

Practices to Display Changes of Epistemic Stances between Teacher and Student in ESL

Individual Writing Conference

Introduction

Epistemic status deals with an interactant's access to certain territories/domains of knowledge, whereas epistemic stance manages the moment-by-moment epistemic relations in turns-at-talk. When epistemic status is compatible with epistemic stance, epistemic congruence is achieved (Heritage, 2013). In a context of ESL individual writing conference, when the students bring in their research topics to discuss with the teacher, conflicts emerge. The students have a higher epistemic status in relation to the research topic but lower epistemic status in terms of academic writing skills; the teacher assumes a higher epistemic authority in giving writing advice but has limited access to students' territory of knowledge in terms of the research topics. This study intends to show the practices that students employ to display their epistemic stances.

Theoretical Background

In conversations of any two speakers, each interlocutor possesses his/her own territory of knowledge, and any specific information can fall into one or both interlocutors' domain(s) of knowledge, typically to different degrees. Epistemic status deals with the interlocutor's access to certain domains of knowledge. Speaker possessing relatively more information occupies a higher position on the epistemic gradient with a more knowledgeable (K+) status, and vice versa. The

interactants share recognition of “their comparative access, knowledgeability, and rights relative to some domain of knowledge (p.376)” as established facts (Heritage, 2013).

While epistemic status is established, presupposed, and enduring in conversations, epistemic stance “concerns the moment-by-moment expression of these relationships, as managed through the design of turns-at-talk. (p.390)” When an interlocutor’s epistemic stance become compatible with his/her epistemic status, epistemic congruence is achieved (Heritage, 2013).

Three aspects of knowledge are salient in conversations regarding epistemics: epistemic access, epistemic primacy and epistemic responsibility. Epistemic access concerns the state of knowing or unknowing and the degree of certainty; epistemic primacy is pertinent to the relative authority of knowledge, and the relative rights to know and to claim; epistemic responsibility deals with a speaker’s obligation to know certain knowledge and influences the recipient design of action and turns of interlocutors (Stivers, Mondada, & Steensig, 2011).

Dynamic of Epistemics

Several researches have contributed to the understanding of epistemics, and specifically to the dynamic of epistemics. Mondada (2011) studied conversations taking place in a call center in France, where epistemic asymmetry often exists. She showed how the participants orient to the knowledge that the interlocutors possess in order to progress the talk. She shows that the acknowledgement of the interactant’s distribution of relevant knowledge has huge impact on the progressivity of the interaction. In addition, epistemic positions are in nature “dynamically

negotiated in the activity, being displayed, claimed, attributed, revised and also being newly acquired” (p.27)

Mondada (2013) analyzed videos in a corpus of guided tours. In such settings, it is assumed that the guide has a K+ epistemic status whereas the guided tourists have a K- epistemic status regarding the information about the place they are visiting. For the fact that the information about the place should be in the guide’s territory of knowledge, he/she assumes the epistemic authority during the conversation. When the guided tourists challenge the guide, conflicts of epistemic status and stance emerge. Mondada’s (2013) study argues that “epistemic authority is not a fixed status attributed to a participant, but an incessant situated accomplishment, particularly vulnerable in challenging sequential environments” (p. 598).

Piirainen–Marsh & Tainio (2014) investigated how epistemic asymmetry impacts on social interaction in gaming sessions over two years. Two Finnish children were videotaped when they were playing video games. All the scripts and clues given in the game were in English. The epistemic asymmetry originally existed for the age difference and the difference of the level of familiarity with the game. However, with the change of amount of time of access to the game, and growth of linguistic knowledge, the asymmetry slowly disappeared. This study shows that their epistemic positions change over time; and more importantly, this change significantly affects the organization of the social interaction, and lastly, provides learning opportunities. The younger Finnish child, starting from being ignored by the older Finnish child due to his limited access to the territory knowledge (how to play the game), developed his higher

epistemic status two year later, when he participated in the game-related conversation, displaying his epistemic status through making use of the resources on the game texts and his territory knowledge. The aforementioned three studies show the changing nature of epistemics either in a short conversation or over a long period of time. The following researches focus specifically on the epistemic asymmetry in individual writing conference.

Park (2012a) in her study of epistemic asymmetry in writing conference showed that a difference in syntax could express level of certainty. In the individual writing conference between teacher and student, students used polar questions to display their epistemic positions. More specifically, interrogative syntax denoted a comparatively lower level of certainty, whereas declarative syntax to denoted a higher level of certainty.

