Response Rethought... Again: Exploring Recorded Comments and the Teacher-Student Bond

by Jeff Sommers

The argument has long been made that audio-recorded response to student writing provides more commentary than does traditional written response. However, an analysis of one instructor's audio comments suggests that audio response differs not only in degree but also in kind. A taxonomy of comments primarily found in audio response and tied to the temporal aspect of the teacher-student relationship is proposed, featuring three kinds of responses:

• retrospective: comments that refer to previous shared experiences in the writing course
• synchronous: comments that refer to the teacher/reader's current reading experience in responding to a student's text
• anticipatory: comments that refer to future shared activities in the writing course

Such comments, although so identified, can be found in the literature of response but have been neglected for the most part. An analysis of the respondents in Straub's (1999) Sourcebook underscores the greater frequency of temporal comments in audio response than in written comments.

The importance of these temporal comments is that they offer a potential explanation for the enhanced bonding of teachers and students reported by S. Sipple (2007) because they emphasize the ongoing connection between classroom activities and teacher response. Further research possibilities include comparative studies of temporal comments' frequency and impact in a single classroom where audio and written comments are both employed; an examination of student response to temporal comments; and studies of teacher intention in employing temporal comments through speak aloud reflection-on-action.

The dominant metaphor for responding to student writing has long been drawn from the act of speaking, not writing: teachers aspire to create a "dialogue" or "conversation" with their students rather than, say, a "correspondence." Straub (1996b) reviewed a half dozen earlier references to effective response as "conversation" in the 1980s and 1990s. Two decades later, Montgomery (2009) explained,

> The primary goal of my study is to explore students' subjective experience of teacher response to their writing... Some of the implications of this study suggest ... that we need to rethink, modify, and experiment with the ways we respond, especially in terms of creating dialogic response [emphasis added]. (p. vi)

Most recently, Scrocco (2012) studied students' responses to "conversational" and "non-conversational" teacher responses. She explained, I define conversational feedback as open-ended, interrogative, specific, and individualized to the writer; conversational comments ideally elicit a response from writers, encouraging them to brainstorm new ideas about the text or consider a different perspective on an issue in the text. (p. 277)

and concluded that "the students in this study appear to want to discuss their writing with their teacher" (p. 288); in other words, they wished to continue a conversation initiated by the teacher's written commentary. But there is a smaller literature over the same time period that examines a response mode that actually employs speech, not writing: the literature of audio-recorded response.

In this essay I want to expand on that literature. It has been frequently argued that recorded commentary differs from written response in degree; that is, in the sheer quantity of the comments made. Straub (1999) analyzed the comments made by well-known composition teachers on several student compositions. Only one teacher employed audio response. Transcripts of that teacher's comments showed that he averaged close to 1000 words per student paper while the eleven other teachers who wrote comments averaged 365 words per paper. Lee (2009) analyzed the written comments of fifteen participating teachers who averaged 258 words per student paper. By contrast, in my own study of recorded comments made on fourteen papers in 2008, and reported here, I averaged 830 words per paper.

But, more importantly, I want to argue that recorded commentary differs from written commentary in a meaningful way *in kind*, that is, in the types of comments made. Toward that end I will propose a new taxonomy of response focused on these different kinds of comments. One reviewer of this essay in manuscript form raised an objection: "With all of the existing taxonomies that are now in the body of scholarship, I am not convinced ... that yet another taxonomy adds to the field's understanding of responses as isolated utterances (written or spoken)." As I hope this essay will make clear, previous taxonomies invariably classified only written comments on student writing. Audio response has been largely excluded from previous classification systems. My objective here, however, is not to apply familiar taxonomies to a less-familiar methodology. The taxonomy I offer proposes to examine kinds of comments that appear much more likely to occur in audio commentary than in written commentary; this essay does not treat these utterances as "isolated" but as integral to an ongoing conversation between students and teacher because recorded commentary is individualized to each student. The importance of individualizing comments was emphasized by Scrocco (2012) and earlier by Sperling (1994), in

her study of the influences that led one high school teacher's responses to vary as she responded to different students. How audio-recorded commentary may lead to such individualized commentary and the implications of that phenomenon lie at the heart of my essay.

The point of the expansive literature on response is, of course, to encourage teachers to improve how they work with their student writers. The starting place for such improvement appears to be to understand that the relationship between the student and the teacher is at the center of the response activity. Straub explained that "I am assuming ... that the words written on a student's paper inscribe certain social relationships between the teacher and the student and that these words come with their own adequate context" (1996a, p. 235). These "social relationships" between teacher and student are created by the teacher's ethos, the varied roles of "mentor... , fellow writer, evaluator, editor, coach, and responsive reader" (Batt, 2005, p. 211). The meaning of comments is "influenced by the teacher's persona, the ongoing relationship established between teacher and student, and the larger classroom setting" (Straub, 1997b, p. 100). Connors and Lunsford (1993) applied Bartholomae's famous metaphor to this relationship when they wrote, "just as students invent the university every time they write, teachers invent not only a student writer but a responder every time they comment" (p. 214).

At the heart of this relationship are the values that the teacher brings to the act of responding. Straub commented,

> More than the general principles we voice or the theoretical approach we take into class, it is what we value in student writing, how we communicate those values, and what we say individually on student texts that carry the most weight in writing instruction. (1996a, p. 246)

But I want to take issue with the dichotomy implied in Straub's separating what happened in the classroom from what happened when teachers responded to their students' writing. Indeed Knoblauch and Brannon (1981) warned that "a single comment on a single essay" cannot be meaningfully analyzed because it is "too local and contingent a phenomenon to yield general conclusions about the quality of the conversation of which it is a part" (p. 2). Comments, they argued, derived their meaning from "the governing dialogue that influences some student's reaction to it" (1981, p. 2). When Sperling concluded that "comments constructed different social experiences for different students" (pp. 199-200), she made explicit the nature of the interaction created by teacher commentary: it is a "social experience."

And here is where audio commentary enters the discussion. Straub described what happened when a student read a teacher's written response: "The image of the teacher that comes off the page *becomes the teacher* [my emphasis] for that student and has an immediate impact on what those comments come to mean" (1997b, p. 100). Straub here seemed to view written comments that drew upon the "governing dialogue" of the classroom as separate from it, but practitioners of recorded response held a different view. Early users of audio recording response emphasized the connections such response can--and should make. Olson (1984), an early advocate of recorded commentary, argued that "ideally, the teacher's response to a student's paper should go beyond mere evaluation; it should be an extension of classroom instruction... " (p. 122). Anson (1997), another practitioner of audio response and the subject of Straub and Lunsford's study (1995), described how he came to use recordings in his classes and noted that "because I was literally *talking* to each student, I felt a social dimension to my commentary that had been less present in my short, often corrective written remarks" (p. 106). His comment not only emphasized speech, but also *individualized* his class in his use of the phrase "to each student" rather than the aggregate, as in "to my *students*." And, interestingly enough, Straub and Lunsford (1995), had already observed audio-recorded response at work and noted that "tape-recorded comments... take on the attributes of conversation" (p. 310), although they did not expand much on that observation.

