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WRITING FEEDBACK AND THE SUCCESS OF ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE (EAL) DOCTORAL STUDENTS: THE ROLE OF DIALOGUE

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ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose	Scholars and practitioners agree that feedback is critical to doctoral students' academic writing development, yet effective feedback processes are complex. The purpose of this case study was to examine the role of dialogue in a Writing Feedback Group (WFG) in facilitating the development of the scholarly writing of English as an Additional Language (EAL) doctoral students. The research question that guided this study was: <i>How does dialogue within a writing feedback group create opportunities for EAL doctoral students to advance their knowledge and skills pertaining to scholarly writing?</i>
Background	Traditional doctoral student writing feedback, characterized as monologic and unidirectional, positions students as passive learners and is difficult for students to use to improve their writing. Dialogic and bi-directional feedback positions students as active learners as they engage in ongoing verbal and/or written exchanges about their writing. Examinations of verbal feedback on doctoral writing show face-to-face exchanges are a source of motivation and necessary for in-depth exchanges about ideas. There is limited understanding, however, as to how dialogue facilitates doctoral students' development as scholarly writers. This case

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	study examines the dialogue of EAL doctoral students as they read and respond to one another's scholarly writing.
Methodology	This was a qualitative case study of an established writing group. Four EAL doctoral students and one faculty member participated in this study during a 16-week semester. Conversational turns during 12 feedback sessions were analyzed using inductive coding with an interpretive approach to allow research findings to emerge from the data. A constant comparative method was used to classify and compare codes and categories and identify themes related to the study's research question.
Contribution	The findings from this study contribute to the body of knowledge on the role of dialogic feedback in doctoral writing development. The findings show how doctoral students' dialogue about one another's writing created critical learning experiences for their writing development. This study provides an explicit and systematic approach to dialogue in writing feedback groups.
Findings	Dialogue scaffolded EAL doctoral students' translation of their complex knowledge to accessible text and helped them respond to the rhetorical context. Dialogue also facilitated doctoral writers' awareness of the importance of precise language and structural organization for readers of their academic writing.
Recommendations for Practitioners	The WFG established a platform for doctoral students to try out their writing and to actively engage with others in receiving and providing ongoing feedback. It is suggested that institutions of higher education create ongoing opportunities for doctoral students to discuss scholarly writing. Writing feedback groups can take many forms, including established groups embedded into coursework or between advisor and advisees.
Recommendations for Researchers	This study examined the dialogue of a writing feedback group whose process was highly structured. To develop a deeper understanding of the influence of dialogue on writing, it should be studied in various types of writing groups.
Impact on Society	Research and scholarship are critical to advancing our society. Doctoral students who speak English as an additional language bring distinctive cultural perspectives to research. Their voices and research are critical to future academic literature.
Future Research	The findings from this study highlight how dialogue in a writing feedback group afforded doctoral students ongoing opportunities to give and receive feedback on critical academic writing skills on their individual current writing projects. Further research is needed to understand the role of dialogue in the WFG on doctoral students' enduring understanding and the application of academic writing skills on future writing projects.
Keywords	doctoral writing, writing groups, feedback

INTRODUCTION

Effective writing skills are essential for doctoral students' success. Doctoral studies mark significant shifts in writing expectations, as developing scholars must learn to coordinate developing research skills with their academic discipline's writing conventions. They must learn to communicate and speak through writing to a variety of audiences. Doctoral students must learn to coordinate their ideas, the written text, and the audience's reception or understanding of the text. Academic writing demands accurate, explicit, and precise communication of content in an objective and linear manner.

Unfortunately, numerous students come into programs with inadequate writing skills and lack experience with disciplinary writing patterns (Gupta et al., 2022; Maher et al., 2014). Although students show weaknesses in their writing skills, we must also recognize the expectations for quality academic writing lack transparency (Inouye & McAlpine, 2019; Zhang & Hyland, 2021) leaving students with only vague targets to guide their writing development.

Most scholars and practitioners agree that constructive feedback is critical to doctoral students' academic writing development (Lam et al., 2019). Feedback on writing scaffolds the process of developing students' knowledge of academic writing conventions and differences (Zhang & Hyland, 2021). Feedback on writing can shape doctoral students' scholarly identity by promoting autonomy, awareness of voice, positioning, learning through critique, and knowledge acquisition (Carter & Kumar, 2017).

Feedback on writing for multilingual doctoral students also necessitates an understanding of how students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds influence their academic writing in English. In their non-native language, English as an Additional Language (EAL) doctoral students must learn genres, registers, linguistic structures, and interactional patterns that are prioritized, privileged, and expected in English academic and professional settings (Duff, 2010). Many use their native language to frame their complex ideas and need guidance in identifying the ways to express them in English (Gupta et al., 2022). Culture may play a role in how students view the relationship between the reader and the writer. It may also influence their willingness and/or ability to value the revision process (Carter et al., 2021).

An ongoing problem, however, is that feedback does not seem to consistently lead to improved writing development. Doctoral students tend to receive feedback on their writing through one-on-one interactions with their supervisor (González-Ocampo & Castelló, 2018) via written comments on partial drafts of their writing (Adams, 2019; González-Ocampo & Castelló, 2018). This traditional mode of doctoral student writing feedback, characterized as monologic and unidirectional, positions students as passive learners. Students often cannot decipher the supervisor's "fuzzy" comments. Although some supervisors are skilled feedback providers, others are inarticulate when providing feedback (Spies et al., 2021; Sun & Trent, 2022), leaving doctoral students unsure about how to use the feedback to further their writing development. This type of feedback falls short of the clarity for writing expectations doctoral students need (Gupta et al., 2022) and often neglects support for developing more non-cognitive skills such as autonomy and authorial voice. Targeted, specific, and constructive feedback is essential for EAL doctoral students.

