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The Oral Writing-Revision Space: Identifying a New and Common Discourse Feature of Writing Center Consultations

Abstract

To better understand interaction between consultants and writers and reveal more about the daily work in writing centers, this exploratory, discourse-based study uses conversation analysis to take an "unmotivated look" at data. Through initial transcription, a new discourse feature, the oral writing-revision space, or OR, emerged. The OR has not been previously identified in either writing center or conversation analysis literature. This emergent discourse feature functions in several important ways, allowing both consultants and writers to navigate the session by taking on more or less responsibility as needed. Further, this research presents the OR as a framework for better understanding interaction and scaffolding in writing center sessions and has implications for tutor training, challenging lore, and discourse-based research.

Introduction

As a methodology, conversation analysis (CA)—that is, turning oral conversations into written texts with identifying markers before analysis—is challenging, but in writing center interchanges, CA can be especially intimidating because of the difficulty of capturing the interaction between talk and text. Yet there is much that can be learned from examining the daily work of the writing center on the discourse level. Using a variety of research methods, including but not limited to the CA approach, earlier studies have focused on language in writing center sessions; some examples are Jennifer Joy Ritter (2002); Jessica Williams (2005); Hansun Zhang Waring (2005); Susan Wolff Murphy (2006); Brooke Rollins, Trixie G. Smith, & Evelyn Westbrook (2008); Isabelle Thompson (2009); Beth Godbee (2012a, 2012b); Jo Mackiewicz & Isabelle Thompson (2013, 2015); Isabelle Thompson & Jo Mackiewicz (2014). This list, by no means exhaustive, serves to underscore how much researchers have taken up discourse-based methods in the last 20 years. Knowing there was still much to be learned about what unfolds in writing center sessions, and in an effort to contribute to more data-driven studies (Driscoll & Perdue, 2012; Haswell, 2005), I adopt a discourse-based, CA approach to examine writing center talk. Evaluating hundreds of interactions taken from four video-recorded sessions, I discover, categorize, and analyze fascinating moments in which students and consultants negotiate writing out loud.

My first overarching research question was as follows: What can examining the discourse of writing center sessions tell us about the interaction between the participants in this context? To answer this, I video-recorded sessions, and it was during the transcription process that something interesting emerged from the data, what I will call the *OR*, *oral writing-revision space*. This discourse was more analogous to spoken writing than other types of discourse interaction. I more fully outline the transcription methods and symbols in the Methodology section a bit later, but, first, it's important to understand what the OR is not: Not only is the OR not conversation about writing, but it is also not participants reading aloud and not participants speaking while they wrote.

What the OR Is Not
Reading Aloud

Transcription conventions such as Magdalena Gilewicz & Terese Thonus's (2003) and John W. Du Bois, Stephan Schuetze-Coburn, Susanna Cumming, & Danae Paolino's (1993) do not indicate a way to differentiate reading text aloud or writing while speaking from other conversational

talk, both of which happened in the videos I was transcribing. See the appendix for an outline of the transcription conventions; relevant transcription symbols are included in the examples that follow. In Du Bois, Schuetze-Coburn, Cumming, & Paolino's (1993) outline of transcription conventions, when there's a change in a speaker's pitch, that text is isolated with specific symbols. For example, when someone whispers, that text is transcribed as *<WH…WH>* with the *WH* surrounding the words that were whispered. There are similar conventions for quoting others and laughing while talking. In this tradition, I decided to transcribe text that was read aloud with *<RE…RE>* to differentiate this text from regular conversation. Excerpt 1 below provides an example of the writer reading aloud. An arrow (➔) is used to draw attention to specific utterances. Numbers on the left side mark turns, not lines.

Excerpt 1. (Alyssa, lines 61–68)

| | 1 | C: | Um and why don't you go ahead and read just the introduction to me. |
|➔ | 2 | W: | Okay. Uh- <RE Commercials have long become an extremely effective way to reach an audience in a way nothing else can. However, the key is developing a commercial that attracts the targeted audience in a positive way. I selected two commercials advertising Covergirl makeup but to my surprise they were two very different approaches to selling the product. While I watched both commercials, my main objective included defining what type of product is being sold, who was the intended audience, and the overall effectiveness of the commercial. RE> |

Even without the consultant asking the writer to read, it is clear the words between the *<RE>* symbols are written, not spoken discourse, so identifying these instances was easy.

Speaking While Writing

Similarly, there was no existing convention for indicating a speaker was talking while writing, which also occurred in the videos I transcribed. With occurrences of participants verbalizing words as they wrote them, I coded the discourse with *<WR…WR>* in the same fashion as the *RE* above. An example of speaking while writing is provided in Excerpt 2.

Excerpt 2. (Grant, lines 453–456)

→	1	W:	So just reword it. <WR The battle is traditional— traditional teaching methods WR> [is between. Okay.
	2	C:	[betw- between Benton's traditional teaching—?
→	3	W:	Yeah <WR Benton's traditional WR> blah blah blah @@@@.

In this example, the writer is writing as she speaks the words (in both turns 1 and 3). Not only is this action evident in the video, but the prosody of the words easily stands out from conversational rhythms. Reading aloud and speaking while writing, though not identified in current discourse conventions, are not difficult to see as something different from "talk about writing."

Introducing the OR

As mentioned, there was an emergent discourse feature that did not readily fit into the previously discussed categories. Excerpt 3 provides an example of this discourse feature from a writing center consultant.

