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## Reported thought as (hypothetical) assessment

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### ABSTRACT

This conversation analytic study examines the use of reported thought in advice-giving sequences. In particular, the study focuses on how the writing instructor uses reported thought as an interactional resource to provide a critical assessment on student writing. The target practice takes the following format: quotative (e.g., *be like*) + response particle (e.g., *oh, okay, well*) + clause (e.g., *there's this random image here*). The analyses show how the reported thought depicts a reader's real-time reaction to the current issue in student writing as well as to the potential issue to be avoided. Such a depiction provides a case for the instructor's accompanying advice for revision. As the practice of embedding reported thought allows the instructor to displace speakership and respond to student writing as an intended reader, it is used as an instructional tool to “bend space and time” (Barnes and Moss, 2007, p. 142) and substantiate the here-and-now advice. This study has implications for conversational analytic work on reported speech and thought and advice-giving in educational discourse.

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## 1. Introduction

In this study, I use conversation analysis to examine the use of reported thought in advice-giving sequences where the instructor “describes, recommends or otherwise forwards a preferred course of future action” (Heritage and Sefi, 1992, p. 368) during one-on-one writing instruction sessions. I argue that the reported thought provides students access to a reader's real-time reaction to their writing, while allowing instructors to provide a critical assessment and ground their accompanying advice. While the specific organization of the advice-giving sequence varies, its common features include a problematization of a certain aspect of student writing, reported thought that illustrates the reader's critical response, advice for revision, and an upshot of the advice. The target practice concerning reported thought takes the following format: quotative (e.g., *be like*) + response particle (e.g., *oh*) + clause. Extract 1 in which the instructor advises the student to provide more support for his claim shows a case in point:

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## 1) Extract 1

01 TA: U:m tsk ((starts reading)) This is universal in speech because  
 02 higher intonation shows the person listening or receiving that  
 03 the speaker is more genuine in their comment. ((stops reading))  
 04 Is this just you::? [or is this based on something, [that's u:h  
 05 S: [(laughs)) hhh [Okay,  
 06 TA: u:m (0.3) [the logic isn't built up to tha:t,  
 07 S: [kinda just- just like my  
 08 Yeah,  
 09 TA: -> so I'm like, ↓Wu::l where did you get that from,  
 10 [so if you can find something in the: in the text, [or something,  
 11 S: [(nods)) [Okay,  
 12 TA: to support that, it would ((snaps fingers)) [be very helpful.  
 13 S: [Okay, hh

The instructor problematizes that the student's claim is not fully supported (lines 1–4, 6). Following the student's acknowledgement, she marks the frame shift with the quotative, *so I'm like*, and prefaces the reported thought with a response particle delivered with a prosodic shift, ↓Wu::l. The reported thought, *where did you get that from*, depicts the reader's critical response to the lack of evidence in the student's writing, and accounts for the instructor's advice to revise it. The instructor continues with her turn, providing specific advice for revision and its upshot (lines 10, 12)

## 1.1. Advice-giving as an accountable action

While advice-giving is prevalent in a wide range of settings including ordinary conversations and institutional interactions, it is an accountable event (Bolden and Robinson, 2011) and a delicate activity that invokes epistemic asymmetry between the participants and the normative course of action to be taken (Heritage and Sefi, 1992). The successful delivery of advice that minimizes resistance from the recipient involves much interactional work, even when advice-giving constitutes the central activity of the interaction based on the participants' explicit orientation to their epistemic asymmetry (Butler et al., 2010; Sandlund, 2014; Waring, 2007). A wide range of studies have shown how the advice giver orients to advice-giving as an accountable behavior, especially as it implicates criticism of the recipient's conduct (see Drew, 1998; Garfinkel, 1967; Robinson, 2016). Specific practices that convey such an orientation include ensuring agreement on a target problem (Jacoby, 1998), fitting the advice to the recipient's concern (Kinnell, 2002), and providing online commentary – a description of what the physician is seeing, feeling, or hearing during physical examination of the patient (Heritage & Stivers, 1999).

Advice-giving analyzed in this paper is situated in the activity of text feedback; the instructor provides advice for revision to the student based on their feedback on the student's writing project in progress (Freedman, 1985; Koshik, 2002a, 2002b; Park, 2014; Vehviläinen, 2009, 2012; Waring, 2007; Young and Miller, 2004). Research on advice-giving during writing instructional talk has shown how the instructor prepares and substantiates their advice by prefacing advice with questions (Vehviläinen, 2012), eliciting student corrections (Koshik, 2002b), and providing accounts (Waring, 2007). Adding to this body of research, this paper shows how the instructor accounts for their advice by providing a critical assessment on the specific aspect of student writing via reported thought. In writing instructional talk, providing feedback on student writing is often complicated by the notion of audience. Writing for an audience is widely accepted as one of the effective writing strategies for classroom, academic, professional, and fictional writing (Dean, 2006; Rafter, 2000; Richardson, 1990). One of the challenges for student writers is to learn how to establish and write for an intended audience, the target group that the writer has in mind, while the real audience typically consists of the instructor. This, in turn, presents a challenge for the writing instructor as they take on the role of “a representative of [the] audience,” (Ede and Lunsford, 1984, p. 166), also to be understood as “one reader among many” (Jefferson, 2011, p. 4). I show how reported thought functions as a resource for the instructor to embed a reader's voice for critical assessment and account for their advice. An array of cases in which the instructor indicates an existing issue in student writing or refers to a hypothetical issue for revision is analyzed.

## 1.2. Reported speech and thought

Reported speech is one of the interactional resources that allow the participants to show the ways in which they select and depict their referents (Clark and Richard, 1990). The boundary of reporting is not limited to the utterances that are actually produced, but extends to the participation framework (Goffman, 1981) and the participants' strategic reaction towards the occurred event (Goodwin, 2007; Holt, 2000). Goffman (1981) observes that reported speech reduces a speaker's personal responsibility for the produced words and describes various production formats through which the speaker takes on different roles as an animator, the deliverer of the words, an author, the originator of the words, and a principal, the authority of the words (p. 144). Building on Goffman's work on distinct production formats and shifting footings between the participants,

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