Seemingly more effective feedback, characterized as dialogic and bi-directional, addresses some of the pitfalls of traditional feedback by engaging students in interactive, sense-making exchanges about their writing. Dialogic feedback is ongoing, flexible, specific, and constructive, enabling back-and-forth interactions between the writer and the reader (i.e., feedback provider). The ongoing and individualized nature of dialogic feedback positions students as active participants in feedback as they revisit and reinterpret feedback over time. Dialogic feedback also facilitates motivation and persistence in the writing process (Spies et al., 2021; Sun & Trent, 2022).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing groups have long been part of doctoral education (Déri et al., 2022) and are beneficial in helping students learn and develop advanced writing skills at the doctoral level (Spies et al., 2021). Academic writing groups are effective in socializing students into academia, developing their scholarly writing skills, and increasing self-confidence (Déri et al., 2022; Spies et al., 2021; Subedi et al., 2022). Studies show commitment and accountability to others in the group are powerful in students' development and create collegiality that extends the context of the writing group (Murphy et al.,

2014). Serving as a critical friend increases self-confidence and the development of disciplinary authority (Murphy et al., 2014). Scholars have also noted writing group participation as a contributing factor to doctoral students' identity as a scholar (Subedi et al., 2022).

Although research points to the power of writing feedback groups in doctoral student development, as Déri et al. (2022) indicated, the landscape for these groups is broad. In fact, Aitchison (2009) highlighted how the practices of writing groups were understudied. Aitchison (2009) followed up this concern with a chapter highlighting the various pedagogies and subsequent learning that comes from writing groups (Aitchison, 2010). Writing and discussing writing helps doctoral students explore their scholarly knowledge and identity: "The giving, receiving, and debating of peer responses to text, creates dynamic spaces for developing writing that is tested and contested, refined, reworked, and honed (Aitchison, 2010, p. 92)."

The foundational work of Aitchison (2009, 2010) and others (e.g., Can & Walker, 2011; Carter & Kumar, 2017; Kim, 2015) consistently points to the importance of feedback in writing and the doctoral students' development in scholarly writing. Feedback is essential to students' socialization into the norms, preferences, and expectations of the academic community (Spies et al., 2021). An effective feedback process, however, is complex and often does not yield the promised learning opportunities (Er et al., 2020). The feedback continuum spans from unidirectional and monologic to bidirectional and dialogic. Monologic feedback is a one-way transmission of information. The traditional type of doctoral writing feedback positions students as passive learners is often difficult to understand and provides little direction to students on how to improve (Wang & Li, 2011). In contrast, dialogic and bidirectional feedback positions students to actively construct meaning through back-and-forth interactions. Then, they can make and translate meaning into action. Carless (2013, p. 90) defines dialogic feedback as "interactive exchanges in which interpretations are shared, meanings negotiated, and expectations clarified."

Dialogic feedback seems to offer the promise of addressing many of the issues inherent in traditional writing feedback. In the review that follows, we examine the role of dialogic feedback in developing doctoral student writing in three critical areas:

- thinking interdependently
- developing scholarly identity
- conceptual threshold crossings

DIALOGIC FEEDBACK AND THINKING INTERDEPENDENTLY

The development of scholarly writing is a process learned over time. This type of advanced writing requires a higher degree of practice (Kellogg & Whiteford, 2009) in an ongoing cycle of practice, feedback, and further practice. Through interdependent thinking amongst feedback participants, dialogic feedback facilitates doctoral students' development of clarity in their ideas and writing. Face-to-face exchanges provide more substantive information for doctoral students as novice authors to use in their revision decisions (Liu et al., 2021). Interactions help feedback participants to dig deeper into the text, assist the author in clarifying their ideas, and communicate their message (Guerin et al., 2013; Liu et al., 2021). Scholarly writing development is not reserved for the feedback recipient alone. Critiquing the work of others is, in fact, a valuable strategy in learning to write (Aitchison, 2009). Dialogic exchanges, in which authors provide other authors with feedback on their writing, facilitate learning about academic writing and even help doctoral students to recognize and address "problems" in their own writing (Álvarez & Colombo, 2021; Spies et al., 2021).

Interdependent thinking and clarity in writing are not restricted to doctoral students. Faculty also benefit from the dialogic feedback process. In Carter et al.'s (2021) narrative inquiry, a supervisor and two international doctoral students reflected on their collaborative revision of doctoral students' academic writing. They highlight how authority was negotiated as they moved out of their supervisor

and candidate roles. The advisor and candidates mutually benefited as they shared a pattern of thinking together in building understanding together. The dialogue between the doctoral candidates and the supervisor “opened into an energetic exploration of how academic writing achieved its purpose, a conversation that we each contributed to, with our different perspectives leveraging ideas and taking us closer as engaged scholars” (Carter et al., 2021, p. 379).

DIALOGIC FEEDBACK AND SCHOLARLY IDENTITY

Identity development as a professional scholar is fundamental during doctoral studies. Broadly, one’s academic identity encompasses how researchers establish themselves within and contribute to their academic field (Inouye & McAlpine, 2019). It captures how one identifies as a member of the academic community and how they are identified by community members (Kellogg & Whiteford, 2009). Dialogic feedback during doctoral studies creates opportunities for students to build skills and dispositions that contribute to their scholarly identity development (Chakraborty et al., 2021). These include building their self-confidence as a scholar, learning to negotiate power relations, and developing their authorial voice.

Socialization in the academic community includes learning the discipline’s conventions and values. Dialogic feedback facilitates this socialization (Spies et al., 2021; Sun & Trent, 2022) but it can also facilitate students finding their authority and voice (Kumar & Aitchison, 2018). Ongoing back-and-forth exchanges about writing, such as commenting on work, asking questions about writing choices, and providing academic resources to consult and use as models to facilitate learning about academic conventions (Sun & Trent, 2022). Students can then use their developing knowledge about standards and conventions to justify research and writing decisions thereby developing authority in their writing (Spies et al., 2021; Sun & Trent, 2022).

Dialogue also helps new authors to recognize and negotiate power relations and experiment with “boundary-pushing” academic expectations. Wilder (2021) found the authority of students’ advisors was “present” in the dialogue among doctoral students with a writing center facilitator. Students referenced their advisor in an effort to legitimize feedback, lend weight to suggestions, or deflect or challenge feedback from group members. Through back-and-forth exchanges, the “presence” of the advisor’s voice was mediated, creating an opportunity for doctoral candidates to negotiate authority and work towards developing their own authorial voice. Similarly, the dialogue in Wegener et al.’s (2016) peer doctoral writing group facilitated members’ balance between the writing expectations and conventions of their field and maintaining their voice and message in their writing.