Park (2012b) examined the interactions between teacher and student during individual conferences. Under the premise that teacher is assuming the epistemic authority and student is seeking advice, she found that students use epistemic downgrade in order to confirm their lower epistemic status in the conversation, express their learner autonomy, and imply their knowledge territory. Focusing on the sentence structure “I don’t know + if/wh complement”, the study showed that “I don’t know if” implies students’ possessing more knowledge of the subject matter, learner autonomy and asking for teacher’s permission, whereas “I don’t know wh...” implies student’s less content knowledge, and that it is closer to a genuine question that students do not know.

Teacher's and Student's Role in Conference

The epistemic relations between instructor and students in individual conferences for a writing class are manifested in various ways. Traditionally, instructor is the authority, giving orders and suggestions in a rigid form while students do not have the liberty to express their own opinions (Moran, 1981). Nevertheless, this way of conferencing has been gradually replaced by a new view towards conference, in which the instructor functions as a facilitator and students as “main actors” (Graves, 1983). Instructors no longer focus on the mechanics of writing; rather, they encourage students to share their ideas and negotiate their meanings.

In both the traditional view and the “facilitator” view, the instructor is always playing a role of an advisor. Heritage and Sefi (1992) explained that, advisor “describes, recommends or otherwise forwards a preferred course of future action” (p. 368). Instructor, as the advisor in writing conference, offers students suggestions on how to make their essays better. This “advisor” role implies instructor’s higher epistemic authority in the course of discussion, whereas the students’ desire of expressing their own opinions may challenge the teacher’s epistemic authority.

This study intends to show the moment by moment nature of epistemic stance, and what practices students employ to display their epistemic stance during the ESL individual writing conference, especially when epistemic asymmetry was salient in the conversation.

Data & Method

The data for this study were recordings and transcriptions of individual writing conferences between an instructor and his students for two sections of a college-level composition course in a public American university. The course aims to familiarize international students with the American academic writing standards and to teach basic writing and communication skills. The instructor and all the students are ESL speakers with intermediate-high to high proficiency level in English. They are working on their final major assignment, an argumentative problem solution essay related to their majors. For this assignment, the students are asked to identify a serious and unsolved problem in their field of study, to search for sources that could help them solve the problem, and finally to argue for one best solution and refute the others.

Before the conference, the instructor distributed an outline sheet (see appendix two) to the students, including the key components and the organization of the essay. The students were required to fill out the sheet and bring it to the individual conference. They were expected to debrief the content on the sheet and the instructor would evaluate the quality of the work, ask questions, and point out the future directions. Each conference lasted ten to twenty minutes depending on the amount of the instructor's follow-up questions. During the conference, a video camera with a tripod was set up in front of a desk, and the instructor and one student were sitting juxtaposed to each other behind a desk, so that the researchers could see the gestures, eye gazes, and facial expression clearly along with their verbal output. Seventeen videos (approximately

383 minutes) were collected in total within a week. The conversations between the instructor and the students have been transcribed according to Gail Jefferson's (2004) conversation analytic transcription conventions (shown in Appendix 1). All the names are pseudonyms.

The agenda in the individual conference was setup by the instructor. The instructor and the student first briefly discussed the what the student's research topic was, based on what student's topic proposal. In the following, student reported what solutions they have found from the research, and the reason why it was supported or refuted. The teacher commented on the strength of the argument, and organization and thesis related issues.

Analysis

Display of Epistemic Stance

In the individual conference, the tension and asymmetrical epistemic status and stance become salient. Although the instructor is assuming a K+ epistemic status and K+ epistemic stance in terms of how to write a final research paper, the fact that students bringing in their own topics from their majors creates the conflict between students' epistemic authority in the knowledge domain of their topics and epistemic inferiority in writing.

The following excerpt gives a general introduction to and a brief depiction of the epistemic asymmetry in the conversation between the instructor and the student, Jietao Li (JTL), whose research topic is about the underage smoking in the U.S.

