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The Co-Requisite Collaboration: Building Self-Confidence, Self-Efficacy, and Rapport through Dialogue Journals in a Basic Writing Course

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**THE CO-REQUISITE COLLABORATION: BUILDING SELF-CONFIDENCE,
SELF-EFFICACY, AND RAPPORT THROUGH DIALOGUE JOURNALS
IN A BASIC WRITING COURSE**

A Master's Thesis

Presented to

The Graduate College of
Missouri State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts, Writing

By

Timothy Jacob Pyatt

July 2021

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English

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Master of Arts

Timothy Jacob Pyatt

ABSTRACT

Research on dialogue journals has grown in the last fifty years, but a gap exists in understanding how and why these dialogue journals work. During the fall of 2020, I conducted a study utilizing quantitative data to examine how dialogue journals impact student's self-confidence, self-efficacy, and rapport. The data has confirmed that dialogue journals are effective classroom tools and that various aspects such as word count and purpose can be impacted in connection to student's perceptions of themselves. This project responds to the gap in the literature and provides data to support how and why dialogue journals promote growth in basic writing classrooms.

KEYWORDS: basic writing, dialogue journals, self-efficacy, self-confidence, rapport

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In the interest of academic freedom and the principle of free speech, approval of this thesis indicates the format is acceptable and meets the academic criteria for the discipline as determined by the faculty that constitute the thesis committee. The content and views expressed in this thesis are those of the student-scholar and are not endorsed by Missouri State University, its Graduate College, or its employees.

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PREFACE

Young students are often asked what they want to be when they grow up. Firefighters, police officers, nurses, and many other typical careers come out of the mouths of babes. One profession that I always answered with when asked was that I was going to be a teacher. It was never a straight path to teaching though. I went through many different phases and many different focuses in my collegiate career. Subconsciously, I always knew that whatever field I studied from American Sign Language and Theatre to Biology and Literature, I would end up teaching the subject I would eventually settle on. As a young boy I would try and teach my younger sister while playing “school” mimicking my childhood teachers. Eventually, I was able to teach someone other than my sister.

During my senior year of high school, I was able to take a course called Cadet Teaching. This course allowed for seniors who were interested in teaching to be able to learn the basic foundations of teaching and figure out if teaching would be a desirable career path. The first half of the year we learned how to maintain a classroom, how to lesson plan, and other significant skills that shape how a teacher responds to a group of students. The other half of the school year we took part in a practicum that had us teach alongside a mentor teacher who would help shape our experience as future educators. During this experience I quickly learned what it takes to be a good teacher and how important it is for a teacher to have a passion for the work they are doing.

I got into the groove of making my own lesson plans and teaching lessons that I never thought that I would be teaching. I was able to teach classes like eighth grade choir and music to nearly 100 students. In one of the two courses, I had a significant amount of control over the

curriculum, and I began to create assignments, assessments, and activities for my students to take part in. I stopped thinking about my students and started thinking more about my ego and who I was supposed to be as a teacher. I was a tough grader, and I was excited every time I had the chance to lecture. My ego got in the way of my teaching, and I wasn't truly teaching my students. I focused on my success instead of theirs. As a student who participated in the same choir and the same music class years before, I knew more and wanted them to see how excited I was, but that excitement became an ego that sometimes overpowered the teacher I was mentoring with. However, as a college level instructor teaching English Composition, I have started to reflect upon my own teaching methods while trying to figure out what real teaching is and how to effectively share that passion.

Real teaching isn't about your feelings in the classroom or the success or failure you experience as an instructor. Instead, teaching is about how you and your students learn and arrive upon conclusions at the same time by collaborating on issue and projects that matter to them. I would take this idea one step further. Being a teacher is like being an uninformed worker that is running a "mom-and-pop" hardware store. In these smaller hardware stores, you have regular customers. These customers you know by name, you know their family, and you know the projects they are currently working on. Customers walk through the store with unclear ideas and hopes of getting to a renovation they have been planning for months. They see tools hanging on the walls, but they don't know what each tool does thus relying on the worker to connect their ideas with the tool that will do the best job.

Teachers do the exact same thing. Similar to customers, students come into the classroom and interact at different levels. You have students who interact with you as the instructor often as well as with other students in the class. Some students are more willing to talk to other students

and rarely have a conversation with you as the instructor. One of our jobs as teachers is to help our students find out the tools in academia that correlate with success in projects. Students, like hardware shoppers, all have their own level of experience that justifies the tools that they use. For instance, a plumber would be less likely to use a hammer much like a carpenter would be less likely to use a plunger. Each student must be able to pick up a various set of tools that will add to their knowledge of the content and push them to challenge those ideas by learning new concepts and trying new methods to investigate knowledge.

One of the major tools that I use in my classroom is collaboration. Collaboration allows students to work together with their classmates as well as with the instructor. The conversations that I am able to have with my students remind me of the instructors who were willing to work with me in high school and shaped my future career. Kenneth Bruffee (1984) once wrote,

Collaborative learning provides a social context in which students can experience and practice the kinds of conversation valued by college teachers. The kind of conversation peer tutors engage in with their tutees, for example, can be emotionally involved, intellectually and substantively focused, and personally disinterested. There could be no better source than this sort of displaced conversation- writing- valued by college teachers. (Bruffee, 1984, p. 642).

Students need to know that their writing has value and that they have someone supporting them in and out of the classroom. One of the ways that I attempt to do this is through dialogue journals.

Xunzi wrote, “Not having learned it is not as good as having learned it; having learned it is not as good as having seen it carried out; having seen it is not as good as understanding it; understanding it is not as good as doing it” (Xunzi & Dubs, 1977, p. 113). For students to learn to the fullest extent in the English Composition classroom is to get them involved and practice

writing as much as possible. Learning, as well as writing, is a collaborative process that needs both teacher and student to be involved. The following study attempts to understand this collaboration and add to the scholarship presented on dialogue journals, with the focus being on student confidence and self-efficacy.

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Being a first-generation student, I have had to make many transitions quickly in order to keep up with the trajectory that my career and studies were taking. At every significant obstacle I had conversations with advisors, mentors, and instructors to seek advice and information about how to navigate the transition ahead. These conversations have happened through emails, phone calls, video conferences, and in-class journaling assignments. As the years have passed, I have learned how crucial these moments of dialogue have been in shaping my patterns of learning and my self-efficacy as a student. Now as an instructor, I use dialogue as a tool in my courses by conferencing with students and using interactive journals in my teaching practices.

As a novice instructor during my first year, I felt as if I was not connected with the needs of my students. Throughout that first year I tried many different pedagogical techniques to help shape my classroom into a welcoming place to learn. I brought Peter Elbow's concept of freewriting into the class hoping that students would instantly find a connection with writing. Although students didn't connect to freewriting right away, they seemed to connect to the concept when working through pre-writing strategies. When it came to working in class, I attempted using small group activities to create an active classroom. Small group discussions brought new perspectives into class, with conversations being difficult to start, but once the dialogue began my classes were able work together and achieve their goals. Each week felt as if I was preparing a new trick to try to get my students involved and excited to come to class. Some worked, while others did not, helping me to begin understanding my students and their needs as first-year composition students. At the end of my first year, I started to rethink my curriculum and my strategies for individualization in a student-centered writing classroom. It was not until I

remembered the work of Erin Gruwell that I began to change my focus as I concentrated on building a course that considered every student who could show up in my classroom. I was first introduced to her work in junior high summer school where I had the opportunity to go through similar activities that Gruwell did with her class while reading through the journal collection. During the early 1990s, Erin Gruwell taught English at a Long Beach high school where she was assigned to teach a group of underperforming students for whom the established education system was not prepared. As part of her curriculum, she began using journals with her students in order to gain their trust while improving their writing skills. Each week the students would journal and write about whatever they wanted to write about knowing that their writing would be kept private. She established an understanding with her students. The journals would be kept locked in a cabinet, and if at any time a student wanted her to read an entry, they would place their journal on a designated shelf in the locked cabinet. Through writing Gruwell was able to help students express themselves and break down barriers that prevent them from success. With Gruwell's help, the Freedom Writers were able to meet Miep Gies and Zlata Filipovic as well as attend field trips that were not accessible to them due to financial and academic limitations. Gruwell supported her students and gained their trust through journaling.

In an analysis that looks at Erin Gruwell's pedagogical practices, Jung-Ah Choi (2009) concurs that Gruwell's teaching practices build trust in her classroom. Two main theoretical and pedagogical practices that Gruwell utilizes are establishing students as creators of knowledge, and community building (Choi, 2009, p. 245-246). First, Choi explains how Gruwell challenges the banking system that Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* also challenges in order to position students as knowledge creators. She writes, "[Gruwell] empowers the students by helping them author and publish their own stories [...] Writing their life stories allows the

students to reflect critically on the sociocultural inequities that define their lives” (Choi, 2009, p. 245). Students are able to write whatever they want in order to tell their stories. While the purpose of writing the journals is not to analyze or even relate to their own sociocultural inequities, the writing that is produced is unregulated and raw and reflects their experience of learning both in society and in the classroom. Through the practice of journaling, students can negotiate their own self authority in the classroom. Students can share what they want with the teacher, allowing them to construct their own identity and shape their relationship to learning in the classroom.

When Gruwell started teaching in Long Beach, the students had a prior constructed authority and identity from being outsiders in the classroom that resulted in them fighting for authority and credibility in the community and in the classroom. Gruwell encourages students to bring their own experiences to the table and values their contribution to the class. Choi writes, “Gruwell helps each become a writer, learning writing by experiencing it. This authentic learning allows the students to take ownership of their knowledge, claim their expertise and experience a sense of competency” (Choi, 2009, p. 246). By giving her students the respect and support that they needed, she also began to build a community in the classroom and by doing so challenge the status quo. Secondly, Choi explains in her article that, “In the traditional classroom, students compete over who knows the most and whose knowledge is more akin to the teacher’s. In [Gruwell’s] critical pedagogy, however, students are creators of knowledge, peers become collaborators, and the classroom is transformed into a significant space where voices emerge, are tested, and are legitimated” (Choi, 2009, p. 246). The journaling and diary writing that the students go through as part of the curriculum that Gruwell uses allows for a classroom to thrive. Seeing the success of Erin Gruwell’s use of journaling with at-risk students and the use of theory

in the classroom made me want to investigate how to use journaling, more specifically dialogue journaling, in my basic writing classrooms.

Throughout this chapter of my thesis, I aim to explain the history of dialogue journaling and the scholars who have made dialogue journaling a mainstream pedagogical practice. By doing so I will elaborate on the past studies that have created a foundation that my study has heavily relied on in looking for a gap in the research. Many studies in the field of composition have looked at dialogue journaling and the results that come from using them in the classroom as well as manipulating the format. Often these studies explain that students feel more confident and comfortable writing; however, many of these studies don't explain why or how these journals work in first-year composition classrooms. In an attempt to look at why and how dialogue journals boost self-confidence I focus on data from students using a lens based on the research that has been done surrounding self-confidence and self-efficacy. Throughout this chapter basic writing theory is weaved together with the work of the research of scholars to show the importance of dialogue journaling in the field of basic writing.

