A NEEDS-ANALYSIS FOR INTERNATIONAL ART STUDENTS:
TALK IN CRITIQUES

BY

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THESIS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of my research is to provide a rich description of critiques—planned activities or periods of time in which feedback is given to student-artists on their artworks—as part of a needs-analysis to determine how best to equip incoming international students to engage in such critique tasks. Using triangulated data sources and methods, I provide an analysis of peer group critiques in an undergraduate first-year art and design course at a large research university in the United States. This includes a description of the organization of the talk in critiques, of the practices and sociocultural norms of giving praise and criticism in critiques, of students’ perceptions of critiques, as well as of instructors’ pedagogical goals for critiques. The analysis of the talk and interactions in critiques, coupled with students’ and faculty members’ perceptions of critiques, can eventually be used to develop materials and guides for international students, to inform learning objectives for an English for Academic Purposes course for art students, and also to make pedagogical and programmatic recommendations to art programs in order to best prepare international students to participate in critiques.
To my husband David,

who became an excellent cook.
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Although speakers generally have “strong and well-formed ideas about what they should say” (Wolfson, 1989, p. 38), this is often not the same as what they actually do say. Wolfson (1989) explains that norms of interaction are culture-specific and mostly under a native speaker’s level of consciousness: “Speech norms, or community ideals concerning appropriate speech behavior, cannot be equated with speech use which is the behavior itself” (p. 38). Therefore, actual speech use must be observed and recorded in order to uncover the “unconscious cultural knowledge and the assumptions arising from it which lead to the way [people] interpret and react to their experiences” (Wolfson, 1989, p. 61).

The purpose of my research is to provide a rich description of critiques—planned activities or periods of time in which feedback is given to student-artists on their artworks—as part of a needs-analysis to determine how best to equip incoming international students to engage in the critique task. Using triangulated data sources and methods, I provide an analysis of peer group critiques in an undergraduate first-year art and design course at a large research university in the United States. This includes a description of the organization of the talk in critiques, of the practices and sociocultural norms of giving feedback in critiques, of students’ perceptions of critiques, as well as of instructors’ pedagogical goals for critiques. The talk is analyzed with the aim of uncovering the speech norms of critiques, especially the practices of giving praise and
criticism, which may well reflect American cultural norms as well as the norms of this particular speech community.

Roeder (2013) describes critique as the “the soul of art education” (p. 145); as a signature pedagogy\(^1\) in art and design, critiques will continue to be used as teaching and learning tools and one of the main vehicles, if not the main one, for giving feedback in art and design courses. However, in general, teaching and learning in the undergraduate art classroom and critiques, especially, are under-researched (Salazar, 2013). The analysis of talk in peer group art critiques will offer a detailed description of the interactions in critiques; this analysis, coupled with interviews with students, will contribute to a better understanding of how international students perceive critiques. This will be a useful contribution to the field of Art Education. This thesis will also make useful contributions to the field of Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). More generally, this study is an example of needs-analysis for learners using triangulated methods and tasks as a unit of analysis (Long, 2005). More specifically, analysis of the talk and interactions in critiques, coupled with students’ and faculty members’ perceptions of art critiques, can eventually be used to develop materials and guides for international students, to inform learning objectives in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course for art students, and to make pedagogical and programmatic recommendations to art programs in order to best prepare international students to participate in critiques. The description of praise and criticism in critiques will also contribute to a deeper understanding of the socio-

\(^1\) According to Shulman (2005), signature pedagogies are “the types of teaching that organize the fundamental ways in which future practitioners are educated for their new professions” and reflect the core values of a profession (p. 52).
pragmatic norms for performing these actions in American pedagogical contexts, in both peer-to-peer and instructor-to-student feedback.

Chapter 2 begins with a literature review which is composed of two sections: 1) background information on art critique to provide the reader with an understanding of the social context and learning environment in which critique takes place and 2) a review of previous studies on critique in art as well as in architecture and design. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology used and the data collected in this study. Chapter 4 gives an overall background on the critique activities in my data including a general description of the features of talk in the critiques, student and instructor perspectives on critique, the overall organizational phases of critique activities, and an analysis of common actions in critique activities. Chapter 5 presents a micro-analysis of talk in critique activities including the organizational structure of praise-giving and criticism-giving actions and an analysis of how praise and criticism are formulated and delivered. Chapter 6 includes a summary of this thesis, implications of this study for potential teaching objectives for an EAP course for art and design, and finally suggestions for future research.
Studies conducted in art classrooms and research-oriented studies in art, especially those focusing on critique, are few and limited, so this literature review draws from research in the disciplines of art, design, and architecture and includes literature by experienced educators in the fields of art, art history, and art education. Some sources are based on years of experience and observation by the authors, and I use these sources as insights into the professional perceptions and intuitions of art educators. The majority of the literature review consists of sources from researchers and educators from the United States. Additional sources come from the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada, which all have similar tertiary art education systems; these sources, therefore, are more or less transferable to the American context.