Excerpt One (JTL finishes reporting, T talks about the thesis)

121 *TEA: this is the problem,

122 {and There are >↑two solutions you found<,
 123 {((bend fingers inward to count))
 124 *JTL: → TRACKING cigarettes [and
 125 *TEA: {[uh tracking cigarettes and
 126 {((LH point to paper and nod))
 127 *JTL: → [<advertising> on >the effect of smoking<,
 128 *TEA: [°advertising° yeah (.) yeah
 129 *JTL: might be the two of the feasible solutions,=
 130 *TEA: ={yeah might be >the two feasible solution,<
 131 {((bend fingers to count))
 132 {how↑ever, this one (0.5) doesn't work because uh (°XXX°)
 133 {((LH palm point to paper))
 134 *JTL: → >DO i have to put it< in the thesis, [or i=
 135 *TEA: [yes
 136 *JTL: =okay
 137 *TEA: {BRIefly
 138 {((BH form a round shape))
 139 *JTL: uh huh (.) ok

Jietao finishes reporting all his solutions and explains which ones he will refute and which one he will argue for. As a routinized step, the teacher is ready to talk about how to write the thesis statement for this essay. He does this in every conference as his instructional plan. The teacher initiates his sequence by summarizing Jietao's report (line 121). In line 124, Jietao starts his turn with a loud voice, and continues his turn in line 127. The teacher's turn then starts from giving summary to repeating Jietao's previous turn, with giving positive feedback, "yeah" (line 125 and 128). At this point, both Jietao (in his research topic) and the teacher (in academic writing advising) are displaying their K+ epistemic status. However, in line 134, Jietao initiates his turn with an utterance using interrogative syntax. In such instructional context, Jietao, as a student, is less likely to ask a display or rhetorical question. This syntax indicates that he is requesting information in a K- epistemic status, because he has less access to this domain of

knowledge, compared to the teacher.

Jietao displays a K+ epistemic stance in the first half of the conversation when the content is focusing on his research topic manifested by his louder voice. He displays a K- stance when discussing writing with the teacher shown by using an interrogative syntax. In such a short excerpt, we can see the dynamic of the epistemics between the interlocutors, and how one can use certain practice in order to display their epistemic stances. From the data we collected, we found the following practices that students employ to display higher or lower epistemic stances, namely, taking the floor, voice quality, and non-verbals.

Competing for the floor

In our mundane daily conversation, one of the characteristics of our talk is that “one speaker at a time” (Sack et al, 1974). Floor can be understood as the interactants following and orienting to this rule, with gaps and overlaps. Competing for the floor here refers to moments when one speaker tries to occupy the floor exclusively, by using overlap, latching, cutoff, speed-up speech, and ignoring the other interactant’s pre-beginnings.

Excerpt Two (overlaps):

8 *TEA: your problem solution is talking about,
 9 [smoking
 10 *JTL: → [underage smoking,
 11 *TEA: ah [underage smoking.
 12 *JTL: [yea:h
 13 *TEA: {and (0.6) you attention grabber will be
 14 {{{look at and LH touch the paper))
 15 the [data
 16 *JTL: → {[data like >the number of underage smokers<,

In excerpt 3, after Jietao explains one of his solutions, the teacher summarizes his answer, displaying his understanding of the topic. In line 23, the teacher hesitates indicated by a hesitation marker “uh”, and is overlapped by Jietao’s turn in line 24, with a loud first syllable. Taking the floor from the teacher, Jietao displays his higher stance in regards to his research topic.

Excerpt Four (ignoring pre-beginnings):

28 *JTL: smoking zones to maybe like three places,
 29 and it will be all >far away from< the classrooms,
 30 *TEA: → .hhh [um
 31 *JTL: [which means you have to walk a long way to the
 32 smoking zone to smoke.
 33 *TEA: mm hm
 34 *TEA: → [.hhh
 35 *JTL: [a:nd (1.6) this might just >reduce the number of smokers<
 36 as not everyone wants to take >thirty minutes to
 37 just take a cigarette.<
 38 *TEA: → {mm hm [.hhh
 39 {(nod))
 40 *JTL: [but the- the thing is it takes a: lot of
 41 human resource to manage it,
 42 *TEA: → .hhh
 43 *JTL: because you have to {place <all the> (0.5)
 44 *TEA: → {{{sit back, put RH on the chin))
 45 *JTL: {security around classroom buildings,
 46 *TEA: {(tap fingers on the table))
 47 *JTL: to make sure no one smoking around it,
 48 *TEA: → [.hhh
 49 *JTL: [so-
 50 *TEA: and how does that related to: underage smoking.
 51 *JTL: beCAUse in school.
 52 (0.8)
 53 >i want it< to be in school.
 (instructor asked some follow-up question)