Creating a Bond between Teacher and Student

Olson's and Anson's comments have suggested that audio commentary can forge ties between classroom teacher and student, commentator and writer. Mellen, (J. Sommers & Mellen, 2003) an undergraduate student, described her relationship with her instructor in terms that also suggested such strong ties, implying, in fact, that the relationship was, if anything, strengthened through recorded response. Mellen wrote,

> When listening to the tapes, I get a sense of being the professor's equal ... on the tapes he spoke to me as if to a fellow writer. That can be an automatic ego boost-or at least somewhat of a confidence builder-for a student listening to the tapes. Along with this, the professor communicated in a more personal way on the tapes than he did in class. I would assume this is a natural outcome of being able to speak so freely to one person concerning her work, unlike in a classroom setting. (J. Sommers & Mellen, 2003, p. 35)

More recently, Mellen's observations are echoed by Sipple (2007). Sipple quoted a student participant: "I can connect better with [instructors] when they're talking to me, rather than just writing something on a piece of paper" (p. 28). A second student participant reported, "I honestly feel that the audio comments sunk into my head better than the written ones" (p. 26). In Sipple's study, eight of

her ten interview subjects informed her "they believed audio commentary helped to create a stronger student-professor bond." That bond was "strengthened by the use of audio comments because they revealed the professor's personality and emotions in ways that handwritten comments did not... " (p. 26). She quoted one interviewee who said, "... audio comments made me feel like I had a much more personal and human relationship with my professor" (p. 28).

Sipple's student interviewees and Mellen's observations offered a take that differed from Straub (1996a), who explained, "I will study comments as they appear on the page independent of the larger classroom setting but seen amid the conventions that typically go along with such teacher-student interactions." (p. 233). Sipple's students and Mellen have told us that teacher comments did not become the teacher but already were the teacher, that the recorded comments did not exist "independent of the larger classroom setting" but were inextricably bound with that setting as the students listened to a voice they already knew from class. These students seem to know what N. Sommers (1982) meant when she argued that "the key to successful commenting is to have what is said in the comments and what is done in the classroom mutually reinforce and enrich each other" (p. 155).

More recently, N. Sommers (2011) researched student reactions to teacher response (in this case, written response) and underscored the connection between commentary and classroom. She concluded

> The comments students most understand are those that have, as one student called it, a "background," either because they continue conversations from the classroom or because they resonate with something students already suspect about their own strengths and limitations as writers. Such comments have anchors, a history and a context, showing students what is "within them to become stronger writers" and moving them forward by building upon the relationship created through comments.

But Mellen (J. Sommers & Mellen, 2003) posed important questions about the personal relationship forged by the recordings when she asked, "I wonder if this [sense of being a fellow writer] is a conscious strategy: the professor purposely speaking as an equal? Being more personal? Or is this just a side effect of the tapes?" (p. 35). Sperling (1994) reminded us that all teacher response to student writing represented what the teacher decided merited discussion because the more frequent choice was silence, given the impracticality of trying to comment on every single written word. Mellen's questions implicitly embodied Sperling's point by questioning to what degree those decisions to speak have been influenced by the medium. To Mellen's questions, I want to add two more: What caused the stronger bonds in a classroom where audio-recorded commentary was used as reported by Sipple? How can audio-recorded comments "continue conversations from the classroom" as N. Sommers has urged?

I decided to take a closer look at my own audio responses in a recent class in an effort to answer these questions, taking to heart Straub's advice that

> The best responding styles will create us on the page in ways that fit in with our classroom purposes, allow us to take advantage of our strengths as teachers, and enable us to interact as productively as we can with our students. Ultimately, they will allow us to make comments that are ways of teaching. (1996a, p. 248)

My reflection on my own work follows the approach used by Straub in his close reading of a semester's worth of his own comments (2000). Although Edgington (2009) has made a persuasive case for reflecting on one's own commentary during the term in which the comments are being made, thus allowing for immediate modifications and adjustments, that moment had passed for me. I did, however, engage in reflection-on-action retrospectively, and that examination provided me with tentative answers to the questions I have posed above.

The Teacher-Student Bond: A New Taxonomy of Response

My reflection-on-action consisted of analyzing responses made to three students in a first-year composition course in Fall 2008. Having selected one student who had earned an A, one who had earned a B, and one who had earned a low C in an effort to find a range of student writing, I analyzed my recorded comments on fourteen papers in all, eleven first drafts and three revised drafts. Cognizant that Fife and O'Neill (2001) offered the critique that "most" research into response "provided textual analysis of comments with little information about how the comments functioned as part of the class" (p. 301), I offer some background to establish the context for the comments I analyzed:

- The students were enrolled in a first-semester, first-year composition course. They were placed in the course based on their SAT verbal scores (all of them had scores between 490-620). That particular semester I taught two sections of the course and had fifty students enrolled.

- The comments I analyzed were culled from five writing assignments (an appraisal of a memorable past teacher, a reformulation of the first paper in a different genre, an ethnographic study of a classroom discussion, an analysis of a workplace's ethos, and an

essay with photographs focused on the students' hometowns) in a portfolio situation where students selected three of the five papers to be assigned a final grade.

• Students wrote 1-2 journal entries every week, responding to assigned readings or brainstorming for assigned papers. They earned credit for completing the journals, but the writing did not receive a grade. I wrote brief replies in the margins, generally questions or observations about what they had written.

• Students engaged in peer review workshops before submitting their papers. Some chose to conference with me at various points in the invention/drafting/revising phases. I conferenced with all of the students twice each during the term to discuss their overall performance in the course.

• The comments were formative not summative; the papers did not receive a grade but were instead described as early/middle/late in the writing process as a means of suggesting how much more work might be required to bring the project to a high quality conclusion (see Helton & Sommers 2000).

• Revisions were optional during the term. Students had to select three papers for grading at the end of the term, but they made their own decisions regarding how much or how often to revise and which papers to revise.

• I made an effort to prepare students to receive my audio comments. They read N. Sommers's 1982 essay on responding, wrote a journal response to it (to which I responded in writing), and participated in a class discussion of how their prior experiences with teacher response matched or did not match Sommers's analysis. We listened to a recorded response I had made in a previous class and critiqued it in light of Sommers's essay and our class discussion.

• All drafts were accompanied by a required but ungraded Writer's Memo (see J. Sommers, 1989) allowing students the first say in our "conversation" about their drafts, reflecting on their drafts' strengths and weaknesses and the process they had undergone to complete it. Subsequent revisions were accompanied by a required Writer's Memo that asked writers to explain the changes they had made and to explain why they might have chosen not to implement any of my recommended changes. All memos concluded with a request for the students to pose questions to me about their writing. I read the memos before reading and commenting upon the drafts.

• Using basic freeware downloaded from the internet, I recorded MP3 files for each draft. The software allowed me to record, pause, and stop, but not edit. My practice was to read the student's Writer's Memo and then the draft, jotting a few notes in a notebook about each draft, facilitating my memory during conferences later with students who wished to discuss their revising process with me. I did not write out the comments nor rehearse, but simply discussed each draft for several minutes. After recording my response, I would send the MP3 file as an attachment via email to the students.

• After the first set of comments of the term, the students completed what Kathleen Blake Yancey calls a Talkback, a journal entry in which they wrote answers to these questions: "What seemed to be the main point of the recorded comments? What questions do you have about the comments? What are your revision plans? To what extent are you encouraged or discouraged to revise and why?" I followed up the Talkbacks with either a brief written response or a request for a conference with students who appeared to be confused or notably discouraged by my responses.