I. Background Information

The Studio

In the educational setting, the word studio has multiple layers of meaning: 1) a “culture”, 2) “a mode of teaching and learning”, 3) “a program of projects, and activities” and 4) “a physical space” (Zehner et al., 2009, p. 26). In the traditional classroom, the instructor is the imparter of knowledge; in the studio, the instructor\(^2\), in addition to being

\(^2\) In a studio-based education, the instructor may be called an artist-teacher, artist-educator, or artist-instructor, recognizing that the instructor is a member of the greater artist community.
a content expert, is a practitioner in the professional community that the students\(^3\) will eventually join (Phillabaum, 2005). As a mode of teaching and learning, studio courses have small class sizes and meet multiple times a week for several hours at a time (Cennamo & Brandt, 2012; Zehner et al., 2009), allowing students opportunities to have extended interactions with classmates and with the instructor. As a program, the studio curriculum is based on a series of projects that students undertake during and beyond the class time. Students take an active role in their own learning (Phillabaum, 2005) and in producing the outcome of their projects. As a space, the studio is both the teaching and working space that has furniture, tools, and equipment as necessary (Zehner et al., 2009). These broad descriptions apply across art\(^4\), architecture\(^5\), design\(^6\), and other disciplines that implement studio-based learning.

**Introduction to Critique**

Central to studio-based learning is making and doing; central to the process of making is reflection (Schön, 1987), a habit and a skill which is learned throughout studio

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\(^3\) In a studio-based education, the student may be called an artist-student, recognizing that the student is a member of the greater artist community (Belluigi, 2013). In this thesis, I refer to students as student-artists.

\(^4\) Art programs generally encompass fine arts, such as painting and sculpture; digital media, such as photography, video, film, animation; ceramics; jewelry; crafts; and textiles (de la Harpe et al., 2009; Zehner et al., 2009).

\(^5\) Architecture programs generally encompass architecture, interior design, landscape architecture, urban design, and urban planning (Zehner et al., 2009).

\(^6\) Design programs generally encompass industrial design, graphic design, multimedia design, communication design, furniture design, and environment design (de la Harpe et al., 2009; Zehner et al., 2009).
courses but particularly honed in planned feedback sessions called critiques\(^7\). Critiques are essential to the studio-based teaching and learning model in art, design, and architecture (Dannels & Martin, 2008; Klebesadel, 2006; Klebesadel & Kornetsky, 2009; Shulman, 2005)\(^8\). Although there is no formal survey of how critiques are exactly practiced in different countries, the literature shows that they are indeed practiced in design and architecture programs (Lymer, 2010), as well as art programs (Elkins, 2012) around the world.

The fundamental requirements for conducting a critique are the presence of a creator, the artwork (either an object or an idea or concept), and at least one other person\(^9\) (Elkins, 2012; Klebesadel, 2006). There are a number of variations on these basic requirements depending on who is present (e.g., one-on-one versus group), who may talk, and the state of the work (e.g., interim versus final). These factors situate critiques on continuums from private to public and informal to formal.

**Pedagogical Purposes of Critique**

Even though there is no standardized form for art critiques, educators and students agree that critiques are instrumental in developing student-artists into artists. On a practical short-term level, feedback from others about the strengths and weaknesses of an

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\(^7\) In this thesis, *critique* is a discipline-specific term referring to a planned communicative event, usually oral, in which feedback is given on artwork created or on artwork in progress. From an assessment perspective, *critique* is defined as a “critical analysis or evaluation…critical in the sense of being characterized by careful analysis and judgment and analytic in the sense of a separating or breaking up of a whole into its parts” (“Critique”, 2005). The entry emphasizes that *critique* does not necessarily mean *critical* or *negative* (“Critique”, 2005).

\(^8\) Critiques are also common in other creative and performative disciplines such as dance, music, theater, writing, speech giving, and practice teaching.

