A case study of *we* for speaker affiliation in a one-on-one writing conference talk[1]

Meng-Hsien (Neal) Liu
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
mhliu3@illinois.edu

This research study attempts to qualitatively investigate the indexically situated functions of one person deixis in English, *we*, vis-à-vis the establishment of speaker roles, voices, and affiliations in a one-on-one writing conference talk (WCT). By appropriating the analytic model of speaker roles and voicing in *narratives*—narrator, character, and interlocutor (e.g., Koven, 2011, 2016)—informed by Bakhtinian view grounded in dialogic notion of voice (Prior, 2001), this research study furthers the discussion of how co-participation in and of a one-on-one WCT itself is tethered to the deployment of *we* that *is* and *becomes* heteroglossic. The participants' voicing and their speaker roles illuminated through a grounded and narrative methodology adopted in this study offer a radical alternative to structuralist, systematized notions of fixed form-referentiality typologies of English person-deictics. What is discovered in the study regarding the indexical meanings of *we* include: heuristics for evaluation and suggestions, device for the bridging of epistemic asymmetry, apparatus for time-travel, and proposal of hypothetical scenarios. Thus, the one-dimensional, structuralist view of an indexical linguistic sign engaged in a complex writing conference interactional talk belies a more complicated, re-occurring *narrativization* (Wortham, 2001) that permits co-participants therein to straddle past, current, and hypothetical expressions of trains of thoughts, engagements, and identities through the intertextuality of *we* and its indexical traces. This research study concludes by discussing theoretical considerations and implications specifically for WCTs and globally for writing studies scholarship.
Keywords: Writing conference talk; dyadic interaction; voicing and speaker roles; identity co-construction

1   Introduction

Researchers have used interactional talk, or talk-in-interaction (Schegloff, 1972), to scrutinize how interlocutors semiotically use linguistic resources to perform (e.g., Austin, 1975; Bauman & Briggs, 1990) a wide array of indexical and

---

[1] The writing conference talk examined in this article took place in a format of one-on-one writing conference exchange between a graduate teaching assistant and a student. While the configuration of the talk is quite commonplace, the interaction between the interlocutors is premised to be unique. More details are available in the main manuscript.

referential functions and to respond to dialogical uptake for value-attribution (e.g., Blommaert, 2005; Gal & Irvine, 2019). Among variegated forms of interactional talk is that of WCT, in which its prototype involves the initiated talk through the writing (or the text) of the uninitiated—proffering comments and articulating feedback within the discourse of writing conference interaction. Pedagogical benefits of delivering the WCT entail the opportunity to verbalize expressions that can be otherwise equivocal when presented merely textually and the avenue for the less experienced tutee to internalize the verbalized knowledge of writing so as to become an autonomous writer.

Previously established scholarship on WCT primarily explores the ways in which turn-taking roles deterministically influence participants' roles and conference types. However, there is a paucity of literature that assays how indexical signs, in particular person deixis or pronouns (e.g., you in English), are strategically deployed to enact functional roles of delivering criticisms and commentaries, establishing (dis)affiliation, brainstorming ideas, and/or constructing footing (Goffman, 1981). Therefore, this research study aims to extend the current scholarship on the WCT by answering the following questions: (1) what indexical functions of the English pronoun, we, emerge in a WCT; (2) how speakers in a WCT use the English pronoun, we, to enact different speaker voices, roles (Bakhtin, 1981; Koven, 2011), and identities; (3) how the resultant interactional pattern helps facilitate the WCT participants' one-on-one writing conference agenda. Results of this research study reveal that not only are the indexical meanings of we variegated but they are also closely connected to interlocutors' emerging interaction.

2   Literature Review

Language as part of the semiotic and sign system (Agha, 2007; Blommaert, 2005; Hanks, 1992; Peirce, 1955; Prior & Hengst, 2010; Silverstein, 1976) is a critical staple in linguistic anthropology. Semiotic and sign systems, like pronouns, highlight how speech events are configured, contextualized, and grounded by sign-using participants (Agha, 2007; Gal & Irvine, 2019; Silverstein, 1976). Multifunctional semiotic resources operationalize to potentially (re)fashion reality and engage in reflexive and metasemiotic meaning-making (Agha, 2007; Gal & Irvine, 2019). Whether consciously or unconsciously, participants in interaction employ these resources to index positionality. Bauman and Briggs (1990) advocate for the understanding of "heterogeneous stylistic resources, context-sensitive meanings, and conflicting ideologies into a reflexive arena where they can be examined critically" (p.60).

In the English language, person deictics (Ingram, 1971) enable interactional actors' negotiations of speaker alignment (Koven, 2016). Ingram (1971) argues: "[d]eictic features handle the fact that language is used to communicate between speakers and hearers" (p.38). More specifically, Ingram (1971) distinguishes the deictic person from the syntactic person, positioning the former as socially-dependent (e.g., indexing the power dynamics between speakers) and the latter as

upholding grammatical constraints (e.g., the agreement between the predicate and the subject). Ingram's separation of the syntactically-motivated person deictic and the semiotically-loaded deictic person points to an interactionally-motivated understanding of how person pronouns satisfy more than just grammatical requirements. Further, a keen analysis of the person deixis fruitfully provides a lens into not only how speakers negotiate socially-interactant roles in the speech event (Levinson, 1979, p.67) but also how speakers respond to larger discourse-based identification and ideological manifestation. Succinctly put, person deictics provide speakers with information on a broader historical and cultural context and relation. For instance, Morford (1997) examines the French second-person singular pronominal address forms: *tu*/*vous*, an intricate addressing system in French that not only serves as a communicative tool but also "a sign of the resilience of French in the face of anglophone hegemony" (p.4). The *tu*/*vous* distinction, along with the increasing currency of *tu* in replacement of *vous* in certain contexts, indexes not only the broader history of French pronominal address system but also the ideologically mediated and enacted social relations. For example, the more common usage of *tu* taken up by the young (p.20) insinuates youthfulness, open-mindedness (p.20), and progressive democratic ideals (p.24). Antithetical to *tu*, *vous* is deployed indexically to valorize asymmetrical social relations (pp.27-28). Indexical meanings encoded in the pronominal address *tu* and *vous* ground the grammar of the French language in social, historical, cultural, and political context, a tethering that demonstrates how "more contextually dependent forms of meaning (the indexical or "pragmatic" level) interact with less contextual, more conventional kinds of meaning (the symbolic or semantic level, focused more on language content than on form)" (Mertz, 2007, p.339).