Excerpt 3. (Alyssa, lines 519–522)

| → | 1 | C: | So you might just um kind of lump them together and say like you know while both commercials blah blah blah um they were different in like this or something like that. |

In this excerpt, the consultant advises the writer on how she might structure her thesis statement. This is not reading aloud, and the consultant is not speaking while writing. Yet, this utterance is also distinctly different from talk *about* writing. Excerpt 4 provides another look at this discourse feature, spoken by a student-writer.

Excerpt 4. (Bryan, lines 73–78)

| → | 1 | W: | I don't know if that was necessary or not. Depending on the product being advertised the ad that goes with it? That doesn't make sense. So never mind. [That's why I'm here.@@@ |
| | 2 | C: | [Okay that's fine. |

The underlined selection is the writer's attempt at rephrasing an excerpt in her draft. Again, this is not text being read aloud, not speaking while writing, and not talk about writing. As with the other interactions, I was unable to locate a transcription symbol. Because current transcription conventions do not account for this type of discourse, I created a new transcription convention, *<OR>*, to represent what these emergent utterances appear to be: an oral writing or revision space.

The OR and Current Scholarship

The OR is not surprising in and of itself; many consultants, directors, and researchers agree that this discourse is common in writing center sessions, even if it hasn't explicitly been discussed. Rebecca Day Babcock, Kellye Manning, Travis Rogers, Courtney Goff, and Amanda McCain (2012) recognized something they labeled "private speech occurrences" in which "one or both of the partners speak as though to themselves" (p. 114). With no examples provided, it is difficult to say that what they describe is an OR, though it seems possible. Similarly, Thomas Newkirk (1989) writes of one conference he examined:

> [This conference] illustrates the role of talk in revision. Revision is often used synonymously with rewriting; we change our writing by writing again and making changes. The student in this conference is revising by talking; she is creating an alternative text that can be juxtaposed against the one she has written. (p. 327)

Newkirk's explanation of the student's "revising by talking" is captured in the ORs above.

As mentioned, much writing center research has focused on language and interaction in sessions, and many times, OR structures appear in these transcripts. Yet, the researchers did not mark these occurrences as anything other than traditional conversational exchange, likely because many were not using conversation analysis as their specific methodological framework, which usually requires more specific coding of such instances. In conversation analysis studies, researchers examine a variety of everyday conversations like telling jokes (Sacks, 1974) and doctor–patient interaction (ten Have, 1991), but short of the discourse-based writing center studies already cited above, not much attention has been paid to the interaction surrounding talk about writing. As we know, writing centers offer a unique communicative situation, and this type of interaction is not common in most other interactions, even educational settings such as advising sessions (Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1992) and classroom talk (Cazden & Beck, 2003). These other conversationally based interactions do not focus on the revision of writing, setting writing center interactions slightly apart

from most others. This distinction explains why this discourse space has not been highlighted and discussed in the literature. Even so, based on the descriptions from other research and my initial findings, it appears that ORs are used in daily writing center practice and warrant further investigation.

As a result of uncovering the OR discourse feature, subsequent research questions followed: 1. How is the OR contextualized in the conversational discourse? 2. How is the OR functioning in these interactions? 3. What, if anything, can the OR tell us about our daily writing center practices?

Methodology

While working as a graduate assistant in a large Midwestern state university writing center, I recorded 25 videos in fall of 2010, following IRB approval. The collection of these data was for both exploratory purposes—recording the sessions with the idea of looking at the discourse in some undetermined way—and pedagogical purposes—assigning consultants to examine their own sessions as part of a training course. There were 24 new consultants being trained that semester, and all consultants recorded at least one session (one consultant recorded two sessions for unknown reasons) for a total of 25 videos. All consultants were graduate students in English, student writers were from all levels and disciplines, and sessions were by appointment, scheduled in 50-minute blocks. Videos were recorded based solely on the consultants' schedules and writers' willingness to participate in the research. Because of this, the recorded videos could be considered random samples of writing center sessions for that time frame during that semester. Though the IRB specified videos could be recorded all semester (September–December), all recordings took place during the month of October. As mentioned in the introduction, I decided to follow a conversation analysis approach to examining the video data, which I will now outline in more detail.

Conversation Analysis

Many of the discourse studies in writing centers call on conversational analysis (CA) transcription conventions to turn their spoken data into written texts. Not all these researchers, however, applied a CA methodology when analyzing their data, which can affect how the data are viewed and interpreted. For this reason, it is important to recognize that CA provides researchers with transcription conventions but that it is also a stand-alone methodology with its own ideology.

CA, developed by Harvey Sacks, Emanuel A. Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson, focuses on authentic, everyday, or institutional language, views language as socially constructed, and centers on text (ten Have, 2007). The transcription conventions often called upon and/or influencing other convention sets were originally designed by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974), with Jefferson continuing to refine the conventions through the years (2004). Talk is often viewed as disorganized or even chaotic, but CA transcription gives researchers a way to organize these exchanges. As Deborah Cameron (2001) describes it, CA takes a "microanalytic" approach, which "defamiliarizes what we normally take for granted, and reveals the unsuspected complexity of our everyday verbal behavior" (p. 89). In short, CA transcription provides researchers with a framework for intentional analysis.

"Noticing" During Transcription

As part of my exploratory study, I began transcribing videos in alphabetic order by the consultant's pseudonym, starting with Alyssa's video, doing what CA calls "unmotivated looking" (ten Have, 2007). This type of examination is not "prompted by prespecified analytic goals . . . but by 'noticings' of initially unremarkable features of talk or other conduct" (Schegloff as cited in ten Have, 2007, p. 121). The general preferred strategy of CA is to start with the data and an open mind and, once something emerges, to more systematically focus the analysis.