Pre-beginnings are the subtle signs that project start of a turn (Schegloff, 1996), such as in-breaths. Students can ignore these pre-beginnings, in order to keep their floor, displaying their higher epistemic stance. In excerpt 4, Jietao is presenting his second possible solution to the problem. In line 30, 34, 38, and 42, four pre-beginnings shown in the form of in-breaths indicates that the teacher is attempting to initiate a turn. However, Jietao does not stop his turn to yield the floor to the teacher. It is also worth noting that in line 35, Jietao initiates his turn with an elongated “a:nd” in order to maintain his floor, though it follows a 1.6-second long pause until he starts his turn again. In line 44, the teacher sits back, and put his right hand on the chin, indicating a sign of listening. The teacher’s fifth attempt with, again, a pre-beginning of in-breath cuts off Jietao’s turn in line 49. Jietao’s keeping the floor exclusively, ignoring the teacher’s in-breaths, shows Jietao’s higher K+ status and K+ stance. Jietao’s answer, starting with louder voice (line 51), and faster speech (line 52), and both ending with falling intonation, shows his level of affirmation, and therefore reinforces his K+ stance.

Excerpt Five (latching and speed-up speech):

74 *TEA: {and >so< uh half half.
 75 {((BH chop on desk))
 76 {half of them get cigarettes
 77 {((LH palm down hit on desk))
 78 {from other people,=
 79 {((LH wave to left))
 80 *JTL: =yeah
 81 *TEA: {and by doing this it will (0.4)
 82 {((RH little finger point to paper))
 83 {uh- >by doing this it will<
 84 {((BH form a round shape))

85 {eliminate those people.=
86 {(BH palms face each other move to far front left))
87 *JTL: → =mmm[NO. >NO NO<
88 *TEA: {[and then half °of the°
89 {(BH come back in front of body))
90 *JTL: {it's like (.) because i track ↑it means
91 {(LH put on the paper))
92 → >you have to show your id when you buy it,<=
93 *TEA: ={yes
94 {(nod))
95 *JTL: to (0.6) make sure: (0.8)
96 → >track it means like< (.) >they will have your id
97 [number,< recorded=
98 *TEA: [yes yes
99 *JTL: =And the id has your (0.7)
100 date of birth on it,=
101 *TEA: ={mm hm
102 {(nod))
103 *JTL: so those teenagers won't be able to
104 buy cigarettes on their own,=
105 =[the half
106 *TEA: {[yes
107 {(nod))
108 *JTL: → THE OTHER HALF buy from others, (0.7) thos:e=
109 *TEA: {=because the others are tracked=
110 {(BH move to far front left))
111 =yeah=
112 *TEA: {=yes
113 → {(RH thumb up))
114 *JTL: so: it's like (.) to all- all the teenagers.=
115 *TEA: ={°yes° i understand.
116 → {(BH thumb up))
117 *TEA: → u:h (.) that's good.

Prior to this clip in episode 5, Jietao finished presenting his last proposed solution. Here, the teacher is trying to summarize and paraphrase the solution and to display his understanding.

His summary is rejected by Jietao in line 87, starting with a “mmm”, and three loud “NO”s. He

continues explaining his solution, with speeded-up speech in line 92, and 96-97, also accompanied with several latching of his own turn, leaving no gaps in between, in line 99 and 105. All these actions and practices (rejecting, fast speech and latching) display Jietao's higher epistemic status and stance of his research topic.

Voice quality/Non-verbals

Other practices that students employ in order to display their epistemic stance are changing voice quality and non-verbals, that sometimes co-occur in the data. In the following examples, soft speech indicates the lack of confidence or certainty, accompany with non-verbals, i.e, gestures and facial expressions.

Excerpt Six (soft voice and wandering eyes):

58 *TEA: {underage smoker is (.) illegal smokers [right,
59 {((BH chop on desk))
60 *JTL: [uh huh
61 *TEA: {un- age under- under eighteen.
62 {((BH move to left))
63 *JTL: yeah
64 *TEA: {and then how (0.5) <#helping college students>
65 {((BH chop on desk))
66 can reduce underage smoking,
67 → {(8.0)
68 *JTL: {((eyes wander))
69 → °then° this might not be a †solution.
70 *TEA: hehe. .hh u:h yeah

Students' change of voice quality and non-verbals (in this case, facial expression) display their epistemic stance. In excerpt 6, the teacher asks several follow-up questions regarding the logical soundness of Jietao's second solution, which leads to excerpt six. In line 64, the teacher

asks a question of how this solution fits into the essay. An eight-second long gap follows, during which Jietao's eyes wander. After his long hesitation, he initiates his turn in a soft voice in line 69. At this point, although the conversation is still about his research topic, the focus in fact is how to argue and the logic soundness of the essay. The teacher claims a higher epistemic status in this domain of knowledge, and therefore has the epistemic primacy (Stivers et al, 2011) to challenge Jietao's proposition. Jietao, through the change of voice quality, eye movement, and long hesitance, displays his lower epistemic stance in the conversation.

