2 and L1 composition. In fact, when it comes to students who are generally labeled as native English speakers, the assumptions seem to be such that these students do not need explicit attention or instruction for improving their writing fluency because they will acquire it naturally through frequent writing. These assumptions often rely on scholarship from 30 or more years ago, when the world and the college composition classrooms were quite different. Since then, the term native English speaker itself has been redefined and has perhaps increased the gap between writing in general (for social purposes) and writing for specific purposes (such as academic and professional). Although these specific purposes may be criticized for their conventions that perpetuate the relationships of power, and although the ability or opportunity for translingual negotiations and choices is a noble one (and realistic and necessary, too), the power relations and the need for acculturation are not a construct of the writing classroom; therefore, students still need to adhere to the expectations of the world outside of the writing classroom (other academia and workplace). If students are to become sophisticated writers, then, they need to continuously inquire about how their academic and professional writing is affected by these expectations, where these expectations originate from, and when they can bend or challenge these expectations without damaging their credibility.
A crucial element in this inquiry is the feedback that students receive from their writing teachers. Responding to student writing has been examined from a variety of perspectives, mainly focusing on what teachers respond to, how students perceive or use that response, and how effective the feedback is to student writing improvement. In terms of responding to grammatical error, a general conclusion from the research in the field of composition studies is that teachers should respond to errors later in the writing process. Unfortunately, this “later” is rarely, if ever, presented in a way to model teacher response, thus confirming that “surface errors” should be ignored. Moreover, a general consensus in the composition field seems to be that such errors will eventually disappear naturally through intensive and frequent writing (a hypothesis that has not been confirmed or tested through empirical research yet). However, let us consider the example of a student who can put together a perfectly correct English sentence, but overall, her sentences are short and choppy. The issue here is not grammatical per se; instead, the student most likely has not mastered complex thinking yet, which in turn is reflected in lacking complex sentences. As the student starts developing more complex thinking in college, she will try to use it in her writing, but may exhibit issues with clarity, comma splices, and other “mechanical” attributes. The student is not able to use coordination and subordination effectively, both in terms of grammatical structures and in terms of critical/complex thinking. At the same time, teachers may feel helpless when trying to address these issues because they have not been prepared to look at deeper issues behind “poor English”—they have been inculcated with the idea of “surface errors” when in reality most of them may not be surface at all. A comma splice is not always simply a missing comma—it shows that the student is not able to distinguish between two genres (spoken and written) or between where one sentence ends and another begins. Yet, teachers have not been educated to understand where the so-called surface
errors originate from, so it is not surprising that their feedback to error does not result in effective student revision.

Since very little research has been done on the factors that influence teachers’ responding practices, including factors such as linguistic subject knowledge or teacher preparation, the present study examines these factors and tries to understand how process ideologies have influenced the preparation of writing teachers in their responding to linguistically diverse students, whether L1, L2, or international students.

1.2. Situating the Problem in the Historical Context

The aforementioned either-or debates on grammar come largely as a result of switching from the current-traditional pedagogies that focus on the final product to process pedagogies that focus on the writing process. In order to better understand the split between product ideologies and process ideologies, the following section provides a brief overview of how language has been treated historically as a part of Composition Studies.

Mastering language as a device to achieve rhetorical purposes has always been considered important to the field of Composition Studies. For example, the Sophists (fifth century B.C.E.) thought that language needs to be studied in order to achieve the purpose of effective speech; for Plato (fourth century B.C.E.), a rhetorician should be proficient in the articulate use of language for the purpose of discovering the Truth; Aristotle's (fourth century B.C.E.) writings provide a sophisticated resource of how language should be used to achieve effectiveness; and Cicero (first century B.C.E.) considered linguistic skills to be an inherent characteristic of the ideal orator (Aristotle, 1991; Cicero, 2001; Jarrat, 1998; McComiskey, 2012; Sadley, 2013). In late 18th and early 19th century of the current era, George Campbell, Hugh Blair, and Richard Whatley published their works on rhetoric, in which they introduced more explicit discussions of the purity of
language in terms of grammar. The works by Campbell (1776), Blair (1802), and Whatley (1828) seem to show the first signs of a variety of concepts that are still used in rhetoric and composition today. For example, the three authors proposed that good writing starts with a good grasp of the subject and with a logical organization of the arguments that a writer is making (Blair, 1990, p. 33; Campbell, 1990, p. 174; Whatley, 1990, pp. 299-303). This proposition sounds very much like what we mean today by higher-order concerns. The term can be viewed as controversial since it assumes that all writers are already able to manipulate sentences and paragraphs confidently and precisely, while students that come to our composition classrooms are still relatively novice writers, at least in terms of academic writing.

Another notion that seems to emerge in the works of these authors is that of grammar being a reflection of language use (Blair, 1990, p. 73; Campbell, 1990, p. 173; Whatley, 1990, p. 290), which may be seen as what was later defined as descriptive grammar. Closely related to that is the idea that grammatical concepts should be studied and learned through practice (Blair, 1990, p. 32; Campbell, 1990, p. 173; Whatley, 1990, p. 287), thus showing the first notions of teaching grammar in the context of writing, and not in isolated exercises. The context of writing also needs to take into consideration what Campbell calls local needs for more or for less grammar instruction based on the population in a certain area (Blair, 1990, p. 32; Campbell, 1990, p. 173; Whatley, 1990, p. 291). Perhaps the most important contribution of these authors with regards to language and grammar is that meta-linguistic awareness needs to be nurtured as it contributes not only to good writing, but also to critical thinking itself (Blair, 1990, p. 33; Campbell, 1990, p. 173; Whatley, 1990, p. 287). (A more detailed elaboration of these authors is provided below in 1.2.2.1. The British influence in order to portray how their work influenced U.S. college composition.)
What follows is perhaps the most relevant period for understanding the ideological and pedagogical implications of teaching grammar in college composition—the period from 1890 to 1963. The relevance of this particular period is twofold: first, the beginning of this period is marked by the introduction of freshman composition into U.S. colleges; and second, the approaches to teaching college composition in this period were preserved until the 1960s when the *process movement* took over, and composition instruction shifted its focus from the written product (that focused on form and grammar) to the writing process (that focused on strategies for generating and organizing ideas). As a result, the responsibility of teaching editing and proofreading of the written product were transferred from composition classrooms to writing centers or self-referenced grammar handbooks.

Considering that the debates against grammar instruction repeatedly bring up arguments from the *current-traditional* pedagogy, a proper understanding of the origin of this pedagogy is necessary. As Kitzhaber (1990) puts it, “If a teacher is to have any perspective on his subject, he must know the tradition that lies behind it, know the place of himself and his times in the tradition, and, through his knowledge, be able to put a proper value on new developments in his subject as they appear” (p. 226). A good understanding of how grammar was taught prior to its elimination from composition studies is relevant to any scholar who is researching progressive ways of reintroducing grammar into composition instruction. Among the authors who examined the history of college composition, the most exhaustive look at history seems to be provided by Berlin (1987), Kitzhaber (1990), and Connors (1986; 1997). Both Berlin (1987) and Kitzhaber (1990) offer the reasons and the ideologies that led college composition to implement and preserve current-traditional pedagogies in that period; and both Kitzhaber (1990) and Connors (1986; 1997) provide extensive discussion of authors who were used most frequently in the
teaching of college composition. In addition, Kitzhaber (1990) and Lunsford (1982) contributed fresh perspectives on authors who might have been misunderstood in their views of language and grammar.

1.2.1. Freshman composition and current-traditional pedagogies

Before examining how grammar was taught in college composition prior to the process movement, this section will briefly summarize the beginnings of freshman composition and of current-traditional pedagogies. Kitzhaber explains that the roots of freshman composition can be traced back to the entrance exams at Harvard. These exams tested English proficiency of entering students, and they focused on proper spelling, punctuation, handwriting, and paragraph division (Kitzhaber, 1990, pp. 34-35). The reason behind these entrance exams seems to have developed from the initial desire of elevating “the systemic study of the English language” (Eliot, as qtd. in Kitzhaber, 1990, p. 33) to the final desire of “relegat[ing] to the lower schools the responsibility for the more mechanical details of writing” (p. 43). Unfortunately, this led lower schools to focus on teaching to the test, which caused students either to fail the entrance exams or to fail their freshman courses. Thus, more and more time in freshman English was devoted to remediation of writing skills, focusing mainly on mechanical correctness, than to the study of rhetoric.

The pedagogy in these remedial classes focused on grammar, style, and form of the written product, and it was later termed current-traditional rhetoric. According to Berlin (1987), rhetorics (and the pedagogies stemming from those rhetorics) are not distinguished from one another based on “the superficial emphasis of one or another feature of the rhetorical act” (p. 3). Instead, they are distinguished by their epistemologies—the “assumptions about the very nature of the known, the knower, and the discourse community involved in considering the known”
Thus, the current-traditional rhetoric is not simply a collection of specific teaching features—it is also a way of thinking. Berlin (1987) explains that the current-traditional way of thinking is based on an objective view of the world, where “the real is located in the material world” it exists before language, and the task of the writer is to “record this reality exactly as it has been experienced so that it can be reproduced by the reader” (p. 7). Berlin (1987) also points out that invention was ignored in current-traditional teaching approaches, and that the description of the existing and observable world was constrained to logical construction in four modes: narration, description, exposition, and argument. The goal of the current-traditional rhetoric and pedagogy, then, was to present this knowledge of the world in a mechanically correct form in order to avoid embarrassment in print.

1.2.2. Grammar in 1890-1963 college composition

1.2.2.1. The British influence

The first textbooks on the use (or not) of grammar in college composition were strongly influenced by the British authors Hugh Blair, George Campbell, Richard Whately, and Alexander Bain. According to Kitzhaber (1990), Blair’s *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* focused on literary composition and criticism. These lectures covered such topics as taste, language, style, and eloquence. A tasteful style, for Blair, showed simplicity, perspicuity, and conciseness in both words and sentences. In order to accomplish such a good style, Blair called for grammatical purity. In fact, Connors (1997) explains that Blair saw the necessity of discussing grammar “for without a knowledge of grammar as a formal system good writing was impossible” (p. 126). Thus, Blair’s *Lectures* included extensive discussion of parts of speech and sentence structure.
As for Campbell, Kitzhaber (1990) states that Campbell’s *Philosophy of Rhetoric* set up “usage as the criterion that governs grammatical matters” (p. 52). For Campbell, rhetoric depends on grammar for the laws of language and on logic for the laws of thought (Kitzhaber, 1990, p. 81); and the major offenses against grammatical purity include barbarism, solecism, and improprieties (p. 188). In addition, Connors (1986) explains that Campbell distinguishes rhetorical theory from grammatical purity, but despite this distinction, he focused on discussing good usage as the source of grammatical purity (p. 7). However, as opposed to Blair, it seems that for Campbell, the task of teaching grammar belongs to lower-grade teachers and to rhetoricians.

There seems to be very little or no mentioning of grammar in Whately’s *Elements of Rhetoric* or in Bain’s *English Composition and Rhetoric*. Kitzhaber (1990) tells us that, for Whately, rhetoric equals invention or, in other words, finding and arranging suitable and logical arguments. Connors (1997) adds that the *Elements* were “a treatise, not a textbook” (p. 61). The author continues to say that Whately denied that rhetoric is “the Art of Composition”; instead, he saw the “argument as primary genre of rhetoric” (Whately, as qtd. in Connors, 1997, p. 61). According to Connors (1997), both Whately and Bain “wrote popular rhetoric texts that had no important grammatical components at all” (p. 132). However, as opposed to Whately, who focused more on invention, Bain was focused more on the form in which arguments were presented. In fact, Bain claimed that he formulated the “Forms of Discourse” (Description, Narration, Exposition, Persuasion); and Kitzhaber (1990) adds that “he was the first man to present a systematic treatment of the paragraph” (p. 119) through the trinity of Unity, Mass, and Coherence. Unfortunately, Bain’s focus on form earned him the unpopular status of the father of the current-traditional rhetoric, but Lunsford (1982) attempts to shed a different light in Bain’s
contributions. Lunsford (1982) posits that, “In his textbooks and in his classroom teaching Bain was in many ways an educational reformer, intent on applying his considerable powers of observation, logical acumen, and knowledge of science to the study of grammar and rhetoric” (p. 293). According to Lunsford (1982), Bain’s intention was not to simply follow the prescribed stylistic and grammatical principles; instead, he guided students through analyzing the available choices of style and grammar. In fact, in his *English Composition and Rhetoric*, Bain argues that in composition and grammar “we need two courses of instruction, running side by side. The first is a systematic course of principles, with appropriate examples; the second, a critical examination of texts, passages, or writings” (Bain, as qtd. in Lunsford, 1982, p. 299). Based on his teaching intentions, then, Bain might not be the father of the current-traditional paradigm, but the father of critical thinking.

1.2.2.2. American authors

The first American author who made a mark in college composition textbooks was A.S. Hill. According to Connors (1997), Hill was initially concerned primarily with rhetoric as style, and not with superficial correctness such as spelling and punctuation. This, however, changed as college composition demands changed due to the need for remedial freshman composition. Hill’s new approach was evident in his *Principles of Rhetoric* that “divided into two parts, the first dealing with superficial correctness (barbarism, solecism, and improprieties) and the second with the forms of discourse” (Berlin, 1987, p. 37), while his *Beginning of Rhetoric and Composition* provides extensive “grammatical material, all of it in negative tone” (Kitzhaber, 1990, p. 197). Kitzhaber (1990) explains that Hill’s “doctrine drew heavily on Blair, Campbell, and Whately” (p. 62), and adds that Hill’s textbooks were dogmatic. His dogmatic methods, however, were valuable for inexperienced teachers as “it discourages questions from students, it simplifies the
teacher's job exposition, it saves time” (Kitzhaber, 1990, p. 62). Hill’s composition pedagogy, then, focused primarily on rewriting to correct the errors of spelling, punctuation, usages, and syntax.

The next American author that had an impact on college composition is John Franklin Genung. His Practical Elements of Rhetoric provided a systematic approach to theories of rhetoric where he placed “the emphasis on form in composition and literature” (Kitzhaber, 1990, p. 65). Connors (1986), however, adds that while textbooks by Bain and Hill (as well as Wendell and Scott, who will be discussed later) “had no important grammatical components at all” Genung’s Practical Elements was the most popular composition textbook between 1887 and 1894 “because of its extensive discussion of grammatical elements” (Connors, 1986, p. 11). The popularity of Genung’s textbook comes as no surprise in an era when writing was considered a practical task of correcting mechanical errors.

As opposed to the authors so far, who treated rhetorical or grammatical concepts in an extensive and complex manner, Barret Wendell’s English Composition offered a much simpler approach to these concepts. Kitzhaber (1990) describes Wendell’s approach in his textbook as simple and informal, practically a synthesis of the complex theories on rhetoric that created “simple generalizations expressed in an easy conversational tone” (p. 68). Kitzhaber (1990) adds that Wendell “turn[ed] attention of rhetoricians away from mere correctness in details to effectiveness of the larger units (paragraphs and whole compositions) as determined by what impression the writer is trying to make on the reader” (p. 69). Also, as opposed to Hill and Genung who adopted Bain’s modes of discourse as a focus in their textbooks, Wendell’s approach focused more on Bain’s discussion of the paragraph (Connors, 1997, p. 189). In addition, according to Kitzhaber (1990), Wendell’s theory of style was an expansion of
Campbell's concept of good usage. Wendell, as it seems, focused on the form of the larger rhetorical discourse, and he did not discuss issues of mechanical correctness.

The authors discussed so far seem to represent one side of college composition pedagogies at the turn of the 19th century. According to Connors (1986), the first years of the 20th century showed a change in how grammar and mechanical correctness were viewed in college composition. The author explains that these were the years when the first antiprescriptivists started criticizing the “idea that grammar instruction carried over to composition” (Connors, 1986, p. 15). One of the most prominent authors who challenged this idea was Fred Newton Scott. While Hill, Genung, and Wendell merely rearranged and simplified the traditional theories, Scott “made a genuine effort to formulate a comprehensive system of rhetorical theory drawing on new developments in such related disciplines as experimental psychology, linguistics, and sociology” (Kitzhaber, 1990, p. 69). Scott worked together with Joseph V. Denney and Gertrude Buck on textbooks that treated “the forms of language as they are conditioned by the functions of language” (Kitzhaber, 1990, p. 199), thus providing the first textbooks on functional instead of prescriptive grammar. Connors (1997) claims that Scott did not care about grammar (p. 131), yet that he and Denney “devoted twelve pages of appendixes to capitalization and punctuation rules” (p. 136). The difference in their discussion of capitalization and punctuation was that they focused on exceptions to the rules more than on the rules themselves. Another textbook that speaks about Scott & Denney's stance was The Elementary English Composition, in which the authors showed that composing is the best when there is balance between the individual and the social, thus they proposed that even superficial correctness can be seen as “a means of meeting definite social needs more or less effectively, of winning attention and consideration, the various devices of grammar and rhetoric make an appeal...
to self-interest which pupils can understand” (Scott and Denney, as qtd. in Berlin, 1987, p. 49). Scott’s view of language as a social phenomenon was a reflection of his view of “reality as a social construction, a communal creation emerging from the dialectical interplay of individuals” (Berlin, 1987, p. 47), thus, his rhetoric was clearly an alternative to the current-traditional rhetoric that saw reality as an objective, material world that exists before language.

The epistemological stances toward rhetoric and composition seemed to start changing after the 1920s, in part due to the findings in other fields. Along with Scott, Denney, and Buck, a plethora of other scholars in the emerging field of rhetoric and composition started criticizing prescriptive grammar and suggesting the use of the findings from philology and linguistics. For example, William D. Whitney’s Essentials of English Grammar was one of the rare textbooks that was based on the scientific view of language; he endorsed a descriptive view of grammar where the teaching of grammar raised reflective users of language (Kitzhaber, 1990, p. 198). Authors such as Leonar; Pooley; Marckwart & Walcott; and Fries provided “landmark studies in current English usage implicitly supported the social basis of rhetorical discourse” (Berlin, 1987, p. 88). Berlin (1987) explains that, “While these individuals were committed to scientific and descriptive views of usage and grammar, their work insisted on the social basis of language and the need for English teachers to consider the importance of class and political contexts in teaching writing” (pp. 88-89). The idea of context was further advocated by Barnes, who claimed that, “Correctness or incorrectness in thought and usage is determined by the social context in which language is used, not by predetermined and fixed standards” (as qtd. in Berlin, 1987, p. 89). Barnes proposed that students should thus be taught a variety of strategies for using language in different contexts.
Despite the gold rush of language as a social construction, the textbooks with such new approaches did not seem to be very popular in that period, and the ideal of mechanical correctness persisted. Instead of these functional textbooks, the most popular textbook seemed to be Edwin Woolley’s *Handbook of Composition* where English grammar was treated as a series of prescriptive error-based rules. According to Connors (1997), the *Handbook* was so successful that “two years later, Woolley published *The Mechanics of Writing*, an expanded version with exercises” (Connors, 1997, p. 138). Other textbooks used the findings from structural linguistics on constructing English sentences. Harry Warfel, for instance, claimed that “composition teachers need to understand the system of English, a system characterized by the algebraic theory of functions, variables, and constraints” (as qtd. in Berlin, 1987, p. 113), and they must see sentences “as a sequence of functions that form predictable patterns, not as a sequence of words, and they must then teach ‘the sentence patterns and the way they are built up’” (p. 113). According to Berlin (1987), the primary purpose of the structural approach is “‘imitation for establishing habits,’ with a view to inculcating a knowledge of patterns—syntactical devices—before pushing for originality or stylistic variety” (p. 114). Although teachers did try this new, descriptive approach to grammar in their composition instruction, the enthusiasm did not last very long. Composition scholars insisted that the “job of the teacher of composition is *not* to describe language, but rather to teach his students how to *compose*” (Renoir, as qtd. in Connors, 1986, p. 21, original emphasis). The heated debate between advocates of the use of structural grammar (or any other grammar, for that matter) in college composition was apparently shut down in 1963, after the oft-quoted research by Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer (1963) concluded that:
In view of the widespread agreement of research studies based upon many types of students and teachers, the conclusion can be stated in strong and unqualified terms: the teaching of formal grammar has a negligible or, because it usually displaces some instruction and practice in actual composition, even a harmful effect on the improvement of writing. (p. 37)

1.2.3. Grammar in college composition from 1963 to today

The 1960s marked a line between the Harvard model of teaching writing that focused on adhering to writing standards and the Dartmouth model that introduced students’ freedom for self-expression and for finding their authentic voices through freewriting and teacher-student collaboration. These authentic voices brought in a variety of dialects from students’ home languages that did not adhere to the expectations of Standard English. Consequently, in 1974, the CCCC published a position statement on linguistically diverse students called “The Students’ Right to Their Own Language” (SRTOL). The document is still widely recognized for acknowledging the presence of linguistically diverse students in U.S. colleges, and it exposes the importance of discussing—and not judging—the various English dialects with students. At the same time, the document also acknowledges that the employability of students depends on their linguistic performance in Edited American English (EAE). The presence of students who were not versed in switching from home languages to EAE resulted in the birth of the basic writing movement, headed by scholars such as Shaughnessy (1977), Bartholomae (1980), and Rose (1989). The common trait that these scholars exposed was that basic writers were not less capable or less intelligent compared to more experienced writers, but that they have, in fact, created their own rules of writing based on blending their home and school dialects. While Shaughnessy (1977) focused primarily on how to support and motivate students in their
perception of and attention to error, the author also reminded us that our perceptions of error largely depend on our expectations of what writing growth means. Shaughnessy (1977) pointed out that these expectations are vaguely, if at all, defined or agreed upon, even though the writing improvement often depends on them (pp. 275-276). Bartholomae (1980) further explained that errors “are not necessarily ‘noise’ in the system, accidents of composing, or malfunctions in the language process” (p. 257). Instead, they signal what a specific writer is doing in a specific writing context, and a writing process that includes error analysis can help students do more than just correct errors—it helps them construct what they want to write through how they are writing.

While Shaughnessy (1977) and Bartholomae (1980) focused on perceptions and treatments of error, Rose (1989) dug deeper into the issues of inequality that basic writers experience by being labeled as such. As the author points out, “Class and culture erect boundaries that hinder our vision—blind us to the logic of error and the everpresent stirring of language—and encourage the designation of otherness, difference, deficiency” (Rose, 1989, p. 205). All three authors call for teachers to change their perceptions of basic writers as incapable of grasping the language of academia to that of students with literacies that are waiting to be discovered and expanded.

In its approach to error, the basic writing movement relied on the findings from the field of applied linguistics, utilizing approaches such as error analysis and sentence-combining exercises (an in-depth discussion of error treatment is provided in Chapter Two). At the same time, however, the applied linguistics field was going through its own turmoil. As Matsuda (2012) shows, the 1960s also brought a change in the teaching of English to ESL and L2 speakers by replacing the structural view of language, where the focus is on language structures and not on the social functions of language, with the functional view of language, where structures are tied to meaning and social functions (p. 151). These usage-based descriptive
grammars influenced new pedagogical approaches—proposed by scholars such as Ellis (2006); Azar and Hagen (2009); and Celce-Murcia, Freeman, and Williams (1999)—that focused on communicative situations. More specific to second language writing instruction, authors such as Hyland (2004) and Tardy (2009a) introduced the focus on genre as “a major guiding principle for the clustering of language resources, reflecting the emphasis on recurring communicative situations” (Matsuda, 2012, p. 152). Such new approaches to grammar and writing were stepping away from the traditional decontextualized grammar lessons and were instead proposing individualized feedback to students’ writing fluency issues. As Ellis (2006) explained, grammar instruction “involves any instructional technique that draws learners’ attention to some specific grammatical form in such a way that it helps them either to understand it metalinguistically and/or process it in comprehension and/or production so that they can internalize it” (p. 84). In other words, personalized attention (feedback) to specific forms in the context of writing helps students develop their metalinguistic awareness that in turn helps internalize language forms and their functions. Not all applied linguists, however, agreed with such progressive views of attention to grammar. For example, Krashen (1992) argued that L2 learners acquire the target language by simply being exposed to it through comprehensible input—through materials and messages are understandable, contextualized, modified, and/or manipulated in a way that is allowed to be processed linguistically and cognitively.

The arguments set forth by Krashen (1992) are reminiscent of the debates in the field of college composition that suggest simply exposing student writers to writing situations in which they will eventually pick up how language functions and how to improve their writing fluency. While in many cases such an approach may be good enough, it may not be helpful for the growing number of linguistically diverse students who struggle with expressing themselves
clearly, succinctly, and confidently. Hesse (as qtd. in Matsuda, 2012) explains this nicely: “I’ve looked at enough of their writing to agree that this isn’t just a case of obsessive profs going nuts over prepositions and articles; there are fluency and intelligibility issues for even an enlightened and charitable reader” (pp. 142-143). Hesse’s reference to fluency and intelligibility issues, however, could be problematic in a world where linguistic diversity, not homogeneity, is becoming the standard—whether in terms of the languages that students bring to our composition classrooms or in terms of the ever-changing English language.

1.2.4. Standard Language Ideologies

English has long been used around the world as a lingua franca—a language used “to communicate with the wider NNS [non-native speaker] world” (Pennycook, 2012, p. 77). Although the main reason for its large usage lies in historical issues of colonization, English has nevertheless developed a status of preferred language in many settings. However, the infiltration of English as a chosen method of communication among speakers of various languages was not unidirectional. In its encounters with these other languages, English was (and is) slowly being modified by them as well. Consequently, as Oxford & Jain (2008) explain, “The emergence and establishment of the many varieties of English, both international and intranational [created a] World of Englishes […]], marked by different ecological, cultural, linguistic, social, etc. characteristics” (p. 14). The authors summarize the attempts to classify the new Englishes by scholars such as Braj Kachru and Tom McArthur. For example, Kachru’s classification of English consists of three concentric circles depending on where and how English is used: the inner circle comprises “countries where native English speakers have settled down in large numbers” such as United Kingdom and the United States; the outer circle includes countries where English is used as a second language, such as India and Singapore; and the expanded
circle constitutes of countries where English is taught as a foreign language, such as Germany and China (Kachru, as paraphrased in Oxford & Jain, 2008, p. 5). On the other hand, McArthur classified the various Englishes in the form of a wheel with World Standard English (WSE) in the center and with regional standards around it (Oxford & Jain, 2008, p. 9). Both classifications, however, appear to be problematic. As Canagarajah (as qtd. in Oxford & Jain, 2008) points out, Kachru’s concentric circles “are leaking” due to reasons such as migration and technology (p. 6), while McArthur’s wheel does not include any countries in the WSE center, thus showing that there is no “universal English language, nor a World Standard English” (Oxford & Jain, 2008, p. 10). English is therefore not simply a lingua franca anymore; it is a language that is constantly being modified by its various localities.

Such expanded and diverse usage of English opens up questions about who the native speakers are. Pennycook (2012) states that, “A native speaker of a language is often assumed to be more fluent, or to have more intuitive ideas about a language, than their non-native counterparts” (p. 81). In the case of English, and more specifically in all its pluralized versions, one dilemma lies in choosing the version of English that should be taken as the referring point for fluency. Pennycook (2012) explains that “because English has become an international language, no one can claim to be a native speaker of the language” (p. 78). Even within national borders of Kachru’s inner circle countries, for example, the question of native English speakers remains a complex one. Aside from the different English varieties that exist in the United States (such as African American Vernacular English), Mangelsdorf (2010) points out that:

[M]any Generation 1.5 students have assimilated into the American popular culture and self-identify as native speakers. While their writing can contain grammatical markers commonly associated with so-called English as a Second Language students, English is
It appears, then, that the concept of native speakers does not depend so much on the fluency in a specific language, but on the ideologies behind what is considered the legitimate standard language.

According to Mangelsdorf (2010), standard language ideology is “the belief that language can be made uniform for the benefit of society. ‘Standard’ language is a social rather than a linguistic construct” (p. 116). The need for such a social construct may initially be born out of exigence for easier communication. However, this exigence often seems to result in creating and maintaining power relations, as it is clearly shown in Tardy’s (2009b) examples of the debate on the U.S. Language Policy when the US Senate declared that the immigrants must take “an English proficiency exam [because] if they don’t become proficient in English, they will never achieve their own individual value and will be hurting our country” (US Senate, as qtd. in Tardy, 2009b, p. 271). Mangelsdorf (2010) further explains that, “One tenet of a standard language ideology is that the boundaries drawn around idealized languages need to be protected from the contamination of other language practices” (p. 120). Such beliefs about language do not only “support linguistic containment,” but they also ignore “students’ lived languages” (Mangelsdorf, 2010, p. 121) that co-exist, interact with, and modify the idealized standard language.

Stemming from the ideology of an idealized standard language, Pennycook (2012) discusses the ideology of nativeness and explains that the term native speaker “suggests that we are born into languages, that our linguistic abilities are independent of class, access, and schooling” (Shuck, as qtd. in Pennycook, 2012, p. 82). It is obvious, however, that class, access, and schooling affect our language proficiency. In terms of a so-called standard language, both
Mangelsdorf (2010) and Pennycook (2012) agree that proficiency in standard norms is developed through education by stating that “one must go to school to learn one’s ‘native’ language” (Wiley and Lukes, as qtd. in Mangelsdorf, 2010, pp. 116-117) and that “the standard is supposedly attained through superior education” (Piller, as qtd. in Pennycook, 2012, p. 80). Therefore, the ideologies behind the definitions of native speakers are tightly connected to the standard language ideology and not to being born into a language.

Within the debate on native and non-native speakers, Pennycook (2012) exposes the notions of what knowing a language represents. The author states that the “tautological distinctions between competence and performance (if the language use fits the predefined norms, it is competence; if it fails to do so, it is a matter of performance) […] merely confirm the belief that native speakers use language in preconceived ways” (p. 82). The belief that native speakers, who are supposedly born into a language, are also competent in that language ignores such factors as “changes over time, so that one may be far less proficient in one’s native language than in languages learned subsequently” (Pennycook, 2012, p. 81), as well as factors such as language appearing in unexpected places and “what it is we need to know in these moments of language mobility to get by” (p. 75). Consequently, both Mangelsdorf (2010) and Pennycook (2012) warn against using labels such as native and non-native speaker or first and second language because they come with a set of assumptions about language competence; in addition, they “fail to describe the complexity of language use and also serve the ideological function of marking students according to their language practices” (Mangelsdorf, 2010, p. 113). Instead, Pennycook (2012) attempts to re-term the distinction between native and non-native speakers by using language competence itself as opposed to using the notion of being born into a language. He first elaborates the appropriateness of terms proficient, passable, legitimate, and speaking like a local
and concludes that these terms have leakages as well. For example, while the term proficiency entails competent and “drops the idea of ‘native-like’,” it runs “the danger of locating the ability in the individual rather than in the social domain,” and it also opens up the question on “what is one proficient in” (Pennycook, 2012, p. 86). The term passable entails “sufficient, adequate, tolerable, satisfactory [but is] patronizing to those learning a language” (p. 87). The term legitimate entails “suitable, appropriate, fitting, apt,” but it is still problematic because it is the social power that brings legitimacy (pp. 87-88). The term speaking like a local, according to Pennycook (2012), is “too tied to local aspirations” (p. 89). Since all these terms appear to be problematic, Pennycook (2012) proposes to use the term resourceful speaker as someone who has “available resources and [is] good at shifting between styles, discourses and genres” (p. 99). A competent speaker, then, is not necessarily a native speaker in terms of being born into a language, but a speaker who is able to draw on linguistic resources that allow navigating through expected and unexpected places.

One of these places, sometimes expected, sometimes unexpected, is the writing classroom with students and teachers of various types and levels of linguistic resourcefulness. Therefore, the field of Composition Studies needs to be aware of the complexities behind what it means to know a language, as well as of the assumptions behind terms such as native and non-native speaker. Although the field has come a long way in identifying the perils of standard language ideologies, the assumptions discussed so far clearly still affect both teachers and students. For example, the discriminatory practices that support hiring teachers who are considered native English speakers are still very present, despite the fact that it is impossible to define native English speakers in a world of pluralized Englishes. Similarly, by assuming that “a clear line of demarcation can be drawn between the languages that people speak” (Mangelsdorf,
2010, p. 113), we ignore the linguistic resourcefulness that students bring with them to our classrooms, thus hindering their ability to be effective users and creators of languages they can employ as mobile citizens of the world. After all, as Villanueva (1993) reminds us, “Rhetoric is the conscious use of language” (p. 76), and such conscious use does not entail merely adjusting our discourse to a specific audience. Instead, it means developing an awareness of how language ideals affect our preferences to belong to a certain class or race—preferences that ultimately discriminate against those who do not match our conditions.

1.3. Summary

The events that led Harvard to introduce entrance exams and the consequences of the scholarship that affected the love-hate relationship between rhetoric and grammar (and generally between the various approaches to teaching rhetoric and composition) help us make a much better sense of the shift from the current-traditional paradigm to the paradigm of the process movement 60-70 years later. Based on this brief historical overview of college composition, it may appear that the widespread discussion of language in the field of rhetoric and composition creates an agreement that language undeniably matters and should be addressed in college composition as a part of nurturing skillful writers. However, the discourses on language use in Composition Studies show that the discussion of language historically lacks specific elaborations of who is responsible for nurturing the linguistic skills of orators or writers. Consequently, it appears that, especially in post-secondary education, writers are expected to either already have those skills or develop them on their own by observing more experienced and sophisticated writers.

A review of authors from the beginning of U.S. freshman composition in the 1890s to the 1960s, when the process movement became widely accepted and implemented in composition
courses and programs, also shows that finding ways to teach composition has never been an easy task. The task involves much more than simply finding effective teaching methods. More importantly, it involves a deep understanding of the ideologies that have shaped the field historically, as well as an understanding of the ideologies in the current period of time. The present overview shows two extreme opposites: either for or against grammar instruction in college composition. However, the linguistic diversity in today’s U.S. colleges indicates that this cannot be an either/or question. Despite the aforementioned conclusion by Braddock et al., based on the ideologies of the process movement, writing fluency has remained a standard for grading students’ written products, and more importantly—for public criticism. On the other hand, despite the new findings on language and writing, the teaching of grammar, unfortunately, still reverts to the ideas of traditional grammar and of mechanical correctness. Kitzhaber (1990) claims that Wooley’s Handbook “set the tone for other texts, and in a sense, for composition instruction generally” (p. 199). As Kitzhaber (1990) elaborates:

It has been a powerful force in perpetuating that distorted view of the true nature and function of grammar that the over-prescriptive approach necessarily brings with it. It has encouraged an unreal perception of the writing process by exalting to the highest place what is, after all, only a subordinate part of composition: correctness in details. And finally, it has helped to entrench the view of writing as something that is done well if only it is done by rule. (p. 225)

The either/or ideologies preserve such distorted views, whether writing is seen as (post-) process or as product. Writing is both. The linguistic diversity in U.S. college composition classrooms shows that it is time to move beyond such dichotomous views of writing—beyond the “one size
fits all” mentality—and replace them with a panoptic and postmodern view, where critical inquiry of the product is a part of the writing process.

1.4. Research Questions

The present study hopes to contribute to such an inclusive postmodern approach to the teaching of writing by researching the forces that guide our teaching and responding practices. In order to contribute to the research on responding to student writing, I conducted a case study of writing teachers’ practices, philosophies, and preparation at a medium-sized research university in the U.S. southwest on the Mexico-U.S. border with a significant bilingual student population. To couple my findings with a national perspective, I also analyzed the guidelines and suggestions for teaching first-year composition provided by the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA), and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), as well as the most common textbooks used for college writing teacher preparation.

My first research question is: Which cultural, institutional, and other standards guide writing teacher preparation? This question is answered by analyzing: the position statements issued by CCCC, CWPA, and NCTE; the most common textbooks used for the preparation of college writing teachers; and the interviews of WPAs at the surveyed university. The analysis examines such factors as the best practices suggested by the field, the teacher preparation in responding strategies, their perceptions of grammatical error, and others. The results are discussed through the theoretical lens of Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998).

My second research question is: What types of responding practices do teachers implement when responding to writing fluency? In my investigation of teachers’ responding practices, I examine student drafts with teacher written comment in order to establish the types of
grammatical errors that teachers respond to. I also analyze the wording that teachers use in their comments with the purpose of establishing how teachers consider the rhetorical effects of errors and of their own comments.

My third research question is: \textit{How is responding to writing fluency shaped by the aforementioned cultural, institutional, and other standards?} In order to answer this question, I examine surveys and interviews conducted with participating teachers in order to illustrate their beliefs and intentions with regards to responding to student writing. I utilize the theoretical framework of \textit{Activity Theory} (Engeström, 1987, 2005) to illustrate the contradictions that arise between teachers’ responding intentions and their actual responding practices. I explain these contradictions through my findings on the expectations of the Composition Studies field as a community of practice.

Finally, I ask: \textit{How could responding to linguistically diverse students be improved based on the findings in the present study?} As Ferris (2011) pointed out, teachers may often not have adequate preparation or knowledge in responding to writing fluency; therefore, the purpose of this study is to contribute to the research on responding to student writing by investigating the factors that guide teachers’ practices when responding to error and by proposing how teacher-preparation programs can be enhanced in order to facilitate response to linguistically diverse students.
### 1.5. Key Terms

<p>| <strong>Action</strong> | As Yamagata-Lynch (2010) explains, goal-oriented actions are “temporary in nature and may be a step that subjects take in the process of participating in an object-oriented activity” (p. 21). In the present study, the goal-oriented actions are based on my analyses of the participants’ comments to student drafts. These analyses provide insight into what the participants are doing during the actual responding activity. |
| <strong>Activity</strong> | Leontiev (1974) defines object-oriented activity as “a system possessing structure, inner transformations, conversations, and development” and not a “totality of actions” (p. 10). The object-oriented activities in this study provided insight into what the participants think they are doing or want to be doing when responding to students, thus showing individual subjects’ ideals, motivations, socio-historical contexts, objectives, and desired outcomes of the responding activity. |
| <strong>Activity System</strong> | Engeström (1987) developed a unit of analysis that allows researchers to understand how human activity is affected by the collective context in which the activity takes place. The activity and the context are graphically represented by triangle diagrams representing a particular activity system that includes elements such as subject, tools, rules, community, and division of labor. |
| <strong>Arhetorical Comments</strong> | Comments that <strong>do not explain</strong> how and why a grammatical error affects the message, the audience, or the purpose of writing (e.g., it confuses the reader/audience, it affects the writer’s ethos negatively due to the expectations relating to Standard English, and so on). |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Bilingual, Translingual</th>
<th>Traditional views of bilingualism defined bilinguals as “two monolinguals in one person” (Baker, 2006, p. 10), who alternate the use of two separate languages. Garcia (2009) proposes that instead of looking at bilinguals through the lens of separate codes/languages, they should be observed through their “engaging in bilingual or multilingual discourse practices” (p. 44). Consequently, the author coined the term <em>translanguaging</em> as “multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds” (Garcia, 2009, p. 45).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitivist Paradigm</td>
<td>Focuses on writers’ cognitive decisions during the writing process; language and thinking are separate—language is developed from thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventions / Accuracy</td>
<td>Used interchangeably to refer to usage, mechanics, punctuation; error-free writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical-Pedagogy Paradigm</td>
<td>Focuses on how power dynamics affect writing classrooms; purpose of writing to empower students to take action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current-Traditional Paradigm</td>
<td>Focuses on the final product, grammar, spelling, syntax, and uniform style and arrangement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFL*</td>
<td>English as a Foreign Language: Learning English in addition to a first language in countries where English is not a primary language (such as China or France).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL*</td>
<td>English as a Second Language: Learning English in addition to a first language in countries where English is a primary language (such as Great Britain or USA).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressivist Paradigm</td>
<td>Focuses on the writing process as discovery and self-expression; language is a tool for personal expression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>Refers to the forms or structures that a language takes, including concepts such as parts of speech or sentence diagramming; typically refers to adhering to standard language conventions without considering the rhetorical effects of specific grammatical structures or errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1 and L2*</td>
<td>L1: The first language that a speaker has learned. L1 is not necessarily the language that the speaker is most comfortable or confident using. L2: Any languages that the speaker has learned in addition to L1.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Post-process Paradigm
Writing “cannot be taught” (Kent, 1993, p. 161)—we can only create an environment that motivates learning; writing is public; writing is interpretive; and writing is situated.

### Process Paradigm
Writing happens in stages; writing is private; writing should be organized.

### Rhetorical Comments
Comments that **do explain** how and why a grammatical error affects the message, the audience, or the purpose of writing (e.g., it confuses the reader/audience, it affects the writer’s ethos negatively due to the expectations relating to Standard English, and so on).

### Social-constructionist Paradigm
Focuses on how writing is affected by social, political, and cultural forces; language and mind are inseparable.

### Systemic Contradiction
The components of an activity system (tools, rules, etc.) may exhibit misalignments, thus showing inner contradictions or tensions that guide a particular activity (Engeström, 1987, 2005).

### Writing Fluency
Relates to the quality and clarity of the message that the writer is trying to get across; it is highly rhetorical because it considers how certain grammatical structures and styles help writers achieve particular rhetorical effects, instead of simply avoiding errors for the purpose of adhering to standard language conventions.

*The present study did not investigate students’ language acquisition histories or profiles; therefore, the term L2 will be used to refer to EFL, ESL, and L2 students, except when quoting or paraphrasing sources.*
Chapter Two: Literature Review on Responding to Students and to Writing Fluency

2.1. Responding to Student Writing

2.1.1. Seminal works and suggested responding practices.

The practice of responding to student writing has been extensively investigated with a variety of foci. The first publication to address and question the practices of responding to students was “Responding to Student Writing” by Odell (1973), published by the NCTE in *College Composition and Communication*. The author explained that the way a writer utilizes linguistic features (e.g., tense shift or fragments) is not simply a signal of whether this writer is making grammatical errors; instead, it is a signal of mental processes and of the writer's engagement in the topic. As an example, Odell (1973) showed how a writer’s verb usage “shifts from conditional to active” (p. 395) when the writer is more engaged in the topic. Odell (1973) concluded that “if we are to make genuinely useful responses to students’ writing, we need to devote a good deal of our effort to identifying mental processes implicit in their language and helping students add to and refine strategies they already possess” (p. 395). A teacher’s response, then, should consider where the student writer is coming from, as well as what the student’s intentions (whether conscious or subconscious) are when engaging in a topic. Despite Odell’s call for identifying students’ mental processes and intentions, the most famous early seminal works on responding to student writing by Brannon & Knoblauch (1982) and Sommers (1982) showed that teachers tend to appropriate student texts by using comments that divert students’ attention from what they intended to write about toward what the teacher is commenting on. As Brannon & Knoblauch (1982) pointed out, readers outside of a writing classroom typically read a text with a certain respect of the writer as an authority on the topic, while in a writing classroom this relationship shifts. In fact, the teacher becomes the authority and consequently takes control
over students’ texts, thus undervaluing “student efforts to communicate what they have to say in the way they wish to say it” (Brannon & Knoblauch, 1982, pp. 158-159). The teacher as a reader, then, is not guided by curiosity to read what the student writer wants to say, but by an expectation of what the student should or could say. Sommers (1982) further elaborated on this issue by presenting the observations of teachers’ responses to students. The author reported two central issues in teachers’ responding. The first issue was the appropriation of student texts, especially by identifying “errors in usage, diction, and style in a first draft” (Sommers, 1982, p. 150); while the second issue was “that most teachers’ comments are not text-specific and could be interchanged, rubber-stamped from text to text” (Sommers, 1982, p. 152). Both responding issues resulted in students revising their texts based on how the teacher wanted them to correct their writing, instead of revising what they wanted to say. To avoid such appropriation of students texts, both Brannon & Knoblauch (1982) and Sommers (1982) exposed the importance of how and when in the writing process teachers should respond to student writing without taking over students’ authority as writers. For example, Brannon & Knoblauch (1982) suggested individual conferences or peer-group collaboration to discuss students’ intentions and the actual effects of their writing (pp. 161-163). The authors explained that if “writers and readers can exchange information about intention and effect, they can negotiate ways to bring actual effect as closely in line with a desired intention as possible” (Brannon & Knoblauch, 1982, p. 162). In order to achieve such negotiation, Sommers (1982) exposed the importance of differentiating between early drafts and final drafts, where our response to early drafts should reflect our reactions as readers by “registering questions, reflecting befuddlement, and noting places where we are puzzled about the meaning of the text” (p. 155). Such response would motivate “revision
as discovery” (p. 156), where students learn how to develop their ideas and express them effectively instead of merely satisfying teachers’ expectations.

These seminal works were followed by years of rich and systematic research on responding to student writing. After just a few years, Anson (1989) collected the works from authors that contributed theoretical and practical views on responding, as well as results from specific case studies on how responding actually happens in the classroom. To illustrate a few examples, the theoretical views proposed arguments such as that teacher response is essential in developing student literacy (Bleich, in Anson, 1989, pp. 15-36) or that it should mirror the culture the teacher represents instead of simply evaluating student texts (Probst, in Anson, 1989, pp. 68-79). The practical views suggested that teachers should provide praise to student writing (Daiker, in Anson, 1989, pp. 103-113) and that they should teach students to reflect on and self-assess their own writing (Beach, in Anson, 1989, pp. 127-148; Fulwiler, in Anson, 1989, pp. 149-173; Thomas & Thomas, in Anson, 1989, pp. 114-126). Finally, the case studies in Anson’s (1989) collection contributed insights into the effectiveness of teachers’ response, showing that students revise differently depending on whether the response is from the teacher or a peer (Nystrand & Brand, in Anson, 1989, pp. 209-230) and that teachers’ responses show different perceptions and definitions of error (Wall & Hull, in Anson, 1989, pp. 261-292). By presenting such a diversified view of response, Anson’s (1989) collection clearly showed how complicated and complex the act of responding is.

It is necessary to mention that, after Anson, two other works were frequently connected to general discussions of response. The first one is A Sourcebook for Responding to Student Writing by Straub (1999), in which the author presented samples of how selected composition specialists respond to student writing. The second book is Assigning, Responding, Evaluating: A
Writing Teacher's Guide by White (2006), in which the author focused mainly on how to construct and deliver assignments, and on how to create and score grading rubrics, but not so much on responding itself. Both works are bestselling books on writing teacher preparation (see Table 4.2 in Chapter Four), so a detailed description of both is included in Chapter Four as a part of the analysis of teacher preparation books.

The complexities of response were additionally expanded by Fife & O’Neill (2001) who continued discussing the premise introduced by Brannon & Knoblauch and Sommers about the need to connect our comments to classroom activities. Fife & O’Neill (2001) contended that most of the scholarship on response “has neglected to account for the context of pedagogical practices” (p. 305) that teachers utilize in the classroom and that also influence how teachers respond, as well as how students perceive that feedback. The authors called for research in which “the pedagogical context of the comments must also be examined to interpret more effectively how commenting practices construct roles for teachers and students” (p. 311). In addition to an examination of pedagogical practices that influence response, Fife & O’Neill (2001) called for empirical studies that would broaden the notions of response as it has been examined in the field of composition studies, and include insights from other fields, such as Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), Writing in the Disciplines (WID), or K-12; the authors also noted that the majority of studies examined teachers’ written feedback, while the influence of feedback from other sources or in different formats have not been examined (pp. 314-315). Finally, Fife & O’Neill (2001) pointed out to the importance of involving students in conversations and self-reflections about their writing in order to “validate and encourage the development of the complex self-awareness that is so necessary for good writers” (p. 316). By providing a comprehensive overview of what studies on response have accomplished, Fife & O’Neill (2001)
showed important gaps that need to be filled in order to bring a deeper understanding of the complexities behind responding to student writing.

The above contributions to studies on response were followed by empirical research that filled a few of the gaps exposed by Fife & O’Neill (2001). These studies examined teachers’ responding practices and students’ perceptions of feedback, as well as teachers’ goals, beliefs, and preparation with regards to responding. The results from these studies are discussed below in their respective sections.