Once I "noticed" the OR in Alyssa's video, I had to choose a representative sample to transcribe, so I went through all 25 videos and made notes about the consultant, the writer, the assignment, the general topic of the session, and the genders of each participant. Unfortunately, not all videos were usable. Four of the 25 had significant background noise and/or low volume of speakers, so transcribing much of the interaction was not possible. Consequently, those four videos were eliminated from the dataset. Of the 21 usable videos, 11 (52%) were with female consultants and 10 (48%) were with male consultants. For the sample, I chose to include two female consultants and two male consultants. When looking at writers, I noted there were 14 female writers (67%) and seven male writers (33%). I decided, then, to choose one male writer and three female writers for my sample to reflect gender distribution of the entire sample size. Seventeen (81%) of the recorded sessions include native English-speaking consultants. For that reason, I chose to include all native English-speaking consultants in my representative sample. The writers' native languages totaled the same: 81% of writers recorded in these sessions spoke English as their native language. Therefore, I also chose to include videos with writers who were

native English speakers. Last, of the 21 videos, 12, or 57%, came from one class, Freshman Composition 1 (ENG 1113), while the other assignments and classes were varied. Thus, I selected only writers working on papers from this one course, holding course and discipline constant. Including only consultations with students working on papers in a 100-level English course with native-speaking consultants and writers limits the breadth of my study and hence its direct implications for other areas. However, holding these potential confounding variables constant (native language, course, level, discipline) is consistent with a most-similar-systems method of case study research, in which researchers seek to hold key variables constant in order to investigate outcomes. Because this is an exploratory study, a most-similar-systems approach is reasonable means to study a sample with potentially diverse outcomes (Gerring & Cojocaru, 2016).

Table 1 outlines information for the final representative sample, identified by consultants' pseudonyms.

Table 1

Consultation demographics

	C Gender	W Gender	C Language	W Language	Class
Alyssa	Female	Female	English	English	ENG 1113
Bryan	Male	Female	English	English	ENG 1113
Grant	Male	Female	English	English	ENG 1113
Lorelei	Female	Male	English	English	ENG 1113

As mentioned, I transcribed the talk using Gilewicz & Thonus's (2003) close-vertical-transcription methodology and some selected transcription symbols from DuBois, Schuetze-Coburn, Cumming, & Paolino (1993). These transcription labels are easy to incorporate and require no formal linguistic training, only attention to detail, such as when speech overlaps or when participants use backchannels during others' talk (e.g., *uh-huh*, *hmmm*). Transcripts can be much more detailed than the excerpts I provide (see Du Bois, Schuetze-Coburn, Cumming, & Paolino, 1993; Jefferson, 2004). In all excerpts provided, writers are identified with a *W* and consultants with a *C* (the terminology used at this particular writing center).

Findings

As I continued to analyze the OR, it became clear that the OR structure is "packaged" within a larger discourse chunk: something before,

the OR, and something after. I labeled what came before as the *lead-in* and what followed as the *lead-out*. The typical OR *chain*, then, is *lead-in* → *OR* → *lead-out*. At times, the lead-in and/or lead-out was absent from the OR chain because ORs were delivered back to back, as in when a student was working with the wording of a phrase and repeated or tried several variations. Table 2 shows the OR organization. This excerpt is from the transcript in which Lorelei is the consultant, and it provides a view of the coding process for this project.

Table 2
OR chain

lines	*lead-in*	*OR*	*lead-out*
191– 202	W: Yeah. I don't know. I was just talking. Uh, I guess— I don't know uh	→ W: <OR the s- strategies used are— would be— OR>	→ C: Well down here I mean you didn't— you talked about the visual arguments which I thought was really interesting because you talk about the music W: mmhmm C: and uh what's going on actually with the color, but you don't really W: mmhmm C: um talk about that up here but you go into it a lot in your paper so you might want to actually look and see—

As Table 2 indicates, speakers choose discourse structures that bring them to or introduce the OR (the lead-in), speak the OR structure, and then choose discourse structures that refer back to the OR or provide closure to the exchange (the lead-out). These lead-ins and -outs became critical in understanding the OR because identifying what came before and what followed helped determine the function of the OR. Though this

particular article does not address the specifics of the lead-ins and -outs, my overall analysis took into account the functions of these discourse chunks (see Denny, 2014), and elements of the lead-ins and -outs can be seen in sections of this piece.

The Functions of the OR

An important step in analyzing the OR structure was to discern how it was functioning in the interaction. Six categories of OR were located within the transcripts, as Table 3 outlines.

Table 3
OR categories

trial	"Trying out" an idea, phrase, or word; usually marked by rising intonation; typically led in or out with questions
repetition	Simply repeating a previous OR (spoken by either participant) without adding any additional words, ideas, or revisions
rewriting	A revision, a rewriting of a passage, phrase, or word; less tentative than the trial OR; sometimes preceded by other trials and/or models
model	An example of what a structure might sound like; usually a starting point; spoken only by the consultants
correcting	A recognition and correction of an error in the previously read passage; spoken only by the writers
corrective	The consultants' counterpart to the correcting OR; typically stated as a question; used mostly for one-word replacements

These categories arose from an open-coding approach to the data (Creswell, 2009). First, I independently coded the transcripts and identified tentative categories. As explained briefly above, I broke the ORs into chunks and looked at what came before and after to determine how the OR was functioning—what was this discourse chunk doing within the discourse at this moment? Second, I included a co-rater to check for consistency with the aim of refining, collapsing, or eliminating categories as necessary (Creswell, 2009). This approach does not typically allow for

interrater reliability, as the two coders must come to a consensus through discussion. This allowed for our coding to be thorough and consistent. It was through our discussions that we concluded there were six OR categories as explained above. Below is a brief overview of each of the OR categories with examples from the transcripts. Following each, I've also provided some relevant literature that places the OR into already-discussed practices of writing center work in hopes of further understanding these occurrences.