History of Dialogue Journaling

Dialogue journals were initiated within the teaching profession during the 1960s, but it wasn't until the early 1980s that academics within K-12 and education began to focus their research on what dialogue journals are and more importantly how those journals could be effectively used in the classroom. Jenna Staton defines dialogue journaling as “interactive, functional writing which occurs between students and their teachers on a daily basis, about self-generated topics of interest to each writer” (Staton, Shuy, Kreeft-Peyton, & Reed, 1982, p. 1). Staton's definition allows for a diverse set of applications of dialogue journals with three specific

requirements. Dialogue journals must be interactive, functional, and self-generated. First, dialogue journals must be written between individuals or groups rather than as an isolated activity that makes up most of journaling practices. Second, the use of dialogue journals in the classroom must be functional; the time writing should not be a hindrance on the daily classroom practices and the writing should contribute to the class. Lastly, the writing should be self-generated by the student without external pressure. Students can write about whatever they choose using methods such as freewriting.

The classroom research of two teachers influenced Staton's definition of dialogue journals. Leslee Reed and Barbara Bode are two elementary school teachers who began to use this practice of interactive writing with their sixth and first grade students respectively. Leslee Reed was a sixth-grade teacher at an elementary school in Los Angeles, California, where over many years she developed a process that worked for dialogue journaling with her students. Each day students would come into her classroom and find their journals in their "boxes" that serve as lockers in preparation for the transition to middle school, and they would read the responses from Reed (Staton, Shuy, Kreeft-Peyton, & Reed, 1988, p. 3). As the day progressed, the students would be able to write a journal entry to their teacher, and at the end of the day Reed would take the journals home and respond to the journals. This process repeated daily throughout the entire year with her students. The work that Reed accomplished with dialogue journaling is reflective of student-centered pedagogy instead of a teacher-centered pedagogy, allowing for her students to communicate directly with her daily. Through exchanging journals with her students, Reed was able to know more about her students and that knowledge helped her be better informed when making curriculum decisions. After she had reached a level of familiarity and practice, she worked with Jana Staton, Roger Shuy, and Joy Kreeft-Peyton to

help analyze how dialogue journals functioned in the classroom and the effectiveness of using dialogue journals in the sixth-grade classroom. As a result, the team received a National Institute of Education grant that allowed for many studies to take place using dialogue journals from Reed's sixth grade and English Language Learners (ELL) classrooms. Together with this team of sociolinguists, Reed began to analyze one year of her students' journals that spanned one to four lined composition books (Staton, Shuy, Kreeft-Peyton, & Reed, 1988, p. 14).

Staton, Shuy, Kreeft-Peyton, and Reed reached many conclusions about skill and language use that are utilized in dialogue journals in studies that were published in *Dialogue Journal Communication: Classroom, Linguistic, Social and Cognitive Views*. The first conclusion was that dialogue journals produce the necessary conditions for language development in both oral and written skill sets (Staton, Shuy, Kreeft-Peyton, & Reed, 1988, p. 87). In order for oral and written skill sets to be developed, there are four conditions that must be met in practice: "the task must happen in order to be learned, the tasks must happen meaningfully, the task must happen meaningfully in such a way that it can be monitored by the learner, self-motivated and provide comparative/contrastive learning" (Staton, Shuy, Kreeft-Peyton, & Reed, 1988, p. 87). First dialogue journals need to be practiced often so that the practice becomes repetitive. Secondly, dialogue journals must be written authentically and without a forced purpose or audience. During the third condition of dialogue journaling, the student and teacher create a reflective monitor that allows for the student to look over past entries and see their own improvement. Lastly, through creating a dialogue between student and teacher, a comparative/contrastive use of modeling is used by the teacher so that students can see common mistakes that are made without being corrected.

Evidence was also found that over a period of ten days, students made a shift from

limited audience connection in their entries to more audience directed and elaborate entries that were more interesting (Staton, Shuy, Kreeft-Peyton, & Reed, 1988, p. 106). This shift in audience allowed for the transfer of skills learned from journaling to be applied to essay writing. Along with the shift in audience, there was also a shift in content for the entries. At the beginning entries revolved around class-based information and activities. By the end of the ten-day period, students were more likely to include nonshared information, meaning they were willing to tell stories that needed to be elaborated because the teacher did not have the contextualization of the information, which was from outside of the classroom (Staton, Shuy, Kreeft-Peyton, & Reed, 1988, p. 106). Kreeft-Peyton was able to notice the connection between oral and written language and how audience is constructed. Oral communication allows for a speaker to clarify and adjust how they are sharing information based on the audience surrounding them and on social cues. With written communication the writer must wait until a reader has read and synthesized the essay or prose after the writing has been completed. By implementing dialogue journals, different features of oral communication and written prose stand out. The first is that when writing, unlike in person-to-person oral communication, the writer must provide background information that contextualizes what they are trying to say. When speaking with people, a speaker can use body language and gestures to indicate meaning (Staton, Shuy, Kreeft-Peyton, & Reed, 1988, p. 89). The second issue that Kreeft-Peyton addressed is that oral communication has instant gratification, whereas in written communication the writer has to imagine and construct the audience they are attempting to connect with. Dialogue journals forced students who rely on oral communication to adapt to how written communication demands the writer to construct an audience during the writing process without the help of feedback. Through dialogue journals students were able to work in a medium that allowed for the

use of both oral and written communication skills that eased the burden on the student as they transitioned to a more academic writing environment. Negotiating this shift in communication allowed students to have a reason for writing before they began writing due to the necessity of constructing an audience in their journal.

Shuy concluded that using dialogue journals increased functional language competency. Functional language competency is defined as “the underlying knowledge that people have that allows them to use their language to make utterances in order to accomplish goals and to understand the utterances of others in terms of their goals. It includes a knowledge of what kinds of goals language can accomplish (the functions of language), and of what are permissible utterances to accomplish each function (language strategies)” (Staton, Shuy, Kreeft-Peyton, & Reed, 1988, p. 107). Part of this language competency is understanding that complaining has value in the classroom. Kreeft-Peyton also concludes that Reed’s “polite” responses as defined by Lakoff’s *Rules of Politeness*, created a more effective way of questioning and as a result, mutual conversation increased allowing for teacher-student rapport to increase and the imbalance of power in the classroom to decrease (Staton, Shuy, Kreeft-Peyton, & Reed, 1988, p. 178, 201). Lakoff’s rules are simple: “be friendly, don’t impose, and give options” (Staton, Shuy, Kreeft-Peyton, & Reed, 1988, p. 178). In the context of the work that Reed was doing in the classroom, Kreeft-Peyton breaks down her responses to students and how they function. First, be friendly means that the teacher relinquishes their authority to establish topics and instead furthers the conversation by asking questions that move the conversation along based on what students write in their journals. Second, don’t impose looks at how often students responded to questions that the teacher asked. Kreeft-Peyton writes, “the fact that students answer only 43% of Mrs. Reed’s questions in the fall, and 67% in the

spring, demonstrates that they feel considerable freedom about whether or not they are required to respond to the questions in the journals” (Staton, Shuy, Kreeft-Peyton, & Reed, 1988, p. 181). Using questioning in responding to students should be focused in creating dialogue while not expecting those questions to be answered if a student does not want to. Lastly, give options means to give, “reflective questions in response to student topics [to address] a particular situation and then expand the focus to suggest new options for similar situation in the future” (Staton, Shuy, Kreeft-Peyton, & Reed, 1988, p. 182). All of the conclusions reached by these scholars contribute to the research supporting the successful use of dialogue journals in the classroom.

During 1988, the same year that Staton, Kreeft-Peyton, Shuy, and Reed published their results, Barbara Bode published her doctoral dissertation *The Effect of Using Dialogue Journal Writing with First Graders and Their Parents or Teachers as an Approach to Beginning Literacy Instruction* that was based on a study that adapted Reed’s use of dialogue journals. One significant difference between the two studies is that in Bode’s study adults, other than the teacher such as parents, guardians, and caretakers were able to write in the journals (Bode, 1989, p. 569). Both Bode and Reed focused on meaningful dialogue that continues the conversation instead of correcting errors in the students’ writing; however, in Bode’s study “the adult was encouraged to model the correct spelling of those words for which the child invented a spelling. Correct usage of written conventionalities was also encouraged by example” (Bode, 1989, p. 569). Bode reached the conclusions that dialogue journals are liberating for teachers and students. Using dialogue journals allowed for reading and writing instruction to be combined in order to create monitors for students to improve their writing by having mentors to model proper writing and mechanics. These practices came together to empower students to want to work on

their literacy and increase their willingness to play a part in their education. Together, the two studies initiated further scholarship in the field.

Since the use of dialogue journals has gained in popularity, there have been new studies considering various formats and methodologies beyond the K-12 classrooms. Priscilla Reinertsen and M. Cyrene Wells (1993) studied how dialogue journals connected to critical thinking in college sociology classes. Through their study they implemented dialogue journaling for individual students and for groups within the course. They concluded that “the atmosphere of the class was comfortable, and journal writing added to the congeniality of the groups. Journal writing transformed writing, which all too often produces anxiety, into an activity that made many students more confident about their abilities to create meaning through writing” (Reinertsen & Wells, 1993, p. 185). Dialogue journals have been used in many different technological methods and practices including email (Abdul Razak & Asmawi, 2005) and WhatsApp (Noyan & Zeynup, 2019), groups and individuals (Reinertsen & Wells, 1993), teacher professional development (Roderick & Berman, 1984), and in curriculums other than composition (Reinertsen & Wells, 1993; Van Horn & Freed, 2008).

Dialogue Journals in Basic Writing

A few key studies have used dialogue journaling in the basic writing classroom. James Olson, Mary Deming, and Maria Valeri-Gold (1994) published an article “Dialogue Journals: Barometers for Assessing Growth in Developmental Learners,” and in that article they were able to piece together an understanding of how dialogue journals become useful in the basic writing classroom. Olson and his colleagues examined dialogue journals as part of a basic writing curriculum that had a revolving set of instructors. The study took place throughout six

undergraduate writing courses that enrolled 250 students over the course of the study. During each class period, students were instructed to write in their journals for the duration of 15-20 minutes per class period and if that time was not enough for students, they were encouraged to continue journaling outside of class. The journaling that took place throughout the process was a result of topic-centered writing rather than undirected freewriting; however, if a student was uncomfortable or uninterested in the topic, the student was able to utilize freewriting in their journal. Once journaling was completed, students submitted their journals to the instructor and waited for a response. The instructors as a team would make sure that journals were submitted to a different instructor each time. Over the course of the study all 250 students completed course evaluations in which 80% of students agreed that dialogue journaling should continue in future courses (Olson, Deming, & Valeri-Gold, 1994).