2.1.2. Teachers’ actual responding practices.

The previous section portrayed scholars’ suggestions for how teachers should respond to students, while this section presents studies on how teachers actually respond to students. For example, the article “Improving Our Responses to Student Writing: A Process-Oriented Approach” by Podis & Podis (1986) exposed the issue of teachers’ cryptic comments, such as “‘Awk!’ ‘Frag.’ ‘Unity?’ ‘Coh.’” (p. 90). The authors contended that such comments serve only one purpose—to evaluate a piece of writing, instead of looking at drafts’ weaknesses as “useful stages in the writer’s composing process” (p. 91). In order to acknowledge these stages, Podis & Podis (1986) proposed a few responding approaches that would have teachers consider the student writer’s intentions instead of merely exposing and evaluating the writing weaknesses. For example, students who use predominantly simple short sentences in a report may not be doing so due to a “limited verbal ability or inadequate analytic power” (p. 96), but because they believe that reporting should be as close as possible to the facts. Thus, Podis & Podis (1986) suggested explaining to such student writers “what the audience’s demands and expectations really are” (p. 96) instead of simply commenting that the sentence style is too short and choppy. Following the ideas from the research presented in the previous section, the suggestions by Podis
& Podis (1986) clearly support developing responding practices that would consider not only student writers’ intentions, but also their preconceived notions of writing, instead of merely evaluating surface writing features.

The focus on responding practices that consider writers’ intentions was put aside as scholars started exploring a variety of rhetorical features of response. In “Teachers’ Rhetorical Comments on Student Papers” Connors & Lunsford (1993) looked at how teachers’ responses considered the rhetorical concepts both in the types of comments they provided and in the areas they commented on. An interesting finding from this research was that teachers’ comments considered rhetorical aspects when providing positive feedback, while negative feedback was predominantly arhetorical (pp. 210-211). In addition, the study by Connors & Lunsford (1993) showed that negative feedback was much more frequent, and that only 6% of the responses considered the audience, while 11% of the responses considered the purpose of the essay (p. 212). The study also showed that teachers’ comments rarely followed the suggestions from the scholarship in the field. For example, the comments rarely reflected an awareness of the writing patterns—instead, the comments focused on errors as isolated occurrences (p.217). Perhaps the most important insight from the Connors & Lunsford (1993) study is that teachers seem “to have been trained to judge student writing by rhetorical formulae that are almost as restricting as mechanical formulae” (p. 218). Just like in the previous study by Podis & Podis (1986), teachers’ comments seemed to be limited to merely judging and evaluating student writing, instead of considering student writers’ intentions or helping student writers understand what our intentions as readers are.

The topic of teachers as readers is further elaborated in “Constructing the Perspective of Teacher-As-Reader: A Framework for Studying Response to Student Writing,” in which
Sperling (1994) conducted a study on how teachers’ comments mirror their role of readers. The author specifically inquired about how a teacher’s response reflects the perception of different students and different types of texts. Sperling (1994) considered factors such as teacher’s interpretation of students’ prior knowledge or teacher’s tendency to respond emotionally or analytically depending on the type of essay (pp. 181-182). The findings showed that the teacher’s responses differed significantly based on the preconceived notions of the student. For example, the teacher responded in a positive and supportive manner to students who were perceived as motivated writers and readers, while the students who were perceived as less motivated writers received more negative and unsympathetic comments (pp. 189-192). Teacher’s responses also differed based on the type of writing, showing a tendency towards more personal and peer-like comments to personal narratives and more instructor-like comments to literary analysis (pp. 193-199). One of the most important implications of Sperling’s (1994) study is that teachers should develop an awareness of how their responses differ “from student to student and text to text” (p. 201). By understanding the reasons that guide our responses, “both teachers and researchers may better understand how reader perspective is projected as students learn to write” (p. 202).

Teachers as readers were also presented in Twelve Readers Reading: Responding to College Student Writing, in which Straub & Lunsford (1995) presented samples of how experienced teachers and renowned scholars (Edward White, Anne Gere, Peter Elbow, and Chris Anson, among others) comment to student writing. The book provides various models of responding practices that teachers can choose from. It includes individual student samples that are commented on by different teachers who show that the same piece of writing can be responded to in different styles and with different foci. The focus of practically all samples is idea development, as well as organization in order to bring ideas together. Most comments in the
margin are in the form of questions—asking for clarification of ideas—while the end comments are typically positive and provide encouragement on how to revise the draft in terms of ideas. It is important to note, however, that the sample student drafts did not show any problematic patterns that would affect reader’s comprehension, thus providing only a limiting picture of how to comment to issues of writing fluency. An important contribution of Straub & Lunsford’s (1995) work is the detailed system for classifying responding styles of teachers. The authors provide a spectrum of six styles that range from authoritative (i.e., more controlling) to interactive (i.e., less controlling): authoritarian, directive, advisory, Socratic, dialectic, and analytical (pp. 191-195). The authors explain that the teachers who focus more on the finished product will be more controlling, while the teachers who focus more on the composing process will be less controlling and will instead “encourage the student to make her own writing choices” (p. 191). Straub & Lunsford’s (1995) work was expanded in A Sourcebook for Responding to Student Writing by Straub (1999) that is reviewed in detail in Chapter 4 as a part of the analysis of teacher preparation books.

The works reviewed so far are the most influential works on responding practices in the field of composition studies. However, these works approached the topic from a predominantly L1 perspective. Considering the linguistic diversity in current college composition classes, it is then necessary to step outside of the field and see how responding to writing has been discussed in L2 writing. A study by Ferris, Pezone, Tade, & Tinti (1997), titled “Teacher Commentary on Student Writing: Descriptions & Implications,” analyzed how teachers respond to first drafts of advanced ESL university students. The study investigated the content and the linguistic form of the comments, as well as the variation of comments across student ability levels, assignment types, and point during the semester. The findings showed that teachers’ comments were too
vague and generic because the field’s suggestions for responding were too vague and generic. For example, the authors explained that field’s advice to focus on content rather than form or to ask questions rather than providing imperatives “does not address the issues of how to determine the most important issues or problems in a student’s paper, of what goals to set in responding, or of what forms of commentary are most comprehensible to L2 readers/writers” (p. 176). The authors suggested having teachers and teacher preparation programs analyze their responding practices according to an analytic model such as the one used in the study in order to become more aware of the substance and the form of their comments. While the study by Ferris et al. (1997) provided insight into general teacher responding practices in ESL writing, additional studies from the L2 writing field are reviewed further below since they focus on responding from perspectives other than teachers’ responding practices.

2.1.3. Students’ perceptions and use of feedback/the effectiveness of feedback.

Most of the studies on response seem to have examined what students actually do with the feedback they receive from their writing teachers, mainly how students perceive teacher feedback and how they use that feedback in their revision. In “A Good Girl Writes like a Good Girl: Written Responses to Student Writing,” Sperling & Freedman (1987) discussed how a student continually misunderstood her teacher’s feedback. The authors followed one student whom they labeled as “a high achiever with a strong drive to be compliant” (p. 362) and one teacher who believed that writing well means developing a personal voice, and not necessarily being compliant. Such a contradiction between the student’s and the teacher’s values resulted in frustration on both sides: while the teacher’s intention was to motivate the student to find her own voice by thinking critically about her ideas, the student’s intention was to be a good student by following what the teacher said (pp. 359-362). The authors suggested that teachers should be
alert “to hidden constraints on their teaching, and perhaps demystify some of the persistence that students show in misconstruing teacher response” (p. 363)—especially the persistence of trying to please the teacher.

Further investigation of student perceptions of teachers’ comments was conducted by Straub (1997) in “Students’ Reactions to Teacher Comments: An Exploratory Study.” The author contributed insights into students’ perceptions by surveying 142 first-year composition students about which teacher comments they found most useful and why. The survey provided sample teacher comments, in which the author investigated students’ reactions to the focus, the specificity, and the mode of the comments. For focus, students were deciding whether they prefer comments on global matters, such as content and organization, or local matters, such as sentence structure. The results showed that students were interested in both types of comments more or less equally (p. 100); however, an interesting trait emerging from the data showed that students perceived global comments as “idiosyncratic preferences of the teacher,” while they perceived “judgments about grammar and sentence structure as matters of right and wrong” (p. 101). Such dichotomous perceptions of global and local comments show that students (and perhaps—or more than likely—teachers as well) were affected by a lack of critical language awareness that would show how writing fluency issues can often be a matter of idiosyncratic preferences as well. In terms of specificity, students preferred explicit and detailed comments that “pointed out problems and indicated ways to improve their writing” (p. 103), while they disliked comments that were controlling. Instead, they showed preference for comments that were in using an interactive mode, such as advice and explanations (p. 112). These preferences signal a need for teachers to be aware of what types of comments students prefer because comments that are well-perceived will more likely motivate more effective revision.
In order to broaden the view of response and bring insights from other disciplines, as Fife & O’Neill (2001) suggested, Beason (1993) conducted a study on how response and revision occur in writing across the curriculum (“Feedback and Revision in Writing across The Curriculum Classes”). While the author acknowledged the similarities between regular composition courses and WAC courses, he also noted the differences between the two: regular composition courses focus on writing itself, but WAC courses focus on both writing and content, thus providing less writing-focused instruction. With that in mind, Beason (1993) examined the goals of comments provided by teachers and peers, and it analyzed the extent of students’ revisions based on the received feedback in four WAC courses from the disciplines of business law, journalism, dental hygiene, and psychology. The results showed that the main teachers’ goals in commenting were to advise, praise, detect problems, and edit (pp. 405-406). As for student revisions, the results showed that teachers’ comments were addressed in revision more frequently than peer comments, but that an overall of 75% of comments were addressed in revision (pp. 406-407). The author compared the results to studies from the field of composition studies and established that the emerging patterns were very similar to those in composition studies. For example, teachers avoided appropriating students’ texts, but they often provided evaluative feedback instead of reader-response commentary, and they often focused on form as opposed to content (pp. 412-417). Beason (1993) attributed these similarities to the fact that “workshops for teachers of WAC courses are usually guided by research and practice established by composition teachers and scholars” (p. 397). Student revisions seemed to show similar results as in regular composition courses as well. As Beason (1993) stated, “both composition and WEC students tend to revise based upon feedback (especially when teachers offer it), but they avoid global revisions” (p. 417). An interesting addition to the discussion of response and revision is
the author’s questioning of whether global comments are necessarily superior to local comments. In fact, Beason (1993) stated that:

Revisions operating below the global level—despite the somewhat trivializing labels of *surface-level* or *micro-structure revisions*—are often cognitively demanding as well. It is, for instance, no small task for a writer to decide which of the thousands of combinations of words and sentences offer the most fitting syntax for a given audience. Perhaps researchers might investigate whether non-global revisions can indeed engage the writer in meaningful inquiry. (p. 416).

Although the author opened up an interesting question that challenged the field’s attitudes toward local comments and revision, research on how non-global revisions could engage writers in meaningful inquiry has yet to come.

While Beason’s (1993) study broadened the view of response by contributing insights from the WAC field, authors from the field of second-language learning additionally broadened this view. The landmark study on how theories on revision are applied in practice with L2 learners was presented by Ferris (1997) in “The Influence of Teacher Commentary on Student Revision.” The author examined the goals and the linguistic features of teachers’ comments, as well as the students’ revisions based on these comments. The work by Ferris (1997) is a landmark study because it contributed an analytic model for examining teacher comments based on how long a comment was in number of words, whether the comment was a question, request, statement, and so on, whether the comments tried to soften the response with hedging, and whether a comment was generic or specific to the text (p. 321). The results showed that teachers tend to use questions to ask for more information (31%) or to make a request (12%) much more than using statements or imperatives (11% and 7% respectively), while students revisions
showed the exact opposite tendency (pp. 323-326). In fact, students’ revisions showed very few positive changes based on questions, while 72% of imperative comments resulted in positive changes in revision (p. 325). Ferris (1997) attributed this tendency to the fact that “students are not always sure how to interpret teachers’ questions or how to incorporate successfully (in a revision) the information requested,” (p. 325). The author also found that longer and text-specific comments influenced the major changes in revision, while praise or hedging had no influence on revision. These findings clearly testify to the importance of responding to students thoughtfully and honestly as students do value and consider teachers’ comments when revising their writing.

The quality of teachers’ responding practices has mainly been investigated by assessing response through external entities (researchers’ examination, students’ perceptions), while a study by Montgomery & Baker (2007) also took into consideration teachers’ self-assessment of their responding practices. In “Teacher-Written Feedback: Student Perceptions, Teacher Self-Assessment, and Actual Teacher Performance,” the authors examined how ESL teacher self-assessment matches student perceptions, as well as how the self-assessment matches the actual responding practice. The results showed that “students perceived receiving more feedback than their teachers perceived giving” (p. 93), thus suggesting that students might be satisfied with less feedback than what teachers believe they should provide. An even more interesting discrepancy was between teachers’ self-assessment and their actual performance. Generally, teachers underestimated how much feedback they provided to local issues, while they overestimated the amount of feedback to global issues (pp. 91-92). Although the authors allowed for the possibility that teachers focused on local issues based on students’ needs as ESL learners, they also explained that teachers were surprised by the results as they believed that were actually focusing on global issues. This discrepancy shows that teachers’ beliefs are clearly influenced by the
scholarship on response, which suggests focusing on global issues, while their practices differ, thus showing that teachers are not fully aware of their responding practices.

The studies so far investigated response to L1 writers separately from L2 writers, while newer studies considered both types of students together. In “Teacher-Written Commentary in College Writing Composition: How Does It Impact Student Revisions?” Treglia (2009) conducted one of the first studies on response in a linguistically diverse environment of first-year composition. Similarly to others studies in this section, Treglia (2006) examined how teachers’ comments affected students’ revisions. The author followed the aforementioned analytical model set up by Ferris (1997), but focused predominantly on whether hedging had a different effect on revision by L1 students compared to L2 students. Most of the results in Treglia’s (2006) study confirmed the results in Ferris (1997), showing that teachers tend to use questions instead of imperatives and that students revise hedged and non-hedged comments in the same amount of occurrences (pp. 73-77). Although hedging did not affect the amount of revision, Treglia (2006) reported that students “revealed that mitigation plays a critical role as a ‘face-saving’ technique and as a tool to engage students to take responsibility for their writing” thus showing that “affective needs of the students should also be taken in consideration” (p. 83). The study also found that students had poor revisions of those parts that required reconsidering the logic of their arguments as it demanded “challenging analytical skills” (p. 78). The author suggested addressing such challenging issues in class by providing specific guidance and examples, which supports the premises set forth by Brannon & Knoblauch (1982), Fife & O’Neill (2001), Sommers (1982), and others on connecting and supporting response practices with classroom practices.
Another study that replicated Ferris’s (1997) landmark work is “Rhetoric of Teacher Comments on Student Writing” by Martin (2011). As opposed to Ferris (1997), who focused on L2 students, and Treglia (2006), who focused on a mixture of L1 and L2 students, Martin (2011) investigated teachers’ comments and students’ revisions in an L1 setting. Using the analytic model from Ferris (1997), Martin also examined teacher comments based on how long a comment was in number of words, whether the comment was a question, request, statement, and so on, whether the comments tried to soften the response with hedging, and whether a comment was generic or specific to the text. The results were quite different from the two previous studies as they showed much fewer comments in the form of questions to ask for more information (2.1% as opposed to 31% in Ferris (1997) and 20.4% in Treglia (2006)), while statements and imperatives were used more or less equally (p. 21). Another difference appeared in the focus of the response, where Martin (2009) found that the most common focus of the comments were grammatical issues (47.9% as opposed to 18% in Ferris (1997) and 20.7% in Treglia (2006)). Students’ revisions in Martin’s (2011) study seemed to show similar opposite findings: while students in Ferris (1997) and Treglia (2006) revised mainly imperative comments, students in Martin (2011) revised mainly comments in the form of questions (p. 22). Although the author acknowledged that these differences could be due to a different student population (L1 instead of L2 students), Martin (2001) suggested that the main reason behind these differences could be that “thirteen years separate this study from Ferris’s may suggest as well a generational change in teacher commenting and pedagogical approach” (p. 27). While the generational change might have an important impact on how teachers respond, it is especially interesting to note that comments in the form of questions were so few when the scholarship on response continuously advocates for using questions instead of statements and imperatives.
2.1.4. Teachers’ goals and beliefs about responding.

The aforementioned study by Montgomery & Baker (2007) started a conversation about teachers’ view of their own responding, but the authors still focused mainly on how these beliefs compare to students’ perceptions. On the other hand, the following studies examine teachers’ goals and beliefs more in depth. In “Teachers' Goals and Methods of Responding to Student Writing,” Moxley (1992) offered the results from a survey in which 419 teachers across the U.S. responded to questions about their responding methods, goals, and beliefs. The author found that “98% of the teachers believe that their responses should promote learning and that 80% of them attempt to be coaches rather than judges,” (p. 19)—two traits that go hand in hand with the scholarship at that time (and today as well) about avoiding response as judgment and instead responding as a reader. Moxley (1992) also reported that the majority of the surveyed teachers believed they respond to global issues, such as content and logic, thus contradicting “the view of the stereotypical English instructor as a reader who cares more-about proper grammar and usage than about the substance of an essay” (p. 20). The author’s findings seem to show very similar beliefs as the ones found by Montgomery & Baker (2007) 15 years later; however as other studies have shown, teachers’ beliefs about responding often contradict with their actual responding practices.

An attempt to show these contradictions was presented in “Teachers’ and Students’ Beliefs about Responding to ESL Writing: A Case Study” by Diab (2005). The author recorded think-aloud protocols of an ESL teacher during the responding activities in order to understand the decision-making process behind teacher’s responses. In addition, the teacher was interviewed about responding beliefs and preferences. Both the think-aloud protocols and the interview revealed that the teacher was mainly torn apart when responding to grammatical issues, which
were also the main focus of the response. As Diab (2005) reported, the teacher thought “that such [grammar] correction should be avoided, but she also seems to believe that grammatical errors should at least be pointed out to the student, if not corrected” (p. 33). At the same time, the teacher seemed to believe “that although error correction probably does not improve students’ writing, it should nevertheless be provided because students expect it” (p. 34). In fact, Diab (2005) interviewed students as well, and they confirmed the teacher’s assumptions about their expectations with regards to grammar correction. As Diab (2005) additionally reported, the teacher did not seem to encounter similar confusions with regards to global issues as she believed that “such feedback to content is essential” (p. 34). These responses clearly show how teachers’ can be confused by the contradictions between the research (that claims students do not benefit from attention to grammatical issues) and the practice (that expects grammatically sound products).

Additional research on teachers’ beliefs about feedback has been conducted predominantly in EFL settings (Lee, 2008; Min, 2013; Schulz, 2001), while very little research has been conducted in the U.S. college composition setting. Almost ten years later, Ferris (2014) conducted a study that continued the conversations started by Diab (2005), Montgomery & Baker (2007), and Moxley (1992). In “Responding to Student Writing: Teachers’ Philosophies and Practices,” Ferris (2014) conducted a study of what teachers believe they do and what they actually do when responding to student writing. The author utilized surveys and interviews to investigate teachers’ beliefs, while the actual practices were established by analyzing teachers’ written comments to students’ drafts. An important contribution in this study was that Ferris (2014) included peer-review comments and teacher-student conferences, in addition to teachers’ written feedback. As opposed to the results in Montgomery & Baker (2007), Ferris (2014) found
that teachers’ “commenting practices matched what they had said on the surveys and in their interviews: they mixed feedback on content and language; they used both marginal and end notes; and they provided suggestions for revision rather than simply telling students what was wrong with their papers” (p. 20). However, while there seemed to be a matching consensus between teachers’ beliefs and practices in terms of general responding approaches and when responding to global issues, the study showed discrepancies between beliefs and practices when responding to local issues. As Ferris (2014) explained, teachers believed that they were responding to local issues by modeling clarity and marking patterns of errors, but their practices showed that they used mainly indirect correction by underlining or circling errors (pp. 16-20). These results seem to signal similar tendencies as the previous studies showed—teachers seem to be confused or uncertain about how to approach responding to error and writing fluency. The reasons for such uncertainties can perhaps be found in how teachers have been prepared to respond to student writing.

2.1.5. Teachers’ knowledge and preparation.

Unfortunately, only one source so far provided insight into how teachers have been prepared to respond to students. The study by Ferris, Brown, Liu, & Stine (2011), titled “Responding to L2 Students in College Writing Classes: Teacher Perspectives,” examined writing teachers from a mixed L1 and L2 environment according to their preparation, experience, beliefs, and practices with regards to responding. As the authors explained, “what is unique about this study compared with other recent L2 studies is that it includes teacher informants who work with L2 writers but who are not trained L2 specialists, and they do not primarily teach specialized or designated L2 writing courses” (p. 212). After analyzing the surveys, interviews, and responding practices, the authors established four emerging categories of teachers: those
who are unaware of L2 students’ needs, those who focused primarily on L2 writers’ errors, those
who were unsure of how to help L2 writers, and those who were responsive to L2 writers’ needs
(pp. 219-222). The authors also found that the majority of participating teachers “have not had
any substantive formal training in working with L2 writers” (p. 223)—perhaps a reason why
their feedback to L2 writers, as well as their attitudes to feedback, showed very different
tendencies to responding practices. For example, as Ferris et al. (2011) explained, certain
teachers “focused more intensively and directly on grammar or language issues, others said
that they simply instructed their L2 students to go elsewhere for extra help, and still others
claimed to provide extra attention, assistance, and encouragement to their L2 writers through
their feedback” (p. 223). Although this study did not investigate the effectiveness of such
diversified approaches to feedback, it is evident that “L2 students in college writing courses may
have dramatically different experiences from one another (and from their monolingual English
speaking classmates), depending on the classroom instructor’s attitude and approach toward L2
writers” (p. 223). Based on the results in this study, the authors warn against assumptions that
teachers will know how to “adjust their strategies to respond more effectively to their L2 student
writers” (p. 225). In place of such assumptions, Ferris et al. (2011) suggest that teachers take
courses in grammar or linguistics and learn more about language acquisition; the authors also
propose that writing programs provide ample opportunities for teachers to develop an awareness
of L2 writers’ needs; and finally, the authors recommend that “professionals in writing
programs—administrators, classroom instructors, writing center personnel—share information
about all aspects of working with L2 student writers, including response strategies” (pp. 225-
226). This invaluable contribution by Ferris et al. (2011), however, brings insights from the field
of L2 composition that has often been considered separate from mainstream college composition
studies, and it is questionable whether it has found its way into composition studies—in fact, the separation between L1 and L2 composition seems to still be quite present.

The majority of the studies so far examined responding to student writing in more general terms of how teachers respond and how students react to response. Since the present study focuses on writing fluency specifically, the following section will review in more detail the literature on perception and responding to error.

2.2. Perception of Grammatical Error

Error in writing typically refers to breaking grammatical rules of a language, often seen as isolated occurrences based on a lack of knowledge of that language. However, the pioneering work on error by Shaughnessy (1977) brought attention to two main premises: errors in student writing are not a sign of ignorance, and errors point to patterns that happen for reasons deeper than not mastering a rule. As Shaughnessy (1977) stated, “Young men and women who have spoken years of sentences cannot be said to be ignorant of sentences” (p. 72). The author suggested that these young writers have not been exposed to writing in academic situations—writing that demands internalizing complex “language patterns characteristic of written English” and recognizing the “attitude toward himself [the writer] within an academic setting” (p. 73, original emphasis). In order to accomplish such internalization and awareness, the author exposed the importance of “a writing class to make writing more than an exercise, for only as a writer, rather than an exerciser, can a student develop the verbal responsiveness to his own thoughts and to the demands of his reader” (p. 89). As writers, then, students need to develop an awareness of their writing processes, habits, and attitudes that affect what, how, and why they write; in turn, this awareness creates a more lasting impact on developing complex sentences that
follow the patterns of written English since the purpose of writing is no longer to create clean
papers, but to express their thoughts clearly. As Shaughnessy (1977) added:

To extend considerations of syntax over large numbers of predictions, to distinguish
between subordinate and coordinate relationships, to ponder over syntactic options is to
be engaged in thinking at a level of abstraction and with a degree of deliberation that is
certain to affect not only a students’ writing but his thinking as well. (p. 89)

In order to motivate students to engage in such thinking and writing, Shaughnessy (1977)
proposed an alternative to the traditional error correction by suggesting to give students the
power to find patterns in their writing and thus to learn from their own mistakes. However, the
author did not suggest simply asking students to hunt for their error patterns since they will
rarely be motivated to do so in a productive way. Instead, Shaughnessy (1977) exposed the
importance of discussing if and why these patterns are problematic, how they relate to different
discourse communities that writers belong to, and how students can deconstruct their sentences
in order to observe and generate “their own grammatical formulations” (pp. 125-128). The
author provided extensive examples for teachers to include in their approach to error treatment in
the areas of punctuation, syntax, spelling, and vocabulary. While these approaches may appear to
be limited to proofreading instead of including full-fledged revision, they were an important
contribution at a time (and perhaps still today) when revision is often limited to global concerns.

As an example of how composition teachers could approach error in composition
classrooms, Kroll & Schafer (1978) proposed to implement the method of error-analysis that is
typically used in ESL classrooms. The authors explained that this method is based on process
pedagogy, and it treats errors as “windows to the mind” that allow the teacher to “identify the
cognitive strategies the learner uses to process information” (p. 243). Hence, instead of teaching
dry grammar rules, teachers should try to understand and explain to students why an error occurred; once the students understand their errors, they can come up with new strategies to change the usage. As Kroll & Schafer (1978) proposed, the error-analysis approach in composition classrooms could be adopted by keeping a record of errors in order to see the error patterns, by providing individualized instruction (conferences, etc.), and by dealing with common errors in class through discussion and students’ own error investigation. Bartholomae (1980) further explained that errors “are not necessarily ‘noise’ in the system, accidents of composing, or malfunctions in the language process” (p. 257). Instead, they signal what a specific writer is doing in a specific writing context, and thus students should analyze their own errors as “studying their own writing puts students in a position to see themselves as language users, rather than as victims of a language that uses them” (p. 258). However, Bartholomae (1980) moved beyond recognizing patterns of errors and proposed that error analysis “begins with the double perspective of text and reconstructed text and seeks to explain the difference between the two on the basis of whatever can be inferred about the meaning of the text and the process of creating it” (p. 265). The approaches proposed by Bartholomae (1980) and Kroll & Schafer (1978) seem to suggest that error analysis should be a part of the writing process that helps students do more than just correct errors—it helps them construct what they want to write through how they are writing.

Nevertheless, mechanical correctness is often addressed at the end of the writing process, mainly as polishing surface errors before turning in the final product. After all, it is the final product that ultimately matters in the world outside of the classroom. As Krauthamer (1999) put it, “spelling, verb forms, or diction are the target of criticism” by the public (p. 119); in addition, the author posited that “usage errors are […] objective aspects of writing” (p. 120), as opposed to
more subjective aspects of style and organization. However, as Hairston (1981), Horner (1992), Williams (1981), and others pointed out, errors in writing can be perceived differently by different readers in different situations. In fact, Williams (1981) explained that there is a “great variation in our definition of error and in our emotional investment in defining and condemning error” (p. 155). The author provided the example of reading freshman essays with the purpose of hunting down usage errors that would most likely not be spotted if the same texts were read in a different context. Williams (1981) suggested that, instead of defining errors according to a grammar handbook, they need to be defined based on which violations of usage readers notice and observe. To add to the discussion, Hairston (1981) wittily wrote that “not all errors are created equal” in the eyes of nonacademic readers, who frequently “complain that their employees cannot spell or punctuate and that much of the writing they see by professionals is semi-literate” (p. 794). The author dug deeper into this complaint and investigated which errors actually bothered nonacademic audiences, such as business executives, lawyers, realtors, and others. Hairston (1981) found that women were significantly more bothered by punctuation errors than men. Both groups, on the other hand, equally disapproved of errors that the author called “status markers,” such as non-standard verb forms (e.g., “we was” instead of “we were”), double negatives, and using objective pronouns at the beginning of the sentence; both groups also highly disapproved of sentence fragments and run on sentences, while only a few were bothered by issues such as “using a singular verb after ‘data’” (pp. 796-797). Even more bothersome than these surface errors, as Hairston (1981) reports, was lack of clarity and wordiness. The author added that, although these readers might not have been as bothered by similar errors when reading magazines, “the kind of writing about which we are most intolerant is that which comes across our desks asking us for something” (p. 799). While it comes as no
surprise that potential employers or grant givers would be bothered by errors in applicants’ writing, the perception of error in the field of composition studies seemed to remain the same regardless of Hairston’s portrayal of real-world readers. Roughly twenty years later, Gray & Heuser (2003) examined if the expectations of nonacademic readers have changed. The authors found that the readers were not as bothered by certain types of errors anymore—errors such as double negatives and object pronouns used as subjects—while errors such as fragments and nonstandard verb forms kept their bothersome status (p. 58). Gray & Heuser (2003) concluded that their data pointed to a high dialect bias since the most bothersome errors originated in the differences between dialects and Edited American English, especially when they appeared in business communication genres. Based on these findings, the authors suggested developing students’ awareness of how different dialects and registers are perceived in different environments and situations, but in order to develop such awareness, teachers first need to develop students’ metalinguistic repertoire that would allow them to recognize and discuss the “arbitrariness of usage rules” (p. 62). The impact of error in nonacademic environments was also studied by Beason (2001), who questioned whether nonacademic readers react to error only in those instances when they interfere with understanding a message—a claim that a few composition scholars proposed in their discussion of error. Beason (2001) surveyed fourteen participants, ranging from vice presidents of corporations to real estate brokers, who read and wrote business documents on a daily basis. While the reactions to error in this study did not differ significantly from Gray & Heuser (2003) and Hairston (1981), the author expanded the discussion by also interviewing the participants about the reasons why certain errors bothered them. Beason (2001) found that the readers did not address the gravity of errors “by discussing their confusion as readers, but by commenting on the image the error creates of the writer” (p. 55).
The author summarized the readers’ perceptions the writers into three categories: writer as a writer, writer as a business person, and writer as a representative. For example, in perceiving writers as writers, the business readers distinguished between: hasty writers, who are typically pressured by time constraints; careless writers, who are considered lazy and sloppy; uncaring writers, who are detached from the readers’ expectations; and uninformed writers, who are not aware of an error (pp. 49-52). Beason (2001) added that, while the readers were aware of issues such as time constraints or not being knowledgeable, they would nevertheless not be forgiving of such errors. These errors became even more relevant when the readers thought of the writers as business persons or as representatives. The author explains that, while students and writing teachers might perceive certain errors as minor, most participants in the study “recounted occasions when errors had detrimental consequences [such as] an incident in which a patient was given twice the normal dosage of a complex medication because of written instructions containing a misplaced modifier and garbled syntax” (p. 59). Based on the studies by Beason (2001), Gray & Heuser (2003), and Hairston (1981), the awareness of usage rules would, without a doubt, contribute to students’ ability to use the most appropriate rules to their advantage in a variety of rhetorical situations that require a variety of persuasive approaches.

As opposed to viewing usage through its arbitrariness, Connors (1985) claimed that English composition was frequently seen as “enforcement of standards of mechanical and grammatical correctness” (p. 61) and not the art of persuasion. In his examination of the cultural and pedagogical forces that created the obsession with error hunt in composition classrooms, Connors (1985) stated that the last decades of the previous century showed a divide between composition theorists as the “proponents of writing as discovery and communication” and traditionalists as “the proponents of writing as vocational skill” (p. 70). Connors (1985)
concluded that composition had to find a “balance between formal and rhetorical considerations” in writing instruction, explaining that grammar helps “students overcome their own unintentional sabotage of the process of communicating their thoughts” (p. 71). Communicating our thoughts is less affected by unintentional errors when we are speaking—in fact, Raimes (1991) stated that “error correction in the middle of a conversation is intrusive. It cuts across real communication; it negates the point the speaker wants to make” (p. 55). On the other hand, unintentional error in writing runs the risk of achieving the exact opposite—it can interfere with the point the writer wants to make. As Raimes (1991) pointed out, “Peter Elbow (1985) has said that writing is ‘the ideal medium for getting it wrong’ (p. 286). It’s also the ideal situation to learn to get it right” (p. 55)—because the writer has the time to make errors and correct them. The author extended the perception of error to the perception of writers themselves:

If we don’t deal with errors, will they become fossilized, that is, permanently engraved in the learner’s language repertoire? Or will someone suspect we don’t recognize the errors? Will we be perceived as lazy, not doing our job? None of these are desirable outcomes and add to the teacher’s concerns about how to handle errors. (p. 56)

In other words, the perception of error cannot and should not be separated from the writer since it is the writer—and in extension the writing teacher—who is ultimately being judged based on those errors. Raimes (1991) further elaborated on the inherent relationship between the error and the writer by exposing the importance of understanding that errors are not discreet and random occurrences in writing; instead, they originate in writers’ attempts to apply the learned rules of a language to novel writing situations (pp. 62-63). The author suggests that:

Asking students to tell us where they think their errors come from provides us with information about their first language transfer, their application of interlanguage rules,
their interpretation of our teaching, and their use of communication strategies. It also gives us useful feedback on which errors our students can recognize and which ones they can’t. (p. 63).

Recognizing the patterns and the origins of errors is reminiscent of Shaughnessy (1977), who also reminded us that errors should not be looked at in isolation as they depend on our larger perceptions of writing.

The broader perceptions of writing and error were complicated by Horner (1992), who claimed that the discussions of error are dichotomous, and thus flawed, because they view errors as either social or cognitive: while the former approaches errors based on their social implications, the latter views errors based on their production and correction by an individual (pp. 172-173). The author contended that errors are social not only in their implications, but also in their production and correction. Horner (1992) offered three examples to illustrate the sociality of error production: errors as social achievement, errors as linguistic confusion, and errors as cultural difference. The author explained that errors vary based on “what counts as an ‘error’ in some given social context” (p. 174); however, in a classroom setting, it is the teacher who defines what is perceived as an error in different social contexts. For Horner (1992), the power relationship between teachers and students affects the sense of social achievement in the student based on the production and correction of errors (pp. 174-176). Error production also shows its sociality through what Horner (1992) called the “linguistic confusion,” which assumes that:

The conventions constituting standard written English are largely fixed and that the social order which has determined the appropriateness or nonappropriateness of certain conventions is largely fixed. The language of privilege is settled, and students must, if they are to have access to privilege, learn it. (p. 177)
Finally, Horner (1992) illustrated the sociality of error production through the lens of “cultural difference,” where students do not simply mature as writers, but they switch “from an ‘oral’ to a ‘literate’ culture, to exchange the language of home and family […] for the language of the academy […]” (p. 184). To avoid perpetuating the relationships of power through treating errors in terms of social achievement and acculturation or as fixed entities that need to be mastered, Horner (1992) proposed teaching editing as negotiation, where students negotiate, not only with their teachers, but “with readers about error in their writing” (p. 188), about how conventions shift and are “renegotiated throughout history and in each act of writing” (p. 182), and about “what he [the writer] thinks they [the readers] might want, what he's willing to give, and what he’s looking for in return” (p. 196). In short, Horner (1992) seems to suggest that students need to be given the power over their writing, not merely by having the freedom to express their ideas, but by having the freedom to choose how they will express those ideas—these choices, however, should reflect an awareness of readers’ expectations and of conscious rule-breaking, instead of being unintentional errors.

The aforementioned approaches to error treatment do not simply teach how to use conventions or how to handle complex sentence structures to avoid public criticism; more importantly, the awareness of these grammatical choices allows writers to play with rhetorical effects. Connors (1985) mentioned that “[a]ny question of mechanics is also a rhetorical question” (p. 71), while Williams (1981) compared grammar and usage errors to errors of social behavior and proposes to “shift our attention from error treated as an isolated item on the page, to error perceived as a flawed verbal transaction between a writer and a reader” (p. 153). The notion of treating error as a misunderstanding in context and not as a broken rule in isolation is further explored by Kolln (2003) within the concept of rhetorical grammar. The author explained that,
“Understanding rhetorical grammar […] means understanding the grammatical choices available to you when you write and the rhetorical effects those choices will have on your reader” (p. 3). Micciche (2004) expanded the concept of rhetorical grammar by asserting that teaching grammar is teaching thinking; according to the author, the various grammatical structures affect the “conceptual ability to envision relationships between ideas,” as well as “relationships between writers and the world around them” (p. 719). Similarly, Horner, Lu, Royster, & Trimbur (2011)—whose work proposed the translingual alternative to the traditional writing instruction that neglects the multilingual nature of U.S. classrooms—contended that linguistic heterogeneity is “a resource for producing meaning in writing, speaking, reading, and listening” (p. 303). The authors call the notion of Standard Written English a “bankrupt concept,” explaining that written English, just like spoken English, “intermingle[s] with other varieties of English and other languages” (p. 305). The translingual manifesto, as proposed by Horner, Lu, Royster, & Trimbur (2011), calls for:

(1) honoring the power of all language users to shape language to specific ends; (2) recognizing the linguistic heterogeneity of all users of language both within the United States and globally; and (3) directly confronting English monolingualist expectations by researching and teaching how writers can work with and against, not simply within, those expectations. (p. 305)

Similar to Horner’s (1992) argument about negotiating which conventions to follow in order to best express their ideas, the translingual approach to writing instruction considers how different languages and dialects interact and affect each other, instead of seeing language as a fixed entity that can be mastered by adhering to its unchangeable rules.
This negotiation between writers and the world around them is also affected by larger communities that students and teachers belong to. As Myhill, Jones, Lines, & Watson (2012) claimed, teachers and environment are also a part of how error is perceived in context. The authors challenged previous research that infers a negative correlation between grammar instruction and writing. Myhill et al. (2012) stated that the research ignores the “complex social, linguistic, and cognitive relationships that shape learning about writing,” as well as teachers' attitudes toward error or teachers’ ‘linguistic and pedagogic subject knowledge’ (p. 141). Consequently, the study conducted by MyHill et al. (2012) investigated whether teaching grammar in context improves writing. The results showed that explicitness, discussion, and playful experimentation positively affected the metalinguistic knowledge, which is a subset of metacognitive knowledge that plays a role in every stage of the writing process. In fact, students’ ability to understand and discuss syntactic choices helped them meet rhetorical goals. The results also showed that teachers’ linguistic subject knowledge (LSK) played a significant factor in the success. According to Myhill et al. (2012), the lack of LSK caused lack of confidence for teaching language. The authors also noted that LSK is more than simply the ability to use appropriate grammatical terminology; it is also the ability to explain grammatical concepts and to know when to draw attention to error.

2.3. Responding to Grammatical Error / Writing Fluency

The way teachers draw attention to error has been studied by scholars who investigated what types of errors teachers recognize in student writing (for example, Greenbaum & Taylor, 1981; Connors & Lunsford, 1988; Lunsford & Lunsford, 2008); how response to error depends on social constructions (for example, Anson, 2000; Beason, 2001; Ferris, 2011); and how teachers’ knowledge and philosophies affect responding to error (for example, Ferris, 2014; Wall
In addition, scholars such as Sommers (1982) and Ferris (2007, 2011, 2014) brought up the importance of classroom practices that reinforce teachers’ feedback. In fact, Sommers (1982) stated that, “The key to successful commenting is to have what is said in the comments and what is done in the classroom mutually reinforce and enrich each other” (p. 155). Similarly, Ferris (2007) suggested that teachers need to ensure students’ understanding of their responses by follow-up practices such as evaluating their own comments according to a scheme and giving students time to ask for clarification and submit a “revise-and-resubmit” memo.

While these studies looked at what teachers respond to and how they respond to error, they did not investigate whether response to error was effective or not. In fact, the infamous report by Braddock et al. (1963) seemed to have satisfied the composition scholars with its conclusion that addressing grammar in writing instruction is futile. After Braddock et al. (1963), the studies that did address this topic, came to similar conclusions; however, they investigated grammar instruction methods that were still reminiscent of the current-traditional approaches in L1 settings (for example, Bennet, 1976; Elley, Barham, Lamb, & Wyllie, 1976; O’Hare, 1973), or they were conducted in L2 settings (for example, Krashen, 1992; VanPatten, 1988). Aside from the fact that they were conducted almost 25 years ago, they did not consider grammar instruction rhetorically, and they did not focus specifically on response. One author that did address response to error was Truscott (1996), who claimed that “grammar correction has no place in writing courses and should be abandoned” (p. 328). The author, however, merely reviewed the studies that, as I mentioned earlier, investigated response based on old-school approaches to grammar and language in general. The conclusions set forth by Truscott (1996) were criticized by Ferris (1999), who argued that simply discarding grammar correction is not a solution, considering that “students’ errors are troublesome” and that “responding effectively to students’
grammatical and lexical problems is a challenging endeavor fraught with uncertainty about its long-term effectiveness” (p. 1). Ferris (1999) pointed out to a few limitations in the arguments posed by Truscott (1996)—such as vague definitions of grammar correction and inconsistency in the reviewed studies—but these limitations were later countered and refused by Truscott (1999). Both authors agreed that further research was necessary.

One project that continued such research was conducted by Ferris & Roberts (2001), who investigated how explicit error feedback should be in order to be effective for L2 students. The authors used three types of feedback: code-marking (such as V for verb or SS for sentence structure), underlining without labeling, and no feedback at all. The authors found that code-marking and underlining had significantly higher effect in editing than no feedback, although there was not a significant difference between the two types of feedback. While these results clearly show that feedback can be effective (as opposed to Truscott, 1996), the study still relies on outdated methods of responding (such as coding), instead of considering the rhetorical effects of errors. Newer studies suggest error feedback that considers students’ home languages—a consideration that calls for teachers to develop an understanding of the basic grammatical rules behind these home languages in order to understand how they are reflected in students’ writing in the dominant English variety. As an example, Christensen (2003) proposed for teachers to create “study groups to analyze the patterns of errors their students bring to class” (p. 9). Teachers in these study groups would help each other become aware of the rules that govern students’ home languages. Such an awareness would result in acknowledging that students are actually following the rules of a language, although these are not the rules of the language of power; in turn, this awareness would help teachers “nurture students in their writing and help them learn the language of power” (Christensen, 2003, p. 6). Although Christensen (2003) took a
step further from looking at error as a deviation within the confines of one language—the dominant English variety—and instead hints at discourse communities and genres, these issues are still not discussed directly in terms of rhetorical consideration, and can only be implied or assumed. On the other hand, Medzerian (2010) specifically addressed one of the canons of rhetoric—style—that is closely related to how we treat error in student writing. The author argued that issues of style are often associated with the current-traditional paradigm of teaching writing, thus disregarding the “rhetoricality of students’ stylistic choices” (Medzerian, 2010, p. 188). Stylistic choices are, in fact, most often perceived as choices of form that is separated from meaning (as it is evident from studies by Connors & Lunsford (“Teachers’ rhetorical comments on student papers,” 1993) or Straub & Lunsford (“Twelve readers reading,” 1995) where the authors commend the responders for focusing their comments on “matters of content, organization, and purpose, often in subtle and complex ways, and giv[ing] only moderate attention to the obvious and outward features of writing: mechanics, word choice, sentence structure, and style” (Straub & Lunsford, 1995, p. 153, emphasis mine). Framing style as a package in which the content of one’s ideas is easily packed, however, does not take into account the theories on style, according to which any “difference of style is always a difference in meaning” (Beardsley, as qtd. in Medzerian, 2010, p. 193). Unfortunately, as Medzerian’s (2010) analysis of the aforementioned studies on teachers’ responding practices shows, issues of style are discussed in terms of accidental lapses in packaging (“accidents of discourse,” Sommers, 1982, p. 150), thus implying that “the writer has little control [and] agency is removed from the student writer, resulting in an arhetorical construction of style” (Medzerian, 2010, p. 196). Although style and grammatical error are not same categories, they are both related to the form
that our writing takes, and they are clearly both heavily influenced by our expectations as readers and writing teachers.

One common trait that all these scholars seem to expose is the tension between teachers’ beliefs and preparation to respond to error (and style, if we categorize as accidental lapses in discourse). For example, Ferris (2014) found that there is a discrepancy between how teachers think they are responding based on their beliefs and how they are actually responding to student writing. Anson (2000) pointed out that there is “a pressing need for teachers of writing to become more reflective of the conditions, nature, and sources of their response to error in students’ texts” (p. 17). Authors such as Odell (1989), Wall & Hull (1989), Anson (2000), and Ferris (2014) all suggested that the conditions and sources that teachers act on when responding to error are influenced not only by “our values, needs, past experiences” (Odell, 1989, p. 224), but also by “cultural, institutional, disciplinary, departmental, and personal standards” (Anson, 1999, p. 308). A general consensus among these scholars seems to be that teachers’ knowledge in both general responding practices and specific linguistic subject knowledge is of utmost importance for effective responding to students’ errors. Other scholars, however, disagree with this consensus. In fact, Matsuda (2012) points out that “one of the senior members of the field expressed his reluctance to address language issues, proclaiming that he was ‘a compositionist, not a linguist’” (p. 147)—thus implying that teaching composition should be separated from teaching an awareness of the linguistic devices used in composing. This attitude is clearly reflected in the actual teachers’ responding practices. As a survey conducted by Matsuda (2012) showed, “only 9 out of 74 respondents (12%) indicated that they addressed grammar issues in their writing classes” (p. 146). At the same time, these same teachers may attribute up to 20% of students’ essay grades to writing fluency issues (for an example, see Reid
& Kroll, 1995, p. 268). The unbalanced focus on ideas can therefore result in a neglect of strategies that students need in order to edit their writing and to express their ideas clearly and effectively for their readers.

2.4. Gaps

Despite a large number of studies on response to student writing and despite frequent calls for studying “the sources of knowledge teachers act on if and when responding to students’ errors” (Anson, 1999, p. 13), little or no research has been done to investigate these sources of teachers’ knowledge. More specifically, there is a significant lack of studies on why teachers respond the way they do (beliefs and preparation), and only one study—Connors & Lunsford (1993)—examined the rhetorical considerations of teachers’ comments. The present study therefore looks into the types of cultural, institutional, personal, and other standards that guide teachers’ response to writing fluency; the ways these standards are affected by teachers’ communities of practice; and the approaches to teacher preparation to responding to writing fluency within these communities.
Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1. Theoretical Framework

In order to address the research questions, my qualitative study was guided by a synthesis of Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998) and Activity Theory (Engeström, 1987, 2005). These theories build a framework for studying teachers’ response to student writing based on institutional settings (Communities of Practice) and according to the challenges that teachers encounter in their responding practices, attitudes, philosophies, linguistic subject knowledge, etc. (Activity Theory).

According to Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of Communities of Practice (CoP), learning happens in “an activity system about which participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and for their communities” (p. 98). A community of practice, as Wenger (2015) further explains, is not simply a group of people who share a common interest, but has three essential characteristics: the domain, the community, and the practice. The domain is characterized by a shared domain of interest to which the members are committed to; the community is characterized by members interacting and learning together; and the practice is characterized by members developing (consciously or unconsciously) shared practices relating to that interest (Wenger, 2015, p. 2). Practices, however, should not be understood as mere mechanical activities of doing something—instead, they are “that which gives meaning” to the activity (Wenger, 1998, p. 51, original emphasis). Let me illustrate this concept through the practice of responding to student writing. Responding involves a variety of mechanics, such as opening and reading students’ work, typing or writing the response, and sending the response to the student. The response itself is just a collection of letters and words, but it is the meaning that the teacher and the student produce from these words that
matters. Hence, as Wenger (1998) concludes, “practice is about meaning as an experience of everyday life” (p. 52, original emphasis). But how is this meaning constructed? Wenger (1998) explains that looking at meaning as an experience is not the same as looking at meaning “as a relation between a sign and a reference” or as a philosophical issue of the meaning of life (pp. 51-52). Instead, meaning as an experience is constructed through a negotiation between participation and reification (Wenger, 1998, p. 52). The author defines participation as the “membership in social communities and active involvement in social enterprises” (Wenger, 1998, p. 55). Participation, however, is not merely an act of engaging in an activity, but it is “a process of being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities” (Wenger, 1998, p. 4, original emphasis). In other words, participation is not simply doing something in collaboration with others; instead, it is a two-way process that also entails being affected by this collaboration in a way that changes and forms our identities. Thus, participation is not limited to engagement in a practice, but it is a part of us that resurfaces even when we are not engaging in a specific activity of that practice. To use the example of responding practices again: even when teachers are not responding to student writing (a practice that is specific to the CoP of writing teachers), they will use their responding identity (knowledge, beliefs, techniques) to comment on somebody’s writing or speaking based on this identity. Participation in a practice, then, becomes such an inherent part of us that it expands to other areas of our lives that are not directly connected to the actual practice.