Trial. When speakers use a *trial* OR, they are "trying out" an idea, phrase, or word. Trials are somewhat uncertain, usually marked by rising intonation (a rise in pitch at the end of an utterance), and are frequently preceded and/or followed by a question. Excerpt 5 offers an example of a trial OR spoken by a writer. From this point, I present ORs in the excerpts with my discourse convention marker *<OR>*.

Excerpt 5. (Lorelei, lines 235–239)

	1	W:	[So should I— should I— should I give— give McCain some credit in this paragraph here and talk
→			and— and explain how like <OR even though Obama is attacking as well but he's not doing it in such a manner that McCain is OR>? I don't know how I would write it out.
	2	C:	Yeah, I mean I think— I think you could mention that you know . . .

Here the writer asks if he should explain more, provides a trial OR of what that explanation might be, and then questions his ability to write his thoughts (turn 1). The uncertainty of this trial is captured by his questioning and truncated (unfinished) phrases in the lead-in, the rising intonation in his OR (indicated by the question mark), and his self-doubt in the lead-out. Even though this writer lacks confidence, the trial OR shows him working with his ideas before committing them to paper. In this excerpt, Lorelei responds as a peer with her opinion about providing additional information. Trial ORs also reveal how consultants are sounding boards for fellow writers when responding to these discourse structures.

The type of interaction highlighted by the trial OR is often discussed in writing center literature. Trial ORs show a discourse space where writers practice writing and consultants respond as peers, confirming Muriel Harris's (1995) claims that "exploratory language [talk that occurs when peers collaborate], though less controlled and controlling,

has more power to generate confident assertions and make connections than does presentational language [more public language]" (p. 31). Thom Hawkins (1980) suggests that working with peer tutors gives writers time to verbalize their ideas and think out loud. Hawkins's comments speak directly to the trial OR when he concludes that writing tasks are accomplished during sessions because there is "a sense of community in which the language learner *can take risks without fear of penalty*" (p. 66; emphasis in original), echoing sentiments from Stephen M. North (1982), who suggested that "growth in writing . . . requires risk taking and failure" (p. 436). Excerpt 5 shows the writer exploring language described by Harris, in the type of environment envisioned by Hawkins, and including the risk taking mentioned by North.

Repetition. *Repetition* ORs occur when either party repeats a previous OR verbatim. Excerpt 6 illustrates the use of a repetition OR.

Excerpt 6. (Alyssa, lines 674–681)

	1	W:	<WR In addition, both commercials— WR> (.) well, actually, their appeals were probably their biggest contrast. So, <OR in addition— OR>
	2	C:	You could say <OR the commercials OR>
	3	W:	Yeah. (.) Um <OR In addition the commercials— OR>
	4	C:	What's a good verb there?
→	5	W:	I know that's why I'm trying to think of. Um. <OR In addition the commercials—OR> I don't like showed. I hate that word.

In this excerpt, the participants are working to phrase the thesis statement. The writer starts with "in addition" (turn 1), and the consultant offers "the commercials" (turn 2) to help build her structure. The writer struggles to find the verb she wants, and to allow herself some time to think, she repeats her previous OR, adding to the consultant's: "in addition the commercials" (turn 3). This example indicates how the writer can "buy" time and maintain her turn in the conversation. In the data, the repetition OR frequently functions as a space for thinking, and at times, the participants repeat each other's words, which can indicate both need time to think, as in Excerpt 6.

Repetition may be used for comprehension or production purposes. Deborah Tannen (2007) reports that repetition is sometimes used for comprehension during conversation, meaning a listener may repeat what was

just spoken to better understand the message. Repetition also acts as "dead space" (p. 59) for speakers to produce their next contribution, something Cameron (2001) also notes. The OR in Excerpt 6 is likely repetition for production purposes, as the writer is clearly thinking while she speaks.

Repetition has been noted in other writing center research. Susan Blau, John Hall, & Tracy Strauss (1998) found "echoing," in which consultants mimic writers' language (from discourse markers to playful wording), and concluded that verbal echoing affirmed or even created rapport between participants. Mackiewicz (2001) noted that participants "piggyback" on each other's turns and that repetition in her data was used to "ratify what the other has said" (p. 216). These interpretations of repetition can be applied to the OR and might also be used to examine how rapport is built between consultants and writers.

Rewriting. The *rewriting* OR is a revision, an oral rewriting of a written passage, phrase, or word, usually for sentence fluency or style. The rewriting OR is different from the trial, which is experimental and uncertain, because the rewriting OR is less tentative and rarely has rising intonation or is presented as a question. Additionally, this OR is not a formulation of ideas, like the trial OR, but rather a *re*formulation. Excerpt 7 shows the consultant speaking a rewriting OR.