Through the course of the study Olson and his colleagues discovered that dialogue journals enhance student-teacher interaction, encourage cognitive growth, strengthen the reading/writing connection, and develop metacognitive abilities (Olson, Deming, & Valeri-Gold, 1994). As a result of their study Olson, Deming, and Valeri-Gold concluded that there were nine significant uses for dialogue journals in the basic writing classroom:

- To enhance student/teacher dialogue
- To build student self-esteem
- To give personal attention to students
- To individualize instruction
- To assess student perceptions of instruction
- To adjust instruction as needed
- To investigate metacognitive aspects of learning
- To uncover “social and emotional” baggage
- To confront student learning problems (Olson, Deming, & Valeri-Gold, 1994, p. 28)

The uses listed above allowed for students to begin to take risks and start the process of being an active participant in their learning. Olson and his fellow researchers define risk clearly: “Risk involves students’ unfamiliarity with the task, the personal and private nature of the task, the lack of an established trust system, feelings of vulnerability and inadequacy, and need to protect the personal self” (Olson, Deming, & Valeri-Gold, 1994, p. 27). By manipulating the environment in which risk takes place, instructors can create a stable classroom that encourages student-teacher interaction. The study claimed that “journals can establish and enhance a dialogue between the teacher and the learner that empowers both parties in the learning process” (Olson, Deming, & Valeri-Gold, 1994, p. 28). The claim that relationships and rapport between students and instructors lead to growth is supported by two student entries that encouraged the further use of dialogue journaling. Growth for the first student is portrayed as a new sense of comfortability with skills that the student struggled with previously. The entry reflects that journaling as a class activity allowed them to be more creative, relieving the pressure of grades and expectations while learning to write for themselves (Olson, Deming, Valeri-Gold, 1994, p. 29). The second student wrote: “I really do not mind if you use things from my journal because I really trust you- a journal should be between you and a trustworthy person- it's something that I can share with another and know that there's always someone there who cares and understands” (Olson, Deming, Valeri-Gold, 1994, p. 29). These two students indicated growth by learning new skills that are vital to first-year composition. The first student learned that in the classroom it is okay to make mistakes and learn from them, while the second student learned that it is okay to share writing with a teacher and have confidence in their relationship with the instructor. Olson, Deming, and Valeri-Gold's findings support the use of dialogue journaling in the basic writing classroom.

While Olson, Deming, and Valeri-Gold (1994) focused on the basic writing classroom and the possible benefits that dialogue journaling could contribute to the curriculum, the team of researchers do not define the particular means by which students improve their skills. Throughout their article they allude to the conclusion that dialogue journaling provides opportunities for students to improve their skills and build rapport. However, their study does not denote a methodology to gather data that could be used to elaborate on how much students improved their skills and how rapport plays a role during dialogue journaling in a way that can be measured. In order to understand the effects of dialogue journals, quantifiable and measurable data must be generated to further the implementation of dialogue journaling in the first-year writing classroom. Part of navigating the research is understanding the variables that come into play when implementing dialogue journals in the classroom. The field of basic writing has its own set of terms and variables that impact the work that is done in the classroom. As a result, one must understand the terminology and the impacts the various variables can have on students.

Writing and Confidence Variables

In the writing classroom, an instructor typically makes the decisions about the curriculum and pedagogy. The decisions that are made by the instructor for the classroom can impact students' attitudes about writing. Before students enter the first-year composition classroom, the decisions and behaviors of their previous teachers and role models have shaped how students feel about themselves and their chances of success. Many of the students who are classified as basic writers are a group of the most culturally and linguistically diverse students that a university will see in the general education programming. James Banks believes that for these students to be empowered the education must be transformative: "students develop the knowledge, skills, and

values needed to become social critics who can make reflective decisions and implement their decisions into effective personal, social, political, and economic action” (qtd. in Hammond, 2015, p. 89). Now, a transformative education does not shift students’ practices to become activists or revolutionaries. Instead, a transformative education allows for students to understand their place in their community, and the history from which they have come, while giving them tools to succeed not only in the classroom but also in the world that they choose to live in. Being able to locate themselves within their community, both at the academic level and in the society at large, is crucial to the development of the students' understanding of who they are and what they can do. Until students are ready to go out into the world and take their place in the university or society without help, they will need an ally.

During their past experiences, students who are classified as basic writers did not have all of the support that they needed in order to thrive in the classroom. Zaretta Hammond points out that, “because of institutional inequities, these students [who are basic writers] have underdeveloped ‘learn-how-to-learn’ skills as well as weak foundational skills in reading and analytical writing” (Hammond, 2015, p. 90). By having underdeveloped “learn-how-to-learn” skills, students are stuck in a cycle of learning that they cannot progress in, and the students have become aware of their position. Hammond writes, “their awareness of their own lack of academic proficiency leads to a lack of confidence as learners” (Hammond, 2015, p. 90). Students are unable to build a foundation of reading and writing skills that their peers have successfully mastered, thus leaving them behind and eventually weakening their confidence in the skills that they have mastered. As a result, students develop learned helplessness that makes the student feel as if they cannot succeed regardless of what they choose to do. Students begin to give up on their education and lose interest in the thought that they can succeed. This

helplessness is magnified by stereotypes of education that are placed on students, not only by teachers, but also the community in which they live either knowingly or unknowingly. These stereotypes create in students what Claude Steel has called a “stereotype threat”. He defines a “stereotype threat” as, “a type of racially charged amygdala hijack. It happens when a student becomes anxious about his inadequacy as a learner because he believes his failure on an assignment or test will confirm the negative stereotype associated with his race, socioeconomic status, gender, or language background” (qtd. in Hammond, 2015, p. 91). One of the goals of basic writing is to help students understand these stereotypes and allow them to confront them with a teacher that wants them to learn to overcome their obstacles and grow confident in their writing despite their experiences.

When a teacher and a student work together in the classroom, they are forming a rapport that allows for the student to create a safe space in which to learn. Psychologist Edward Bordin has detailed what he calls a Learning Partnership Alliance that creates a therapeutic alliance that Hammond has broken down. In order to create this alliance that is akin to doctor-patient confidentiality, there are three critical parts that the student and teacher must follow: the pact, the teacher as ally and warm demander, and the student as a driver of their own learning (Hammond, 2015, p. 93-95). The pact is the creation of an agreement between a student and a teacher as a promise to work together in order to achieve learning goals that they establish together. The teacher as an ally and warm demander allows the teacher to offer emotional support and a drive towards success. The teacher must build an environment in which students can take risks in order for them to build confidence. Lastly, the student must “commit to being an active participant in the process and [take] ownership of [their] own learning” (Hammond, 2015, p. 95). Basic writers depend on this alliance as a pedagogical tool in order for their confidence to improve.

Dialogue journals employ each method of the pact explained by Hammond. First, those students committing to using dialogue journals write with a teacher in a journal with the notion that writing practices will improve. Secondly, journaling in nature is a highly personal practice. The exchanging of journal entries between student and teacher creates a rapport and a relationship that the student can trust. Students know when dialogue journal entries are due, and they have an expectation of the instructor to respond to what they have written. Lastly, students write often in a dialogue journal, allowing them to practice their writing skills. Some students push themselves harder each time journals are exchanged to write more and improve their skills while taking responsibility for their own education. Pollard writes of journaling that,

The value of journal writing is that it allows the expression and clarification of individual experience. Such expression and clarification is a fundamental component of education... Our journals allow us to capture our experience and arrest it for contemplation. Gradually, we come to the understanding that we are engaged in a slow but powerful discipline for understanding and creative growth. (qtd. in Oxendine, 1988, p. 6).

The combination of the process of journaling and the therapeutic alliance that Bordin suggests, allows for the potential of dialogue journaling to confront the stereotypes and past experiences in learning that students have had put upon them and channel the learning of writing into a new direction.

Self-Efficacy Theory

When students walk into the first-year composition classroom, they have preconceived ideas of what the class is about and their chances of reaching success at the end of the course. Instructors often attempt to change these preconceived ideas that students have, but the

motivation that the student has develops individually creating a self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is defined by Albert Bandura as a “person’s particular set of beliefs that determine how well one can execute a plan of actions in prospective situations” (qtd. in Lopez-Garrido, 2020, What is Self-Efficacy?). Albert Bandura is an educational psychologist who developed the social cognitive theory that considers how individuals learn and gain knowledge as a part of behavioral interactions. Social cognitive theory relies on four key theoretical components: modeling, outcome expectations, self-efficacy, and identification. Modeling allows students to observe actions that can influence learning behaviors as well as learn what actions should not be mimicked in the classroom. Outcome expectations are reliant on the student having a clear understanding of what is expected of them. If students know their expectations, then they are better prepared to produce a product that reflects those expectations. Self-efficacy as defined above focuses on motivation and how the individual student must subconsciously develop a sense of motivation or lack thereof for the educational tasks at hand. Lastly, identification allows for students to connect with one another and as a result see themselves through other students’ successes and mistakes.

Self-efficacy theory takes the broad strokes of social cognitive theory and applies those concepts to develop an understanding of how motivation is established. Motivation begins by experiencing success. Bandura writes, “Mastery experiences are the most influential source of efficacy information because they provide the most authentic evidence of whether one can muster whatever it takes to succeed. Success builds a robust belief in one's personal efficacy. Failures undermine it, especially if failures occur before a sense of efficacy is firmly established” (qtd. in Lopez-Garrido, 2020, Mastery Experiences). Bandura simply theorized that if students achieve success, their motivation to continue that success will continue. However, if a student

struggles and consistently falls short of expectations, then their motivation decreases as a result. This phenomenon is also applicable to social successes that peers experience. In a classroom where students can easily identify with one another, and they see that a fellow student can meet the expectations and succeed, the students then begin to feel as if they too can rise to the expectations. These vicarious experiences are explained by Bandura: “Seeing people similar to oneself succeed by sustained effort raises observers' beliefs that they too possess the capabilities to master comparable activities to succeed” (qtd. in Lopez-Garrido, 2020, Vicarious Experiences). The observations that are made in class could be a student discussing the feedback that they received on their assignments, or it could be a direct comment that drives the observer to work harder to achieve.

The next aspect that constructs self-efficacy is social persuasion or verbal persuasion. B.F. Redmond has done work on social persuasion, and he indicates that when students receive positive verbal feedback, it persuades the student to believe that they are successful. Redmond explains, “Self-efficacy is influenced by encouragement and discouragement pertaining to an individual’s performance or ability to perform” (qtd. in Lopez-Garrido, 2020, Social Persuasion). Verbal persuasion allows for students to create new beliefs on what they can achieve in a course and to replace prior beliefs that are negative with positive reinforced beliefs.

Lastly, self-efficacy depends on the emotional and physiological states of students. Each student observes and interacts with the world differently, and those interactions and conditions shape the image they have of themselves based on race, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and gender that create stereotype threats. Bandura explains that the minute differences between emotional and physical experiences create perceptions that impact a student’s writing and how they create the “self”: “it is not the sheer intensity of emotional and physical reactions that is

important but rather how they are perceived and interpreted. People who have a high sense of efficacy are likely to view their state of affective arousal as an energizing facilitator of performance, whereas those who are beset by self-doubts regard their arousal as a debilitator” (qtd. in Lopez-Garrido, 2020, Emotional and Physiological States). Affective arousal simply stated means that some individuals have a higher self-efficacy allowing for obstacles to encourage them to succeed. For example, a student who is homeless, poor, and a person of color could have perceptions of their success that produce a lower self-efficacy, while a non-minority student, who has a place to live, ample food to eat, and financial stability would have a higher self-efficacy.