Participation alone is not enough to have the experience of meaning, according to Wenger (1998). To be able to negotiate the meaning of the experience, one must also be able to reify that experience—or be able to “give form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into ‘thingness’” (Wenger, 1998, p. 58). By thingness, Wenger (1998)
does not simply refer to physical objects, but also to abstract concepts such as conventions, expectations, processes, and other aspects of human experience that are “congealed into fixed forms and given the status of object” (p. 59). In terms of responding to student writing, reification can be seen in a variety of objects that reify the responding practice. For example, the tools that teachers use to respond (e.g., a word processor or an audio recorder) may reify the view of responding as a composed act of writing that preserves the distance between the teacher and the student; alternatively, they may reify the view of responding as a relaxed conversation that portrays the teacher as a human being with a voice. As another example, the writing center may reify a web of agreements and expectations, such as where teachers’ responding stops and writing centers’ tutoring steps in (as can be seen through comments such as, “visit the writing center for help with grammar”). Thus, reification in a practice is a projection or representation of our understandings, beliefs, and activities. In other words, although these objects (word processors, audio recorders, or writing centers) were created for certain purposes, they have gradually become objects that reify complex processes of a practice. Ultimately, their reification extends across the boundaries of the practice itself and is reflected in theories and pedagogies that in turn define and guide participation in a practice. Figure 3.1 illustrates this fluid relationship between participation and reification, as defined by Wenger (1998):

![Figure 3.1. Fluid relationship between participation and reification (Wenger, 1998, p. 63)](image-url)
Participation and reification are two complementary parts of the experience that constructs a meaning. According to Wenger (1998), they not only complement each other, but they enable each other, and understanding one is necessary in order to understand the other (p. 62). To illustrate this complementarity, let me go back to the first example of responding to student writing. The response itself is a collection of letters and words that are a reification of a variety of understandings, beliefs, and activities related to writing. The response is a projection of a teacher’s meaning. This response/reification, however, is empty without the interaction of teachers and students who negotiate the meaning of the response through mutual participation (e.g., during class time, individual conferences, or revision memos). Without participation, the reified response would not produce a relevant meaning. Likewise, the participation alone—without reification in the form of a written or recorded response—would not provide an anchor for the participants to refer to in the process of negotiating the meaning. This complementary relationship between participation and reification also illustrates Wenger’s (1998) concept of duality that originates from seminal work on situated learning by Lave and Wenger (1991), who introduced the concept of legitimate peripheral participation. The concept suggests that a novice in a CoP does not simply master specific skills in order to move on from the status of the novice; instead, a novice starts out from the outer boundary of a CoP and learns “through the process of becoming a full participant in a socio-cultural practice” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 29). Thus, knowledge is not simply transferred from a master to an apprentice, but it is co-constructed. The concept of legitimate peripheral participation was later changed by Wenger (1998) into a more elaborate portrayal of duality that is evident in the various dynamics of CoP (such as participation and reification, continuity and discontinuity, and others).
With regards to responding to students, writing teachers share assumptions about what responding means and entails based on a variety of CoP that they are part of. Specific to the present study, first-year writing (FYW) teachers at the surveyed university belong to the institutional context of a U.S. university—a CoP that shares an understanding of responding to student writing based on, for example, the guidelines provided by national institutions such as *The Council of Writing Program Administrators* (CWPA). At the same time, the surveyed university is located on the border with Mexico—a linguistically diverse area that creates a CoP in which FYW teachers share (or are assumed to share) an understanding of writing and language that is specific to the local bilingual context. The theory of CoP provides a lens for looking at the “*shared histories of learning*” (Wenger, 1998, p. 86, original emphasis) that show how responding to student writing is affected by teachers’ inculcation with responding practices and enculturation into CoP, and it provides theoretical guidelines for analyzing the relationships between response, community, and learning. The development of a practice is tightly related to the internal dynamics of the shared histories of learning, and these histories, according to Wenger (1998) are “histories of mutual engagement, negotiation of an enterprise, and development of a shared repertoire” (p. 95). Figure 3.2 represents how these histories interrelate:

*Figure 3.2. The internal dynamics of the shared histories of learning (Wenger, 1998, p. 73)*
Mutual engagement relates to the interactions, roles, and relationships within communities of practice; joint enterprise shows the goals, the conditions, and the evolution of the communities of practice; and shared repertoire consists of routines, concepts, or discourses that a specific community has adopted through time (Wenger, 1998, pp. 73-84). The CoP framework, then, identifies the situational factors of a practice and offers a lens for describing the general contexts that affect how a community is formed and how learning in this community happens. Therefore, I utilize the lens of Communities of Practice (as proposed by Wenger, 1998) to analyze how responding practices are discussed in teacher preparation materials.

In addition to analyzing teacher preparation materials, I also look at how my participating writing teachers actually respond to their students’ drafts. In order to understand their responding practices, I utilize the lens of Engeström’s (1987, 2005) Activity Theory (AT), which is used to describe human activity or actions as a part of a “systemic whole”—rather than in isolation— with the purpose of challenging, understanding, and solving a contradiction or an activity. With regards to this study, AT provides a model to look at how the subjects/actors (in this case, teachers) are challenged by the contradictions that guide the responding activity in which the object/goal is to improve student writing in terms of writing fluency, punctuation, mechanics, usage, and style. The outcomes of this particular activity depend on how the external actors within a CoP affect the activity (for example, attitudes and perceptions about addressing writing fluency, WPA programmatic decisions about teacher preparation and responding, etc.); how CoP govern the division of labor (for example, the hierarchy of higher-order concerns and lower-order concerns, the division of labor between teachers and writing tutors, etc.); and how CoP affect the contradictions between the rules and the tools (for example, academic/standard language conventions vs. available linguistic subject knowledge or professional development in
As Engeström (2005) points out, the AT lens can “facilitate connection between seemingly random incidents and contradictions in the activity system so that change may occur through attention to mediating signs and tools” (p. 181). By using the lens of Activity Theory as a model to look at the responding activity, I was able to observe the dynamics of a system and thus enhance the understanding of how teachers’ responding practices are affected by their CoP.

3.2. Research Procedures

3.2.1. The research site and participants.

The data for this study was collected at a medium-sized research university in the U.S. southwest on the Mexico-U.S. border. I chose it as my research site because it is geographically suitable to my residence. The specific location has influenced my findings due to its large bilingual population; therefore, in order to better understand the issue from a national perspective, I also analyzed the guidelines and suggestions provided by CCC (Conference on
College Composition and Communication), CWPA (Council of Writing Program Administrators), and NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English), the most common books used for writing teacher preparation, and the most common student textbooks used for college composition.

The surveyed university’s demographic data for the academic year 2014-2015 shows that approximately 85% of the students were Hispanic or Mexican, 8% were White non-Hispanic, 3% were African American, and the remaining 4% were of other races, such as Asian, Native American, etc. (University Communications, n.d.). Linguistically, both English and Spanish are used as languages of communication on campus. According to the Center for Institutional Evaluation Research and Planning at the surveyed university, approximately 39% of students identify themselves as bilingual in English and Spanish, 53% of students are most comfortable speaking English, and 8% of students are most comfortable speaking Spanish (as qtd. in Brunk-Chavez, Mangelsdorf, Wojahn, Urzúa, Montoya, Thatcher, & Valentine, 2014). The admission process at the surveyed university distinguishes between domestic and international students, but it requires only international students to identify their first language, thus assuming that the first language for domestic students is English (Brunk-Chavez et al., 2014). However, this distinction is complicated—among other reasons—by students growing up on the border with Mexico, who may be considered domestic students based on their immigration status, but may use Spanish as their first or dominant language (Brunk-Chavez et al., 2014).

The data was collected from first-year writing courses that are divided into two sections: the first section focuses on writing to explore, inform, analyze, and convince, while the second section focuses on analyzing rhetorical situations and developing fluency in visual, oral, and written communication. The courses are taught in English; however, Spanish is also used to
communicate with bilingual students. Domestic students are placed into mainstream freshman composition courses if they scored at least 6 out of 8 possible points on the ACCUPLACER™ writing exam, and they have fulfilled the general admission requirements such as graduating from a Texas high school in the top 10% of their graduating classes or earning a minimum score of 1070 on SAT or a minimum score of 23 on ACT (Undergraduate Admissions, n.d.). However, first-time first-year students who do not meet these admission standards can be placed into a provisional admission program called START (Success Through Academic Readiness Today) that allows students to be placed into freshman composition courses, but they also need to attend required tutoring sessions and maintain a minimum 2.0 GPA during the first two semester at the university (Undergraduate Admissions, n.d.). International students are automatically placed into ESOL courses (Brunk-Chavez et al., 2014), while their general university admission requirements are similar to those for domestic students, although their standardized test scores can also include tests such as TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), or PTE (Pearson Test of English) (Undergraduate Admissions, n.d.). From my interviews with three WPAs from the surveyed university, I found that the students in the university’s FYW courses are very diverse in terms of their writing abilities. According to Dr. A (one of the interviewed WPAs), the student population is mixed in terms of how they have been prepared in high school—certain students are excellently prepared, while others might have lower writing abilities (personal communication, April 6, 2015). Another interviewed WPA, Dr. C, agrees that there are students in FYW “who are barely capable of writing a coherent paragraph to those who are very competent in writing a standard essay” (personal communication, May 12, 2015). The reason behind such diversity in writing ability is that the university is essentially an open access university, so as long as the students fulfill the minimum entrance criteria mentioned above, they
are enrolled to FYW. Another reason for such diversity is exposed by Dr. B (also one of the interviewed WPAs), who explains that about 80% of students have Hispanic background, and for about 20% of these students “English is not their first language although they have advanced skills in English” (personal communication, May 12, 2015). Dr. B also notes that a high number of students are “first-generation students,” although there is no specific data on how many. However, Dr. B explains that students in FYW typically write their literacy narratives, and based on those narratives, she estimates that about 50% of students are first-generation college students.

The courses are taught by full-time and part-time lecturers, as well as by graduate teaching assistants (TAs) and doctoral assistant instructors (AIs). The hiring criteria for lecturers include masters or doctorate in a field that relates to English or Composition Studies; interest (publications, presentations) in Composition Studies; a variety of teaching experience; specific teaching skills (e.g., technical writing); subject area knowledge; good student evaluation; and good recommendations. In order to teach as graduate teaching assistants, applicants need to have completed 18 credit hours of graduate work in English, passed English 5346 (Composition Theory and Pedagogy), tutored at the University Writing Center for at least one semester, observed experienced writing instructors in the classroom and online, and received a favorable evaluation the semester prior to teaching. Incoming TAs must also attend a two-week composition camp prior to their first semester of graduate studies at UTEP. All freshman composition teachers at UTEP also take part of ongoing professional development that is offered through monthly workshops, mentoring, and classroom observations.

The focal participants of the study were eight writing teachers that taught freshman composition classes during the semester of data collection. The participants were selected based
on their willingness to volunteer in the study. The selection also considered the participants’ educational background and teaching experience in order to collect data from a continuum of backgrounds and experiences. The range of teaching experience is relevant because it can signal how teachers are inculcated with responding practices through time and by their communities of practice. In order to preserve my participants’ anonymity, I use gender-neutral pseudonyms (as shown in Table 3.1) when referring to them in my study:

Table 3.1. *Gender-Neutral Pseudonyms of the Study Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Teaching Experience (years)</th>
<th>Writing Teaching Experience (years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>MFA; MA in Creative Writing</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>6-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andy</td>
<td>MFA</td>
<td>0-2</td>
<td>0-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blake</td>
<td>MFA</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>0-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>MA in Teaching English</td>
<td>0-2</td>
<td>0-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jess</td>
<td>MFA</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>2-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>PhD in Rhetoric and Professional Communication</td>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>11-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pat</td>
<td>PhD in Rhetoric and Composition</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>2-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quinn</td>
<td>MA in Organizational Communication</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>2-5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.2.2. Data collection.

The data for the study was collected during the spring 2015 semester and was divided in two parts: The first part included the selection of materials that have influenced how writing teachers respond to students. These materials included a variety of position statements issued by CCCC, CWPA, and NCTE, bestselling and local teacher preparation books, bestselling and local student textbooks, and interviews with three WPAs from the surveyed university. The second part consisted of surveys, interviews, and student rough drafts from eight writing teachers at the surveyed university.
### 3.2.2.1. Selection of teacher preparation materials: National view.

One major scope of the present study was to examine how teachers’ responding to linguistically diverse students was influenced by their communities of practice. The focus was therefore on how these CoP are reflected in teachers’ beliefs and responding practices, and not to observe and evaluate the actual preparation programs in their whole. Therefore, my selection is based on the most common materials that are used for college writing teacher preparation. Also, the purpose was not to examine these materials in detail as that would require a study on its own; instead, the purpose was to build a general idea of how writing fluency is addressed both in general teaching practices and in specific responding practices.

The starting point of my examination were various position statements issued by the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA), and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). These three organizations shape and guide the field of composition studies with their nationwide events, members, and publications, including the guidelines and position statements on teaching college composition. I accessed these position statements through each organization’s website during spring 2015, and my selection included the following statements:

**CCCC Statements:**

- Position statement on the preparation and professional development of teachers of writing (1982)
- Position statement on the students’ right to their own language (SRTOL) (1974)
- Principles for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing (2013)
- Statement on second language writing and writers (2014)
CWPA Statements:

- WPA Framework for success in postsecondary writing (2011)
- WPA Outcomes statement for first-year composition (2014)

NCTE Statements:

- Beliefs about the teaching of writing (2004)
- Guideline on the essentials of English (1982)
- Guideline on expanding opportunities (1986)
- Resolution on grammar exercises to teach speaking and writing (1985)
- Resolution on Language Study (1994)
- Position paper on the role of English teachers in educating English language learners (ELLs) (2006)
- Standards for the English Language Arts (2012)

In addition to the position statements issued by CCC, CWPA, and NCTE that provide guidelines and suggestions for teaching college composition, writing teacher preparation programs use a variety of teacher preparation textbooks. The choice of these materials was based on searching for bestselling writing preparation books through NCTE (ncte.org) and Amazon (amazon.com) by using specific search strings. The search strings targeted two categories of books: general books on teaching college writing and specific books on responding to student writing. Each search string is presented in Table 3.3, along with the books that fulfilled additional criteria of my search. The first criterion was to sort the results by “Bestselling.” While Amazon offers this option, NCTE does not. NCTE does, however, offer the option of navigating to its bestsellers through Resources > Books > Browse Bestsellers. Once in the Bestsellers section, I was able to browse by “College” level. Since the results showed a variety of books, journals, and webinars...
that did not apply to my research, I attempted to further filter the results with the same keywords as in my Amazon search strings. Unfortunately, the keyword search through NCTE’s bestsellers section constantly resulted in an error message. Therefore, I filtered the results through the “Category” option and limited the results to books, thus leaving out journals and webinars. The results now included a few books on code-meshing, fiction, and creative non-fiction, except for two books that related specifically to college composition:


As for Amazon, after the first criterion of sorting result by “Bestselling,” the second criterion was to limit the selection of books for review to the first three bestselling books in each search category; however, if a certain book consistently appeared in the first ten search results, that book was also selected for review. The third criterion was to select books that target college writing teachers since they are the focus of my study; hence, the books that target WPAs or teaching K-12 writing were discarded. I conducted the search on May 31, 2015, and the results of individual searches on Amazon are presented in Table 3.2:
Table 3.2. Search for Teacher Preparation Books on Amazon.com

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keywords</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“preparing teachers to teach writing”</td>
<td>Target: High school, K-12, 1st grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“teaching college composition”</td>
<td>Target: Student textbooks, AP books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“college composition teacher preparation”</td>
<td>Target: Student textbooks, AP books, K-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“rhetoric and writing”</td>
<td>Target: Books on style (e.g. Strunk &amp; White’s <em>Elements of Style</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bedford / St. Martin's.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“responding to L2/ESL students”</td>
<td>Target: General books on teaching ESL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“feedback to L2/ESL students”</td>
<td>Ferris, D. R., &amp; Hedgcock, J. S. (2014). *Teaching L2 composition:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“responding to linguistically diverse students”</td>
<td>Target: Books on children, K-12, learning disabilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although my search included the bestselling books on responding to L2/ESL students in college composition, I cannot assume that these books have become a part of college composition.
teacher preparation programs, especially since they are rarely (if ever) mentioned in the literature on college composition. Therefore, I did not use them in this section as a part of teachers’ communities of practice. The final selection of books for review thus includes Roen et al. (2002), Sommers (2013), Straub (1999), Sullivan & Tinberg (2006), Villanueva & Arola (2011), and White (2006).

In addition to the bestselling teacher preparation books, the textbooks that teachers use in their classrooms also influence how teachers approach the topic of writing fluency. In fact, these textbooks might often be the only resource that teachers have since looking for additional resources would take additional time out of their busy schedules. The choice of the textbooks for review was based on four search approaches: (1) searching for bestselling textbooks through Amazon (amazon.com), (2) using specific search strings through the Advanced Search feature on Amazon (amazon.com), (3) using specific search strings through Google (google.com), and (4) searching for scholarly articles on first-year composition textbooks. I conducted the search on June 25, 2015 with the following results:

(1) The first 20 books in the results of the search through Amazon’s Textbooks bestsellers were various textbooks relating to SAT preparation, statistics, medical reference, and business management. The only book relating to writing/composition/rhetoric appeared in position #9, and it was Strunk and White’s *Elements of Style*. I repeated the search through the bestselling textbooks in Humanities, and the first 20 results showed various literature-related books, while the following books related to writing/composition/rhetoric:

#3: Strunk and White, 1999, *Elements of Style*

#14: Zinsser, 2006, *On Writing Well*

#15: Thurman & Shea, 2003, *The Only Grammar Book You’ll Ever Need*
(2) The second search approach that I used through Amazon was the Advanced Search. I used the search string “first-year college composition” and sorted the results according to the bestselling books. After weeding out the books on AP and theories of writing, the following books remained as the actual FYW student textbooks:


(3) To double-check my findings, I used Google with the search strings:

“(recommended/required) first-year composition textbooks,” “(recommended/required) freshman composition textbooks,” and “college composition textbooks.” The results are
based on what appeared most frequently on a variety of FYW programs' websites from different parts of U.S. (e.g., Florida State, Ohio State, Central Michigan, San Jose State, etc.):


(4) My last search approach was searching for scholarly articles on first-year composition textbooks. The only recent article on the topic was “What First-Year Composition Textbooks are Beginning to Say about Writing in Business” by Samson (2007), in which Samson (2007) examined three textbooks that, according to the author, are “widely used in colleges and universities in the United States”: *The St. Martin's Guide to Writing* (Axelrod & Cooper, 2008), *The Bedford Guide for College Writers* (Kennedy, 2005), and *The New McGraw-Hill Handbook* (Maimon, Peritz, & Yancey, 2007).

The same three books occurred in at least two search approaches (Graff et al., 2012; Axelrod & Cooper, 2013; and Hacker & Sommers, 2015), so they were used in my review and analysis.
However, Graff et al. (2012) and Hacker & Sommers (2015) seem to be writers’ references, not full-fledged textbooks—the former provides templates for constructing arguments, while the latter serves as a quick reference guide for formatting, style, and grammar. In order to provide a broader picture of books that serve as self-standing textbooks, I added Lunsford et al. (2010) and Wysocki & Lynch (2011) to the selection since they also ranked high in the search results.

It is necessary to note that these student textbooks can have different purposes, such as serving as rhetoric and writing textbooks (for example, Wysocki & Lynch, 2011) or as quick reference handbooks for grammar and style (for example, Hacker & Sommers, 2015). Considering these different purposes, it is likely that writing teachers use both in their writing classes.

3.2.2.2. Selection of teacher preparation materials: Local view.

In order to understand how my participants were also influenced by the environment of the surveyed university, my examination included preparation materials that are used at the local university, as well interviews with three Writing Program Directors (WPAs) who have served in this position at the surveyed university at some point in time in the past 5 years and have thus also influenced the local teacher preparation program and, consequently, my participants. In my study, I refer to the WPAs as Dr. A, Dr. B, and Dr. C. The initials do not reflect the WPAs names, and the alphabetical order does not reflect the chronological order of their appointments. The personal communications with individual WPAs took place on April 6, 2015 (see Appendix A for a list of interview questions). One of the books used by the local teacher preparation program is Roen et al.’s (2002) Strategies for Teaching First-Year Composition that is also a part of the national bestselling teacher preparation books. The other books used by the local program are:
In addition, when teachers start teaching in the classroom at the surveyed university, they typically use two student textbooks. One is *The RWS Guide to Undergraduate Rhetoric and Writing Studies (RWS Guide, 2014)*, while the other one depends on the particular FYW section.


### 3.2.2.3. Case study surveys, interviews, and students’ rough drafts.

After selecting the teachers who were willing to participate in my study, I emailed them the link to a survey that I created through Qualtrics. The purpose of the survey was to collect demographic data, as well as to gather preliminary information on their teaching experience and philosophy. A complete list of survey questions is provided in Appendix B.

In the next step, I asked my participants to send me copies of students’ rough drafts and final (graded) drafts. The drafts were de-identified coursework from students who were 18-years or older and who were informed by their teacher that their work might be used for research
purposes. All the participants used electronic drafts for both rough and graded versions. The drafts were selected from two assignment types: one is informative (*Community Problem Report* for the first FYW section and *Literature Review/Primary Research* for the second FYW section), while the other was analytical (*Rhetorical Analysis*) (see Appendices G to J for detailed assignment guidelines). The rationale for selecting these assignments was based on three premises:

- First, both assignment types are required in both sections (that is, teachers cannot choose from a variety of options within a certain type of assignment).
- Second, the assignments are similar with regards to content and structure.
- Third, both assignment types require submitting both a rough and a final draft.

These common characteristics allowed for consistency in the collection and analysis of data. I collected 3 samples of student drafts from each participating teacher. While I collected both rough and final drafts, the final drafts were not analyzed for the effectiveness of teachers’ comments, but only for the types of comments. The focal points of collected comments were writing fluency, punctuation, mechanics, usage, and style.

The third step in my data collection from my primary participants were interviews. I scheduled one interview with each participant, and each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes, during which I asked semi-structured questions about their teaching and responding practices (a complete list of questions is provided in Appendix C). During the interview, I took notes by hand, and I also audio-recorded each interview that I subsequently had professionally transcribed. During analysis, I reviewed my notes, the recordings, and the transcripts as multiple representations of interview data. The interview questions and responses were used as illustrative quotations where appropriate.
3.2.3. Data analysis.

My data analysis utilized a mixed-methods approach, thus including both quantitative and qualitative research methods that followed *concurrent* and *transformative* procedures. As Creswell (2003) explains, in concurrent procedures a researcher “collects both forms of data at the same time during the study and then integrates the information in the interpretation of the overall results,” thus providing a “comprehensive analysis of the research problem, (p. 16). In transformative procedures, according to Creswell (2003), “the researcher uses a theoretical lens […] as an overarching perspective within a design that contains both quantitative and qualitative data” (p. 16). Specific to this study, the concurrent procedures are reflected in the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the writing teacher preparation materials, participants’ interviews, and students’ drafts, while the transformative procedures are reflected in my use of the aforementioned theoretical lenses (Communities of Practice and Activity Theory).

Initially, my plan for the qualitative part was to utilize the *grounded theory* approach through constant comparison analysis and theoretical sampling. However, my time constraints did not allow for the “systematic choice and study of several comparison groups” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 9), in which I would compare “different ‘slices of data’ in order to reach higher levels of abstraction and advance with the conceptualization” (Gregory, 2010, p. 7). Instead of grounded theory, I opted for *qualitative content analysis* of what appeared to be the most common texts used to prepare college writing teachers and of participants’ interviews. While both grounded theory and qualitative content analysis follow a similar coding process that is based on finding themes, there are two main differences between the two approaches. One difference is in their goals: The goal of grounded theory is to generate a “substantive theory that will explain a phenomenon in a specific context and suited to its supposed use” (Cho & Lee,
2014, p. 5), while the goal of qualitative content analysis is to “systematically describe the meaning” of the analyzed materials (Schreier, as qtd. in Cho & Lee, 2014, p. 5). Another difference between the two approaches is in the linearity of their coding procedures. Grounded theory follows a non-linear procedure, in which data collection and data analysis occur almost simultaneously, and any subsequent data collection depends on immediate analysis and comparison of each set of data that has already been collected. Qualitative content analysis, on the other hand, follows a linear procedure that starts with selecting the units of analysis and is followed by coding for themes, then applying these themes to the remaining data, and revising the themes based on subsequent coding. This linear procedure can use a deductive or an inductive approach (or a combination of both). As Cho & Lee (2014) explain, “In the inductive approach, codes, categories, or themes are directly drawn from the data, whereas the deductive approach starts with preconceived codes or categories derived from prior relevant theory, research, or literature” (p. 4). My analysis of writing teacher preparation materials followed the inductive approach because there are no other studies (to my knowledge) that have analyzed the discourses of teacher preparation materials.

The first step of my qualitative content analysis was data preparation. After collecting all the materials (position statements, textbooks, WPA interviews, and teacher interviews), I carefully examined these sources, identified substantiated stories, and wrote narratives with thick descriptions and specific examples. These narratives served as the basis for my data coding. I uploaded the narratives into QDA Miner Lite, which is the free version of a computer assisted qualitative analysis software. The software allowed me to code and categorize my data, as well as to analyze the frequency of the observed themes. The second step in my coding process was
the identification of units of analysis. The units of analysis in qualitative content analysis can be words, sentences, or larger units. Minichiello (as qtd. in Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009) explains:

Qualitative content analysis usually uses individual themes as the unit for analysis, rather than the physical linguistic units (e.g., word, sentence, or paragraph) most often used in quantitative content analysis. An instance of a theme might be expressed in a single word, a phrase, a sentence, a paragraph, or an entire document. When using theme as the coding unit, you are primarily looking for the expressions of an idea. (p. 310)

Hence, my initial—open—coding was based on observations that emerged from the text, whether from specific words or from ideas that were expressed in larger chunks of text. Following my preliminary coding, I developed categories and coding schemes that I then used for coding the remaining text. While coding the remaining text, I was also constantly checking for consistency, revising my codes and categories, and re-coding all my data based on these revisions in order to ensure coding consistency (Weber, as qtd. in Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009, p. 311). Finally, I examined the frequencies of my recurring themes in order to draw conclusions from my coded data. This step helped me in “identifying relationships between categories, uncovering patterns, and testing categories against the full range of data (Bradley, as qtd. in Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009, p. 312). Such approach to my data analysis helped me understand how responding to student writing is influenced by CoP that inculcate teachers with responding philosophies and practices. In addition, the data helped me determine how the available sources (provided or adopted by CoP) assist teachers in guiding students through their writing assignments.
The quantitative part of my data analysis targeted students’ drafts with teachers’ written commentary. I analyzed these drafts based on coding categories that followed three studies that focused on:

- Type of students’ errors (for example, fragment, spelling, tense, etc.): This categorization was adapted from Peleg (2011), and it provided information on the frequency of comments based on error types (Table 3.3):

Table 3.3. *Types of Errors in Students’ Drafts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Error</th>
<th>Teacher’s Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syntax</td>
<td>In-text Correction*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dangling Modifier</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S-V agreement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comma splice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessive/Plural</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb/Tense</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronouns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preposition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel Structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Choice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idiomatic Expressions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting verbs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subordination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal / Informal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In-text correction refers to a teachers’ correction directly in students’ drafts without an accompanying explanation of the error/correction.*
Linguistic form of teachers’ comments: The procedure for developing the coding categories for the linguistic form of teachers’ comments was adapted from the framework used by Ferris, Pezone, Tade, & Tinti (1997) in order to identify the formal characteristics of comments, such as syntactic form (statement, exclamation, question, or imperative), hedges (praise, polite requests, etc.), and specificity (the comment is specific to the text or general to any text) (Table 3.4):

Table 3.4. Linguistic Forms of Teachers’ Comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Linguistic Features of Comments</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Syntactic Form</th>
<th>Hedges</th>
<th>Specificity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Statement / Exclamation</td>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>Praise with Advice</td>
<td>Polite request</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rhetorical characteristics of teachers’ comments: The procedure for developing the categories of rhetorical comments was adapted from the framework used by Connors & Lunsford (1993) to identify whether teachers’ comments consider rhetorical effects of errors (for example, whether their comments refer to audience, purpose, etc.) (Table 3.5):

Table 3.5. Rhetorical Characteristics of Teachers’ Comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rhetorical Characteristics of Comments</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Genre / Medium</th>
<th>Logos (e.g., organization, transitions)</th>
<th>Ethos (e.g., insider terminology)</th>
<th>Pathos (e.g., words evoking emotions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The data from students’ drafts allowed me to compare the responding practices to the national and local suggested best practices, and thus to see how the focus and format of comments relate to CoP best practices and the latest findings on teaching grammar in context. In turn, this comparison allowed me to analyze the interaction between the national and local CoP
and the AT elements in order to understand how CoP affect teachers’ shared understanding of responding practices.

### 3.3. Role of the Researcher

I grew up in an area that is linguistically very diverse and that mixes a variety of languages, including Slovenian, Croatian, Italian, and German, as well as English (through the spread of popular culture and of English as a lingua franca). Hence, I am a multilingual speaker who has learned English as a fourth language—if speaking in terms of the sequence of learned languages. However, I consider English to be my dominant language, especially in academic and professional settings due to my extensive workplace experience and graduate work. This dominance has never made me feel like my other languages and cultures are threatened by it. Quite the opposite. From my personal experience of mixing languages on the one hand and adhering to certain standards on the other hand, I find that a metalinguistic awareness of any language empowers us as communicators in different discourse communities and in different genres. Thus, I have always been interested in understanding how teachers could help students develop such metalinguistic awareness without threatening their home languages.

During the semester of my data collection, I was a doctoral candidate in Rhetoric and Composition, with four years of teaching experience in U.S. first-year composition classrooms and with two years of experience as a writing tutor prior to that. In addition, I hold an MA in Applied Linguistics that I believe contributes to my understanding of how languages function, how they are learned, and how they can be taught. I would argue that, as a writing teacher, I do not subscribe to a particular ideology because I believe that good pedagogy can and should draw from a variety of ideologies based on what students need and what is best in a particular context. This stance, however, is an ideology as well—perhaps most reminiscent of postmodernism since
I lean towards critical interpretation, usage, and re-construction of other ideologies and pedagogies depending on the specific context. Hence, I consider myself an insider in the community that I have researched in this project. My insider position allowed me to contextualize my data and my interactions with participants; at the same time, I maintained an unobtrusive position during these interactions by not expressing my stance and not commenting on participants’ responses other than by follow-up questions.

3.4. Limitations of the Study

Due to space, time, and labor constraints, my study was limited to only one university and is thus not representative of how writing teachers at other universities or colleges in the U.S. respond to student writing. In order to provide a glimpse of how responding might look elsewhere, I reviewed the most frequent resources for preparing college composition teachers based on bestselling books through NCTE and online sellers. However, the review of these resources relies on the assumption that these materials are actually used in teacher preparation programs. Even if the assumption is correct (based on their bestselling features), teacher preparation programs most likely include additional readings that are provided through other sources (PDF files, websites, etc.) and that were not accessible to me at the time of my analysis. Furthermore, although my data included both rough and final drafts, I looked at final drafts from the point of view of responding to student writing, and not from the point of view of assessment. Therefore, my study does not consider assessment characteristics such as validity and reliability. Finally, the study is based on analyzing teachers’ written responses and does not look at other classroom practices or oral responses (e.g., student conferences).
Chapter Four: Responding and Communities of Practice

Chapter Four identifies how the field of college composition shapes writing teachers in terms of addressing students’ writing fluency. The first part of the chapter examines a variety of resources on a national level by: (1) reviewing what the field expects from teachers to teach and from students to learn in terms of writing fluency (NCTE, CCCC, and CWPA Position Statements); (2) analyzing how writing fluency is addressed in the most commonly used materials for preparing college writing teachers; and (3) describing how writing fluency is treated in the most common student college composition textbooks. The second part of the chapter examines a variety of resources at the local institution by: (1) interviewing four WPAs who were running the FYW program at one point in time during the last seven years at the surveyed university; (2) analyzing how writing fluency is addressed in the materials that The University used or uses for preparing writing teachers; and (3) describing how writing fluency is treated in FYW student textbooks at this particular university.

Each of these sections includes the results of my coding. The aim of this study was not to examine the statements and books per se, but to understand how these statements affect participants’ responding practices. Therefore, the results provide a summary of the most frequent codes in order to show the tendencies that are occurring in the data. Each relevant code is illustrated by one or two examples, and not by all examples, because my goal was to merely give the reader an idea of the types of messages that occur in these statements and books. Based on these summarized findings, I explain how I constructed the major themes that contribute to the third part of the chapter, where I utilize the lens of Communities of Practice to provide insight into how these resources inculcate teachers with responding practices.
4.1. College Composition: National View

4.1.1. Position statements.

The following section will review the expectations and outcomes of learning and teaching writing in post-secondary education, as defined by the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA), and National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). NCTE is the leading professional organization that focuses on literacy education, and it was founded in 1911 “out of protest against overly-specific college entrance requirements and the effects they were having on high school English education” (NCTE’s History, 2012, para. 1). The organization is “devoted to improving the teaching and learning of English and the language arts at all levels of education” (NCTE Mission, 2011). The 30,000 members of NCTE are teachers, administrators, and scholars whose work relates to any level of schooling from elementary to post-secondary. The organization also hosts specialty groups such as TYCA (Two-Year College English Association), and caucuses such as the Latino or the Black Caucus. One of the largest NCTE’s specialty groups is the CCCC that was founded in 1949 and is “the world's largest professional organization for researching and teaching composition” (CCCC Home, 2015). The focus of CCCC is college-level writing theory and pedagogy, and the organization’s members participate in panels and workshops at the annual national convention, where they also engage in SIGs (Special Interest Groups) such as the ones on Second Language Writing and on Faculty Development and Composition. Finally, the CWPA is the “national association of college and university faculty with professional responsibilities for (or interests in) directing writing programs” (CWPA About, 2014). Founded in 1979 (McLeod, 2007), the organization connects directors of college composition, WAC/WID/CAC coordinators, and writing centers, as well as department chairs and deans
(CWPA About, 2014). Considering the depth and breadth of influence that these organizations have on college composition, the following sections examine the standards and position statements issued by the above three organizations in order to portray what students are expected to learn and what teachers are expected to teach. I focused on position statements that relate to post-secondary education, not K-12.

4.1.1.1. What students are expected to learn.

Before looking at position statements for post-secondary education, it is worth noting what students are expected to know by the end of secondary education. The NCTE’s “Standards for the English Language Arts” (2012) list that students should have the knowledge of language structure and conventions (standards 3, 4, and 6), as well as “an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles” (standard 9). Despite these standards, however, post-secondary education is faced with students whose writing abilities and quality suffers from a lack of the above knowledge. Therefore, NCTE expands the secondary education standards to the “NCTE Guideline on the Essentials of English” (1982), in which NCTE states that developing language skills is a lifelong process. Thus, the NCTE Guideline proposes that by studying language, students should:

Become aware how grammar represents the orderliness of language and makes meaningful communication possible, recognize how context--topic, purpose, audience--influences the structure and use of language, and recognize that precision in punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and other elements of manuscript form is a part of the total effectiveness of writing. (“NCTE Guideline on the Essentials of English,” 1982)
Likewise, CWPA includes similar expectations in its “WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition” (2014), according to which students should:

Develop facility in responding to a variety of situations and contexts calling for purposeful shifts in voice, tone, level of formality […] use strategies—such as interpretation, synthesis, response, critique, and design/redesign—to compose texts that integrate the writer's ideas with those from appropriate sources; develop flexible strategies for reading, drafting, reviewing, collaborating, revising, rewriting, rereading, and editing; and develop knowledge of linguistic structures, including grammar, punctuation, and spelling, through practice in composing and revising. (“WPA Outcomes,” 2014, emphasis mine)

According to these statements, then, post-secondary students are expected to master the linguistic structures of Academic English, so the question that arises is whether teachers are expected to help students master these conventions—and also, what are teachers expected to know in order to succeed in this endeavor.

4.1.1.2. What teachers are expected to teach.

Although the aforementioned NCTE Guideline on the Essentials of English (1982) states that developing language skills is a lifelong process, its primary audiences are middle school and high school teachers, thus leaving out college-level teachers. In addition, the NCTE Guideline (1982) defines the need for students to develop grammar awareness, but it does not define that teachers are responsible for assisting students in this task. In fact, the Guideline only points out that teachers are responsible for developing students' interests, abilities, and open inquiry in order to “to preserve the tradition of free thought in a democratic society,” (“NCTE Guideline on the Essentials of English” 1982). NCTE does, however, provide four other position statements in
which it addresses the teaching of grammar awareness. The first such document is the “NCTE Resolution on Grammar Exercises to Teach Speaking and Writing” (1985), in which NCTE resolves that isolated grammar exercises are “deterrent to the improvement of students' speaking and writing and that […] class time at all levels must be devoted to opportunities for meaningful listening, speaking, reading, and writing” (NCTE Resolution on Grammar,” 1985). While this resolution does not offer an alternative to isolated exercises, the second NCTE’s document does so nine years later by briefly mentioning that “conventions of writing are best taught in the context of writing” and not by “completing workbook or online exercises” (“NCTE/CEE Beliefs about the Teaching of Writing,” 2004). In the same document, NCTE exposes the importance of conventions by stating that, “Conventions of finished and edited texts are important to readers and therefore to writers” (“NCTE/CEE Beliefs,” 2004). The document points out that, “Teachers should be familiar with techniques for teaching editing and encouraging reflective knowledge about editing conventions,” including the teaching of linguistic terminology and of the relationship between conventions and rhetorical purposes. The same position is reiterated in the third document—the “Guideline on Expanding Opportunities: Academic Success for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students” (1986)—in which NCTE states that drill exercises should be replaced with “frequent writing by assigning topics for a variety of audiences and purposes” and that teachers should “respond supportively […] by “evaluating students' writing in a way that fosters critical thinking.” Unfortunately, the Guideline seems to replace drill exercises with a very general suggestion for more writing and acknowledging students’ ideas. Finally, the fourth and newest position statement by NCTE—the “Position Paper on the Role of English Teachers in Educating English Language Learners (ELLs)” (2006)—describes the growing need for writing teachers to teach “text- and sentence-level grammar in context to help students understand the
structure and style of the English language.” As opposed to previous brief position statements, this document provides a detailed specification of what and how teachers should address language awareness in their writing classrooms. The common characteristic of these suggestions is to provide an environment where students learn language through content, collaboration, and writing, but not through explicit instruction. In terms of responding, teachers should focus on content and ideas and leave local concerns for later stages of drafting.

Similarly, more detailed attention to how to teach linguistically diverse students has been given in position statements issued by CCCC and CWPA. The revised version of CCCC’s “Statement on Second Language Writing and Writers” (2014) calls for writing teachers to “look for the textual features that are rhetorically effective, and prioritize two or three mechanical or stylistic issues that individual second language writers should focus on throughout the duration of the course.” In addition, the CCCC document—“Principles for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing” (2013)—mentions that writing instruction should include editing as a part of teaching the writing process, and it specifies that studying and analyzing genres also “includes attention to textual conventions such as organization, register, style, and the use of evidence” (emphasis mine). Likewise, the “Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing” (2011)—developed collaboratively by CWPA, NCTE, and National Writing Project—states that writing teachers should provide “the formal and informal guidelines that define what is considered to be correct and appropriate, or incorrect and inappropriate, in a piece of writing” (“Framework for Success,” 2011). Furthermore, CWPA’s “WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition” (2014) points out that teachers should also teach usage conventions and “strategies for controlling conventions.” To sum up, all three major organizations that govern the field of college composition call for writing teachers to include attention to linguistic structures in their writing
classrooms; however, as opposed to the current-traditional approach to grammar instruction, the position statements from the past 20-30 years expose the importance of treating language issues rhetorically and in the context of writing.

4.1.1.3. What teachers are expected to know.

It is interesting to note that CWPA—as “a national association of college and university faculty with professional interests in directing writing programs,” (http://www.wpacouncil.org) —does not have any position statements on what teachers are expected to know or how they should be prepared in order to teach writing. On the other hand, both CCCC and NCTE provide a few statements on the theme. Perhaps the most famous document on linguistically diverse students was published in 1974 by CCCC: the position statement on “The Students’ Right to Their Own Language” (SRTOL). The document is still widely recognized for acknowledging the presence of linguistically diverse students in U.S. colleges, and it exposes the importance of discussing—and not judging—the various English dialects with students. At the same time, the document also acknowledges that the employability of students depends on their linguistic performance in Edited American English (EAE). For teachers to be able to effectively navigate between linguistic diversity and EAE, SRTOL states that, “All English teachers should, as a minimum, know the principles of modern linguistics, and something about the history and nature of the English language in its social and cultural context”—including knowledge on language acquisition, syntax, grammar and usage, and others. In the same year, NCTE issued its brief “Resolution on Preparing Effective Teachers for Linguistically Different Students” (1974), in which it called for “the development of teacher education programs which prepare teachers to work effectively with the learning needs of students from diverse language and dialect backgrounds.” These two documents, however, merely mention the need for preparing teachers
to work with linguistically diverse students, but they do not specify what exactly this preparation should entail. It is only eight years later that CCCC issued its “Position Statement on the Preparation and Professional Development of Teachers of Writing” (1982), in which it states that teachers of English at all levels should participate in continuing education on how to teach “editing final drafts for punctuation, spelling, usage, and other conventions.” The Position Statement also specifies that teacher preparation programs should offer opportunities for teachers to study “how the English language works,” including the insights from other fields, such as applied linguistics.

Nevertheless, the influence of the process ideologies kept grammar instruction away from writing instruction and affected the lack of teacher preparation in the area of language awareness. It took 14 years before teachers’ voices resulted in the first position statement that opens further discussion of how writing teachers are caught up in the split between the needs of linguistically diverse students and the field’s process ideologies. Thus, NCTE issued the “Resolution on Language Study” (1994), in which it resolved to “explore effective ways of integrating language awareness into classroom instruction and teacher preparation programs” with the purpose for teachers to learn “how the structure of language works from a descriptive perspective.” The CCCC reiterated the same need in its “Statement on Second Language Writing and Writers” (2014) by urging writing programs to provide adequate “resources for teachers working with second language writers, including textbooks and readers on the teaching of second language writing as well as reference materials such as dictionaries and grammar handbooks for language learners.” To conclude, the various standards and positions statements clearly consider the teaching of language conventions to be an important part of composition classrooms, even if
only as the last part of the writing process, and they also point out the importance of preparing teachers to be competent in teaching the required conventions.

4.1.1.4. Recurring themes.

The position statements issued by CCCC, CWPA, and NCTE show very similar tendencies in all areas that they address. Through a constant revision of codes and subsequent codes in my qualitative content analysis method, I identified five major categories that the statements portray: (1) attitudes toward writing fluency; (2) expectations relating to students’ learning; (3) expectations relating to teaching; (4) expectations relating to teachers knowledge; and (5) expectations relating to teachers’ preparation for teaching writing fluency. At the end of each category, I specify which major theme emerges through the data based on the frequencies of my coding. These themes are then summarized in a table that contributes to the third part of the chapter, where I utilize the lens of Communities of Practice to provide insight into how these resources inculcate teachers with responding practices.

The attitudes toward writing fluency had the two most frequent codes that I marked as grammar awareness helps communicate clearly (N=9) and conventions depend on the rhetorical situation (N=4). One example of the code grammar awareness helps communicate clearly is from the “NCTE Guideline on the Essentials of English” (2007), which states that “precision in punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and other elements of manuscript form is a part of the total effectiveness of writing,” while an example of the code conventions depend on the rhetorical situation is from the “NCTE Guideline on the Essentials of English” (1982), which proposes that students should “recognize how context--topic, purpose, audience-influences the structure and use of language.” As Figure 4.1 shows, the remaining codes confirm this attitude.

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Considering that the most frequent attitudes toward writing fluency in the CCCC, CWPA, and NCTE position statements were positive, I assigned *Writing fluency Matters* as one of the themes that these institutions bring to writing teachers’ CoP.

The expectations relating to students’ learning show that *students should recognize the connections between rhetoric and grammar* ($N=4$) as in the example stating that students should “become aware how grammar represents the orderliness of language and makes meaningful communication possible” (“NCTE Guideline on the Essentials of English,” 1982). Another learning expectation is the *need to continue developing grammatical knowledge* ($N=4$) as in the example of stating that students should “[d]evelop knowledge of linguistic structures, including grammar, punctuation, and spelling, through practice in composing and revising” (“WPA Outcomes,” 2014). In addition, the “WPA Outcomes” (2014) also specify that *students need to learn editing strategies*. These examples show that, in terms of what students are expected to
learn in FYW, the theme that the CCCC, CWPA, and NCTE position statements contribute to writing teachers’ CoP is *Students Need to Continue Learning Grammar*.

The expectations relating to teaching grammar show a strong tendency to *teach grammar in the context of writing* (N=8) and that *teaching conventions matters* (N=6), while to *teach grammar through a rhetorical lens* and to *teach editing* had a very small number of occurrences (N=2 and N=1 respectively). The code *teach grammar in the context of writing* is well-illustrated in the “NCTE/CEE Beliefs about the Teaching of Writing” (2004), which states that “conventions of writing are best taught in the context of writing” and not by “completing workbook or online exercises.” Another example can be found in the NCTE’s “Position Paper on the Role of English Teachers in Educating English Language Learners (ELLs)” (2006), which describes the growing need for writing teachers to teach “text- and sentence-level grammar in context to help students understand the structure and style of the English language.” One example of the code *teaching conventions matters* is from the “Framework for Success” (2011), which states that writing teachers should provide “the formal and informal guidelines that define what is considered to be correct and appropriate, or incorrect and inappropriate, in a piece of writing.”

As Figure 4.2 shows, the statements that call for teaching grammar in context and through a rhetorical lens are countered by statements that I coded as *no explicit instruction needed—frequent writing is enough* (N=3), *no teaching—student responsible* (N=2), and *teaching conventions is irrelevant* (N=2). As an example of *no explicit instruction—frequent writing is enough*, the “NCTE Guideline on Expanding Opportunities” (1986) suggests that teachers should merely provide an environment for “frequent writing by assigning topics for a variety of audiences and purposes.” One example of *no teaching—student responsible* is implied
by the CCCC’s “Statement on Second Language Writing and Writers,” (2014) that specifies for teachers to “prioritize two or three mechanical or stylistic issues that individual second language writers should focus on throughout the duration of the course” (emphasis mine). Although this example asks teachers to point out the issues to individual students, it seems that teachers are only responsible for pointing them out, while students are responsible for solving or improving those issues on their own.

*Figure 4.2.* Teaching Expectations according to CCCC, CWPA, and NCTE.

Furthermore, I marked two instances as teaching conventions is irrelevant because the only alternative to current-traditional drill exercises was to have students read and write more, without bringing explicit attention to conventions or grammatical choices. The first such instance states that isolated grammar exercises are “deterrent to the improvement of students' speaking and writing and that […] class time at all levels must be devoted to opportunities for meaningful listening, speaking, reading, and writing” (“NCTE Resolution on Grammar,” 1985). The second
instance states that drill exercises should be replaced with “frequent writing by assigning topics for a variety of audiences and purposes” (“NCTE Guideline on Expanding Opportunities,” 1986). Considering that the most frequent expectations relating to teaching grammar in the NCTE, CCCC, and CWPA position statements lean towards teaching grammar in context and through a rhetorical lens (11 out of 16 or 68%), I assigned Grammar Needs to Be Taught Rhetorically as one of the themes that these institutions bring to the teachers’ CoP.