Excerpt 7. (Grant, lines 217–222)

→	1	C:	<RE So they mention that college students in particular benefit from technology RE> <OR benefit from technologies OR>?
	2	W:	Yeah, that one was hard to word.
→	3	C:	<OR Technological advances OR>?
	4	W:	Yeah.

After reading aloud, Grant suggests an edit from "technology" to "technologies" (turn 1), a stylistic change. The writer admits she struggled to word this phrase (turn 2), and the consultant offers another rewriting OR, "technological advances" (turn 3), which the writer accepts with "Yeah" (turn 4). As this excerpt demonstrates, when used by consultants, the rewriting OR can be viewed as more directive; Grant appears to be rewriting this phrase for the writer. Though I don't necessarily support the directive/nondirective binary, especially because it's recently been complicated further (Kjesrud, 2015), it is difficult to describe these instances beyond that binary. Rewriting ORs were found mostly when consultants were reading aloud, and though Mackiewicz & Thompson (2015) didn't

mark the rewriting aspect in their data, they coded reading aloud as a cognitive scaffolding strategy that "prod[s] thinking" (p. 33). However, Grant goes further than simply encouraging thinking, as he also provides a rewrite of the student's words. Most rewriting ORs when used by consultants would likely be considered too instructive. However, writers also use the rewriting OR to reword their own language, and in these cases, the rewriting OR space can provide different revision strategies, such as in Excerpt 8.

Excerpt 8. (Grant, lines 141–145)

	1	W:	So maybe another way of wording that?
	2	C:	<RE these arguments which address the positive and negative effects that technology— RE>
→	3	W:	<OR has on the American society OR>
	4	C:	Okay.

In this excerpt, the writer suggests "another way of wording that" (turn 1), and the consultant rereads the original text (turn 2). The writer offers a rewriting OR in turn 3 with "has on the American society." The consultant accepts this rewriting OR with "Okay" (turn 4). The example shows the writer taking initiative with her revision. First, she suggests the structure needs to be reworded, the consultant prompts her with rereading the passage aloud, and the writer takes responsibility for rewriting her original statement.

   Model. *Model* ORs occur when consultants provide writers with a model of what a structure might sound like. Models are a starting point and/or truncated, can contain filler words such as *blah blah*, and often give the turn to the other participant. Excerpt 9 provides a model OR.

Excerpt 9. (Lorelei, lines 322–329)

	1	C:	They all start together? Okay. <RE So then suddenly police lights pop up— RE> Maybe you could say
→			<OR at the same time a serious and dark piano tune starts or begins or plays. OR> Something like that.
		W:	yeah
	2		((WRITING)) Just keep it like that? Or?
	3	C:	<RE At the same time a serious um and dark piano tune— RE>
	4	W:	<OR play or— OR>?
	5	C:	Mhmmm.

In turn 1, the consultant provides a possible structure for the writer's sentence that's lacking in clarity. Lorelei presents this model as an option, starting with "maybe you could say" and then providing more than one solution with "begins or plays." She ends her models with "something like that," leaving the floor open for the writer. The writer then begins to rewrite his sentence and ask clarification questions.

In these instances, consultants act as the more capable peer (Vygotsky, 1978), offering just enough assistance to help the writer make progress. Providing models for writers is a common suggestion to consultants (e.g., Harris, 1983, 1995; McAndrew & Reigstad, 2001; Meyer & Smith, 1987; Ryan & Zimmerelli, 2010) and is seen as a way to provide scaffolding (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). More recently, specific studies on scaffolding practices in writing centers have been published (Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2013; 2015; Thompson, 2009; Thompson & Mackiewicz, 2014), and many theorists and practitioners agree scaffolding is an important element in writing center work and needs more investigation (Nordlof, 2014). The OR, specifically the model OR, provides tangible examples of how consultants scaffold writers during consultations.

Correcting. *Correcting* ORs are used exclusively by writers and occur when they recognize an error in the previously read passage and (self-) correct it. Excerpt 10 exemplifies this move.

Excerpt 10. (Grant, lines 392–396)

	1	C:	<RE By working with the software, Benton and Bedore potentially close the gap that restricts anyone from getting an education in a learning environment and increases the student's chance— chance of learning in comfort— in— RE>
→	2	W:	<OR In the comfort of their home OR>
	3	C:	Yes.

The consultant is reading aloud, and as is typical for this consultant, he stumbles and repeats the problematic section to draw the writer's attention to that area (turn 1). The writer then uses a correcting OR to mend the problem (turn 2), and the consultant accepts this correction (turn 3). As this example shows, correcting ORs are a direct result of reading aloud, a common practice in writing centers.

José Vallejo (2004) mentions "grammar-checking dialogues" in sessions he examined. In these dialogues, consultants explain how to make corrections, and the writers make the corrections themselves. Correcting

ORs are different from what Vallejo describes, however. The consultants do not first explain the error and then allow the writer to correct it. Rather, reading aloud helps writers identify something they can already recognize as incorrect without an explanation. None of the correcting ORs in this data are accompanied by explanations either before or after.

Corrective. *Correctives*, the consultant counterpart to the writer-correcting ORs, allow the consultant to correct written errors. A corrective is different from a rewriting OR in that the speaker signals something is incorrect, typically by stating the corrective OR as a question or with rising intonation. Correctives are typically used for one-word replacements like subject/verb agreement and typos. Because correctives occur when consultants are reading aloud, the consultants could be taking on a reader's role. This type of response is different from what Mackiewicz & Thompson (2015) describe as "responding as a reader or listener" (p. 106), which is defined as summarizing or paraphrasing. Excerpt 11 provides an example of the consultant reading aloud and questioning the written content, much as a reader would, before offering the corrective OR.

