



## **Relationship Between Spoken and Written Discourse of a Generation 1.5 ESL Student: A Study of a German Student in a College ESL Composition Class**

Generation 1.5 ESL students are often characterized as achieving quite advanced oral/aural proficiency but less developed academic literacy (Forrest, 2006; Singhal, 2004). And yet little is known about the relationship between their spoken and written discourse. Thus, this paper discusses a case study that explored the relationship of spoken and written discourse of a Generation 1.5 ESL student, whom we call Mary, in a college ESL composition classroom. The findings revealed that Mary employed speechlike features for her writing (i.e., use of colloquial language and lack of explicitness in linguistic and content terms). These findings indicate that Mary seemed to write the way she spoke, which contributed to making her writing informal, implicit, and less persuasive. In addition to examining the language features, we explored the effect of explicit instruction on the difference between spoken and written discourse. Such instruction turned out to be partially effective. Findings arising from this study suggest that Generation 1.5 ESL students such as Mary employ two approaches (i.e., writing/speaking and reading/writing connections) to improving writing.

Generation 1.5 ESL students have recently received considerable attention in the field of TESOL partly because they do not fit into any traditional institutional labels or categories of English language learners (Goen, Porter, Swanson, & VanDommelen, 2002a). In reality, many writing instructors have begun to voice their concerns and dissatisfaction about their lack of understanding of this emerging student population. Generation 1.5 ESL students are often defined as students who came to the US as young children or adolescent students and have had formal schooling in both the US and their home countries, and who are characterized as an in-between generation (having characteristics of both first- and second-generation immigrants).<sup>1</sup> We argue that they should be considered within the *continuum* of language learners, given their varying degrees of bilingualism (Yi, 2007).

Generation 1.5 immigrant students may be unique and differ from both first- and second-generation immigrants in terms of language profile, educational experience, and degrees of socialization in both the US and their home countries (Kim, Brenner, Liang, & Asay, 2003). Unlike U.S.-born second-generation or foreign-born first-generation immigrants who move to the US as adults, Generation 1.5 students are brought into a new country as preteens or teenagers and have been partly raised and educated in their home and the US school. Like Mike, a high-school Generation 1.5 student who described his life as “double lives” (Yi, 2009), Generation 1.5 students often negotiate boundaries between home and host country, between first and second generation, between young children and adults, and even between monolingual English-speaking teachers and monolingual home-language-speaking parents. Given that, they can become a “bridge builder” (Park, 1999) and may enjoy a special advantage of living in two worlds with two sets of languages, rules, and customs.

However, in terms of language and literacy development, Generation 1.5 ESL students can be identified as a group that faces difficult challenges, especially when they have “lost or are in the process of losing their home languages without having learned their writing systems or academic register” (Thonus, 2003, p. 18). As Blanton (2005) powerfully described in her study, Generation 1.5 ESL students’ education (first language [L1] and literacy education) has been “interrupted” once they move to a new country. In this case, they have limited or no literacy in the first language and thus cannot take advantage of their L1 basis for their second language (L2) acquisition.

What particularly drew our attention in our local context (i.e., an ESL college writing classroom in the US) was one Generation 1.5 ESL student from Germany (whom we call Mary) who wrote as she spoke.<sup>2</sup> This particular characteristic of *writing like they speak* has been directly and indirectly addressed among researchers and teachers of Generation 1.5 students (Blanton, 2005; Bloch, 2007; Kinsella & Roberge, 2003; Weissberg, 2006). Because Generation 1.5 ESL students have their formal schooling in the US, they tend to have knowledge of and familiarity with U.S. educational norms and practices as well as fluency in informal spoken English (Blumenthal, 2002). When they enter universities, some of them could be characterized as having advanced basic interpersonal communicative skills but far less developed academic language proficiency (Forrest, 2006; Singhal, 2004). Thus, when they write in English, they draw upon their strong oral proficiency and become “oral composers and oral editors” (Kinsella & Roberge, 2003). Recently, Bloch (2007) raised an insightful question, asking if Generation 1.5 ESL students can “transfer their strategies from an oral form of discourse to a more academic form” (p. 134). And yet few Generation 1.5 studies have examined the relationship between spoken and written discourse of Generation 1.5 ESL students. More specifically, few researchers have compared Generation 1.5 ESL students’ written and oral discourse to investigate to what extent Generation 1.5 ESL students write as they would speak. Equally important, there has been little investigation of the effects of explicit instruction on oral and written language differences or to how students respond to such explicit instruction. Therefore, we conducted a study in which we asked the following research questions: (a) What is the relationship between the spoken and writ-

ten discourse of a Generation 1.5 writer in the context of an ESL college writing classroom?, and (b) To what extent does the explicit instruction regarding the difference between the two modes of discourse (speaking and writing) help the student improve her writing?