• After the first draft was submitted, all the students had the option of requesting written responses instead of audio on subsequent papers. In thirty years of using audio response, I have had no more than three dozen such requests. None of the fifty students in Fall 2008 asked me to write comments instead of recording them. This was congruent with other reports on student preferences. For example, Sipple surveyed 197 students who had experienced both audio-recorded and written response and found that 89% preferred audio-recorded response (J. Sommers & Sipple, 2006).

As I listened to the recordings, I began to recognize patterns that suggested the comments sounded "conversational," that is, they seemed to connect with our ongoing shared experiences in the course. Fife and O'Neill (2001) noted that "conversation... is a socially embedded activity that can only be understood in the context in which it occurs" (p. 312), and the context in this case was that I had spent time with my students in class, in the hallways outside our classroom, and in my office and was spending time commenting on the writing that they had spent time composing. I have made the argument elsewhere that recorded commentary emphasizes "the temporality of reading and responding in ways that written comments do not" (2002, p.174). Unlike written comments that seem spatially oriented, appearing in the margins or at the end of a text, audio comments cannot be observed spatially. Talking about them as "marginal comments" and "end comments" simply is not very useful or apt. "A student listens... and becomes cognizant of time passing" (p. 175), I argued, which underscores that writing and reading are processes. As I examined my own responses, I started to notice comments that implicitly conveyed the passage of time required to engage in reading and writing. Thinking of responding as a process that encompassed the whole of my interaction with the student writers may have led me to make comments that created a sense of conversation; in other words, I am convinced that recorded response encouraged me to

take this "holistic approach" (La Fontana, 1996, p. 72) to response, and I created a taxonomy to represent these comments, which, as my essay will show, tend to occur more often in audio response than in written response.

Those "different" comments are related to the temporal nature of recorded response by emphasizing what has previously transpired, what is happening during the response, and what will or might happen after the commentary. The taxonomy consists of three kinds of responses that I label "temporal comments": Retrospective comments, synchronous comments, and anticipatory comments. I follow now with an explanation of each form of temporal comment and annotated examples culled from my analysis of my recorded responses on the fourteen student drafts:

Retrospective comments: These responses linked the teacher's reading experience to previous interaction with the student over the course of the term (e.g., by referring to the student's earlier written work, to shared classroom activities, or to previous communications between the student and the teacher). Because retrospective comments forged connections to previous classroom activities and related practices, they had value as a counter to Fife and O'Neill's (2001) criticism that much research into response provides textual analysis "in a vacuum, disconnected from other teaching practices" (p. 301).

Several examples of retrospective comments follow, with a brief annotation about each.

• "I think what you've said about your teacher is true also of Professor Kingsfield, the law professor in the video clip we watched, who is anything but friendly while still being challenging... my point is that teachers like yours and Prof Kingsfield can be challenging without being the students' friend." [I referred to a shared class activity.]

• "You're a nice enough guy. You eat an apple every day-that's healthy-and I want to believe you, but when it comes to reading... I need to see the evidence." [I referred to an ongoing joke between me and the student, who generally arrived in class with an apple that he ate before we began the day's activities.]

• "Like your first paper, this is an accomplished draft, and I assume you are comfortable writing and know that you have some skill at it, because you do. You use language well... and the paper has a very good variety of sentences and rhythms. So I want to get really particular about some of the bumpier phrasing compared to the smooth writing I see most of the time here." [I referred to the student's earlier written work in the course.]

Synchronous comments: These responses were reader response comments that shared the teacher's reactions as they occurred (e.g. "Here's what I was thinking/feeling as I read this.") Synchronous comments referred to the teacher in the first-person and were not references to possible responses by a conjectured "reader" or "readers." Such responses may share personal anecdotes recalled by the teacher/reader during the reading: stories about the teacher as writer, editor, or teacher or about the topic or context of the student paper. Mellen (J. Sommers & Mellen, 2003) attested to the value of this form of response when she wrote that in the very first audio commentary she received, she

> ... began to get that sense of being an equal. Jeff made comments such as "when I write." He referred to his own experiences as a writer, and by applying these comments to my writing, he included me in the same group with him. (p. 36)

Mellen's comment anticipated N. Sommers's observation (2006) that "feedback is rooted in the partnership between student and teacher" (p. 255), and synchronous comments emphasized that partnership by sharing what was happening at the very moment of the teacher's reading the student's writing.

Several examples of synchronous comments follow, with a brief annotation about each:

• "You've told me you have two coaches who are apparently polar opposites. One of them is a Bill Parcells/Bobby Knight in-your-face, challenging tough guy, and the other one is more like a Tony Dungy, quiet, committed, empathetic motivator... but I don't know which one is which here... I'm not seeing enough of what they actually do to be able to agree with you that they are polar opposites in personality." [I referred to what I assumed to be shared knowledge with the writer. His draft did not mention any famous coaches by name, but I was counting on the names being familiar to him based on the content of his draft.]

• "As a reader, I want to share with you what I'm thinking here... I figured you were done with this teacher ... and have moved on. So when the next paragraph returns to her again, I'm surprised." [I referred to my expectations as a reader as I moved through the text.]

• "The choice of picking titles is a skill. I'm not great myself at coming up with clever and catchy titles. I've learned to settle for a title that conveys adequately what my paper is about." [I referred to my own experiences as a writer facing a similar challenge.]

• "I'm fascinated to hear that forty years after I worked there [at McDonald's] as a college student, their terminology for special

orders hasn't changed." [I referred to a shared work experience with the author of the essay.]

Anticipatory comments: These responses looked ahead to the next stages of the writing process or of the course. Such comments were valued by students in N. Sommers's Harvard study (2006). They said the "most helpful" comments were "responses that straddle the present world of the paper at hand with a glance to the next paper, articulating one lesson for the future" (p. 254).

Several examples of anticipatory comments follow, with a brief annotation about each:

• "So later in the semester when we're writing other kinds of papers, you'll want to remember that evidence matters." [I referred to future assignments with similar requirements/conventions.]

• "One way to get better at writing, I'm convinced, is to get better at asking questions about your writing... I also want you to get in the habit of explaining things more fully." [I referred to developing specific writing practices in future writing.]

• "If you're looking for more data to analyze, do something substantial with those other twenty students in the class... you could use those numbers to say some more interesting analytical things if you chose to." [I referred to possible alternative ways to explore the data collected in a classroom ethnography in a forthcoming revision.]

In my analysis of the responses, I counted as one instance any comment of at least one full sentence on a topic. As the examples illustrate above, many of my remarks extended for multiple sentences, but until I changed to a different topic, I counted these multi-sentence comments as a single instance. I was only interested in tallying these specific three forms of temporal comments; the rest of my responses on each recording consisted of typical teacher comments: questions, suggestions, critiques, and so forth. I asked a colleague who also uses audio comments to listen to two of my recordings and apply my taxonomy. We met, discussed our perceptions, and I revised the taxonomy to reflect our mutual understanding of the categories. While synchronous comments were most common, there were multiple instances of temporal comments in each category (Table 1).