DIALOGIC FEEDBACK AND CONCEPTUAL THRESHOLD CROSSINGS

During doctoral studies, students will cross several conceptual thresholds. Wisker (2010) conceptualizes these thresholds as ‘learning leaps’ that move students to work at higher conceptual, critical, and creative levels. These paradigm shifts occur not only within their research but also within themselves. Threshold crossings during doctoral studies include *ontological shifts* in which the security of self is questioned, as well as *epistemological shifts* in which knowledge is problematized and deepened (Wisker et al., 2010). Dialogic feedback guides students toward crossing these conceptual thresholds.

Persistence is critical in academic writing and particularly important for doctoral students learning to write. Dialogic feedback encourages doctoral students to persist through the challenges of academic writing. Collegial and supportive relationships that come from ongoing discussions encourage group members to persist (Guerin et al., 2013). Dialoging through one another’s struggles and accomplishments is affirming and promotes personal and professional growth beyond academic writing (Hradsky et al., 2022; Spies et al., 2021). Further, positive comments, particularly at the early stages of writing, assure novice writers they are on the right track, incentivizing them to persevere (Liu et al., 2021).

Receiving feedback on academic writing can be an anxiety-inducing emotional experience. Albeit uncomfortable for emerging scholars, constructive critique is an intrinsic element of academic research

and publication and is pivotal to student growth and development. Often, doctoral students' initial responses to feedback evoke a negative emotional response. Students often lose confidence (Wisker et al., 2010) and experience an imbalance between the enthusiasm they put into their writing and the critical response it yields. Dialogic feedback can facilitate and shape students' response to and utilization of feedback. Feedback groups can be a space to support emerging scholars in processing negative feedback (Vacek et al., 2021). In fact, dialogic feedback can help students develop positive attitudes toward feedback (Carter et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2021). Engaging in ongoing, back-and-forth discussions about writing helps students learn to not personalize feedback (Spies et al., 2021).

Although developing appropriate emotional responses to feedback is critical, learning how to use feedback to improve writing is also another important conceptual threshold (Chakraborty et al., 2021). The back-and-forth nature of dialogic feedback requires students to actively engage with feedback. By actively engaging with ongoing feedback about writing, doctoral students can revisit and re-interpret feedback across the different stages of writing to develop a better understanding of how feedback can be used to improve writing. Doctoral students can continuously express, negotiate, and critique their ideas through ongoing exchanges about writing (Sun & Trent, 2022).

In sum, although the research is limited, dialogic feedback shows great potential for promoting doctoral students' academic writing skills and scholarly identity. Current research has primarily focused on a combination of written and verbal exchanges (e.g., Álvarez & Colombo, 2021; Liu et al., 2021; Sun & Trent, 2022) or does not necessarily analyze the dialogue itself (e.g., Álvarez & Colombo, 2021). Research that exclusively examines dialogue is often short in duration (1 session, e.g., Wegener et al., 2016). What is missing in prior research is how consistent ongoing dialogue about writing contributes to doctoral students' academic writing development.

To address the enduring issues associated with feedback in doctoral student writing, we implemented a Writing Feedback Group (WFG) in which group members met weekly over the course of a semester using dialogic, bidirectional feedback. The purpose of this case study was to closely examine the role of dialogue in English as an additional language (EAL) in doctoral students' sense-making of the scholarly writing process.

METHODOLOGY

We examined how dialogic feedback helped EAL doctoral students develop scholarly writing using a descriptive case study design. A descriptive case study design was appropriate in developing a deep and detailed portrayal (Schwandt & Gates, 2018) of how dialogue contributed to students' sense-making of the scholarly writing process. Our case was bounded by participants of the WFG, which was situated in a large, urban research university.

In the fall semester of 2018, a faculty member initiated the WFG to provide regular opportunities for EAL doctoral students to discuss their writing projects beyond their dissertation. Participants brought their original research intended to be published in a peer-reviewed journal. The WFG met weekly for two hours during the fall and spring semesters from 2018 to 2022. The faculty members and doctoral students met every week to share their writing drafts and receive feedback in specific areas they found challenging. It is important to note that the group met in person until COVID required group members to meet virtually.

THE WRITING FEEDBACK GROUP

The WFG's aim and processes were shaped by Yang and Carless' (2013) feedback triangle. Three interrelated dimensions of feedback that address common barriers to feedback and promote productive student learning make up the triangle. The cognitive dimension focuses on elements of disciplinary learning to promote self-regulation and guide students to recognize and tackle disciplinary problems. The social-affective dimension addresses the role of relationships between feedback participants and their responses to feedback. This dimension helps students channel emotions toward self-

regulation and promotes learner agency. Last, the structural dimension addresses the organization and management of feedback resources to support individualized needs for feedback. Figure 1 displays the feedback triangle with its associated areas of foci. Next, we outline how the WFG applied each dimension of the feedback triangle by using a consistent process and structure.