In the excerpt seven, Quan Lin, a student who works part-time at one of her university's food commons, is providing background information on the routine of her job in order to better explain her essay topic. Her changes in voice quality and the extent of gestures indicates her change of epistemic stance.

Excerpt Seven (soft voice and gestures retraction)

7 *TEA: eats that=
 8 *LIN: =yeah. like in our-
 9 {in the buffet in our school, the system is like that
 10 {(BH index swing))
 11 the kitchen (0.8) prepare for like {four backups
 12 {(RH gestures four))
 13 or three backups {>in the warmer in the kitchen<
 14 {(RH thumb point to right))
 15 *TEA: {mm hm
 16 {(nod))
 17 *LIN: .hh a:nd (0.4) {ONce you finish
 18 {(BH fingers tap down))
 19 {in (.) uh in the buffet,
 20 {(RH move forward and tap down))
 21 you can- {you take the empty tray

22 {((BH form a circle representing tray))
 23 {to the:# kitchen
 24 {((hold up RH with thumb out point to right))
 25 {and ask them to like cook more.=
 26 {((right arm swing to the right again))
 27 *LIN: → =.hh BUt (0.4) {u:h if we like- if people carry less,
 28 {((LH point to the outline sheet))
 29 <and the food will like> (.) empty
 30 {in (0.7)
 31 {((BH waving in front of the body))
 32 → {a °long time°,=
 33 {((right arm move to the right))
 34 *TEA: =mm hm
 35 → {°>after a< long time, [yeah.°
 36 → {((RH touch hair))
 37 *TEA: [mm hm
 38 *LIN: → that will like {<slow down the speed.>=
 39 {((right arm wave to right and come back))

In the process of introducing the information, her hand gestures and arm movements transit from small movements near her body to more obvious ones in front of her body (line 8-32). She starts with hand gestures using the index finger (line 10, 12, 18), and then projects her hands farther away from her body using gesture with both hands (line 20, 22, 24), and finally, she swings her right arm and waves her hands in front of the body (line 26, 31). The transition of her body movements reflects the increase of her epistemic stance in the conversation about the work in the food commons, of which she has a high degree of certainty and possesses knowledge that the teacher does not have access to. Here, she has both K+ epistemic stance and K+ epistemic status.

In line 30-32, after she utters “in”, she pauses for 0.7 seconds, followed by a soft-voice “long time”, which later followed by an also soft but speeded-up speech “after a long time” (line

35). The change of voice quality is accompanied by her retraction of her hands closer to her body and touches her hair (line 36). The self-initiated repair self repair in soft voice in line 35 and the retraction of hands show that her degree of certainty decreases as the domain of knowledge switches from her work experience to English grammar. It is an established fact in the writing conference that the teacher has relative higher status in the domain of English grammar. Therefore, Quan Lin here (line 32-36) displays equal or lower epistemic status and lower epistemic stance.

After the side sequence of self-initiated repair, the content of conversation falls back into Quan Lin's territory of knowledge. Starting from line 38, she returns to the core sequence with a stressed first syllable. The change of stress and volume marked the increase of her stance. This excerpt presents the dynamic of the epistemics in the conversation between Quan Lin and the teacher, and it is manifested through the change of her voice quality (regular – soft – stressed first syllable), and her hand gestures (in front of her body – goes further away – retract and touch hair). It shows the trajectory of Quan Lin's epistemic status and epistemic stance: from K+ status/K+ stance, to K- status/K- stance, and to K+ status/ K+ stance.

In expert eight, Yuanlong Tang's topic is about computer radiation. His change of facial expression indicates his change of epistemic stance.

Excerpt Eight (Yuanlong's facial expression)

33 *TEA: ok. >°and the third one is,°<
 34 *YLT: u:h the third one is to just (1.4) avoid
 35 using: [°computers°.