Another telling example of how person deictic could unearth regimes of institutionalization and ideological beliefs therein can be found in Mulderrig's (2012) study, in which the person deixis *we* is found to textually function as a rhetorical instrument in the discourse of U.K. education policy-making to express neoliberal and political coalition in education. Mulderrig (2012) argues that the semantically-encoded and -ambivalent *we* is strategically leveraged for the legitimization of the educational policies by the government and the exhortation of curricular changes in response to neoliberal imperatives under the galvanization of globally-scaled economic competition and (inter)national community identities. This is done so as to arrive at the "neoliberal consensus" (Mulderrig, 2012, p.704), whereby marketization and free market economics co-exist harmoniously with the agenda of social justice and democracy.

Per the illocutionary force of the first-person plural deixis that concerns intentions of speech acts (Austin, 1975), *we*, in the modern English language, it is not only "referentially complex" (Mulderrig, 2012, p.708) but also highly contingent upon the context of utterance in order for exact connotational meanings to be aligned with speakers' position. *We* has been primarily conjectured to bifurcate the referential role played by addressees, to wit, the *we-exclusive* and the *we-inclusive* model, as well as the participatory demarcation discursively set up by interacting participants. Mulderrig (2012) reviews that the *we-exclusive* stance is

often deployed when speakers (or addressors) need to avoid contextually-infelicitous or -unnecessary reference to addressees and mitigate the seriousness of the matter at issue. The *we-inclusive* is often used to establish in-groupness, shared allegiance, solidarity, and inclusion. However, Mulderrig (2012) formulates that the referential scope of the first-person plural deictic could also connotate a sense of equivocality, thus strategically democratizing the public discourse of policy-making.

Voicing and voiced roles have been accorded with centrality when it comes to analyzing situated semiotic practices in oral narration wherein interpersonal relations, and therefore identities, are emergently co-constructed and displayed "by semiotic activities performed by both" (Agha, 2007, p.253). Koven (2011) codes three main speaker role in oral narratives: narrator, character, and interlocutor. A narrator role, according to Koven, (2011), is embodied when the speaker connects the narrated event "to the current event of speaking" (p.154) and can be identified via multiple means, such as that of the verb tense or that of place-and-time deictics. A character role is performed when speakers or narrators deploy quoted speeches to retell the story by appropriating voices and perspectives of characters within the story and by re-enacting moments of the narrative (Koven, 2011, 2016). An interlocutor role involves speakers' here-and-now evaluation of the narrated event (Dunn, 2017, p.67), and Koven (2011) notes that an interlocutor role can be pinpointed by discourse forms, such as topical markers (p.156) or a shift in the verb tense used (e.g., using the present to address the past event) (p.156). Bamberg (2004, as cited in Dunn, 2017, p.67) adds another role by suggesting a narrated *self* vis-à-vis larger-scaled operative discourses (p.335, as cited in Dunn, 2017, p.67), and this fashioning of selfhood in relation to variegated, stratifying social, historical, or political structures permits a critical reflectivity that invites the (re)positioning of subjectivities and intersubjectivities in the matrix of social movement (Bamberg, 2010, as cited in Dunn, 2017, p.68). The foregoing brief account of the typology of different speaker roles does not insinuate that voicing characters are invariably singularly voiced. In fact, Bakhtin's (1981) heteroglossia in the discourse of narratives clearly indicates that speakers' voices are multiple. Bakhtin (1981) notes that "[t]he word in languages is half someone else's…Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions, it is populated—overpopulated—with the intentions of others." (pp.293-294). The inhabitation of voicing and voiced characters also parallels the same underpinning philosophy accordingly.

The WCT is traditionally researched through the number of turns taken up by participants for the determination of the typology of writing conferences (e.g., student-centered, teacher-centered, or collaborative model; see also in Calkins, 1986; Patthey-Chavez & Ferris, 1997; Reigstad, 1982; Sperling, 1990; Walker & Elias, 1987). Recent scholarship on the WCT orients towards emergent interactions, with a particular focus on students' agency (e.g., Alexander, 2006; Hawkins, 2016, 2019; Leaner, 2005; Park, 2017; Strauss & Xiang, 2006; Waring, 2005) as well as the moment-to-moment interaction (e.g., Shvidko, 2018). However, little research is undertaken to qualitatively theorize how participants

through the WCT use person deictics to facilitate textually and verbally mediated talks. Thus, this current study aims to establish and postulate that the WCT is a type of a narrative facilitated by the use of person deictics by tutors and tutees to semiotically position their speaker roles and voices. By drawing on the analytic model of speaker roles and voicing in *narratives*, this research illuminates the ways in which the modality of a WCT becomes a linguistically-rich and -mediated location where one person deixis is observed to facilitate the process of decontextualization and recontextualization (Bauman & Briggs, 1990; Blommaert, 2005; Silverstein & Urban, 1996) of *here-and-now* and *there-and-then*.

3   Data and methods

Data analyzed in this study were selected from a larger pool of data sets from another research study that the researcher is currently undertaking. Approved by the Institutional Review Board at the State University of Illinois, U.S.A. (pseudonym; henceforth SUI) in Fall 2019, with which the researcher and the participants were affiliated during the time of data collection, this research study initially aimed to qualitatively investigate the *becoming* identity performed and enacted by FYC GTAs. Drawing data from that aforementioned project, this study shifts its focus to how semiotics, or specifically linguistic signs, are performed in a WCT. In particular, this work investigates: [1] the indexical meanings encoded in the first-person plural English pronoun *we* in a WCT and [2] the ways in which conference participants use *we* to establish different speaker affiliations. The researcher adopted convenience sampling to procure the selection of one FYC GTA (Emma- pseudonym) and her student (David-pseudonym) to reflect the qualitative nature of the data coding and the representational narrative form of the data analysis. All the participating informants were given a copy of the consent form and the tape release form to sign during the conference observation.