Learned helplessness is the opposite of self-efficacy. Learned helplessness implies that the student has accepted defeat and is unwilling to work towards improving their skills. Courtney Ackerman writes in her article, “What is Self-Efficacy Theory in Psychology?” that “While self-esteem is focused more on ‘being’ (e.g., feeling that you are perfectly acceptable as you are), self-efficacy is more focused on ‘doing’ (e.g., feeling that you are up to a challenge)” (Ackerman, 2020, Self-Efficacy vs. Self-Esteem). It is important to realize that self-efficacy implies that there are actions that a student must do in order to succeed. Bandura implies that there are coping mechanisms that contribute to self-efficacy. Ackerman (2020) writes of Bandura’s model that, “perceived self-efficacy influences what coping behavior is initiated when an individual is met with stress and challenges, along with determining how much effort will be expended to reach one’s goals and for how long those goals will be pursued” (Ackerman, 2020, Albert Bandura and His Model). The perceptions that a society has of a student and their circumstances thus influences the self-perceptions that students create as beliefs that they can or cannot succeed in a course.

While self-efficacy and motivation at times seem to be interchangeable, it is important to note that the terms merely overlap in meaning and not in use. Self-efficacy examines how students create and process beliefs and perceptions that apply to their individual situation. These beliefs and perceptions generate motivation or the lack thereof for the student. Motivation relies on the desires of the student to achieve a goal. Motivation can push a student to success regardless of mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and the given emotional and physiological states that the student has lived in or is currently living in. In the first-year composition program, one demographic of students that respond to both those who lack self-efficacy and/or an abundance of motivation: the basic writing classroom.

Building Rapport

In university writing centers collaboration and making connections are essential core values to running a beneficial tutoring session. As students come into centers tutors only have a limited window to establish a connection before turning to the writing that the student is seeking help with. Each student has a preconceived idea of what a tutor does and how the session will result. Some students come into the writing center and are open to making changes while learning various skills they need to be successful. Other students are more resistant. They want the tutor to take on more of the work or act as an editor instead of collaborating and establishing rapport. Often basic writers are part of this latter group.

Basic writers enter the classroom with hesitations and a resistance to writing. Sometimes these barriers are brought on by past experiences in the classroom, poor encouragement, learning differences, and other obstacles that leave a lasting impression. Although these reasons are significant, one main issue with resistance presents itself in the basic writing classroom: the

belief that they are not writers. The key condition to establishing a connection is recognizing similarities between the instructor or tutor and the student. The University Center of Writing-Based Learning at the University of DePaul has a blog that helps explain how to better establish rapport with hesitant writers. They write, “Creating a shared identity with your writer can help remove the evaluator/student relationship and instead suggest a peer to peer dynamic. Though as tutors we’re allotted a few minutes in the beginning of our appointment to build rapport, it is something we should continue to build throughout any appointment” (Chicagoland, 2021, What Building Rapport Looks Like). Dialogue journals allow the teacher/tutor and student to share the common identity of writer because both are engaged in the act of writing. This shared identity provides a way to establish rapport. Later in their blog post they reiterate, “Rapport building with a more hesitant writer is a key way to change a writer’s attitude, both about their experience in the Writing Center, but also about the writing process in general” (Chicagoland, 2021, What Building Rapport Looks Like). Dialogue journals provide an opportunity for students to work through this process at their own pace while establishing a connection with writing and the instructor.

Two significant studies have looked at rapport and how it is developed in the writing center. The first was a study by Therese Thonus who discovered practices that impact rapport. Those practices “included agreeing on a diagnosis of how to improve the writing, taking turns during a conversation, talking about other subjects besides writing, and a mutual understanding existing between the student and the tutor” (Mahaffey, 2020, para. 3). When tutors and instructors use these techniques during a session, rapport increases because a working relationship begins to form allowing for more open lines of communication. Dialogue journals can include all of these practices. The second study by Cynthia Lee analyzed tutoring sessions

looking for instances of rapport and surveyed both writer and tutor. Lee discovered there is a connection between “higher levels of rapport [and] higher levels of involvement and integration on behalf of the writer” (Mahaffey, 2020, para. 2). Students create rapport when they are more involved in the work taking place during the session. Dialogue journals encourage participation by requiring student and instructor to write back and forth allowing for connections to be made as involvement increases. In the literature there isn’t much on rapport. Rapport in the classroom is discussed in graduate level composition theory classes, but the research focuses more on collaboration and working together in the learning environment. Further research on building rapport in the field would be beneficial not only for instructors, but also for students on the other side of instruction.

Studies focusing on dialogue journals have briefly discussed the idea that students and instructors are able to communicate more through the journal. However, those studies do not address how or why these journals foster an environment in which students and instructors feel comfortable exchanging information. More importantly, the rapport that researchers claim is there, is not measured. By creating a system that measures rapport, practitioners and researchers can consider the impact and the significance that rapport adds to the learning experience. In this study I aim to measure the significance of rapport on various variables that are present in dialogue journals.

Basic Writing and Dialogue Journals

Both dialogue journaling and basic writing began to gain traction in academia during the 1980s. The concept of dialogue journaling encompasses a broad spectrum of formats and participants, but the two main conditions that are important are establishing a dialogue or

exchanging information and allowing students to have the opportunity to practice their writing. Whether basic writers are English Language Learners or native speakers, dialogue journaling has something to offer them by a means of acquiring new skill sets to improve their writing. The studies above show how useful dialogue journaling can be in the basic writing classroom. Although studies have shown that dialogue journaling has increased confidence in first year composition and other discipline-specific courses, they have also neglected to connect the confidence that students achieve to participation and how self-efficacy can play a role in dialogue journaling. How can we take this practice and use it to advance the field of basic writing further? How can we measure the confidence of students and their writing abilities through the use of dialogue journaling? How can we use the confidence that is achieved through dialogue journaling to increase self-efficacy and reduce stereotype threats? Over the last year I have asked myself these questions over and over looking for answers. I could not wait for answers and eventually I decided to conduct a study myself that focuses on confidence levels, affective filters, and to what extent is student/teacher communication shaped as a result of using dialogue journals in a basic writing classroom.

METHODOLOGY

Many scholars and academics have conducted studies to determine the usefulness of dialogue journals in K-12 classes, L2 courses, basic writing courses, and discipline specific courses. However, the research done by Staton, Shuy, Kreeft-Peyton, and Reed (1988) focuses more on the linguistic aspects of dialogue journaling such as language use, sentence structures, and the orality of writing while outlining the procedures that Reed followed in assigning and responding to journals in her sixth-grade classrooms. Reinertsen and Wells (1993) use dialogue journals in higher education, yet do not mention how to utilize and recreate their success in the classroom. This is a recurring theme throughout the scholarship on dialogue journaling. Studies focus on what happens as a result of using these journals in the classroom, but they do not lay out a process for using these dialogue journals. None of the studies in the literature identify specific protocols about the process that made dialogue journaling so successful for students; therefore, it is difficult to know what elements of dialogue journaling are essential to include in the classroom.

When examining the literature on dialogue journals, there is another significant gap in the scholarship. None of the studies address how they measured an increase in confidence or self-efficacy; they simply conclude that dialogue journals did increase confidence and/or self-efficacy. Without specifics, it is difficult to replicate their success or identify what aspects of dialogue journaling lead to increased self-confidence and self-efficacy. Can the success that has been proven to work in K-12, basic writing courses, ELL courses, and discipline specific higher education courses be replicated in my classroom? One goal of many was to see if I could replicate this process without having an initial standardized account of how to use dialogue

journals. Secondly, I wanted to determine if dialogue journals could increase students' confidence from the beginning of the semester to the end. Basic writers often have a lower self-esteem when it comes to writing, resulting in a need for a teaching tool that can increase self-esteem. While scholars like Olson, Deming, and Valeri-Gold (1994) use student journal entries to support their claims that dialogue journals increase student confidence, they do not support how and why dialogue journals build up confidence among students. This study is an attempt to take a deeper look at how dialogue journals function in that process. Along those same lines of questioning, I wanted to consider how a student's self-efficacy can be shaped through dialogue with the instructor. How the student perceives their ability to accomplish various writing tasks shapes their overall confidence in the class. As a result, both confidence and self-efficacy must be considered. Lastly, I wanted to consider how lines of communication are constructed with students through dialogue journaling. In the classroom there is often a gap between students and teachers and the information that they share. However, if a student willingly shares information, the instructor and student begin to define a rapport that can be utilized in the classroom. I wanted to know how this relationship develops using dialogue journals and how that sense of rapport impacts student teacher communication.

Participants

For the purpose of this study 16 students enrolled in a Co-Requisite basic writing course during one semester at Missouri State were invited to participate. At Missouri State University, basic writers are defined by ACT scores. If a student's score is a 17 or below, they are required to take ENG 100 Introduction to College Composition. However, there is an exception to this rule. If students score on the boundary of this regulations, they can choose to take the Co-

Requisite course that is six credit hours and is a combination of ENG 100 and ENG 110. Of the 16 students, the class consisted of 7 males and 9 females. Out of that sample size two students dropped the course, and six students did not complete the journals by the end of the semester. It is common in the basic writing classroom for students to stop participating in various classroom activities while continuing to remain in the class. These students did not have at least 50% of the journals completed by the end of the semester, and as a result they were excluded from the initial data sets. The remaining eight students completed their journals and completed the course, and out of those eight, gender was split evenly.

The students who participated in this study were enrolled in a hybrid version of the co-requisite course splitting instructional methods to 50% online and 50% in person. The co-requisite course required students to take six credit hours of ENG 100 and ENG 110 in the same semester with the same instructor for two hours and forty-five minutes twice a week. Due to the pandemic, class sizes needed to be reduced in order to practice safe social distancing resulting in the change in delivery methods from fully in person to the hybrid split. As a result, eight students were physically present in class during the first 75 minutes of class while the remaining eight students would meet digitally through a Zoom meeting that was connected to the physical classroom. After the first 75 minutes, students were able to take a fifteen-minute break and switch modalities, meaning the students in the Zoom meeting would report to the physical classroom, and those in the physical classroom would join a Zoom meeting from another location. This format allowed all students to have equal contact, both digitally and in a physical classroom with the instructor while allowing students time to work in class setting that replicates a studio. At the beginning of the semester the split Zoom and face-to-face learning worked; however, as the semester progressed student interest in the class and attendance began to drop.

The eight students who are included in this study were mostly the students who had regular attendance with one exception due to the students having completed the required journals. Slowly as the semester came to an end, attendance rates dropped significantly to 50% or less per class meeting.

Procedures

At the beginning of the semester, each student was given a journal that became their own physical writing space for them to communicate with me; they were required to write in their journals for ten minutes three times a week. During the second half of the co-requisite course each day that the course met, students would be given ten minutes to freewrite in their journals about anything that they chose to write about. This process was repeated during the second class meeting each week. The third journal of the week was for the student to complete on their own time using the same structure: 10 minutes of freewriting about a topic of their choosing. At the end of every other week in the semester, students posted their journals in a secure word document by either taking a picture or retyping their journals. Many students chose to either post photos or use the digital submission space to write when outside of the physical classroom.