The expectations relating to what teachers should know in order to teach grammar show a high number of expectations that cumulatively add up to sixteen occurrences, as opposed to one occurrence where knowledge is assumed, and zero occurrences that would specifically state that knowledge is not necessary (I did find such occurrences elsewhere). The three most common expectations are related to linguistic terminology ($N=4$), techniques for teaching editing ($N=4$), and conventions and rhetoric ($N=4$). For example, SRTOL (1974) states that, “All English teachers should, as a minimum, know the principles of modern linguistics [including] syntax, grammar and usage” (i.e., linguistic terminology); the “NCTE/CEE Beliefs” (2004) point out that, “Teachers should be familiar with techniques for teaching editing and encouraging reflective knowledge about editing conventions” (i.e., techniques for teaching editing); and the “WPA Framework” (2011) defines that writing teachers should provide “the formal and informal guidelines that define what is considered to be correct and appropriate, or incorrect and inappropriate, in a piece of writing” (i.e., conventions and rhetoric). As Figure 4.3 shows, another frequent expectation was to be familiar with concepts on language acquisition ($N=3$), as in the example of SRTOL (1974), which specifies that teachers should have knowledge on language acquisition.
Figure 4.3. Teachers’ Knowledge according to CCCC, CWPA, and NCTE.

The one peculiar occurrence that I coded as knowledge assumed is based on the observation that CWPA—“a national association of college and university faculty with professional interests in directing writing programs” (http://www.wpacouncil.org)–does not have any position statements on what teachers are expected to know in order to teach writing. The expectations relating to teachers’ knowledge in the CCCC, CWPA, and NCTE position statements seem to be distributed into knowing grammar rhetorically and having knowledge from applied linguistics (15 out of 17 or 88%). Therefore, I assigned Knowledge on Rhetorical Grammar and Applied Linguistics as one of the themes that these institutions bring to the teachers’ CoP.

The last category relates to what teachers or teacher preparation programs should do in order to achieve this expected knowledge. Although the CCCC, CWPA, and NCTE position statements offer a variety of expectations with regards to FYW teaching and learning, there were
only eight occurrences that related to how teachers should be prepared to teach. Three out of eight occurrences specify that there is a need for programs that would prepare teachers for linguistically diverse students. For example, the CCCC’s “Statement on Second Language Writing and Writers” (2014) urges writing programs to provide adequate “resources for teachers working with second language writers, including textbooks and readers on the teaching of second language writing as well as reference materials such as dictionaries and grammar handbooks for language learners.” In addition, one occurrence specifies that programs need to provide teachers with L2 resources, but four occurrences seem to suggest that teachers should educate themselves by studying how English works, gaining insights from other disciplines, and studying how to teach editing. For example, the CCCC’s “Position Statement on the Preparation and Professional Development of Teachers of Writing” (1982) states that teachers of English at all levels should participate in continuing education on how to teach “editing final drafts for punctuation, spelling, usage, and other conventions.” In terms of teacher preparation, half of the occurrences place the preparation responsibility on teacher preparation programs, while the other half places the responsibility on teachers themselves. As the responsibility seems to be equally distributed between teachers and preparation programs, the common theme that I see in these instances is Teacher Preparation Needs to Include Significant L2 Resources.

To sum up, the position statements issued by CCCC, CWPA, and NCTE reflect five themes that clearly show the expectations for students, teachers, and teacher preparation programs to continue learning and teaching language, including grammar and conventions. The themes are summarized in Table 4.1 and will be used in the third part of the chapter, where I utilize the lens of Communities of Practice to provide insight into how these resources inculcate teachers with responding practices.
Table 4.1. Summary of Themes in the CCCC, CWPA, and NCTE Position Statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing Fluency</td>
<td>Writing Fluency Matters</td>
<td>Writing teachers should provide “the formal and informal guidelines that define what is considered to be correct and appropriate, or incorrect and inappropriate, in a piece of writing” (WPA Framework, 2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Expectations</td>
<td>Students Need to Continue Learning Grammar</td>
<td>Students should “become aware how grammar represents the orderliness of language and makes meaningful communication possible,” (“NCTE Guideline on the Essentials of English,” 1982).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Expectations</td>
<td>Grammar Needs to Be Taught Rhetorically</td>
<td>Teachers need to teach “text- and sentence-level grammar in context to help students understand the structure and style of the English language” (“NCTE The Role of English Teachers,” 2006).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Knowledge</td>
<td>Knowledge on Rhetorical Grammar and Applied Linguistics</td>
<td>Writing teachers should provide “the formal and informal guidelines that define what is considered to be correct and appropriate, or incorrect and inappropriate, in a piece of writing” (“Framework for Success,” 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Preparation</td>
<td>Teacher Preparation Needs to Include Significant L2 Resources</td>
<td>Writing programs should provide adequate “resources for teachers working with second language writers, including textbooks and readers on the teaching of second language writing as well as reference materials such as dictionaries and grammar handbooks for language learners” (“CCCC Statement on Second Language,” 2014).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.2. Teacher preparation books.

Although the aforementioned standards and statements include the need for grammar instruction in composition classrooms, and although scholars have been proposing new methods for teaching grammar with rhetorical purposes in mind, it is questionable whether most composition teachers are aware of these new methods and whether they use them in their classrooms. In order to understand how writing teachers have been prepared to respond to students in terms of writing fluency, this section examines the most common writing teacher
preparation books. The process of selecting these books is described in Chapter Three as a part of my data collection rationale, and the final selection of books for review includes Roen et al. (2002), Sommers (2013), Straub (1999), Sullivan & Tinberg (2006), Villanueva & Arola (2011), and White (2006).

4.1.2.1. **Book review.**

Since the books by Roen et al. (2002), Sullivan & Tinberg (2006), and Villanueva & Arola (2011) address multiple topics that relate to the teaching of writing, I first provide a brief overview of general themes in these books, followed by a more detailed description on responding to linguistically diverse students and writing fluency. The edited collection by Roen et al. (2002), *Strategies for Teaching First-Year Composition*, opens up with a chapter that presents various perspectives on teaching writing, including the departmental, TA, cultural, and racial perspectives. The second and third chapters address issues of developing curricula and syllabi based on idealized outcomes and on process pedagogies. Chapters four and five provide insight into constructing assignments and guiding students to present their work in writing portfolios. Chapter six presents strategies for managing class interactions, such as civilized discussions and group work. The next two chapters focus on teaching invention and peer review, while chapters nine and ten discuss responding to rough drafts and responding to polished writing. Perceptions of teaching with technology and suggestions for teaching in computer-mediated classrooms are presented in chapter eleven, followed by guidelines and samples of teaching portfolios in chapter twelve. The last two chapters address teaching grammar, usage, style, and research skills. The collection clearly offers a full circle of topics that look at the teaching of writing from macro to micro contexts—from how writing is situated in the field and the writing community to how writing happens in the classroom.
The chapters that focus specifically on responding to student writing (chapters nine and ten) look at responding in two separate stages: responding to rough drafts that are expected to be revised and responding to final drafts with the purpose of facilitating students’ understanding of teachers’ assessment. The topics of responding to rough drafts discuss the differences between current-traditional and process approaches to responding, the use of conversational responding instead of directives, the creation of relationships between the classroom practices and responding practices, and the advantages of writing center consultations. The articles in this section share a common enthusiasm for process approaches that replaced the current-traditional focus on grammatically polished products. For example, Moneyhun (in Roen et al., 2002, pp. 326-329) advocates avoiding appropriation of students’ texts and usage of “rubber-stamp” comments, and instead suggests providing minimal comments on global issues, considering students intentions, and leaving comments on mechanics until the end. Rutz (in Roen et al., 2002, pp. 329-338) describes a study on how students react to anonymous comments (that is, without knowing whether the comments were from a teacher or a peer, a woman or a man, etc.). The directions for commenting were specific about “commenting on content, not grammar, spelling, or mechanics” (p. 331). It is interesting to note that the writing sample Rutz provides in the report was from a writer who had strong writing fluency, not only in terms of mechanics, but also in terms of using complex sentences, good transitions, and rich vocabulary. Kahn (in Roen et al., 2002, pp. 338-355) suggest utilizing “conversational responding and revising” that replaces codes such as “Awk” or “Frag” by sentences that reflect everyday language through questions and comments. Kahn also suggests to “turn away from mechanics” and to use questions and comments that encourage students to think about their ideas; however, Kahn does mention applying the same Socratic approach to “matters of correctness” (p. 351)—thus asking
students about their grammatical choices instead of correcting their mistakes. Straub (in Roen et al., 2002, pp. 355-366) offers a few basic responding principles that should enhance the effectiveness of teachers’ feedback. The main ideas that Straub proposes include creating a relationship between classroom practices and responding practices; avoiding “cryptic comments” (p. 359); and focusing on two to three areas instead of overwhelming students. Straub also suggests emphasizing on “matters of content, focus, organization, and purpose” (p. 360) and employing “minimal marking for errors” (p. 361). In terms of error, Straub proposes using a “tick mark in the margin next to the line where the error occurs. Leave it up to the student to locate and correct the error” (p. 361). Straub adds—in parenthesis—the option of taking fifteen minutes of class time to workshop on locating and correcting these errors. The rest of the chapter discusses how writing centers can support teachers and students through their writing development; in these chapters writing fluency is only briefly referred to as a reminders that writing centers “help students grow as writers, instead of merely showing them how to ‘fix’ their sentences” (Shannon, in Roen et al., 2002, p. 369). The wording in this sentence does not specifically say that growing as writers does not mean growing in terms of writing fluency; however, since “fixing sentences” is a term that quickly reminds us of the current-traditional approaches to writing, it is easy to assume that the author is referring to growing in terms of generating, focusing, and organizing ideas, and not so much in terms of writing fluency.

The next set of articles in Roen at al.’s (2002) collection focuses on responding to final drafts with the purpose of facilitating students’ understanding of teachers’ assessment. The authors of these articles discuss how to develop and use rubrics (Anson & Dannels, in Roen et al., 2002, pp. 387-401), what defines the criteria of good writing and how to weigh these criteria (Fischer, pp. 401-403; Hindman, pp. 404-421; Vaught-Alexander, pp. 435-436), how to use
portfolios to assess students’ writing (Hesse, in Roen et al., 2002, pp. 422-432), and how to conduct a “confrontative conference” (Fischer, in Roen et al., 2002, pp. 432-435). Writing fluency is very briefly addressed in Fischer’s article on what makes writing good, where the author mentions that linguistic expectations depend on the rhetorical situation and genre. A more detailed description on how to evaluate writing fluency is provided in Hesse’s article on assessing writing portfolios, where the author suggests how to describe the evaluation criteria for each grade of a portfolio. Hesse’s suggestions for “A” and “B” portfolios in terms of writing fluency include criteria such as “sentences of various types and lengths (especially cumulative and other subordinated structures),” and portfolios that are “virtually free of the kind of errors that compromise the effectiveness of the piece, and have virtually no stigmatized errors” (p. 424). The “C,” “D,” and “F” portfolios have similar descriptions as “A” and “B” with different levels of expected errors (“a few,” “some,” and unspecified). The use of words such as “effectiveness” and “stigmatized errors” by Hesse calls for error judgment based on its rhetorical effects and not its mere occurrence.

The second edited collection, What Is College-Level Writing by Sullivan & Tinberg (2006), includes articles that portray how college-level writing is viewed from the perspectives of high-school and college teachers, college students, composition scholars, department chairs, WPAs, and writing center directors. In the opening chapter, Sullivan (in Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006, pp. 1-28) discusses writing fluency issues in terms of underprepared and ESL students who require basic writing programs, but his discussion focuses more on the political forces that affect basic writing programs and does not elaborate on what it means to be “underprepared” for college-level writing. Later, however, Sullivan does specify that “to discuss and evaluate abstract ideas is, for [him] the single most important variable” of college-level writing (p. 16). Among
other expectations of what college-level students should demonstrate, Sullivan adds “the ability to integrate some of the material from the readings skillfully” and “the ability to follow the standard rules of grammar, punctuation, and spelling” (p. 17). These expectations, however, all relate to what students should demonstrate and not how teachers should support students in enhancing these skills. The next four chapters provide interesting insights into the perplexities that high-school teachers face when preparing their students for college writing. For example, Jordan, Nelson, Clauser, Albert, Cunningham, and Scholz (in Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006, pp. 36-40) express concern over being “saddled with the burden of teaching the [grammar] rules and gaining the reputation of a stickler, while professors get to sail through uncharted linguistic waters, throwing rules overboard at whim” (p. 37). This contradiction is confirmed by Mosley (in Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006, pp. 58-68), who argues that “college theory and high school practice differ greatly” (p. 60) mainly due to the curriculum that is prescribed by the school systems—a curriculum that places a variety of topics into high-school English classes, thus making it hard for teachers to spend enough time on writing itself. The remaining chapters in Sullivan & Tinberg’s (2006) collection testify to the inverted views of addressing writing fluency issues in college as compared to high-school. Although most articles include the need to nurture adherence to “Standard English as the lingua franca for writing in the academy” (Bloom, in Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006, p. 75), they do it in a tone that portrays attention to writing fluency as something separate from what should be valued in college writing (ideas, construction of arguments, students’ intentions, and so on). In fact, Lunsford even proposes that teachers should not bother responding to writing fluency issues as “those things come in time as writers become more and more engaged with their writing” (in Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006, p. 197). Instead, Lunsford proposes giving students “complex texts to read, write, and talk about” (p. 197). In
other words, students can figure it out on their own how to write, while teachers will simply evaluate their writing based on “superior control of diction, syntactic variety, and transition” (White, in Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006, p. 249). As in the previous section where I examined position statements, students are therefore expected to edit and proofread their writing, and they are expected to showcase writing fluency, but teachers are not necessarily expected to assist them in the process.

The last reviewed bestseller that relates to general topics on teacher preparation is *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory: A Reader* by Villanueva & Arola (2003). Although the bestseller has a newer edition that was published in 2011, there were no significant differences in the choices of articles that would affect my review, with the exception of one added article by Elbow that I included further below. The 2003 edition of the bestseller discusses writing as it relates to process, discourse, cognition, society, diversity, and technology. The collection opens up with Murray (originally published in 1972), who proposes to encourage students in their discovery of their own individual writing processes and suggests that, “Mechanics come last. It is important to the writer, once he has discovered what he has to say, that nothing get between him and his reader” (in Villanueva & Arola, 2003, p.6) This absolute priority of process over product seems to disregard those writers who actually prefer to make sure there is “nothing between him and his reader” as they are thinking through what they want to say—hence, mechanics at the same time, not “at last.” A more balanced view of process and product is suggested by Emig (originally published in 1977), who contends that “writing as process-and product […] establishes explicit and systematic conceptual groupings through lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical devices” (in Villanueva & Arola, 2003, p. 14). Hence, writers—as readers of their own ideas—need to see those ideas clearly in their writing, so attention to mechanics may not be so superfluous. In fact,
the study conducted by Perl (originally published in 1979) shows that, “Editing played a major role in the composing processes of the students” (in Villanueva & Arola, 2003, p. 35). Perl, however, attributes this habit to the “embedded processes the students bring with them” (p. 38), suggesting that teachers identify how to facilitate students’ transition from seeing writing as a surface (“cosmetic”) process to a process of discovering meaning. Villanueva & Arola’s (2003) collection includes one of the most frequently cited articles on the topic of addressing error—“Grammar, Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammar” by Hartwell (originally published in 1985). Hartwell cites Emig’s contention that “the grammar issue is a prime example of ‘magical thinking’: the assumption that students will learn only what we teach and only because we teach” (in Villanueva & Arola, 2003, p. 205)—but does not explain how this assumption differs in relation to teaching anything else that we teach in college composition. However, the notion of teaching grammar per se (as the studies presented by Hartwell have done), is not the same as the notion of bringing attention to specific writing fluency issues in students’ writing. In fact, the notion of teaching grammar typically brings up concepts such as parts of speech or sentence diagramming, while writing fluency relates more to the quality and clarity of the message that the writer is trying to get across. Nevertheless, the majority of teacher preparation books address writing fluency in negative terms, mainly because they rely on teaching grammar as memorizing linguistic rules. In the similar manner, Hartwell’s article seems to criticize the current-traditional approach to writing that is presumably outdated in today’s process and post-process classrooms. Also, Hartwell clearly approaches the topic through the lens of monolingual English speakers by citing Francis (1954) who claimed that “all speakers of a language above the age of five or six know how to use its complex forms of organization with considerable skill” (Francis, as cited in Hartwell, in Villanueva & Arola, 2003, p. 209). This assumption, however, shows a big gap
between speaking to writing—two genres that are considerably different and that present a challenge to all writers whether they are monolingual or multilingual. In short, Hartwell’s article is full of assumptions that may no longer be valid in today’s college composition classrooms, so maybe it is truly time to “move on to more interesting areas of inquiry” (Hartwell, in Villanueva & Arola, 2003, p. 228).

These challenges are studied by authors who looked into the cognitive processes of writing. For example, Flower & Hayes (originally published in 1981) argued that writing does not happen in organized stages that neatly follow one another. While the authors agree that there is a hierarchy within the writing process, they assert that these stages are “intimately bound up with the ongoing, moment-to-moment process of composing” (in Villanueva & Arola, 2003, p. 282). Closely related to writing fluency is what Flower & Hayes call translating—“the process of putting ideas into visible language” (in Villanueva & Arola, 2003, p. 282). The authors distinguish between writers whose “translating” skills are automatic and writers who struggle with putting their ideas into forms demanded by written English. For the latter, “the task of translating can interfere with the more global process of planning what one wants to say” (in Villanueva & Arola, 2003, p. 282). Flower & Hayes point out that sophisticated writers do not linger on how their ideas are translated into writing because they are focused on writing as discovery, not as producing correct sentences.

Villanueva & Arola’s (2003) collection also include articles on basic writers, whose writing struggles typically derive from the inability to analyze and synthesize. For example, Lunsford (originally published in 1979) follows the works by Vygotsky and Britton and proposes “learning by doing” instead of learning through abstract principles. When applying this approach to the basic writing classroom, Lunsford proposes grammar exercises that are inductive and
analytic, thus having students observe a feature and describe it in their own words instead of using drill exercises based on abstract principles. Similarly, Shaughnessy (originally published in 1976) criticizes the traditional teaching of rules by presenting to students “flawless schemes for achieving order and grammaticality” (in Villanueva & Arola, 2003, p. 314). The author argues that this approach disregards many factors behind students’ errors (for example, a student’s mother tongue or dialect, unawareness of the differences between spoken and written genres, and others). Shaughnessy then suggests “diving in” and becoming more profound in the treatment of error by determining why an error is occurring instead of simply showing how to correct it. These suggestions, however, might have been ignored by programs or teachers preparing for FYW or upper-level writing courses, since Lunsford’s and Shaughnessy’s focus is on basic writers. A more inclusive discussion of what to do about writing fluency is provided by Lu (originally published in 1994), who addresses the issue of error in multicultural classrooms. Lu points out to the contradictions between the current composition theories (e.g., focus on ideas) and practices (e.g., students’ and teachers’ frustrations over stylistic issues) in a world where correct English is assumed to be a sign of educated writers. The author suggests that “one way of helping students to deal with this frustration would be to connect their ‘difficulties’ with the refusal of ‘real’ writers to reproduce the hegemonic conventions of written English” (in Villanueva & Arola, 2003, p. 492). Instead of reproducing the conventions, Lu proposes involving students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds in analyzing and discussing the perceived errors in order to understand their origins, consequences, and alternatives. The conflict that teachers face when addressing writing fluency issues is also mentioned by Elbow (originally published in 1999), who phrases the dilemma in the following terms:
On the one hand, I feel an obligation not to force all my students to conform to the language and culture of mainstream English. (See ‘The Students' Right To Their Own Language’ [Committee].) On the other hand, I feel an obligation to give all my students access to the written language of power and prestige. (in Villanueva & Arola, 2011, p. 641)

Elbow brings up many points that relate to the differences in English dialects, as well as the differences between spoken and written English, but his main goal is to create a classroom that serves as a safe space for student writers to express themselves without worrying about correctness, while at the same time learning the language of power. The solutions that Elbow proposes are basically two: first, help students write and rewrite their ideas in their own language until they know exactly what they want to say, and then help them with writing fluency issues; and second, teach students to seek help with writing fluency issues from any source they can (writing centers, friends).

The last article relating to language issues in Villanueva & Arola’s (2003) collection discusses the growing number of non-native English speakers in U.S. colleges. Matsuda (originally published in 1999) points out that “the linguistic and cultural differences they [ESL students] bring to the classroom pose a unique set of challenges to writing teachers” (in Villanueva & Arola, 2003, p. 774) The author argues that there is a significant lack of research in the field of composition that would facilitate “the need for writing instructors to become more sensitive to the unique needs of ESL writers” (in Villanueva & Arola, 2003, p. 774). Matsuda’s article presents a historical overview of the forces that influenced “the division of labor between composition specialists and ESL specialists” (in Villanueva & Arola, 2003, p. 788)—a division that, according to Matsuda, places ESL students into courses that treat writing problems and
linguistic problems separately. The author, however, does not advocate that the two fields should be merged into one; instead, Matsuda proposes to include L2 elements into composition practices by including readings on ESL writing in teacher preparation programs and in graduate programs in composition studies. In addition, Matsuda suggests that composition scholars include ESL perspectives in their research and that WPAs create ESL-friendly learning environments. While Matsuda’s article offers suggestions for integrating ESL into composition studies in order to support both teachers and students in linguistically diverse classrooms, Villanueva & Arola’s (2003) collection does not include any studies that followed Matsuda’s ideas. It is important to note that most of the articles in the collection are quite outdated (from the 60s, 70s, and 80s)—with the exception of Elbow’s and Matsuda’s articles from 1999, which is still more than 15 years ago. These works are a crucial part of the field historically, but the collection might need to be updated with studies and theories that consider writing (whether as process, product, or process-and-product) in today’s linguistically diverse classroom.

While these collections address multiple topics that relate to the teaching of writing, the bestselling teacher preparation books reviewed next are specific to responding to student writing in college composition (Straub, 1999; White, 2007; Sommers, 2013) and responding to L2 students in college composition (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Ferris, 2011; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014). In A Sourcebook for Responding to Student Writing, Straub (1999) continues the work started in Twelve Readers Reading (Straub & Lunsford, 1995) by presenting samples of how “good teachers” (Straub, 1999, p. 1) comment to student writing. While Straub does not explain the criteria for “good teachers,” he does specify that the selected commentators are “well-recognized composition specialists and noted teachers of writing” such as Edward White, Anne Gere, Peter Elbow, and Chris Anson, among others (p. 1). The goal of the book is to provide
various models of responding practices that teachers can choose from. The majority of the book is exactly that: individual student samples that are commented on by different teachers who show that the same piece of writing can be responded to in different styles and with different foci. The focus of practically all samples is idea development, as well as organization in order to bring ideas together. Most comments in the margin are in the form of questions—asking for clarification of ideas—while the end comments are typically positive and provide encouragement on how to revise the draft in terms of ideas.

The comments that relate to writing fluency are rare (or none by specific teachers), and they either tell students not to worry about it or point the errors to students without explaining why these errors are an issue. From all the samples in the book, these were the comments in the margin relating to writing fluency: “Oral tone” (p. 19), “How could you combine these sentences?” (p. 51), “Try reading this aloud to hear what you’ve written” (p. 72), “Try a dash here instead of a comma” (p. 86), “Maybe omit? Do you see why?” (p. 87), “See if you understand how I’ve used semi-colons (;) and commas here and why” (p. 88), “This, by the way, isn’t a sentence” (p. 91), “Punctuate?” (pp. 92-93), “Word form?” (p. 92), and “This is a sentence fragment” (p. 95). While the comments relating to ideas were typically more elaborate, the comments to writing fluency were very brief and did not explain how or why these issues affect the reader. Only one comment explained to the student why a certain sentence style was problematic:

And, look at the structure of this sentence. Your phrase, “starting slow, then fast, then slow, and then fast again,” seems like conversational shorthand. I think you mean something like: “by starting with a slow number, then moving to a fast-paced song, offering another slow number, and finally moving to a second very fast song…” Or,
could you simply say, “by moving back and forth between slow and fast songs.” …At any rate, the way you have your sentence structured now makes it very hard to see what the subject is for the verb “would leave.” (p. 95)

The teacher here clearly took time to engage with the student’s writing style, but the rephrased examples could be perceived as appropriation of student’s writing. Another teacher provided two comments that also offered some sense of audience: “See what you can do with punctuation here—to help your reader follow” (p. 69), and “Use punctuation here to make reader stop and pause” (p. 70). Here, the audience is considered, but the use of generic “punctuation” may not be very helpful for the student.

Those teachers who pointed to writing fluency problems in the margin also reiterated these issues in the end comments, mostly in the same generic manner: “I have marked six places where you failed to recognize sentence boundaries. Please examine these examples and see if you can rewrite them correctly” (p. 21). The same teacher who considered audience in the margin also referred to audience in the end comment: “Watch sentence structure and punctuation—particularly in the areas marked with *. Remember that our readers depend on punctuation signals to help them read with understanding” (p. 71). Aside from a few exceptions that suggested revising for punctuation, most end comments that referred to writing fluency suggested ignoring the potential issues:

- “Don’t worry about sentence structure, spelling and punctuation in the next draft. Just concentrate on what you want to tell your audience” (p. 17).
- “This is a preliminary draft, so you won’t be worrying too much at this point about the grammatical and other surface matters, but when you’ve developed it further, you’ll,
you’re gonna want to be tough on yourself about all these little, you know, you shift tenses […], spelling […], and commas” (p. 38).

- “There are, of course, one or two spots where I’d like to see you tighten up your sentence structure, but, quite frankly, I don’t want to deal with them now” (p. 68).

It is important to note, however, that the sample student drafts did not show any problematic patterns that would affect reader’s comprehension. With the exception of a few comma splices and rare fragments, the reading of the samples was easy and did not call for specific attention to writing fluency issues. Unfortunately—as I show in Chapter Five—the students’ drafts in my study do not reflect the same level of writing fluency as the samples in Straub’s (and Straub & Lunsford’s) study—perhaps their samples were not true student examples, they were edited student examples, or they were the best of what the instructor had to work with. Another important consideration is the stage of the sample drafts that are used in Straub’s (1999) book. The first set of samples includes early drafts, in which the teachers point out that ideas matter more than writing fluency issues. The next set of samples shows final drafts, in which writing fluency issues are evaluated and assessed (though not commented upon). The question that arises is: what happens between the early drafts and the final drafts? Do teachers assign any additional drafts in between, in which they “deal with them [sentence issues]” (p. 68)? Straub (1999) does not offer any responding models from well-recognized composition specialists to these later drafts, thus leaving us with the idea that responding to writing fluency is not a teacher’s responsibility, while grading it is.

In addition to samples of teacher responses, Straub (1999) includes nine articles on response that influence the field significantly. Renowned scholars, such as Edward M. White, Nancy Sommers, Chris Anson, and others, discuss topics ranging from theories of response that
support teaching writing as a process to practical suggestions on responding strategies. The common trait of all articles is that responding should support the discovery, development, and organization of ideas. The authors expose the importance of not appropriating students’ texts and instead paying attention to what students’ intended to write before suggesting revisions based on our intentions as readers. In addition, the authors suggest that teachers consider what type of response is the most suitable for a particular student and paper at a particular time and that they provide praise for what students did well. The only articles that mention writing fluency are the articles on evaluating and assessing student writing. Both articles propose “holistic” scoring (for example, assessing student writing through portfolios and not based on individual assignments), and both include competence in syntax and mechanics as a part of their sample rubrics. While these articles elaborate on how to approach evaluating and assessing the content and organization of student papers, they do not mention how to do the same with regards to syntax and mechanics. As in the case of sample commented drafts, then, the articles on responding do not mention responding to syntax and mechanics, while both are included in the articles on grading, where they are only included in the rubrics, but not discussed in terms of how to approach their evaluation.

The next bestselling book on responding is Assigning, Responding, Evaluating: A Writing Teacher’s Guide by White (2006). The book focuses mainly on how to construct and deliver assignments, and how to create and score grading rubrics. There is also a brief exercise on teaching grammatical sentences and a short chapter on responding. In the exercise on grammatical sentences, White (2006) suggests to use sample problematic sentences and “take enough class time with this set of sentences to discuss both the problems and the alternative improvements that the students will suggest” (p. 16). The author points out to the research that
has shown how recognizing grammatical errors does not help improve writing and adds that “one’s own sentences are designed to carry meaning for a purpose and an audience, not merely to be correct” (p. 16). Nevertheless, White (2006) contends that familiarity with grammatical concepts may help students edit their papers and suggests connecting the exercise sentences to students’ own writing by referring to them when responding to students’ drafts. In the chapter on responding to student writing, White (2006) notes that responding should not be harsh, sarcastic, and vague as such comments do not motivate students to revise their writing; instead, comments should be encouraging, clear, and specific in order for them to be meaningful to students. White (2006) also recommends incorporating revision into grading, as otherwise we send a message to students “that the product is all that we value” (p. 53). For White (2006), assessing revision can happen in a variety of approaches, from checkmarks to numerical scales that are later incorporated in the final grade. With regards to response, White (2006) emphasizes the importance of focusing “on the conception and organization of the paper” and not on editing, hence “not to worry about mechanics” (p. 54). If, however, a teacher is “bothered” by errors, White (2006) proposes commenting on those errors in the end comments with a sentence such as, “Be sure to clean up the copy after you revise so that readers will be able to understand and respect what you have to say” (p. 54). Thus, grammatical errors are again equaled to mechanics (mainly spelling and punctuation), and they are a marginal issue that students should be able to “clean up” without the teacher specifying what those issues are, why they constitute an issue, and where to seek help. In a later chapter, White (2006) discusses the assessment of what he calls “special needs students,” such as students with physical and learning disabilities, along with ESL and Generation 1.5 students, and explains that these students may need additional feedback to editing issues, but does not elaborate on how teachers could provide such feedback.
Another bestselling book on responding—*Responding to Student Writers*—is a practical guide for teachers, written by Sommers (2013). The author emphasizes the importance of responding as thoughtful readers and not simply as teachers, while at the same time holding students’ intentions in sight. Sommers (2013) maintains that “responding to student writers is a conversation that begins in the classroom,” (p. 1), and just like we would not use codes such as “Awk” in our classroom conversations, we should not use them in our responses. Similarly, Sommers (2013) reminds us that we would not try “to teach every compositional lesson in a single day” (p. 1), so our responses should also be selective and not overwhelming to students. Another strategy that the author suggests is to differentiate between rough and final drafts in terms of how we formulate the response. For example, Sommers (2013) advises that response to rough drafts should focus on the draft itself (e.g., by commenting on how to revise the specific thesis statement), while response to final drafts should focus on how the student could approach the same issue in the next assignment (e.g., by providing more general guidelines for introducing a topic). As previous authors have suggested, Sommers (2013) also professes encouragement instead of criticism to motivate revision, proposes connecting responding practices to classroom practices to preserve the dialogue with students, and suggests commenting on a few identified patterns instead of on all the issues a draft might show to not overwhelm the student. With regards to writing fluency, Sommers (2013) recommends responding to those errors that “impede communication” (p. 31) and advises to use minimal marking so that students “become their own copy editors [which] encourages them to develop a reflective and analytical habit of mind,” (p. 32). In addition to minimal marking, however, Sommers (2013) adds that she also asks students to keep editing logs where they trace their sentences, grammar rules, and corrections—an approach that teaches students how to find and improve their own problematic patterns.
Although Sommers recognizes the need for attention to writing fluency issues, teachers are advised to provide a bare minimum of comments and encourage students to figure out these issues with the help of handbooks and writing centers. To sum up—with the exception of White’s (2006) brief mentioning of ESL and Generation 1.5 students, the bestselling books on responding to student writers describe strategies for responding to monolingual mainstream English-speaking students. This does not mean that teacher preparation programs do not include readings that relate to linguistically diverse students. It does mean, however, that the bestselling books in the composition field do not provide readings on that topic, so the interested teachers need to look elsewhere. Also, the present review of teacher preparation books is not able to predict whether the preparation programs actually assign readings from these sections when preparing their writing teachers. The review does, however, show the tendencies of the field that surrounds and grooms these writing programs.

4.1.2.2. Recurring themes.

Similar to the position statements, the reviewed bestselling writing teacher preparation books (Roen et al., 2002; Sommers, 2013; Straub, 1999; Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006; Villanueva & Arola, 2003; and White, 2006) show resembling tendencies in all areas that they address. Through a constant revision of codes and subsequent codes in my qualitative content analysis method, I identified three major categories that the statements portray with regards to responding to students: (1) the content, (2) the focus, and (3) the linguistic features of response. In addition to the categories specific to response, I identified four categories relating to more general views of language and writing fluency: (1) attitudes toward writing fluency; (2) expectations relating to students’ learning; (3) expectations relating to teaching; and (4) expectations relating to teachers’ knowledge. At the end of each category, I specify which major theme emerges through the data.
based on the frequencies of my coding. These themes are then summarized in a table that contributes to the third part of the chapter, where I utilize the lens of Communities of Practice to provide insight into how these resources inculcate teachers with responding practices.

The content of response had two most frequent codes suggest to consider student intentions \((N=3)\) and to create a relationship between classroom and responding \((N=3)\). For example, among other authors, Sommers (2013) and White (2006) expose the importance of not appropriating students' texts and instead paying attention to what students' intended to write before suggesting revisions based on our intentions as readers, and they suggest creating a relationship between classroom practices and responding practices (Straub, 1999, p. 359) since “responding to student writers is a conversation that begins in the classroom” (Sommers, 2013, p. 1). As Figure 4.4 shows, the bestselling writing teacher preparation books also suggest to foster critical thinking, avoid appropriation, avoid fixing student errors, and help students grow as writers.

![Figure 4.4. Suggested Response Content in Writing Teacher Preparation Books](image_url)
In terms of the content of response, writing fluency is only briefly referred to in the suggestion to avoid fixing student mistakes as in the reminder that writing centers should “help students grow as writers, instead of merely showing them how to ‘fix’ their sentences” (Shannon, in Roen et al., 2002, p. 369). Although the wording here does not suggest that growing as writers does not mean growing in terms of writing fluency, the expression “fixing sentences” is a term that quickly reminds us of the current-traditional approaches to writing, and thus it is easy to assume that the author is referring to growing in terms of generating, focusing, and organizing ideas, and not so much in terms of writing fluency. Considering that the most frequent suggestions about the content of response in the bestselling writing teacher preparation books relate to letting the student writer have power over their writing, I assigned Foster Student Autonomy as one of the themes that these books bring to the teachers’ CoP.

The focus of response, according to my analysis, should be on ideas first (N=10), while the books are specific about attending to grammar last (N=8) or to ignore grammar (N=6). For example, White (2006) emphasizes the importance of focusing “on the conception and organization of the paper” and not on editing, hence “not to worry about mechanics” (p. 54). Similarly, Villanueva & Arola (2003) collection includes Murray’s suggestions that, “Mechanics come last. It is important to the writer, once he has discovered what he has to say, that nothing get between him and his reader” (in Villanueva & Arola, 2003, p. 6). Sample suggestions to ignore grammar completely come from Straub (1999), who advises, “There are, of course, one or two spots where I'd like to see you tighten up your sentence structure, but, quite frankly, I don't want to deal with them now” (Straub, 1999, p. 68).

A rare exception that suggests focusing on errors that impede communication comes from Sommers (2013), who recommends responding to those errors that “impede
communication” (p. 31) and advises to use minimal marking so that students “become their own copy editors [which] encourages them to develop a reflective and analytical habit of mind” (p. 32). Considering that the most frequent suggestions about the focus of response in the bestselling writing teacher preparation books relate to ideas, I assigned Disregard Writing Fluency as one of the themes that these books bring to the teachers’ CoP.

The linguistic features of responses portrayed through examples in the analyzed books show a strong tendency towards generic responses (N=14) that could be applied to any text and that do not provide any explanation as to why a certain sentence is problematic. For example, Straub (1999) comments to writing fluency issues with comments such as, “How could you combine these sentences?” (p. 51), or “Try reading this aloud to hear what you've written” (p. 72). Only one example was specific to the text as it explained to the student why a sentence style was problematic:

And, look at the structure of this sentence. Your phrase, “starting slow, then fast, then slow, and then fast again,” seems like conversational shorthand. I think you mean something like: “by starting with a slow number, then moving to a fast-paced song, offering another slow number, and finally moving to a second very fast song…” Or, could you simply say, “by moving back and forth between slow and fast songs.” …At any rate, the way you have your sentence structured now makes it very hard to see what the subject is for the verb “would leave.” (Straub, 1999, p. 95)

Figure 4.5 shows the strong tendencies of providing sample comments that are generic and arhetorical.
In fact, rhetorical comments ($N=13$) were the second most frequent occurrence in the sample comments as opposed to rhetorical comments ($N=3$). The sample comments provided by Straub (1999) most frequently pointed out to an issue with comments such as, “Maybe omit? Do you see why?” (p. 87) or “This, by the way, isn't a sentence” (p. 91), while the comments do not explain how these issues affect the audience or the purpose of writing. One of the rare comments that did consider writing fluency issues through a rhetorical lens is “Use punctuation here to make reader stop and pause” (Straub, 1999, p. 70). These examples show that, in terms of the types of comments that teachers are offered as models for responding to writing fluency, the theme that the bestselling writing teacher preparation books contribute to teachers’ CoP is Grammar Does Not Need to Be Taught Rhetorically.

As opposed to the attitudes toward writing fluency in the NCTE, CCC, and CWPA position statements, the teacher preparation books show quite a different picture. In fact, the
most frequent attitudes show that *conventions are marginal* \((N=13)\). For example, Elbow (1999) suggests that teachers should let students express themselves without worrying about correctness, while White (2006) contends that “one’s own sentences are designed to carry meaning for a purpose and an audience, not merely to be correct” (p. 16). Figure 4.6 shows how writing fluency and conventions are viewed in the bestselling writing teacher preparation books.

![Figure 4.6. Writing Fluency Attitudes in Writing Teacher Preparation Books](image)

Based on these attitudes, I assigned *Writing fluency is Irrelevant* as one of the themes that the bestselling writing teacher preparation books bring to the teachers’ CoP.

While writing fluency appears to be irrelevant when responding to student writing, students are expected to *demonstrate writing fluency* in their papers \((N=5)\) and they need to *learn editing strategies* \((N=1)\). Teachers, however, are not expected to address writing fluency or to teach editing. In fact, the most frequent occurrence relating to teaching writing fluency is that *students are responsible* \((N=10)\) for their own learning when it comes to writing fluency and that *teaching conventions is irrelevant* \((N=9)\), while the least frequent occurrence was to *teach editing*
Students' responsibility is portrayed by examples such as the one proposed by Straub (in Roen et al., 2002), who suggests using a “tick mark in the margin next to the line where the error occurs. Leave it up to the student to locate and correct the error” (p. 361). That teaching conventions is irrelevant is evident from examples such as when Hartwell claims that “all speakers of a language above the age of five or six know how to use its complex forms of organization with considerable skill” (Francis, as cited in Hartwell, in Villanueva & Arola, 2003, p. 209). Similarly, Lunsford (in Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006) states that teachers should not bother responding to writing fluency issues as “those things come in time as writers become more and more engaged with their writing” (p. 197). The one occurrence that briefly mentions teaching editing is also provided by Straub, who adds—in parenthesis—the option of taking fifteen minutes of class time to workshop on locating and correcting these errors. As Figure 4.7 shows, if grammar is to be taught, it should be taught in the writing context (N=5).

![Figure 4.7. Teaching Expectations according to Writing Teacher Preparation Books](image-url)
The writing context is brought up by Lunsford (in Villanueva & Arola, 2003), who proposes grammar exercises that are inductive and analytic, thus having students observe a feature and describe it in their own words instead of using drill exercises based on abstract principles. Other tendencies lean towards students’ responsibility again by suggesting that frequent writing is enough \( (N=3) \) and that students can seek help from the writing center \( (N=2) \). Considering the predominance of the occurrences that place the responsibility of addressing writing fluency issues on students, I assigned Writing fluency Does Not Need to Be Taught as one of the themes that the bestselling writing teacher preparation books bring to the teachers’ CoP.

It comes as no surprise, then, that the expectations relating to what teachers should know in order to teach writing fluency are practically non-existent. While two occurrences called for the teachers’ knowledge of conventions and rhetoric, most occurrences showed that knowledge is assumed \( (N=13) \) or that knowledge is not necessary \( (N=2) \), while other types of knowledge regarding language are not addressed at all (Figure 4.8).

**Figure 4.8.** Teachers’ Knowledge according to Writing Teacher Preparation Books
The *knowledge of conventions and rhetoric* is briefly addressed by Fischer (in Roen et al., 2002), who mentions that linguistic expectations depend on the rhetorical situation and genre. Similarly, Hesse (in Roen at al., 2002) suggests that assessment of student portfolios should include criteria such as that writing is “virtually free of the kind of errors that compromise the effectiveness of the piece, and have virtually no stigmatized errors” (p. 424). Although the authors do not specifically state what teachers should know, they seem to subtly suggest that teachers should be familiar with these conventions.

That *knowledge is assumed* is evident from the fact that none of the teacher preparation articles or books provides directions for teachers as to where they can find support for their approaches to writing fluency issues. For example, Straub (in Roen et al., 2002) suggests the option of taking fifteen minutes of class time to workshop on locating and correcting these errors, and White (2006) advises using sample problematic sentences and “tak[ing] enough class time with this set of sentences to discuss both the problems and the alternative improvements that the students will suggest” (p. 16), but neither authors offer resources that teachers can use in order to address these issues. Similarly, White (2006) discusses the assessment of special needs students, including ESL and Generation 1.5 students, and explains that these students may need additional feedback to editing issues, but does not elaborate on how teachers could provide such feedback. Other examples suggest that *knowledge is not necessary* since it is enough to only use minimal marking so that students “become their own copy editors” (Sommers, 2013, p. 32). In other cases, teachers are advised to provide generic summative comments such as, “Be sure to clean up the copy after you revise so that readers will be able to understand and respect what you have to say” (White, 2006, p. 54). As these examples tend to place a very light and generic
burden of dealing with errors on teachers, the common theme that I see in these instances is

*Teachers’ Knowledge Is Marginal.*

To sum up, the bestselling writing teacher preparation books reflect seven themes that clearly show how writing fluency is addressed in the best practices for responding to student writing. The themes are summarized in Table 4.2 and will be used in the third part of the chapter, where I utilize the lens of Communities of Practice to provide insight into how these resources inculcate teachers with responding practices.

**Table 4.2. Summary of Themes in the Bestselling Writing Teacher Preparation Books**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content of Response</td>
<td>Foster Student Autonomy</td>
<td>Sommers (2013) and White (2006) expose the importance of not appropriating students’ texts and instead paying attention to what students’ intended to write before suggesting revisions based on our intentions as readers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus of Response</td>
<td>Disregard Writing Fluency</td>
<td>“There are, of course, one or two spots where I’d like to see you tighten up your sentence structure, but, quite frankly, I don't want to deal with them now” (Straub, 1999, p. 68).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic Features of Responses</td>
<td>Grammar Does Not Need to Be Considered Rhetorically</td>
<td>“This, by the way, isn't a sentence” (Straub, 1999, p. 91).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Fluency Attitudes</td>
<td>Responding to Writing Fluency is Irrelevant</td>
<td>Lunsford (in Sullivan &amp; Tinberg, 2006) states that teachers should not bother responding to writing fluency issues as “those things come in time as writers become more and more engaged with their writing” (p. 197).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Expectations</td>
<td>Demonstrate Writing Fluency</td>
<td>College-level students should demonstrate “the ability to integrate some of the material from the readings skillfully” and “the ability to follow the standard rules of grammar, punctuation, and spelling” (Sullivan, in Sullivan &amp; Tinberg, 2006), p. 17).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Expectations</td>
<td>Writing fluency Does Not Need to Be Taught</td>
<td>Straub (in Roen et al., 2002) suggests using a “tick mark in the margin next to the line where the error occurs. Leave it up to the student to locate and correct the error” (p. 361).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Knowledge</td>
<td>Teacher Knowledge Is Marginal</td>
<td>“Be sure to clean up the copy after you revise so that readers will be able to understand and respect what you have to say” (White, 2006, p. 54).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1.3. Student textbooks.

The process of selecting these textbooks is described in Chapter Three as a part of my data collection rationale, and the final selection of books for review includes Graff et al., 2012; Axelrod & Cooper, 2013; and Hacker & Sommers, 2015; Lunsford et al. (2010), and Wisocki & Lynch (2011).

4.1.3.1. Textbook review.

The first textbook, “They say / I say”: The moves that matter in academic writing by Graff et al. (2012), focuses on teaching students to develop arguments by situating their claims in relation to the claims of others. The book guides students through understanding why and how to frame their arguments with signal phrases and transitional expressions, starting from how to present and interpret what others claim to how to respond to those claims and how to extrapolate the significance of these claims. Although the book offers template sentences that prompt students to consider opposite views and compose meaningful responses, it does not address writing fluency issues that students might encounter in their writing.

The next widely used first-year composition textbook is The St. Martin's Guide to Writing by Axelrod & Cooper (2013). Throughout the textbook, the authors provide contemporary articles on a variety of topics and from a variety of genres. Each article is then examined for its rhetorical features, such as purpose and audience, as well as for its lexical features, such as descriptive language use. Then, the authors include writing prompts and exercises that are accompanied by definitions and examples of terms that a particular section is targeting (such as paraphrasing and summarizing or cause and effect). An impressive characteristic of this textbook is how grammatical features are integrated in the reading samples and writing prompts. In fact, the color-coded tags also include grammatical terms such as action
verbs, prepositional phrases, and even tenses—

with a clear reference to the rhetorical effects of these choices. Where appropriate, the authors include specific notes for multilingual writers on topics such as tense construction or word choices. In addition to placing grammatical choices and their rhetorical effects directly in the context of reading and writing, the end of each chapter of the textbook includes a “Revising, Formatting, Editing, and Proofreading” section that the authors refer to as “a troubleshooting guide” with typical problems that writers encounter when revising and editing. Both the problems and the solutions explain why these issues matter to our readers. The textbook is accompanied by a detailed instructor’s manual that offers icebreaker ideas and activities for each section, as well as resources for the challenges that teachers might encounter in each section. The instructor’s manual also provides the typical issues that teachers might encounter when responding to students drafts, though it does not point out to the teacher where to look for solutions either in the manual or the textbook. Due to its attempt to cover such a wide array of writing and rhetorical issues, the textbook may seem a bit confusing and overwhelming; however, it is the first textbook that I have encountered that actually addresses grammar rhetorically and in the context of reading and writing, instead of placing it in a separate section as a “quick reference.”