3.1   Setting and Participants

Attending to the qualitative case-study design, the researcher observed one writing conference in Fall 2019 by Emma, a first-year M.A. Chinese graduate student in English and a first-semester FYC instructor at the SUI, and David, a first-year African-American undergraduate student at the SUI, during the time of the data collection. The observed writing conference session took place in a shared office in the English Department building at the SUI. The researcher videotaped (cf. Waring, 2005) and audio-recorded the WCT in this shared office space—to preserve the integrity of the interaction (see also Waring, 2005) for Emma and David, as their first writing conference meeting took place in the same shared office space. The audio-recorder was placed in front of the participants with the video camera, to both ensure the sound quality and recognize equally critical semiotic resources (Leander & Prior, 2004, p.206). The observation was supplemented with extensive field notes. The WCT, lasting for roughly 15 minutes, was transcribed verbatim and sequentially through an *adaptation* of the conversation analysis (CA) paradigm. In this study, the data was excerpted from

the transcribed audio-recorded data; the transcription convention can be found in the appendix and a full transcript is available upon request.

4   Data Analysis

Adhering to the caution voiced against the referential reductionism often observed in the one-on-one lodged equation of performativity of person deixis and its illocutionary forces (Bauman & Briggs, 1990, p.62), a grounded qualitative data-analysis framed via a sequential (Martínez, Durán, & Hikida, 2017) and moment-to-moment fashion (Shvidko, 2018) was adopted for coding and analyzing the functional relations of *we* actualized in the WCT. To put it simply, to avoid imposing what *we* means in the interaction between the two interlocutors, the researcher used a more grounded approach to understanding the emergent indexical meanings of how *we* is leveraged during talk-in-interaction.

Prior to the analysis, it should be noted that Emma read through David's piece before the conference and left both marginal and end comments on his draft. This pre-conference act sets up the parameter of the unfolding of the conference and the interaction. In addition, when David entered the conference, in lieu of engaging in the WCT immediately, Emma had David silently read through her comments for several minutes before they discussed the feedback.

After an initial coding of the sequential turns (Schegloff, 1972) of the WCT, the researcher segmented the talk on the basis of completed turn-taking typically observed in the sequence of a classroom discourse (Cazden, 2001): Initiation, Response, and Evaluation (IRE). Although the sequence might not strictly hew to the 3-tier paradigm (Schegloff, 1972), they are sequential in character, and each unit contains a completed *semantic* sequence—a completed discussion of a topic. Five semantically-complete units are coded and identified in this WCT, but *we* as a person deixis is not observed in Unit 4. Thus, the following discussion would concentrate on the four units in which *we* is pinpointed. In addition, as Agha (2007) exhorts against the metonymic reduction (pp.286-293), the researcher also analyzed the other co-occurring linguistic signs that could potentially motivate the indexical meanings of *we.* That is, instead of framing the person deictic *we* from an *a priori* repertoire, the researcher treated the textual and the contextual meanings of *we* as indeterminate (Blommaert, 2005; Koven, 2016). Therefore, the following analysis is presented in a narrative form to reflect the indeterminacy to reveal how *we* is environmentally coupled with the other linguistic signs for Emma and David to emergently align themselves with differential speaker roles and fulfill speaker functions.

4.1   Unit 1

In this first unit, Emma and David began their one-on-one consultation after David spent a few minutes reading over Emma's commentaries. The following is the transcription of the first four minutes of the WCT between Emma and David.

Line 001 David	So my first que[stion is]
Line 002 Emma	[Mm-hm]
Line 003 David	Um:: (2.0) with the end comments, so I think my first question =
Line 004 Emma	=Yeah.
Line 005 David	Um:: (1.8) like so you see, you see more arguments:? and like my question is how can I mo:ve like the arguments into: (1.1) supporting evidence or analysis or=
Line 006 Emma	=Cool. Um:: (1.0) I shall give an example here:? just a moment. (2.8). Yeah. So um:: (2.2) like here. This is (.) basically more of a slo:gan type argument:?=
Line 007 David	=Okay.
Line 008 Emma	*We need to start working more on* (1.2) *teams.* ((inaudible)) *And we need- we as black people need to look at the mirror and ask what can I change myself (.) when we need to stop waiting, when we need to stop setting*, ((reading from the text)) which is gre:at]:?
Line 009 David	>[mn-hm<
Line 010 Emma	Like (.) this, like this, um: (0.2) it's kind of (2.2) it's already (0.3) there:? But I wish that you to have more specific (1.1) ((footsteps)) um: (1.3) I-I don't know…. more specific solutions:?=
Line 011 David	Okay=
Line 012 Emma	=how we should stop [racism].<
Line 013 David	[Okay].
Line 014 Emma	because I feel like your (0.5) central argument -what is your (.) central thesis?
Line 015 David	>Oh, my central thesis is m (.) like around the (1.4)-I guess m < >that it's not really white people that are being r[acist]
Line 016 Emma	[mn-hm]
Line 017 David	[this] is really more like minorities that are keeping racism ali:ve.
Line 018 Emma	Okay=
Line 019 David	=in a way=
Line 020 Emma	=Yeah. That's a great argument:? which (.) you can try to put that into the introduction [part.<=
Line 021 David	=Okay=
Line 022 Emma	=>this is a strong argument.=
Line 023 David	=Okay]
Line 024 Emma	>[Like] (.) um (.) like (.) we (.) should -I suppose that we should not only blame the white people for
Line 025 David	[Right].
Line 026 Emma	[racism], but we should also like have our own,- like, what, like confidence and cultural like, like interaction,