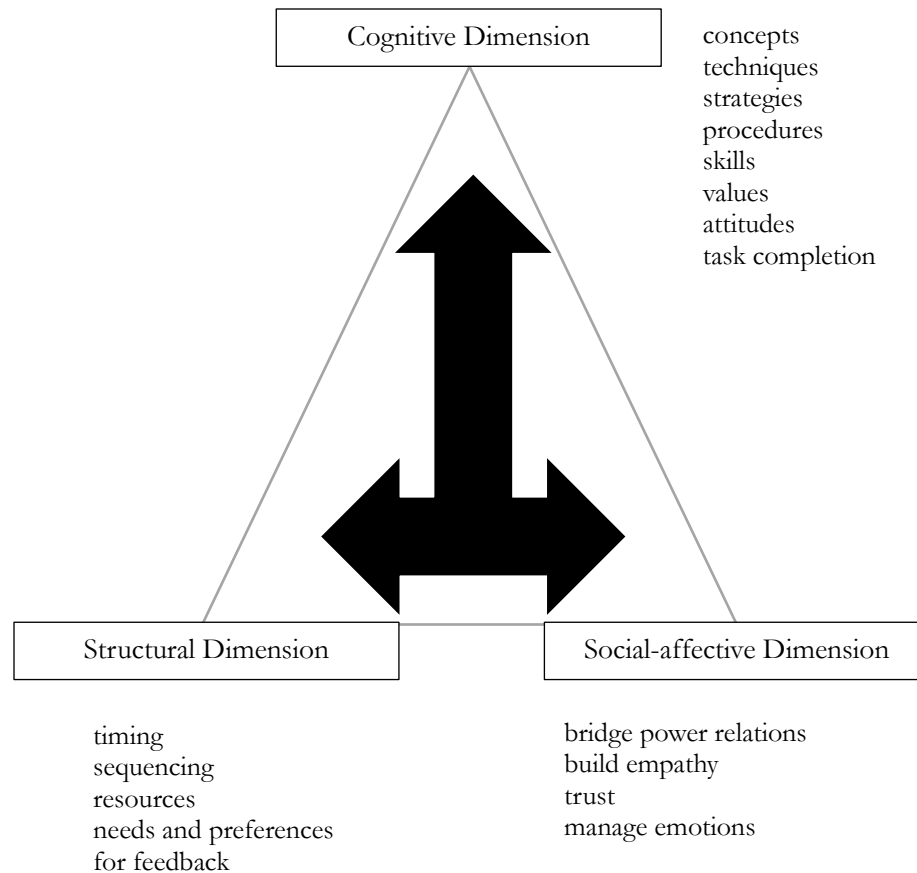


Figure 1. Core dimensions in the feedback triangle (Yang & Carless, 2013)

Social reflection

Each weekly feedback session began with 15 minutes of social interaction. This time facilitated group members' transition to thinking about scholarly writing. As mothers, graduate assistants, and caretakers responsible for their parents, this time was crucial for members to decompress and step into their academic selves. Conversations forged deep and lasting academic and personal connections (social-affective dimension; Spies et al., 2021). This structured time also buffered logistical issues related to delays such as traffic, lack of parking, or connectivity issues (structural dimension). This time ensured that when feedback began, members were present and distractions were minimized.

Successes, challenges, and feelings about writing

A 15-minute block in which all members shared their successes and challenges from the week followed social reflection. This time was meant for members to reflect on what led to their successes and challenges (cognitive dimension). Members discussed how they incorporated feedback from the previous session into their writing (cognitive dimension). Group members shared their feelings about the writing they were bringing for the current feedback session (social-affective dimension). Members showed empathy, celebrated together (social-affective dimension), and offered solutions to challenges (structural, cognitive dimensions).

Individual feedback sessions

Individual feedback sessions lasted approximately 75 minutes in total. Individual time was divided equally amongst the number of group members with writing for feedback. Each author provided a copy of their writing (no more than two pages) to the group. Prior to meeting virtually, the authors provided each group member with a copy of their writing. The writing was shared on the screen in the virtual setting. Each author shared their background on the selected writing and identified where they were struggling with the writing or where they had identified a disciplinary problem with which they needed support in solving (cognitive dimension). After reading the selected text, group members highlighted positive aspects of the author’s text (social-affective dimension). Then they gave suggestions to improve the text (cognitive dimension). Through discussions, authors and group members negotiated the text, leaving the author to make the ultimate decision. Depending on the author’s preference, comments were written directly on the draft, or the group collaboratively revised the selected text together (structural dimension). The facilitator made sure the feedback aligned with the author’s request and maintained their voice and message (cognitive, social-affective dimensions). The feedback session ended with positive comments about the author’s writing and assurance that they had a plan for improvement (cognitive, social-affective dimension).

Reflection and goal-setting

To close the weekly feedback session, group members shared their writing goals for the upcoming week and reflected in their journals. In the goal-setting process, members reflected on their previous successes and challenges, feedback, and the upcoming week’s responsibilities (cognitive dimension). This guided them to plan their writing critically and realistically. Members recorded what they found valuable (cognitive dimension), their emotions (socio-affective dimension), and their revision plans (cognitive dimension, structural dimension) in their journals. Table 1 includes a sampling of questions used to facilitate each component of a WFG meeting.

Table 1. Questions to facilitate each component of the WFG meeting

<i>Meeting Component</i>	<i>Possible Questions</i>
Successes, Challenges, and Feelings	What wins as a scholar did you have this week? What did you do that contributed to your success? What challenged you in your scholarship? How did you overcome your challenges? How did you use the feedback from last week? How do you feel about the piece of writing you brought this week?
Individual Feedback Sessions	What feedback are you looking for this week? Why? How can we help you tackle your writing this week? How do you want us to approach feedback today? Read aloud? How do you want us to chunk the reading of your text? Read sentence by sentence? Paragraph? Entire passage? Does our feedback capture the support/guidance you were seeking? Is the feedback helpful? Do you feel you now know how to move this piece of writing forward this week?
Reflection and Goal Setting	What are your writing plans for this week? How will you move this piece of writing forward? How do you feel about the feedback this week? Did you hear feedback given to others that you can apply to your own writing?

PARTICIPANTS

Four EAL doctoral students and one faculty member participated in the WFG. The faculty member invited her doctoral advisees or students she supervised on various research projects. Although identified as EAL, all participants were proficient in English and their native language. The participants knew one another from interactions within the doctoral program prior to beginning the WFG. The ongoing interaction through the WFG bonded participants establishing a strong element of trust amongst group members. To maintain anonymity, pseudonyms were given to all participants in this study.

Darcy, an international Chinese EAL doctoral student, spoke Mandarin and Cantonese as her first languages. In Spring 2020, when this data was collected, she was gathering and analyzing data for her dissertation. Darcy's motivation to attend the WFG was driven by a desire for more constructive feedback. Her prior feedback experiences were viewed as evaluative and did not support her in ways that moved her writing forward. She sought feedback to learn if the knowledge and message she wanted to share were conveyed through her writing.