One such quick reference handbook is the third bestselling textbook, *A Writer’s Reference* by Hacker & Sommers (2015). Considering the fact that the book’s purpose is to serve as a reference and not as a full-fledged composition textbook, it is a teacher’s responsibility to fit specific parts of the reference into the context of students’ writing. The Reference starts with a general section on composing and revising that describes the various parts of the writing process, including editing and proofreading. The practical tips and examples on how to edit (e.g., creating a personal editing log) and how to proofread (e.g., reading out loud or
in reverse order) explain that these two parts of the process are crucial to writing as errors “can be distracting and annoying,” while careful editing and proofreading show respect for readers as well as for writers’ own writing (Hacker & Sommers, 2015, pp. 30-32). The next section focuses on strategies for reading and writing critically in the academic setting. This section offers guidelines and examples for conversing with the readings, for evaluating the rhetorical appeals, and for constructing strong arguments that avoid fallacies. The Reference also includes models for MLA, APA, and CMS citation styles, but the largest part of the Reference is dedicated to the so-called local elements of writing: sentence style, words choice, grammatical sentences, multilingual challenges, punctuation and mechanics, and basic grammar. The explanations and examples in these sections are written from the point of view of how they affect readers’ comprehension. For example, when discussing parallel structures, Hacker & Sommers (2015) explain that “readers expect items in a series to appear in parallel grammatical form. When one or more of the items violate readers’ expectation, a sentence will be needlessly awkward,” (p. 129). Another trait of the Reference are the callboxes that point out the places where multilingual writers might encounter challenges. As an example, when discussing subject-verb agreement, verbs, or sentence fragments, the authors note that certain languages, such as Russian, Turkish, Spanish, and Japanese, do not require subjects or linking verbs; then, the authors provide corrected examples and directions to the section where challenges of multilingual writers are further discussed (Hacker & Sommers, 2015, p. 206, p. 212, and p. 235, p. 270). Thus, the Reference approaches grammatical issues from the perspective of readers’ comprehension, and it also provides insight into the challenges that multilingual writers might encounter. These characteristics make the Reference a resourceful guide not only for students, but also for teachers who feel underprepared to address writing fluency issues.
Similarly to Axelrod & Cooper (2013), *Everything's an Argument* by Lunsford et al. (2010) also includes contemporary articles on a variety of topics and from a variety of genres. Each chapter discusses arguments through a different lens, such as reading, writing, and presenting arguments. Most chapters also include a section titled “Looking at Style,” in which the authors typically provide examples of sentences with a brief explanation of how the sentences achieve different effects. The authors ask questions such as, “Do stylistic choices, even something as simple as the use of contractions or personal pronouns, bring readers comfortably close to a writer […]?” (Lunsford et al., 2010, p. 117). In addition to these brief sections on style in each chapter, the authors also include a separate chapter on “Style and Presentation of Arguments.” This chapter discusses word choice, sentence structure, punctuation, and figurative language, and it provides various examples with an explanation why they are effective or not. For example, the authors explain, “Rosen chooses a coordinate structure, with the first clause about Roth’s arthritic hands perfectly balanced by the following clause describing the results of putting those hands on a keyboard” (Lunsford et al., 2010, p. 422). In their discussion of stylistic choices, however, the authors do not highlight or point to examples of contractions, personal pronouns, or coordinate structures, thus assuming that students are already familiar with those terms. In the same manner, the accompanying instructor’s manual guides teachers through teaching the sections on figurative language, but it does not offer any assistance for teaching sentence structure, punctuation, or coordination.

The last reviewed textbook, *Compose, Design, Advocate - A Rhetoric for Integrating Written, Visual, and Oral Communication* by Wysocki & Lynch (2011), provides guidelines for composing in the written, oral, and visual genres with a specific focus on composing arguments and advocacy. In terms of writing fluency, the book includes a brief section that explains the
difference between revising, editing, and proofreading, but the suggested strategies are very
general and do not show examples of what is more effective in terms of language use when
composing arguments. For example, the suggestions for editing and proofreading tell students to
pay attention to the computer’s spell-checker in order to see what might be wrong in their
sentences or to read their papers aloud and listen “for places that do not read smoothly,”
(Wysocki & Lynch, 2011, p. 213). Hence, the book does not address writing fluency issues that
students might encounter in their writing.

4.1.3.2. Recurring themes.

The reviewed college composition textbooks show similar tendencies to writing fluency
as teacher preparation books, and my qualitative content analysis method yielded three major
categories: (1) attitudes toward writing fluency and (2) expectations relating to students’
learning, and (3) expectations relating to teaching. The attitudes toward writing fluency showed
that conventions matter to readers and writers (N=9) and that conventions depend on the
rhetorical situation (N=5), but also that conventions are easy to master on student’s own (N=3).
Examples that portray the importance of conventions can be found in all textbooks, although
Graff et al. (2012) and Wysocki & Lynch (2011) barely mention the importance of editing and
proofreading. A much more detailed approach to conventions is shown, for example, in Hacker
& Sommers (2015), who offer practical tips and examples on how to edit (e.g., creating a
personal editing log) and how to proofread (e.g., reading out loud or in reverse order) and
explain that these two parts of the process are crucial to writing as errors “can be distracting and
annoying,” while careful editing and proofreading show respect for readers as well as for writers’
own writing (pp. 30-32). Similarly, Lunsford et al. (2010) show that conventions depend on the
rhetorical situation by asking questions such as, “Do stylistic choices, even something as simple
as the use of contractions or personal pronouns, bring readers comfortably close to a writer […]?” (p. 117). At the same time, Lunsford et al. (2010) seem to assume that the conventions are easy to master since in their discussion of stylistic choices, the authors do not highlight or point out to examples of contractions, personal pronouns, or coordinate structures, thus assuming that students are already familiar with those terms. In the same manner, the accompanying instructor’s manual guides teachers through teaching the sections on figurative language, but it does not offer any assistance for teaching sentence structure, punctuation, or coordination.

Considering that the most frequent attitudes toward writing fluency in the bestselling student textbooks were positive, I assigned *Writing fluency Matters* as one of the themes that these books bring to the teachers’ CoP.

The expectations relating to students’ learning show that students should recognize the connections between rhetoric and grammar (N=5) as in Axelrod & Cooper (2013), who integrated grammatical features into the reading samples and writing prompts, and in Hacker & Sommers (2015), who, for example, discussed parallel structures by explaining that “readers expect items in a series to appear in parallel grammatical form. When one or more of the items violate readers’ expectation, a sentence will be needlessly awkward” (p. 129). The textbooks also show that students need to learn editing strategies, students should demonstrate writing fluency, and students need to continue developing grammatical knowledge. Based on these attributes, the theme that arises in student textbooks is *Students Need to Continue Learning Grammar*.

The expectations relating to teaching writing fluency show a tendency towards students being responsible for their own learning (N=6) and teaching conventions is irrelevant (N=3). In fact, as mentioned beforehand, the textbooks do not provide explanations of the grammatical terms that are used in the examples; in addition, the accompanying instructor manuals do not
offer any assistance to teachers for teaching conventions. As Figure 4.9 shows, when teaching is supported, it is typically addressed through a rhetorical lens \((N=4)\), but without the writing context \((N=3)\).

Figure 4.9. Teaching Expectations according to Bestselling Student Textbooks

Considering the predominance of the occurrences that place the responsibility of addressing writing fluency issues on students, I assigned Writing fluency Does Not Need to Be Taught as one of the themes that the bestselling student textbooks bring to the teachers’ CoP. The recurring themes in the bestselling student textbooks are summarized in Table 4.3:
Table 4.3. Summary of Themes in the Bestselling Student Composition Textbooks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing Fluency Matters</td>
<td>Writing fluency Matters</td>
<td>Hacker &amp; Sommers (2015) offer practical tips and examples on how to edit (e.g., creating a personal editing log) and how to proofread (e.g., reading out loud or in reverse order) and explain that these two parts of the process are crucial to writing as errors “can be distracting and annoying,” while careful editing and proofreading show respect for readers as well as for writers’ own writing (pp. 30-32).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students Need to Continue Learning Grammar</td>
<td>Students Need to Continue Learning Grammar</td>
<td>Axelrod &amp; Cooper (2013) integrate grammatical features into the reading samples and writing prompts, and in Hacker &amp; Sommers (2015) discuss parallel structures by explaining that “readers expect items in a series to appear in parallel grammatical form. When one or more of the items violate readers' expectation, a sentence will be needlessly awkward” (p. 129).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Does Not Need to Be Taught</td>
<td>Teaching Does Not Need to Be Taught</td>
<td>The textbooks do not provide explanations of the grammatical terms that are used in the examples; in addition, the accompanying instructor manuals do not offer any assistance to teachers for teaching conventions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2. College Composition: Local View

The materials reviewed so far show the most frequent resources based on the bestselling books on preparing college-composition teachers and on responding to college-level writing. Since the present study involved participants from a specific university, the following section will review teacher preparation materials used at this university. Prior to reviewing the teacher preparation books and student textbooks, I describe what three local WPAs think about preparing teachers to teach and respond to linguistically diverse students.

4.2.1. WPA interviews.

I interviewed three WPAs who have served in this position at The University at some point in time in the past 5 years, so they influenced the local teacher preparation program and,
consequently, my participants. I refer to them as Dr. A, Dr. B, and Dr. C. The initials do not reflect the WPAs names, and the alphabetical order does not reflect the chronological order of their appointments. The personal communications with individual WPAs took place on April 6, 2015.

Because students come to FYW with a vast range of writing abilities, I asked the WPAs if they can describe students’ ability to write with grammatical correctness after they have taken the FYW courses. Dr. A’s view agrees with the scholarship in the field and finds it hard to improve grammatical issues in the two semesters of FYW. According to Dr. A, the main reasons for this are (1) lack of time to include grammatical concepts in a rhetorical and contextual manner and (2) lack of writing in other courses that would reinforce what students are learning in FYW. For Dr. B, this is “a million dollar question, because a lot of it depends upon each instructor and how much of an emphasis they put on writing fluency in their classroom, if at all.” Dr. B noticed that certain teachers focus solely on content and let students “identify their grammar problems [...] and figure out how to fix them.” Other teachers focus much more on grammar than on content, “maybe because that’s the way they were taught in school.” Dr. B continues by saying that it is almost impossible to estimate how much students improved because they come to FYW with a “different skill set.” What the program tries to do is teach students to be self-reflective—“to be more aware of their own writing process and then their own skills and areas that they need to work on that they can improve their grammar when they leave the class.”

Dr. C thinks that “there is minimal improvement” because there are many things that “we are trying to get done in these courses.” Dr. C adds that there is “a programmatic assumption that students have a command of grammar and punctuation when they enter the program and that’s just simply not the case.” Hence, all three WPAs agree that, while it is hard to gauge students’
improvement, there is most likely not much improvement mainly due to lack of time to incorporate writing fluency into the course and due to the assumptions that students are already competent in that area.

The FYW program at The University employs writing teachers who are mainly graduate students in the master's and doctoral programs in the English Department. Dr. B estimates that an average of eight to nine teachers are part-time lecturers, and an average of one to two are tenure-track professors. All three WPAs agree that the preferred field of study for FYW teachers is Composition Studies or Rhetoric and Writing Studies (RWS). Dr. A believes that RWS programs offer the most comprehensive approaches to teaching writing by including other topics that are not directly related to writing, but that contribute immensely to it, while Dr. C thinks that RWS graduates or TAs have an interest in RWS, unlike TAs from other programs, who may be teaching just to support themselves through graduate school.

The writing teacher preparation program at The University follows slightly different theoretical principles depending on who is directing the program, but the underlying principle is that of “writing as a process and helping students to understand writing as a process as a cyclical process.” For example, Dr. A explains that the program was set up by considering the curriculum requirements and then deciding what teachers needed to know to teach that curriculum. Stemming off of that, the program then included “some rhetorical theory, some pedagogical perspectives, pedagogical theory, some brief looks into assessment theory, some brief looks into things like collaborative theory and teaching with technology.” For Dr. C, the preparation program was based on works by James Berlin and Lloyd Bitzer and their argument that “any theory of rhetoric must account for the orator or the writer, an audience, language or discourse, and reality.” Overall, it seems that the preparation program, regardless of the director, relied on a
variety of theoretical principles from the Composition Studies field, though one focused more on writing, while the other focused more on rhetoric itself. Within these theoretical guidelines, the preparation program “includes a balance between readings on the theory about writing instruction and practical applications by helping with lesson plans and classroom activities.” A more detailed description of activities is provided by Dr. A, who explains that prior to attending Comp Camp (a two-week intensive course for incoming TAs), the incoming teachers and TAs are provided with readings on a variety of topics that they discuss face-to-face and online. (These readings are reviewed further below in “4.3.2. Teacher Preparation Books.”) During Comp Camp, the participants take part in group work that relates to the topics from the readings, and they “try out different technologies for different purposes, collaborative purposes usually, some practice doing assessments of the project, the documentary.” Dr. A clarifies that the documentary is a project that teachers will have to teach in the second section of FYW, so they go “through the experience of it so at least they understood what their students were going to be faced with when they had to do that project.” Thus, the intensive program seems to provide hands-on activities that are supported by theoretical insights into rhetoric and writing.

Once the teachers enter the classroom, they are required to use two textbooks. One is a guide that was created locally by the FYW program and that includes course policies, assignments, and activities for both FYW sections. Dr. A explains that the local guide is more specific to the curriculum and that it also includes sections on research and grammar, but Dr. A thinks that most teachers do not use those sections. In addition to the guide, the first FYW section uses *The McGraw-Hill Guide: Writing for College, Writing for Life* by Roen, Glau, and Maid (2013), and the second section uses *Writing Today* by Johnson-Sheehan & Paine (2014). As Dr. B explains, both books are customized for The University, and they were chosen for three
reasons: (1) they emphasize writing as a process, (2) they are “aligned with the type of assignments that we are doing,” and (3) they are cost-friendly. In order to portray how these books contribute to teachers’ practices, they are reviewed further below in “4.3.3. Student Textbooks.”

When asked about how teachers are advised to respond to student writing, Dr. A comments that preparing teachers to respond to students is “a very tricky undertaking” because the program can prepare teachers to do one thing, but once these teachers go into their classrooms, “they each have their own idiosyncratic preferences and sometimes those preferences align very nicely with the program and sometimes they are completely in a different direction.” Dr. A further explains that responding “happens in a very closed system between the student and professor,” so the program itself may not be aware of how teachers really respond. Dr. A adds that she is aware that “there is not a lot of response to student writing even though you might emphasize it’s important.” The program tells teachers that responding needs to be balanced and not overwhelming, that it needs to encourage revision and critical thinking. Similarly, Dr. B explains that “the overall guidelines tend to be focused on content over grammar although that doesn’t mean ignore grammar completely.” Dr. B adds that the response should be positive and provide students with “global ways to revise their paper.” Considering that the focus of responding seems to lean towards commenting on ideas, I asked how grammatical correctness fits into their first-year composition program goals. While Dr. A finds grammatical correctness important, she adds that “it’s not at the top of the list.” Focus, clarity, and idea development have a high priority, while grammatical correctness is attended to only if it “makes or breaks a student’s grade” (Dr. A). On the other hand, Dr. B believes that “grammar needs to have a place” in FYW, and that teachers should look for patterns in individual students’ writing and across the
class. Based on these patterns, teachers should prepare mini-lessons, but also tell students that “this class isn’t about grammar so at some point you have to take over that responsibility” (Dr. B). Ultimately, for Dr. B, students should learn to be self-reflective and identify their own writing issues and learn how to improve them. A quite different view on writing fluency is offered by Dr. C, who explains that “the only place we approach language is in issues of error or style. When I’m talking about language I’m talking about a theory of language and its relationship to reality”, adding that “language and discourse are the ones that get locked off completely when we teach undergrads.” Nevertheless, Dr. C thinks that student writing has to be correct because correctness is expected in the workplace, and it builds a writer’s ethos. The issue of grammatical correctness, according to Dr. C, is a complex one since correctness can be viewed subjectively. Dr. C explains that the problem arises from the fact that “the way that we talk about and understand grammar and punctuation” is not uniform. The lack of uniformity raises the next question: how are teachers advised or prepared to work with their students on writing fluency issues?

Dr. A explains that certain writing fluency issues were typically addressed during assessment sessions where TAs and teachers were exposed to grading student papers. A general suggestion was to address writing fluency issues if they affected clarity and focus. Another suggestion that the program offers to teachers is to “figure out the patterns of student’s grammatical concerns and help them identify those patterns and then focus on how to adjust for those patterns.” Dr. A thinks that the most successful time to address grammatical concerns is when a teacher finds a place in students writing to make it a “teachable moment, not something that overwhelsms them or makes them feel defeated.” Contrary to Dr. A, Dr. B asserts that the teacher preparation program doesn’t specifically advise on how to address writing fluency issues,
but it does include discussions on second-language writers. These discussions typically provide a general understanding of second-language writers so that teachers would not respond in terms of “You don’t know how to write.” Dr. B adds that the RWS program does have an elective class on second-language writing, but the teacher preparation program does not address the topic in depth, though “that’s something that we need to think about.” Dr. B’s personal suggestion is to “highlight a major grammatical issue that could be impeding by understanding their work.”

Finally, Dr. C explains that teachers are advised to respond “in a rhetorical context.” Dr. C elaborates further that the rhetorical context means “thinking about ‘how do I want to represent myself, what type of subjectivity, in other words, I’m I trying to promote in this particular context. What is the expectation of this group that I’m a part of?’” Dr. C stresses the importance of teaching students to understand the discourse communities they are trying to be part of, “There are certain expectations within that group about what constitutes good writing and part of your job as a human being who wants to enter that discourse community is to figure out what to do, constitute good writing and then deliver it and that’s just the way it is.” I also asked the WPAs to estimate the level of comfort that teachers have in addressing grammatical concerns with their students. Dr. A noticed that literature students/TAs seem more interested in grammatical issues, while TAs from other disciplines are not concerned about writing fluency. For Dr. A, it is this interest that affects the perception and the comfort of addressing grammar. Similarly, Dr. C finds that teachers are not comfortable responding to grammar “because they themselves have problems in their own writing.” The same view of comfort is confirmed by Dr. B, who believes that the comfort “depends on your own mastery of grammar” and adds that simply being a native speaker and a good writer is not enough to be able to explain it to students because “students are not comfortable with ‘well, that’s just the way it should be.’ They want,
and you need to explain it in their terms so they can understand why is that a comma can go here and not here, why is it now a run-on sentence.” Dr. B does not claim that students should memorize rules, but does maintain that writing teachers should be familiar with grammar in order to have “the ethos and the confidence” that students need from them and adds that “students don’t trust what you say if you cannot explain to them with confidence what you know.” Dr. B reiterates, however, that teachers need to be able to place or address these grammatical issues through the lens of rhetoric and not as random rules. At the same time, however, teachers in the FYW program use the same assessment rubrics that, according to Dr. B, always include a “writing fluency box with a very basic assessment” as it simply looks at the amount of errors and how they affect reading comprehension. Dr. B adds that both textbooks offer online assessment tools “that students can use on their own and the assessment then it is self-directed”—thus confirming the generally proposed approach of letting students figure it out on their own.

4.2.1.1. Recurring themes.

From the interviews with The University’s WPAs, I identified three major categories that the statements portray: (1) attitudes toward writing fluency; (2) expectations relating to teaching; and (3) expectations relating to teachers’ knowledge of grammar. The attitudes toward writing fluency seem to lean towards the same attitudes as on the national level, as conventions are marginal \(N=5\) was the most frequent trait of WPAs views. As an example, while Dr. A finds grammatical correctness important, she adds that “it’s not at the top of the list” since focus, clarity, and idea development have a high priority, while grammatical correctness is attended to only if it “makes or breaks a student's grade.” In three instances, the WPAs thought that conventions matter to readers and writers \(N=3\) since “[t]here are certain expectations within
that group about what constitutes good writing and part of your job as a human being who wants to enter that discourse community is to figure out what to do, constitute good writing and then deliver it and that’s just the way it is,” (Dr. C). One occurrence showed that *language is more than conventions* when Dr. C explained that “the only place we approach language is in issues of error or style. When I'm talking about language I'm talking about a theory of language and its relationship to reality.” Although the three WPAs seem to agree that conventions matter, they also seem to be indecisive about where these conventions fit in the FYW curriculum, thus showing a common theme of *Writing fluency Somewhat Matters* that the WPAs bring to the teachers’ CoP.

The expectations relating to teaching writing fluency show a similar indecisiveness. On the one hand, the attributes such as *teach grammar through a rhetorical lens, teaching conventions matters,* and *teach with mini lessons* added up to a total of nine occurrences. On the other hand, the attributes such *no teaching—student responsible, no suggestions,* and *addressed as part of assessment* added up to a total of nine occurrences as well (Figure 4.10).

![Figure 4.10. Teaching Expectations according to WPAs at the Surveyed University](image-url)

"Figure 4.10. Teaching Expectations according to WPAs at the Surveyed University"
The most frequent attribute on one side, *teach grammar through a rhetorical lens*, occurred in suggestions such as to “highlight a major grammatical issue that could be impeding by understanding their work” (Dr. B), while at the same time Dr. B confirmed the attribute of *no teaching—student responsible* by suggesting that students should use online assessment tools “on their own.” Based on the equal balance between two types of traits that are opposite to each other, I assigned the theme *Writing Fluency Barely Needs to Be Taught* as one of the themes that the WPAs bring to the teachers’ CoP.

The expectations relating to what teachers should know in order to teach writing fluency show a high tendency to *knowledge is assumed* (N=7) versus only one occurrence that calls for teachers to be *knowledgeable about grammar, usage, and error*. In fact, only Dr. B pointed out that writing teachers should be familiar with grammar in order to have “the ethos and the confidence” that students need from them when facing writing fluency issues. At the same time, Dr. B explains that the teacher preparation program does not specifically instruct teachers how to address grammatical issues, and Dr. A confirms teachers are advised to “figure out the patterns of student’s grammatical concerns and help them identify those patterns and then focus on how to adjust for those patterns,” thus showing that *knowledge is assumed*. The clear predominance of this trait shows that another theme that the WPAs bring to the teachers’ CoP is *Knowledge Is Assumed*. The three themes that emerged from the interviews with The University’s WPAs are summarized in Table 4.4.
Table 4.4. Summary of Themes from the Interviews with WPAs at the Surveyed University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing Fluency</td>
<td>Writing Fluency</td>
<td>Grammatical correctness is important, but “it’s not at the top of the list” (Dr. A).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>Somewhat Matters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Expectations</td>
<td>Writing Fluency</td>
<td>Teachers should “highlight a major grammatical issue that could be impeding by understanding their work,” but at the same time students should use online assessment tools “on their own” (Dr. B).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Barely Needs to Be Taught</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Knowledge</td>
<td>Knowledge Is Assumed</td>
<td>Teachers are advised to “figure out the patterns of student’s grammatical concerns and help them identify those patterns and then focus on how to adjust for those patterns” (Dr. A).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.2. Teacher preparation books.

One of the books used by the local teacher preparation program is Roen et al.’s (2002) *Strategies for Teaching First-Year Composition* that I have already described in the section on the bestselling teacher preparation books, so I will not include it here. The other books used by the local program are Bean (2011, *Engaging ideas: The professor’s guide to integrating critical writing, critical thinking, and active learning in the classroom*); Beaufort (2007, *College writing and beyond: A new framework for university writing instruction*); and Dethier (2005, *First-time up: An insider's guide for new composition instructors*).

4.2.2.1. Book review.

Books by Dethier (2005) and Beaufort (2007) offer a view into college composition that is slightly different from the rest of the teacher preparation books. As Dethier (2005) states in the title itself, the book targets beginner writing teachers, and it offers a variety of tips for handling issues such as class time, grading, and confidence. With relation to responding to writing fluency, Dethier (2005) advises to “be flexible in responding to grammar” (p. 68) and to build up...
a balance between ignoring grammar errors and commenting on every error. Later on, Dethier (2005) also agrees with the process approach of focusing on ideas first and ending with editing activities (p. 88). The last part of the book also includes an appendix with “grammar superstitions,” in which Dethier (2005) contradicts a few of the most typical prescriptive rules of English by rephrasing them as in the example of “You may split infinitives” (pp. 174-176), and by explaining why these rules are obsolete. Dethier (2005), however, spends much more time on providing practical tips for managing the personal development of a teacher, and not so much on how to teach writing. On the other end, Beaufort (2007) seems to target WPAs and other administrators by proposing changes in the way first-year composition is set up. Through a thick theory-based approach to presenting a longitudinal case study of a college student, the author exposes the issue of lacking transfer from what is taught in FYW to other disciplines and to workplace. The book offers theoretical and practical insights into the importance of teaching FYW through specific genres in specific disciplines (instead of in general terms of “academic” writing), but does not address issues of writing fluency or responding per se.

The third book used for writing teacher preparation at The University is Engaging Ideas: The Professor’s Guide to Integrating Critical Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom by Bean (2011). The author provides an extensive guide for designing assignments and activities that foster critical and rhetorical thinking. With relation to writing fluency, Bean (2011) shows his position on the issue at the beginning of the book by telling teachers that not being knowledgeable about writing and grammar does not present an issue since it suffices to “be an honest reader, making comments like these: ‘I got lost in this part’” (p. 13). In his suggestions for teaching revision, Bean (2011) proposes fifteen approaches that encourage discovery through problem-solving and dialogue, thus adhering to the process
approach of focusing on idea development and organization. Bean (2011), however, offers a separate chapter on “Dealing with Issues of Grammar and Correctness” (pp. 86), in which he repeats the famous quote from Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer (1963) to support his point that the old model of teaching grammar is not effective, but the author does not offer an alternative model. Despite this stance, the author continues the chapter with a helpful overview of what grammar is, how it is distinguished from usage, and what various studies on error have found. The chapter concludes with a section on responding to error, in which Bean (2011) advises teachers to show students that (but not how) their sentence-level errors can harm the rhetorical effectiveness of their writing. Since teachers should not worry about showing students how to correct sentence-level errors, Bean (2011) suggests that teachers shift from “editing-oriented” comments (that focus on correcting errors) to “revision-oriented” comments (that focus on rethinking the ideas (pp. 82-83). In the same manner, the author suggests holding students responsible for finding and correcting their own errors. Bean (2011) does acknowledge that “second-language speakers present extra challenges to teachers” (p. 84), but suggests a similar approach to error as with native speakers—to focus on idea development and organization—because “by providing a rich language environment created by the kinds of writing and critical thinking activities recommended throughout this [Bean’s] book,” second-language speakers will gradually lose the “accent” that they bring with them (p. 85). Another interesting point that Bean (2011) makes is that second-language speakers “can avoid comma splices, fragments, nonparallel constructions, and so forth” (p.85, emphasis mine)—which are the sentence-level issues that Bean as a writing teacher expects his students to avoid, whereas he is more forgiving of errors such as articles or verb tenses (p. 85). The rest of Bean’s (2011) book does not address the issues of writing fluency errors or grammar/usage as it assumes no correlation between error...
and critical/rhetorical thinking. As in other books that I reviewed, however, writing fluency, usage, punctuation, and spelling are regularly included in the sample assessment rubrics, but students are responsible for figuring out those issues on their own.

4.2.2.2. Recurring themes.

The teacher preparation books used in the local FYW program yielded four major categories: (1) attitudes toward writing fluency; (2) the focus of response; (3) expectations relating to teaching; and (4) expectations relating to teachers’ knowledge. As in the previous sections, the attitudes toward writing fluency show a predominant tendency to conventions are marginal (N=6), while conventions matter to readers and writers occurred only twice, as in the example when Bean (2011) advises teachers to show students that their sentence-level errors can harm the rhetorical effectiveness of their writing. That conventions are mainly perceived as marginal is evident from the books minimal discussion of writing fluency, while Bean (2011) does not address the issues of writing fluency or grammar/usage at all as it assumes no correlation between error and critical/rhetorical thinking. The theme arising from the local teacher preparation books with regards to attitudes towards writing fluency seem to be Responding to Writing fluency is Irrelevant.

The focus of response, according to my analysis, should be on ideas only (N=3) or ideas first (N=1), while balance between ideas and grammar occurred once. For example, Bean (2011) suggests that teachers should apply the same approach with both native and non-native speakers by focusing on idea development and organization (p. 84). Similarly, Dethier (2005) advises focusing on ideas first and ending with editing activities (p. 88). However, Dethier (2005) also contributes the idea of balancing between ideas and grammar as he advises to “be flexible in
responding to grammar” and to build up a balance between ignoring grammar errors and commenting on every error (p. 68). Based on the tendency to focus on ideas only, I assigned *Disregard Writing Fluency* as the themes that contribute to teachers’ CoP from the local teacher preparation books.

With regards to what teachers are expected to teach, the most frequent attributes were *teaching conventions is irrelevant (N=7), no teaching—student responsible (N=4), and no suggestions (N=2)*. Most of these expectations come from Bean (2011), who asserts that students are responsible for finding and correcting their own errors, while teachers should merely provide a “rich language environment” (p. 85) in which students will mature as writers. The author also adds that the old model of teaching grammar is not effective; however, he does not offer a new model that would be more effective, except for letting students find and correct their own errors in a rich language environment. As Figure 4.11 shows, only one occurrence potentially suggests *teaching editing* (Dethier, 2005), although the author merely proposes ending the writing process with editing, but does not clearly specify if teacher are responsible for teaching editing.

Therefore, I assigned *Writing fluency Does Not Need to Be Taught* as one of the themes that these books bring to the teachers’ CoP.
The expectations relating to what teachers should know in order to teach writing fluency show similar tendencies as previous sections. Aside from one occurrence suggesting that teachers should be *knowledgeable about grammar, usage, and error*, the predominant attributes were *knowledge assumed* and *no knowledge necessary*, each occurring twice. Although Bean (2011) continually shows his stance against addressing grammatical issues in student writing, he seems to suggest that teachers should be knowledgeable about grammar as he provides an extensive overview of what grammar is, how it is distinguished from usage, and what various studies on error have found. Nevertheless, statements such as the one telling teachers that not being knowledgeable about writing and grammar does not present an issue since it suffices to “be an honest reader, making comments like these: ‘I got lost in this part’” (Bean, 2011, p. 13)—clearly show that teachers do not need be knowledgeable about how to approach writing fluency issues. Considering these stance, the last theme that these books bring to the teachers’ CoP is
Teacher Knowledge Is Marginal. The three themes that emerged from the interviews with The University’s WPAs are summarized in Table 4.5:

Table 4.5. Summary of Themes from the Local Teacher Preparation Books

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing Fluency</td>
<td>Responding to Writing Fluency is Irrelevant</td>
<td>That conventions are mainly perceived as marginal is evident from the books minimal discussion of writing fluency, while Bean (2011) does not address the issues of writing fluency or grammar/usage at all as it assumes no correlation between error and critical/rhetorical thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bean (2011) suggests that teachers should apply the same approach with both native and non-native speakers by focusing on idea development and organization (p. 84).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus of Response</td>
<td>Disregard Writing Fluency</td>
<td>Bean (2011) asserts that students are responsible for finding and correcting their own errors, while teachers should merely provide a “rich language environment” (p. 85) in which students will mature as writers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Expectations</td>
<td>Writing Fluency Does Not Need to Be Taught</td>
<td>Not being knowledgeable about writing and grammar does not present an issue since it suffices to “be an honest reader, making comments like these: ‘I got lost in this part’” (Bean, 2011, p. 13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Knowledge</td>
<td>Teacher Knowledge Is Marginal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.3. Student textbooks.

4.2.3.1. Textbook review.

As the teachers start teaching in the classroom, they typically use two textbooks. One is The RWS Guide to Undergraduate Rhetoric and Writing Studies (RWS Guide, 2014) that is used in both sections of FYW at The University. The RWS Guide was created and is regularly updated by undergraduate writing instructors and faculty members at the local university. The RWS Guide comes in two versions—one is for teachers and one is for students. Both versions include assignment guidelines and assessment rubrics, as well as explanations of rhetorical considerations for each assignment. The teachers’ version includes activities that teachers can
assign as homework or class exercises. The first part of the *RWS Guide* offers general guidelines on the process of writing, including chapters on invention, organization, and research. One chapter is dedicated to Writing about Writing, and it offers a list of scholarly articles on a variety of topics from the field of Composition Studies, such as revision, collaboration, genres, arguments, and so on. The rest of the *RWS Guide* has separate chapters for each individual FYW section, and it provides assignment guidelines with accompanying activities that teachers can use to teach the writing process. The individual activities that are incorporated in the *RWS Guide* focus on generating and organizing ideas, but they do not provide any exercises on editing or proofreading, with the exception of instructing students to look for grammatical, punctuation, and formatting errors and to correct them (p. 96). Editing and proofreading are also mentioned in the general course overview of each FYW section. The overview reminds students that they need to eliminate “violations of the conventions of written English,” but that editing “is not stressed until late in the drafting process” and that “the ultimate responsibility for proofreading any paper remains with the writer” (p. 85). In addition, editing is mentioned in the part that explains how teachers will respond to student drafts, where it is clarified that “the purpose of these comments is not to help with editing. The instructors will not pay close attention to writing fluency, usage, spelling, and other surface concerns” (p. 353). In other words, the *RWS Guide* does not provide any resources that would assist teachers or students to edit their writing, while it makes it clear that students are responsible for editing and proofreading prior to submitting an assignment.

In addition to the *RWS Guide*, the first FYW section uses *The McGraw-Hill Guide: Writing for College, Writing for Life* by Roen, Glau, and Maid (2013). At the end of each chapter of the book, the authors offer a section on the knowledge of conventions and editing. This section typically repeats the same explanation of what editing represents, and it includes an
accompanying exercise. The explanation tells students that editing matters in order to adhere to the expectations of the audience or the genre and that it includes “changes to your sentences structures and words choices to improve your style and to make your writing clearer and more concise” (p. 101). While the general explanation refers to the rhetorical elements, the exercises do not. Instead, they provide sample issues (such as fragments) with corrections and with purely grammatical explanations (e.g., fragments are incomplete thoughts that miss a subject or a verb). The textbook also contains a separate section on “Using Cohesive Devices,” in which the authors explain that cohesive devices, such as transitional expressions or pronoun references, help readers see “how sentences are connected to one another” (p. 428). The section includes a few examples and two writing activities that ask students to improve connections between sentences. To sum up, the textbook offers a very limited set of editing resources that are placed at the end of the chapter (or in a separate chapter), instead of being mentioned throughout the chapter inside of the context of reading or writing.

Selected classes of the first FYW section at The University use the WaW curriculum, thus they use the book Writing about Writing: A College Reader by Wardle & Downs (2014). The goal of the WaW approach is to expose students to the research that has been done on writing, and not to teach them the writing process; thus, the book is a collection of articles on a wide range of topics relating to rhetoric and writing. The articles relating to writing fluency and/or responding to writing are basically the same articles (or revised articles by the same authors) that I reviewed elsewhere in this chapter (such as Straub or Sommers). The main message that these authors relay is to leave “sentence revisions and corrections for the writer. It’s her paper” (Straub, in Wardle & Downs, 2014, p. 18). Hence, the textbook reiterates the same
attitudes towards responding and towards editing—focus on idea development and let the student writers figure out their own editing needs.

In addition to the aforementioned RWS Guide, the second section of FYW at The University uses a custom edition of Writing Today by Johnson-Sheehan & Paine (2014). The textbook includes chapters on rhetorical concepts (such as genre, purpose, and readers), different genres of assignments (such as analyses, research papers, and argumentative papers), writing processes (invention, drafting, revising), designing principles, collaborative writing, presentation techniques, and others. The end of each chapter of the textbook includes a “Revising and Editing” section. The instructions for editing generally tell students to proofread carefully and check for grammar mistakes or misspelled words, although there are no additional guidelines on how to do that. The textbook does have a separate—and more elaborate—chapter on revising and editing with questions that guide students through creating more concise and clearer sentences. For example, the textbook asks, “Can you eliminate any unnecessary prepositional phrases?” (Johnson-Sheehan & Paine, 2014, p. 232). However, the authors do not explain why unnecessary prepositional phrases could represent an issue or how they could affect readers’ comprehension. The authors also do not provide any guidelines on how to solve other problems that their questions open up. By placing the sections on editing at the end of a chapter or in a separate chapter far away from the contexts of reading and writing, both students and teachers will continue seeing language concerns as separate issues that can be fixed by looking them up in the “writer’s handbook.” Of course, it can be claimed that it is a teacher’s responsibility to incorporate those language topics into the classrooms (e.g., as mini lessons); nevertheless, the textbooks tend to lack in terms of supporting both students and teachers in their need to incorporate editing effectively within the context of their writing.
4.2.3.2. Recurring themes.

The reviewed local composition textbooks show similar tendencies to writing fluency as teacher preparation, and my qualitative content analysis yielded three major categories in this section: (1) attitudes toward writing fluency and (2) expectations relating to students’ learning, and (3) expectations relating to teaching. The most frequent attitude toward writing fluency showed that conventions are marginal ($N=8$), while conventions matter to readers and writers was much lower ($N=4$). The books also showed that conventions are easy to master on students own. That conventions are marginal is evident in the fact that textbooks either barely mention the need to edit and proofread (as in the RWS Guide, 2014; Wardle & Downs, 2014) or they place the sections on editing and proofreading at the end of the textbook (as in Roen et al., 2013; Johnson-Sheehan & Paine, 2014). For example, the RWS Guide (2014) specifies to students that teachers will respond to student drafts, but that “the purpose of these comments is not to help with editing. The instructors will not pay close attention to writing fluency, usage, spelling, and other surface concerns” (p. 353). Thus, the theme that the local student textbooks bring to the teachers’ CoP is Responding to Writing fluency is Irrelevant.

The expectations relating to students’ learning show that student should demonstrate writing fluency ($N=6$) and that students need to learn editing strategies ($N=6$). In fact, all textbooks remind students to proofread carefully and to check for grammar mistakes or misspelled words, but they also place the burden of improving writing fluency on students’ alone by proposing to leave “sentence revisions and corrections for the writer. It’s her paper” (Straub, in Wardle & Downs, 2014, p. 18). Only one occurrence seem to suggest that students should recognize the connections between rhetoric and grammar by reminding students that editing matters in order to adhere to the expectations of the audience or the genre and that it includes
“changes to your sentences structures and words choices to improve your style and to make your writing clearer and more concise” (Roen et al., 2013, p. 101). Based on these attributes, the theme that arises in local student textbooks is Students Need to Continue Learning Grammar.

Similar to the bestselling student textbook, the expectations relating to teaching writing fluency show a tendency towards students being responsible for their own learning (N=8) and teaching conventions is irrelevant (N=7). For example, the individual activities that are incorporated in the RWS Guide (2014) focus on generating and organizing ideas, but they do not provide any exercises on editing or proofreading, with the exception of instructing students to look for grammatical, punctuation, and formatting errors and to correct them (p. 96).

![Figure 4.12. Teaching Expectations according to Local Student Textbooks](image)

As Figure 4.12 shows, when teaching is supported, it is typically addressed without the writing context (N=5) as in the example of Roen et al. (2013), who provide general explanation of rhetorical elements and sample issues (such as fragments) with corrections and with purely grammatical explanations (e.g., fragments are incomplete thoughts that miss a subject or a verb),
instead of relating these issues to the readings and to student writing. Considering the predominance of the occurrences that place the responsibility of addressing writing fluency issues on students, I assigned *Writing fluency Does Not Need to Be Taught* as one of the themes that the local student textbooks bring to the teachers’ CoP. The recurring themes in the bestselling student textbooks are summarized in Table 4.6:

Table 4.6. *Summary of Themes in the Local Student Composition Textbooks*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing Fluency Attitudes</td>
<td>Responding to Writing Fluency is Irrelevant</td>
<td>The RWS Guide (2014) specifies to students that teachers will respond to student drafts, but that “the purpose of these comments is not to help with editing. The instructors will not pay close attention to writing fluency, usage, spelling, and other surface concerns” (p. 353).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning Expectations</td>
<td>All textbooks remind students to proofread carefully and to check for grammar mistakes or misspelled words, but they also place the burden of improving writing fluency on students’ alone by proposing to leave “sentence revisions and corrections for the writer. It’s her paper” (Straub, in Wardle &amp; Downs, 2014, p. 18).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Expectations</td>
<td>Writing Fluency Does Not Need to Be Taught</td>
<td>The individual activities that are incorporated in the RWS Guide (2014) focus on generating and organizing ideas, but they do not provide any exercises on editing or proofreading, with the exception of instructing students to look for grammatical, punctuation, and formatting errors and to correct them (p. 96).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3. Conclusion

The results from the individual sections on position statements and books describe how the composition field contributes to writing teacher preparation. The emerging themes show certain tendencies towards how the field and the local institution approach responding to writing fluency, and I will attempt to make sense of these tendencies by utilizing the theoretical
framework of *Communities of Practice* (CoP) as *shared histories of learning*. The CoP framework identifies the situational factors of a practice and offers a lens for describing the general contexts that affect how a community is formed and how learning in this community happens. Therefore, in this section, I discuss my results through the CoP dimensions of *joint enterprise*, *mutual engagement*, and *shared repertoire* as conceptualized by Wenger (1998) in order to answer the question: *How are teachers inculcated with responding practices by their communities of practice?*

The development of a practice is tightly related to the internal dynamics of the shared histories of learning, and these histories, according to Wenger (1998) are “histories of mutual engagement, negotiation of an enterprise, and development of a shared repertoire” (p. 95). *Mutual engagement* relates to the interactions, roles, and relationships within communities of practice; *joint enterprise* shows the goals, the conditions, and the evolution of the communities of practice; and *shared repertoire* consists of routines, concepts, or discourses that a specific community has adopted through time (Wenger, 1998, pp. 73-84). Based on these three dimensions, my observations of the CoP were guided by the questions presented in Table 4.7:
Table 4.7. CoP Dimensions Guiding the Observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CoP Dimensions (Wenger, 1998)</th>
<th>Questions Guiding the Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mutual Engagement:</td>
<td>How to engage in the responding practice? What helps and what hinders the practice? What is the role of teachers? What is the role of students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Enterprise:</td>
<td>What is the purpose of the responding practice in the community? How is it determined? How is it expressed? What are the conflicting interpretations of the enterprise?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of Practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evolution of Practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Repertoire:</td>
<td>Which routines, concepts, tools, and discourses are used to give meaning to this community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both the national resources (portrayed through the NCTE, CCCC, and CWPA position statements, the bestselling teacher preparation books, and the bestselling student textbooks) and the local resources (portrayed through the WPA interviews, the local teacher preparation books, and the local student textbooks) suggest similarly conflicting views of how responding to writing fluency should be approached. In fact, the CoP dimension of mutual engagement shows that interactions, roles, and relationships within the national and local communities of practice do not expect from teachers to engage in responding to writing fluency. The common recurring themes that signal such disengagement are Responding to Writing fluency is Irrelevant, as evident from the writing teacher preparation books; or Writing fluency Does Not Need to Be Taught, as in the writing teacher preparation books and student composition textbooks. On the other hand, the NCTE, CCCC, and CWPA standards remind us that, since writing fluency in isolation hinders improvement, it needs to be attended to rhetorically and in context (as in the theme Grammar Needs to Be Taught Rhetorically). Despite these standards, teachers and students participate in
the activity of improving writing fluency in two mutually exclusive roles: the teachers’ role is to foster student autonomy, while the role of students is to develop and demonstrate writing fluency (as in Foster Student Autonomy in the writing teacher preparation books; or in Students Need to Continue Learning Grammar and Students Need to Demonstrate Writing Fluency in NCTE, CCCC, and CWPA position statements, writing teacher preparation books, and student composition textbooks. These mixed and contradictory messages signal a lack of mutual engagement and instead show that the field is disengaged from supporting teachers in responding to writing fluency.

The dimension of joint enterprise shows that the goals, the conditions, and the evolution of the communities of practice lean towards the purpose of responding that helps students express and develop their ideas, and not to improve writing fluency (see Disregard Writing Fluency in the writing teacher preparation books). This goal seems to have been determined by the process pedagogies based on the claim by Braddock et al. (1963) that is repeatedly referred to in sources that advise against responding to grammatical issues. In fact, most teacher preparation books suggest that writing fluency should be addressed only at the end of the writing process, while the provided models are minimal and do not consider the latest findings on addressing language issues rhetorically and in context (see Grammar Does Not Need to Be Considered Rhetorically in the bestselling writing teacher preparation books). These models show that the evolution of responding practices—as they are discussed in writing teacher preparation books and textbooks—has been stagnant within the composition community in the past 40-50 years, thus limiting the conditions of responding to writing fluency based on the research that is outdated. At the same time, the aforementioned recurring themes show that students need to
demonstrate writing fluency, even if writing teachers do not necessarily need to teach it, thus again showing a contradiction in what is valued in a piece of writing.

Similarly, the shared repertoire dimension of routines, tools, or discourses that the college composition community has adopted through time shows that the routine of responding should leave writing fluency for the end of the writing process. In fact, all teacher preparation books focus on how to respond to ideas, and they specify that issues of writing fluency should not bother the teacher or the student until the student’s ideas are completely shaped. Unfortunately, none of the books provide a model of what to do with writing fluency issues once those ideas are shaped—except to include writing fluency in the assessment rubric. The student textbooks and teacher manuals uphold this concept by providing minimal support for teachers in their responding to writing fluency (see Teacher Knowledge is Marginal and Teacher Knowledge is Assumed in writing teacher preparation books). However, as in the previous CoP dimensions, the recurring themes in the CCCC, CWPA, and NCTE position statements show that teachers should have Knowledge on Rhetorical Grammar and Applied Linguistics and that Teacher Preparation Needs to Include Significant L2 Resources. The shared repertoire of routines, tools, and discourses thus again shows contradictions in how the field perceives and treats writing fluency—it is marginal when being included in teacher preparation materials, though it is relevant enough to be included in the evaluation of student writing. A summary of the national and local views through the CoP Dimensions is presented in Table 4.8:
Table 4.8. National and Local Views through the CoP Dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CoP Dimensions</th>
<th>Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mutual Engagement</td>
<td>Teachers do not need to engage in responding to writing fluency. Attending to writing fluency in isolation hinders improvement, so it needs to be attended to rhetorically and in context. The role of teachers is to foster student autonomy, the role of students is to develop and demonstrate writing fluency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Enterprise</td>
<td>The purpose of responding is to help students express and develop their ideas, and not to improve writing fluency. This goal has been determined by the process pedagogies based on the claim by Braddock et al. (1963). Writing fluency should be addressed only at the end of the writing process, but the provided models are minimal and do not consider the latest findings on addressing language issues rhetorically and in context. At the same time, students need to demonstrate writing fluency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Repertoire</td>
<td>The routine of responding should focus on ideas and leave writing fluency for the end of the process. This routine creates the concept of writing fluency as being marginal or even irrelevant. Teachers’ knowledge of grammar is assumed or marginal. The models and teacher manuals uphold this concept by providing minimal support for teachers in their responding to writing fluency.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To sum up, while CoP typically look for consensus in their mutual engagements, joint enterprises, and shared repertoires, my data shows that the community of college composition has not yet reached an agreement on whether writing fluency matters or not. On the one hand, it clearly matters—since students need to continue developing it and demonstrating it in their final drafts, but on the other hand, it appears to be irrelevant—since teachers are not advised to respond to it or taught how to respond to it through a rhetorical lens. A deeper look into the teacher preparation materials shows that the outcomes relating to writing fluency is left to students to acquire on their own. The most common suggestion that teachers are advised to give
their students is to visit the writing center if they need help with editing. By doing so, teachers are sending a message to their students that editing is a marginal issue not worth their class time, while at the same time, these same teachers grade students’ writing for clarity and mechanical errors.

A look at the accompanying student textbooks shows a similar view: two of the FYW textbooks barely mention editing and writing fluency (Graff et al., 2012; and Wysocki & Lynch, 2011), while one textbook’s instructor manual does not provide any guidance for the teacher on how to approach these issues in class (Lunsford et al., 2010). Furthermore, the two textbooks that do provide some guidance for students place writing fluency concepts in separate chapters—either at the end or at the beginning of the textbook—thus disregarding the latest findings on teaching grammar in the context of reading and writing. It has been established that teaching grammar in isolation does not have a positive effect on writing, therefore various scholars and position statements from CCCC, CWPA, and NCTE suggest that grammar should be taught in context. By placing these chapters far away from the contexts of writing, both students and teachers will continue seeing language concerns as separate issues that can be fixed by looking them up in the writer’s handbook. Of course, it can be claimed that it is a teacher’s responsibility to incorporate those language topics into the classrooms, usually in the form of mini lessons; however, the question still remains whether these teachers have the knowledge necessary to incorporate those mini lessons effectively within a context or if they are still using out-of-context lectures. Only two textbook seems to offer a more comprehensive and rhetorical approach to writing fluency (Axelrod & Cooper, 2013; and Hacker & Sommers, 2015).