\(^9\) This other person can be a peer, an instructor, a guest critic, or a visiting practitioner in the field (Buster & Crawford, 2010).
artwork can guide the student-artist as to how to improve the artwork (Barrett, 2000a). Critiques can also help the student-artist distance him or herself from the artwork; working on something closely and individually, the creator may not be able to see the artwork as it exists in and of itself and to other people (Elkins, 2012). With a group of viewers, artists can “check their intentions against the group’s perceptions” and then make adjustments to the artwork (Barrett, 2000a, p. 177).

Although critiques have been likened to exams (Elkins, 2012), critiques are not primarily a performance assessment of students’ abilities to talk about art or solely an assessment of the objects created. Students may perceive critiques as the end goal of a project or of a course, but critiques are actually formative events socializing students to becoming art professionals, who by the nature of their profession must become accustomed to feedback. Buster and Crawford (2010) describe the extension of critiques from the controlled classroom setting to the real-world setting:

“[Critique] is not a singular goal or deadline. Rather, it is one of the many, part of a series of cadences that partition the semester into sections of creative productivity. Thus, the critique is both a deadline and a marker of a perpetual beginning, a freeze-frame moment in the context of continuous studio practice. In a sense, this is carried beyond art school into professional practice when the critique is replaced by the curator’s studio visit (another ritual of judgment and selection), the subsequent exhibition, and finally the press review (p. ix).”

Classroom critiques simulate the act of exhibiting artwork, an essential part of being a professional artist or designer in the real world, along with receiving and responding to public reactions to the work.

Even more important is the long-term deep learning that comes out of listening to peers’ and instructors’ perspectives as well as practicing verbalizing one’s own thoughts about classmates’ artwork. Through hearing honest feedback, students can form “internal
standards against which they can evaluate their own...work” (Taylor & McCormack, 2004, p. 2). This sensitivity to particular details is how student-artists develop a professional artist’s eye, knowing what features professionals would examine and even how they would interpret those features; this skill of professional seeing was also demonstrated in Goodwin’s (1994) analysis of interactions between experienced and novice archaeologists during which novices learn to see dirt as an archaeologist does: an examination of the color differences of dirt may be evidence of past building structures. During critiques, students have an opportunity to verbalize what they see, in their own artwork as well as in their classmates’ artworks, as a way of building their professional vocabulary and reinforcing concepts (Sanborn, 2002), as well as increasing their confidence in their own ways of seeing.

Critiques are also an opportunity for instructors, who are practitioners too, to model how artists talk, think, and act, all of which are essential for student-artists as they learn to engage in the discourse community of other artists, curators, art collectors, and art critics (Belluigi, 2008; Gutierrez, 1995). Learning formal and conceptual vocabulary is essential for students to effectively communicate about their work verbally and in written artist statements (Belluigi, 2008; Walker, 2004). In addition, the thoughts verbalized by classmates and by instructors over time become internalized into one’s own thought processes. Gutierrez (1995) writes, “[O]ur verbal thought, the inner speech that takes place in our heads, is never really private; instead it contains a chorus of voices, the voices of significant others in our history” (p. 24). Those voices from critiques—one-on-one or group, peer or instructor—help not only to shape students’ abilities to examine and
“read [their] own work” critically and reflectively (Belluigi, 2013, p. 8), but also to situate themselves and their work in the greater context of the art world.

**Various Formats of Art Critiques**

Critiques can differ in format from school to school, from course level to course level, from instructor to instructor, and even from one day to another in the same course. One-on-one critiques, with the student and the instructor, are private interactions and are the basic model of critiques in Master of Fine Arts programs (Barrett, 2000b; *What is Critique?*, 2010). Non-traditional methods of critiques have also been introduced such as a video method of delivering feedback (Cruikshank, 1998) and written critiques (Walker, 2004). Simpson (2012) proposed a variation of the group critique in which students are arranged into smaller groups which each critique their assigned artwork and then report their evaluations back to the whole class.