For each submission, students were required to indicate at least three journal entries that they wanted the instructor to read by highlighting the text of the journal in red. The minimum number of journals was set at three because students could write in class twice a week and once outside of class creating a total of 6 entries. Students were required to submit three journals out of the six, allowing for the student to play an active role in deciding what was included in the study. Students were not informed of what I was looking for throughout this process. Although only three journals were required to be submitted for review, students had the option to indicate

other journal entries to be read by highlighting the text of the journal in yellow. To end their submission, they were to write a letter to the instructor with the knowledge that the instructor would respond to the letter over the next two weeks. Every two weeks students would repeat the submission and letter writing process, allowing for a dialogue to begin and continue throughout the semester. As their instructor, I responded to their letters carefully and in retrospect many of my responses fell into Lakoff's rules of politeness that Reed's responses also fell into. For students who were unable to start writing, I would ask them more questions about themselves and about their projects in order to get them thinking so that the next letter they wrote they would have more to say. An attempt was made not to write more than the student; however, as more students began to come out of their shells, I would respond more and write about topics we had in common or offer advice if they have asked for it. My responses went where students wanted to take their journal entries. As the semester came to an end, the students who are in this study wanted to communicate both in their journals as well as in class.

Surveys

In addition to creating dialogue journals between students and teacher, surveys were given four times throughout the semester: once at the beginning of the semester, twice throughout the semester after peer review, and once more at the end of the semester in order to track changes in their confidence, self-efficacy, and rapport with the instructor. As part of my teaching practices, surveys are used to check-in with students and adjust the course accordingly. The survey was an attempt to track longitudinal changes throughout the semester relating to the students' attitudes toward writing. Over the course of the four surveys, the expectation was that confidence with writing, in the form of self-efficacy, would improve as a result of using dialogue

journals. Most of the survey questions were on a sliding scale about the attitudes they had about writing and the course in general. The Likert scales were used so that students could provide a more nuanced response. I wanted to see the smaller shifts of confidence and comfortability as the course progressed. The final question on the survey was a “Choose all that apply” question. The expectation was that as students become more confident in their writing, the number of self-perceived issues in their writing would decrease. The survey included nine questions; however, for the purpose of this study, only five questions were focused on:

- How confident you are in your writing?
- How willing are you to ask for help in your writing?
- How open to change are you in your writing?
- How willing are you to share your writing?
- What issues do you believe you have in your writing? Select all that apply.
 - Organization
 - Punctuation
 - Getting thoughts on the page
 - Flow
 - Word Choice
 - Expanding Ideas
 - Pre-Writing
 - Grammar
 - Capitalization
 - Topic Selection
 - Other (Students can put in their own answers)

The first question allowed students to self-report their confidence as it related to their writing. The second question looked at how rapport develops throughout the semester with peers and instructor. Both the second and third questions looked at self-efficacy, but each question connected to a specific skill under the category of self-efficacy. The second question examines students’ self-perceived willingness to ask for help or recognize when they may need help. The fourth question examines how willing students believe they are to make changes in their writing.

A student that is willing to adapt to the practices of a writing class is more likely to perceive that they are more inclined to succeed in the course. In connection to Bandura's Self-Efficacy theory, these questions directly correlate to how students with high self-efficacy respond. It is important to refer back to Ackerman's statement that, "perceived self-efficacy influences what coping behavior is initiated when an individual is met with stress and challenges, along with determining how much effort will be expended to reach one's goals and for how long those goals will be pursued" (Ackerman, 2020, Albert Bandura and His Model). Coping methods in first-year writing courses include the ability to ask questions from a mentor or a more skilled peer and the ability to be open to making changes while drafting an essay. These two questions measure how students perceive their own abilities to use these coping mechanisms with the goal being an increase in their overall self-efficacy. Lastly, the final question that was used for this study allows for students to share what issues they believe they have in their writing. The hope was that students would feel that they had fewer issues in their writing at the end of the semester compared to the beginning of the semester.

Coding

To begin the coding process, journals needed to be compiled and sorted to identify journals that students allowed the instructor to read. In order to do this a Microsoft Word document was used to create a master document of all journal entries that students indicated to be read. For journals that were not able to be copied and pasted into the master document due to formatting and technology errors, they were analyzed in the original document where the journals were submitted paying close attention to only read the indicated entries.

Once the entries that were labeled to be read were separated from entries that were not to

be read, the quantitative and qualitative data collection began. Coding for each journal entry analyzed three specific concepts: content, word count, and purpose. These three categories establish the criteria that are used in order to determine the effectiveness of dialogue journals in the co-requisite writing course and create quantifiable results in order to understand how and why these journals work. Basic writers often write about many topics within a text, even if they are focusing on a specific prompt or idea. The purpose of looking at the content of each journal was to consider how writers would utilize dialogue journals by writing about content of their choosing. Content mapping allowed for the analysis of content themes and recurring patterns that appear throughout the journaling process. The expectation of looking at the content of journals was that students would slowly shift from solely discussing issues in class or college in general to eventually telling stories and sharing personal details about their life. Borrowing terminology from Staton, Shuy, Kreeft-Peyton, and Reed (1988), the expectation was that students would shift from class- based information to non-shared information. The shift from academic topics to personal topics opens the conversation between student and teacher beyond the classroom and establishes trust resulting in a more direct purpose when writing.

For basic writers, spelling and word truncation errors often present themselves both in their freewriting and essay writing for major coursework. Similarly, compound words are often mistakenly separated or combined although grammatical rules define otherwise. For example, words like “whenever”, “a lot”, and “everyday” were inconsistently misused throughout journal entries complicating word count. As a result, word units in this study are defined by the student’s typographical intent as indicated by spacing out words in their journal entries, i.e. “whenever” would be considered one word while “when ever” would be considered two words. Word count was used as a quantitative measurement rather than sentence length

due to inconsistency of skills across First Year Composition (FYC). In both basic writing courses and traditional FYC courses, the skillsets of a class can be skewed by previous experience and knowledge of writing. This inconsistency was present in this group of research participants enrolled in the corequisite basic writing course. Students that are typically enrolled in basic writing courses at Missouri State University have varying abilities and skill sets that they have managed to learn through their experiences with writing; regardless of abilities and skills, all students in this course struggled with sentence boundaries. Using the sentence boundaries that students have decided to use in their writing would conflate the data and create inconsistencies across all eight journals. At the beginning of the study, the expectation was that as students' confidence and comfortability with writing increase, word count should also increase, similar to the more elaborate and interesting entries reported by Staton, Shuy, and Kreeft-Peyton (1988).

The final element of coding considered the development of purpose, or functional language competency, that was represented by each journal entry that was submitted. By looking at the purposes that students use in their dialogue journals, one could begin to see the learning process that each individual participant practices as the semester progresses. The development of this progression scale was loosely based on Roderick and Berman's (1984) purpose classification from their 1984 article, "Dialoguing About Dialogue Journals" in which they list categories they applied to how language was functioning within the dialogue journals that they as teachers shared as part of professional development. They constructed six categories that their entries fell into: hunching/questioning, describing/elaborating, chaining, reflecting on self, suggesting, and logistics (Roderick & Berman, 1984, p. 687-8). Although Roderick and Berman's study looks at the application of dialogue journaling to instructors and not students,

creating a similar classification system was a key aspect in developing my methodology to create a measurable system that associates data with a number when considering how students use purpose and develop their own reasons to journal.

Reinertsen and Wells (1993) also make an astute observation about the experiences that dialogue journals provide to students. Together they have found that dialogue journals allow students “to reflect, to question, to evaluate, to consider multiple perspectives, to become aware of their biases, to deal with uncertainty, and to relate personal experiences to new learning” (Reinertsen & Wells, 1993, p. 185). The two scholars’ study looked at the use of dialogue journals both on the individual and group levels in sociology courses in higher education. The data they gathered analyzed direct text to journal processes or writing that directly responded to a text and or the course content. With the journals being used in a discipline specific course rather than general education course, the journals were intended as a learning tool. By combining the classifications used by Roderick and Berman (1984), and Reinertsen and Wells (1993) that looked directly at how students were using writing in the classroom, I was able to create a classification system that analyzed the development of purpose as the participants in the study used their respective dialogue journals. When combining the two categorization systems, I developed a system that used categories that correlated with a number on a scale, and those categories were based on how students used writing in each entry. The goal was to place each journal entry on the scale in order to see how their purpose as measured by this scale changed by either making progress towards a higher purpose or to see if students changed their purpose at various points throughout the semester. The classification system that was created is as follows:

- 1 Simple Sharing
- 2 Reporting

- 3 Anecdotal Welcoming
- 4 Complaining
- 5 Seeking Advice
- 6 Metacognition
- 7 Anecdotal Connection

The goal of creating this system was to look at how purpose developed from “Simple Sharing” to “Anecdotal Connection” in a way that is practical for first-year composition students. “Simple Sharing” is writing that lists tasks or ideas that do not have a common theme or idea. An example of this would be a student writing a sentence about what they ate for breakfast and then in the next sentence sharing their frustration about homework assignments. The two sentences are only connected by being in the same paragraph or journal entry. “Reporting” within the entry consists of lists of tasks or ideas that are connected by a common thread or theme. Unlike “Simple Sharing,” The classification “Reporting” describes a more cohesive journal entry. For example, if a student wrote about their weekend and listed the various activities they did in a weekend, it would be considered “Reporting” because the common thread is their weekend. The third step in developing purpose is “Anecdotal Welcoming”. The journal entries that are classified under this category are entries that tell stories or share information that goes beyond listing information and the content of the entry is more personal than “Reporting.” The purpose of “Anecdotal Welcoming” is sharing information that helps to build conversations both in the classroom and throughout the dialogue journaling process. “Complaining” categorizes journal entries that are emotional or angry based on the content of the entry. Journal entries that fit into this classification are often about a frustrating class, or roommates that they don’t get along with.

The next three classifications revolve around reflection and how information is sought or

applied within a journal entry. “Seeking Advice” entries often have rhetorical questions, direct questions to the instructor for advice, or references to struggling with coursework both inside the course and in other courses at the university. “Metacognition” focuses on the reflection of the entry and how the student applies skills or information learned to their life. Often the journal entries that fit into this category reflect on past actions or lack of planning and the student uses those reflections in order to create a plan of action for future situations. The last category is “Anecdotal Connection” where a journal entry includes a story embedded in the reflection process or the application of ideas and concepts in class in the practice of creative writing.

By doing extensive coding for purpose, I aimed to consider how student writing changes in regard to purpose. Too often basic writers are seen as students without a purpose or a reason for writing because they are not fully aware of the expectations that academic writing demand of them. Part of the basic writing classroom is teaching students how to understand these rules and use them to achieve a purpose that reaches an audience. It is the expectation that students will begin to think different about how and for whom they are writing. As students progress through the semester, their writing should thus shift from writing for the sake of writing to writing with a purpose that addresses either an external audience or an internal audience that is self-reflective. The categories above allow for this progression to be tracked and identified throughout the journaling process to see if dialogue journaling contributes to this shift.