### Review of the Literature

The relationship between writing and speaking has been explored in the fields of both second language writing and linguistics. Salient differences between the two modes (speaking and writing) of discourse abound. For instance, the differences include “the structure of the discourse in each, the mental processes at work, the distance of the audience, the role of editing, and the nature of changing in the two forms” (Horning, 1987, p. 8). In particular, the sense (distance) of audience makes writing quite different from speaking. In natural speech, an audience is usually present, and speakers use the feedback from their listeners to ensure effective communication. On the other hand, the recipient of a written text is usually farther away and mostly unknown (Crystal, 1997). When writers compose, they may feel the disconnect in relation to their audience partly because the audience is not nearby, but writers must imagine their audience and try to write for it without any immediate feedback. Thus, “the distance from the audience makes writing inherently more difficult” (Horning, 1987, p. 9).

In a recently published book, *Connecting Speaking and Writing in Second Language Writing Instruction*, Weissberg (2006) argues for the important use of dialogue for second language writing based on his belief in the inextricable link between written and oral modalities. While looking into how different students develop expertise in L2 writing in relation to their L2 speech, Weissberg provides an illuminating example of an L2 writer, Francisco (a 19-year-old high-school graduate from Mexico), whose case offers valuable insights into the understanding of the nature of *writing like they speak*. At the beginning of the college ESL writing course, Francisco had greater comfort and fluency in oral English than in writing, and his writing teacher observed that there was “no greater lexical or syntactic differences between his writing and his speech” (p. 31). Francisco’s written English was characterized by the “same chatty, conversational features” that the teacher heard in his spoken English (p. 31). And yet, Francisco’s written English had developed throughout the semester, losing many of its speechlike characteristics and adopting “the impersonal language and conventionalized rhetorical features of academic essay writing” (p. 33),<sup>3</sup> though Weissberg did not explain what exactly (e.g., instruction) helped Francisco improve his writing in English. While observing this process of improvement, Weissberg (2006) argues that writing can be best taught in a classroom where much dialogue between students and teachers occurs, and he suggests that teachers use “talk-write tasks” to deliberately incorporate talk time into lessons, which will ultimately push students to write. One example of a “talk-write task” that Weissberg presents is geared toward “naturalistic, speech-preferring L2 writers,”<sup>4</sup> a group that could include some Generation 1.5 ESL students (p. 43). Weissberg’s talk-write task calls for students to compare a transcript of a professor’s conversation to his

or her written version on the same topic and thus leads students to recognize the differences between spoken and written discourse, with respect to the lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical differences.

Similarly, Blanton (2005) suggested that Generation 1.5 ESL students orally tell a story on an audiotape, then write down the story, and finally compare it to a transcript of the oral story. From this exercise, one hopes that students will be able to see how “their spoken English is more grammatically controlled, more syntactically sophisticated, than their written English” (p.118). It is important to note that this was proposed only as an initial goal (i.e., “to write the way they speak”) for Generation 1.5 ESL students whose oral proficiency is more advanced than their written proficiency. Ultimately, Blanton suggests that teachers should create a literacy-rich context, and Generation 1.5 ESL students should engage in “real life literacy,” which should always be a “social event” (p. 118). As can be seen, both Weissberg (2006) and Blanton (2005) address the significant relationship between speaking and writing and present ideas that could help L2 writers recognize the difference between speaking and writing at the initial stage of their L2 literacy development. And yet, they did not actually examine how effective these consciousness-raising activities were in helping L2 writers use spoken and written discourse features appropriately. Furthermore, before considering such differences in the two modes (speaking and writing), we conduct a linguistic comparison of spoken and written discourse, which is needed to help teachers themselves understand the differences. Therefore, in our study reported here, we first analyze the spoken and written discourse of one university Generation 1.5 ESL student, Mary. Then we will discuss the revisions that Mary made after the writing conference with her instructor (i.e., explicit instruction) about the differences between spoken and written discourse.