Still, the most common format of art critiques is the face-to-face group setting with largely verbal discussions. In Barrett’s (1988) survey of art professors, all respondents thought that critiques were important; most planned group critiques at the end of every project, and some had group critiques both in the middle and at the end of projects. However, group critiques can vary in format, limited only by the creativity of the instructor who can set the tone of the critiques. Some personality types and critiquing styles of the instructor include “connoisseurs,” “judges,” “evaluators,” “specialists,” “narcissists,” “drill sergeants,” “unconditional supporters,” and “philosophers and theorists” (see Buster & Crawford, 2010, p. 97-103 for a full description of each type); each of these types of instructors can set a different affective environment of the critique as well as the student-teacher power dynamics.
Sometimes the instructor allocates a certain amount of time to each student-artist so that everyone’s work is critiqued, either within one class period or over the course of a few class periods; sometimes only a few students’ artworks are critiqued (Buster & Crawford, 2010). Sometimes students critique work based on a set of criteria, given explicitly or implicitly, by the instructor in the form of assignment parameters or different approaches to aesthetics (Buster & Crawford, 2010); other times there are no guidelines. The discussions can be centered on technique, meaning, or a combination of both (Buster & Crawford, 2010; Elkins, 2012). Some instructors dominate the conversation while other instructors say almost nothing at all (Barrett, 2000b). Student-artists may be able to introduce their artwork before the group begins the discussion and may be able to talk about their intentions as artists (Buster & Crawford, 2010; Elkins, 2012); other times, the student-artist whose artwork is being critiqued remains silent during the critiques.

**Peer Group Critiques**

Most critiques in tertiary art classrooms are group discussions that are led by the instructor who gives most of the feedback (Buster & Crawford, 2010). However, based on his survey of instructors and over one thousand students at tertiary institutions in the United States, Canada, and Australia, Barrett (2000b) reported that both instructors and students “would like to have lively and honest interaction among all those participating” in critiques (p. 32). Barrett (2000b) also concluded that students wanted to hear more

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10 Some examples of peer critiques that are not peer group critiques can be found in writing pedagogy when classmates review each other’s essays, in observation reports in a pre-service teaching practicum, and in peer reviews of a manuscript submitted to a journal. The communication of feedback, however, does not usually occur in a group setting where other individuals in addition to the person receiving the feedback are privy to the feedback. Peer group critiques, though, are common in creative writing workshops, dance, experimental theater, and speech and conference rehearsals.
perspectives from their peers in critiques rather than solely from an instructor who dominates the discussion. In a smaller survey of professors at an American university, Barrett (1988) found that most professors wanted active student participation in the critiques and used the level of student participation as an indicator of successful critiques. The idea that critiques are “conversations”\(^\text{11}\) between students and teachers interacting as equals is not a new concept (Eliason, 1955\(^\text{12}\); Mackey, 2013), but in a panel discussion, Elkins asserted that peer group critiques are a relatively new concept in that “students are [allowed] to perform the function of teacher,” whereas traditionally students have not had as much frequency and even legitimacy of voice in the discussion (What is Critique?, 21:41).

**Peer Group Critiques as Critical Inquiry**

Peer group critiques are opportunities for students to give and receive technical feedback on artwork. They are also opportunities to investigate interpretations of artwork through *critical inquiry* (Geahigan, 1998a) as the group engages in a dialogue to try to discover the meaning and value of an artwork (Geahigan, 1996). Multiple individuals give feedback as they “think” out loud about the artwork and formulate hypotheses,

\(^{11}\) *Conversation* or *dialogue* is used in the art and art education literature to refer to informal discussions either one-on-one between an instructor and a student or in a group setting (Zander, 1997, 2003). In the art and art education literature, *conversation* is used in the colloquial sense rather than as a term specific to Conversation Analysis—an approach used in linguistics, sociology, anthropology, and psychology to study social interaction. In the colloquial sense, *conversation* means ordinary talk between people for no purpose other than sociability (ten Have, 2007). The “conversations” and dialogues in art critiques are technically defined in the field of Conversation Analysis as *institutional talk* since the talk occurs in the institutional setting of a class and has an agenda, however free or loose that agenda may be.

\(^{12}\) In his article, Eliason (1955) refers to *critiques as criticism* since the word *critique* was not in systematic use in art education at the time; and therefore, the distinction between these two terms had not been formalized.
checking them with the group; their contributions build on each other organically and have the potential to affect the way the group views the artwork.