In the composition classroom audience awareness is a vital skill for students to learn. Teaching audience can sometimes be difficult when some students in the class have yet to focus on their written communication skills, leaving them without the necessary tools to succeed at the beginning of the class. Much like Kreeft-Peyton (1988) outlines in her portion of the study,

students must negotiate and understand how written and oral communication are different and how to utilize an audience in writing. The student must consider how and why they are writing, along with the context in which they are writing. When students are able to have a clear purpose for writing, they can communicate more effectively. According to Kreeft-Peyton, dialogue journals are the bridge between oral and written communication, and as a result purpose must be looked at more in depth than audience and content alone. Purpose encompasses the content, audience, and tone of each journal. The goal is for students to move across this bridge having a more directed purpose when writing in academic and professional settings, shifting from simple listing in their entries to a more reflective and abstract mode of writing.

Correlations

For this study four sets of correlations were calculated using the variables of word count, purpose, self-reported error, self-efficacy, self-confidence, and rapport. To do these calculations it was first important to ensure that the data from both the journals and the surveys were grouped chronologically. Only the journal entries written prior to each survey were considered for correlation purposes with that particular survey. If a student did not complete a survey during a specific time period, their journal entries for that time period were excluded because the survey would then be a measure of the effectiveness of pedagogical methods used in the classroom rather than a measure of the effectiveness of dialogue journaling. Once this step was complete, all sets of data for all eight students were aggregated together. To calculate the correlations, I used the correlation function (=CORREL) in Excel to calculate the following correlations to determine if a correlation existed and if it did, how strong was the correlation and what type of correlation it was (direct or inverse). I used the correlation function to explore the relationship

between self-confidence, self-efficacy, and rapport (as self-reported in the survey) and shifts in the dialogue journals in terms of word count and purpose. I also looked at the relationship between students' self-reported confidence, and self-efficacy with self-reported errors. All correlation tests are shown in Table 1: Correlation Groupings.

Table 1: Correlation Groupings

Variable	Ran Against
Self-Confidence Survey Data	Word Count Purpose Self-Reported Errors Survey Data
Self-Efficacy Survey Data (willingness to seek help)	Word Count Purpose Self-Reported Errors Survey Data
Self-Efficacy Survey Data (willingness to change in writing)	Word Count Purpose Self-Reported Errors Survey Data
Rapport Survey Data	Word Count Purpose Self-Confidence Survey Data Self-Reported Errors Survey Data

Expectations

In preparation for this study, I made assumptions and expectations about each of these variables that would contribute to a better understanding of how and why dialogue journals should be used in the basic writing classroom. I believed that word count would increase over the course of the semester as students become more confident, as well as students using more complex purposes over time. Student rapport in my classroom is a critical aspect of how I run my

classroom. Coming into the semester I knew that I needed to make connections quickly just in case lockdown orders were reinstated. Using these journals, in my mind, would boost student teacher communication as well as encourage students to be more willing to participate in class and ask questions. By looking at the journal entries and the survey data, I wanted to better understand how dialogue journals impact students' confidence and self-efficacy. Many scholars have written and shared their ideas about how dialogue journals work and function in the classroom; however, they don't offer much of an explanation or any data to support their conclusions in regard to self-confidence or self-efficacy. This research project has allowed me to focus on answering this question and addressing the expectations that I had of students and the use of dialogue journals in the college basic writing classroom. The study itself was vetted and received approval from the Institutional Review Board from Missouri State University on September 30, 2020, IRB-FY2021-52 (See Appendix).

While the results of this study did not completely match my expectations, the information and insight gained from this study contributes to the gap in the literature and provides new insight into working with basic writers. The results reported in the next chapter follow five months of journaling from students, and while the data is displayed numerically, these students are much more than numbers. They are students with stories to tell, and that should be kept in mind while considering that data that these students produced.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In academia, reflective practitioners are better at adjusting to new students as well as listening to the needs of students. Early on in my teaching, I began to ask more and more questions of my students in an attempt to gauge where they were and how I could help them to get where they need to be. I use many different techniques in my classes such as surveys, class discussions, and colleague intervention to help assess my students' needs at any given time throughout a semester. Being a reflective practitioner, it was important to merge this practice with this study in order to gain feedback throughout the process and see the connections between the survey answers and what was happening in the dialogue journals students were writing. Therefore, I incorporated several questions into my survey that could gauge students' self-perceptions of their confidence and self-efficacy. Researchers have concluded that dialogue journals increase students' confidence and self-efficacy. However, none of the previous studies clearly articulate how these two factors were measured. Rather than relying on my own subjective assessment of these factors, I decided that a more accurate assessment would be students' reported self-perceptions of confidence and self-efficacy over the span of a semester in which they were engaged in dialogue journaling.

The original survey had nine questions that were targeting different issues such as confidence, self-efficacy, and self-perceptions that students had about their writing. Five questions of those nine were actually used as part of the data for this study: How confident you are in your writing?, How willing are you to share your writing?, How willing are you to ask for help in your writing?, How open to change are you in your writing?, and What issues do you believe you have in your writing? Each time the survey was given, the same survey and

verbiage were used allowing for a consistent measurement to take place. Across all four surveys, given in 2-3 week intervals, all students increased their self-assessed confidence levels in alignment with Reinertsen and Wells' (1993) findings that journal writing increased student confidence. The range of growth in their assessment was intriguing. Over the four surveys, students' initial assessment of their confidence in their writing was compared with their final survey to see the difference between those scores. All students increased their confidence by at least 1 point on a 10-point Likert scale. Initially, the students' self-assessed confidence was anticipated to increase steadily over the semester. While some students increased their confidence in a straight trajectory, others would shift back and forth between being more confident and less confident during surveys 2 and 3. Even though the students' confidence did not increase steadily throughout the semester, every student experienced an overall increase in confidence from the beginning of the semester to the end of the semester. When students began the semester, they collectively averaged out to be a 6.25 on the Likert's scale. At the end of the semester the students' confidence averaged out to be 8.43, meaning that over the semester students increased their confidence by 2.18 points. Out of this group of 8, three students stood out from the data by making major shifts in their confidence using the Likert's scale: from 4 to 8 (4 point shift), from 6 to 10 (4 point shift), and from 5 to 8 (3 point shift).

Two survey questions were aimed at trying to understand how students assess themselves on factors that contribute to self-efficacy. Self-efficacy, as defined in this study, relates to a student's belief in themselves that they can accomplish an academic feat. Two components of self-efficacy as it relates to this study were considered: the willingness to seek help, and the openness to change in their writing. In order to overcome their beliefs and develop a sense of self-efficacy, students must be willing to ask for help and be open to change when receiving help

or advice. When asked “How willing are you to ask for help with your writing?”, most students reported they were not as willing to ask for help by the end of the semester. At the beginning of the semester the average of student responses equaled 7.75. Once the semester was over, the last survey showed an average of 8.75 with a slight increase over the previous average; however, two out of the eight students increased their willingness to ask for help by 5 and 3 points which could have skewed the impact of the final survey. The remaining six students either decreased by 1 point or remained the same as their initial survey; the majority of students, therefore, did not see an increase in willingness to ask for help.

The second component of the survey looking at self-efficacy analyzed how students’ openness to change in their writing. In first-year composition classes, students must quickly adapt to new writing styles and expectations due to these courses focusing on peer response groups that depend on the willingness to give and receive feedback. In response to the survey question, “How open are you to change in your writing?,” half of the students increased their openness to change. The raw data indicates that students increased their self-assessed openness by a range of 1 to 3 points over the course of the semester. Overall, throughout the semester, the survey data did indicate that there was an increase in this aspect of self-efficacy.

Through looking at this data, another question presented itself: is there a correlation between confidence and the two components that make up self-efficacy, and if so, which correlation is stronger within the students’ data? Albert Bandura believed that there is a strong connection between confidence and self-efficacy, but how they presented themselves is different. He writes, “Confidence is a nondescript term that refers to strength of belief but does not necessarily specify what the certainty is about... Perceived self-efficacy refers to belief in one’s agentive capabilities, that one can produce given levels of attainment” (Bandura, 1997, p. 382).

These “agentive capabilities” can also be referred to as coping mechanisms as explained previously in the literature review. To answer this question, a correlation test was conducted in Excel using the three survey questions that relate to each issue within the survey. The results are shown in Table 2: Self-Confidence vs. Self-Efficacy.

Table 2: Self-Confidence vs. Self-Efficacy

Survey Question	Survey Question	Correlation
Self-Confidence: “How confident are you in your writing?”	Self-Efficacy: “How willing are you to ask for help in your writing?”	0.439795
Self-Confidence: “How confident are you in your writing?”	Self-Efficacy: “How open are you to change in your writing?”	0.359192

The data above confirms Bandura’s position that there is a strong correlation between confidence and self-efficacy over the time period that students were working on dialogue journals. The correlation between each component of self-efficacy, however, differs. Students are more willing to ask for help as their confidence increases, than they are to changing their writing. The ramifications of this data could mean that students are more willing to be vulnerable because they are confident in their writing. The second correlation that looks at students’ openness to change as confidence increases is a little weaker than its counterpart. The reasoning for this gap could be related to identity creating in writing. Students that are extremely confident in their work often have issues like Ken Macrorie (1985) terms “Engfish” where they use elevated and complex language to make a simple point or they attempt to write to fit into the university as detailed in David Bartholomae’s (1986) “Inventing the University” where they want to impress

an instructor. Once they reach a state of locking in a voice they believe is true, they have a new challenge to break out of the expectations of the university and write using their own voice that takes practice to discover.

The data of this survey shows that students' self-perception of confidence and self-efficacy increased over the course of the semester. The question remains, though, whether these increases are related to the implementation of dialogue journals in the classroom. To answer this question, I considered the content, word count, and purpose of the journal entries in the context of the results of the surveys students responded to.

Content

One of the major features that is discussed about dialogue journals is the way that students and instructors build a sense of rapport over the time that they are writing together. The content that students share contributes to connections being made through writing. Throughout the course of the semester, students were able to write about whatever they wanted allowing many different topics to be included in their entries. The topics that came up the most were: family, friends, Greek Life, COVID-19, anxieties, and routines. Students would often share the importance of seeing their family members and stories of activities or memories that they had experienced prior to the semester, and during the semester. Friendship for this group of students was a bit more of a complex issue. Some students were excited about the new opportunities that being in college would offer them. This comes after months in lockdown due to the pandemic, and they were ready to try new things in order to create friendships. Other students were too worried about the pandemic to go out with friends and meet new people, yet they discussed wanting to make new friends. Multiple students wrote about the struggle of

making new friends and how they were really trying. One student wrote, “At the beginning of this year I was looking for friends and I feel like that hasn’t been working but when I am not expecting on meeting new people that are cool it normally happens and worked out good so far.” This need for connection was evident in many journals. Part of this search for friendships led many students to try new things such as joining a fraternity or sorority to make new connections on campus.