The present chapter attempted to provide insight into how writing fluency is addressed by U.S. college composition standards and how the teacher preparation materials and student
textbooks respond to these standards in practice. Through the dimensions of *mutual engagement*, *joint enterprise*, and *shared repertoire* of Wenger’s concepts of CoP, I portrayed the situational factors that affect contradictory attitudes towards developing metalinguistic awareness in the college composition community. The latest findings on the need to teach grammar in context, not in isolation, are supported by the CCCC, CWPA, and NCTE standards and position statements. However, the analysis of the most common FYW teacher preparation materials and student textbooks show that the latest findings and standards are not well implemented in practice. The main gaps that seem to remain open are the continuous treatment of grammar in isolation in textbooks and the lack of teacher preparation and guidance on how to teach metalinguistic awareness. These gaps necessarily affect how teachers respond to writing fluency, and ultimately, how students continue to develop as writers.
Chapter Five: Case Studies on Responding to Student Writing

The data for this study was collected during the spring 2015 semester at a medium-sized research university in the U.S. southwest on the Mexico-U.S. border. The focal participants of the study were writing teachers from two sections of first-year composition during the semester of data collection. These courses are taught by full-time and part-time lecturers, as well as by graduate teaching assistants (TAs) and doctoral assistant instructors (AIs). The present study included three full-time instructors, three TAs, and two AIs. My data collection included surveys and interviews that showed teachers’ responding philosophies, while their actual responding practices were examined based on their comments to student drafts. The responding philosophies and practices of my eight participants showed certain similarities that I was able to group as follows:

Table 5.1. Summary of Responding Philosophies and Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Philosophy</th>
<th>Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step aside, and let students discover their way</td>
<td>No or generic response to everything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responding is a conversation that challenges students to think</td>
<td>No or generic response to writing fluency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>critically</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapt responding to individual students’ needs</td>
<td>Specific, but arhetorical response to writing fluency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respond to patterns of errors that affect readers’ comprehension</td>
<td>Specific, and somewhat rhetorical response to writing fluency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The four categories show a tendency toward generic and arhetorical comments that can be found in the responding practices of six participants, while only two participants offered comments that were rhetorical at least to a certain extent. In the following sections, I describe the general characteristics of each participant within these categories, and I provide a detailed analysis of
one participant per category in order to portray the activity system that guides the participants’ responding activity. I describe these activity systems through the lenses of *object-oriented activities* and *goal-oriented actions*. As Yamagata-Lynch (2010) explains, goal-oriented actions are “temporary in nature and may be a step that subjects take in the process of participating in an object-oriented activity” (p. 21). With relation to the present study, the object-oriented activities are based on my personal communication with the participants, in which they talked about their teaching and responding philosophy, the formation of this philosophy through their educational background, their attitudes toward writing fluency, and so on. These interviews provided insight into what the participants think they are doing or want to be doing when responding to students, thus showing individual subjects’ ideals, motivations, socio-historical contexts, objectives, and desired outcomes of the responding activity. On the other hand, the goal-oriented actions are based on my analyses of the participants’ comments to student drafts. These analyses provided insight into what the participants are doing during the actual responding activity, thus showing how individual subjects’ participate in the temporary goal-oriented actions as steps in the object-oriented activity of responding.

**5.1. Step Aside and Let Students Find Their Way**

Two participants, Blake and Jess, prefer to not interfere with students’ drafting, thus they provide no or very minimal and generic comments to students’ drafts—typically in the form of assessment rubrics. Blake and Jess both have a background in Creative Writing and hold an MFA from a medium-sized southwest university, and they also both have specific training on language and grammar through courses on general linguistic and language acquisition. They assert that the paradigms that inform their overall pedagogical approach to teaching composition include expressivism, social-constructionism, and critical pedagogy. Blake and Jess explained
that their rationale for the “step aside” approach comes from noticing that students will attend to issues that bother them when they bother them, regardless of the teacher’s response. They also believe that students should feel free to shape and express their ideas without teacher’s interference. Jess pointed out that instead of individualized responses, she provides general suggestions and asks students to “compare their drafts with [her] guidelines” (personal communication, April 9, 2015). She also believes that writing is improved by abundant writing exercises: “The more students write, the more their writing begins to reflect an awareness of what good writing looks like” (personal communication, April 9, 2015). Jess explained that she focuses on the research part of the writing process—researching, reading, and narrowing down the topic—while “writing is the easy part.” For students who show specific writing fluency issues, Jess suggest that they “learn sentence structure rules” by using a handbook that helps them understand why something is a mistake and how to correct it. Jess never corrects students’ errors and believes that “if [students] are really serious about wanting to write better, they are going to take an initiative to make those changes” (personal communication, April 9, 2015). In order to signal to students that they might have writing fluency issues, Jess uses grading rubrics with generic entries such as, “Academic voice, third person, present/past tense mostly consistent. Few grammar or mechanical errors. Writing is clear.” Jess does not provide any comments to students’ drafts other than the standard grading rubric, while Blake provides minimal summative comments in addition to the rubric, hence I describe Blake’s case in more detail.

Blake holds a BA in Creative Writing and is currently finishing her MFA from a medium-sized southwest university. In addition to her MFA work, Blake was teaching two FYW classes with a total of 33 students in the spring 2015 semester. Throughout the graduate program that Blake was a part of, she attended courses and workshops on composition theory and
pedagogy. A part of these courses and workshops was also dedicated to responding to student writing; in addition to these formal programs, Blake expanded the knowledge on responding to students through informal learning, mainly through practical experience. Blake also took undergraduate and graduate courses on general linguistic and language acquisition that provided specific preparation on language and grammar. Blake is in the second year of teaching college writing, but has also worked as a writing tutor for two years. Blake traces the start of teaching preparation all the way to when she was 11 years old and started giving regular speeches in front of the church congregation (between 100 and 300 people). Through preparing for these speeches, Blake learned different techniques and styles of teaching in addition to becoming more confident in speaking in front of large groups of people. Blake was also taught by other deacons and priests to teach lessons to smaller groups within a congregation. Blake learned mainly from trial and error, by asking questions, and by listening to what people were understanding in order to adjust what she was teaching to her audience. Blake observed her parents’ teaching at the church and learned how to break people in groups and have them teach a lesson based on what they were learning. Blake’s father’s practice was to do plenty of research prior to composing an intellectual speech. Blake’s mother was very energetic and animated. Blake combined the two (research and animation) to teach. Her extended family (grandparents, uncles, aunts) were all teachers, and a few were also heads of universities. Specific to writing, Blake learned from experiences as a student in English composition classes and from her father. On the one hand, the English teacher taught Blake the importance of letting students write about what they cared for, while on the other hand, Blake’s father taught her the importance of clarity and conciseness by carefully examining Blake’s writing assignments and marking all grammatical errors in red. Blake’s father also required that she write regular reflective journals, as well as reading reports based on stories
from newspapers. In college, Blake took mainly classes on writing and public speaking. Her father, however, despised the mainstream education system and teaching, so Blake lives in a constant conflict between the family education on one side and the mainstream education on the other side. Blake wants to teach students to respect their teachers, but “to not be subservient to them” as teachers do not know everything and they may not always be right (personal communication, April 1, 2015). For Blake, a good teacher guides students, but students need to teach themselves as well: “teaching someone isn’t a matter of lecturing—it’s a matter of helping them teach themselves” (personal communication, April 1, 2015). Blake likes to challenge students and have them write arguments to challenge her back and thus make their own education more meaningful. She explains:

> I’m fighting for my positions, for what I understand about writing, and you fight back for what you understand about writing, and the harder you fight, the more skilled you’ll become because you’ll have to be concise in your articulation of your ideas and thinking, as well as the way in which you write it so that you unfit me in my position. If you can convince me out of the way I think, you are a successful student. (personal communication, April 1, 2015)

Blake finds that the most successful activities to improve student writing include freewriting, outlining and modeling, and the composition paradigms that inform her approach to teaching writing include expressivism, cognitivism, and social-constructionism.

5.1.1. Responding practices in theory: What Blake believes she is doing.

With regards to responding to student writing, Blake explains that she prefers to ask questions about what students know until “I exhaust their ability to answer them” (personal communication, April 1, 2015). Blake believes that students love to show what they know, and
by asking them questions to show their knowledge, Blake motivates them to continue searching for answers until they reach the point of not being able to answer a question: “At that point, students will ask a question because they really want to learn something, and that is the point where a teacher can teach something because the student is ready to learn” (personal communication, April 1, 2015). Blake’s philosophy of asking question formed at an early age. While Blake did try the opposite approach (lecturing), this approach was not effective, so she continues using the questioning approach: “I can’t teach anything that they don’t want to know or that they are not ready to know or able to know. The only way they are able to know is if they have a question and they are in tune with getting the answers and they are really feeding their desires and all” (personal communication, April 1, 2015). Motivating students to ask questions and not giving them full answers so that they are challenged to ask for more is the most successful responding strategy, according to Blake. On the other hand, the most frustrating thing about responding to students for Blake is how to translate her speech into a short and concise written response “because nobody wants to read a lengthy response.” Blake explains that “the leader of the assessment committee [at The University] suggested asking a question instead of writing a lengthy comment—‘ask them questions where they can correct themselves,’ and that changes all the headache of having to do all the thinking for them” (personal communication, April 1, 2015). Blake adds that she asks open-ended questions, such as “How can you add other points of view to create multiple angles of argument?” because that way, students use their own problem-solving processes instead of blindly following the teacher’s advice. When responding to student drafts, Blake expresses a preference for personalized comments both in the margins and at the end. She finds that the most important elements to comment on include audience, purpose,
context, and usage, followed by organization, content, mechanics and style, while punctuation and grammatical error are less important.

In terms of writing fluency, Blake defines grammar as “an understanding of how words work in conjunction with other words, punctuations, and in inflections in relation to a sentence” (personal communication, April 1, 2015). Blake adds that she is comfortable responding to writing fluency issues based on “the knowledge that if I cannot find an answer, I can find the path to the answer” (personal communication, April 1, 2015). When responding to students’ errors that relate to language, Blake ranks usage and grammatical error as the two most important issues, followed by style, mechanics, and punctuation. When deciding whether to mark an error or not, Blake states that “if an error is noticed, it should be pointed out; the same holds true if a pattern of errors are noticed” (personal communication, April 1, 2015). Blake’s favorite methods of marking errors include correction, criticism, advice, and open questions, and she adds that “simply pointing out an error isn’t enough; showing someone how to recognize, and correct their errors is an asset” (personal communication, April 1, 2015). As a writing teacher, Blake checks that students understand her feedback by asking students to submit a revision plan memo and through individual student-teacher conferences.

Prior to looking at the actual responding practices, let us first consider what Blake’s goals were when responding to the surveyed drafts and how she approached the responding process. In both the literature review assignment and the genre analysis assignment, Blake believes that she looked for effective techniques that students are using to communicate their ideas. She explains that she tries not to involve herself in student drafts by judging or evaluating them as this approach creates the “first draft syndrome” where students try to write perfect rough drafts and then invest very little work in subsequent drafts. Blake adds that she only provides sample
drafts with suggestions and lets students write their own way. She also tells me that she did not comment on rough drafts because she perceives drafting as a messy process, and her comments would be “trying to force something out of their draft which is not what they really intended to do” (personal communication, April 1, 2015). Blake believes that each person has an individual writing process, and they should be left to use their process freely, without teachers interfering:

Every scout built his fire his own way, and I got my own way of building a fire, and every one of us were able to light it in the end. But if I interfere in their fire they get frustrated, they walk away, they don’t want anything to do with that fire. I end up having to fix their fire, redo their fire and light it nicely. See that’s how fire is done, and they didn’t learn anything, all I did was do it myself. (personal communication, April 1, 2015).

In terms of revision, Blake tells me that she was hoping her students would answer the assignment questions and show that they are using the techniques they are learning in class. Blake adds that she does read student drafts, but does not comment individually in order to not interfere with individual writing processes. Blake provides general comments and suggestions in class, and provides different techniques for drafting, but does not interfere with what students choose to use.

5.1.2. Responding practices in practice: How Blake responds to writing fluency.

Since Blake does not provide feedback to rough drafts, the following section provides an analysis of Blake’s responding practices based on the comments to students’ final drafts. Blake also included the assessment rubrics with these final drafts. The drafts belong to two genres: one is informative (Literature Review with Primary Research) and one is analytical (Genre Analysis) (see Appendices G to J for detailed assignment guidelines).
The first set of drafts that I examined was from the informative genre (*Literature Review with Primary Research*). The final drafts averaged six pages per student, thus amounting to an average of 198 pages. I examined three samples of final drafts according to the type of error that affects writing fluency and according to linguistic and rhetorical features of the teacher’s comments. As Table 5.2 shows, I identified a total of 131 errors in all three student samples, but Blake did not provide any comments in the margins or corrections in the text with regards to writing fluency issues. It is important to note that she also did not provide in-text comments to any other issues, such as organization or idea development.

Table 5.2. Frequency of Student Errors and Blake’s Comments (*Literature Review*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Error</th>
<th>Teacher’s Response</th>
<th>In-text Correction</th>
<th>Unmarked</th>
<th>Margin Comment</th>
<th>Total Errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Syntax</td>
<td>No Comment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dangling Modifier</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S-V agreement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>No Comment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics</td>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Possessive/Plural</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verb/Tense</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pronouns</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preposition</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parallel Structure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usage</td>
<td>Word Choice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Idiomatic Expressions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transitions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reporting verbs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co/Subordination</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal / Informal</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Errors and Comments</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>131</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>131</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In-text correction refers to a teachers’ correction directly in students’ drafts without an accompanying explanation of the error/correction.*
The most frequent students’ errors were comma splices ($N=40$), but word choice issues ($N=15$), prepositions ($N=11$), and sentence structure ($N=10$) were also frequently problematic. Although Blake did not comment on any comma splices or verb issues, examples [1], [2], and [3] in Table 5.3 show that these issues were problematic in terms of readers’ comprehension.

**Table 5.3. Blake’s Sample Comments to Literature Review**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Error</th>
<th>Type(s) of error</th>
<th>Teacher’s Margin Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[1]</td>
<td>In this article it talks that any media can affect children’s behavior but is more commonly to increase violence and aggression while playing too much a video game.</td>
<td>Comma splice (intro) S-V agreement Sentence structure</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[2]</td>
<td>The authors also did a posit about the Kyoto Protocol which is responsible on reducing the emissions caused by greenhouse gases and how there are suggestions of adopting national policies for the development of wind turbines and other sources that do not emit any carbon dioxide.</td>
<td>Word choice Preposition Parallel structure</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[3]</td>
<td>It has been discovered several bad effects for humanity as well as to the environment in general he also stated that […]</td>
<td>Sentence structure Coordination Comma splice</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Blake’s summative comments typically pointed out that students had writing fluency issues, but they did not specify what kind of writing issues students had. These summative comments appeared to be canned, and not personalized. In one sample, the student had issues with comma splices, word choice, and verbs, but Blake only commented that “The writing could be much clearer.” In another sample, Blake did specify what kind of writing issues the student had by commenting that “The writing itself needs work involving paragraph indents, word use,
sentence structure, spelling, and punctuation.” As in the previous participants’ examples, the accompanying assessment rubric provided generic and arhetorical explanations such as, “Demonstrates adequate writing fluency, exhibiting a fair number of grammar and mechanical errors. Academic voice, third person, and tense are somewhat consistent. Writing could be clearer.” In the third sample, Blake provided personalized summative comments to issues of content and organization, but did not mention any writing issues, while the grade in the assessment rubric states that the student “Demonstrates limited writing fluency, exhibits numerous grammar and mechanical errors. Academic voice, third person, and tense are inconsistent. Writing is unclear.” Students’ grades were typically lowered by 5 points on a 200-point scale for this assignment.

The second set of drafts that I examined was from the analytical genre (Genre Analysis). The graded drafts averaged three pages per student, thus amounting to a total of 99 pages. I examined three samples of final drafts according to the type of error that affects writing fluency and according to linguistic and rhetorical features of the teacher’s comments. As with the previous type of assignment, Blake provided only summative comments and the assessment rubric, but no comments in the text. As Table 5.4 shows, all three samples had a total of 97 errors, and the most frequent students’ errors were sentence structure (N=13), parallel structure (N=13), and comma splices (N=13), followed by word choice issues (N=11).
Table 5.4. Frequency of Student Errors and Blake’s Comments (Genre Analysis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Error</th>
<th>Teacher's Response</th>
<th>No Comment</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In-text Correction*</td>
<td>Unmarked</td>
<td>Margin Comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syntax</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dangling Modifier</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S-V agreement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>Fragment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comma splice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics</td>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Possessive/Plural</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verb/Tense</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pronouns</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preposition</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parallel Structure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usage</td>
<td>Word Choice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Idiomatic Expressions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transitions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reporting verbs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co/Subordination</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal / Informal</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Errors and Comments</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>97</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In-text correction refers to a teachers’ correction directly in students’ drafts without an accompanying explanation of the error/correction.

Although Blake did not comment on any of these specific issues comma splices or verb issues, examples [4], [5], and [6] in Table 5.5 show that these issues were problematic in terms of readers’ comprehension.
### Table 5.5. Blake’s Sample Comments to Genre Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Student Examples</th>
<th>Error Type(s) of error</th>
<th>Teacher's Margin Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[4]</td>
<td>Then my second genre is The New York Times online and topic would be “Obama says he doesn’t expect more external talks with Iran” what is writing about on this would be Iran has made nuclear weapons that can be a threat to the world.</td>
<td>Comma splice, Sentence structure, Preposition</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[5]</td>
<td>Together, these genres share many common elements with each other, but definitely differentiate by their requirements and how they influence and impact their audience through the use of ethos, pathos and logos as well as the themes to which will attract certain audiences.</td>
<td>Word choice, Parallel structure, Coordination</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[6]</td>
<td>And article is purely informative without any opinionated statements, showing that the article is completely expository with facts to which the reader can logically relate this article to being a fully credible source.</td>
<td>Sentence structure</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Blake’s summative comments typically pointed out that students had writing fluency issues, but they did not specify what kind of writing issues students had. Again, these summative comments appeared to be canned, and not personalized. Blake typically provided summative comments that specified only very general writing issues the student had: “Read backward through your essays sentence by sentence in order to catch errors while editing. This essay has numerous word, grammar, and punctuation errors throughout.” As in the previous participants’ examples, the accompanying assessment rubric provided generic and arhetorical explanations.
such as, “Demonstrates limited writing fluency, exhibits numerous major grammar and mechanical errors. Academic voice, third person, and tense are inconsistent. Writing is unclear.” Students’ grades were typically lowered by 5 points on a 100-point scale for this assignment.

5.1.3. Blake and the activity system of responding.

Blake’s teaching and responding philosophy shows a strong tendency towards freedom of expression: not only should students express themselves freely, but they should also be free to find their own way through how they want to express themselves. This philosophy seems to be reflected in Blake’s actual responding activity since she does not respond to rough drafts and provides only generic comments to final drafts. However, a detailed comparison of Blake’s philosophies and practices shows contradictions between her long-term objectives and short-term goals. These contradictions are especially evident within the individual elements of Blake’s responding activity, while there seem to be no inconsistencies between the elements. As mentioned previously, Blake as the subject of the responding activity acts in two roles: that of a teacher in her object-oriented activity and that of a teacher and graduate student in her goal-oriented actions. While all the other element of her activity system are influenced by these competing roles that influence how she prioritizes and distributes her time, the recurring themes in the national and local resources (as they emerged in Chapter 4) provide insight into why she chooses such distribution (see Chapter 6 for a discussion of these insights).

When looking at Blake’s object-oriented activity (where she takes on the role of a teacher), it appears that the main desired outcome of Blake’s teaching and responding approaches is for students to become independent thinkers and effective communicators, who look for their own questions and answers, and who become naturally more articulate through “fighting for their position” (personal communication, April 1, 2015). In order to achieve this
outcome, Blake’s responding objective is to challenge students with questions and to teach revision. In fact, Blake asserts that she strives to provide short and concise questions in order to motivate students to use their own problem-solving processes, while she merely points to the patterns of errors. Consequently, her division of labor places the weight of learning responsibility on students who will learn when they are ready to learn, and not when Blake attempts to teach them. Despite the weight of labor leaning towards student responsibility, it seems to be distributed between the teacher who asks questions and students who also ask questions, but in addition find answers as well. Blake’s object-oriented activity also shows a desire for distributing the focus of response to both ideas and articulation. These three elements of Blake’s object-oriented activity, however, seem to clash with her goal-oriented actions (where she takes on the role of a teacher and a graduate student). In fact, while her desired outcome is for students to become independent thinkers who are also effective communicators, the actual outcome of her responding actions seems to focus solely on independent thinking. Such outcome follows her goal of providing minimum guidance and letting students discover their own writing process. Stemming from this minimalistic responding goal, the division of labor is not as distributed as in her object-oriented activity and shows a strong tendency towards individual work, where the teacher does not ask questions to motivate thinking, but instead provides general comments that reflect the entries from the assessment rubric, while students should unpack these generic comments and apply them to their specific ideas and writing fluency. Figure 1.1 represents the model of Blake’s activity system and the tensions that emerged between her object-oriented activities and goal-oriented actions:
Figure 5.1. Blake’s Object-oriented activity vs. goal-oriented actions.
While the activity system elements of outcome, objective, and division of labor seem to go hand in hand with each other, the system becomes more complicated when zooming in the elements of rules, tools, and community that guide Blake’s responding activity. In fact, Blake’s object-oriented activity seems to be guided by rules that balance a writer-centered approach that values freedom of expression with a reader-centered approach that values clarity and conciseness. In order to follow these rules, Blake claims that she utilizes a combination of inquisitive and corrective tools that are tailored to individual students. Such a desire to combine inquisitive and corrective approaches seems to result from her educational background in Creative Writing and Composition Studies, where the focus is on ideas, and her family background of strict teachers, who taught her the importance of clarity and conciseness by carefully examining Blake’s writing assignments and “literally red lining everything” (personal communication, April 1, 2015). Her desire to create a balance between ideas and conciseness, however, is not reflected in her goal-oriented actions, where her comments show that she relies on the community of her immediate institution by following the institution’s generic assessment rubrics, which point out to students that they have writing fluency issues, but do not specify which issues or where they occur or how to improve them. This approach is also evident in the non-inquisitive and generic tools that Blake uses (such as sample drafts and canned comments), thus reflecting rules that are writer-centered (such as students’ freedom of expression and teachers’ lack of interference with a student’s writing process). Blake’s main objectives of the responding activity are to challenge students with questions and to teach revision in order to achieve the desired outcome of students becoming independent thinkers and effective communicators. These objectives are focused on idea generation and development, while the outcomes also include the need for students to communicate effectively. The goals in Blake’s
actual responding activity, however, show that assisting students in achieving such an outcome of effective communication does not seem to be a part of Blake’s actual responding activity.

5.2. Written Response is a Piece of a Conversation

Instructors Alex and Andy prefer to fit their written responses within the larger conversations in the classroom and during the individual student-teacher conferences. Alex and Andy both have a background in Creative Writing and hold an MFA from a medium-sized southwest university. In addition, Alex has specific preparation in language and grammar through courses on general linguistics, while both attended presentations and workshops on grammar. Alex and Andy explained that their rationale for the “conversation” approach comes from their own creative writing tendencies and experiences, which in turn helps them understand what it means to experiment with writing and think about writing choices.

According to Andy, the composition paradigms that inform her approach to teaching writing include current-traditional, expressivism, and cognitivism. She believes that good writing means communicating one’s thoughts clearly. She likes to teach students how to become critical thinkers, so she pushes them to think about why they think the way they think or believe. Andy states that her responses will focus more on what is missing than on what is already there because pointing out what is missing pushes students to think further/deeper. Andy explains that her philosophy was influenced by strict and tough teachers who were also fair—the teachers who would make students work hard for their grade and constantly push to do better. In terms of writing fluency, Andy defines grammar as “a tool which demonstrates the professional voice of the writer” (personal communication, April 17, 2015). When responding to writing fluency issues, Andy finds mechanical errors (e.g., capitalization, spelling, or parallel structures) and punctuation errors to be the most important to respond to, while style, usage, and grammatical
error are less important. Andy’s decision for marking writing fluency issues depends on “how
great of an impact the error made on the content of the paper, or if it is an error that the student
keeps making” (personal communication, April 17, 2015). She believes that the teacher needs to
provide clear and simple feedback. She learned these responding strategies through tutoring at
the writing center and through student interactions. Based on the examination of the commented
student drafts, Andy very rarely provides comments in the margins; when she does, these
comments are arhetorical and generic, such as “Only 3rd person.” Her summative comments are
typically also very short and generic, such as “you had some major format flaws” or “hard to
understand at times.” Alex, on the other hand, provides more meaningful comments to content
issues throughout the paper and at the end. Although her comments to writing fluency are
minimal and predominantly generic, I describe Alex’s case in more detail since her general
commenting approach offers slightly more data than Andy’s.

Alex holds a BA in English and an MA in Creative Writing from a large southeast
university, as well as an MFA from a medium-sized southwest university. Currently, Alex is in
the process of earning a PhD in Rhetoric and Composition at the same medium-sized southwest
university. In addition to her PhD work, Alex was performing administrative duties in the RWS
program and was teaching one FYW class with 12 students in the spring 2015 semester.
Throughout the graduate programs that Alex was a part of, she attended courses, presentations,
and workshops on composition theory and pedagogy, as well as on creative writing pedagogy. A
part of these courses and workshops was also dedicated to responding to student writing; in
addition to these formal programs, Alex expanded the knowledge on responding to students
through informal learning, mainly through practical experience. Alex also had specific
preparation on language and grammar through graduate courses on general linguistics, through
presentations and workshops on grammar, and through informal learning. Alex does not have any specific preparation in working with ESL/bilingual writers, but did collaborate frequently with co-workers from foreign countries; in addition, the MFA program that Alex attended was a bilingual program (English and Spanish). An important part of Alex’s teaching background was being part of a pilot program that built a new curriculum for the second section of FYW at The University, thus doing intense work “related to pedagogical practices and comp theory” (personal communication, April 23, 2015). Alex spent one year tutoring at the university’s writing center and has been teaching writing courses for approximately eight years—teaching a range of courses from first-year composition to advanced undergraduate writing courses. According to Alex, the composition paradigms that inform her approach to teaching writing include expressivism, social-constructionism, and critical-pedagogy. She believes that her teaching is student-centered as “teaching is about the students and not the teacher” (personal communication, April 23, 2015). Alex tells me that she adapts her teaching based on what students struggle with—and this can be different every semester with every different set of students. Alex’s philosophy is to “work with the students to achieve the best outcome and to make them feel comfortable about writing and to take away some of the anxiety” (personal communication, April 23, 2015). For Alex, discussion, peer work, freewriting, outlining, modelling, drafting, and individual teacher-student conferences are all very useful activities to improve student writing.

5.2.1. Responding practices in theory: What Alex believes she is doing.

Stemming from this student-centered philosophy, Alex says that she likes to make students comfortable by talking to them in class and during individual conferences. She sees responding as “a piece of a conversation” that may not make sense to someone who looks at her
written comments out of context. Being a student herself, Alex feels she understands what it means to experiment with writing. Working at the writing center influenced Alex a lot, especially working as a graduate student tutor and responding to numerous dissertations. Alex sees that responding is different every semester due to learning more about writing and responding, and also based on how students react to comments; students questions, confusion, and follow-up comments also influence the changes in responding. Alex prefers to respond to student drafts by providing personalized comments in the margins and at the end, as well as by having students peer review their work. When commenting to student drafts, Alex finds audience, purpose, context, organization, and content to be very important; punctuation, grammatical error; mechanics, and usage to be important; and style to be somewhat important. Alex finds that the most successful or effective response strategies are comments in the margins that need to go hand in hand with the summative comments. For Alex, comments need to be made about “the big things. You can’t comment on every little missing comma, or every sentence that’s off because then they just get confusing overwhelmed by everything they see.” Alex sees the side comments as specific examples that show students what is problematic; side comments can sometimes be harsh, so the end comments serve to “soften the blow” by telling students “Okay, I see that you are working, now how can we improve what you have done so far.” On the other hand, the most frustrating or challenging part of responding to student writing is when a student is investing work into a paper, but obviously not following the instructions: “I’m so frustrated and sometimes that will come out in my comments and I will catch myself and sometimes I’ll go back and fix it and then other times, no—I want them to know that I know” (personal communication, April 23, 2015). To sum up, Alex seems to take an active role in students’
drafting by involving herself in talking to students before, during, and after the assignment in order to help students understand the rhetorical issues they need to consider in their writing.

In terms of writing fluency, Alex defines grammar as “the ways in which sentences are put together.” Alex teaches writing at a university that is largely Hispanic, so sometimes the whole class can be ESL or bilingual and can exhibit writing fluency issues. Alex understands the pressures of students who need to write for a grade in a non-native language because she studied two foreign languages and took a bilingual MFA, during which it was required to submit work in those foreign languages. When addressing writing fluency issues that students might have, Alex comments on issues that affect readers’ comprehension, and not on every little error; in order to avoid overwhelming the student, Alex chooses what can be improved: “I try to fix a bit […] when they struggle with when to use ‘on’ and when to use ‘in’ […] fixing that, that’s 40% right? That’s a big thing that can be fixed to where their writing is more coherent.” Alex is comfortable when responding to writing fluency issues because of experience in her own writing and believes that “in order to teach and respond to students’ writing, [she has] to regularly review grammar rules and acceptable exceptions to those rules” (personal communication, April 23, 2015). When responding to writing fluency issues, Alex finds grammatical errors (e.g., sentence structure, subject-verb agreement) and usage errors the most important to respond to, while mechanics, style, and punctuation are less important. Alex’s decision for marking writing fluency issues depends on whether these issues affect the “content, context, or understanding of what the student is trying to say” and whether there are issues “that keep repeating.” To indicate writing fluency issues to students, Alex uses correction, criticism, praise with advice, closed or open questions, and reflective statements, but does not use imperatives. Alex decides which responding method to use based on the individual students’ needs, as well as based on the stage
of the draft, and whether the comment is written or oral/face-to-face. Alex learned these responding strategies through her own writing courses and processes, as well as from students’ reactions to her responding. In order to check if students understood the feedback, Alex uses class mini-lessons, class discussions based on student samples, and individual student-teacher conferences. To sum up, Alex is very selective when responding to writing fluency issues and thus comments only on issues that affect readers’ comprehension or that show a problematic pattern. As in her general responding practices, Alex uses class, peer, and individual discussions to clarify or follow up on issues that students are encountering.

Prior to looking at the actual responding practices, let us first consider what Alex’s goals were when responding to the surveyed drafts and how she approached the responding process. According to Alex, the focus of responding to these drafts depended on individual students. These assignments were assigned halfway through the semester, so Alex already had an idea of what individual students were struggling with. Alex thinks that certain students did not need a lot of commenting because they already knew what she pointed out to them throughout the semester, so they needed to work on those same issues. She also thinks that other students needed more attention to sentence structure, so she showed them examples of rephrased sentences. Alex claims that, generally, she looked for focus, organization, and coherency; if the students did not have issues in these areas, then she commented on other issues, such as punctuation. Alex’s criteria for a good draft of these assignments were incorporating sources according to APA, adhering to length requirements, and showing focus and coherency. Prior to providing any written feedback, Alex worked with students in class while they were working on peer review. After peer review, Alex had individual conferences, during which she and the students talked about their drafts and at the same time both wrote down the comments into the
students’ drafts. Alex hoped that students have learned the difference between inexperienced and experienced writers based on the article “Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers” by Sommers (1980), and thus that they would revise their drafts by focusing on bigger issues and ideas, instead of revising a few words or sentences. Alex generally hoped that students would learn how to shape their ideas through various drafting stages before those ideas were ready for someone else to read them: “I don’t want to seem like the finished product is all I care about—it’s not, it’s the process that got them there, so I’m unhappy when the process that got them there was nonexistent” (personal communication, April 23, 2015). A major weakness that Alex noticed in students’ drafts was providing credible sources and then incorporating sources into their writing without simply patching them or not paraphrasing properly. Students seemed to have a hard time providing sources that were other than websites. Their strength, on the other hand, was the passion towards their chosen topics as it was evident in their writing.

Alex’s habit is to recognize students’ strengths and talk about them in class or during individual conferences, and not use these encouraging comments written feedback. Another habit that Alex has is preparing a class time after feedback where the class works on all the major issues together. In addition to preparing a lesson on major issues from students’ drafts, Alex explains that she prepares mini-lessons on sentence-level issues (run-ons, comma splices). She uses a section from a Workplace Writing textbook that has a separate section dedicated to ESL issues, and she talks with students about issues such as sentence structure or punctuation and about how to correct those issues. Alex thinks that this approach shows to students that “there is no one way magic bullet for writing; there are all these different ways to address sentence issues.” To sum up, Alex’s overall responding goal for these assignments was that students were following the guidelines, but also that they were learning that a good product is a result of constant revision.
With regards to writing fluency, Alex’s goal was to comment on writing issues only after commenting to global issues and only if they affected readers’ comprehension.

5.2.2. Responding practices in practice: How Alex responds to writing fluency.

The following section provides an analysis of Alex’s responding practices based on the comments to students’ rough or final drafts. The drafts belong to two genres: one is informative (Community Problem Report) and the other is analytical (Rhetorical Analysis) (see Appendices G to J for detailed assignment guidelines). For the informative genre, Alex provided only rough drafts, while both rough and final drafts were provided for the analytical genre. Alex did not include an assessment rubric with the final drafts.

The first set of drafts that I examined was from the informative genre (Community Problem Report). These were rough drafts that averaged four pages per student for 12 students, thus amounting to a total of 48 pages for the entire class. I examined three samples according to the type of error that affects writing fluency and according to linguistic and rhetorical features of the teacher’s comments. The frequency of students’ errors and Alex’s comments is presented in Table 5.6, while the linguistic and rhetorical features of Alex’s comments are presented in a description further below.
Table 5.6. Frequency of Student Errors and Alex’s Comments (Community Problem Report)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Error</th>
<th>Teacher's Response</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No Comment</td>
<td>In-text Correction*</td>
<td>Unmarked Margin Comment</td>
<td>Total Errors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syntax</td>
<td></td>
<td>Unmarked</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sentence Structure</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dangling Modifier</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S-V agreement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Unmarked</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fragment</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Comma splice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Possessive/Plural</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verb/Tense</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Pronouns</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parallel Structure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usage</td>
<td></td>
<td>Unmarked</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Idiomatic Expressions</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transitions</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reporting verbs</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subordination</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td></td>
<td>Unmarked</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal / Informal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Errors and Comments</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>137</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In-text correction refers to a teachers’ correction directly in students’ drafts without an accompanying explanation of the error/correction.

As Table 5.6 shows, all three samples had a total of 137 errors, and only nine of those errors were marked by Alex. The most frequent students’ errors were comma splices ($N = 73$), but Alex did not mark any of them. Likewise, Alex did not mark any of the verb tense errors, which were the second most frequent error ($N = 15$). One error relating to the formal style was corrected directly in the text without an explanation:

[1] The danger with the current situation is that because prescription drugs are so beneficial for those who use them properly it isn’t is not justifiable […]
Eight errors had comments in the margin, but none of them provided any reference to rhetorical considerations such as audience, purpose, context, or genre. Most comments were general, not specific to the text, and the most predominant linguistic features of the comments were statements or imperatives. Generally, Alex provided one or two comments per page in each draft and concluded with summative comments that reiterated the comments in the margin. However, while the summative comments specified that there were grammatical errors that made it difficult to read the drafts, there were no specific directions as to what types of errors the students tend to make—only directions to proofread carefully for clarity.

Table 5.7 shows sample student errors and Alex’s comments based on the most predominant issues with comma splices ($N = 73$), verbs ($N = 15$), and word choices ($N = 7$). Although Alex did not comment on any comma splices or verb issues, example [2] shows that these issues were problematic in terms of readers’ comprehension. This example is from a student draft that contained a total of 90 issues, but only two issues were commented on. In contrast, examples [3] and [4] are from a sample draft that had only 16 writing fluency issues, but Alex commented on four of those. While example [3] points out to the student how Alex as a reader understood the sentence, the student could benefit from an explanation of parallel structures that would solve the issue of clarity in this case. Similarly, Alex pointed out to the sentence and word choice issues and instructed the student to rephrase the sentences in examples [4] and [5], but does not explain why these sentences were problematic. The statements were general and not specific to the text, and they had no rhetorical characteristics.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Student Examples</th>
<th>Teacher's Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| [2] | Thirteenth rule *Free kicks*, the free kick has two categories the indirect and the direct, the direct can be shot directly to the goal, and the indirect has to be touched by a player before going into the goal.                                                                                     | **Verb (missing)**
**Comma splices**                                                                                                                                                                                                 | None                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| [3] | Prescription drug abuse has become an epidemic in the United States and because it is hard to regulate and easily attainable, there is not a simple solution.                                                                                                                             | **Parallel structure**
**Word choice**                                                                                                                                                                                                 | The way this is worded makes it seem like you're saying drug abuse is easily attainable. I think what you want to say is that prescription drugs are easily attainable for some. |
|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| [4] | Pharmaceutical drugs, when used as directed, have made a positive impact on so many people’s health for the better and have increased the quality of life, as we know it.                                                                                                          | **Word choice**                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Read this sentence out loud the rework it.                                                                                                                                                                     |
|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| [5] | In certain states, Texas, Ohio, North Carolina, and Wisconsin, are trying to push voting restrictions by enhancing new laws such as, Voter ID laws, the ejection of early voting, and many other small critiques that will eventually have a major effect on the outcome of votes in future elections. | **Sentence structure**
**Word choice**                                                                                                                                                                                                 | This is not a complete sentence
**Word choice**                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

The second set of drafts that I examined was from the analytical genre (*Rhetorical Analysis*). These drafts included rough drafts that averaged three pages per student and final drafts that averaged five pages per student for 12 students, thus amounting to a total of 36 pages for rough drafts and 60 pages for final drafts. I examined three samples of rough drafts and three samples of final drafts according to the type of error that affects writing fluency and according to
linguistic and rhetorical features of the teacher’s comments. There were no significant
differences in responding practices between rough and final drafts, so Table 5.8 provides the
frequency of students’ errors and Alex’s comments for all six samples. The linguistic and
rhetorical features of Alex’s comments are presented in a description further below.

Table 5.8. Frequency of Student Errors and Alex’s Comments (Rhetorical Analysis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Error</th>
<th>Teacher’s Response</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Word Count: 6,910</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Comment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In-text Correction*</td>
<td>Unmarked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syntax</td>
<td>Sentence Structure</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dangling Modifier</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S-V agreement</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>Fragment</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comma splice</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics</td>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Possessive/Plural</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verb/Tense</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pronouns</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preposition</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parallel Structure</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usage</td>
<td>Word Choice</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Idiomatic Expressions</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transitions</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reporting verbs</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subordination</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal / Informal</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Errors and Comments</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In-text correction refers to a teachers’ correction directly in students’ drafts without an
accompanying explanation of the error/correction.

As Table 5.8 shows, all six samples had a total of 158 errors, and 43 of those errors were
marked by Alex, either by in-text correction or with a comment in the margin. The most frequent
students’ errors were comma splices (N = 29) and formal/informal style (N = 36), followed by
word choice and spelling issues (N = 17 for each). While Alex marked more than half of style
issues, most of the issues relating to comma splices, words choices, and spelling were left unmarked.

A total of 17 errors were corrected directly in the text without an explanation, and 26 errors had comments in the margin. Only one of the comments in the margin had a slight inclusion of rhetorical considerations by mentioning the genre of professional writing ([6]) and thus implicitly referring to the audience, while others did not relate to any rhetorical characteristics.

[6] The article gives a lot of useful information about the process of 3-D printing, the price of different models of 3-D printers, and how 3-D printing could be used in the future.

Comment: “Think of a more formal / professional word here.”

Most comments were general, not specific to the text, and the most predominant linguistic features of the comments were statements, questions, or imperatives. Alex provided comments in a balanced manner throughout each draft. The summative comments typically reiterated the comments in the margin, but they mentioned writing fluency issues in a very general manner without specific examples of the types of errors the students tend to make: “There are some grammar/mechanical issues but you can work them out during the revision and proofreading stages.”

Table 5.9 shows sample student errors and Alex’s comments based on the typical comments to writing fluency issues. As example [7] shows, apart from the unmarked comma splice with an introductory phrase, the two other issues were word choice and the use of you in an academic paper. Alex’s comments to both these issues were arhetorical and did not provide
much context for the student. Likewise, the comments in examples [8] and [9] simply point out to an issue, but they do not explain why the sentences are confusing.

### Table 5.9. Alex’s Sample Comments to the Rhetorical Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Student Examples</th>
<th>Type(s) of error</th>
<th>Teacher's Margin Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[7]</td>
<td>By reading further into this analysis facts will be provided through her well-created webpage to enlighten you on a widespread topic that is present in all age groups.</td>
<td>Comma splice (intro) Word choice Formal/Informal</td>
<td>?????</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Who is you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[8]</td>
<td>Then she goes on describing what she saw at the plant and what she learned from the experts inside, combining it with information from her research, describing the business model of 3-D printing and the different areas in which it is applied.</td>
<td>Coordination</td>
<td>This sentence is confusing. Read it out loud to yourself several times. How can you break this up or reword it for clarity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[9]</td>
<td>Each picture was as relevant has helpful, each one showed a different person, style of living, and profession/dream.</td>
<td>Spelling Comma splice</td>
<td>This is not a sentence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**5.2.3. Alex and the activity system of responding.**

As opposed to Blake, Alex’s responding activity does not show such clear-cut and abundant contradictions within or between the individual Activity Theory elements. Fewer contradictions could be a result of Alex’s longer experience in the teaching of writing (seven years versus Blake’s two years) that gave her time to adjust her philosophy to the constraints of the teaching reality (such as time, resources, etc.). Alex’s teaching and responding philosophy shows a strong tendency towards collaboration, both among peers and between herself and students. According to Alex, the majority of this collaboration happens during class time and individual student-teacher conferences; however, since my data collection focused on observing
teachers’ written response, and not their classes or student conferences, I can rely only on how their written response reflects this collaboration. In Alex’s case, it appears that her written response tries to adhere to her philosophy of staying involved with students by providing comments throughout their drafts. While she herself explains that these written comments may not make sense to someone who looks at her written comments out of context, she believes that these comments are “a piece of a conversation” (personal communication, April 23, 2015). It seems, however, that students need to put these pieces together on their own since Alex does not provide any cues as to how her comments relate to the larger conversation (for example, by reminding students about a specific conversation or lesson with phrases such as “remember our class on xyz” or “check the handout on xyz that I posted on Blackboard”). As mentioned earlier, such discrepancies between her long-term objectives and short-term goals may not be as evident as in Blake’s case, but they still exist, and they are also especially evident within the individual elements of Alex’s responding activity, while there seem to be no inconsistencies between the elements. There were also no evident contradictions in the outcome element of her responding activity. In fact, when looking at Alex’s object-oriented activity, it appears that the main desired outcome of her teaching and responding approach is to help students develop as writers. Her actual written response in her goal-oriented actions supports such outcome as she provides constructive feedback that students can use to improve as writers. Figure 5.2 represents the model of Alex’s activity system and the tensions that emerged between her object-oriented activities and goal-oriented actions:
Figure 5.2. Alex’s object-oriented activity vs. goal-oriented actions.
As with Blake, the contradictions that do emerge in Alex’s responding activity system more than likely arise from the clash in the roles that Alex takes on: in her object-oriented activity, she is a teacher and a writer who can relate to students as writers, while in her goal-oriented actions, she is not only a teacher and empathizing writer, but also a graduate student with administrative duties—two roles that affect how she prioritizes and distributes her time. Hence, while Alex’s responding objectives are to improve coherence, teach revision, and make students aware of rhetorical issues, her actual responding goals seem to stop at coherence and revision, thus neglecting rhetorical issues. This neglect is evident in the tools that Alex uses to accomplish her objectives and goals. For example, in her object-oriented activity, she claims to utilize individual attention to students through discussion and based on her knowledge of rhetoric, as well as her own experience in learning a foreign language that helps her understand the issues that L2 writers might be encountering. However, this awareness and desire to incorporate her wide range of resources is not reflected in her written comments, which do provide individual attention through personalized comments, but do not include rhetorical explanations or contextual support for writing fluency issues. In fact, the majority of her comments were arhetorical and in the form of statements and imperatives, thus not supporting her desire of making the written response a part of the larger conversation. The lack of the desired conversation and collaboration is also evident through the AT element of community, which shows that Alex’s objective-oriented activity includes her educational background in Creative Writing and Composition Studies, where the focus is on ideas, as well as her own experience as a writer and foreign language learner, where clarity and correctness are also extremely relevant. In her actual written response, however, she seems to leave herself out of the
classroom microculture and does not collaborate with students as a writer and foreign language learner.

Similar contradictions also arise in the AT elements of rules and of division of labor. In fact, Alex’s object-oriented activity seems to be guided by rules that see writing as a conversation between writers and readers—a conversation that is guided by rhetorical elements and by patterns of error that students are making. In order to follow these rules, Alex claims that she utilizes a combination of expressivist, social-constructivist, and critical-pedagogy approaches that are adapted to students’ needs because she also believes that good writing should be balanced between freedom of expression and coherency. In her goal-oriented actions, however, she seems to be guided mainly by the rules of balancing freedom of expression and coherence, while the conversation between writers and readers is left out. In fact, her written response focuses mainly on pointing out to students which ideas need to be clarified and how the draft should be formatted in order to adhere to the assignment requirements. Thus, her desire to divide the labor in a way that would reflect a constant conversation between the student and the teacher—a conversation in which both the student and the teacher are writers and readers—is not transferred to her actual responding activity, where she as the teacher performs the task of the reader who points out what needs to be improved, while students perform the task of writers who need to figure out why and how to improve.

5.3. Adapt the Response to Individual Students’ Needs

Instructors Chris and Quinn seem to have a similar approach to responding as they both comment heavily at the beginning of the paper, stop commenting after the first one or two pages, and do not comment at all until the end, where they both provide summative comments that point out specific issues, including those relating to writing fluency. Both also explain that their
responding approach depends on the needs of individual students, thus they prefer to use writing workshops during class time in order to be able to talk to individual students. They add that their responding philosophy was formed based on what they personally liked in their respective writing instructors’ responses. Chris and Quinn, however, come from different educational backgrounds. While Chris holds a BA in English and American Literature and is finishing her MA in Teaching, Quinn holds a BA in Political Science, an MA in Communications, and an upcoming PhD in Rhetoric and Composition. Both were a part of the semester-long teacher preparation program for composition instructors at The University. In terms of grammar preparation, Chris took graduate courses on general linguistics and language acquisition, while Quinn took an undergraduate course on English grammar. Quinn also has extensive experience as a technical writer and has taught writing for an online university prior to entering the PhD program through which she has been teaching writing in a face-to-face environment. According to Quinn, the composition paradigms that inform her approach to teaching writing include current-traditional, expressivism, and social-constructionism. Quinn prefers to “give a lot of individualized attention in the classroom by having students do a lot of workshops” (personal communication, March 25, 2015). With written feedback, Quinn tends to give directives to students on what to do with a specific issue. Quinn finds it hard to say which responding strategies are more successful as this question would be more appropriate for students and what they find effective. Quinn tries to adapt her responses to what seems effective for individual students—sometimes it is questions, other times it is corrections. The most frustrating thing for Quinn is working with ESL students because she has no specific preparation for working with multilingual students. She adds that she has many ESL/bilingual students in her classes, and she finds it more difficult to respond to them as they seem to “use some of the practices in their own
language, in their native language and apply them to the English language, but the same rules don’t apply” (personal communication, March 25, 2015). Quinn uses an example of students whose sentence structure was “kind of a real bad mishmash of English and Spanish, kind of structural.” She explains that, when she worked with them on their sentences, the students did not think there was anything wrong, and since she did not know how to help them, she instructed them to visit the writing center. Although Quinn’s commented drafts show regular attempts to provide substantive comments to writing fluency issues, these comments tend to be generic and vague. Chris provided slightly more specific feedback that referenced both writing fluency and genres, so I describe Chris’s case in more detail.

Chris holds a BA in English and American Literature and is currently finishing her MA in Teaching English at a medium-sized southwest university. In addition to her MAT work, Chris was teaching two FYW classes with a total of 43 students in the spring 2015 semester. She has been teaching college writing for two years and has also volunteered to design a co-curriculum for a private high school. Prior to teaching, Chris also tutored at the writing center. With regards to preparation for teaching writing, Chris took graduate courses on composition theory and pedagogy, as well as graduate courses on teaching second language writing. A part of these courses was also dedicated to responding to student writing. In addition, Chris took graduate courses on general linguistics and language acquisition. She explains that the composition paradigms that inform her teaching include expressivism, social-constructionism, and critical pedagogy. Chris exposes the influence of Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo “because they see literacy as a form of self-defense” (personal communication, April 2, 2015), and Chris teaches students to be able to recognize oppressive situations and defend themselves in those situations.
For Chris, it is important that students become independent critical thinkers who are able to analyze a text and also express themselves.