Jessica, a Turkish EAL doctoral student, spoke Turkish as her first language. In Spring 2020, she was collecting data for her dissertation. Jessica's fears of scholarly writing, driven by learning English as an adult, compelled her to join the WFG. For Jessica, academic writing was a learning process, and she believed that feedback was essential to her growth.

Kim, an international Mexican EAL doctoral student, spoke Spanish as her first language. In Spring 2020, she was studying for her comprehensive examinations and preparing her dissertation proposal. Kim was interested in participating in the WFG because she wanted to build her confidence and competency in producing scholarly research in English. Her enjoyment of research began during her master's program, but fear and hesitancy also began, particularly relating to plagiarism. Respectful of researchers' work, she wanted to make sure she recognized their work in her writing. Kim also enjoyed hearing others' opinions on her writing. She commented she thinks in her first language and sometimes the intent she establishes in Spanish is not effectively translated to English, noting, "I am not always saying what I think I am saying."

Megan, a Turkish EAL doctoral student, spoke Turkish as her first language. During Spring 2020, she was completing doctoral coursework and was not yet at the stage of comprehensive examinations. Megan wanted to improve her academic writing skills to be an effective academic scholar. She noted she knew the revision process strengthened her writing. Learning English as an adult, Megan realized early on that she improved most when she received specific feedback.

Morgan, an associate professor born in the U.S., spoke English as her first language and Spanish as her second. Beyond the WFG, she worked with participants as either their doctoral advisor or as their supervisor in their work as research assistants on grant-funded projects. During her own doctoral experiences, Morgan worked full-time outside the university and was viewed as a "part-time student." She felt her appreciation for the feedback process did not fully mature until she entered the academy. She attributed this delay to limited experiences resulting from her "part-time" status. Morgan established the WFG to offer students ongoing motivation and support for their academic writing. Morgan actively participated in giving and receiving feedback on scholarly writing during feedback sessions.

DATA SOURCES

After IRB approval and prior to data collection, feedback group members gave their consent to participate in this study. Initial interviews were also used to provide contextual background on the participants. During this interview, participants were asked to describe their fears and challenges as EAL doctoral students and how they believed participation in the WFG would support their development as a scholar. Feedback sessions were recorded and electronically stored during the Spring semester.

Given our objective was to understand the role of dialogue only, it is appropriate to examine several instances (i.e., recorded feedback sessions) of the phenomena (Schwandt & Gates, 2018). Initially, a recorded feedback session from the beginning, middle, and end of the semester was selected for each participant and served as the primary data source for this study. Analysis indicated saturation was reached within the selected videos. Twelve recorded feedback sessions totaling 236 minutes were analyzed.

DATA ANALYSIS

The videos were uploaded into *Vosaic*, a video coding software. First, all the researchers independently watched the videos familiarizing themselves with the content and compiling notes describing key codes related to the dialogue during each feedback session. By using conversational turns as the unit of analysis, the researchers watched the first two videos together and developed the coding framework (see Table 2). The purpose of team coding was to establish a consistent application of the codes. Afterward, in pairs, the researchers coded the remaining 10 videos. Conversational turns during collaborative dialogue were analyzed using inductive coding with an interpretive approach (Ajjawi & Boud, 2017) to allow research findings to emerge from dominant themes inherent in raw data without the restraints that other frameworks and methodologies bring (Thomas, 2006).

One researcher did not analyze the videos with a partner but served as a critical friend (Schuck & Russell, 2005) by selecting 20% of the videos coded in pairs from the beginning, middle, and end of data collection and coded them independently to address inter-coder agreement. Researcher pairs met after coding the beginning videos with the critical friend to seek clarification of codes and to resolve differences and inconsistencies in code application. This process of clarification and resolution of inconsistencies in coding continued with the middle and final set of videos.

After coding the data, a constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was used to classify and compare the data by identifying similarities and differences across categories. Themes were identified by recognizing patterns across conversational turns within each code and by finding the relationships among them to interpret the data as it related to the study’s research question. Through analyzing the dialogue, the researchers identified three themes that demonstrated how the exchanges impacted what participants learned and how they developed their skills.

Table 2. Coding framework

Theme	Category	Code
Translation of their theoretical knowledge into text	Expertise and literature understanding	Advancing argument Learning and knowledge-building Disciplinary knowledge
Recognition of the rhetorical context	Perspective taking	Justification of decision-making Idea development Audience awareness Argument negotiation
Identification of ways to aid the reader	Precise communication	Word choice Style Grammar Ambiguity
	Structure and Organization	Clarity Conciseness Cohesiveness Paragraph organization

FINDINGS

We present three key themes that emerged from the analysis. We illustrate these themes with transcribed excerpts exemplifying how they materialized across participants and feedback sessions. At the beginning of the excerpts, a piece of the author's writing is included in *italics* to provide some context to the dialogue developed during the WFG. Dialogue facilitated doctoral students': (a) translation of their theoretical knowledge into text; (b) recognition of the rhetorical context; and (c) identification of ways to aid the reader.

TRANSLATING KNOWLEDGE INTO TEXT

Dialogic exchanges between authors and readers guided doctoral students in translating theoretical knowledge into concrete understandings for readers. Doctoral students learned how to make complex ideas accessible through their dialogue. Because the audience may not always have the disciplinary knowledge to clearly understand the content, the readers made the author aware of the needed disciplinary knowledge to understand the intended message. Specifically, feedback exchanges focused on (a) advancing argument, (b) learning and knowledge building, and (c) communicating disciplinary knowledge. In the excerpt below, the WFG is trying to help Jessica translate her theoretical knowledge about cognitive autonomy into concrete teaching practices for in-service teachers. The excerpt begins with Jessica's text in italics followed by a group member discussion about her text.

Jessica's Text: *Objective: Students will acquire and develop voicing an opinion skill such as express feelings, opinions, beliefs, needs, and aspirations to learn to self-advocate for themselves.*

Morgan: [referencing the goal] What does acquire mean?