Another major topic that appeared throughout the process was COVID-19 and anxieties that come with this significant shift in societal behavior. Students wrote about their concerns about coming to campus this fall due to the fact that the virus was not under control and their classes looked quite different compared to their high school classes or their previous college courses here at Missouri State University. The significant shift from a more open school environment that was easily accessible for students, to an environment where digital learning became a predominant delivery method for curriculum was difficult for many students. They struggled to adapt to this new environment which created further anxieties about their academic progress. One student wrote about her chemistry class that, “This self-taught situation is not for me at all. It’s a lot of weight on me right now that I don’t think I can handle right now.” Another student also addressed how difficult it was to keep up with classes and learn through Zoom: “I also need to work even harder at school and really work to get all my grades to A’s and B’s I can't afford to get any C’s or I will have to leave Mo State and I really don’t want to leave. The problem I am facing is how hard it is to be productive and learn from a zoom class especially my art classes. It's extremely impossible to learn and get better from my room.” In response to stress students began to worry both about the pandemic and their academic progress, mental health resources and news articles were brought into the classroom to help alleviate this

stress and have a candid conversation in class. Having this conversation with students allowed for more students who were not writing about these topics in their journals to become more vocal about the issues that they were facing. Knowing what students were concerned about and wanted to talk about helped to create a classroom environment in which all students felt safe coming forward to discuss issues in the class.

Through mapping the many different topics that students were writing about, a clear pattern did not emerge. It was anticipated that as students became more confident, they would share more personal information or non-shared information. Instead, students wrote about various topics in irregular patterns much like a roller coaster. Going into this study I expected students to develop their writing from discussing shared information like issues focused on the class, to writing about non-shared information that is outside of class and the instructor's knowledge. Staton, Shuy, Kreeft-Peyton, and Reed (1988) found that there was a shift in content and purpose the longer students wrote in dialogue journals. The beginning entries revolved around class-based information and the later entries included non-shared information about things outside of class. While Kreeft-Peyton and her colleagues may have discovered that result in their findings, this study did not reflect that. Rather, this study reflected that as student and teacher build more of a rapport the flow of information is much like a friendship. Sometimes friends have more to say while at other times they don't have as much to say. Dialogue journals created a rapport between students and the instructor not only in writing but also in classroom activities and conversations. Often students wanted to talk about dialogue journals in class or they would ask when they could write in them again. A pattern that shows development from one type of content to another did not exist.

Word Count

Basic writers often face the challenges of self-censorship and the fear of error while writing. This often result in shorter papers. Word counts for these students often vary for this reason. At the beginning of this study, it was expected that as confidence and self-efficacy increased, then an increase in word count would follow. As rapport was built, word count was also expected to increase due to having a more open line of communication between the students in the course and with the instructor. In order to assess if these assumptions were true, a set of correlations was run between word count and the survey results for confidence, self-efficacy, and rapport. These correlations used every response from all four surveys that aligned with the word counts for all 141 journal entries that were analyzed. The results of these correlations are displayed in Table 3: Word Count Correlations.

Table 3: Word Count Correlations

Survey Question	Journal Data	Correlation
Self-Confidence: “How confident are you in your writing?”	Word Count	0.00855
Self-Efficacy: “How willing are you to ask for help in your writing?”	Word Count	-0.33468
Self-Efficacy: “How open are you to change in your writing?”	Word Count	0.05723
Rapport: “How willing are you to share your writing?”	Word Count	-0.25248

The first conclusion that can be drawn from this data set is that there isn't a connection between word count and the students' perceived confidence. Students' word

count neither increases nor decreases as students' confidence increases over the span of the semester. The expectation that students would increase their word counts in the dialogue journals as they became more confident was not supported by the data. This result was unexpected because it was originally believed that when students felt more confident, they would be more willing to share information because they would write using more details. Staton, Shuy, Kreeft-Peyton, and Reed (1988) found that students were likely to write more in their journal entries by using details to elaborate, thus the word count should increase as a result; however, this was not the case.

The second conclusion that can be made about this data set of correlations is that word count has an inverse correlation with student's willingness to ask for help. This finding means that a students' willingness to ask for help is related to lower word counts. In comparison, students' willingness to make changes in their writing did not impact word counts in their journal entries. The data reflects students were more inclined to seek assistance when they are struggling to figure out what they are trying to convey during the translation phase of the writing process. For students, asking for help forces them to start a conversation in an attempt to get the information they need.

Conversations allow for student and teacher to have a more thorough understanding of what the other is intending to convey. As rapport builds, students become more comfortable with the instructor and as a result more comfortable with sharing new ideas. While sharing more ideas often leads to the idea that students write more, that data did not support this conclusion. In the case of these eight students, as rapport built over the semester through using dialogue journals, the less students would write. This is an interesting conclusion because although students were not writing more in the journals, they would speak up more in class compared to the beginning of

the semester and compared to the instructor's past experiences teaching first year composition. Students were more willing to come up to the instructor and have more open conversations about their interests, class, extra-curricular activities, and more making for a strong connection and sense of communication between the instructor and the student.

Purpose

Writing should always have a focus, whether its conscious or unconscious. Every writer learns to consider who their audience is and how to write in order to reach that audience. As we teach students to become more aware of their audience, their purpose becomes more direct as connections are made. Over the course of the use of dialogue journals, students were directed to freewrite about anything that they wanted to write about in each of their entries. Students would sometimes ask, "What should I write about?" or "Who should I write to?" Instead of answering questions, I simply directed students to keep writing even when they got stuck by telling them to repeat the last word they wrote before losing focus. This trick helped some students to re-center and continue writing. Instructions regarding purpose and audience were intentionally left out so that the study could look at how students use dialogue journals without being influenced by an instructor. At the beginning of the study a sliding scale for purpose was created in order to see the changes in purpose that students used in their journal entries. This scale focused on shifts from simple reporting to a more direct purpose that includes reflection. Over the course of the semester students did not make a direct shift in purpose from simple reporting to a more direct purpose. Instead, the students' entries varied in purpose throughout the semester. How students wrote depended on how the student felt about the topic. The dialogue journals functioned much like a friendship in terms of content and purpose.

Students shared what they wanted to share knowing the confines of the relationship. That relationship allowed students to be excited while writing and have more direct purposes at times, while other entries didn't have a purpose because students didn't have as much to share. Using the raw data from the dialogue journals alone, a correlation was tested between word count and purpose and that test proved that there was a slight correlation between word count and purpose at 0.169952. While the correlation isn't necessarily strong, it does provide enough evidence to consider studies looking at this connection. The anticipated results for the data were that as students became more confident in their writing, and they had a stronger self-efficacy, that the purpose would shift towards a more direct purpose while also reflecting and thinking about different topics they wanted to discuss using the dialogue journal.

Using Excel, correlations were run using the survey data as well as the journal data regarding purpose to see if there was a connection between the two sets of data. Each entry was categorized into a category that reflects simple reporting to a more direct purpose with each category connected to a number ranging from 1 for simple sharing to 7 for anecdotal connection. The results are shown in Table 4: Purpose Correlations.

Table 4: Purpose Correlations

Survey Question	Journal Data	Correlation
Self-Confidence: "How confident are you in your writing?" (Q2)	Purpose	0.17229
Self-Efficacy: "How willing are you to ask for help in your writing?" (Q4)	Purpose	0.05670
Self-Efficacy: "How open are you to change in your writing?" (Q7)	Purpose	0.19791
Rapport: "How willing are you to share your writing?" (Q3)	Purpose	0.21680

The data shows that there is a slight correlation between students reporting their confidence increased over the course of using dialogue journals and their purpose in the journals becoming more direct. The result of this correlation supports the initial assumption that students' purpose would become more direct as confidence increases; however, the correlation is not strong enough to be the final conversation about this connection, especially given that this semester was a particularly unusual semester in which students were struggling through a global pandemic. As students become more confident, the more likely they are to know how to manipulate their purpose to fit different audiences. Much like Staton, Shuy, Kreeft-Peyton and Reed (1988). found, students shift from a limited audience connection to a more direct audience; however, students fluctuate between these categories as they write in dialogue journals. Confident students are sometimes more willing to take risks in their writing allowing them to learn how different audiences and purposes are needed for their writing to be seen. More research should be conducted in the future on this topic.

Next, self-efficacy was considered by focusing on the two components that this study defined in previous chapters. The first correlation test showed that there isn't a connection between students' willingness to seek help and having a more direct purpose in their journal entries. One reason for this result could be that when students asked questions about what to write or who to write to, they were told that they could write about whatever they wanted, and they were not given an answer to their questions.

While students were not more willing to ask questions in correlation with purpose, they were however more open to change in their writing. The correlation for students being more open to change in their writing was nearly four times the correlation coefficient that was calculated for students being more willing to ask questions. One conclusion that can be reached

from this data is that students could be using the journal to explore different purposes in a low-risk dialogue journal, as opposed to a formal essay that is graded by the instructor. This practice is allowing them to experiment with purpose and by the end of the semester their likelihood of building up the skills needed for a more direct purpose can be learned. Students in class were not directing their entries to a particular audience across the semester, but the reasons why and how they are writing in their journal did show that there was a more directed sense of purpose that developed over the semester, connected to rapport both in the classroom and with the instructor.

Out of the four correlations that were run, rapport and purpose had the strongest correlation. This correlation brings up further questions of why are rapport and purpose connected in the journal entries? And in what ways does rapport impact purpose other than being more direct over time? Rapport is a strong foundational skill that is developed in the first-year writing program as well as understanding how to use purpose effectively in writing. Dialogue journaling allows for students to develop both skills in the basic writing classroom before moving on to the gateway class ENG 110 Writing I.

Self-Perception of Error

Every student that walks into an English classroom has had an experience where they doubted or were proud of their writing skills. These experiences shape students' self-perception of error. Basic writing students are often students that have many errors in their writing, and prior teachers have gone through their writing and made those errors known. The most common trope is the English teacher marking essays with a red pen causing students to panic or lose motivation as a result. For the set of co-requisite students that participated in this study, their perception of error was important to assess in connection to confidence and self-efficacy. The

expectation was that as students feel more confident and their self-efficacy increases, the number of self-reported errors would decrease over the course of using the dialogue journals. The survey asked students to check off skills from a list that answered the question, “What issues do you believe that you have in your writing?” At the beginning of the semester, students started out in a range of 2-8 self-reported issues with five students reporting 4-5 issues. As the semester progressed, students would fluctuate by 1 or 2 issues during the middle of the semester due to receiving more feedback from the instructor in the class overall thus impacting the survey results. The final survey showed that 5 students decreased their number of self-reported issues ranging from 2-4 issues. The remaining three students remained the same as their initial survey reported; however, two out of the remaining three increased their self-reported number of errors during the middle of the semester and then returned to their initial responses.

Correlations were tested to analyze how self-reported errors were impacted by self-confidence, self-efficacy, and rapport. In order to run these correlations, the data collected from the surveys was compared to other questions that were asked within the survey and not compared to the dialogue journal data. The results of the correlation tests are displayed in Table 5: Self-Perception of Error Correlations.

The table below indicates an inverse correlation between students’ confidence and errors, meaning that as confidence increased over the course of the semester, the number of errors that they chose to self-report decreased. Mina Shaughnessy addresses this phenomenon in her book *Errors and Expectations* and she shares that basic writers can conflate “good writing” with “error-free writing” (Shaughnessy, 1979, p. 8). The students in this study, however, don’t necessarily conform to this idea. From the initial survey 6 out of the 8 students reported issues with lower order concerns such as capitalization, punctuation, and grammar. 4 out of those 6

students reported roughly 2 to 4 more higher order concerns than lower order concerns. By the final survey only half of the students reported having issues with lower order concerns, and the number of higher order concerns overall dropped with 4 higher order concerns being the most compared to 6 being the most in the initial survey. Often when students become more aware of their errors, they tend to focus on those errors. However, in this case, as supported by the data, as confidence increased the focus on their lower order concerns and higher order concerns decreased, but higher order concerns did not decrease as significantly as lower order concerns.