		whatever um (0.6) ((footsteps)) so right now:?, these are more abstract:?=
Line 027	David	=Okay.]
Line 028	Emma	>I wish you to have more: (o.6) concrete examples, either from your everyday life:?
Line 029	David	Okay.
Line 030	Emma	>Or from like the sources that you have read:? (0.9) or from um: (1.2) like, all the activities <you've>done:?=
Line 031	David	=Okay.=
Line 032	Emma	=because you did, (0.5) um. (0.5) you did mention Black Lives [ma ((stutter))
Line 033	David	[Yeah].
Line 034	Emma	Black Black - (1.5) Lives [Matter]:?
Line 035	David	[Matter]. Yeah=
Line 036	Emma	=which is a good like - which is a goo:d campaign (0.8) kind of (0.6) stuff. So try to have more examples on that>.
Line 037	David	<Okay>.=
Line 038	Emma	=And try to have more angles like we need to: (0.9) becau- like, <um> (1.2) African Americans need to have their (0.9) own to stop racism by^ <like>- by setting up their own cultural com[petence]
Line 039	David	[Mm-hm]
Line 040	Emma	by um (.) either um (1.1) exploring um (0.5) own in- in- like- exploring their own culture? or by um (1.0) having confidence a- at supporting: (0.7) each one-each other:?=
Line 041	David	=[Mm-hm]
Line 042	Emma	[in]the:? African American community? or by blah blah blah, so basically, we make it more [specific]
Line 043	David	[Okay].=
Line 044	Emma	=and from different angles=
Line 045	David	=Alright.

In this unit, David initiated the WCT by raising a specific question pertinent to how he could better marry his arguments with sources and evidence. This concern was motivated by an end comment left by Emma, who instantiated her commentary by pointing towards a particular area (Line 006) in David's draft by using the place deictic (i.e., *here*). After pinpointing a specific place where Emma found the necessity for more exegesis from David, she began to narrate David's in-text sentences verbatim (Line 008). After a short narration, an immediate appraisal by Emma ensued. Emma first complimented David's insight into a call for immediate action taken to obliterate racism (Line 008 & 010; see also Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2013), but she suggested that David specify or contextualize some viable solutions to achieving that end (Line 010). In Line 012, Emma re-couched her suggestive statement by invoking more probing questions (Line 014) in order

to help David connect his thesis to the sub-argument: addressing systemic racism (Line 017).

In this snippet of exchange, *we* as the person deictic is leveraged to facilitate different speaker-alignment functions. The first function serves as an evaluation device (e.g., Sandlund, 2014). In Line 008, Emma enacted a narrator role by extracting part of David's writing as a form of reported speech, as *we* in Line 008 appeared in the David's original wording. The transported *we* from David's text to Emma's narration helped Emma relay her assessment of David's argument, as the precursor of Line 008—Line 006—is where, as analyzed earlier, Emma provided her evaluative commentary, classifying David's argument as a "slogan type argument" (Line 006), maintaining that the generic statement by David sufficed to express his main thesis but failed to supply more detailed information (Line 010 & 012).

The second function is to avoid possible adversary confrontation or to mitigate epistemic asymmetry (Sandlund, 2014, p.662), that is, the knowledge gap between teachers and students. Such is effectuated via a doubly-voiced *we*: an interlocutor-character role. When Emma transported David's argument (Line 008), she used an implicit quotative framing of reported speech to perform as if she were David. Line 012 (*how we should stop racism*) was an extended turn (Koven, 2011, p.161) from Emma's narrating David's text in Line 008, which indicates that Emma was enacting portions of the narrated event, that is, David's argument concerning the necessity to end the racism as a character. However, at the same time, Emma also performed an interlocutor role, providing both her evaluative comment of David's argument and her close alignment with David. *We* in Line 012 by Emma is a poetic recycling and echoing of *we* in Line 008 crafted by David and envoiced by Emma, and this is preceded by Emma's evaluative comments, such as her qualified directive (Line 010), the practice of which indicates that while Emma might have concurred with David's assertion, she thought that he should have exemplified an argument that he was making. Therefore, the doubly-voiced *we* (interlocutor-character), along with the other linguistic means, is purposefully used for Emma to successfully perform her role as a congenial feedback-giver who could understand students' ideas and give constructive feedback without engaging in face-threatening acts. The same pattern is also discerned in Line 024 and Line 026. Following Emma's probing question in Line 014, David and Emma collaboratively worked to tether David's thesis to unpacking Emma's feedback on a paucity of possible solutions to racism. In Line 024, Emma evidently still hinged upon the character enactment that she established previously in Line 008 and 012 and continued well into Line 026 to offer a piece of advice of how racism could be concretely resolved, as if she were the one facing the racism or the one making the argument. The characterological enactment and attribute effected through *we* afford Emma to align herself closer with David, without her being ensconced at a dominant and authoritative position.

Similar to the speaker affiliation constructed in the earlier analysis, Emma continued her recommendation and probing. The rest of the conversation in this unit still surrounded around Emma elaborating how David should flesh out his

arguments by supplying more specific details (Line 028 to Line 36). In this part of the exchange, Emma chiefly took on the more authoritative voice by using the first person singular *I* with the predicate *wish that* (Line 028) to apprise David of her expectation (Austin, 1975). Emma segued into wanting David to address multi-pronged perspectives (Line 038) that pertain to racism. In Line 038, Emma used *we* to characterize David as if she were the writer, as established in the foregoing analysis. In Line 40, Emma detailed possible ideas of her own suggestion, such as exploring the cultural values of African American community. In Line 042, Emma summed up the discussion by transporting the hypothetical narrative into the present moment of a constructed dialogue. *We* in Line 042 not only implies to David that those directions recommended by Emma are sanctioned and can be included in his revision but also relays to David that she was willing to work with David to help, *collectively* and *together*, improve the text. By saying *we make it more specific*, Emma once again alleged solidarity with David and donned herself a countenance of a receptive and welcoming graduate teaching instructor.

4.2   Unit 2

Following the first unit, David ensued to ask a follow-up question related to a piece of advice proffered by Emma earlier for his revision. The interactional talk of this unit, presented transcriptionally below, lasted for roughly one minute.