Table 1. Number of Comments in Three Categories in J. Sommers's FYC (2008)

Drafts	Retrospective Comments (Avg # of comments per draft)	Synchronous Comments (Avg # of comments per draft)	Anticipatory Comments (Avg # of comments per draft)
1st drafts n=11	39 (3.5)	73 (6.6)	23 (2.1)
Revisions n=3	6 (2.0)	18 (6.0)	5 (1.7)

However, it may be more productive to discuss audio comments in terms of time spent on each (Table 2). My analysis indicates that 54% of the time spent on response on first drafts was devoted to making either retrospective, synchronous, or anticipatory comments, and 53% of the time spent on responding to revised drafts fell into one of these three categories.

Table 2: Time Devoted to Retrospective, Synchronous, and Anticipatory Comments in J. Sommers's FYC (2008)

Drafts	Total Commenting Time	Average Commenting Time	Total R/S/A Commenting Time	Average R/S/A Commenting Time
1st drafts n=11	79:02	7:11	43:00	3:54
Revisions n=3	16:22	5:27	8:40	2:53

Transcribed audio comments generally produce one typewritten page for every two minutes of talk. Assuming a conservative count of 250 words per typed page, the comments on the first drafts averaged approximately 898 words in transcription with 487 of those words devoted to temporal comments. With revisions, the commentary in transcription averaged 680 words with 360 words devoted to retrospective, synchronous, and anticipatory comments.

What I learned from my reflection-on-action was that I had characteristic ways of commenting on student writing that seemed particularly likely to occur in the recorded approach I was using. In reviewing the actual comments, such as the samples provided above, I could not imagine writing very many of them in the margins or in end comments, given the time it would have taken to do so, not to mention the challenge of determining the appropriate location on the printed page for some of the comments.

But two new questions arose for me: Had such comments been identified before in the literature on response? To what extent do the kinds of comments I had observed also occur in written response? And I found answers to these questions: Indeed there are discussions of retrospective, synchronous, and anticipatory comments in the literature on response, but they are labeled differently or even overlooked. I also learned that while these kinds of comments do appear in written response, their frequency is markedly less than in recorded commentary.

Temporal Comments in the Literature

It is possible to find in work published over forty years ago (Lees, 1979) a reference to a "mode of response" labeled "reminding," which helps "students come to recognize a coherence among parts of the course" (p. 372). Lees does not emphasize this form of response, however, and it is interesting to note that when Sprinkle (2006) used Lees' seven modes of response to construct a self-evaluation scheme for teachers to use in monitoring their own response styles, he only included six of the modes, omitting "reminding" (p. 275). He offered no explanation but must have decided that Lees herself had not emphasized the value of the approach. Another reference to what I am terming retrospective comments occurred in Ewing's (2009) examination of marginal comments in 225 student papers. Ewing created a classification system for the comments and included "Class context," which he defined as comments in which "lecture, prompt, class discussion, course requirements, or other are mentioned."

Perhaps the most emphatic reference to retrospective comments appeared in Anson's (1997) explanatory piece on how to use recorded commentary in which he advised teachers to

> include contextual remarks when appropriate. Written comments on students' papers rarely link the paper to other work, allude to progress in the course, or include remarks about other matters of the classroom context. Due to their narrative quality, taped comments let you mentor students in the full context of your class. Comments can focus on the progress a student has made between the last paper and the one being discussed. (p. 109)

Anson's endorsement made explicit the connection between comments on papers and in-class interactions that I have been attempting to describe.

What of synchronous comments, however, those teacher responses that emphasize the "now" of reading a student's draft? Smith (1997) described "Reader Response Genres" in positive terms as "tools for expressing the reactions of an active reader. Using these primary genres, a teacher can establish a more personal connection with the student and demonstrate the effects of words on readers" (p. 257). She endorsed reader response genres, pointing out that "if used more frequently, [they] could serve as an antidote to the usual impersonality of end comments" (p.258). Anson (1997) also favorably described "reader-like explanations," which he defined as "simply talking through your actual experience reading something... " (p. 110), what I would now call "synchronous comments." I (J. Sommers, 1989) have argued for the value of creating analogies to explain a reader response (p. 65). More recently, Treglia (2008) reported on a category of response she identified as "personal attribution" and that she defined as a teacher's articulating "commentary as a personal response" (p. 135). But Lees (1979) was actually quite critical of a mode of response that she called "emoting." She had in mind comments that constituted a venting of feelings as a reader. She seemed to find such comments inadequate and "more obviously about the teacher" than the student (p. 372). Her final word on "emoting" was to call it "useless" (p. 373).

Lees (1979) appeared more enthused, however, about comments that looked ahead. She did not name such a mode of response--akin to what I have termed *anticipatory comments*--but she did laud comments that "foster belief" in students. "Student writers," she wrote, "need to learn how to hope... and believe in the possibility of producing something else" (374). This idea of looking ahead was embodied in what Straub (1997b) identified as "advisory" comments (p. 104). I interpret these observations as a nod in the direction of anticipatory comments.

Not only have previous studies and articles identified modes of response that sound similar to the taxonomy I am proposing, but they have also provided actual teacher response in which it is possible to identify examples of these temporal comments. Straub's self-analysis of his own comments on a student's paper (2000) offered multiple examples of synchronous comments ("Isn't it interesting, how this works. You've got me thinking" and "I'd like to hear more... " p. 27) although he did not label them as a specific genre of commentary. Anson (1997) quoted a recorded comment that contrasted the student's current draft with previous work: "You've really got the hang of doing the methods sections; this one is a lot clearer than in your last assignment" (p. 109). Treglia quoted two comments that appear to be retrospective in linking current student performance to past performance: "You are improving, Nancy, but you need guidance in correct English translation" and "Kim, nice job; your best writing this semester" (p. 117). Warnock (2008) offered two transcriptions of his audio commentary in his recent article, and examples of retrospective comments can be found in both. In one he referred to his disagreement with the student's peer reviewers: "I kind of differ from your reviewers, you know, about the beginning and the end" (p. 223). In the other transcription, Warnock told the writer, "I saw your comment to yourself at the bottom of your writing thoughts ... " (p. 224), the student's "writing thoughts" being a previously-written reflection on the draft that Warnock was reading.

An interesting anecdote can be found in Edgington's (2009) study of teachers engaged in reflection-in-action. One teacher's speak-aloud protocol described the student writer upon whose draft she was about to comment as "one of my weakest writers." But she was so pleasantly surprised at the quality of the student's draft that she noted, "This is so superior compared to past papers he has written. I am so pleased" (p. 385). She then pondered how to express her satisfaction in her actual written comment, finally writing,

> This is really an interesting paper and well-written. I like the way you analyze the story without retelling everything that happened. I like the way your opening and ending tie together, and I like the way you pull those specifics from the story to suggest your analysis. Congratulations. (p. 386)

So she actually did not make a retrospective comment on the student's paper although she was certainly thinking of one as she responded.

One instructor whose comments did include retrospective written comments was Margaret, the focus of Batt's study (2005). Margaret wrote long letters, averaging 400 words each, to her students. In one letter, Margaret's first response was an extended (70 words) retrospective comment that remarked at one point: "This essay continues your attention to, and terrific work with, voice in writing." She went on to note that the student has tried a "different technique" with voice, and has varied sentences more than in the past (p. 212). In a second letter to a different student, she told the writer that his "thinking is getting very strong" and that his new draft "flows more confidently," in contrast to past work, concluding her letter with a note that "your later drafts are consistently a great improvement" (p. 216). Batt concluded that "Margaret shows students where to go by pointing out where they have already been" (p. 220), a suitable definition of a retrospective comment.