Table 5: Self-Perception of Error Correlations

Survey Question	Survey Question	Correlation
Self-Confidence: “How confident are you in your writing?”	Self-Perception of Error: “What issues do you believe that you have in your writing?”	-0.49563
Self-Efficacy: “How willing are you to ask for help in your writing?”	Self-Perception of Error: “What issues do you believe that you have in your writing?”	-0.35015
Self-Efficacy: “How open are you to change in your writing?”	Self-Perception of Error: “What issues do you believe that you have in your writing?”	-0.51814
Rapport: “How willing are you to share your writing?”	Self-Perception of Error: “What issues do you believe that you have in your writing?”	-0.37518

The second correlation test revealed that students were more willing to ask questions as their self-perception of error decreased. Students’ motivation to ask questions in the classroom plays a significant role in reducing errors in writing. When students ask questions about different types of errors, they are better informed on how to fix those errors and add that

technique to their writing process. The correlation test revealed that as students' self-efficacy increased by means of being more open to change, students reduced the number of errors that they perceived that they make. Out of the three correlations that were tested, the students' willingness to change had the strongest impact in connection to reduction of the students' perceptions of their errors. Change and flexibility in writing are vital to addressing errors in student writing. Without the willingness to take risks and make changes, students can't change their mindset about writing nor change their mindset about the errors they believe they make while writing. Finally, as rapport increased self-perceived error decreased, suggesting that rapport does have an impact on reducing the self-perception of error.

Rapport

One common thread that runs through the data is the impact that rapport has on word count and purpose. Upon further consideration of the data, I wanted to understand how much of a connection rapport had with the main tenants that were used in this study: self-confidence, self-efficacy relating to asking for help, and self-efficacy relating to willingness to make changes to writing. In order to see the relationships between these three sets of data, correlations were tested, and the results are displayed in Table 6: Rapport Correlations.

The correlations between rapport and self-efficacy are stronger than the correlation between rapport and self-confidence. Throughout this study it has been reconfirmed that dialogue journals increase self-confidence and self-efficacy, but the key to this success could be rapport. Dialogue journals allow for rapport to build on an individual level with the instructor while also making sure that every student has a similar learning experience. Dialogue journals allow for students to develop self-confidence, self-efficacy, and rapport through first-year

writing.

Table 6: Rapport Correlations

Survey Question	Survey Question	Correlation
Self-Confidence: “How confident are you in your writing?”	Rapport: “How willing are you to share your writing?”	0.53990
Self-Efficacy: “How willing are you to ask for help in your writing?”	Rapport: “How willing are you to share your writing?”	0.64659
Self-Efficacy: “How open are you to change in your writing?”	Rapport: “How willing are you to share your writing?”	0.62228

Limitations

While this study began with a much larger sample size, there were some limitations to information that could be included in the data. The initial group of 16 students were reduced to eight students due to half of the class not completing enough journal entries to be included in the study. Survey data also had to be reduced in order to connect the dialogue journal data to the survey data. Four students missed surveys out of the eight and the data was removed from the pool of data; however, these exclusions did not significantly impact the results of the study. Another issue that presented itself during the data collection was the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic students were more concerned about their health, their families, and how to stay safe overall than focusing on their academic work, and rightfully so.

CONCLUSION

Before planning this study, I had a simple goal in mind: to figure out how dialogue journals work in the basic writing classroom. Now that this study is complete, I can reflect upon the nearly five months spent journaling with 16 of my students over the course of a semester. While only eight students successfully completed the journals, the processes and implementations that were necessary for the journals, all the students were impacted by using dialogue journals.

Through this process, I learned how to motivate students authentically instead of relying on a “you can do it!” rhetoric. Instead, I found topics of conversations that I could use both in the journals and the classroom as segues to addressing issues that related to writing and their major projects over the course of the semester. By having this interaction with students, I was better able to address lulls or empty gaps of class time and turn those moments into productivity. Knowing the students’ needs and concerns allows for better individualization in instruction. The conclusions reached for this study heavily relied on individual data and experiences as well as the data grouped as a whole in order to better understand how and why dialogue journals work in a basic writing classroom. Although their experiences have been mostly reduced to numerical values, the journey that each student has taken through this process cannot be reduced to numbers or simple ideas. Each student has a story and a path, and this study is merely one aspect and representation of who they are as learners. However, for the sake of academic scholarship, this chapter will blend experiences of students with the conclusions reached to better explain how dialogue journals work and why they are beneficial in the basic writing classroom.

Over the course of this study, there have been many significant findings that have been

discovered or reaffirmed. The first finding is that there is now tangible evidence in connection to dialogue journals that there is a correlation between confidence and self-efficacy. As mentioned previously, Bandura makes this connection between confidence and self-efficacy, but the scholarship surrounding dialogue journals does not make this connection clear or define how or why this connection impacts students. Many dialogue journal studies simply report that they saw an increase in confidence and self-efficacy (Olson, Deming, & Valeri-Gold, 1994; Staton, Shuy, Kreeft-Peyton, & Reed, 1988; Bode, 1989), but don't report survey results or other quantitative evidence that supports those claims. As a result of this study there is reportable data that reflects these claims. Every student whose data is shared in this study reported an increase in self-confidence and self-efficacy. For the purpose of this study, self-efficacy was split into two categories and functions: willingness to seek help with writing and being open to change in writing. Each of these categories provided interesting results.

According to the data, when students were more willing to ask for help with their writing, word count in their journal entries would decrease. When students were more open to change in their writing, there was a connection to purpose and self-perception of error that was stronger in comparison to when students were more willing to ask for help. From this data one could suggest that when students are more open to change and be flexible with their writing through giving and receiving feedback, they are more inclined to use a more direct purpose when writing as well as reducing their self-perceptions of error. Lastly, self-efficacy has a strong correlation with rapport when using dialogue journals. Regardless of which area of self-efficacy was examined, the correlations between rapport and self-efficacy were some of the strongest correlations out of the data sets. Rapport in this classroom should be noted as strong. I as the instructor worked diligently at making connections with my students both through writing and in the classroom.

Students in this classroom were more willing to have conversations in class, both about the class and other popular topics at the time, more than any other class I have taught before. Based on the quantitative data and the experience from the classroom, I believe that dialogue journals strongly impact rapport by simply using them as part of the course.

The assumptions made around word count did not meet the expectation that word count would increase as students became more confident in their writing. The data suggest that there isn't a connection between these two variables. However, there was a slight connection between purpose and word count. This connection supports the work of Joy Kreeft-Peyton (1988) that students would shift from sharing classroom-based information to sharing information not related to classroom activities. Although this connection was made, the data suggests that students do not move linearly as previously thought by Joy Kreeft-Peyton (Staton, Shuy, Kreeft-Peyton, & Reed, 1988). Instead, students move back and forth between purposes as they deem appropriate for journal entries. Using dialogue journals in the basic writing classroom contributes to vital skill building for students to matriculate through the university.

Basic writing programs historically thrive when data shows that they are successful, and politicians continue to support fundamental courses in English and Math. In the state of Missouri, politicians have made rules about placement in courses that are a prerequisite for both English and Math based on ACT scores. Without understanding the stories and skillsets of these students, politicians create statewide rulings for these "remedial courses" instead of leaving that decision up to individual institutions based on their mean ACT scores. For example, an Ivy League School has a higher average ACT score in comparison to a public institution like Missouri State University. Kelly Ritter (2009) discusses this point extensively in her book, *Before Shaughnessy: Basic Writing at Yale and Harvard 1920-1960*, that regardless of where

students place on a spectrum of skills, there will consistently be a need for basic writing programs to make sure that all students have a strong foundation in order to reach matriculation. My students were not Ivy League students; however, they found success in my classroom because of using dialogue journals.

Some of the students that participated in this study took the prerequisite version of this course the previous semester and didn't find success, but because of dialogue journals they found a confidence that proved to themselves they are worthy to be a writer. For example, a student named Elizabeth did not pass the previous semester and was very hard on herself to the point that when she came into class, she was quiet with her headphones in and her hood up. She didn't exactly want to be in the class. By the middle of the semester, she began to take the encouragement that I wrote in her journal every other week and on her papers to heart. She finished the semester by working with me one on one to completely fill a whiteboard with all of her ideas for revision. When she came into the classroom, she was a black daughter of immigrants who couldn't write, and when she left my classroom, she was a proud black woman who understood how writing played a role in her life. Without dialogue journals I wouldn't have been able to pick up on her struggles with her identity and confidence as a writer.

In a basic writing course, students vary in abilities. Although many students have recognizable error patterns, some students fall on the cusp of getting into the gateway course or ENG 110. From my experience some of these students shift between high expectations and low expectations making their need for self-efficacy a prominent issue they need to navigate during the semester. One example that stands out from this course is Ezekiel, a student who had high expectations for himself but did not know how to navigate the mixed expectations of college instructors. Ezekiel used his journal to seek advice about his coursework and improve himself

not only as a writer but also a member of the college community. He developed a self-efficacy that allowed him to not feel defeated when receiving feedback, but instead he used those instances to ask how to change and get better. Elizabeth and Ezekiel are only two students out of eight that thrived using dialogue journals as tools to navigate the classroom. After completing this study, there are eight reasons to continue research on dialogue journals: the success stories of students.

In future studies, scholarship should investigate what elements of dialogue journaling impact confidence. In the study confidence has a connection with purpose, self-perception of error, and rapport. Is this confidence because students know how to better use purpose? How do different errors impact the students' self-perception of confidence? Is rapport and confidence connected due to the instructor the students are writing to or is it because of the pedagogical environment of the classroom? All of these questions, if answered, could provide valuable feedback to the implementation and inner workings of dialogue journals in the basic writing classroom. Another line of investigation that should be considered is comparing the survey data gathered in this study with a control group of basic writers that did not use dialogue journals. Basic writing courses at Missouri State University are expected to be a supportive environment that helps students succeed regardless of the obstacles students face. By comparing this data to a control group of basic writers, we could see how significant a role dialogue journaling plays in building confidence, self-efficacy, and rapport. Lastly, how do students use language differently in dialogue journal entries when compared to major writing assignments? It would be interesting to see if the linguistics of word choice and sentence structure play a role in perception of purpose as well as the development of rapport.

Throughout this study I have learned many things. I have learned to put my needs as an

instructor aside and focus on the development of my students. I have learned that students in the basic writing programs at Missouri State University have stories to be told and experiences to be shared through scholarship and academic endeavors. Dialogue journaling is a practice that must continue for the sake of our students' self-confidence, self-efficacy, and the ability to develop rapport as a writer.

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APPENDIX: IRB APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

Date: 8-12-2021

IRB #: IRB-FY2021-52

Title: Starting a Conversation: Utilizing Dialogue Journaling in a Corequisite Composition Course

Creation Date: 7-31-2020

End Date:

Status: **Approved**

Principal Investigator: Margaret Weaver

Review Board: MSU

Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type	Initial	Review Type	Expedited	Decision	Approved
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