36 *TEA: [HEHEHEHE
 37 *YLT: → ((slightly twitch mouth))
 38 >yeah< there's some (.) like there's a town in
 39 "you es" with no {(1.0)
 40 {(smack lips))
 41 wifi no wireless thing no radiation.
 42 → ((nod his head twice))

When Yuanlong reports his third solution (line 34-35), the teacher laughs in a loud voice as if it is amusing, even before Yuanlong ends his turn. However, from Yuanlong's reaction, slightly twitching his mouth (line 37), a speeded-up "yeah" (line 38), and nodding his head (line 42), it becomes obvious that it is a serious and legitimate solution from Yuanlong's point of view, and it should not be laughed at. He shows a sign of dissatisfaction, and an evaluation of the teacher's understanding of the knowledge. His embodied action, the non-verbals, in this case, twitching his mouth and nodding his head, is one way to display his K+ epistemic stance.

Excerpt nine, Yiran, is another example of displaying the change of epistemic stance by changing of facial expression. His research topic is about China's economic recession.

Excerpt Nine (Yiran's snicker)

12 *TEA: <and then,> they will do investment,
 13 or purchasing stuff [or#
 14 *YRW: [>yes actually that when i-<
 15 >when the government lower the interest rate,<
 16 the price level will like decrease.
 17 >cuz it will-< (1.2)
 18 cuz like-
 19 → ((snicker))
 20 → ⊙it's >it's a common sense< ⊙ fo:r (.) economy,=
 21 *TEA: =yea huh
 22 *YRW: once the privel- le: PRIce level (.) go D0wns,

23 the demand will goes up.=

The teacher is displaying his understanding of what Yiran just explained about what the consequence is if the interest rate is lowered. He uses examples to illustrate his point (line 8, 12-13). In line 19, he snickers, and he starts his turn in a smiling voice, saying, “it’s a common sense for economy.” By using the phrase “common sense,” he states that it is the teacher’s epistemic responsibility to know what he has said. “Responsible to know” is a dimension of knowledge, which is governed and influenced certain social norms, including “treat[ing] others as responsible for knowing what is commonly known” (Stivers et al, 2011). He assumes that the teacher should have access to this territory of knowledge. His facial expression (snicker in line 19), like Yuanlong does, displays his K+ epistemic stance.

Provide information/clarification

Excerpt Ten (Yuanlong’s explanation)

15 *TEA: [um the- the ↑radiation mainly comes from
 16 {the sCREEN?
 17 {(LH wave in front of the screen))
 18 or {the- the
 19 {(BP draw circles on the keyboard))
 20 *YLT: → uh both.
 21 *TEA: both.=
 22 *YLT: =yes.=
 23 *TEA: =ok
 24 u:h (0.8) so: by# (0.5) when you sa:y# (0.4) come up with
 25 new: (0.8) {PARTs in the computer=
 26 {(BP touch the keyboard again))
 27 *YLT: {=°yeah°
 28 {(nod head))
 29 *TEA: that will (.) radiates (.) uh (.) ↑less

30 {°radiation°?=
 31 {((BH fingers point to the screen, shake a little))
 32 *YLT: → =>yeah like hardwares.<

In this excerpt, Yuanlong and the teacher talk about one of the solutions to computer radiation, that is, to install a specifically designed hardware to counter the radiation. Yuanlong displays his higher epistemic status by providing information and clarification. In line 20, he completes the teacher's utterance by providing information that the teacher does not have access to, and therefore displayed his K+ status and K+ stance. Afterwards, he gives a positive evaluation to the teacher's repetition of the information he provided to reinforce his K+ stance (line 23).

In line 32, while Yuanlong answers the question from the preceding turn, he used the word "hardwares" to address the computer "parts" mentioned by the teacher in line 25. Here, by providing clarification with a more specific term of the object mentioned in conversation, he displays his K+ status and gains K+ stance. In addition, the teacher displays different degrees of uncertainty of the knowledge of computer radiation with cut-off (line 18), incomplete utterance (line 18), multiple pauses (line 24, 25, 29), soft speech (line 30), and creaky voice (line 24), which reflects the teacher's K- epistemic status and stance, and therefore reinforce Yuanlong's K+ stance.