Line 057 David	=the follow up questions,=	
Line 058 Emma	=Yeah=	
Line 059 David	=You said I can use examples from like (0.7) everyday life? So could I, like for example, say *Oh, even around my friends=*	
Line 060 Emma	=[Mm-hm]	
Line 061 David	[th]ere have been times where we have like (.) mistakenly ma:de=	
Line 062 Emma	=[Mm-hm]=	
Line 063 David	=stereotypes towards white people or something like that?	
Line 064 Emma	=Definitely you can try.=	
Line 065 David	=Okay. All right. And then:	
Line 066 Emma	Yeah, like, sorry, um, just on that, like, you can say (.) we we (0.4) have friends ((footsteps)) to make stereotypes, but try to be more spe-, be more speci[fic].	
Line 067 David	[Okay].	
Line 068 Emma	Why is that ((inaudible))	
Line 069 David	[Okay, Right. All right].	

In this unit, David followed up Emma's suggestion earlier by enacting a character role when he recounted experiences of stereotypification made towards white people (Line 012). *We* used in this character enactment (Line 061) suggests a time travel, despite the fact that it could be a brief excursion, as the short time-travel

was aided by the use of the present perfect (i.e., *have mistakenly made*) for David to not only engage in traveling from *here-and-now* to *then-and-there* but also to confirm with Emma that he might have had some germane everyday experiences that could exemplify his otherwise rather generic argument in his earlier writing. Therefore, the enacted character by *we* in Line 061, coupled with the time-travel in the predicate, helps David refer to the experiences that he and his friends have had collectively (Line 059) and recognize that racism and stereotypification are a common encounter in the course of his everyday life. The researcher regards the *we* in Line 061 to mirror more a character-like speaker role than that of an interlocutor or a narrator, in that although David is recounting some of his own previous and personal experiences (which might have endowed his statement in Line 061 a narrator role), he nonetheless excerpts the experiences of him and his friends, thus speaking on behalf of the racialized group that he and his friends identify themselves with. Appropriating the voice of his friends as well as extending the application to the social group identification, David efficaciously accomplished the purpose of re-affirmation with his instructor.

Emma reciprocated by not only giving David a confirming nod (Line 064) but also poetically appropriating, with more succinct expressions, what David said previously in Line 059 and Line 061. The role encoded in the *we* in Line 066 is a doubly-voiced interlocutor-character, inasmuch as Emma performed as if she had been David by switching from the second-person deictic (*you*) to the first-person collective *we*. The shift in person allows Emma to enact David's voice, but at the same time, the echoing of *we* in Line 066 to Line 061, along with her positive response in Line 064, showcases that Emma appraised positively of David's idea, nodding (figuratively) her approval of David's proposal. The closer alignment effected by the shift towards using *we* in Line 066 could also help Emma circumvent any potential face-threatening hazard that might ensue her interlocutor-character enactment. By aligning with David first by using the doubly-voiced *we* in this particular segment of the discourse avoids sounding too diminishing or overbearing when Emma introduced her expectation in the same line (Line 066).

4.3   Unit 3

In this unit, David and Emma continued to discuss a key term used by David, who left it undefined, and Emma provided her thoughts on how to rework the part of the text. The interaction in this unit was about fifty seconds.

Line 071 David	=Um, and then I think I had a que:stion: hum (4.0) where was it, I'm sorry.=
Line 072 Emma	=Yeh, that's okay. Take your time. (5.2)
Line 073 David	Oh right [here]
Line 074 Emma	[Yeah]
Line 075 David	[So], it says what is your definition? I was a little confused on like, definition of wha:t, [ex:actly?]
Line 076 Emma	[Oh racism]=

Line 077 David	=[O::kay]
Line 078 Emma	[You were saying], like, um (0.4) yo-you say we have to start with this concept for racism<
Line 079 David	=[O::kay].
Line 080 Emma	[So, I was saying]
Line 081 David	[Okay].
Line 082 Emma	[what is exactly is that concept].
Line 083 David	[Alright, okay].
Line 084 Emma	because it's kind of hard to define?
Line 085 David	=[Mm-hm]
Line 086 Emma	[Uh]You don't need to choose the <u>right </u>definition? You only need to choose your <u>own</u> [definition].
Line 087 David	[Okay].=
Line 088 Emma	=and to explain why do you think [that]'s
Line 089 David	[Mm-hm]
Line 090 Emma.	[the] right definition, Right?=
Line 091 David	=right.=

In this unit, David moved onto another comment concerning a wanting of working definition of racism in his draft. In Line 078, Emma responded to David's question by quoting David's text. Akin to what Emma did in the preceding two units (Unit 1 & 2) where the quoted speeches contained *we*, Emma enacted a doubly-voiced role, but antithetical to the role performed previously, this unit witnesses the double narrator-character role by Emma in Line 078. Emma enacted a narrator role in the narrated event by providing a description of what David penned on his draft whereas invoking a character voice by quoting David's text. The transcription from *then-and-there* to *here-and-now* is observed when Emma switched from the past to the present tense. The speaker alignment incurred here along with the doubly-voiced narrator-character role could be construed as a preface of Emma's evaluation in the next few lines (e.g., Line 080 & Line 082), where Emma donned an interlocutor role by switching to the first-person singular person deictic, *I* as well as the second-person counter, *you*. The distinct shift from we to *I* (Line 080) and *you* (Line 086 & Line 088) clearly marks a strong evaluative stance taken up by Emma, who, in this unit, directly addressed the lack of the definition of a key term in David's writing about mitigating or qualifying her statement.