Margaret's letters to her student also manifested multiple synchronous comments-four in the first letter and six in the second. One striking example used an analogy or metaphor: Margaret wrote about her reading experience, "I use the shorter sentences to move efficiently, to cover ground-as if I were using stepping stones to tiptoe out into a stream. Then, once I've gotten my footing, I'm ready to fall into a more elegant and complicated sentence or two, one that really sweeps me up (like the stream itself?)" and she concluded with a smiley face (Batt, p. 212). In her second letter, Margaret stepped back and commented on her comments when she wrote, "I'm hoping to give you a sense of what occurred to me as I read... " (p. 216).

Less frequent than in Margaret's letters, synchronous comments can still be found in other published reports of teacher commentary. Scrocco (2012) recently offered as an example of "'conversational'" written feedback the marginal comments "'All right, I'm still wondering what you are going to really talk about . . .'" (p. 278) and "'I know plenty of people who don't . . . who don't or never have played this game'" (p. 284). Anson (1997) certainly voiced a synchronous comment when he told a student "I'm just feeling a little confused on this point" (p. 108), and Straub's examination (1996b) of several responders' work also quoted several clear examples of synchronous comments: "I like the feel of this draft," "Your description of Orlando's lakes ... gives me a real feeling for the place... " and "If I had to pick a title for this draft, it would be something like 'The Day I Caught My Monster Bass'" (p. 378). Warnock's (2008) two transcriptions were filled with synchronous comments: He began one response by saying, "I had a similar kind of experience, and this rang true to me in a number of ways" and then he later returned to this idea and said, "I had my own story that was kind of similar to this. It's funny. Back when I was in the eighth grade all this happened to me" (p. 224). In the other transcript, Warnock told the student, "I like that you have this kind of ... question... " and later related uncertainty: "Now, this part, I don't know ... quite what to make of the rest of this... " (p. 223).

Examples of synchronous comments can also be found in essays about responding to high school writers. Sperling (1994) quoted one comment written by the high school teacher whose responses she analyzed that clearly shared the teacher's actual reader response as it occurred: "'I'm a roller coaster junkie. I love to go no hands & ride in the first or last seat'" (pp. 183-4). LaFontana (1996) offered some excerpts from her own comments on one high school student's literary essay and began her response with a first-person statement of her opinion: "I like the way you've worded your thesis statement at the end of the first paragraph." Later she shared her reading expectations: "As I continue reading, I'll have to see if you keep your contract with the reader" (p. 72). Worth noting is that LaFontana's responses appeared as a transcription of her recorded commentary.

However, some examples of synchronous comments were more ambiguous. Smith (1997) quoted two "typical" end comments, one of which included the observation, "Some claims in this evaluation might be seriously challenged because there is much controversy about [Booker T.] Washington's 'truthfulness' these days" (p. 265). This remark employed passive voice, but because the passive construction seemed to mask the teacher's own response, I infer that this might be a synchronous comment. Interestingly, in another study, Straub analyzed two teachers' commentaries about the same essay (1996a). He analyzed their responses closely, but he remained silent about one comment by each of the instructors. The first one was "I enjoy the energy of your style" (p. 236), and the second one "I think you've fallen into the interesting detail trap here" (p. 238), both clearly synchronous comments, but evidently not significant enough to rise to Straub's notice in his analysis.

Anticipatory comments were harder to find. Anson (1997) concluded one tape-recorded commentary by advising the student: "So

what you might try next time is naming each possible cause on the left side of a piece of paper; then write down the evidence of causality on the right side. Put a question mark next to any items where the research evidence conflicts. Then when you make an assertion, you can say whether it's supported in some way" (p. 110). One of Smith's (1997) typical end comments included the anticipatory comment "Remember in future writing that this is important" (p. 265). But, once again, it was Batt's subject (2005), Margaret, who provided the clearest examples in her letters to her students. She told one writer that she was providing "direction that you might go if you decided to 'wrestle' this text further" (p. 216) and concluded her other letter by telling the student "keep doing what you're doing, mostly! Focus especially [on] continuing that skill of using outside sources to present your own thoughts... " (p. 212). In both instances she was anticipating what might happen next in her students' writing.

Perhaps the most interesting example of an anticipatory comment that I came across appeared in one of Warnock's transcriptions (2008). He commented upon the writer's struggles to use commas, and then remarked, "You and the comma--it's your ... friend. If you remember anything from this class, you'll remember that I kept harping about your commas" (p. 223). Here Warnock predicted what the student might experience in the future as a writer, but at the same time, he created a retrospective comment that reminded her of previous class instruction and earlier remarks of his. This comment thus served multiple functions, referring both to the past and the future at the same time.

My point in reviewing these examples is to contextualize what I found in my own recorded responses: The temporal comments in which I am interested were not unique to my personal commenting style. They have been noticed and discussed for years, albeit often obliquely. But how prevalent are these comments? I offer here some other data about temporal comments. Connors and Lunsford (1993), in their study of 3000 papers marked with written comments, labeled one category "overall progress," which gestures at being a retrospective form of comment, but they found only 176 of the 3000 papers (6%) included even one such comment. In an examination of the marginal comments written on 225 first-year composition papers, Ewing (2009) found similarly sparse results: Only 12 of the 4,433 coded comments fell into the category he labeled as "Class Context," akin to retrospective comments.

If we look at synchronous comments, the story is similar. Smith's work (1997) analyzed 313 end comments. She identified two reader response genres, calling them "reading experience" and "identification," but she found "reading experience" comments present in only 67 end comments (21%) and "identification" comments in only 43 end comments (14%). More recently, Treglia's analysis (2008) of 385 comments made on two student papers identified only eight comments (2%) as "personal attribution" comments (p. 113), which would be termed synchronous comments in my taxonomy. Straub and Lunsford (1995) reported only 8% of the comments they analyzed in their study of twelve readers reading could be labeled as reader response comments (p. 183). And in the largest of the studies, Connors and Lunsford (1993) identified one category of response as "comments that give general reader response ('like/dislike')," reminiscent of synchronous comments, but only 322 of the 3000 papers (10.7%) included even one such response. It is noteworthy that they contrasted these 10.7% of the papers with the 83% that "pronounced on the paper in a distanced tone" (p. 214), a tone not likely to promote the kind of bond between teacher and student that Sipple's (2007) student respondents described as a product of receiving recorded commentary.

As for anticipatory comments, Smith (1997) defined a "coaching genre" that offered "suggestions for future papers" and appeared in 88 (28%) of the end comments (p. 253). Ewing (2009) identified 708 comments that did not fit into any of his categories, but he did not explain why he could not code them. Perhaps they were illegible or relied upon cryptic abbreviations. It seems possible they did not fall into his rather traditional categories, suggesting that some of them might well have been retrospective, synchronous, or anticipatory comments, but that can only be speculation. In short, the temporal comments I am examining did not seem to occur very often according to published studies of written commentary.