### **Methodology**

While conducting “teacher research in writing classrooms” (Fecho, Allen, Mazaros, & Inyega, 2006), we hoped that a systematic analysis of spoken and written discourses could offer the kind of data teachers need to compare the two modes of discourse and a model they could use in their writing instruction. To achieve these goals, in this study we focused on an individual student’s writing practice and situated ourselves methodologically within a qualitative “case approach” (Merriam, 1998).

### ***Context and a Participant***

The study reported in this paper was conducted in a college ESL composition class (ENG 120) at a four-year university in the southeastern part of the United States.<sup>5</sup> The course was our lowest-level, postadmission academic writing course for nonnative English speakers. The first author, Michelle Jeffries, was the instructor for this class and developed this research with her university professor, Youngjoo Yi. This class consisted of 13 students (9 Asians, 3 Europeans, and 1 Middle Eastern student). Among these 13 students, the research participant, Mary, was the *only* U.S. high-school-graduate Generation 1.5 ESL student and immediately appeared to be quite distinctive from the

rest of the students—international students who entered the American university after graduating from high school in their own countries. Thus, we selected her as the focus of this investigation.

Mary came from Germany to the US when she was 16 because of her father's job transfer. She attended a U.S. public high school for approximately 2 years. She had studied English in Germany since the fifth grade for a total of 5 years before coming to the US. During her first semester in high school in the US, Mary was placed in a basic writing course and then joined mainstream classes for her remaining three semesters. When we first met Mary and conducted this research, it was her first semester at the university. She planned to return to Germany after her first year in the American university to enter a German university, majoring in fashion design.

### ***Data Collection and Analysis***

We collected and reviewed all of Mary's work for the course, ENG 120, including eight one-page reading-response journals, eight reading quizzes, four essays, two presentations (including one audiotaped presentation), in-class discussion participation, a midterm essay exam, and a final writing portfolio with a reflective essay, which gave us a general idea about Mary as an L2 writer. However, the primary data for this paper consisted of her argumentative essays (several drafts), an audiotaped oral presentation based on the argumentative essay, its transcript, a lesson plan for the writing conference, an audiotaped writing conference, teacher's reflective notes on the conference, and Mary's response to reflective questions about her writing.

All the students in the class were required to give two oral presentations of their essays (i.e., an argumentative essay and a field-research essay). For this study, Mary's oral presentation based on her argumentative essay was transcribed, and it was later compared with the final draft of her argumentative essay. In her paper and presentation, Mary argued that the legal drinking age in the US should be lowered, a topic Mary chose herself. We acknowledge that such an academic oral presentation is more formal than other modes of spoken discourse, and yet the instructor of the course, Jeffries, tried to create an environment that was more apt to elicit "natural" speech by not allowing the students to have any notes when they presented. In addition, by telling students that they would not be graded on their presentations, the instructor helped them relax.

Interestingly, in both spoken (transcript of the presentation) and written media, Mary used a personal "narrative" as a supporting detail for one of her main points, which in fact led us to draw upon Labov's (1972) notion of narrative.<sup>6</sup> According to Labov, a narrative is defined as containing clauses that are "characteristically ordered in temporal sequence; if narrative clauses are reversed, the inferred temporal sequence of the original semantic interpretation is altered" (p. 360). Further, he states that more fully developed narratives contain certain elements that usually flow in the following order: "abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda." These six narrative elements allowed us to make a more accurate comparison of the spoken and written discourse for the purpose of our study. Interestingly, the

narrative elements in both the spoken and written discourse correspond with each other (see Appendices A and B).

Based on the comparative analysis of Mary's written and spoken discourse, an hour-long writing conference was carefully planned and followed accordingly. First, Jeffries asked Mary how she viewed speaking and writing, and then they discussed the differences between spoken and written language. Finally, Jeffries pointed out aspects of Mary's writing that resembled spoken language and suggested ways in which she could revise her writing so that it did not violate guidelines of written academic language. Immediately after the conference, Jeffries e-mailed Mary a summary of the key points they discussed in their conference. One week after the conference, Mary returned a revised draft of her final essay in which she attempted to remove oral features and replace them with (or simply add) features found in academic writing. In addition, after revising her essay, Mary answered questions via e-mail about how her perception of writing had changed based on the conference discussion.

At this point, Jeffries and Yi separately analyzed the data (i.e., Mary's two essays written before and after the writing conference, audiotaped and transcribed conference session, reflective notes, and Mary's response regarding how her perception of writing had changed based on the conference) while considering the main foci of the writing conference and Mary's revision of the paper. Finally, we came up with the three categories of revision types, "sentence combining," "use of informal language," and "additions of connectors and explanations," which will be further discussed in the next section.