4.4   Unit 4

In this unit, Emma and David moved onto the last part of their writing conference interaction, which centered around David's concern of how to recapitulate his argument of his paper without sounding repetitive. This part of the WCT was about three minutes and fifty seconds long.

| Line 149 David | Hm (0.5) And other than that? (2.0) other than that, I think like my only thing is I (.) don't think my conclusion?= |

Line 150 Emma	=Okay.=
Line 151 David	=was strong enough? (1.1) Is there >like< any (1.8) I wouldn't say like, analysis or anything, is there anything I can a:dd,
Line 152 Emma	As a conclusion?
Line 153 David	Ri:ght to-kind of summari:ze but at the <u>same</u> time (1.2) I don't know how to put it like summarize but >at the< same time like,
Line 154 Emma	push forward?=
Line 155 David	=Right like finish off my argument if that makes sense,=
Line 156 Emma	=[Okay].
Line 157 David	[like] summarize the paper but then also give like (0.4) and then this is the side I'm o:n and if that makes sense.
Line 158 Emma	(1.0) Yeah, ah what I wish you to do? i:s, definitely summarize (.) um your (0.6) part? which is? (0.9) exactly the main thesis? (0.6) state that again?, which I suppose you said >that< in the [beginning]
Line 159 David	[^{0}Mm-hm].=
Line 160 Emma	=but (.) a paraphrase and reverse and say that again.=
Line 161 David	=okay.=
Line 162 Emma	=And that will be the first part of-of the summary of- the conclusion, but also try to push a bit for:ward? (0.6) Either you can talk about the things, the other si:des (.)that you have-you haven't had time to talk during your (.)- inside your essay, it's fine? to kind of touch ^{0}on that but not talk about
Line 163 David	Okay.=
Line 164 Emma	=you can say um "*the-the-the problem of racism (0.8) inside minorities (1.1) can also raise on the issue because the-like black and white contrast is still grea:t, and um (0.5) even though we-I didn't focus on white people in this essay? (1.0) we should still -there are still things they can be >blah blah*"<.=
Line 165 David	=Okay].
Line 166 Emma	[So] that's kind of open up a: new conversation but it should not be discussed inside this. And also you can try to (0.8) um >whatever< um (.) ^{0}push forward (1.0) and also try to,-kind of (0.5) you can still try to question?=
Line 167 David	=Okay].
Line 168 Emma	[Som]e of the parts you: feel like you haven't (0.9) have time to support enough, you can say, "*Yeah, I did give some um (0.8) everyday examples about why: race and discrimination is still among minorities*?"
Line 169 David	[Mm]

Line 170 Emma	"*but um (0.5) either if there are other more concrete ways to solve this problem, I haven't start-I haven't had that concrete answers yet*"? Because (inaudible) still talk about that?=
Line 171 David	=Okay.=
Line 172 Emma	=And in the conclusion? So: I'm not sure if that answers your questi[on]?
Line 173 David	[Yeah].=
Line 174 Emma	=what exactly >what<-what exactly do you wish to achieve in the conclusion. Is it a closing one? or open one. Like (.) >we talked about it in class<, right.=
Line 175 David	=<u>Right</u>.
Line 176 Emma	So.
Line 177 David	Um (2.5) it's kind of hard like (.) I wa:nted- it's like, I wanted to do <u>both</u>.=
Line 178 Emma	=<u>Definitely</u>, it should be closed fi[rst]
Line 179 David	[Right] (.) Um (1.2) It's just I'm a little confused like, every time I try to ope:n (0.7) I guess you could say it's like, okay now I feel like I have to touch on this even <u>more</u> and then I really don't know where to <u>end</u> my conclusion (1.4) so >I don't< know, I'm-I wanted to do <u>both</u>, I just don't kno:w (1.3) like what wa:y to do that.=
Line 180 Emma	=Oh, Okay, so I would suggest (0.4) still focus on your-um focus your conclusion <u>on</u> thi:s closing >part<.=
Line 181 David	=Okay.=
Line 182 Emma	=Yeah, if you do too much on the opening part? (0.7) the readers are gonna expect more,=
Line 183 David	=Right].
Line 184 Emma	[>But<] there's not going to <u>be</u> more=
Line 185 David	=Exactly]
Line 186 Emma	[so] maybe one or two sentences in the last part (0.9) to say "*maybe there are still other questions like this and this*" (1.1), maybe the-(0.8) this three (2.1) <u>not</u> more than three.=
Line 187 David	=Okay.=
Line 188 Emma	=>Yeah.< "*That we can still <u>think</u> about, <u>but</u> (1.2) because I believe my essay als- already touches on this question-and kind of give some >solutions to this one.<* And that kind of en:ds the whole essay.=
Line 189 David	=Okay.=

In this final unit (Unit 5), the discussion centered around how David could conclude his writing in a way that does not make him fall for the trope that a conclusion is merely a paraphrased thesis statement (Line 153 & Line 157). Emma

reacted to David's question by goading him to not only reiterate his central thrust (Line 158) but also advancing the parameter of the discussion (Line 162, Line 164, & Line 166). In Line 164, Emma enacted an interlocutor-character speaker role.

First, Emma envoiced David by using the second person deixis *you* and therefrom, provided a conjectured picture of how David could have concluded his expository piece that suited his intention: summarizing the main idea and furthering the discussion. The acting by Emma on behalf of David is also achieved by Emma switching from *we* to *I* in the same line. This is a sophisticated move to establish the speaker alignment: the shift from *we* to *I* indicates that Emma came up with this hypothetical scenario by grounding her statement in a collective and wide readership initially but then realized that the question was about how David as a writer could summarize his piece. Therefore, Emma downscaled and used *I* by contributing to and acknowledging David's authorship.

The second *we* in Line 164 is also self-repivoted by Emma, and she ended up using an expletive syntactic structure (e.g., *there are*) where the collective third-person deictic *they* replaced the first-person plural *we*. This indicates a type of speaker alignment whereby Emma attempted to issue suggestions and guidelines and to avoid appearing subjective. Switching from *we* to *they* allowed Emma to enact non-partisanship and attain calls-for-action that is rendered objective. This in turn galvanized David to contribute to his own academic authorship, the authorial self that he was developing as a writer. The same envisioned collectivity of and connection with an assumed readership by *we* but a shift to the singular counterpart *I* was also observed in Line 188, where Emma envoiced as David to provide a guideline of how he could sum his discussion. The speaker alignment collapses the distance of narrated and narrating selves seen in David and Emma as an interacting dyad but also further establishes Emma's identity role as an open-minded commentator and facilitator who was not autocratically controlling, and David's identity as an emerging college writer.