Models of art criticism—the discipline that seeks to understand new artworks, or reinterpret old artworks, in light of their contexts, their cultural associations, and the artists’ intentions in order to interpret their meanings and assess their value (Geahigan, 1998a)—are often used as methods to structure art critiques and to teach students how to do critique. Art critique, however, is not art criticism; art critique is an act of inquiry that may lead to art criticism, whereas art criticism is the presentation of formed criticism in spoken or written discourse. A commonly used approach to forming and communicating well-supported art criticism is Feldman’s (1973) 4-step process of description, analysis, interpretation, and judgment. “Proceed[ing] in a linear fashion” through these steps (Geahigan, 1997a, p. 143), is a way to communicate one’s decided evaluation of an artwork to others in a logical way (Geahigan, 1996). However, applying Feldman’s 4-step model of art criticism as a method for critique, some educators take a speech acts-based approach to talking about artwork and advocate careful attention to word choices (Geahigan, 1997b), for example using neutral descriptions that do not contain any hidden evaluation (e.g., “good” or “bad”) and classifying students’ contributions as acceptable or not in relation to a corresponding stage of the 4-step model.

Finding this a problematic way of teaching art critique and critical thinking, Geahigan (1998a) has written extensively on the difference between critical inquiry and art criticism. There are accepted procedures, such as Feldman’s model, for presenting art

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13 This term was coined by Geahigan to make a sharp distinction between the inquiry of and the discourse of art criticism.
criticism. Critical inquiry, on the other hand, is an organic interaction and a “communal endeavor” (Geahigan, 1998a, p. 14). The stages of Feldman’s model for art criticism—description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation—are visited and revisited in a “recursive process” with the dialogue going back-and-forth between the various stages (Geahigan, 1998b, p. 297). This was confirmed in Stout’s (1995) classroom-based research in two of her undergraduate art education courses; she observed that in classroom discussions of artwork that “students couldn’t, more precisely wouldn’t separate [the stages of art criticism]…[and] almost everyone failed in their attempt at pure description” (p. 181).

Central to this group endeavor of critical inquiry is verbalizing one’s thoughts. There is the practical need for one to say one’s thoughts out loud in order for others to hear what one is thinking. Before a critique starts, there may be thoughts on and reactions to the work, both verbal and non-verbal. In a panel discussion, Butter explains that the act of verbalizing these thoughts formalizes them and makes them explicit to the group (What is Critique?, 2010). These comments are then opened up for evaluation by and responses from the group. In this way, group members check each other’s ways of seeing, and the group is “self-correcting about interpretations that are too far removed from the work to be convincing” (Barrett, 1991, p. 71). Since individuals “[see] phenomena differently based on their patterns of perception and their individual biographies,” (Barrett, 2000a, p. 176) students will likely notice different descriptive aspects of the artwork and have different interpretations of the artwork. A student may share an idea which may “spark a new idea for someone else” (House, 2008, p. 49). Hearing the different ways each person sees a work can “expand the group’s perception of the work,”
(Barrett, 2000a, p. 176) which in turn can cause students individually to reevaluate the artwork as they “[see] the work in a new light” (Geahigan, 1996, p. 34). In group critiques, students also offer up their own candidate assessments for confirmation from the group and more experienced artist-instructors. In this way, critiques are a vital part of art students’ education as a socializing and professionalizing activity (Goodwin, 1994; Phillabaum, 2004).

II. Previous Studies on Critique

Relevant Studies in Architecture and Design

Studies on critiques come primarily from architecture and design (Anthony, 1991; Blair, 2007; Lymer, 2010). Since critiques in art are under-researched, I expanded my literature review to include studies in architecture and design.

In a case study by Wallis et al. (n.d.), as part of a larger project by The Studio Teaching Project in Australia, architecture students were taught a peer critique process14 and the importance of giving comments and feedback using “appropriate” language (p. 1). A handout was given to the students with a list of specific guidelines. Excerpts from the handout, which was quoted in the article, are reproduced here:

[Give feedback] by using “I” language and refer to the design not to the designer. Do not use “YOU” language. “YOU” language is accusative and effectively blames the designer for getting it wrong… and it makes the designer feel defensive. Remember this is about developing professional language skills…

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14 The authors structured each critique as follows: 5 minutes for the student-architect to present, 5 minutes for other students to ask questions, 5 minutes for the students to critique the work, and 5 minutes for the assessors to summarize the critique.
Make a feedback statement and immediately follow by offering options/ways to develop the design. When this is done using “I” language the designer has choice in how to consider feedback…Remember to say what is good and why, and to cover things that need further development.

(Wallis et al., n.d., p. 3, ellipses in original)

The handout also gives specific exemplars of feedback using “I” language:

I like the way the design organizes... because I think that makes...
I find it difficult when... is not clear yet. I think/I prefer/I find it helpful to...
I would like to suggest... because...