Jessica: I was thinking they are going to learn. But I also wasn't sure. Should I just say develop? It's too wordy and not a very clear goal. Should I just get rid of acquire and use develop?

Kim: I think it should be maybe that they acquire them, and they use them [skills]. You know-how to use them. What is the purpose of acquiring those skills?

Morgan: Do they use them in this strategy?

Jessica: Yeah [hesitation]. What they are going to do is they are going to learn those skills and practice them. The purpose is the teachers are going to allow them to practice. They are going to develop through practice.

Morgan: But what is the goal?

Kim: Mmm hmmm.

Morgan: What is your goal for kids?

Jessica: I want them to develop those skills and become cognitively autonomous. Those skills are going to help them become cognitively autonomous independent learners. So, they need to learn and develop those skills.

Kim: Maybe master?

Jessica: Maybe master? I don't know. Students will develop ... (Jessica, feedback session, 5/18)

Through this exchange, it is evident that Jessica knows what she wants as the outcome of her paper (i.e., teachers to support children to be cognitively autonomous learners). In other words, she has a mental representation of cognitively autonomous students. Through dialogue, Jessica saw there was still distance between her mental representations of theoretical knowledge (i.e., disciplinary knowledge of cognitively autonomous students) and its translation into actionable prose for her intended audience (i.e., teachers' practice in developing cognitively autonomous students). In the dialogue, which included multiple scaffolding questions, Jessica was able to talk through her developing

thinking as she worked to communicate disciplinary knowledge in meaningful and accessible ways for her target audience, practicing teachers.

In another example, Darcy brought a partial draft of her research article. In the text she brought to this session, her goal was to explain the impact of translating texts (e.g., picture or word translations) on the meanings children could derive from the translations. She had previously revised this selection of writing but remained fearful that it was still “too confusing” for readers. The exchanges between Darcy, Morgan, and Kim helped Darcy ground her intended message while also trying to ensure her writing was understandable for non-expert readers.

Darcy's Text: Changing even one component (e.g., translation, re-illustrating), subtle or not, is likely to change the original illustration-text interaction dynamic and could provoke different reader responses.

Morgan: Do you need *subtle* or *not*?

Darcy: Uh, I don't.

Kim: Well, I think it's [*subtle*] important because maybe, like Darcy said, if you move one picture from one side of the page to the other, that's not changing something big but that has implications. Even little things can produce a change.

Darcy: Yeah, that is what I meant. (Darcy, feedback session 4/6)

Darcy included the word *subtle* to contrast a significant change from a minimal change in the text or illustration to support the paper's argument and knowledge building. When asked if the word *subtle* was necessary, Darcy hesitated before noting that she did not need this word. Through Darcy's writing, Kim recognized that if Darcy removed the word *subtle*, she would lose the message she was trying to convey. During the feedback discussion, there was a disagreement about word choice, which resulted in a negotiation between the author and other participants about how to advance the paper's argument. Through dialogue, Kim helped Darcy translate her knowledge into the text by highlighting that her word choice, *subtle*, was essential to understanding the implications of changes in the translation process. In the end, it was Darcy's decision to keep the word *subtle*.

RECOGNIZING THE RHETORICAL CONTEXT

The dialogue provided occasion for doctoral students to grapple with the discrepancies between themselves and their readers in terms of knowledge, purpose, motivation, and assumptions brought to the text. As an interdisciplinary group, authors acquired invaluable insight as to what non-expert readers brought to the text. Through dialogue, participants could recognize one another's experiences and perspectives and understand how they influenced their writing (authors) and understanding of the text (readers). Together, readers and authors negotiated the text to the point in which the author was satisfied with the message and the reader fully understood the writer's intent.

Through dialogue, WFG members recognized the gap between the assumed and actual knowledge of readers and created the opportunity for the author to consider these discrepancies. Feedback exchanges promoted group members': (a) justification of decisions, (b) idea development, (c) audience awareness, and (d) argument negotiation. In the exchange below, Kim and Darcy talk through Darcy's translation paper.

Darcy's Text: Translators who are influenced by their habitus develop particular capital structures. Translators will interact with each other in the field to advocate or maintain their capital and this impacts the further development of their habitus.

Kim: I think you need to explain what habitus is.

Darcy: Ohhh

Kim: You explicitly talk about habitus and I have no idea what's habitus. So, my first question was going to be what is a *habitus*? (laughs) because it is very explicit in there [the text]. I think you need a definition for *habitus*.

Darcy: OK

Kim: The first thing that jumps out is my lack of understanding.

Darcy: Yeah, OK, it is a habit but it's sociology terminology.

Kim: But then if you say habit, find a specific definition because you said in the second sentence habitus and it gives us a sense that it has an extra component than a regular habit, different from the perception that I have.

Darcy: That's good thank you. (Darcy, feedback session, 5/11)

In this example, Darcy is somewhat surprised by Kim's comment about needing habitus defined (i.e., Ohh). She wants to use the term as associated with the sociology field and thus provides the definition to Kim. However, Kim persists, indicating her perception and that of the text is different. Darcy builds audience awareness by hearing from the reader, firsthand, that her message is muddled as the reader is distracted by their lack of understanding of a term critical to the comprehension of the text. At this point, Darcy becomes aware of the needed revision to address the audience's need to understand the intended message.

With the help of dialogue, feedback group members experienced how motivations and assumptions influence the author's writing and the reader's interpretation of and engagement with the text. Members observed how the readers' context and experiences shape the meaning they extract from the text. In the excerpt below, Kim brought a paper focused on the differences between special education services in the U.S. and Mexico.

Darcy: All I am saying is you can say foreign-born Spanish-speaking population is the largest, then you can say this is why you use Mexican as an example. To contextualize your paper.

Megan: That is what I was looking for. It sounds like you are going to talk generally about others from diverse countries, but your focus is on Mexico.

Kim: Mexico.

Megan: That is what you are trying to say, to make it more specific.

Kim: So how would I make it ...

Darcy: ... you don't need to say Mexican, so specifically. You can say why it's important. Besides Mexico, they are from other ... so you can say in your paper you are using Mexican ...