## Results

This section consists of two parts. The first part, "Mary's speechlike written discourse" (based on the comparative analysis of Mary's spoken and written discourse), discusses two salient characteristics of Mary's written discourse in relation to her spoken discourse. The second part, "Mary's actual use of knowledge of the differences" (based on the writing conference and revised essay), discusses to what extent and how Mary actually employed her knowledge of the difference between written and spoken discourse in revising her essay.

### *Mary's Speechlike Written Discourse*

Among many characteristics of Mary's discourse, two salient characteristics appeared in both spoken and written discourse: (a) use of colloquial language, and (b) lack of explicitness in both linguistic and content terms. Since our main focus is on Mary's writing the way she speaks, this section focuses on speechlike characteristics manifested in her writing.

**Use of Colloquial Language.** A speechlike feature appearing in her writing is her use of colloquial language. In Mary's spoken narrative, she used the word "totally" twice, as is seen in the following examples:

13. They were *totally* ... drunk.
30. And like till they're *totally* drunk.

Here, “totally” in her spoken discourse was used as a “lexical intensifier” (Labov, 1972), which works to strengthen the evaluative point of her story—that getting extremely drunk is not a responsible drinking habit. Therefore, in speech, especially narratives, such lexical items can serve to intensify the point of the speech; however, in writing, this type of vocabulary would appear as informal. In fact, Schleppegrell (1996) specifically cites the word “totally” as unconventional language in academic discourse: “ESL and other developing writers often use lexical items or phrases that violate register conventions for academic writing, such as *totally*” (p. 274).

In Mary’s written narrative, the number of informal words such as “like” (which was used when Mary was at a loss for words in speech) decreased when compared with the speech of her oral presentation, but much unconventional language (e.g., “totally”) was present in her essay.

**Lack of Explicitness.** The previous characteristic (use of colloquial language) of Mary’s speechlike written discourse addresses issues at the lexical level, but the second distinctive characteristic of her discourse is rather at a content level. Overall, Mary’s discourse, both written and spoken, lacked explicitness in both linguistic and content terms in that she often used unclear referents and pronouns (at a linguistic level) and did not provide enough supporting explanations for her claims (at a content level). According to Crystal (1997), explicitness is necessary in writing because of the amount of distance that exists between a writer and his or her intended audience: “In the absence of immediate feedback, available in most speech interactions, care needs to be taken to minimize the effects of vagueness and ambiguity” (p.181). For instance, the “evaluation” section of Mary’s oral discourse and the “evaluation” and “resolution” sections of her written discourse show her inability to articulate the point of her story (see Appendix B). Such lack of explicitness would cause problems in academic prose, as is seen in Mary’s written discourse, particularly in the “evaluation” and “resolution” sections of her narrative, as follows:<sup>7</sup>

*Evaluation*

W. My cousin was totally shocked  
X. about that.

*Resolution*

Y. Then he told me that he met  
Z. them the next day at the  
AA. university, and they told  
BB. him that they had their best  
CC. night ever!

In the “evaluation” section above, Mary explained her cousin’s reaction by stating that he was shocked by “that” (in line X). Here, Mary’s use of “that” results in lack of explicitness in linguistic terms because it is not clear as to what the pronoun “that” refers to. In terms of content, the written discourse above also lacks explicitness because Mary never articulated *why* her cousin was shocked. The reader is left to infer the meaning of the cousin’s reaction. Likewise, the “resolution” is also implicit in nature. Unless the audience is

from a culture like Mary's, which does not find enjoyment in "getting drunk," then readers may react to Mary's resolution by asking, "So what?"

One interesting point to note here is that both Mary's spoken and written discourse lacked explicitness, and yet during her presentation (i.e., lines 22 to 26 in Appendix B), Mary attempted to provide more impromptu explanations after realizing the disconnect between her and her audience, although these were not quite successful. Unfortunately, she did not make such attempt or effort to add explanations in her writing. Not surprisingly, this lack of explicitness in her writing shows that Mary's sense of audience was relatively weaker in her written discourse.

As can be seen so far, the comparative analysis of Mary's written and spoken discourse revealed that Mary employed speechlike features, such as the use of colloquial language and the lack of explicitness, in her writing. This indicates that Mary seemed to write the way she spoke, which contributed to making her writing informal, implicit, and less persuasive.