(Wallis et al., n.d., p. 3)

Students and instructors had more positive experiences with the peer critique model as compared to the traditional model, in which a panel of assessors gives feedback and the classmates quietly observe the critique. One challenge of using the new peer critique format was that “international students, depending on there [sic] level of English speaking skills, were sometimes disadvantaged” (p. 4); the authors did not elaborate with specific details as to why or how the international students were “disadvantaged”.

At an Australian university, Taylor and McCormack (2004), using action research in an advanced undergraduate graphic design course, developed guidelines for instructors on giving verbal feedback in critiques. Reflecting on her teaching, Taylor\textsuperscript{15} thought she was too direct and not sensitive enough to her students’ emotions in her language choice. The author developed a list of key words and phrases—mitigators such as “might,” “maybe,” “perhaps,” and hedging phrases such as “as you continue to develop as a designer...” and “yes, that’s one way, what about...”—and incorporated them into her verbal feedback (p. 7). Based on her students’ positive feedback on surveys and her

\textsuperscript{15} This article is written in first person singular, but there are two authors. I assume that the first person singular pronoun in the article refers to the first author, Taylor.
reflection of her transcribed talk, Taylor developed a list of guidelines for giving feedback:

Personal Checklist for Giving Constructive Verbal Feedback

Point 1: Feedback is given with respect
Point 2: Feedback is neutral, not labelled
Point 3: Feedback is descriptive, not evaluative
Point 4: Feedback is specific
Point 5: Feedback is prioritised
Point 6: Feedback should focus on the positive
Point 7: Feedback is focused on what is actionable
Point 8: Feedback is an interaction

(Taylor & McCormack, 2004, p. 8)

These points were not accompanied with transcripts of talk. This checklist and the list of key words and phrases may be useful for students as well. However, Taylor and McCormack focused specifically on improving the effectiveness of instructor-to-student feedback rather than student-to-student feedback. The checklist and key words and phrases were also developed based on reflection and intuition rather than on actual talk. We can infer from the lists, though, that giving pedagogical criticism in the Australian culture is a delicate matter.

Perhaps the most relevant needs-analysis study in the visual arts is that of Swales et al. (2001), who conducted a macro-level and micro-level analysis of transcriptions of videotaped final critiques in architecture. This study compared the discursive practices and linguistic forms of successful and unsuccessful oral presentations. Swales et al. found that successful presentations consisted of the following: 1) a description of the site in the present tense with simple sentence structure and the use of deictics; 2) an architecturally-based description of the design process using first person singular; and 3) a depiction of the site details in present tense while inviting the viewer to imagine the space with
phrases such as “you can look back onto the unit” and “you can see…” (p. 446). Using a concordance-based micro-analytical approach, Swales et al. examined words and phrases in context and extracted authentic examples of the talk to develop practice exercises for students. These exercises included the use of metapragmatic markers such as “I must say,” “as I said before,” “so to speak,” hedge words and phrases, and field-specific vocabulary (p. 451). The results of their analyses were used to design an EAP course to prepare international Master’s students for presenting their work more successfully in formal architecture critiques. Since art critiques do not usually consist of formal oral presentations, the Swales et al. study of architecture critiques is not directly transferable to the talk in art critiques. However, art critiques can be investigated in a similar manner to reveal any macro-level and micro-level patterns of talk.

**Relevant Studies in Non-classroom Contexts**

Although the research sites of her dissertation are youths in non-school learning environments, Soep’s (2000, 2005) findings from her study of talk in critiques are relevant to peer group art critiques. Her study was mainly focused on unplanned critiques—defined by Soep as “a form of assessment through which young people jointly judge their own work and that of their peers”—that emerged in a community-based video production project and an independent magazine project that both had public release dates (Soep, 2005, p. 748). Data collection took place over one year for the video production project and over three months for the magazine project and consisted of a total of 250 hours of audio recordings, observation notes, interactions with participants, and documentation of the works that were created. Soep made interpretations of the features of the critique, the variability of the content of the critique, and the language used by
participants to co-construct perceptions of the work being critiqued. Four features of the
critique were identified:

**Face-to-face improvisation:** …participants must compose and express their
contributions on the spot; they can also immediately judge how interlocutors are
receiving their feedback and make spontaneous adjustments…

**Reciprocity:** …all participants subject work to joint review; there is a mutuality
(but not necessarily equality) of engagement and vulnerability, as each person
both provides and receives critique.