Excerpt 11. (Bryan, lines 160–164)

	1	C:	<RE Commercials play upon emotions, wants, needs, and economic usefulness. The ad RE> uh <OR uses OR>?
→			
	2	W:	Mmhmm
	3	C:	So you might want to mark that. ((WRITER WRITING)) (3s) <RE The ad uses humor, drama, memorable design and color and catchy jingles to keep the audience thinking about the commercial and product. RE>

In this excerpt, Bryan finds a mistake (whether this is a typo or grammatical error is unclear), and he uses a corrective OR with rising intonation to signal the mistake and provide a correction (turn 1). The writer offers only a minimal response of "mmhmm" (turn 2), prompting Bryan to suggest that she mark the error, which she does (turn 3). This type of interaction has been noted in other writing center research. Again, Vallejo (2004) labels another kind of discourse interaction as "grammar-checking discourse" (different from grammar-checking *dialogue* mentioned above). In these cases, consultants corrected writers' mistakes while writers made minimal contributions, with no dialogic exchanges around the correction. The scenario Vallejo describes appears to be what transpires in Excerpt 10, where the corrective OR might be interpreted as a reader's response in

this context. Consultants are reading aloud and questioning the content, as a reader might, and responding as such. Even if couched in the language of a reader, the corrective OR is a slight or veiled directive by consultants because these ORs are corrections offered with little to no input from the writers.

The analysis of the ORs' functions shows participants playing many roles—such as collaborative peer, expert, and listener—and further highlights the OR as an essential interactional component and scaffolding tool. These categories range from what some might describe as nondirective (model and repetition ORs) to writer focused (trial, rewriting, and correcting ORs) to directive (corrective and rewriting ORs). The OR provides a framework, much like Mackiewicz & Thompson's (2015) coding scheme, to examine conversational features of consultations, a way to see the interaction and understand how participants work together in a variety of ways in writing center sessions.

The "Bigger Picture" of the OR

After locating and categorizing the OR functions, I focused the next stage of analysis on how often each of these categories appeared in both individual sessions and the dataset as a whole. Table 4 provides a breakdown of each category by consultation and further by speaker to understand how the ORs were distributed among sessions, writers, and consultants. Last, the total for each category and overall percentage are provided. Table 4 delineates the commonality of the OR discourse feature in consultant and writer talk, though there is variability in how often types of OR are used.

Table 4
OR totals by category

	Alyssa		Bryan		Grant		Lorelei		Subtotal			%
	W	*C*	*W*	*C*	*W*	*C*	*W*	*C*	*W*	*C*	Total	
Trial	14	1	20	7	18	6	19	3	71	17	88	36.07
Repetition	16	7	2	1	4	16	4	2	26	26	52	21.31
Rewriting	2	6	3	7	6	17	0	2	11	32	43	17.62
Model	0	16	0	4	0	6	0	12	0	38	38	15.57
Correcting	0	0	6	0	6	0	0	0	12	0	12	4.92
Corrective	0	0	0	1	0	8	0	2	0	11	11	4.51
Totals	32	30	31	20	34	53	23	21	120	124	244	100.00

Table 4 shows *trial* ORs have the highest percentage of use, with 36.07% of total ORs spoken by participants. The writers speak a much larger percentage of trials: 80.68% of trial ORs are by writers. The frequency of the trial OR marks it as important to writing center interaction. The second most frequently occurring OR is *repetition*. There are 52 instances, or 21.31% in all sessions. The repetition ORs are equally distributed between writers and consultants, with 26 instances each. It's important to note Grant used this structure more than the other consultants did, and repetition ORs account for 30.77% of Grant's total ORs. Grant's use of repetition ORs may be skewing these totals.

The third most frequently occurring OR is the *rewriting* OR, with 17.62% (or 43 examples) of all ORs. While the writers used rewriting ORs in their sessions (25.58% of all rewriting ORs), the consultants used this OR structure much more frequently (74.42% of all rewriting ORs). All consultants had a higher percentage of rewriting ORs than did their writers.

Model ORs, which were spoken exclusively by the consultants, account for 15.57% (or 38 instances) of the ORs in the data. Alyssa had the highest number of model ORs with 16, comprising 42.11% of all models. Lorelei had the second most, with 12, or 31.58%, of the total. The other consultants used the model structure considerably less: Grant with six and Bryan with four, or 15.78% and 10.52% respectively. Use of model ORs is likely linked to the consulting situation. Given the circumstances of Alyssa's consultation—rewriting of the thesis statement—her use of model ORs aligns with the agenda of the session. The writer is producing writing rather than revising, which leads Alyssa to speak more model structures. With Grant's, Bryan's, and Lorelei's sessions, the writers had completed drafts and were reading through the papers, so modeling was not as prevalent. Lorelei's session had 12 model ORs because the draft had substantial sentence-level issues that required more revision. Even if not used extensively by all consultants, the model OR is present in all transcripts and is an important means of facilitating interaction and encouraging scaffolding.

The Importance of OR Functions

My analysis shows there are ORs that occur more frequently than others in these writing center sessions; perhaps this finding will prove to be true for sessions in general. For example, the *trial* OR was used extensively by writers in all four sessions, marking an important composing space for writers. This discourse space exemplifies some traditional writing center practices, including the importance of talking about writing in a support-

ive, nonthreatening environment. Additionally, the trial OR demonstrates ways in which the writing center provides a much-needed practice space for writers.