Here we need to add a cautionary note: We do not argue that Mary's speechlike features are solely ESL errors in that these features also often occur in the prose of basic writers. Generation 1.5 researchers have already argued that Generation 1.5 writers share some characteristics of both ESL and basic writers, which makes this population unique and further challenges their writing teachers (in ESL or Composition) in terms of assessment and instruction. For instance, in the study of Goen, Porter, Swanson, and vanDommelen (2002b), 8 Generation 1.5 students at San Francisco State University were placed across ESL and Basic Writing courses; additionally, when ESL and Composition teachers were asked to respond to the writing of Generation 1.5 students and to identify which writing program (ESL or Composition) they thought would best serve the writer, these teachers did not agree on the placements for Generation 1.5 writers. Given that, we argue that Mary's speechlike features in her writing are not necessarily ESL errors, and that Generation 1.5 writers and their writing need to be examined within a *continuum*.

### ***Mary's Actual Use of the Knowledge of the Differences Between Written and Spoken Discourse***

During the writing conference, Jeffries provided explicit instruction on the differences between spoken and written discourse in English by pointing out how much Mary wrote the way she spoke (i.e., sharing with Mary the comparative analysis of Mary's spoken and written discourse) and by emphasizing that writing requires more explicitness than speaking does. Mary's revision of the essay after the conference shows to what extent and how she used her knowledge of the differences between the two modes for improving her essay. This analysis reflects whether or not and to what extent explicit instruction on the differences helped a student.

After the writing conference, Mary made revisions of 22 items in her argumentative essay while attempting to eliminate speechlike characteristics in her writing, and yet some of her revisions were not quite successful. Those revised items mostly dealt with (a) combining sentences, (b) using more formal words, and (c) adding explanations or connectors to make her

writing more explicit and clear. We will discuss her revisions in this order in this section.

**Sentence Combining.** Since Mary had some errors in her written discourse when using coordinating conjunctions, Mary practiced combining sentences during the conference. Then Mary tried to combine sentences in her revision, though she made only one sentence-combining revision. That revision appeared successful and even powerful because it established a more argumentative tone, which suited the purpose of Mary's essay—to persuade:

*Original:* “Another thing that one can do before turning twenty-one is vote. *One is deciding* with millions of other youngsters the future of the United States of America.”

*Revision:* “Another thing that one can do before turning twenty-one is vote, *deciding* with millions of other youngsters the future of the United States of America.”

**Use of Informal Language.** Mary made two revisions of lexical items, with the first one being a change of the words “doing it” to “drinking” as follows:

*Original:* “... but everybody knows that they are *doing it* secretly. ...”

*Revision:* “... but everybody knows that they are *drinking* secretly. ...”

This change was quite effective and explicitly states what the actors in the sentence are doing—drinking. Therefore, this revision, though minor, further develops the essay because it causes the action in the sentence to become clearer for the reader. In addition, after being explicitly told of the informal register of the word “totally” during the writing conference, Mary replaced two instances of the word “totally” with “very.” Notably, Mary was able to make two successful lexical revisions here, but she continued to use some informal language when she added new information to her essay. For example, she added the following phrases, which are rather informal for academic writing: “big secret ... bad thing ... big deal.” Given that, Mary appeared to understand the concept of more formal, academic language but might not have had active academic language (e.g., vocabulary) that can replace informal, spoken words (e.g., “thing,” “big deal”).

**Additions of Connectors and Explanations.** The majority of the revisions were made through “additions” of transitional words or explanations. When adding transitions to her sentences, Mary was only partially successful; two of her four attempts for adding transitions proved to be somewhat effective. For example, she added the transitions “in addition” and “in fact” to add further information and emphasis to the point that is expressed in her sentence, respectively, as follows:

Similar to what was said earlier about the fact that minors do drink anyway and it is a lot more dangerous if they do it in secret or if other persons are with them who could look out for the ones drinking. *In addition*, it would not be so special and exciting to get drunk because one is

allowed to do it. I sometimes see examples of that when I am going out in the United States and comparing the drinking styles in Europe and America. *In fact*, I always come to the conclusion that we drink more responsibly than the Americans. (Mary's essay)

Mary also added more explanations in her essay, in particular, when she was attempting to explain and analyze her ideas, which creates more explicit writing when done effectively. Out of seven explanation additions, four explanations were successfully added.

However, one unsuccessful addition that Mary made shows her difficulty in incorporating what she learned from the writing conference into actual writing (revising her essay). Below are the original and revised sentences:

*Original:* "Lowering the drinking age would help to prevent minors from bench drinking."