**Presence of the maker:** critique poses a different interactive challenge than do
opportunities to criticize people’s work behind their backs…

**Orientation towards future production:** [participants in critique] consider
where the work came from to determine where it needs to go.

(Soep, 2000, p. 27)

Soep (2000) describes critiques as socially complex and educationally unique, but she
does not directly comment on how to make the complexity of critique interactions more
transparent to international students. However, her conclusions are relevant: the order of
progression in critiques should not be strictly predetermined and “a common vocabulary
and set of understandings” can guide critiques as needed (Soep, 2000, p. 253). Soep
(2000) offered the following continuums to help establish a common understanding
among participants and listed hypothetical phrases as exemplars:

**Possibility < > Accountability**

Language of possibility could allow for an exchange of ideas: “You might…” or
“Have you considered…” or “What about…” (p. 253).

Language of accountability holds the artist or group of artists to decisions
previously made: “But I thought you said…” or “What happened to…” (p. 253).
**Intentions <> Evidence**

Prompts to allow for the exchange of artist intentions include “What do you want…” or “Why did you choose this technique…” or “I’m not sure what you’re trying to convey here, can you say more?” (p. 254)

A request for evidence when the artist intentions don’t match what others can see include “What I read in your work…” or “But that’s not coming across…” (p. 254).

**Elaboration <> Necessity**

Language of elaboration is used to add to the work by introducing participants’ own ideas: “And then you could…” or “Not only that, but…” or “This piece reminds me of…” (p. 255).

Sometimes elements of the work need to be eliminated to create better focus or meet a deadline: “You don’t need that--get rid of it…” or “How does this element add to your story?” (p. 255)

Finally, her detailed analysis of the use of refracted discourse confirmed how participants in critique co-construct interpretations of work by “speak[ing] on behalf of peers--to finish or augment or apply one another’s utterances” and by building on the perspectives of everyone in the group (Soep, 2000, p. 218). It is unclear how transferable this study is to the tertiary studio art classroom as the study consisted of youth working collaboratively, rather than individually, on projects outside of a formal education setting, rather than in the institutional setting of a classroom.

Another study by Soep with Cotner (1999) that did not take place in a classroom environment is relevant to talking about artwork. The study analyzed the linguistic strategies that non-artists use to describe and interpret artwork. Based on the idea that “perception and interpretation involve the production of meaning through language,” the researchers assumed that people use verbalizations to think through what they see and make sense of it (p. 350). Eight adults who were not formally trained in the visual arts
each individually met with one researcher for about 30 minutes to describe the same original artwork. The participants started by talking about the print pretending that he or she was telling a friend about it. Then the researcher guided the participant to talk about the form and meaning of the artwork. The interaction was transcribed and analyzed; four linguistic strategies were used to communicate a description and to form an understanding of the artwork:

- **Contrast**: “it is smooth, but textured…”
- **Negation**: “it’s *not* a calm painting…”
- **Speculation**: “The artist *might* have…”
- **Narration**: “Some wind is taking them…”

(Soep & Cotner, 1999, p. 356)

Participants used modals to create hypothetical scenarios and speculate about changes in meaning. Any small fragments of talk that had an element of activity or causality were classified as narration. Of the four strategies, contrast was the most common strategy used, followed by negation. Speculation and narration were used much less often than the other two strategies. In addition, a pattern of back-channeling and hedging with words such as “almost,” “sort of,” and “I get the sense…” was observed (Soep & Cotner, 1999). This study was significant in that it identified specific strategies for talking about artwork and understanding artwork by talking about it. The interaction, however, was in an experimental rather than natural setting; the researcher also elicited responses from the participant, and there was no opportunity for participants to co-construct talk about the artwork. Since interaction and negotiation are absent, this study is not a good indicator of what critical inquiry looks like in a classroom setting or a multi-party interaction.
Relevant Studies in Art

The literature in art education is mainly focused on primary and secondary school education; there are not many studies, generally or specifically on critiques, of tertiary art education (Salazar, 2013). I will first review relevant literature on art critiques at the tertiary level in general, then literature using naturalistic data to analyze teacher talk in critiques at various levels, then literature analyzing talk in art classrooms, and finally literature using naturalistic data to analyze student talk in critiques.