Although these kinds of responses may not have been especially common in teacher response, students prefer such comments, according to Straub (1997b). When Straub surveyed students about their preferences in teacher comments, their most preferred category in his study was what he termed "Advisory." This category was not only the students' most preferred category, but three of the most highly student-rated examples of specific individual comments were "advisory." The students' single most-preferred response was clearly what I would term anticipatory: "In your next draft try to focus on developing more convincing arguments against legalized drugs. For instance, what can you do to show how drugs like marijuana and cocaine would be more dangerous if they were legal and therefore more available?" (p. 104). One inference I draw is that the students in Straub's study must have been somewhat disappointed to find so few of the kinds of comments they most valued.

But if Straub's student respondents would have been disappointed in the scarcity of their most-preferred kinds of comments, their reactions might have been different with recorded response. Not only were there a substantial number of the preferred forms of commentary in the study I reported earlier (Tables 1 and 2) on my own audio responses, but when I compared Straub's (1999) nine examples of teachers' written comments to two examples of recorded comments on the very same student essays, my findings suggested that temporal comments occurred more often in recorded response than in written commentary. I report on this comparative study in the next section of my essay.

Comparing Recorded and Written Comments

Straub (1999) invited a number of well-known composition teachers to respond to actual student papers so he could publish their comments in a Sourcebook for Responding to Student Writing. One of those teachers, Chris Anson, used tape-recorded response on two essays while four of his colleagues wrote comments on one of the essays, and five colleagues wrote comments on the other. Thus, Straub provided eleven responses to two student essays, reproducing the nine written responses so that readers could see the student text, the marginal comments, and the end comments. He also provided transcriptions of the two recorded commentaries. Thus, I was able to analyze all of the responses to seek examples of the temporal comments I have been discussing in this essay. My analysis revealed that the recorded comments were not only longer but featured more retrospective, synchronous, and anticipatory comments than did the written responses.

To illustrate the comments made by the readers, I offer some examples in each category, drawn from the eleven responses, the source of each example labeled as either a written comment or a recorded comment:

Retrospective comments:
• "You know, something just occurred to me ... that we haven't really explored or, that hasn't come up in class at all, and that's what happens with speaking in relation to writing" (recorded comment) (p. 37).
• "And, um, what really gives me the sense that you haven't really pushed this piece much from the rough draft we talked about comes in your last line... " (recorded comment) (p. 54).

Synchronous comments:
• "I hadn't thought of people hibernating too--this is a neat comparison" (written comment) (p. 56).
• " Since I'm from a part of the country that has four equally balanced seasons, I don't think I'd like the Sun Belt at all. Like you, I want some change, and I especially like nippy Fall and Winter days. I dislike intense heat and intense cold, but there is no Shangri-La. If I have to choose between summer-like weather most of the time, and the four seasons, I'll take the latter" (written comment) (p. 48).
• "Oh, also, one of the points of this assignment is to chart the changes in your thinking as we go through the process, so don't worry if you start out strongly and modify your position. You know, I wrote a semi-angry letter to one of my colleagues the other day on the computer and went to bed and the next day when I looked at it I'd changed my mind. And I think that's normal" (recorded comment) (p. 38).

Anticipatory comments:
• "I know it is often difficult to use the first person 'I' and to let people in on your real feelings about home, but try it once anyway. You will write an essay you will truly enjoy writing and anyone who reads it will learn about you and Syracuse" (written comment) (p. 63).
• "Before beginning a second draft, I suggest you do a barebones outline on the article" (written comment) (p. 35).
• "So, what I'd encourage you to do here, Dave, is to spend a lot more time thinking through your drafts before turning them in. Remember that that's where most of the learning comes in; if you, um, you shortchange yourself at this stage, you'll be giving up that chance to think of alternate strategies, tones, styles, words, and so on" (recorded comment) (p. 55).

I asked a colleague, another long-time user of recorded commentary, to read and code Anson's comments also. We compared notes, and I made adjustments to the taxonomy to reflect our agreement. When I compared the number of retrospective, synchronous, and anticipatory comments made by five teachers using written comments to the number made by the one teacher using recorded comments, the recorded commentary consistently showed more of each form of response (Table 3).

Table 3. Individual Responses to "What If Drugs Were Legal?" Essay

Methodology	**Recorded**	**Written**	**Written**	**Written**	**Written**	**Written***
Commentator	**CA**	**PM**	**EW**	**JP**	**BM**	**PS**
Length of Comments	1050 wds	176 wds	119 wds	132 wds	525	605 wds
Retrospective	2	0	0	0	0	0
Synchronous	3	1	1	1	3	2
Anticipatory	4	1	0	1	1	1
Total Comments	9	2	1	2	4	3

*This comment took the form of a letter addressed "Dear Nancy."
One Synchronous Comment was extended (189 of the 605 words in the response) as the teacher read the source essay aloud and inserted asides in which she shared her thoughts and reactions.

Another way to look at this comparison is to compare Anson's recorded comments to the average of the other five commentators (Table 4). He recorded twice as many synchronous comments and more than four times the number of anticipatory comments as the five teachers who wrote comments. The only retrospective comments were those made by Anson.

Table 4. Total Responses to "What If Drugs Were Legal?" Essay

Taxonomy	# of recorded comments n=1	# of wds in recorded comments	Avg # of comments n=5	Avg # of wds in written comments
Retrospective	2	-	0	-
Synchronous	3	-	1.6	-
Anticipatory	4	-	0.8	-
Total Comments	9	1050	2.4	311

Results of the analysis of the second essay were similar (Table 5). Anson recorded more of each kind of comment than any other commentator.

Table 5. Individual Responses to "The Four Seasons" Essay

Methodology	Recorded	Written*	Written	Written	Written
Commentator	CA	DS	AG	GH	RM
Length of comments	900 wds	892 wds	172 wds	238 wds	426 wds
Retrospective	4	0	0	0	0
Synchronous	5	2	3	2	4
Anticipatory	5	1	0	2	2
Total Comments	14	3	3	4	6

*This comment took the form of a letter addressed "Dear Nancy."

Another way to analyze these the data is to contrast Anson's recorded comments to the average of the other four commentators (Table 6). He recorded nearly twice as many synchronous comments and four times the number of anticipatory comments as the five teachers writing comments. The only retrospective comments were those made by Anson.

Table 6. Total Responses to "The Four Seasons" Essay

Taxonomy	# of recorded comments n=1	# of wds in recorded comments	Avg # of written comments n=5	Avg # of wds in written comments
Retrospective	4	-	0	-
Synchronous	5	-	2.75	-
Anticipatory	5	-	1.25	-
Total Comments	14	900	4.0	432

It was no surprise that the eleven teachers who wrote comments on these two student papers did not write any retrospective comments, given that none had had any previous contact with the student writers. So why then did Anson's recorded comments include retrospective comments at all? Anson explained to Straub that in order to record his responses, he had to create a back story similar to what would have transpired in his own classes. Thus he spoke to the two authors as if they had been in his class and engaged in the same activities that Anson usually assigned. What I found significant was that Anson's customary approach to recording had evidently habituated him to have a specific listener in mind, one with a history of which Anson was aware, so that in order to participate in Straub's study, he had to recreate the customary rhetorical situation for audio response before proceeding.

I understand that by creating these tables full of statistics, I may be suggesting some form of scientific precision to my analysis, but that is not my intent. I would assert that my findings are suggestive rather than scientifically definitive. What these results suggest to me is that temporal comments seem more likely to occur in audio-recorded commentary than in written commentary. The results also suggest that there seems to be something conducive to making temporal comments when using an audio-recorded methodology, at

least for two teacher commentators, namely Chris Anson in this study, and myself in my reflection-on-action reported on earlier.