*Revision:* "Lowering the drinking age would help to prevent minors from bench drinking *because they would not have to wait till their 21 and it would not be as exciting as it is for them now.*"

Though the "because-" sentence in italics is added to a topic sentence, this addition does not reflect what the paragraph beneath the topic sentence discusses. In other words, the revised topic sentence above signals that there will be a discussion of the reasons *why* lowering the drinking age would prevent minors from binge drinking, and yet this was not discussed in the paragraph. Instead, Mary uses the supporting sentences to define binge drinking and discuss its consequences. Thus, the additional information in italics is not effective in developing her argument because Mary does not support the new information.

This particular revision also reflects her limited ability to use transitions appropriately because her use of "and" above would have been more successful if it had been followed by a transition. The revision also reveals that more improvement was needed in using coordinating conjunctions effectively. By using the word "and" when coordinating sentences, Mary did not make the meaning between her sentences clear. When using "and" to connect two ideas, the writer signals that the ideas on either side of the conjunction are equivalent (Pelsmaekers, Braecke, & Geluykens, 1998). However, Mary's two clauses are not equivalent; based on her surrounding argument, they should signal a cause-and-effect relationship. To indicate the relationship of these two clauses, one could write the following: "... because they would not have to wait till their 21 and *thus (or therefore)* it would not be as exciting for them now."

Thus far in this section, we have shown the kinds of revisions that Mary made and how she actually used her knowledge of the differences between spoken and written discourse for revising her essay. Clearly, she attempted to eliminate some speechlike characteristics and to make her writing more explicit, and yet, her efforts were only partially successful because most of the additions still contained informal language, instances of coordination that revealed an unclear connection between two ideas, unrelated topic explanations, and unnecessary bits of information. Mary's revisions seem to indicate

that the explicit instruction on the differences of the two modes during the writing conference was partially effective.

### Discussion and Conclusion

One of the major findings from the study is that some characteristics of Mary's spoken discourse appeared in her written discourse; her essay included informal language and a lack of explicit explanation, which are all salient features of her spoken discourse. Put simply, Mary tends to write the way she speaks. This finding supports what Blanton (2005) found from her study of Generation 1.5 students. What somewhat surprised or even puzzled us was that Mary appeared to understand the material that was presented to her in the writing conference, and yet, her revisions revealed that she did not quite grasp how to develop her academic writing register in contrast to spoken discourse. Even though at times Mary was able to effectively alter informal language and add explanations in her revised paper, she did not continue to do so when she added new words, phrases, or sentences to her essay. In other words, informal language was abundant, transitions were not often used, and the ideas in her new sentences were not always connected. We speculated on possible reasons for her lack of progress; though she was likely to understand the differences between written and spoken discourse, she might not recognize *where* to make these revisions. During the conference, Jeffries picked out the areas of Mary's writing that needed more development and drew Mary's attention to specific sentences so that Mary seemed to know what revisions she was supposed to make and how to make them. For instance, when discussing transitions, Jeffries pointed out to Mary where transitions should be added in a sample essay, and then Mary tried to select the most effective transition. Therefore, one cannot say for sure that Mary knew where she needed to add transitions. Instead, she just knew that she must include them in her writing.

In addition, Mary's partial success in the revision shows that the practices and exposure to the spoken/written comparison in the conference were not enough to enable Mary to recognize speechlike features on her own. Similarly, she did not seem able to recognize which words in her writing were informal words. As a result, she might not have known which words to even look up in a thesaurus. (In the conference, Mary was very excited to learn for the first time about the use of a thesaurus to find more formal, academic words.)

Given Mary's partial success in revising the paper, it is likely that a one-time writing conference is not effective by itself in helping students put into practice editing strategies to make their writing more formal and academic. Though Mary's essay was improved, the fact that new, erroneous information was added to the essay *after* the conference indicates that explaining and modeling the differences between spoken and written language and then incorporating a little bit of practice was not enough to effect immediate change in one Generation 1.5 student's writing. We acknowledge that the study was quite limited in that we had only one session of writing conference; additionally, we had only one method—explicit instruction about comparing spoken and written discourse and eliminating speechlike features in written discourse. Thus, we are not certain how much improvement Mary would make after a

greater amount of practice in making her writing more explicit. However, since Mary's essay did show some improvement, perhaps this type of explicit instruction can at least serve as the initial step in teaching the preferred language and content conventions of academic written discourse to students with strong oral proficiency. Nonetheless, this study reveals that it can no longer be assumed that solely teaching the differences between spoken and written discourse will enable oral composers to develop the academic language and literacy that they will need to be successful in college composition courses. Obviously, more is needed, but to determine what exactly will aid Generation 1.5 writers, both the fields of second language writing and applied linguistics need to combine their findings and design studies that will examine the effectiveness of different teaching methods.