Special Case: Making Congruence with lower stance

In the previous section, practices that students employ to display their epistemic stances are presented. To achieve epistemic congruence, students can use various practices to display

their K+ stance, matching with their K+ status in terms of their research topic. However, there exists a special case in our analysis. Students can also make congruence with the teacher's lower epistemic stance so as to match with their presupposed K- stance (based on teacher's epistemic authority in the conference) and their teacher's K- stance (based on teacher's lack of access to student's knowledge territory). The underlying reason could be students' intent to affiliate with the teacher. Lindström and Sorjonen (2013) explain that affiliation is affected by "the larger activity in progress" (p. 353). Speakers can choose to appear less knowledgeable by dissembling their epistemic status (Heritage, 2013). The individual conference resembles a miniature classroom, a representation of instructional space, in which the teacher is the authority (epistemically, but also in terms of power). If the teacher at the moment is in K- epistemic stance in the conference during the conversation, then students may pose a lower stance in order to affiliate with the teacher, or to simply put, saving teacher's face.

We found two practices: clarification, and slow down speech that students deploy to make congruence with the teacher.

Clarification:

Excerpt Eleven (Yiran's explanation)

12 *TEA: <and then,> they will do investment,
 13 or purchasing stuff [or#
 14 *YRW: → [>yes actually that when i-<
 15 >when the government lower the interest rate,<
 16 the price level will like decrease.
 17 >cuz it will-< (1.2)
 18 cuz like-

19 ((snicker))
 20 ©it's >it's a common sense< © fo:r (.) economy,=
 21 *TEA: =yea huh
 22 *YRW: once the privele- le: PRIce level (.) go DOWns,
 23 the demand will goes up.=

In in the previous section in Yiran's excerpt, we just mentioned that the teacher's rendition of summary and examples does not match with Yiran's understanding of the topic. Due to the fact that Yiran had already explained it, the teacher has the epistemic responsibility to know the content. When Yiran detects that the teacher is going astray from his focus, he uses overlap to take the turn (line 14). However, instead of pointing out that the teacher is wrong, he agrees with what the teacher's utterance with a "yes", in a speeded-up speech with "actually", showing that the following will be what is on his agenda. Rather than identifying the incorrectness of the teacher's speech, providing more clarification is what Yiran employs, a sign of making congruence with the teacher's lower stance. The following excerpt also demonstrates the practice of clarification.

Excerpt Twelve (Yiran's reexplantation)

29 *YWR: and what they need=
 30 *TEA: =mm hm mm hm
 31 and how does that directly help the: >°economic
 32 recession.°<
 33 *YWR: → OH CUz (.) >economic recession means like the
 34 growth rate is tra-< is slowing down,=
 35 *TEA: =mm hm

As a routinized step in the conference, the first question the teacher asks concerns students' overall topic, what the "problem" is in the problem solution essay. Student needs to

explain several aspects of the problem, such as the definition, the cause and consequence of it, etc. Hence, Yiran has explained what economic recession is at the very beginning of the conference. Before this excerpt, Yiran explained how to implement his proposed solution in detail and the rationale behind it. The teacher initiates a question in line 31, asking how this relates to solve the problem. It is unclear that the teacher is asking a display question to check Yiran's reasoning or a genuine question to request more information, but Yiran treats it as the latter. To him, teacher's question breaks one of the norms in epistemic responsibility, not to request information if you know the answer (Stivers et al, 2011). When he starts his turn in line 33, it is an oh-prefaced response in a loud voice. According to Heritage (1998), an oh-prefaced response to an inquiry indicates that the question asked is inapposite. One of the reasons could be that the inquiry is problematic regarding its "relevance, presuppositions, or context" (p. 314). Yiran's oh-prefaced response indicates that the teacher's question is inappropriate. Nonetheless, he does not display any dissatisfaction because of the question raised. He re-explained what "economic recession" is as new knowledge, though it has been explained once. He makes congruence with the teacher by providing clarification again to match with the teacher's lower stance.