Conclusions

I want to be clear about what I have been attempting to accomplish in this essay: I set aside any claims about whether audio-recorded commentary is "better than" or "more effective than" written response to student writing. Instead, my objective is to examine some features of audio-recorded response that suggest it may not only provide more response than written commentary but that it also is different from written response in the kinds of comments it fosters. I want also to conjecture about the significance of those differences. I offer here a different take on "teaching response as conversation," to echo the title of Straub's (1996b) study, in an effort to understand why some students (see Sipple; J. Sommers & Mellen) report that recorded commentary improved their working relationship with their instructors. One of Straub's key findings was that of six strategies that mark conversational commentary perhaps the most significant was the final one: When teachers achieved a conversational commentary, it was in great degree because "they elaborated on the key statements of their responses" (p. 382). He continued, "It is this kind of elaborating, more than anything else, that makes... [the] commentary more than simply talkative... " (p. 387). The consistently higher word counts and comment totals in recorded responses that I have reported here certainly speak to the importance of elaboration in making recorded commentary "conversational" in the way that Straub defined it. Later he noted that effective conversational comments

> do not emphasize informal talk at the expense of exploring ideas for revision, and they do not emphasize exploration at the expense of communicating easily with the student. They demonstrate how the best conversational responses integrate informal dialogue and serious inquiry. (p. 388)

What Straub intended to be a discussion of a metaphor--written comments as conversation--however, is entirely apt in describing the actual speech act of recording comments.

I do not employ a metaphor when I discuss recorded comments as "informal talk." I think that in describing temporal comments that extend the talk back into the past shared classroom experiences of teacher and student, underscore the present of a teacher's reading the student's words, and point to the future of their working together, I am identifying important features that help make recorded commentary into a conversation. Phelps (2000) pointed out that teacher comments, although generally discussed as if they were "autonomous events," do not exist apart from the context of the student's previous writing and interaction with the instructor. Phelps observed, "Teachers' commentaries participate in a concatenated, coordinated set of teaching moves that 'respond' to writings and their writers" (p. 95). And she noted that "well-written commentaries... are coherent and interactive because they are embedded in a common classroom context and history of learning... " (p. 95). Admittedly, the "conversation" I am describing may literally be a monologue, but-and here is my central point-it is also situated as part of an ongoing dialogue that began in the classroom and will continue through the term. To paraphrase Phelps, I would say that recorded commentary provides an effective medium for instructors to provide well-spoken commentary because it can more readily appear to student and teacher as a "concatenated, coordinated" teaching move. The kinds of comments I have been exploring, I believe, can transform the monologue into an actual *response* to what has been previously been said, inviting a response from the student writer (which, increasingly, is taking the form of a recorded commentary by the student). In other words, retrospective, synchronous, and anticipatory comments seem to be doing other work at the same time that they are providing a response to the student's written text: They may be building the relationship between teacher and student.

Straub (1996b) recognized that conversational comments "bring the meaning a reader creates from the text back out, through the reader's comments, into the arena of social exchange, where meaning may be refined, redirected, and developed" (p. 392). But he also noted that effective conversational written comments illustrated how "these responders seem to concentrate on the subject at hand, not on the student reading the comments, and engage the writing in a way that they hope will engage the writer" (p. 390). He intended this comment as praise, but I contend that retrospective, synchronous, and anticipatory comments do not exist as an either-or in which they must be focused on the text or focused on the student, but not on both. N. Sommers quoted one student in her study registering a criticism that "'Too often comments are written to the paper, not to the student'" (2006, p. 250), and Fife and O'Neill (2001) criticized response studies for failing to account for the "role that teacher response plays in ... the students' development as writers" (p. 305). Temporal comments manage to concentrate on *both* the subject of the written text and also on the student who is receiving the comments, and that is their major strength. As my essay has shown, these kinds of comments are not exclusive to recorded response, but I am persuaded by Straub that "elaborating" is crucial to conversational response and that the kind of elaborating he has described is just easier to produce and more likely to occur in audio response, which generates more commentary in less time than written commentary can. Thus, recorded response affords an opportunity not only to provide more of the comments usually made in writing but also provides a greater opportunity to make different--and productive-kinds of comments.

I am cognizant of the literature that argued against overwhelming students with too many comments to assimilate. Straub and Lunsford (1995) observed that the one reader of twelve included in their study who employed recorded response spoke to more issues in his responses than ten of the other eleven participants (p. 315). But they also offered the qualification that the recorded commentator used this approach "not to take up more issues in his responses but to address more fully the issues he does take up"

(p. 311). Although recorded commentary seems to be more expansive (using word counts as evidence) than written commentary and may in fact *cover more ground*, what may be more important is that audio comments often cover ground *in greater depth*. Scrocco (2012) studied student response to teacher written comments through think aloud protocols and observed that "brief comments and symbols" only "rarely" prompted her student subjects to respond to teacher commentary "conversationally," noting that the students were six times more likely to verbalize no response at all (p. 287). N. Sommers (2006, p. 251) reported that 90% of 400 Harvard students surveyed urged faculty to give more detailed feedback on their writing. Audio commentary can provide such detail. For instance, in one response in my study of my own recordings, I devoted 67 words to discussing the organization of a draft, but it required only 32 seconds for me to speak those words. In another case I explained to the writer the difference between "as if" and "like" in 29 words, a mere 14 seconds of speaking. It is difficult to imagine many instructors writing that many words in marginal comments, given the time required to do so. Thus, the written versions are likely to be terser and less detailed. See J. Sommers and Mellen (p. 35) for one student's discussion of how audio comments tended to be more detailed than written ones.

The written responses that came closest to recorded commentary in terms of elaboration and increased incidence of temporal comments seemed to be in the form of letters to students such as Margaret's letters in Batt (2005) and Stock's letter in Straub (1996b). Also see Edgington (2004), who showed that students preferred personal letters to marginal comments because they elaborated more and suggested a greater level of teacher involvement. Because the personal letter approach highlights the rhetorical nature of the response event--the letter writer addresses a specific reader directly--it seems to come closest as a written response to replicating the audio approach of a speaker directly addressing an individual listener. Patricia Stock, Straub explained, had a "double focus" in her comments as she discussed with the student what she perceived his message to be while simultaneously examining where the writing might develop and move ahead productively (p. 390). I contend that if she were being truly conversational, as it appears she was, then there would have been a *triple* focus because she was also using her comments to forge an effective working relationship with the student. Stock was already responding in the manner later described by Anson (2000). Anson's essay has been praised for emphasizing the "impact of commentary on the quality of the relationship between teacher and student, as well as the quality of the writing experience itself, rather than specific revisions in a subsequent draft of a subsequent assignment" (Knoblauch & Brannon, 2006, p. 12). Anson's essay provided a "promising change of focus: ... a concern to personalize the interaction between teacher and student, rather than an effort to shape or control immediate changes in student performance" (Knoblauch & Brannon, 2006, p. 12). Personalizing this interaction is one way to ensure that the responses are congruent with-rather than disconnected from-what Knoblauch and Brannon twenty years earlier (1981) had termed the "governing dialogue" of the classroom. N. Sommers reminded us that "there is a story behind each effective comment that animates it, making it more than mere marks on a page" (pp. 248-249), and temporal comments, whether made in written form, most likely in letters such as the ones written by Patricia Stock or by Margaret in Batt's study, or more often, in recorded form, help to further the narration of a story begun in the classroom and continued through the term.