### ***Pedagogical Implications***

The findings of this study provide some practical implications for classroom teachers. Mary's partial success in revising teaches us two slightly different approaches to improving writing, that is, "writing/speaking" and "writing/reading" connections.

At the initial stage, Generation 1.5 ESL students such as Mary need to be more aware of the distinctive features of spoken and written discourse. If such students could conduct a comparative analysis of their *own* written and spoken discourse (transcript of their speech), they would benefit from realizing similarities and differences between the ways that they speak and write. Such an activity, though time consuming, could help raise students' awareness of the speechlike features in their written discourse.

In addition, given that our one-time intervention (i.e., tutorial) was partially successful in helping Mary produce more explicit, academic writing in her revised essay, we argue that explicit instruction (e.g., modeling and practicing academic writing skills) should be provided to students. Through such explicit instruction and practice, we need to draw students' attention to the conventions, features, and vocabulary associated with academic writing. To ensure more success, this instruction needs to be carried out more frequently and consistently and bolstered by in-class lessons that reinforce the same editing skills.

Moreover, Mary's main challenge was recognizing *when* her language was informal, *when* to combine sentences, and *when* to add transitions. Given this, we suggest that Generation 1.5 ESL students such as Mary be exposed to more academic language and literacy, especially through *focused reading* in which students pay specific attention to the conventions of written text; to the formality of lexicon; and to sentence structure, transition words, and explicitness. By being exposed to and paying selective attention to (e.g., "noticing") academic lexicon, the sentence structure, and the ways ideas are connected, students are better equipped to produce this kind of text themselves.<sup>8</sup> We argue for the importance of reading and writing connections, as Hirvela (2004) states, "through this exposure [to reading] ... learners are better able to internalize L2 writing rules and conventions, thus putting in place the competence they must draw from while attempting to write in the target language" (p.112). When Jeffries worked with Mary, this step was skipped (we can take

this into account in further research). She assumed, like other teachers may do, that Mary could recognize informal language and thus, explained only the differences in spoken and written discourse. However, students who have weaker academic language and literacy may not have the schema for academic discourse that is needed to fully recognize the differences between spoken and written discourse. Therefore, drawing upon the “noticing” that focused reading provides (Schmidt, 1990, 2001), students, especially Generation 1.5 ESL students, will be more equipped to recognize academic discourse features and eventually apply those features to their writing. By providing students with meaningful reading activities and also discussing the differences in spoken and written modes, L2 writing teachers are supplying their students with some of the many tools they will need in order to write independently in a setting that calls for academic discourse.

### **Authors**

*Michelle Jeffries is an ESL instructor at Spring International Language Center at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. She holds a MATESOL from the University of Alabama. Her research interests focus upon adult language learners' writing development, the effectiveness of error correction, and the connection between reading and writing.*

*Youngjoo Yi is an assistant professor in ESOL/Literacy in the Department of Middle-Secondary Education and Instructional Technology at Georgia State University in Atlanta. Her research interest areas are adolescent English language learners' in- and out-of-school literacy learning, language and identity construction, and teacher education.*

### **Endnotes**

- <sup>1</sup> We acknowledge that L2 writing scholars have recently raised a concern about the term itself (Belcher, Hall, Matsuda, & Nero, 2006; Schwartz, 2004), and yet there is no alternative term that can capture the full complexity of this population. Thus, we use the term “Generation 1.5” in this study while acknowledging that they are a significantly diverse and fluid group (Harklau, Losey, & Siegal, 1999; Roberge, 2002).
- <sup>2</sup> We acknowledge that some oral (spoken) discourse is highly formal and academic, as in examples from Gee (2005). We used the terms “spoken discourse” and “written discourse” in the same manner as Bloch (2007) used the words “oral form vs. more academic form.” In this paper, we simply refer to spoken versus written discourse as more informal versus formal discourse.
- <sup>3</sup> The story of Francisco in Weissberg (2006) is a promising example. In Vasquez (2007), however, Festina (a Generation 1.5 student from Kosovo), who was enrolled as a degree-seeking student at the university, either failed or withdrew from all the classes in which she was enrolled. Though her highly advanced oral/aural proficiency enabled her to establish a “good student” identity in the Intensive English Program (IEP) at the same university, it was ultimately insufficient to ensure her academic success beyond the IEP.