However, there is another kind of *we* used in this unit. In Line 174, Emma alluded to a particular lesson unit in her curriculum where she lectured ways to summarize a piece. The *we* here is not referenced to a general audience as the one invoked earlier in this unit. Rather, the *we* here bespeaks Emma, David, and the other students in her class. The speaker role by Emma here is that of a fused interlocutor-character, because the line *we talked about it in class* was prefaced by the discourse marker *like* and couched in the past tense, a kind of time travel that allows Emma to perform as an instructor to re-live the moment of teaching the lesson on summary. The line also connotates some sort of speaker evaluation where Emma ended the sentence with a tag question by not only affiliating herself with David but also probing to see whether David could recall what was instructed in class.

In the narrated event of conferencing and the narrating event of (re)establishing speaker relation (Wortham, 2001), the first-person collective *we* is semiotically used purposefully for an array of discursive functions for the two participants to not only fashion their emergent and interactionally grounded speaker roles and identities (Dunn, 2017, p.66; see also Koven, 2011) but also

successfully carry out the conferencing activity without compromising the facilitation of it.

5   Discussion and conclusion

Departing from the previous research on the writing conference typology and the identity roles inhabited therein that are informed by the turn-taking sequence, this current research study furthers the understanding of how *we* in English is semiotically instantiated, along with the other co-occurring linguistic-semiotic signs, for the construction of speaker voices and affiliations in a WCT. Through a narrative examination of an FYC WCT, the researcher examines the grounded patterning of *we* and preliminarily establishes the possible functional purposes of *we* in an in-person dyadic interaction. These speaker-role affiliations and their attendant functions effected by the English person-deictics *we* include: heuristics for evaluation and suggestions, device for the bridging of epistemic asymmetry, apparatus for time-travel, and proposal of hypothetical scenarios. More important to the listed functions is the establishment of a WCT as a *narrativization-in-action* (Wortham, 2001) co-constructed via speakers' strategic use of *we*.

Granted, the speaker-role affiliations and their attendant functions assayed above do not exhaust all the schema of how *we* can be operationalized. However, the preliminary findings of this study provide several critical implications of how, in an academically-oriented exchange (Sandlund, 2014), students are scaffolded into academic socialization (Baffy, 2018) through the leveraging of linguistic indexical signs. First, the one-on-one WCT can display a cross-over from that of a classroom discourse, as evidenced in how Emma referenced a lesson unit by using *we* (Line 174, Unit 5). Therefore, this indicates a far more complicated speaker-role matrix. Future research endeavors could investigate how co-narratives in the form of a conference interaction evolve across temporal and geographical scales. Researchers could examine the relationship between instructors and students in regular classroom instruction and how such interaction is carried over to the conferencing proceeding and style. Another possible arena for scrutiny is to investigate how indexical signs in WCTs are sedimented to essentialize participants' roles, such as how instructors' use (Koven, 2016; Silverstein, 1993) of *we* could help them take on the pathway (Wortham & Reyes, 2015) *to become as instructors* through conferencing with students, that is, a more sustained process of taking on the identity as the instructor.

Several limitations might qualify the findings of this research study. First, as noted by Prior and Hengst (2010), who assert that "[i]f a particular semiotic is going to be a focus (and we recognize the potential value of such focused attention), then it should be clear why and how the semiotic range has been so narrowed" (p.19), this study does not address the other equally formative semiotic resources, such as gestures, and remediation processes (Prior & Hengst, 2010) that are implicated in the happenstance of the WCT. Therefore, how semiotics are collectively enacted should be accounted for in the future research, along with other source types, such as that of videotaped interaction. Another apropos

limitation pertains to the showing of transcription. Resonating powerfully with what Prior and Hengst (2010) argue about semiotic remediation, the representation of the person deixis through transcription might overlook other linguistically embodied operations, such as the contouring of intonations of pronouncing those deictics (Gumperz, 1982). Thus, an analysis of the speaker alignment implicated by the indexicality of the person deixis should also be justified and complemented with that of other linguistic semiotic foci.

That said, the chief purpose of this research study is not meant to categorically establish a generalizable typology of how the person deixis *we* is invoked in an FYC WCT. Rather, the rich, narrative delineation of the qualitative snapshot of *we* indexically intersecting with the other co-occurring linguistic signs instantiates the necessity of more research on how multisemiotic expressions and interactions inform the accessibility, configuration, and re-mediation of speaker voices and alignments.

Acknowledgements

References

Agha, A. (2007). *Language and Social Relations*. NY: Cambridge University Press.

Alexander, R. (2006). *Towards dialogic teaching: Rethinking classroom talk* (3rd ed.). York, England: Dialogos.

Austin, J.L. (1975). *How to Do Things with Words*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Baffy, M. (2018). Constructed dialogue as a resource for promoting students' socialization to written academic discourse in an EAP class. *Linguistics and Education*, *46*, 33-42. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2018.06.0010898-5898

Bakhtin, M. (1981). "*Discourse in the Novel*" in The Dialogic Imagination. Austin, University of Texas Press.

Bauman, R., & Briggs, C. L. (1990). Poetics and performances as critical perspectives on language and social life. *Annual review of Anthropology*, *19*(1), 59-88.

Blommaert, J. (2005). *Discourse: A critical introduction*. Cambridge University Press.

Calkins, L. M. (1986). *The art of teaching writing*. Heinemann Educational Books Inc.

Cazden, C. B. (2001). *Classroom discourse: The language of teaching and learning* (2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Dunn, C. D. (2017). Personal narratives and self-transformation in postindustrial societies. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *46*, 65-80.