Megan: But why don't you focus on the population of students? The Spanish-speaking population? I think it is the highest.

Kim: Yeah, but I just don't want to ... this is the thing. Many people are confusing that all Spanish-speaking kids come from Mexico. They come from Guatemala, El Salvador, and I don't want that. This is just ... they are different cultures. I don't want them to mix.

Darcy: That is what I am saying. You can say it is important because the Spanish-speaking population is so big, there are many other populations other than Mexican, you are using Mexican as an example to inform teachers not only.

Kim: But I don't think Mexican is one example ... The one country that has the most immigrant families in the US is Mexico. That is what I want to stress.

Darcy: Then why not just say it here?

Kim: Like where, give me an idea ... Maybe I can say, about the language. The majority are Spanish-speaking and many of those come from Mexico. (Kim, feedback session, 2/10)

Kim is personally connected to the purpose of her paper. Her motivation is to situate her paper in the context of special education students from Mexico with the purposeful intent of addressing readers' (i.e., educators') assumptions. Through dialogue, Kim realizes Darcy and Megan's experience and context affect their interaction with the text. Darcy and Megan's backgrounds created an expectation that Kim would address a broader population (i.e., foreign-born, Spanish-speaking). Through their exchanges, the author and readers were able to resolve the disagreement and negotiate the text to the point it was meaningful to the reader while maintaining the author's intent. The dialogue developed included Kim's justifications for her decision-making process and argument negotiation among WFG members.

IDENTIFYING WAYS TO AID THE READER

The authors in the feedback group aimed to share their specific message, wanting readers to understand and yield to their perspectives. Dialogue served as a direct path to the authentic needs of readers revealing the importance of communicating precisely and using structural markers to aid the reader in understanding the intended message. These dialogic exchanges facilitated the authors' intentional selection of revisions to support the reader in accessing the author's message. Specifically, during the feedback exchange, authors highlighted: (a) precise communication, and (b) structure and organization as essential components for the understanding of the message they wanted to communicate.

Precise communication

With the help of dialogue during the feedback sessions, doctoral scholars were made aware of issues with clarity and were supported in refining their text for more precise communication. Members discussed word choice, style, and grammar, and addressed ambiguity in the writing. Authors saw how readers interpreted their text and together, group members brainstormed revisions to bring the writer's message and readers' understanding closer together. In the excerpt below, Kim responds to how Megan has detailed the intercoder agreement rate in her literature review:

Megan's Text: Initial agreement rate on the inclusion of the articles was 86%. Then, authors together read the articles that they had a 14% disagreement and reached 100% agreement through consensus, after checking the articles on explicit and intentional interventions and agreeing on inclusion and/or exclusion. Authors used total count interobserver agreement. In order to calculate total count, smaller count was divided by larger count and multiplied by 100.

Kim: Instead of saying agreement and disagreement, I would just use agreement rate. Of course, if your agreement is 86% your disagreement will be 14. So, I think she has extra [laughs]. And then, how did you get the 86%? The actual formula. We added the number of articles and divided this number by the total number of articles, and it yielded 86% of agreement rate. (Megan, feedback session, 2/10)

Here, Megan learns that even though her description is detailed, her inclusion of agreement and disagreement rates is repetitive. She also gained insight into the reader's questioning of how the agreement rate was calculated. In this example, Kim confirms that readers need academic writing to be concise (i.e., "extra") and precise (e.g., "the exact formula").

Authors also came to the feedback group having identified problematic areas within the text and seeking the reader's viewpoint on how to address the problem areas. In the excerpt below, Kim seeks help to ensure her intended message is clear. She wants to know that the message she is trying to convey is what is understood by readers.

Kim's Text: *Immigrant families who have children with disabilities have had to navigate different perceptions of what a disability is and how special education services should be navigated.*

Kim: So, should I say here in their home country? Because what I am trying to say is that they have experienced different perspectives ...

Megan: Yes. Where do they experience them in the United States or, yeah, I think you need to put experience different perceptions ...

Kim: I don't know. What I am trying to say is like the definition of disabilities and the process to ...

Megan: Yes, it is totally different.

Kim: It is different in their countries than here.

Megan: We need to mention it. So (starts reading in low voice)

Kim: Between their country of origin and the United States. Do you think that sounds good?

Darcy: Maybe say instead of experience, have developed or I feel like ... I see what you are saying.

Kim: Yeah, because they have experience. Because when they are in that country, disability is ...

Megan: Different.

Kim: Perceived differently than here in the United States.

Megan: So, do you want to [say] that these parents come here with different backgrounds on special education? Or do you want to mention that they come with different, but they see it differently[ly] here?

Kim: I want to mention that they have an idea of what a disability is or if there are special education services, and when they arrive here is different. So, they have to adapt to the new system. (Kim, feedback session, 2/10)

In this exchange, Darcy and Megan both indicate an understanding of the message Kim is trying to convey as they work to help Kim clarify that message in her text. Even though Kim is aware her text may be confusing and ambiguous for some readers (i.e., home country), having access to non-expert readers in the area confirmed her initial thinking. Through the dialogue, Kim, Megan, and Darcy were able to collaboratively revise the text for the mutual benefit of the author and readers by addressing the ways to communicate precisely.

Structure and organization

Dialogue also facilitated scholars' understanding of the reader's need for structure and organization to construct understanding from the text. The authors specifically stressed the need for clarity, conciseness, cohesiveness, and paragraph organization. The back-and-forth exchanges between the author and readers helped doctoral scholars understand how to incorporate structural markers to support reader's comprehension. In the excerpt below, Darcy brings a draft of her translation paper.

Kim: Another thing that I notice when we are revising this paper is that you jump from the general research to your example in *Grandma and the Perfume* [book]. You start talking about the ...

Darcy: Two stages.

Kim: The two stages without telling us that you are now referring to the book that you are talking about [findings] ... Every time you talk about the general [literature] and go back to

your example [findings], you have to refer us that you are going back to the example [findings] because we are positioned in the general literature.