- <sup>4</sup> Weissberg (2006) adds a cautionary note that the distinctions between speech-preferring and writing-preferring L2 writers “range along a continuum according to their preferences for writing or for speech as the primary vehicle for SLA” (p. 41).
- <sup>5</sup> ENG 120 course description: “The first part of a two-semester series designed to help advanced international student writers to further their academic reading and writing skills based on the expectations of the U.S. academic community.” (Course description from the course policy)
- <sup>6</sup> In fact, the first author, Jeffries, conducted the comparative analysis of written and spoken (transcript of presentations) discourse of all the 13 students in ENG 120 for another study. Surprisingly, Mary was the *only* student who employed “narrative” for both written and spoken discourse.
- <sup>7</sup> According to Labov (1972), fully developed narratives contain certain elements that usually flow in the following order: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda.
- <sup>8</sup> Richard Schmidt (1990, 2001) coined the term “noticing” to refer to the process of bringing some stimulus into focal attention. For example, “when one notices the odd spellings of a new vocabulary word” (1994, p. 17), she or he registers its occurrence whether voluntarily or involuntarily.

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### **Appendix A** **Transcription Key**

<b><i>Mark</i></b>	<b><i>Meaning</i></b>
<u>underline</u>	Pitch glide/salient information
[ ]	Overlapped talk
—	Interruption
<i>italics</i>	Emphatic stress
..	Slight pause
...	Longer pause
[????]	Unclear speech

\*Each numbered line in spoken narrative represents an “intonation unit” as defined by Gee (2005). Each alphabetized line in the written narrative has no significance except to serve as an organizing tool.

## Appendix B

### Mary's Written and Spoken Narrative Analysis

<i>Labov's six narrative elements</i>	<i>Spoken narrative (Transcription of her presentation)</i>	<i>Written narrative (Argumentative essay)</i>
1. Abstract	1. We're drinking when were <u>younger</u> 2. so it's not <u>special</u> for us anymore 3. and we don't go <u>out</u> and just .. 4. drink so much that we pass <u>out</u> or something 5. Um .. 6. A good <u>example</u> that my cousin told me is that um	A. It also would not be so special B. and exciting to get drunk C. because one is allowed to do it. D. I sometimes see examples for E. that, when I am going out in the F. United States and comparing G. drinking styles in Europe and H. America. I always come to the I. solution that we drink more J. responsibly than the K. Americans.
2. Orientation	7. he was out 8. in <u>Kaiserslautern</u> 9. where he studies 10. and he met <u>two</u> .. girls from America	L. My cousin just told me that he M. was out with his friends in N. Kaiserslautern where he studies O. business, and met two girls P. from the United States.
3. Complicating Action	11. And they went out 12. They had two <u>beers</u> 13. They were totally .. <u>drunk</u> 14. They kept on <u>drinking</u> 15. And he saw them the next <u>day</u> 16. and they were like, 17. "Oh I had the <u>best</u> night ever!"	Q. He told me that the only reason R. those two girls were going out S. that night was to get drunk. T. But after they had two beers U. they were totally drunk but kept V. on drinking.
4. Evaluation	18. And it was the <u>thing</u> that they get drunk— 19. um .. that they were drinking just to get <u>drunk</u> and just to .. 20. I don't know 21. And it was the <u>best</u> thing that they <u>ever</u> had done in Germany 22. and we were like <u>okay</u> [laughter] 23. <u>Whatever</u> [laughter] 24. It was .. um .. 25. I don't know .. 26. <u>He</u> was shocked by that	W. My cousin was totally shocked X. about that.
5. Resolution	27. And he just told me that 28. and he was like what are they doing down there 29. Are they doing .. like .. <u>everybody</u> just goes drinking 30. And like till they're totally <u>drunk</u> 31. If this is like the <u>thing</u>	Y. Then he told me that he met Z. them the next day at the AA. university, and they told BB. him that they had their best CC. night ever!
6. Coda	32. I have like the <u>same</u> opinion of that 33. And so um .. 34. <u>from</u> my .. 35. um experience that I had <u>here</u> and in Germany 36. I think that ... 37. like ... in <u>Europe</u> we're responsible drinker than here.	DD. I think that this is a good EE. example that shows' getting FF. drunk is the only reason GG. why most American minors HH. drinking alcohol.