Gal, S. & Irvine, J. (2019). *Signs of Difference*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Goffman, E. (1981). *Forms of talk*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Gumperz, J. (1982). *Discourse strategies.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hanks, W. (1992). The Indexical Ground of Deictic Reference. In A. Duranti, & C. Goodwin (Eds.), *Rethinking Context* (43-76). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hawkins, L. K. (2016). The power of purposeful talk in the primary-grade writing conference. *Language Arts*, *94*(1), 8-21. Retrieved from www.jstor.org/stable/44809875

Hawkins, L. K. (2019). Writing Conference Purpose and How It Positions Primary-Grade Children as Authoritative Agents or Passive Observers. *Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts, 58*(1), 22-47.

Ingram, D. (1971). Toward a theory of person deixis. *Research on Language & Social Interaction*, *4*(1), 37-53. https://doi.org/10.1080/08351817109370247

Koven, M. (2011). Speaker Roles in Personal Narratives. In J. Holstein & J. Gubrium (Eds.), *Varieties of Narrative Analysis* (151-180). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Koven, M. (2016). Essentialization strategies in the storytellings of young Luso-descendant women in France: Narrative calibration, voicing, and scale. *Language&Communication*, *46*, 19-29. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2015.10.005

Leander, K., & Prior, P. (2004). Speaking and Writing: How Talk and Text Interact in Situated Practices. In C. Bazerman, & P. Prior (Eds.), *What Writing Does and How It Does It: An Introduction to Analyzing Texts and Textual Practices* (201-238). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410609526

Lerner, N. (2005). The Teacher-Student Writing Conference and the Desire for Intimacy. *College English, 68*(2), 186-208. https://doi.org/10.2307/30044673

Levinson, S. C. (1979). Pragmatics and social deixis in Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistic Society. *Berkeley Linguistics Society*.

Mackiewicz, J., & Thompson, I. (2013). Motivational scaffolding, politeness, and writing center tutoring. *The Writing Center Journal*, *33*(1), 38-73.

Martínez, R. A., Durán, L., & Hikida, R. A. (2017). Becoming "Spanish Learners": Identity and Interaction Among Multilingual Children in a Spanish-English

Dual Language Classroom. *International multilingual research journal, 11*(3), 167-183. https://doi.org/10.1080/19313152.2017.1330065

Mertz, E. (2007). Semiotic Anthropology. *Annual Review of Anthropology, 36*(1):337-353. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.36.081406.094417

Morford, J. (1997). Social Indexicality in French Pronominal Address. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology, 7*(1), 3-37.

Mulderrig, J. (2012). The hegemony of inclusion: A corpus-based critical discourse analysis of deixis in education policy. *Discourse & Society*, *23*(6), 701-728. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926512455377

Park, I. (2017). Questioning as advice resistance: writing tutorial interactions with L2 writers. *Classroom Discourse, 8*(3), 253-270. https://doi.org/10.1080/19463014.2017.1307125

Patthey-Chavez, G., & Ferris, D. (1997). Writing Conferences and the Weaving of Multi-Voiced Texts in College Composition. *Research in the Teaching of English, 31*(1), 51-90. Retrieved from www.jstor.org/stable/40171264

Peirce, C. (1955). "Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs." In J. Buchler (Ed), *Philosophical Writings of Peirce* (98-119). New York: Dover.

Prior, P. (2001). Voices in text, mind, and society: Sociohistoric accounts of discourse acquisition and use. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *10*(1-2), 55-81.

Prior, P., & Hengst, J. (2010). Introduction: Exploring semiotic remediation. In P. Prior & J. Hengst (Eds.), *Exploring semiotic remediation as discourse practice* (1-23). New York: Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Reigstad, T. (1982). The Writing Conference: An Ethnographic Model for Discovering Patterns of Teacher-Student Interaction. *The Writing Center Journal, 2*(1), 9-20. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/43441755

Sandlund, E. (2014). Prescribing conduct: Enactments of talk or thought in advice-giving sequences. *Discourse Studies*, *16*(5), 645-666. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445614539065

Schegloff, E. (1972). Notes on a Conversational Practice: Formulating Place. In P. Giglioli (Ed.), *Language and Social Context* (75-119). New York: Penguin.

Shvidko, E. (2018). Writing conference feedback as moment-to-moment affiliative relationship building. *Journal of Pragmatics, 127*, 20-35. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2018.01.004

Silverstein, M. (1976). Shifters, Linguistic Categories, and Cultural Description. Language, Culture, and Society: In K. Basso & H. Selby (Eds.), *Meaning in Anthropology* (11-55). Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press.

Silverstein, M. (1993). Metapragmatic discourse and function. In J. Lucy (Ed.), *Reflexive Language* (3-58). Cambridge University Press, New York.

Silverstein, M. & Urban, G. (1996). The natural history of discourse. In M, Silverstein & G. Urban (Eds.), *Natural Histories of Discourse* (1-17). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sperling, M. (1990). I Want to Talk to Each of You: Collaboration and the Teacher-Student Writing Conference. *Research in the Teaching of English, 24*(3), 279-321. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/40171167

Strauss, S., & Xiang, X. (2006). The writing conference as a locus of emergent agency. *Written Communication, 23*(4), 355-396. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741088306292286

Walker, C., & Elias, D. (1987). Writing Conference Talk: Factors Associated with High- and Low-Rated Writing Conferences. *Research in the Teaching of English, 21*(3), 266-285. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/40171115

Waring, H. Z. (2005). Peer tutoring in a graduate writing centre: Identity, expertise, and advice resisting. *Applied linguistics, 26*(2), 141-168. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amh041

Wortham, S. E. F. (2001). *Narratives in action: A strategy for research and analysis*. Teachers College Press.

Wortham, S. & Reyes, A. (2015). *Discourse Analysis beyond the Speech Event.* Routledge.

Appendix A

Transcription Notation

(.)	untimed perceptible pause within a turn stress (micropause)
Underline	emphatic stress
.	sentence-final falling intonation
:	prolonged segment
?	rising intonation
,	continuing intonation
-	cut-off or self-interruption
[]	overlapped talk
=	latch (one at the end of a line and another at the start of the next line shortly thereafter)
(0.5)	numbers in parentheses indicate silence, represented in tenths of a second
(( ))	comments on background or action
< >	the talk in between is compressed or rushed
0	marked quietness and softness