Darcy: Makes sense. That's good ... I think it is necessary to reintroduce the reader by transitioning ...

Kim: I've never read about translation research. So, I am trying to understand the translation research and then you change to the example [findings], so I need, um, OK we are going back to the example. Ok we are going back to the literature. Because it is a lot of new knowledge. (Darcy, feedback session, 2/3)

In this exchange, Kim clarifies that as a non-expert reader, markers within the text are important for her to fully understand the findings. Kim explicitly communicates to the reader what she understands, where her understanding breaks down, and how Darcy as the author can use transitions and textual markers to address the clarity of the message and better support her as the reader.

The dialogue developed among authors fostered opportunities to refine the structure and organization of their manuscripts needed to address the rigor required for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. In the exchange below, Jessica seeks feedback on the presentation of the content by including a table.

Jessica: Should I keep this or turn it into a table with sessions, this first part?

Morgan: I would just put in this part narrative.

Jessica: Narrative?

Kim: Even if you put it on a table, you always want to explain in your narrative whatever is on the table.

Morgan: Hmm

Kim: If it is very repetitive, don't do a table.

Jessica: Okay

Kim: It's your tool to understand the table, just what you are explaining ... to guide them, I mean teachers (Jessica, feedback session, 1/27).

Through this exchange, Jessica was hesitant on how to present information to make it clear to the reader. She suggested the inclusion of a table as a solution. Through the dialogue, Kim and Morgan made Jessica aware that when a table includes the same information as the narrative, it could become repetitive. The dialogue exchange among participants supported Jessica on how to concisely organize the information in her paper to promote comprehension of the content.

DISCUSSION

The findings from this study emphasize the importance of dialogue in the co-construction of knowledge amongst EAL doctoral students in the WFG. Sociocultural theory posits that knowledge is constructed through interaction, highlighting the relationship between social and individual processes in the co-construction of knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). Through their dialogue, doctoral students together learned how to translate their theoretical knowledge and research into academic text. Scholarly writing at the doctoral level crafts new knowledge, a shift from students' prior academic experiences in which writing served to tell and transform knowledge (Kellogg & Whiteford, 2009). Writing is an especially demanding way for writers to think about what they know. Oftentimes, writers' knowledge takes on multiple forms and representations (e.g., nonverbal) which are not always easily translated into prose (Flower, 1993). All the doctoral students in the writing group were not only writing about complex ideas but also interdisciplinary topics in which multiple fields overlapped, making the importance of an opportunity for the co-construction of knowledge critical.

The bidirectional nature of the dialogue allowed doctoral writers to acquire critical access to readers' perspectives, enabling them to recognize the rhetorical context. Writers aspire for readers to see things the way they do; however, differences in knowledge, attitudes, and needs between readers and writers create distance between them. In developing as academic scholars, students must learn about and negotiate with the forces influencing themselves as writers, their readers, and the meanings created through interacting with the text (Flower, 1993). Scholars coordinate the intended message, the text, and the reader's response (Kellogg & Whiteford, 2009). Our findings align with those of Álvarez and Colombo's (2021) case study in which doctoral students' dialogue with readers was powerful in gaining an early perspective of the reader, enabling them to see problems unseen through their author's lens.

Similar to Álvarez and Colombo (2021), dialogue within the WFG exposed participants to a variety of perspectives that allowed scholars to explore their topics in deeper and unanticipated ways. Exchanges about writing engaged both authors and readers in active sense-making as they worked to communicate their ideas. The dialogue helped them to identify gaps in their knowledge, ideas needing further conceptualization, or issues of organization or word choice in translating their ideas. Through their dialogue, group members learned how to utilize scholarly writing features to support the audience's comprehension of the intended message.

Dialogue further helped EAL doctoral students recognize scholarly writing as a process rather than a product as they engaged in negotiation during feedback sessions. Authors and readers often negotiate ideas from their own perspectives. By talking about their ideas with readers, authors recognized necessary shifts and changes to their writing. By negotiating the feedback received, the authors' knowledge was affirmed or challenged, thereby supporting their evolving knowledge, conceptualizations, and translation. When "placed in a discursive space which allows for knowledge-generating discussion" (Stenton, 2011, p. 16), potentially higher levels of understanding are the result. Rather than viewing feedback as something done to students or the product of learning, feedback is also the act of engagement itself (Macleod et al., 2020).

LIMITATIONS

The findings of this study should be viewed in conjunction with the limitations of this study. These findings are specific to an established group that has participated together in the WFG for four years. There is an element of trust that has been built over the four-year relationship that may have contributed to the dialogue that took place in the WFG. Further, the fact that all of the doctoral students were women from minoritized backgrounds may also have contributed to trust that may not have been present in other grouping configurations.

CONCLUSION

English as an additional language doctoral scholars' research is enriched with cultural diversity and diversity of thought which academic fields crave. Yet, this research may be lost if institutions of higher education fail to support EAL doctoral students' diverse needs in developing as scholarly writers. Many EAL doctoral students think in their native language (Hoang & Ma, 2019) and struggle to effectively communicate their well-developed ideas in English (Chang & Strauss, 2010). Dialogue in the WFG situated participants in spaces of active sense-making and negotiation.

Dialogue created multiple entry points for participants to contribute to the discussion and build their knowledge. It provided a safe space for students to ask questions and clarify misunderstandings about academic writing in English. Each culture has its own writing styles and rhetorical conventions (Connor, 2002). EAL scholars need time and guidance to adjust to the differences between scholarly writing in English and their native language. These differences may include writing with clarity, linearity, and straightforward language.

The findings from this study highlight the need for institutions of higher education to identify mechanisms for EAL doctoral students to engage in dialogue about scholarly writing. The WFG provided a setting for students to try out their writing (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Dialogue within the group positioned students to be active in the feedback process, a critical requirement for learning from feedback. It is recommended that institutions of higher education identify mechanisms to increase doctoral students' access to engage in ongoing dialogue about scholarly writing. Writing feedback groups can take many forms including established groups, embedded into coursework, or between advisor and advisees. Although this type of group requires a time commitment, we believe the outcomes indicate that this is time well spent.

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