Slowed-down speech

Excerpt Thirteen (Liye's slow-down)

7 *TEA: okay. so mmm (0.6) i ↑THINK in america,
 8 lots of bank doesn't actually provide
 9 those (.) #u:h#

- 10 *LYT: → chip=
 11 *TEA: = {credit card with chips.
 12 {(LH form an empty fist and shake)}
 13 *LYT: → <<BUT the MAJor# (.) banks {do.>> =
 14 {(nods)}
 15 *TEA: =°okay okay°

Slowed-down speech is another practice that students employ in order to make congruence with the teacher. In this excerpt, Liye Tang and the teacher talk about one of the solutions to online credit card hacking: adding chips on cards. The teacher exhibits his limited access to this domain of knowledge by stating the incorrect information with word search, pause, creaky voice, and elongation of the hesitation marker “uh” (line 7-9). In the next turn, Liye provides other completion of the teacher’s word search and displays a K+ epistemic status and a K+ epistemic stance (line 10). However, after the epistemic congruence is achieved, Liye does not maintain the K+ stance that was compatible to his K+ status. Instead, he deploys a lower (but still K+) epistemic stance to affiliate with the teacher’s K- stance and in line 13 he shows signs of hesitation when talking about knowledge in the domain of which he proved to have high certainty, providing correction with extra slow speech, creaky voice, and pause in his turn.

Discussion and Conclusion

In the individual writing conference, the teacher assumes the epistemic authority as the “advisor” role. However, due to the fact that students are bringing their own research topics to the conference, teacher often does not have access to that domain of knowledge. The conflict between the teacher’s epistemic authority and teacher’s limited access to student’s knowledge domain creates the dynamic of epistemic stance in the conference. This paper aims to present the

practices the students employ to display their epistemic stance during the course of individual writing conference. Students deploy practices such as competing for the floor, change of voice quality, non-verbals to display their higher or lower epistemics; meanwhile students used clarification and slow-down speech in order to make congruence with the teacher, and to affiliate with the teacher.

Teachers are the epistemic authorities in most conversations with their students due to the power difference in social relationship, but it could be useful for teachers to notice the dynamic of epistemic stance during the individual conference. Teachers' awareness of this changing nature prevents them from being the dictator in the conversation, and to understand students' true propositions, intentions, and ideas. When they see students displaying their higher epistemic stance, it could mean they have more to offer, to contribute to, and to progress the conference. When they see students displaying lower stance, teachers can offer more, may even provide a learning opportunity for the students.

These practices become salient in the individual conference because of the one-to-one nature, but, I believe, they can still be seen in the regular classroom. It is important that teachers are able to notice those practices, and to draw on them as pedagogical resources. Further research can be done in this direction.

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Appendix One: Transcription Convention

[]	Overlapping utterances
{	Gesture speech co-occurrences
=	Contiguous utterances (latching)
(.)	Micro-pause; The number inside the parentheses represents the length of the pause.
:	Elongation (the more the colons, the longer the pause)
.	Fall in pitch at the end of an utterance.
,	Slight rise in pitch at the end of an utterance. Continuing intonation.
-	An abrupt stop in articulation. Cut-off.
?	Rising in pitch at utterance end (not necessarily a question)
↑	Marked upshift in pitch
↓	Marked downshift in pitch
CAPS	Loud speech
°°	Soft speech
underline	Stress/accenuation
><	Surrounds talk that is spoken faster
<>	Surrounds talk that is spoken slower
(())	Description of nonverbal conducts
()	Uncertain utterances. Surrounds the transcriber's best guess.
(X)	Unintelligible syllables; the number of Xs represents the number of unintelligible syllables.
(LRB)H	Left hand; Right hand; Both hands
→	A line of particular interest in the analysis

Appendix Two: Problem Solution Outline Sheet

I. Introduction (1 paragraph)

Thesis must include
 a problem, proposed
 solution, and
 alternative inadequate
 solution(s) and reasons

- a. Attention grabber:

- b. Briefly introduce the problem:

- c. Thesis statement(*complete sentence*):

II. The problem (2-3 paragraphs)

- a. Use research to define the problem and explain the context

- b. Use research to prove that this is a problem in this place.

- c. Present the major challenges to solving this problem

III. Refutation (1-3 paragraphs)

- a. Explain alternative in adequate solution(s)

- b. Acknowledge other valid views on the problem

- c. Counter the argument-why won't this solution work?

IV. Proposed Solution (2-4 paragraphs)

- a. Explain proposed solution in detail-outline specific step to solve the problem

- b. Use evidence to show that this solution is feasible

- c. Show why this solution is the best choice

- d. What are the possible counter arguments? How can you refute?

V. Conclusion (1-2 paragraphs)

- a. Summarize main points

- b. Restate thesis statement

c. Restate the problem's importance

d. Leave the audience with something to think about

Audience: Who is your intended audience? Who cares about the problem or has some responsibility to solve this problem? Remember that this must be academic writing, so choose an appropriate audience and explain below.