When Sipple (2007) reported her students found that audio commentary created a stronger bond between teacher and student, I think she was building on the approach to response advocated by Anson and praised by Knoblauch and Brannon. She was certainly describing a relationship rather than examining the impact on textual revision of specific comments. As teachers employ retrospective, synchronous, and anticipatory comments, they convey a message that emphasizes their relationship with the students. Temporal comments say, "Here's what we have experienced together already, here's what I am experiencing now as I read your text, and here's what you might experience as we work on the process in the future." I am growing convinced that temporal comments account in some important way for the developing bond that Sipple's students reported.

But I think Straub (1996b) actually grasped that such bonding was happening when he noted that the conversational comments he praised "dramatize the act of reading the text and push the student back into the writing, calling on him to consider ... possibilities for further development in this text and in his overall work as a developing writer and reader" (p. 390). Words such as "dramatize," "push the student back," "further development," and "developing" suggested implicitly the impact of the temporal comments I have been tracing because they evoked a present, a past, and a future for the student writer and her or his draft. Straub (1997a) more explicitly rethought his approach to response in a commentary published a year later. He wrote, "I also think there's a lot to be said for teachers' making their comments on the page closely reflect their classroom personas" (p. 277) and "I agree that we need to go beyond textual analysis of isolated comments and study the role of teacher comments in relation to the larger dynamics of actual classroom situations" (p. 282). Three years later, Straub (2000) published a study in which he examined his efforts to analyze those "larger dynamics" by appraising his own responses, comments "designed to create a dialogue with the writer and connect our moment-by-moment work to the overall work of the course... [keeping] one eye on their [students'] development as *writers*... " (p. 26). In this later study, Straub cited two articles about audio commentary as he focused on his goal of turning his comments into "a conversation" (p. 28), articles that he had not previously cited in his earlier research although they had already been in print. I believe that this essay of mine, through the analysis of the temporal comments featured in audio commentary, has also been examining "the larger dynamics of actual classroom situations" by which response to student writing is turned into conversation.

So, I return to the question posed by undergraduate author Mellen, "Are temporal comments present in recordings as a result of teacher strategy or by virtue of the medium itself?". I think the answer is "Both." It is important to recall that the first principle in Chickering and Gamson's (1987) famous "Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education" is "good practice in undergraduate education encourages contact between students and faculty." Such contact can be provided by recorded

commentary that relies upon the temporal comments I have identified. After completing my reflection-on-action into my own characteristic responding strategies and developing this new taxonomy, I have begun, in a more self-aware manner, to perpetuate the strategy of employing temporal comments that link my reading to previous experience while reporting on my personal reading responses and projecting into the student's future work.

At the same time, I can find my own transcribed recorded comments to one student from 2000, a decade before my current reflection-on-action, filled with temporal comments. This transcription appeared in slightly different form (with more paraphrasing) in J. Sommers (2002):

> You asked where my sympathies lie, and I think they're divided. I can relate to and identify with your position as a student because I was once an honors English student myself and a very diligent kind of perfectionist high school student. On the other hand, I'm a teacher myself and I can understand what [your teacher]... was trying to do, but when you raise the question of ethics with him, I certainly wanted to hear more about it because I do think there's an ethical issue here... That's it! That's my walking tour. I tried to describe for you what I was feeling and what I was thinking about in hopes that you'll want to revise the paper, and when you do, I'll be glad to look at it again.

Here I referred to a question the student writer had asked me in her Writer's Memo, which I had read prior to responding to her draft (a retrospective comment); spoke about my own reactions based on my personal experiences and also employed the metaphor of a "walking tour" of her draft to describe my actions (synchronous comments); and concluded by looking ahead to her next steps (an anticipatory comment). My "walking tour" comment was the product of a consciously chosen strategy, and my response to the question she had posed and that I had read prior to responding to her draft was also a planned response. However, my comments about looking ahead seemed to grow organically as I wrapped up my response. In other words, my recorded commentary was an amalgam of strategy and the influence of the medium I had chosen.

What lies ahead for this exploration of the effects of recorded commentary on the teacher-student working relationship? Several questions seem worth researching further:

• I have conjectured that the temporal comments described here may account for the stronger bonds described in Sipple's study. This essay is a preliminary study of temporal comments, focused entirely on my own perceptions of such comments and largely devoted to making a case that such different kinds of comments exist and have significance. However, O'Neill and Fife (2001) have argued that students saw teacher comments as only a single aspect of a larger context established through multiple interactions with their teachers in and out of class and that researchers need to investigate students' views of response. An important next step, therefore, is to ask, "What are students' attitudes and responses to retrospective, synchronous, and anticipatory comments?"

• Scrocco's (2012) examination of student response to conversational response through think-aloud protocols analyzed the impact of written comments on students' papers, as reported by the students, specifically examining the conversational nature of the communication. If, as I have been arguing, audio-recorded response through the use of temporal comments fosters conversations between student and teacher, then replicating Scrocco's study by having students think aloud while listening to recorded comments for the first time would allow for a contrast between the impact of written and audio response that might continue the work of analyzing the bond created (or not created) through teacher response.

• We know that the length of teachers' comments tends to be greater with the recorded approach. But when a teacher employs both written and recorded response in the same course, what differences surface in the frequency of temporal comments? In other words, how do the instructor's written and recorded comments differ, apart from length?

• Tobin (2010) explores the pedagogical strategy of teacher self-disclosure. In what ways do teachers who use recorded response to make temporal comments consciously employ the strategy of self-disclosure? A study in which teachers listen to their own recorded comments and analyze the decisions they have made to reveal their selves could offer important insights.

• As new technology develops, many instructors are moving from audio recording to audio-visual recordings, providing students not only with a voice to hear but a computer screen capture of the student's written text to observe (see Warnock 2008). What impact does this change in media have on the occurrence and form taken by temporal comments?

• Finally, how do temporal comments affect online writing students? For that matter, what reactions do online students have to any teacher comments, written or recorded, when the "governing dialogue" of the course is no longer that of a shared experience in a classroom but of a shared experience in a virtual environment. How do online teachers create a bond with their students through commenting on their writing? Sipple (2007) speculated that the bonds created by recorded commentary might lead to higher retention rates. This notion echoed Betts's (2008) argument for "Online Human Touch." Betts reported that frequent, high quality faculty contact with students is central to student retention, while also pointing out a need to define "'frequency and quality of contact" in online education. Ice et al. (2007) found "the role audio feedback played in developing ... interpersonal relationship[s]

with students in our asynchronous courses to be a compelling enough reason for its continued use even if no other positive factors had been discovered" (pp.18-19). Clearly, the potential for recorded commentary to aid in student retention in online environments is intriguing and worthy of further investigation.

These explorations have illuminated for me what it is that may appeal to students about recorded response. I have been employing such comments since the tape cassette days of the late '70s through the MP3 files and CDs of the early 2000s and now into the screen capture world of Jing and Camtasia, and have long been aware that students appreciate the elaboration and the personal voice of recorded response. I find it exciting, however, to be examining specific forms of comments that may well explain the enduring popularity with students of recorded response, and I look forward to further investigations.

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