**5.3.1. Responding practices in theory: What Chris believes she is doing.**

Chris explains that she avoids attacking students with negative comments and prefers to point out what students do well, while at the same time showing them how to do even better. Chris tries to focus on commenting to idea generation and development instead of commenting to writing fluency, but admits that this endeavor is not always successful because it is easier to respond to writing fluency issues such as where to put commas. Chris attributes her philosophy to bad experiences with teachers in her own education—the teachers who provided criticism in a “negative and personal way” had a negative impact on her own development as a writer. Then Chris encountered professors who focused on what students did well and used that as a starting point to work on improving. Also, Chris learned from a mentor at The University that providing a good balance of positive feedback with improvement suggestions goes a long way. When commenting to student drafts, Chris finds audience, purpose, organization, and content to be very important; while context, punctuation, grammatical error; mechanics, usage, and style to be important. Chris finds that the most successful or effective response strategies are comments in the margins that need to go hand in hand with the summative comments. Chris finds interaction with students the best responding strategy because “in person I think the student feels like you are working with them” (personal communication, April 2, 2015). Chris adds that, on the other hand, it seems that students perceive any written feedback as negative because they are accustomed to red marks from high school and they rarely even notice the “you did good” comments. Working with students at the writing center was her preferred way of working with students as that allowed for thorough individual attention. Chris finds that time is the most
frustrating aspect of responding. She thinks that every teacher would want to invest more time and effort into thoughtful responding, but that is hard to do “when you have a 2 week turnaround and you have your own work going on” (personal communication, April 2, 2015).

In terms of writing fluency, Chris defines grammar as “the mechanics of writing. It is a tool that helps us best express our ideas. Though I am firmly rooted in the belief that idea generation and personal expression are the ‘most’ important elements of writing, strong grammar and mechanics gives us the foundation from which to best express these elements,” (personal communication, April 2, 2015). Chris adds that, although all writers have to work on developing ideas and “express[ing] our ideas confidently and thoughtfully,” ESL/bilingual writers have to struggle through the process of translating from their dominant language that they might be using in their thought process. Chris explains that she does focus more on writing fluency with ESL/bilingual students, “although the field instructs us not to focus on grammar, but to focus on ideas.” Chris differs and believes that focus on grammar is necessary with this type of student, but also instructs students to seek additional help or come to her office for individual help. Chris explains that she feels comfortable responding to writing fluency issues, but adds that:

Although I understand grammar “rules,” I am self-conscious of my “mastery of grammar.” It is always fun to focus on idea generation and the potential empowerment that comes through strong writing. Grammar, though an essential element of the mastery of writing, is difficult to respond to because of the potential to go “over board” and focus on mechanics rather than idea generation. I find it difficult to find the comfortable medium between commenting on larger ideas in a student’s paper and commenting on their grammar issues. (personal communication, April 2, 2015).
When responding to writing fluency issues, Chris finds stylistic and grammatical errors (e.g., sentence structure, subject-verb agreement) the most important to respond to, while usage, mechanics, and punctuation are less important. Chris’s decision for marking writing fluency issues depends on whether “the error interrupts the transmission of the student’s idea.” Chris adds:

My goal as a writing instructor is to help students become critical thinkers who can cogently articulate their ideas. I try to focus on mistakes that prevent students from achieving this goal. Another major factor that contribute to what I comment on is how often the error appears on the paper. If there is a repeated error in my students work, I feel it is my responsibility to point out how it is influencing their own ethos as writers.

To indicate writing fluency issues to students, Chris lists that she uses correction, criticism, command, advice, and reflective statements. She explains that she prefers to use open-ended questions that motivate students to reflect and think about the errors that they are making. However, Chris adds that, “unfortunately, most of the time I find myself making corrections to the paper to make efficient use of time” (personal communication, April 2, 2015). In order to check if students understood the feedback, Chris uses student revision plan memos.

Prior to looking at the actual responding practices, let us first consider what Chris’s goals were when responding to the surveyed drafts and how she approached the responding process. According to Chris, the goal of responding to these drafts was to make sure that students were following the model paragraph that Chris provided. She explains that “the model paragraph helps students introduce and explain evidence for their ideas. By following the model paragraph, students showed that their analysis was strong and focused.” Chris adds that she also focused on writing fluency, especially pointing out issues that relate to academic writing (such as overusing
“a lot”). She also tells me that she does not use canned comments and tries to make individualized comments, but is aware that after a certain number of drafts, the comments become repetitive. Chris thinks that a major strength in students’ drafts was following the model paragraph and thus maintaining focus and providing strong evidence, as opposed to students who did not follow the model paragraph and used their own opinion instead. Another strength that Chris noticed was that students followed APA well, and explains that “while APA may seem trivial, following a certain style shows that students pay attention to details, which matters” (personal communication, April 2, 2015). In her response to students, Chris also highlights students’ improvements, even if a student still has weaknesses—if Chris sees that a student put effort into improving by revising and visiting the writing center, Chris considers that and provides more positive feedback in order to build student’s confidence. Chris explains that she focuses on providing positive comments to students because she is aware that they are freshmen and that “maybe this is their only chance to get some decent comments to their writing” (as opposed from their other classes where they are one of 300 students). Chris adds that she tries to provide more feedback to first drafts, but time constraints do not always allow for that. The beginning of the semester is also very fast with assignments, so Chris does not comment much and also does not take points off for what she did not comment on. Later in the semester, Chris becomes strict as by then students should already know their weaknesses and be acquainted with more resources (e.g., writing center). Between drafts, Chris takes ten minutes in class when returning drafts and points out to students what their major issues are. Then Chris lets students look through the feedback and write a reflection and revision plan. Chris thinks students understand the comments, but have a hard time figuring out what to do to improve. Chris provides the example of commenting to writing fluency: students “understand what that means,
but like now how do they fix it?” Chris feels there is no time to help students actually “fix” that, so she lets students talk to him after class and then takes time to help them individually. In addition, Chris tells me that if she notices that at least half of the class is having the same issue, she refreshes her memory on the issue and adjusts the lesson plan to address it in class.

5.3.2. Responding practices in practice: How Chris responds to writing fluency.

The following section provides an analysis of Chris’s responding practices based on the comments to students’ rough or final drafts. The drafts belong to two genres: one is informative (Community Problem Report) and the other is analytical (Rhetorical Analysis) (see Appendices G to J for detailed assignment guidelines). For the informative genre, Chris provided only final drafts, while both rough and final drafts were provided for the analytical genre. Chris did not include an assessment rubric with the final drafts.

The first set of drafts that I examined was from the informative genre (Community Problem Report). These were final drafts that averaged five pages per student for 43 students, thus amounting to a total of 215 pages for two classes that Chris was teaching that semester. I examined three samples according to the type of error that affects writing fluency and according to linguistic and rhetorical features of the teacher’s comments. The frequency of students’ errors and Chris’s comments is presented in Table 5.10, while the linguistic and rhetorical features of Chris’s comments are presented in a description further below.
Table 5.10. *Frequency of Student Errors and Chris’s Comments (Community Report)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Error</th>
<th>Teacher's Response</th>
<th>No Comment</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Total Errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In-text Correction*</td>
<td>Unmarked</td>
<td>Margin Comment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syntax</td>
<td>Sentence Structure</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dangling Modifier</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S-V agreement</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>Fragment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comma splice</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics</td>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Possessive/Plural</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verb/Tense</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pronouns</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preposition</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parallel Structure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usage</td>
<td>Word Choice</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Idiomatic Expressions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transitions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reporting verbs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subordination</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal / Informal</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Errors and Comments</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>44</strong></td>
<td><strong>58</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In-text correction refers to a teachers’ correction directly in students’ drafts without an accompanying explanation of the error/correction.

As Table 5.10 shows, all three samples had a total of 107 errors, and 49 of those errors were marked by Chris—although most of those were direct in-text corrections (*N* = 44). The most frequent students’ errors were comma splices (*N* = 23), and Chris corrected 11 of them, while she added the comment “comma splice” in the margin for the following sentence:

[1] This is when Americans’ answers were more towards “pro-choice” by 2009 the answer where also reflected in the “pro-choice” label until this last survey in 2014 the answers remain split.
Awkward word choices, subject-word agreement, and prepositions were the next most frequent writing fluency issues, with 16, 14, and 12 occurrences respectively. As with comma slices, Chris corrected most of these errors directly in the text without an accompanying explanation of the issue (see example [2] in Table 5.11), with the exception of two comments to the student’s choice of words. The two comments in the margin were specific to the text, but they did not provide any rhetorical considerations (see examples [3] and [4] in Table 5.11).

Table 5.11. Chris’s Sample Comments to the Community Problem Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Error</th>
<th>Type(s) of error</th>
<th>Teacher's Margin Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[2]</td>
<td>Electric Zoo, Ultra Music Festival, Burning Man, Coachella, Electric Daisy Carnival Las Vegas, and many other major music festivals among in the United States—have been the primary target of drug dealers due to its the high demand for drugs.</td>
<td>Preposition, Comma splice, Pronoun unclear, Missing Complement</td>
<td>None—in-text corrections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[3]</td>
<td>Whether they regret or not that decision is what some people do not know because they have not yet taking that similar decision.</td>
<td>Word choice, Verb form</td>
<td>Your point is not totally clear here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[4]</td>
<td>There are many possible causes for this community problem to increment, it could be poverty, single mothers, rape, lack and lack of knowledge and the list goes on.</td>
<td>Word choice, Comma splice</td>
<td>Is this the best word to use here?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Generally, Chris marked more errors at the beginning of the paper, and then stopped marking them after the first two pages. Her summative comments typically point out that there are “more errors related to writing fluency” and instruct students to edit more carefully; however, she seems to be referring to proofreading, and not editing. Most comments were general, not specific.
to the text, and the most predominant linguistic features of the comments were statements and questions.

The second set of drafts that I examined was from the analytical genre (Rhetorical Analysis). These drafts included rough drafts that averaged three pages per student and final drafts that averaged four pages per student for 43 students, thus amounting to a total of 129 pages for rough drafts and 172 pages for final drafts. I examined three samples of rough drafts and three samples of final drafts according to the type of error that affects writing fluency and according to linguistic and rhetorical features of the teacher’s comments. There were no significant differences in responding practices between rough and final drafts, so Table 5.12 provides the frequency of students’ errors and Chris’s comments for all six samples. The linguistic and rhetorical features of Chris’s comments are presented in a description further below.
Table 5.12. Frequency of Student Errors and Chris’s Comments (Rhetorical Analysis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Error</th>
<th>Teacher's Response</th>
<th>In-text Correction</th>
<th>Unmarked</th>
<th>Margin Comment</th>
<th>Total Errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Syntax</td>
<td>Sentence Structure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dangling Modifier</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S-V agreement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>Fragment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comma splice</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics</td>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Possessive/Plural</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verb/Tense</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pronouns</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preposition</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parallel Structure</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usage</td>
<td>Word Choice</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Idiomatic Expressions</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transitions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reporting verbs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subordination</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal / Informal</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Comments</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>107</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>129</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In-text correction refers to a teachers’ correction directly in students’ drafts without an accompanying explanation of the error/correction.

As Table 5.12 shows, all six samples had a total of 129 errors, and 21 of those errors were marked by Chris, although predominantly in the form of in-text corrections. The most frequent students’ errors were related to coordination or subordination (N = 18) and parallel structure (N = 17), followed by comma splices (N = 14) and word choice issues (N = 13). A total of 17 errors were corrected directly in the text without an explanation, and five errors had comments in the margin. These comments related to either word choice or to the use of an informal style. Only one of the margin comments was specific to the text and had a slight
inclusion of rhetorical considerations by mentioning how the reader was confused ([5]), while the other four comments were generic and arhetorical.

[5] The author from this video is not credible for the most part. There is however, no contact info posted to get in contact with any local agencies/organizations concerning or involving the legalization of marijuana.

Comment: “This is confusing. Using the transition “however” signals that an opposite idea is coming. This never happens though.”

Most comments were general, not specific to the text, and the most predominant linguistic features of the comments were statements or imperatives. Chris provided most comments at the beginning of the student drafts, and then stopped commenting. The summative comments pointed out to specific writing fluency issues, such as run-on sentences and comma splices, but disregarded issues with coordination and parallel structure. Chris seemed to attempt including the importance of genre in her comments by writing such comments as “Be careful with grammar mistakes such as run on sentences and errors in comma usage. Writing fluency is incredibly important in this assignment.” However, she does not explain why writing fluency is important in this specific assignment.

Table 5.13 shows sample student errors and Chris’s comments based on the typical comments to writing fluency issues. As examples [6] and [7] show, apart from the unmarked comma splice, the two other issues were coordination and parallel structure that affected readability. Examples [8] and [9] how Chris commented to the use of informal style. While the comments are specific to the text, they do not provide any rhetorical considerations or an explanation how such choices affect the writer’s ethos.
Table 5.13. Chris’s Sample Comments to the Rhetorical Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Student Examples</th>
<th>Teacher's Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Error</strong></td>
<td><strong>Type(s) of error</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[6]</td>
<td>It is clearly stated in the video that this organization is against corruption, and that it is trying to promote the Anti-Corruption Act they are proposing, by showing all the problems that society faces, as well as how the country and the whole world is affected by corruption and how could it change if corruption was not an issue.</td>
<td>Comma splice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Parallel structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[7]</td>
<td>In the video, Joe strongly supports the legalization of marijuana and why there are laws against this drug that “hurts no one.”</td>
<td>Parallel structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[8]</td>
<td>Writing a rhetorical analysis is great way of explaining a story, text, video, etc. in a lot of detail using ethos, pathos, and logos and also being as specific as possible.</td>
<td>Style (informal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[9]</td>
<td>The point he is trying to make from this statement he said is you don’t go around closing down burger “joints”.</td>
<td>Style (informal)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3.3. Chris and the activity system of responding.

Similar to Blake, Chris’s responding activity shows more distinct contradictions within individual Activity Theory elements—and perhaps this is in part a result of the same amount of teaching experience that Blake and Chris share (approximately two years). An interesting difference between these two participants, however, seems to be in the level of awareness of these contradictions. In fact, while Blake appears to believe that her responding practices are following her philosophy and intentions, Chris is aware that her actual responding may not
always be what she would want it to be. Chris’s general responding philosophy is to be encouraging and to use open-ended questions that motivate students to reflect and think about the errors that they are making. However, she adds that, “unfortunately, most of the time I find myself making corrections to the paper to make efficient use of time” (personal communication, April 2, 2015). She also tells me that she does not use canned comments and tries to make individualized comments, but is aware that after a certain number of drafts, the comments become repetitive. She further explains that she tries to focus on commenting to idea generation and development instead of grammar, but admits that this endeavor is not always successful due to lack of time. In fact, Chris adds that every teacher would want to invest more time and effort into thoughtful responding, but that is hard to do “when you have a 2 week turn-around and you have your own work going on” (personal communication, April 2, 2015). Hence, Chris is well-aware of the discrepancies between her long-term objectives and short-term goals that—as with both Blake and Alex—seem to largely be a reflection of how she prioritizes her time based on the sole role of teacher in her object-oriented activity and the competing roles of teacher and graduate student in her goal-oriented actions. Figure 5.3 represents the model of Alex’s activity system and the tensions that emerged between her object-oriented activities and goal-oriented actions:
Figure 5.3. Chris’s object-oriented activity vs. goal-oriented actions.
When looking at Chris’s object-oriented activity, it appears that the main desired outcome of her teaching and responding approaches is for students to become articulate critical thinkers. In order to achieve this outcome, Chris’s responding objective is to teach students how to be independent thinkers, how to express their ideas, and how to improve their writing fluency. However, her actual responding practices show that the outcome of her goal-oriented actions leaned predominantly towards feedback on how to formulate a focused draft, and not so much on articulation of independent and critical thinking. Consequently, the goals of her responding practices leaned more on teaching how to use supporting evidence and how to avoid grammatical errors. Hence, while Chris’s desire to provide a balanced division of labor that would reflect student-teacher collaboration, her actual responses to student drafts show a much less collaborative approach since Chris relies predominantly on providing model paragraphs and in-text corrections, while students need to follow the given models and accept the given corrections. Considering that Chris utilizes Word documents as a tool to work with student drafts, all that students have to do is literally accept the corrections with a command in their Word file once they receive it back from Chris, thus not even correcting (and learning from) their own mistakes. Such approach seems quite peculiar in Chris’s example since the tools that she brings with her include educational background in language acquisition, L2 writing, and composition. In her object-oriented activity, Chris refers to these tools and envisions using them, especially with ESL students. As she explains, all writers have to work on developing ideas and “express[ing] our ideas confidently and thoughtfully,” but ESL/bilingual writers have to struggle through the process of translating from their dominant language that they might be using in their thought process (personal communication, April 2, 2015). Unfortunately, her goal-oriented actions do not
reflect the knowledge that Chris brings with her, and instead rely on model paragraphs, corrections, and canned comments.

The lack of desired approaches to teaching independent thinking through collaboration is also evident through the AT element of community, which shows that Chris’s objective-oriented activity includes her educational background in Literature, Teaching English, and Composition Studies—three fields that potentially provide a balanced approach that encourages independent thinking along with idea generation and articulation. Chris herself particularly exposes the influence of her instructors in the MAT program, who “moved commenting from basic correction of my mistakes, to the realm of conversation that was meant to cause careful reflection of both the ideas I was investigating and my development as a writer” (personal communication, April 2, 2015). However, in her goal-oriented actions, it is not clear which community she brings with her—in fact, none of the aforementioned communities subscribes to the ideology of corrective feedback that Chris so heavily utilizes. The only community that seems to emerge, then, is her personal microculture, in which the most important guiding force is task management, through which Chris attempt to use her time most efficiently. One thing that Chris does attempt to accomplish in her goal-oriented actions, regardless of time, is to be encouraging. Chris attributes her philosophy to bad experiences with teachers in her own education—teachers who provided criticism in a “negative and personal way” had a negative impact on her own development as a writer. Then Chris encountered professors who focused on what students did well and used that as a starting point to work on improving. Therefore, a good balance of encouragement followed by suggestions for improvement seems to be the most prevalent rule that guides Chris’s response. While encouragement is evident both in the object-oriented activity and in her goal-oriented actions, suggestions for improvement are missing in her actual
responding practices. Such approach could signal that Chris is also guided by the assumption that students will understand the in-text correction and canned comments, or perhaps that they will eventually learn from simply being exposed to those corrections. On the other hand, her object-oriented activity intends to provide much more constructive feedback since her desire is to follow rules such as to focus on ideas first, to respond to patterns of errors that affect comprehension, and to include rhetorical elements in the response.

5.4. Respond to Patterns of Errors that Affect Readers’ Comprehension

Lee and Pat utilize patterns of errors as their main focus when responding to student writing. Both explain that their primary consideration is how students’ writing development will affect their future professional endeavors. In their responding, Lee and Pat tend to address how audience and purpose change depending on the genre and on the situation. In their responding to writing fluency, both Lee and Pat take time to explain why and how an error affects a message. Although Lee and Pat have different educational backgrounds, they both have professional experience that relates to professional writing, and they have both taught advanced undergraduate and graduate writing courses. Lee holds a PhD in Professional Communication and an MA in English Language and Literature, while Pat holds a PhD in Rhetoric and Composition, an MA in Public Administration, and an MBA. Their preparation as writing instructors includes graduate courses and workshops on composition theory and pedagogy that also included specific workshops on responding to student writing. In terms of grammar preparation, Lee took undergraduate courses and workshops on English grammar, while Pat attributes her grammar knowledge to mainly self-learning. According to Lee, the composition paradigms that inform her approach to teaching writing include current-traditional, cognitivism, social-constructionism, critical pedagogy, and digital rhetoric. Lee explains that she learned to
teach writing at a large southwest university by working at the writing center and then teaching freshman composition while attending the doctoral program. Lee did not have any specific preparation for working with multilingual students, except for the informal comments from the writing program director in the PhD program. However, she is an ESL speaker who, in addition to English, learned three other foreign languages. Lee believes that learning these foreign languages provides an advantage in terms of understanding multilingual students and understanding how language works. Lee adds that, although her approach to teaching involves asking open-ended questions in a Socratic manner in order to make students think, she does not use the questioning approach when responding to students. Instead, she provides more direct feedback by pointing out what the issue is and how to solve it. Lee finds individual attention and conversations with students to be the most effective response strategies because they allow her to show to students that she is not “somebody who is a stiff grammarian, kind of like a grammar Nazi who is there to drag you down,” but that instead she wants to help students “recognize that you have it in you to become a better writer” (personal communication, April 9, 2015). The most frustrating thing for Lee is when she is not able to “get through to somebody” because the students are taking a “consumer's approach to their learning while you are supposed to correct their grammar […]. They are not really taking up the challenge.” Lee tries to make them see that they are not in that class for a grade or for the teacher “to correct [their] mistakes because once [they] are on the job, she won’t be there to do that” (personal communication, April 9, 2015). Lee does not see significant differences in writing fluency issues between monolingual English speakers and ESL students. Lee thinks that both groups show issues in writing as if they were speaking, so she often comments on the difference between the spoken and written genres. Lee sees writing fluency as an important part of “getting your message across,” so she focuses on
recognizing patterns of errors and then commenting on a couple of examples, but not on every single occurrence. She adds that “if you can’t get a message across locally, then globally it’s also going to be impacted” (personal communication, April 9, 2015). Lee’s commented drafts confirm the described responding approaches that show consideration for different genres and for students’ patterns of errors. In addition to genres and patterns, Pat’s responses seemed to include other rhetorical concepts, such as audience and purpose, so I describe Pat’s case in more detail.

In the spring 2015 semester, Pat was teaching two FYW classes, a graduate professional writing seminar, and a graduate writing practicum with a total of 54 students. In addition, she was performing administrative duties for the English Department at The University. She has a rich background in professional and technical communication, with 20 years of writing and teaching writing in a professional setting. Throughout the PhD program that Pat was a part of, she attended courses, presentations, and workshops on composition theory and pedagogy. A part of these courses and workshops was also dedicated to responding to student writing. In addition to these formal programs, Pat expanded the knowledge on responding to students through informal learning, mainly through practical experience. She also took one graduate course on cultural issues in classrooms with L2 learners, but did not have any other specific preparation for working with ESL writers. However, Pat is an ESL writer herself, and she started learning English in first grade, although this learning did not happen in an ESL-specific classrooms—Pat explains that she was assimilated into mainstream English classrooms. She adds that her own bilingualism helps her understand the grammatical tendencies that many bilingual students have in the classroom. According to Pat, the composition paradigms that inform her approach to teaching writing include social-constructionism and critical-pedagogy, while she also believes that rhetoric is “not only epistemic, but it informs major decisions during writing process”
(personal communication, April 2, 2015). Pat’s main concern is to teach students how writing will “impact their adult and professional life”—thus, her teaching focuses on how audience and purpose change in a variety of situations.

5.4.1. Responding practices in theory: What Pat believes she is doing.

Pat tells me that she avoids using generic terms, such as “awkward” in her responses; instead, she provides comments and questions that signal to students what she—as audience—did not understand. She adds that she typically comments on issues that relate to leading the audience to where the writer wants the audience to go. Pat’s philosophy formed through her experience in the professional setting where, as a writer, she needed to consider how her memos, letters, or presentations needed to be shaped to reach a specific audience. This philosophy has refined itself through the theories she has learned in her academic life. She finds that different responding strategies are successful for different students, though it can be hard to see what is actually effective. She thinks that responding itself may not be the most challenging part of teaching writing and that the most challenging thing is to have students do the readings in a reflective way. She explains that “students typically seem to expect a lecture following the readings, instead of integrating the readings into their discussions and writing” (personal communication, April 2, 2015). With regards to responding to monolingual and multilingual students, Pat sees only a slight difference when it comes to mechanics; however, Pat noticed that foreign students adapt faster as if they knew “their weaknesses better so are able to work through them.” On the other hand, Pat noticed that monolingual English students have a harder time understanding rhetorical concepts. Pat prefers to respond to student drafts by providing personalized comments in the margins and at the end, as well as by having students peer review their work. When commenting to student drafts, Pat finds audience, purpose, context,
organization, content, and style to be very important; and punctuation, grammatical error; mechanics, and usage to be important. She finds that the most useful activities in helping students improve their writing include peer work and modeling, followed by class discussion, outlining, and individual student-teacher conferences.

In terms of writing fluency, Pat defines grammar as “understanding the generally accepted rules governing written and spoken language and applying them successfully for specific audiences and situations” (personal communication, April 2, 2015). Pat teaches writing at a university that is largely Hispanic, so her students are primarily bilingual in Spanish and English. She says that she tends to correct their grammatical mistakes more, although she always also explains the reasons why something is incorrect and the rule behind it. She feels comfortable when responding to writing fluency issues, even if she does not have formal training in grammar, and explains that:

Although I find I am quite an editor in reviewing work for other professional purposes, I find that for students, I often consult sources to provide students with comments as to why some grammar issue is not a generally accepted/”correct” expression. Particularly with ELL students in advanced undergraduate or graduate courses, I prefer to give students the “why” so than can understand and apply the concept in their future writing. When responding to writing fluency issues, Pat finds usage and style the most important to respond to, while grammatical errors (e.g., sentence structure, subject-verb agreement), mechanics, and punctuation are less important. Pat’s decision for marking writing fluency issues depends on whether the error is simply a typo, a wrong word, or clear grammar issue such as verb tense or subject-verb agreement. She explains that she considers “these points of instruction and I attempt to explain why the marking is an ‘error’” (personal communication, April 2, 2015).
To indicate writing fluency issues to students, Pat uses correction, praise with advice, open questions, and reflective statements. Pat explains that:

Using questions—particularly when the issues I’m commenting on are global in nature, for example organization, more research required, logical fallacies—helps students reflect on why their writing is not as effective as it could be for the specific purpose/audience. I believe providing advice helps students understand that their work belongs to them rather than appropriating it.

She learned these responding strategies through her graduate studies, continued research, and practice. In order to check if students understood the feedback, Pat uses class mini-lessons.

Prior to looking at the actual responding practices, let us first consider what Pat’s goals were when responding to the surveyed drafts and how she approached the responding process. According to Pat, the focus of responding to these drafts was on how students approached their research topic in terms of focus, quality and integration of sources, and writing fluency. The first set of assignments was assigned earlier in the semester, and Pat explains that she was less strict in commenting to these drafts because they were assigned at the beginning of the semester. She tells me that she was more demanding in the second set of assignments as they were assigned half way through the semester. She adds that she does not often comment on rough drafts; instead, the students peer review each other’s work. In instances when Pat does comment on rough drafts, she typically comments on whether students are addressing the assignment, and only looks at a few writing fluency issues to spot tendencies. Pat does, however, ask students in class if they have any questions, but says that they rarely do. Pat tells me that, during the drafting stages, she conducts class workshops on paragraphs or sentences from sample drafts. She provides questions such as “What do you think the author is trying to say here? Did the author
communicate that effectively? What would you change?” and lets students decide before she tells them her view.

5.4.2. Responding practices in practice: How Pat responds to writing fluency.

The following section provides an analysis of Pat’s responding practices based on the comments to students’ final drafts. The drafts belong to two genres: one is persuasive (Research Proposal) and the other is informative (Research Report) (see Appendices G to J for detailed assignment guidelines). For both assignments, Pat provided only final drafts, and she also included the assessment rubrics.

The first set of drafts that I examined was from the persuasive genre (Research Proposal). These were final drafts that averaged one page per student for 42 students, thus amounting to a total of 42 pages for the two FYW classes. I examined three samples according to the type of error that affects writing fluency and according to linguistic and rhetorical features of the teacher’s comments. The frequency of students’ errors and Pat’s comments is presented in Table 5.14, while the linguistic and rhetorical features of Pat’s comments are presented in a description further below.
Table 5.14. Frequency of Student Errors and Pat’s Comments (Research Proposal)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Error</th>
<th>Teacher's Response</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Comment</td>
<td>In-text Correction</td>
<td>Unmarked</td>
<td>Margin Comment</td>
<td>Errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syntax</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Structure</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dangling Modifier</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S-V agreement</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragment</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comma splice</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mechanics</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessive/Plural</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb/Tense</td>
<td></td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronouns</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preposition</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel Structure</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usage</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Choice</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idiomatic Expressions</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transitions</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting verbs</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subordination</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal / Informal</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Errors and Comments</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In-text correction refers to a teachers’ correction directly in students’ drafts without an accompanying explanation of the error/correction.

As Table 5.14 shows, all three samples had a total of 33 errors, and five of those errors were marked by Pat. The most frequent students’ errors were comma splices ($N = 6$) and word choice issues ($N = 5$), followed by sentence structure and verb forms ($N = 4$ respectively). Two of the three sample drafts had writing fluency issues that seemed to stem from not differentiating between spoken and written genres, as in the following example:

[1] I firmly believe that the dissonance would be the fact that of course no one will want to accept my proposal on the fact that I am requesting a mandated rule for a 401K and
the ability to sign up whomever the employee chooses to have on their health insurance plan.

The same student also had issues with coordination, word choice, and comma splices that affected readability, but Pat did not provide any comments in the margins to these issues. Her summative comments did not mention writing fluency either, although the grading rubric showed writing fluency as “good” (8/10 points on a 100-point scale). Out of the three samples, Pat commented only to one draft, where she provided comments throughout the draft, but none relating to student’s major issues (coordination and comma splices). Likewise, her summative comments did not mention writing fluency, but the grading rubric showed writing fluency as “satisfactory” (7.5/10 points on a 100-point scale). Table 5.15 shows sample student errors and Pat’s comments based on the most predominant issues in a student’s draft that contained a total of 17 writing fluency issues, and Pat commented on five of them. As examples [2], [3], and [4] show, Pat’s comments point out to the student how she as a reader understood the sentences, although the student could benefit from a more in-depth explanation of the issues that affect clarity. Generally, Pat’s commented in the form of questions, statements, and imperatives, and her comments were specific to the text, but they had no rhetorical characteristics, such as referring to audience, genre, and so on.
Table 5.15. *Pat’s Sample Comments to the Research Proposal*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Student Examples</th>
<th>Type(s) of error</th>
<th>Teacher's Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Teacher's Margin</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>My target audience is mainly to heavy smokers in the US that doesn’t understand the dangers of smoking and also people who are barely starting to smoke in order to make them think about quitting in an early stage before it becomes an addiction.</td>
<td>S-V agreement Coordination</td>
<td>“do not” - because “smokers” is plural.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I believe that generally every kind of medical practitioner could be helpful to stop the spread of smokers in the US, because they have to deal with a lot of disease caused by regular smokers but mainly I would say that oncologist could help in a better way because they have an expertise in people with cancer and they deal with patients of lung cancer.</td>
<td>Sentence structure Plural Noun Coordination</td>
<td>do you mean that the practitioners “could help stop smoking”? More concise if this is your meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>We could increase the awareness of the dangers of smoking to the world, it's just depends in the spreading of right information.</td>
<td>Pronoun Preposition Spelling</td>
<td>Who is &quot;we&quot; in this instance?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I believe that if there is a little more freedom for insurance and getting everyone going with a mandated 401K I think it will help eliminate the debt a person sees in their own life as well as a loved one who is getting older.</td>
<td>Parallel Comma splice</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second set of drafts that I examined was from the informative genre (*Research Report*). These were final drafts that averaged five pages per student for 42 students, thus amounting to a total of 210 pages for the two FYW classes. I examined three samples of final drafts according to the type of error that affects writing fluency and according to linguistic and
rhetorical features of the teacher’s comments. Generally, Pat commented throughout the drafts, but a bit less after the first half of the drafts. The frequency of students’ errors and Pat’s comments is presented in Table 5.16, while the linguistic and rhetorical features of Pat’s comments are presented in a description further below.

Table 5.16. Frequency of Student Errors and Pat’s Comments (Research Report)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Error</th>
<th>Teacher’s Response</th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syntax</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Structure</td>
<td>In-text Correction*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dangling Modifier</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>S-V agreement</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
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<td>Fragment</td>
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<td>Comma splice</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>78</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*In-text correction refers to a teachers’ correction directly in students’ drafts without an accompanying explanation of the error/correction.

As Table 5.16 shows, out of 78 errors, Pat marked 22, mainly in the form of comments in the margins. These comments showed a strong tendency to using statements and polite requests that were specific to the text, but that were mainly arhetorical. On the other hand, five comments
showed rhetorical considerations by referencing the genre and the audience, but they were
generic, as in the following example:

[6] The therapist will inform you of what you will do during the therapy, but more
importantly what health concerns you should eliminate before beginning therapy.

*Comment:* Avoid 2nd person in academic writing.

While this example shows a reference to the genre of academic writing, it does not mention why
this is not acceptable or which other options would be more appropriate. Similarly, a lack of
rhetorical considerations or explanations as to why an issue is problematic can be observed in
examples [7] and [8] in Table 5.17. Although Pat’s comments in these examples were specific to
the text, she does not explain why a pronoun “should be immediately after the group you wish to
describe” or why first person should be avoided in academic writing.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Student Examples</th>
<th>Type(s) of error</th>
<th>Teacher's Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[7]</td>
<td>For basketball, the team is required to stay on campus while regular students return home due to their playing schedule conflicting with the time the school breaks occur.</td>
<td>Pronoun (vague)</td>
<td>Be mindful that when you use a pronoun, it should be immediately after the group you wish to describe. The way you wrote this sentence, “their” appears to apply to the students who get to go home...not your intent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[8]</td>
<td>In recent decades, it seems that our education is worth less than how much money is generated from athletics.</td>
<td>Style</td>
<td>You shifted to first person - try to avoid that in academic papers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[9]</td>
<td>Today, the most popular social networking system around the world, Facebook, acquires 1.23 billion active users.</td>
<td>Word choice</td>
<td>This sounds as though Facebook acquired all its users &quot;today&quot; -- consider, &quot;As of May 8, 2015, the most popular ....boasted 1.23 billion active users.&quot; -- notice how that indicates this is a snapshot in time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[10]</td>
<td>Information to Prepare for Physical Therapy [title]</td>
<td>Word choice</td>
<td>Consider &quot;Patient Information...&quot; makes it clearer that you are focusing on what patients should know.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pat showed a tendency to provide more meaningful comments to issues of word choice. As examples [9] and [10] show, she does not only point to the issues, but also explains how these issues affect the message and offers alternative options. Generally, Pat seemed to comment more on word choice and style issues. In fact, out of a total of 17 comments, seven related to word choice and four related to style. While the three sample drafts showed that the use of non-academic style was one of the most frequent issues ($N = 13$), the other most frequent student errors were awkward transitions ($N = 14$), comma splices ($N = 12$), and vague pronouns ($N = 9$).
Pat, however, did not mark any of the awkward transitions that was quite frequent in one student’s draft, as in the example below:

[11] For this person the recovery time will be much longer than a person in the same situation with a healthy body weight. “Postmenopausal breast cancer risk is elevated among those who have experienced weight gain throughout adulthood, whereas weight loss after menopause has been associated with reduced risk.” (Demark-Wahnefried, Pg.1).

While the lack of transitions does not necessarily interfere with reading comprehension, it was quite a predominant pattern that the student would benefit from being told about. Similarly, she did not mark an obvious pattern of comma splices with introductory phrases and a pattern of vague pronouns in the other two drafts.

5.4.3. Pat and the activity system of responding.

Compared to the other participants, Pat exhibited very few contradictions within or between the individual AT elements. As with Alex, fewer contradictions could be a result of Pat’s longer experience in the teaching of writing (five years) that gave her time to adjust her philosophy to the constraints of the teaching reality (such as time, resources, etc.). In addition to the teaching experience, however, Pat also has extensive experience in professional settings, where she spent 20 years working as a writer who understands the demands and expectations of writing outside of the classroom—where writing is not focused on generating and expressing ideas, but on communicating them with a clear purpose and for an obvious audience. Her teaching and responding philosophy shows a strong tendency towards making students aware of how writing will “impact their adult and professional life” (personal communication, April 2, 2015)—thus, her teaching focuses on how audience and purpose change in a variety of
situations. Pat’s written response to student drafts reflects her philosophy as she frequently points out to students where their writing could be misunderstood, she asks students about their intentions and how these intentions fulfill the purpose of the task at hand, and she provides suggestions for alternative expressions based on these intentions. However, most of her comments relate to issues with word choice, and occasionally to vague pronouns, while issues relating to sentence structure (including coordination, parallel structure, or comma splices) are rarely, if ever, addressed. Although Pat’s written comments do not normally address these issues, they do seem to follow what she values and intends to comment on, and thus they show minimal discrepancies between Pat’s long-term objectives and short-term goals. As figure 5.4 shows, Pat’s object-oriented activity and goal-oriented actions do not exhibit any contradiction, with the exception that—just like all the other participants—she takes the roles of teacher and administrator during her goal-oriented actions. The two competing roles more than likely result in her comments to word choice issues that are not always as rhetorical and detailed as she would want them to be, but they are nevertheless specific and at least somewhat rhetorical.
Figure 5.4. Pat’s object-oriented activity vs. goal-oriented actions.
5.5. Conclusion

The above case studies show a variety of tensions and contradictions between object-oriented activities and goal-oriented actions. These contradictions, according to Engeström (1987), are inevitable features of an activity that is a result of knowledge creation and exchange. The author contends that, as inevitable features, they need to be articulated in order to understand the historicity of knowledge creation and consequently to create new forms of knowledge. As Engeström (1987) explains, “the concept of learning activity can only be constructed through a historical analysis of the inner contradictions of the presently dominant forms of societally organized human learning” (Engeström, 1987, p. 106). In order to understand the historicity of this organized human learning, Chapter 6 discusses how my participants’ AT elements are a reflection of their CoP through the lens of communities of practice as defined by Wenger (1998). Interestingly, one general difference emerged from the data for all participants—the contradictions within the activity systems element of the subject of the activity. While thinking about their responding objectives, the participants place themselves in the role of the teacher whose only focus is on the teaching aspect of their life: what they would like to teach, how they would like to teach, and what they hope their students will take away from their teaching. In contrast, during the actual responding activity, the participants have to consider their time constraints based on their obligations as graduate students, researchers, and administrators, in addition to being teachers. (These time constraints are undoubtedly further limited by each participant’s private obligations, such as that of a spouse and/or parent, but those obligations were beyond the scope of the present study—as they are in most studies. It would, however, be interesting to observe how teachers prioritize their professional and private obligations to achieve effective time-management that would allow for ideal responding approaches suggested by the
literature on responding to students). The tension between their role of teacher and their multiple roles of teacher, graduate student, researcher, and administrator is likely one of the reasons for the tensions that arise in all the other elements of the participants’ activity systems. The element of time, however, is present in any activity that we dedicate ourselves to, and the question that follows is this: since time constraints affect how teachers will respond, what is it that guides their selection of issues they respond to? As Barab et al. (2002) explain, “Activities are realized through actions; however, actions cannot be understood without a frame of reference to the larger activity system—that is, without reference to the larger context through which these actions are realized” (p. 84). It is this larger context that I portray in my next chapter by explaining how the recurring themes in the national and local resources from the field of College Composition (as they emerged in Chapter Four) cause the tensions and contradictions in participants’ systems of responding to students’ writing fluency.
6.1. Discussion of Findings

While the Activity Theory (AT) dimensions, illustrated in Chapter Five, help us recognize the factors that constitute a practice, the Communities of Practice (CoP) dimensions from Chapter Four portray the situational factors that affect the manifestation of a particular practice (Billet, 2002). That is, the relations and activities within an activity system are mediated by tools of mediation or “forms of reification” around which communities of practice organize their interconnections (Wenger, 1998). In the context of this study, I focused on identifying where the concepts laid out by AT and its activity systems intersect with the concepts from Wenger’s CoP. In other words, how are the recurring CoP themes reflected in the participants’ AT elements and in their goals and beliefs, and how are they actualized in the competing daily responsibilities? These AT concepts appear to have a few commonalities that are also mirrored in how CoP as situational factors affect the responding practice: AT objectives/goals and outcomes can be compared to the CoP joint enterprise; AT division of labor and community are reminiscent of the CoP mutual engagement; and AT tools and rules are similar to the CoP shared repertoire. Based on the case studies described in the previous chapter, my participants seem to have a variety of objectives, outcomes, communities, and so on; however, except for Pat, they all seem to be influenced by similar themes that emerged in my examination of CoP’s dimensions in Chapter Four.

For instance, Blake’s main objectives of the responding activity are to challenge students with questions and to teach revision in order to achieve the desired outcome of students becoming independent thinkers and effective communicators. These objectives are focused on idea generation and development, while the outcomes also include the need for students to
communicate effectively. The goals in Blake’s actual responding activity, however, show that assisting students in achieving such an outcome of effective communication does not seem to be a part of Blake’s actual responding activity. Likewise, although the contradictions within the AT dimensions of Alex’s responding activity are subtle, there are evident correlations between these dimensions and the situational factors of the CoP that Alex is a part of. The main objectives of her responding activity are to improve coherence, teach revision, and create students’ rhetorical awareness in order to achieve the desired outcome of student writing development. The goals in Alex’s actual responding activity, however, show that such an outcome can be accomplished without developing students’ rhetorical awareness since most of her written comments are arhetorical. Similar to Blake and Alex, Chris’s main objectives of the responding activity are to teach students how to be independent thinkers, how to express their ideas, and how to improve their grammar in order to achieve the desired outcome of students becoming articulate critical thinkers. The goals in Chris’s actual responding activity, however, show that the goals of her responding practices leaned more towards teaching how to adhere to assignment guidelines and how to avoid grammatical errors, though mainly through direct in-text corrections and without any accompanying explanations. Blake’s, Alex’s, and Chris’s objectives, goals, and outcomes are a reflection of the CoP’s dimension of joint enterprise that is influenced by recurring themes relating to teaching expectations—as in Writing fluency Barely Needs to Be Taught or Does Not Need to Be Taught—as well as in the themes relating to learning expectations—such as Students Need to Continue Learning Grammar and Demonstrate Writing Fluency. These themes tell teachers that the purpose of responding is to help students express and develop their ideas, and not to improve writing fluency. If addressed, writing fluency should be placed at the end of the writing process, but the provided models are minimal and do not consider the latest findings on
addressing language issues rhetorically and in context. At the same time, students need to demonstrate writing fluency since this element is always present in the assessment rubrics that the participants utilize.

In terms of the AT’s dimensions of division of labor and community, they are reminiscent of the CoP’s dimension of mutual engagement that portrays the roles that teachers and students take in the practice. In Blake’s example, her object-oriented activity seems to be influenced by a larger CoP that includes her family of strict teachers, her Creative Writing background, and her background in Composition Studies, along with her writing center tutoring experience. These experiences have created a desire in Blake to distribute the responsibility for writing effectiveness between the teacher and the students. However, this desire does not seem to be realized in her goal-oriented actions where the responsibility for writing effectiveness is not distributed between Blake and her students, and is instead a responsibility of individual students. In Alex’s example, her object-oriented activity seems to be influenced by a larger CoP that includes her experience as a foreign language learner, her Creative Writing background, and her background in Composition Studies. These experiences have created a desire in Alex to create a collaborative classroom microculture that shares writing and reading experiences. However, this desire does not seem to be realized in her goal-oriented actions where the Alex as the teacher is mainly the reader, while students are the writers. The communities that Chris brings to her responding activity system are the fields of Literature, Composition Studies, and Teaching English that arguably provide a balanced approach to independent thinking, idea generation, and idea articulation. However, her goal-oriented actions do not show that any of these communities influence her responding practices, which rely heavily on corrective feedback—an approach that none of the aforementioned communities subscribes to. Furthermore, Chris’s desire is to divide
the labor by utilizing a collaborative approach between her and students, but her responding practices signal that students are mainly passive receivers of teacher’s model-paragraphs and intext corrections. Chris seems to be aware of this divide between her desired and actual responding practices, and frequently exposes the issue of time that does not allow her to respond as deeply she would like. While Blake’s, Alex’s, and Chris’s approaches to responding might be quite different, they all show that the division of labor in their goal-oriented actions seems to be influenced predominantly by their immediate CoP of Composition Studies, in which the recurring themes, such as Foster Student Autonomy and Responding to Writing fluency is Irrelevant, in the dimension of mutual engagement show that the role of teachers is to encourage student autonomy in all writing matters, but much more so in terms of writing fluency, while it is the role of students to develop and demonstrate writing fluency.

Following these expectations of engagement (or teacher disengagement), it is not surprising that the participants’ AT dimensions of tools and rules are strongly influenced by the CoP dimension of shared repertoire that showed such recurring themes as Teacher Knowledge is Marginal and Grammar Does Not Need to Be Considered Rhetorically. In fact, Blake’s desire to utilize inquisitive and individual approaches to responding is countered by her actual responding practices that utilize non-inquisitive and generic approaches. Blake also believes in rules that are both writer- and reader-centered, thus balancing freedom of expression with clarity and conciseness; however, her beliefs are not reflected in her practices where her lack of response signals that freedom of expression is what she values, despite the fact that she has grammatical knowledge that she could use to help students with issues of clarity and conciseness. Similarly, Alex’s desire to utilize discussion, rhetorical elements, and her foreign language learning experience is countered by her actual written responding practices that do not incorporate her
rhetorical and grammatical knowledge into her written response and thus into the conversation. Alex believes that writing is a conversation between writers and readers and that good writing is balanced between freedom of expression and coherence; however, her responding practices do not signal a continuing conversation as her comments do not refer to any discussions from the classroom or from student-teacher conferences, and they do not offer any rhetorical considerations. Finally, Chris’s desire to follow rules such as to focus on ideas, to be encouraging, and to respond rhetorically to patterns of errors that affect comprehension is countered by the rules that are evident from her actual comments that are arhetorical and based on assumptions that students understand the corrections that she made directly in students’ text. As tools, these in-text corrections and canned comments do not reflect Chris’s knowledge that she acquired through courses on composition, L2 writing, and language acquisition. The discrepancies in Blake’s, Alex’s, and Chris’s responding practices show how their immediate CoP of Composition Studies has influenced their learning process. As Wenger (1998) explains, learning is “a change in the alignment between experience and competence, whichever of the two takes the lead in causing a realignment at any given moment” (Wenger, 1998, p. 139). Although Blake, Alex, and Chris feel competent in addressing writing fluency, their CoP experience has taught them not to. Their AT tools and rules are therefore a reflection of their CoP repertoire, in which the routine of responding creates the concept of writing fluency as being marginal or even irrelevant. The models and teacher manuals uphold this concept by providing minimal support for teachers in their responding to writing fluency.

Pat—as the exception to the rule—does not seem to be influenced by the same themes as Blake, Alex, and Chris. In fact, Pat’s activity system does not show any significant contradictions between her object-oriented activities and goal-oriented actions. Her desired
outcome of developing students as reflective writers is accomplished by addressing rhetorical issues such as genre and audience in her comments. As tools, Pat utilizes the desired individual attention and rhetorical approaches. Both in her beliefs as in her practices, she shows that writing and response are situational and that errors are socially constructed, while the labor is clearly divided between the teacher as the reader and students as writers since she rarely, if ever, appropriates students’ writing by correcting errors or by using imperatives; instead, she poses meaningful questions that relate both to ideas and to writing fluency issues. As I speculated beforehand, Pat’s responding practices could be a result of her extensive experience in professional settings, where she spent 20 years working as a writer who understands the demands and expectations of writing outside of the classroom—where writing is not focused on generating and expressing ideas, but on communicating those ideas with clarity and conciseness. Considering that Pat is a more mature writer and teacher, perhaps she had different models of writing that allow her to have a deeper understanding of writing as a form for expressing ideas on one side and writing as a communicative tool on the other side. However, her rich approach to responding could also be a result of personal traits such as the ability to focus and to handle tasks more efficiently while still juggling multiple roles, such as those of a teacher, a researcher, and an administrator.