I also found that *repetition* is important for writers. Consultants used the repetition OR as well, but because Grant's session produced most of the occurrences, those examples might not be typical of most consultations. Even so, like the trial, the repetition OR shows a space for invention and thinking and highlights how participants listen to each other, another significant aspect of writing center practice.

While not used as broadly across all sessions, the *model* OR appears to be a common way for consultants to support writers. I found consultants use this tactic to maintain traditional writing center interaction and provide some, though not too much, assistance to writers. However, not all ORs are consistent with recommended consulting strategies. For example, the *rewriting* OR looks to be a deviation from standard writing center practice because when using this OR, consultants could assist writers too much. The same could be said for consultants' use of *correcting* ORs. Both of these structures place the authority with consultants rather than with writers and do not align with common writing center theory and practice.

The OR, which previously escaped serious notice by scholars, is an emergent, oral writing and revision space that is not merely a feature that happens to be present in interaction between participants during writing center sessions—the OR also actually aids in this interaction. This frequently occurring discourse space has a variety of discourse functions that highlight how participants negotiate during sessions. In the next section, the OR is connected to larger theoretical concepts in writing center studies.

Discussion

To answer my final research question, What, if anything, can the OR tell us about our daily practices?, I sought connections to previous research to understand the implications of this oral revision space. While there are more implications in my larger study (Denny, 2014), this piece will focus on the largest takeaway: the OR as a scaffolding technique.

OR as Scaffolding

My research likely parallels the writing of John Nordlof's (2014) article on scaffolding, and we appear to come to similar conclusions separately. My connections coincide more with scaffolding while Nordlof's are more aligned with Vygotsky's ZPD (zone of proximal development), a

key component of scaffolding. Nordlof has already skillfully outlined the basic history and theoretical underpinnings of scaffolding; therefore, I will provide only a brief outline of scaffolding here.

A concept of educational psychology, the term *scaffolding* was first introduced by David Wood, Jerome Bruner, and Gail Ross (1976), whose work focused on how young children learned to assemble a structure made of interlocking wooden blocks with the assistance of a tutor. Their concept of scaffolding described how much and what kinds of assistance the tutor provided, drawing heavily on the work of Lev Vygotsky (1962). Their "region of sensitivity to instruction" (Wood & Middleton, 1976, p. 185) mirrors the "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86) and is a key element to successfully scaffolding a learner. Teachers and tutors must pinpoint the ZPD and provide just enough assistance, or scaffolding, for the learner to succeed independently. In the writing center context, scaffolding appears in the following ways: It allows consultants to act as models and questioners until writers are able to question on their own (Palinscar & Brown, 1984); it has established, shared goals (Hogan & Pressley 1997); it allows feedback to introduce new patterns of thought (Holton & Thomas, 2001); and it helps internal speech become external-ized and external speech become internalized (Zimmerman, 2001). Many of these scaffolding elements have already been presented as characteristics of the OR in previous sections of this article.

Though scaffolding is mentioned throughout writing center lit-erature, especially in relationship to collaboration, the most recent and thorough work done on scaffolding in the writing center is Thompson's (2009) microanalysis of a consultant's verbal and nonverbal strategies as they relate to scaffolding. There is also work by Mackiewicz and Thompson (2013, 2014, 2015) that focuses on motivational scaffolding and politeness. The OR's connection to scaffolding is more akin to Jennifer G. Cromley & Roger Azevedo's (2005) "cognitive scaffolding," or that which "helps a student solve a problem on [their] own" (p. 87), rather than Mackiewicz and Thompson's "motivational scaffolding," or that which appeals to the student's motivational state.

The OR is an example of cognitive scaffolding because it provides some explicit ways consultants offer more and less assistance, and writers take on more and less responsibility. With the trial and repetition ORs, writers are given space to compose and think; with correcting and trial ORs, writers can orally rewrite their work. Consultants also have space to think and additional space to listen through repetition ORs, occasions for modeling with the modeling ORs, and the means to deliver much-need-ed feedback to writers through lead-ins and lead-outs (not specifically discussed in this article). The OR examples show a variety of scaffolding

strategies used by both consultants and their writers and contribute to a better understanding of writing center talk. Through close examination of the conversation between writers and consultants, we can see the many ways consultants and writers can negotiate during writing center sessions. The OR can allow exploration of Nordlof's (2014) question of "whether there could be a theoretical concept that might adequately explain and encompass the full range of successful practices that tutors might use to help writers develop their skills" (p. 46). Yet, the OR is not theoretical in nature; it is a practice that already transpires in the daily work of writing centers, as this analysis shows. Ultimately, the OR provides a framework for investigating scaffolding within writing center sessions.

Conclusion

This study used conversation analysis to more closely examine the everyday talk of writing center sessions, first to explore interaction between participants and later to focus on the emergent discourse phenomenon, the OR, a discourse space that provides both consultants and writers various interactional options.

First, the OR highlights the benefits of a discourse-based method to writing center research. Discourse-analytic methods allow researchers to analyze interaction on the micro and macro levels, which as this study and others in the field have shown, can reveal much about the features of writing center sessions. These methods can most readily assist in defining writing center work through evidence-based conclusions rather than relying on lore and anecdotal evidence to shape the field's identity. The OR can also bring a better understanding of what happens and doesn't happen in writing center sessions, allowing for data-driven support for, or rebuttal of, long-standing notions of writing center lore. One piece of lore in particular this research has already complicated is the directive versus nondirective approach to tutoring. Other areas of lore might also be supported and/or challenged with a more specific approach to analyzing our daily talk.