With the exception of Pat, the competing daily responsibilities of my other participants seem to be the main cause for the contradictions in their activity systems of responding. Because of these competing responsibilities and time constraints, my participants are faced with the necessity to choose what they will focus on in their responding practices. However, as my data showed, these choices are not always based on what students need, but more on what the field of composition studies deems important. As mentioned previously, teacher preparation materials
show that the outcomes relating to writing fluency are left to students to acquire on their own, and the most common suggestion that teachers are advised to give their students is to visit the writing center if they need help with editing. By doing so, teachers are sending a message to their students that editing is a marginal issue not worth their class time, while at the same time, these same teachers grade students’ writing for clarity and mechanical errors. As Matsuda (2006) reminds us:

It is not unusual for teachers who are overwhelmed by the presence of language differences to tell students simply to “proofread more carefully” or to “go to the writing center”; those who are not native speakers of dominant varieties of English are thus being held accountable for what is not being taught. (p. 640)

Being overwhelmed or not having enough time is not the only reason why teachers neglect responding to writing fluency issues and teaching students editing and proofreading practices. Another reason to consider is whether teachers are properly prepared to address linguistic awareness issues in their writing classrooms. The CCCC, CWPA, and NCTE position statements clearly define the need for teacher preparation on how to teach language, including grammar. Although the present study did not observe the actual teacher preparation programs, the examined teacher preparation materials show a significant lack of support for teachers to learn how to assist students in the development of their writing fluency rhetorically and in the context of writing. Indeed, the most common materials barely mention writing fluency as one of the objectives of FYW, thus telling teachers what they should do, but not how they should do that.

The focus on what and the disregard of how seem to follow three patterns that I have noticed in my analysis of writing teacher preparation materials and that are reflected in my participants’ responding practices: (1) the push for students’ autonomy in editing and
proofreading of their writing, (2) the assumptions about students’ and teachers’ knowledge, and (3) the neglect of rhetorical approaches to issues of writing fluency.

6.1.1. Student autonomy

As I have shown in Chapter Four, the CCCC, CWPA, and NCTE position statements specify the need for teachers to include attention to grammatical structures in their teaching of writing; however, none of the teacher preparation books support this call. In fact, when it comes to the content and the focus of response, the themes that emerged in all the bestselling teacher preparation books were to foster student autonomy and to disregard writing fluency. Suggestions such as to leave “sentence revisions and corrections for the writer. It’s her paper” (Straub, as qtd. in Wardle & Downs, 2014, p. 18, emphasis mine) reiterate the attitudes towards responding and editing: focus on idea development and let student writers discover and address their own editing needs. It seems that the most that writing teachers should do is point students to the editing resources that are available outside of the classroom. For example, Dr. B—one of the interviewed WPAs—explains that both student textbooks used at the surveyed university offer online assessment tools “that students can use on their own and the assessment then it is self-directed”—thus confirming the generally proposed approach of having students deal with writing fluency autonomously and with minimal teacher support.

Perhaps even more problematic are the attitudes that emerged from my data with regards to the learning and teaching expectations. On the one hand, all the examined materials (including teacher preparation books) call for students to continue learning grammar and to demonstrate writing fluency; on the other hand, only the CCCC, CWPA, and NCTE position statements express the need for teachers to teach grammar (rhetorically), while the teacher preparation materials tell us that grammar does not need (or barely needs) to be taught. At the same time,
writing fluency, usage, punctuation, and spelling are regularly included in the assessment rubrics, thus bringing up the question of whether and how teachers are responsible to assess something that they do not necessarily teach. One suggestion comes from Matsuda, who proposes that, “As a rule of thumb, the proportion of grammar grades should not exceed the proportion of grammar instruction provided that can guarantee student learning” (Matsuda, 2012, p. 157). The author also points out that it is often assumed that grammar actually is taught in college composition classrooms since it is typically included in writing programs’ outcomes; however, instructors may not understand these outcomes as Matsuda (2012) shows through an instructor’s comment: “When I try to teach mechanics or grammar or vocabulary, the Writing Programs here at ASU tells me not to” (p. 146). It is no wonder, then, if teachers have conflicting beliefs and practices that perpetuate such student autonomy, especially when they need to choose what to respond to while juggling their competing daily practices. Suggestions such as to use a “tick mark in the margin next to the line where the error occurs. Leave it up to the student to locate and correct the error” (Straub, as qtd. in Roen et al., 2002, p. 361) may not be the most appropriate anymore in today’s linguistically diverse classrooms, where students may need just as much help with idea generation and development as they need with expressing those ideas clearly.

6.1.2. Knowledge assumptions

Following these prevailing views of student autonomy in terms of writing fluency, it is not surprising that most of the teacher preparation materials do not provide resources for teachers to build their own knowledge of grammar (especially in progressive ways, such as through rhetorical considerations or translingual approaches). The lack of such resources signals that teachers’ knowledge is assumed and that teachers are expected to already be familiar with
grammar. While many of them might have a good grasp of the metalanguage and of the grammatical constructs, these assumptions do not consider the following:

1. New (younger) teachers and TAs are *products of the process generation* (pun intended) that may not have been educated in terms of grammar in the same manner as older generations.

2. Having good command of grammar and writing does not necessarily imply having the knowledge or ability to teach writing fluency, especially through the aforementioned progressive approaches.

As I have shown in Chapter Five, where I examined my study participants, even teachers who feel confident in their grammatical knowledge do not feel confident in addressing writing fluency issues in their students’ writing. When they do address it, they do so arhetorically. These considerations are especially crucial in linguistically diverse classrooms where students might not develop writing fluency as easily as it is expected from monolingual mainstream English speakers. The assumptions about teachers’ linguistic knowledge (that the field of Composition Studies seems to reproduce—or reify, if I use Wenger’s term from CoP—by not updating the writing teacher preparation materials) are followed by a question that Matsuda (2012) brings up: “If writing instructors are not teaching grammar, how are students supposed to ‘learn to use grammatical and mechanical conventions’ as stipulated in the intended outcomes?” (p. 146). The answer lies in another set of assumptions—the assumptions about students’ knowledge—that are present in all the bestselling writing teacher preparation books.

As I mentioned elsewhere, most of the writing teacher preparation materials place the burden of deciphering writing fluency issues on students’ shoulders by modeling generic responses, such as a “tick” in the line where the grammatical error occurs. Most generic
approaches place writing fluency issues in the summative comments with suggestions such as, “Be sure to clean up the copy after you revise so that readers will be able to understand and respect what you have to say” (White, 2006, p. 54) or “[t]here are, of course, one or two spots where I'd like to see you tighten up your sentence structure, but, quite frankly, I don't want to deal with them now” (Straub, 1999, p. 68). These comments clearly assume that student writers will know which issues are occurring in their sentences. Interestingly enough, while the comment by Straub (1999) implies that the author/teacher might deal with those issues later, more often than not, that later never comes—whether in writing teacher preparation materials or in the actual participants’ responding practices.

6.1.3. Rhetorical approaches

The present study also showed that, when teachers do address writing fluency issues, they do so arhetorically. Comments such as “this is not a complete sentence” (see Table 5.7) does not provide any clues for the student about what an incomplete sentence is—and what it does. The teacher (Alex, in this case) assumes that the student knows what a complete sentence is; however, if the student knew, then he or she would not make that mistake to start with. More importantly, Alex does not explain what an incomplete sentence does rhetorically (e.g., it confuses the reader/audience, it affects the writer’s ethos negatively due to the expectations relating to Standard English, and so on). Although Alex (and my other participants) have the rhetorical knowledge necessary to respond rhetorically, they do not seem to apply that knowledge to writing fluency—just like the writing teacher preparation materials do not seem to find it relevant enough to connect rhetoric and grammar. One of the elements of the rhetorical situation that we teach in first-year writing courses is context. Similarly, progressive approaches to teaching grammar suggest addressing writing fluency issues in the context of writing, but
unfortunately, the mere fact that writing fluency is addressed generically and in the summative comments shows an arhetorical approach to responding to student writing, thus focusing on grammar, but not on writing fluency. Furthermore, the grading rubrics that my participants use in their assessment are arhetorical as they describe writing fluency with the following terms: “Academic voice, third person, present/past tense consistent. Almost no grammar or mechanical errors. Writing is clear” (see Appendices H and J). With a tick in the margin and generic comments such as the ones portrayed here, students may learn only that editing is a marginal process that serves the purpose of evacuating imperfections. This marginality is additionally developed by referring students to the writing center where these marginal issues are addressed by outside experts or consultants, and are thus not a part of construction persuasive ideas during the writer’s process.

6.2. Suggestions for Future

Following the above observations, it appears that two of the five rhetorical canons—*style* and *delivery*—are clearly neglected in teacher preparation materials since the emphasis is on *what* needs to be taught and learned in order to achieve writing fluency, while it is not clear *how* to teach, learn, or even use these concepts. In fact, the focus of student writing and of teachers’ responses is on what students want to say, but not on how they want (or should) say it. This should come as no surprise as a few scholars have already established why style and delivery, along with memory, have historically disappeared or have become subordinated to invention and arrangement in the scholarship on rhetoric in writing (see Jacobi, 2006; Trimbur, 2000; or Welch, 1999). In short, the development of writing itself shifted the view of delivery from careful consideration of oral and visual attributes (such as gestures, voice, or dress) to considering delivery only in terms of mere mechanical attributes of writing (for the purposes of
error-free publishing) that were not worthy of scholarly investigation. Similarly, style became a matter of language decoration and of form separated from meaning (see Medzerian, 2010; or Welch, 1999)—attributes that students are assumed to eventually acquire through simply being exposed to plentiful reading and writing. While style and delivery per se were not the focal points of my investigation, the results of the present study inherently point to the need of developing more scholarship on style and delivery in the field of Composition Studies. This scholarship should include both theoretical and pedagogical investigations of how style and delivery are affected by the spread of World Englishes and by standard language ideologies, as well as by languages that our diverse students bring to our college composition classrooms. Any good pedagogy should be informed by theory, and the lack of such theories is clearly reflected in outdated approaches to writing teacher preparation materials and student textbooks, where language issues are discussed as mere decorations or mechanical errors, instead of as writing choices that writers make during their writing processes.

More specific to my study, the observed predominant patterns of student autonomy, knowledge assumptions, and rhetorical approaches offer a few options for improvement for both teachers and writing teacher preparation programs. In order to enhance teachers’ responding to students’ writing fluency issues, I propose the following set of principles:

**Principle #1: Shift student autonomy to student-teacher-peer conversations**

As mentioned beforehand, student writers might eventually develop their writing skills autonomously in all areas of writing, including invention and arrangement, and not only in the area of writing fluency. The choice of involving ourselves as teachers in certain parts of the writing process (such as idea generation and development) and not involving ourselves in other parts (such as editing and proofreading) is highly influenced by the scholarship that tells us to do
so. However, as my examination of writing teacher preparation materials shows, the models for responding to students do not include the latest findings on how to discuss language issues in our linguistically diverse classrooms. These models do suggest one generally accepted approach: to ask questions that motivate critical thinking instead of providing statements or imperatives for what students should do next. My suggestion, then, is to apply the same Socratic approach that teachers use when discussing students’ ideas to their responses about the rhetorical choices relating to language. This principle goes hand in hand with the latest findings on translingualism—where instead of assuming that something is a grammatical error, we see those instances as students negotiating meaning. As teachers, we can help students through those negotiations by showing the same curiosity about their language choices as we show about their ideas. We can involve students in experimenting with language and reflecting on interactions between content and grammatical form, or we can discuss the discursive effects of subordinating one idea to another through a variety of punctuation choices. By doing so, we will engage in a conversation with our students about grammar and writing fluency as the art of selection instead of simply imposing and perpetuating any language ideologies that students bring and will continue carrying on through their autonomous discovery of the tick mark that signals what a teacher was bothered by.

**Principle #2: Identify and break the assumptions we bring to our writing classrooms**

Throughout my study, I showed that my participants follow the models for responding to students’ writing fluency issues provided by the bestselling teacher preparation books. Practically all of these models provide minimal (if any) guidance for students to understand the nature of their writing fluency issues, thus relying heavily on the assumption that students will understand our comments (whether the outdated “awk,” the newer “tick in the margin,” or the
latest “this is not a sentence”). To break this assumption, Ferris (2007) suggested the use of follow-up practices (such as giving students time to ask for clarification and submit a “revise-and-resubmit” memo) in order to ensure that students understood the teacher’s responses. While such follow-up practices may already be used regularly, it seems that they mainly focus on content revision, while writing fluency resubmission is more about “fixing errors” than about understanding their rhetorical effects. Thus, we need to break the assumption that students know what we mean by certain comments that seem self-explanatory to us and that students understand why those errors are problematic aside from simply being an error in the code (an error that, speaking in terms of programming languages, can cause crucial software failures). Another assumption relates to the nature of errors that are frequently considered “surface errors,” such as fragments, comma splices, or run-on sentences. Although for some students these errors might be superficial “accidents of discourse” (Sommers, 1982, p. 150), for most students they signal a deeper issue, such as lack of understanding coordination and subordination or not being able to distinguish between the spoken and the written genre. Since teachers have not been effectively prepared to understand where the so-called surface errors originate from, it is not surprising that their feedback to error does not result in effective student revision. Thus, we need to break the assumption that grammatical errors are by default surface errors that will disappear from that surface with a little bit of polishing. The first step in breaking such assumptions could perhaps be by dropping the terminology such as “surface errors” and “lower-order concerns” that most of the examined writing teacher preparation books still widely use, thus disregarding the possibility that, for certain students in our college composition classrooms, writing fluency is actually a higher-order concern.

**Principle #3: Provide rhetorically rich comments to writing fluency issues**
While this principle might seem self-explanatory since teachers have (or are expected to have) an awareness of the rhetorical concepts, the examined writing teacher preparation materials do not provide any models for teachers to follow. It is not surprising, then, that the analyzed teachers’ comments from this study do not provide such rhetorically rich comments. Although my participants occasionally tried to provide at least some kind of a response to language issues, most of these responses did not refer to any rhetorical concepts. It appears that, although my study participants have both the rhetorical and the linguistic knowledge necessary to provide rich comments, they do not connect the two when responding to writing fluency. I attribute this disconnect to the writing teacher preparation materials that do not bring together rhetoric and grammar in their models for responding to student writing. Hence, this principle should serve as a reminder for writing teachers to apply the same rhetorical principles (e.g., audience, purpose, and genre) when commenting to writing fluency issues—just like they would for content, focus, organization, and so on.

In order to support these principles, the field of College Composition should develop models of responding to student writing that include such rhetorically rich comments to writing fluency. Such models are crucial for writing teacher preparation as they affect if and how teachers will address these issues in their responding practices. Although FYW teachers generally need to have a certain amount of completed graduate English courses, they are not required to take any specific courses in the areas of linguistics, second language learning, or language education, thus confirming Matsuda’s concern that graduate courses on composition do not prepare teachers for classrooms with linguistically diverse students. As Myhill et al. (2012) pointed out, teachers’ linguistic subject knowledge (LSK) plays a significant role in the success of teaching linguistic awareness. According to the authors, the lack of LSK causes lack of
confidence for teaching language. The authors also note that LSK is more than simply the ability to use appropriate grammatical terminology; it is also the ability to explain grammatical concepts and know when to draw attention to them instead of focusing on superficial errors. This last part is particularly crucial in relation to the results of my study since my participants were confident in their LSK (based on their educational background), yet they seemed insecure or unable to use it in their responding practices. I would argue that the reason they are not able to do that is because the field of Composition Studies does not provide the support that would help teachers connect their rhetorical subject knowledge to their linguistic subject knowledge. This connection needs to be made visible through new or updated writing teacher preparation materials and student textbooks that are based on progressive models for responding to student writing fluency. The updated materials should provide scenarios that not only mirror grammar through a rhetorical lens, but also allow teachers to explore and decide what and why benefits their students’ learning of grammar through a rhetorical lens. At the same time, writing teacher preparation programs should motivate teachers to think critically and rhetorically about their own writing fluency, and thus help them make connections between their existing linguistics knowledge and rhetorical knowledge. In addition, writing programs should provide ad-hoc spaces and workshops for responding to writing fluency issues, where teachers can learn how a specific approach will solve an immediate problem relating to students’ writing fluency.

6.3. Conclusion

Responding to student writing has been thoroughly examined from various perspectives in the past 50 years; however, most of that research focused on what teachers do and what is effective for students, while there are only four studies (to my knowledge) on why teachers respond the way they do. One of these studies (Moxley, 1992) investigated the responding
methods, goals, and beliefs of college composition teachers (presumably in L1 college composition classrooms). The study established that the majority of the surveyed teachers believed they respond to global issues, such as content and logic, and not to local issues, such as grammatical errors. One study (Ferris, Brown, Liu, & Stine, 2011) examined writing teachers’ preparation, experience, beliefs, and practices with regards to responding in a mixed L1 and L2 environment. The authors established four emerging categories of teachers: those who are unaware of L2 students’ needs, those who focused primarily on L2 writers’ errors, those who were unsure of how to help L2 writers, and those who were responsive to L2 writers’ needs (pp. 219-222). Another study (Ferris, 2014) investigated writing teachers in classrooms with both L1 and L2 students; the study investigated what teachers believe they do and what they actually do when responding to student writing. Ferris (2014) concluded that, while there seemed to be a matching consensus between teachers’ beliefs and practices in terms of general responding approaches and when responding to global issues, there were significant discrepancies between beliefs and practices when responding to local issues. The last of the four studies (Diab, 2005) focused strictly on ESL writing and examined teachers’ and students’ beliefs about responding. The author found that teachers were confident in their beliefs that feedback to global issues is essential, while they showed contradictions between beliefs and practices in terms of responding to local issues.

The four studies on writing teachers beliefs about responding show that teachers are confused by the contradictions between the research (that claims students do not benefit from attention to grammatical issues) and the practice (that expects grammatically sound products). Hence, the present study attempted to understand how the field of College Composition has contributed to these contradictions and how these contradictions could be minimized in order to
benefit the linguistically diverse students in our college composition classrooms. In order to contribute to the research on responding to student writing, I conducted a case study of writing teachers’ practices, philosophies, and preparation at a medium-sized research university in the U.S. southwest on the Mexico-U.S. border with a significant bilingual student population. To couple my findings with a national perspective, I also analyzed the guidelines and suggestions for teaching first-year composition provided by the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA), and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), as well as the most common writing teacher preparation books and first-year writing student textbooks. Through these materials, I examined such factors as the best practices suggested by the field, the teacher preparation in responding strategies, their perceptions of error, and others. I discussed my results through the theoretical lens of Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998). In my investigation of teachers’ responding practices, I examined students’ drafts with teacher written comment in order to establish the types of errors that teachers respond to. I also analyzed the wording that teachers use in their comments with the purpose of establishing how teachers consider the rhetorical effects of errors. In addition, I examined surveys and interviews conducted with participating teachers in order to illustrate their beliefs and intentions with regards to responding to student writing. I illustrated these beliefs through the theoretical framework of Activity Theory (Engeström, 1987, 2005) and portrayed the contradictions and tensions that arise between the expectations of the field and the actual responding practices.

The results of my study show that the shift from product ideologies to process ideologies in the field of College Composition has caused a shift from one extreme (where the focus is almost strictly on grammatically sound products) to another extreme (where the focus is almost
strictly on idea development). In fact, although the position statements issued by the CCCC, CWPA, and NCTE call for writing teachers and teacher preparation programs to provide a balanced attention to process and product, the examined writing teacher preparation materials show a significant lack of support for teachers to learn how to assist students in the development of their writing fluency rhetorically and in the context of writing. Indeed, the most common materials seem to follow three patterns: (1) the push for students’ autonomy in editing and proofreading of their writing, (2) the assumptions about students’ and teachers’ knowledge, and (3) the neglect of rhetorical approaches to issues of writing fluency. These patterns are clearly reflected in the responding practices of the eight writing teachers that I portrayed through my case study. Six of the examined teachers (Alex, Andy, Blake, Chris, Jess, and Quinn) did not provide any feedback to students’ writing fluency issues, regardless of the level of clarity (or obscurity), while two teachers (Lee and Pat) did attempt to address such issues in a rhetorical manner. While all the examined teachers claimed to have a strong grasp of both rhetorical subject knowledge (RSK) and linguistic subject knowledge (LSK) necessary to address writing fluency issues, only Lee and Pat utilized that knowledge effectively. The main difference that I have noticed between these two sets of teachers is that Lee and Pat both have extensive experience in workplace settings, in addition to their academic experience as graduate students and writing teachers, while the remaining six teachers mainly have experience in academic settings as graduate students and writing teachers. I would argue that the crucial factor here is the extensive workplace setting experience that gives Lee and Pat an understanding of the demands and expectations of the writing outside of the classroom—where writing is not focused on generating and expressing ideas, but on communicating them with a clear purpose and for an obvious audience. Hence, Lee and Pat seem to understand the necessity of connecting and
utilizing their RSK and LSK when responding to students’ writing fluency issues. On the other hand, Alex, Andy, Blake, Chris, Jess, and Quinn seem to simply follow what the bestselling writing teacher preparation materials suggest: Be inquisitive about students’ ideas, but not about their language use. Thus, they may not have (or see) a reason for connecting their RSK to their LSK in order to support their responding practices.

Considering that the majority of first-year writing teachers at U.S. universities are typically graduate students like Alex, Andy, Blake, Chris, Jess, and Quinn, it would be safe to assume that most of them do not have the workplace setting experience that would guide their autonomy in connecting their rhetorical knowledge to students’ writing fluency issues. Therefore, in my suggestions for future, I proposed three basic principles that writing teachers and writing teacher preparation programs should follow in order to facilitate and enhance responding to writing fluency issues in our linguistically diverse college composition classrooms.

My first principle suggests to shift from giving students complete autonomy over their writing fluency issues to having student-teacher-peer conversations, through which we show the same curiosity about students’ linguistic choices as we do about their ideas. My second principle suggests to identify and break the assumptions that we bring to our writing classrooms, such as the assumption that students understand comments as “be mindful of writing fluency issues” that does not provide any useful information to the student. My third principle suggests to provide rhetorically rich comments to writing fluency issues. Although the expectation might be that teachers are already following this principle, my study showed that they rarely do. In order to help teachers provide rhetorical comments to grammatical concerns, writing teacher preparation materials and student textbooks should be updated with models that make the progressive approaches to addressing writing fluency visible to teachers.
The observations and conclusions set forth in this study are based on the examination of a limited number of sources due to space, time, and labor constraints. In order to provide a deeper view of the forces that guide teachers’ responses to writing fluency in FYW, it would be necessary to conduct empirical studies that examine writing teacher preparation programs in their entirety, and thus include not only the bestselling writing teacher materials, but also the materials and activities that specific writing programs offer to their teachers prior and during a semester. These studies should be conducted at a variety of post-secondary institutions in order to provide a view that is representative across writing programs since the present study was limited to only one program. Also, my examination of teachers’ responding practices was based solely on teachers’ written responses; thus future studies should include classroom observations of multiple lessons and of teachers’ oral responses (e.g., student conferences), in addition to the written responses. Finally, future studies on the effectiveness of responding to writing fluency in college composition should examine those teachers who are actually applying progressive approaches to writing fluency instruction since all the existing studies were based on current-traditional approaches and not on the latest findings on how to enhance students’ metalinguistic knowledge. Despite the limitations of the present study, the results of the analyzed position statements and writing teacher preparation materials show that the field of Composition Studies is undecided when it comes to addressing students’ writing fluency. On the one hand, the field expects students to demonstrate writing fluency, yet on the other hand it does not expect teachers to support students in this endeavor. Such lack of consistency necessarily affects writing programs when thinking about their curricula, as well as writing teachers when responding to students. As Ferris (2011) put it:
Instructors completing those [teacher-preparation] programs may find themselves in the awkward position of believing that they should be morally opposed to addressing errors in student writing but confronting the very real language gaps of their students (including even monolingual L1 writers)—yet without any practical preparation as to how to address those gaps through their feedback and instruction. (p. 61)

The nature of a community of practice, such as the community of Composition Studies, is to look for a consensus in the practices of that community, while my data shows that there is lack of such consensus. Instead of looking for an agreement that would support both students and teachers, we find disregard of writing fluency issues. A general consensus in the Composition Studies seems to be that writing fluency issues will eventually disappear naturally through intensive and frequent writing. It is worth noting, however, that this hypothesis has not been confirmed or tested through empirical research. Responding to writing fluency, which the teaching of writing inherently entails, is a craft that requires creativity and flexibility, and most importantly, application of all the resources we have available in order to contribute to the growth of student writers. To conclude with a thought by Dana Ferris: “The most important end-product, I argue, is each student’s progress and increasing awareness of and skill in using various strategies to compose, revise, and *edit* their own work” (Ferris, 2007, p. 167, emphasis mine).
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Appendices
Appendix A: Interview Questions for Local WPAs

(Adapted from Stolley, 2010)

1. What types of students enroll in your first-year composition courses?

2. Do incoming students need to pass a writing placement test to enroll in first-year composition courses?

3. If not, how do you determine the student population’s ability to write before they take first-year composition courses at your institution?
   - How do you determine their ability to write with grammatical correctness?
   - How would you describe their ability to write with grammatical correctness after they take the FYW course?

4. What types of instructors does your first-year composition program employ?

5. Which instructor’s field of study is preferred for employment?

6. Which theoretical principles does your teacher-preparation program follow?

7. Which types of activities are implemented in your teacher-preparation program?

8. Which textbook(s) does your first-year composition program utilize?

9. What are your expectations with regards to teachers’ responding to student writers? How are your writing teachers advised to respond?

10. How does grammatical correctness fit into your first-year composition program goals?

11. How are instructors in your program advised or prepare to work with their students on grammatical issues?

12. Do you have any specific assessment tool(s) used to evaluate students’ grammatical accuracy?

13. How would you describe instructors’ comfort in addressing grammatical concerns with their students?

14. How would you describe instructors’ success in addressing grammatical concerns with their students?
Appendix B: Survey Questions for Teachers

Educational and Teaching Background
(Adapted from Ferris, 2014; and Brice, 1998)

1. Where (in which country or U.S. state) did you complete any post-secondary education? Please list all that apply.
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

2. What is the highest level of education that you have completed? (If multiple of the same level, choose all that apply.)
   PhD in __________
   MFA
   MA in __________
   MS in __________
   MBA
   BA in __________
   BS in __________
   Other: ________________________________________________________________

3. What kind of specific training for teaching writing do you have? Choose all that apply.
   Graduate courses on composition theory/pedagogy
   Presentations/workshops on composition theory/pedagogy
   Graduate courses on teaching second language writing
   Undergraduate courses on teaching second language writing
   Practicum/internship course on second language writing
   None
   Other: _________________________________________________________________

4. What kind of specific training on responding to student writing do you have? Choose all that apply.
   Part of a course
   Workshops
   Professional conference
   Informal learning (self-learning)
   None
   Other: _________________________________________________________________

5. What kind of specific training on language and grammar do you have? Choose all that apply.
   Graduate course on general linguistic
   Graduate course on language acquisition
   Graduate course on English grammar
   Undergraduate course on general linguistic
   Undergraduate course on language acquisition
Undergraduate course on English grammar
Presentations/workshops
None
Other: _________________________________________

6. How long have you been teaching?
   0–2 years
   2–5 years
   6–10 years
   11–20 years
   20+ years

7. How long have you been teaching first-year composition?
   0–2 years
   2–5 years
   6–10 years
   11–20 years
   20+ years

8. Which other writing courses have you taught?
   Basic writing course
   Advanced undergraduate writing courses
   Graduate writing courses
   ESL equivalent of first-year or basic writing course
   Secondary English course
   Elementary English course
   None
   Other: __________________________________________________________________

Responding Practices
(Adapted from Brice, 1998; and Stolley, 2010)

1. Which composition paradigm (or theories) informs your overall pedagogical approach to
teaching composition? Please choose three most prominent.
   Current-traditional [focus on the final product, grammar, spelling, syntax, and uniform
   style and arrangement]
   Expressivism [focus on the writing process as discovery and self-expression; language is
   a tool for personal expression]
   Cognitivism [focus on writers’ cognitive decisions during the writing process; language
   and thinking are separate—language is developed from thinking]
   Social-constructionism [focus on how writing is affected by social, political, and cultural
   forces; language and mind are inseparable]
   Critical-pedagogy [focus on how power dynamics affect writing classrooms; purpose of
   writing to empower students to take action]
   Other: __________________________________________________________________

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2. On a scale from 1-4, how useful are the following activities in helping students to improve their writing?
   [1 = not useful, 2 = somewhat useful, 3 = useful, 4 = very useful]
   - Class discussion
   - Peer work
   - Freewriting
   - Outlining
   - Modelling
   - Individual teacher-student conferences
   Other: ________________________________

3. How do you respond to writers’ rough drafts? (Check three most used methods.)
   - Personalized comments in the margins
   - Personalized comments at the end
   - Coded comments with a legend
   - Coded comments with no legend
   - Template comments
   - Peer review
   - Minimal commenting/I do not respond to rough drafts
   Other: ________________

4. What is your personal definition of grammar?
_________________________________________________________________

5. On a scale from 1-4, how important is it to make comments about the following elements in your students’ written work?
   [1 = not important, 2 = somewhat important, 3 = important, 4 = very important]
   
   Audience
   Purpose
   Context
   Organization
   Content
   Punctuation
   Grammatical error [e.g., sentence structure, subject-verb agreement]
   Mechanics [e.g., capitalization, spelling, parallel structures]
   Usage [the habitual or acceptable practices and conventions of a discourse community--e.g., knowing that "ain't" is not acceptable in academic or professional writing]
   Style [the writers' choices to say what they want in any way they want to say it, usually to achieve a rhetorical effect--e.g., using "ain't" despite the usage convention in order to achieve a rhetorical effect]

6. How comfortable are you in responding to grammatical concerns?
   - Not comfortable
   - Comfortable
Very comfortable

7. What influences your level of comfort in responding to grammatical concerns?
________________________________________________________________________

8. When responding to students’ errors in writing, in what order do you rank the following features?
[1 = least important, 2 = somewhat important, 3 = important, 4 = most important]

   1   2   3   4
Punctuation
Grammatical error
Mechanics
Usage
Style
Other: _________________________________________________________________

9. How do you indicate errors in your students’ written work? Choose all that apply.
   Correction
   Criticism
   Command
   Praise with advice
   Advice
   Closed question
   Open question
   Reflective statement
   Other: __________________________

10. Why do you use this method of error marking?
_____________________________________________________________________

11. Where did you learn this method of error marking?
_____________________________________________________________________

12. Which other methods of error marking have you used in the past?
_____________________________________________________________________

13. What determines whether you are going to mark an error?
_____________________________________________________________________

14. How do you check that students understand your feedback?
   Individual teacher-student conferences
   Student revision plan memo
   Class mini-lessons
   Error log
   Other: _________________________________________________________________
Appendix C: Interview Questions for Teachers

Background Questions
(Source: Ferris, Brown, Liu, & Stine, 2011)
1. Please briefly describe your background & experience as a writing teacher. [ask for where they got their education and teacher preparation]
2. Do you have any specific experience or preparation in working with bilingual and ESL student writers?
3. How does your approach to response fit into your overall philosophy of how to teach writing?
4. How would you say your philosophy or approach has been formed?
5. Has it changed over time?
6. What have been your most successful or effective response strategies? (Note: clarify that responses to this question do not have to be limited to written teacher feedback—they can also cover conferences, peer feedback, etc.)
7. What is most frustrating or challenging to you about response to student writing (same note as for question 4)?
8. Do you have (m)any ESL/multilingual students in your classes?
9. Do you think that their needs as writers differ from those of the monolingual (native English speakers) students? If so, how?
10. Do you adapt your response strategies in any way with those students, and if so, how?

Questions about Commented-upon First Drafts
(Source: Brice, 1998)
1. In general, what issues did you focus on in your comments on this assignment?
2. What were your goals in commenting on the drafts?
3. What did / are you hoping students will do to revise their draft?
4. Did your comments vary from student to student? Please explain.
5. What were some of the students’ major strengths/weaknesses on these drafts?
6. Did your perceptions of students’ strengths/weaknesses influence your commentary? If so, how?
7. What factors do you think affected the types of comments you made on the drafts? (e.g., the length of the term, online teaching, the stage of the writing process, etc.)
8. What factors do you think affected the length of the comments you made on the drafts?
9. What are your criteria for a good draft of this assignment?
10. How do you rank those criteria in terms of relative importance?

Questions about Practices Between Drafts
(Adapted From Brice, 1998)
1. Have any students asked for clarification about the feedback they received from you to their rough drafts?
2. Do any students seem to be having trouble with revision of their drafts? Have any students spoken to you directly about this?
3. Have you done any activities, in-class or otherwise, to follow up on your feedback?
4. How did you decide which activities to include between drafts?
Appendix D: Summary of Recurring Themes (National and Local View)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>National and Local Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes toward Writing Fluency</td>
<td>Writing Fluency Matters</td>
<td>NCTE, CCCC, and CWPA Position Statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing Fluency Somewhat Matters</td>
<td>NCTE, CCCC, and CWPA Position Statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responding to Writing Fluency is Irrelevant</td>
<td>NCTE, CCCC, and CWPA Position Statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Expectations</td>
<td>Students Need to Continue Learning Grammar</td>
<td>NCTE, CCCC, and CWPA Position Statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students Need to Demonstrate Writing Fluency</td>
<td>NCTE, CCCC, and CWPA Position Statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Expectations</td>
<td>Grammar Needs to Be Taught Rhetorically</td>
<td>NCTE, CCCC, and CWPA Position Statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grammar Barely Needs to Be Taught</td>
<td>NCTE, CCCC, and CWPA Position Statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Grammar Does Not Need to Be Taught</td>
<td>NCTE, CCCC, and CWPA Position Statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Knowledge</td>
<td>Knowledge on Rhetorical Grammar and Applied Linguistics</td>
<td>NCTE, CCCC, and CWPA Position Statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Preparation</td>
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<td>Knowledge Is Assumed</td>
<td>NCTE, CCCC, and CWPA Position Statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content of Response</td>
<td>Foster Student Autonomy</td>
<td>NCTE, CCCC, and CWPA Position Statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus of Response</td>
<td>Disregard Writing Fluency</td>
<td>NCTE, CCCC, and CWPA Position Statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic Features of Responses</td>
<td>Grammar Does Not Need to Be Considered Rhetorically</td>
<td>NCTE, CCCC, and CWPA Position Statements</td>
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Appendix E: Comparison of Recurring Themes (National and Local Resources)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>National Themes</th>
<th>Local Themes</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes toward Writing Fluency</td>
<td>Writing Fluency Matters</td>
<td>Grammar Somewhat Matters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responding to Writing Fluency is Irrelevant</td>
<td>Responding to Grammar is Irrelevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Expectations</td>
<td>Students Need to Continue Learning Grammar</td>
<td>Students Need to Continue Learning Grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students Need to Demonstrate Writing Fluency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Expectations</td>
<td>Grammar Needs to Be Taught Rhetorically</td>
<td>Grammar Barely Needs to Be Taught</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grammar Does Not Need to Be Taught</td>
<td>Grammar Does Not Need to Be Taught</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Knowledge</td>
<td>Knowledge on Rhetorical Grammar and Applied Linguistics</td>
<td>Teacher Knowledge Is Assumed</td>
</tr>
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<td>Teacher Knowledge Is Marginal</td>
<td>Teacher Knowledge Is Marginal</td>
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<td>Teacher Preparation</td>
<td>Teacher Preparation Needs to Include Significant L2 Resources</td>
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<td>Content of Response</td>
<td>Foster Student Autonomy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus of Response</td>
<td>Disregard Writing Fluency</td>
<td>Disregard Writing Fluency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Linguistic Features of Responses</td>
<td>Grammar Does Not Need to Be Considered Rhetorically</td>
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### Appendix F: Comparison of Supporting and Opposing Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Supporting Themes</th>
<th>Opposing Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Attitudes toward Writing Fluency | *Writing Fluency Matters*  
*Writing Fluency Somewhat Matters* | *Responding to Grammar is Irrelevant* |
| **Sources:**              | NCTE, CCCC, and CWPA Position Statements  
Bestselling Student Composition Textbooks  
The University’s WPAs | Sources:  
Bestselling Writing Teacher Preparation Books  
Local Teacher Preparation Books  
Local Student Composition Textbooks |
| Learning Expectations     | *Students Need to Continue Learning*  
*Grammar*  
*Students Need to Demonstrate Writing Fluency* | |
| **Sources:**              | NCTE, CCCC, and CWPA Position Statements  
Bestselling Writing Teacher Preparation Books  
Bestselling Student Composition Textbooks  
Local Student Composition Textbooks | |
| Teaching Expectations     | *Grammar Needs to Be Taught*  
*Rhetorically* | *Grammar Barely Needs to Be Taught*  
*Grammar Does Not Need to Be Taught* |
| **Sources:**              | NCTE, CCCC, and CWPA Position Statements | Sources:  
Bestselling Writing Teacher Preparation Books  
Bestselling Student Composition Textbooks  
The University’s WPAs  
Local Teacher Preparation Books  
Local Student Composition Textbooks |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Supporting Themes</th>
<th>Opposing Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Knowledge</td>
<td>Knowledge on Rhetorical Grammar and Applied Linguistics</td>
<td>Teacher Knowledge Is Marginal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher Knowledge Is Assumed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sources: NCTE, CCCC, and CWPA Position Statements</td>
<td>Sources: Bestselling Writing Teacher Preparation Books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The University’s WPAs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Local Teacher Preparation Books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Preparation</td>
<td>Teacher Preparation Needs to Include Significant L2 Resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sources: NCTE, CCCC, and CWPA Position Statements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content of Response</td>
<td>Foster Student Autonomy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sources: Bestselling Writing Teacher Preparation Books</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus of Response</td>
<td>Disregard Writing Fluency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sources: Bestselling Writing Teacher Preparation Books</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local Teacher Preparation Books</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic Features of Responses</td>
<td>Grammar Does Not Need to Be Considered Rhetorically</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sources: Bestselling Writing Teacher Preparation Books</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G: Assignment Guidelines for the Community Problem Report

Your work in this course continues to focus on community engagement and awareness. As you become more aware of discourse practices and conventions, you will also become attentive to how discourse affects various communities. One of the most critical uses of discourse and language is to inform others of important information that they may not have. In this assignment, you will do this by creating a report that draws attention to a community problem.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this assignment is to familiarize you with writing in the fairly formal genre of the report. You will practice presenting information in an organized, coherent manner and draw logical conclusions based on reason and evidence.

**Audience:** Your audience will consist of your scholarly peers who will most likely only have a casual familiarity with your community issue and agency.

**Content/Subject:** You will be required to write a substantive report that discusses a significant community problem. You will use the research sources and information that you have gathered in your Annotated Bibliography as the foundation for the information in your report. You will want to present this information in an academic and organized manner. Overall, you should use your report to explain the problem as well as its importance to and impact upon the community.

Specifically, you will want to complete the following tasks as you structure your report:

- Provide background information and relevant facts.
- Explain the problem in relation to these facts.
- Conclude by arguing for increased awareness of the problem by emphasizing why your audience should care or pay attention.

**Constraints:** A report is a formal, informative document, and your report should adhere to these characteristics. You will be required to produce a professional report which provides information about a community problem.

Specific guidelines include:

- 4-6 pages in length.
- Adherence to APA format (including in-text citations and Reference page).
- Correct grammar, punctuation, spelling, and language usage.
- The appropriate and effective use of at least one visual, no more than two.
- Effective organization and a clear, logical argument.

Do not attach the annotated bibliography to the end of this report. You may use the references, but be sure to remove the annotations.
## Appendix H: Assessment Rubric for the Community Problem Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus</strong>&lt;br&gt;20 pts.</td>
<td>Response maintains focus on topic/subject throughout response.</td>
<td>Response may exhibit minor lapses in focus on topic/subject.</td>
<td>Response may lose or may exhibit major lapses in focus on topic/subject</td>
<td>Response may fail to establish focus on topic/subject.</td>
<td>Response lacks focus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use of sources: integration and fair use</strong>&lt;br&gt;25 pts.</td>
<td>Sources are used fairly and demonstrate a variety of perspectives. Quotes are skillfully woven in the writer’s own words.</td>
<td>Sources are used fairly and demonstrate more than one perspective. Most quotes are woven into writer’s words.</td>
<td>Only one perspective is presented. Sources may be over-used. One or more floating quotes.</td>
<td>Only one perspective is presented. Sources not used properly. Quotes overtake the writer’s language.</td>
<td>Only one perspective is presented. Sources not used properly. Quotes are strung together with little explanation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality and Quantity of sources</strong>&lt;br&gt;15 pts.</td>
<td>Amount required or exceeded. Sources are academic and/or reputable, with a variety of types of sources.</td>
<td>Required amount. Some sources are academic and/or reputable, with a variety of types of sources.</td>
<td>Required amount not met, and/or insufficient variety of academic and/or reputable sources.</td>
<td>Sparse use of sources, and/or poor variety of academic and/or reputable sources.</td>
<td>No sources used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing Fluency:</strong> Academic voice, third person, present/past tense, clarity&lt;br&gt;25 pts.</td>
<td>Academic voice, third person, present/past tense consistent. Almost no grammar or mechanical errors. Writing is clear.</td>
<td>Academic voice, third person, present/past tense mostly consistent. Few grammar or mechanical errors. Writing is clear.</td>
<td>Academic voice, third person, present/past tense somewhat consistent. Several grammar or mechanical errors. Writing could be clearer.</td>
<td>Academic voice, third person, present/past tense inconsistent. Many grammar or mechanical errors. Writing is unclear in significant areas.</td>
<td>Lacking academic voice, third person, present/past tense. Grammar or mechanical errors distract from content. Writing is unclear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General APA format and assignment guidelines</strong>&lt;br&gt;15 pts.</td>
<td>Meets all page format, font, and citation format criteria from assignment guidelines and APA manual.</td>
<td>Assignment guidelines met, a few minor format errors.</td>
<td>One or more guidelines not met, or several types of APA format errors.</td>
<td>Numerous major guideline or APA format errors.</td>
<td>Lacks adherence to assignment guidelines or APA format.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix I: Assignment Guidelines for the Rhetorical Analysis

The goal of a rhetorical analysis is not to analyze what a writer is arguing, but to analyze how the writer is presenting the argument. You will do this by analyzing the use of rhetorical strategies. Using a text related to your community issue and/or one your instructor provides, you will provide an objective analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in the writer’s use of ethos, logos, and pathos within his or her argument(s).

**Purpose:** This assignment prompts you to identify the strategies that a particular argument employs. One of the reasons that this is useful is that it requires you to understand not just what writers are saying but also the purposes and motivations behind their arguments. Additionally, as you get more comfortable identifying the strategies other writers employ, you will be able to utilize these strategies effectively in your own writing.

**Audience:** Your audience will consist of your scholarly peers whom you may assume have only a casual familiarity with the issue and the text that you are analyzing.

**Content/Subject:** The rhetorical analysis you conduct will consist mainly of your analysis of the three rhetorical appeals of logos, pathos, and ethos.

*Logos* is concerned with the logic of the writer’s argument. In considering the writer’s use of logos, you will analyze issues such as the quality and quantity of supporting evidence. You may also want to consider any bias that the writer might have toward the subject and the effect of that bias upon the argument being presented. Is the writer’s reasoning sound? Do you identify any logical fallacies? In short, you will want to address any weaknesses and/or strengths in the logic of the argument.

*Pathos* deals with emotion. Here, you should identify any attempts on the part of the writer to evoke a particular emotion from the audience. Additionally, you will want to consider whether or not appealing to emotion is an effective strategy for the argument being discussed.

*Ethos* deals primarily with credibility. You will want to examine the author’s reputation, authority, and/or expertise. These factors as well as the argument being made will either improve or detract from the writer’s credibility.

Remember: Audience is an extremely important consideration for the writer; therefore, you also want to determine who you think is the intended audience, and explain how and why you came to that conclusion. Again, you are *not* developing an argument that advocates in favor of or against the writer’s position/issue.

**Constraints:** This is an analytical, academic assignment, and, as a result, your writing should reflect that. This means that your analysis should be written in an elevated and sophisticated style that makes use of correct grammar and usage. You should make a clear and precise argument as you analyze the rhetorical strategies employed in the text that you are examining.
Specific guidelines for this assignment are:

- Clear introduction and conclusion.
- Address all three rhetorical appeals: ethos, pathos, and logos.
- Address the issue of audience.
- Adherence to APA format (including in-text citations and Reference page).
- 3-5 pages in length.
- Correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
## Appendix J: Assessment Rubric for the Rhetorical Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analysis</strong></td>
<td>Specific, developed analysis and insightful observations.</td>
<td>Analysis is generally sound but could be more specific or insightful in some areas.</td>
<td>General and/or undeveloped analysis.</td>
<td>Analysis is sparse and lacks insight.</td>
<td>No relevant analysis and insightful observations made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supporting Details</strong></td>
<td>Support information is related to analysis and supportive of the topic/subject.</td>
<td>Support information has minor weaknesses relative to analysis and/or support of the topic/subject.</td>
<td>Support information has major weaknesses relative to analysis and/or support of the topic/subject.</td>
<td>An attempt has been made to add support information, but it was unrelated or confusing.</td>
<td>No support information found or irrelevant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus</strong></td>
<td>Maintains focus on topic/subject throughout response.</td>
<td>May exhibit minor lapses in focus on topic/subject</td>
<td>May lose or may exhibit major lapses in focus on topic/subject.</td>
<td>May fail to establish focus on topic/subject.</td>
<td>No analytical focus found.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing Fluency:</strong></td>
<td>Academic voice, third person, present/past tense consistent. Almost no grammar or mechanical errors. Writing is clear.</td>
<td>Academic voice, third person, present/past tense mostly consistent. Few grammar or mechanical errors. Writing is clear.</td>
<td>Academic voice, third person, present/past tense somewhat consistent. Several grammar or mechanical errors. Writing could be clearer.</td>
<td>Academic voice, third person, present/past tense inconsistent. Many grammar or mechanical errors. Writing is unclear in significant areas.</td>
<td>Lacking academic voice, third person, present/past tense. Grammar or mechanical errors distract from content. Writing is unclear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General APA format and assignment guidelines</strong></td>
<td>Meets all page format, font, and citation format criteria from assignment guidelines and APA manual.</td>
<td>Assignment guidelines met, a few minor format errors.</td>
<td>One or more guidelines not met, or several types of APA format errors.</td>
<td>Numerous major guideline or APA format errors.</td>
<td>Lacks adherence to assignment guidelines or APA format.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Curriculum Vitae

Daliborka Crnkovic Padon was born in Apatin, Serbia, to parents Marija and Stjepan Crnković, and moved to Izola, Slovenia, when she was 5. She grew up in a Slovenian-Italian bilingual area, with Serbo-Croatian as her home language. Through schooling, she also learned English and French. She graduated from the Secondary School for Teaching, Natural Sciences, and Mathematics in Koper, Slovenia, with a degree in Socio-Linguistic Studies. She earned a BS in Traffic Technology Engineering from the University of Ljubljana (Slovenia), where she served as the elected student representative in the college’s steering committee, and she was the founding member of the first regional student organization of littoral Slovenia. After earning her BS, she worked in the IT field as a Business Systems Analyst for 11 years.

In 2009, Daliborka moved to the U.S. to pursue her MA in Applied Linguistics with a concentration in TESOL at Old Dominion University (ODU) in Norfolk, VA. While pursuing her degree, she worked as a writing tutor at ODU and developed an interest in writing pedagogy that targets linguistically diverse students. After earning her MA in 2011, she taught first-year composition and upper-level grammar classes as an adjunct instructor at ODU. In 2012, Daliborka entered the PhD program in Rhetoric and Composition at The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), TX. As a graduate assistant instructor at UTEP, she taught various levels of writing courses, and she served as the English Department webmaster, as well as the assistant director for the undergraduate writing program. After completing her doctorate, she took the position of assistant professor at Thomas Nelson Community College in Hampton, VA.

Contact Information: dcpadon@gmail.com

This dissertation was typed by Daliborka Crnkovic Padon.