As my own research has shown, one doesn't have to be a trained linguist or discourse analyst to work with these methods. Simply looking closely at what is happening in sessions can expose truths buried in our daily practices, and I hope this study can show others the accessibility of discourse studies, specifically conversation analysis. The OR itself acts as a framework to organize what the participants say, thereby providing a method for analyzing talk and, specifically, scaffolding. Beyond pure CA, interactional sociolinguistics (specifically frame analysis and footing) is another option for understanding the interactive qualities of the OR

discourse structure as well as other contextual features of the interaction. Future researchers might consider looking more closely at the gender and native language of both the consultant and writer as potential areas of influence on the type and frequency of OR use. Further, there could be interesting implications in examining the OR in terms of corpus-based research, using Mackiewicz's (2017) approach in her latest book-length study on writing center talk, particularly in examining function words, content words, and lexical bundles.

I would be remiss if I didn't discuss in more detail the most recent study of writing center talk and scaffolding by Mackiewicz & Thompson (2015) and how my findings intersect with and deviate from theirs. Even though their work focuses on motivational scaffolding and mine focuses on cognitive scaffolding, there are some clear overlaps between the two frameworks. However, the OR is an *oral revision and writing* space for *both* participants that focuses specifically and only on *the writing* (whether already written or only orally written at this point), not the talk *about* writing. There are certainly connections between the two frameworks, yet they are not interchangeable. The frameworks, though, might serve to complement one another and could be used in tandem to deepen our understanding of writing center interaction and scaffolding. Having descriptive frameworks for analyzing discourse helps researchers and practitioners further consider the interactions in these sessions.

Most important, the OR serves to uncover details of consultant-writer interaction in the writing center, which assists with understanding our daily work by providing examples to train consultants for interactions with writers. The ORs show explicit ways consultants offer more and less assistance and how writers take on more and less responsibility for their learning, and these examples offer consultants real-world scenarios and responses to use as references. The OR additionally provides the terminology needed to more accurately discuss what writing center consultants do during these interactive negotiations: They model for their writers, they respond to writers' trials, and they correct writers' work from time to time. With this terminology, we can open conversation about the ways in which consultants can scaffold and respond to writers in the way most appropriate for a given situation. These examples further illustrate that consultants have an assortment of approaches, not merely the limiting directive/nondirective strategies, with which to work with writers and facilitate learning. It's also important to note that the OR reveals much about *writers'* interactions and utterances in sessions. Knowing how writers might respond in sessions can be a valuable training tool as well. These examples can show consultants multiple ways to work with writers to best

serve the situation and the writers' needs, which is, after all, the ultimate goal of the writing center session.

Acknowledgments

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Appendix: Transcription Conventions

Transcription conventions and symbols

Conventions	
Backchannels	Contributions made by other participants while the first speaker maintains the floor. Backchannels are written in lowercase **(okay)** to distinguish them from minimal responses. **Examples: uh-huh, yeah, mmkay, okay, (all) right, mhmm**
Filled pauses	Any spoken word that speakers use to fill gaps. **Examples: um, hmm, er, uh**
Minimal responses	Utterances by a speaker that signal engagement. **Examples: Uh-huh** (= yes), **Uh-uh** (= no), **Yeah, Okay, (All) Right**
Pauses	Pauses are marked by a (.) for a short pause (1–2 seconds), and by the number of seconds (5s) for a timed pause (2+ seconds).
Symbols	
W: C:	Speakers are identified as W for writer and C for consultant
- {hyphen}	Truncated word, a word that was not spoken in its entirety. **Example: Wha- where is he?**
— {2 hyphens}	Truncated thought, where the speaker stops mid-thought and picks up another. **Example: But he— I thought he was coming.**
[words	Speech overlap. Beginning shown by a right-facing bracket ([) placed vertically. Overlaps between participant contributions are marked using brackets aligned directly above one another. Overlaps continue until one interlocutor completes their utterance. **Example:** **W: That is really random. [Because I was pretty sure I was** **C: [Really? I could swo-** **W: for today.**

<Q words Q>	The angle-bracket pair <Q Q> indicates a stretch of speech characterized by a "quotation" quality. **Example: He was all like <Q you must cite your sources Q>**
@	The symbol @ is used to represent laughter. One token of the symbol @ is used for each "syllable," or pause, of laughter. **Example: That's what I was thinking. @@@@**
<@ words @>	The angle-bracket pair <@ @> indicates a laughing quality over a stretch of speech, i.e. laughter during words enclosed between the two @ symbols. **Example: <@ Yeah @> it was pretty funny.**
<WH words WH>	The angle-bracket pair <WH WH> indicates a whispered quality over the words spoken between the two WH symbols. **Example: <WH He's not going be there tomorrow WH>**
<RE words RE>	Reading aloud from the paper. **Example: <RE technology not just for educational purposes but for real-life situations RE>**
<WR words WR>	Verbalizing words while writing them. **Example: So <WR corrupts—WR>**
<OR words OR>*	Oral writing or revision* **S: <OR Urlacher is who a great many young men aspire to be OR>?** **T: Right.** **S: <OR aspire to be like OR>? <OR or aspire to be— OR> ? I don't know.**
Paralinguistic markers	Nonverbal features (( )) additional observation—COUGH, SIGH, READING, WRITING XXXX Indecipherable or doubtful hearing → Turns focused for analysis

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