Studies on art curriculum and art pedagogy include at least some mention of critiques, as no study in art education can be complete without examining critiques as well. In her doctoral dissertation creating case portraits of the first-year curriculum at two art schools, Kushins (2007) observed that the format of the critiques did not vary much from one school to the other and from instructor to instructor: students displayed their artwork and each artwork was discussed individually, with the instructor contributing most of the feedback. Because she observed that guidelines for critiques were given in only one or two instances, Kushins recommended that instructors give students clear goals and purposes for the critiques rather than “[expecting students] to intuitively understand the purposes and processes of engaging in critiques” (p. 168); this, she concluded, was very important pedagogically because students can have very different past experiences and expectations of critiques.

In her dissertation on college students’ experiences in an introductory ceramics class, Sanborn (2002) was a teacher-researcher and collected field notes, interview data, student journals, and a teacher journal. She concluded that the critiques’ public nature, as well as the studio environment, contributed to building the classroom community and to
the students’ perceiving their classmates as sources of knowledge. Although critiques were not the focus of these studies, these studies added to the description of art critiques as a communal effort.

The most relevant naturalistic study of talk in a tertiary level art classroom is Phillabaum’s (2004) dissertation using Conversation Analysis methodology, which was also used in this study and will be described in the next chapter, to examine the interactions between students and instructors during workshops as well as critiques in an undergraduate beginning photography class. The video data was essential to the analysis of the interactions because it captured gesture and gaze. For example, the video recording showed that silence in the student-teacher interactions indicated that careful evaluation and problem solving was in progress, such as when the instructor silently looked at a photo to assess the color balance. His study showed how “apprentice photographers calibrate a professional vision” of a color print and determine meaning in a photograph through negotiation and “joint activity” with experts and within a community (Phillabaum, 2005, p. 148). The students made candidate understanding displays in order to prompt the instructors’ explanations and teaching moments and also to test out their own “developing professional knowledge and competence” (Phillabaum, 2004, p. 60). The candidate understandings were expressed through different degrees of certainty using hedge words and phrases, such as “I think,” “I believe,” and “in my opinion,” and

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16 Candidate understanding is a term Phillabaum borrowed from Stivers (2002). Stivers’ candidate diagnosis refers to situations in which patients offer doctors a speculation of the cause of an illness which is the starting point of the doctor-patient interaction. Phillabaum is not using candidate understanding as defined in the field of Conversation Analysis: a repair initiation that checks one’s understanding of prior talk (e.g., rephrasing what one has heard to make sure one understood correctly). In Phillabaum’s research, students offer a speculation of the quality of a photograph or of a solution to a technical problem.
through repetition of phrases and terms. In critique comments revolving around the meaning rather than technical aspects of photographs, Phillabaum noticed a common organization of the talk:

1. An assessment of the work or the body of work
2. A connection of the work to some external frame
3. An explanation of how the external frame applies to the particular piece of work
4. A final assessment of the work, which may or may not explicitly connect the external frame to the photographs

(Phillabaum, 2004, p. 150)

The transferability of the results, however, to other art classrooms was not explored. Since his research was focused more generally on talk in the photography studio as a whole, a micro-level description of the talk used specifically in critique was limited.

This review of the literature shows that previous studies mainly investigated art critiques as a teaching and learning event, analyzing instructors’ pedagogical practices and discourse. Studies based on naturally-occurring data in tertiary art classrooms is limited; most previous studies analyzing classroom talk focus on typologies of statements (e.g., description, evaluation, analysis, interpretation) and the talk of instructor feedback rather than student feedback. Although some researchers analyzed in detail the talk in critiques and in classroom interactions in general, the focus was more on the co-construction of knowledge in moment-by-moment talk rather than that actual talk itself.

**Talk in Peer Group Critiques**

Talk is the medium of critique; however, analyses of the talk in critiques in art classrooms of any level are few and limited. Therefore, the discourse of peer group critiques has to date not been clearly described. Sample extracts of critiques have been transcribed (words only) in books such as *Art Critiques: A Guide* (Elkins, 2012), but the
focus of the analysis is interpreting the meaning of the comments and not the structure of the talk or the linguistic strategies used to give feedback, respond to feedback, add ideas, contest ideas, and revisit ideas. Based on his professional experience and observation as an educator, Elkins (2012) describes the talk in critiques as drifting from topic to topic and full of parentheticals, jokes, stories, and repetition. He categorizes statements in critiques as either “reporting thoughts,” in which one says what one has already thought, and “discovering thoughts,” in which “half-formed ideas...overlap in sentence fragments” as the speaker tries to make sense of what he or she thinks in the middle of verbalizing (p. 83). Buster and Crawford (2010), also based on their experience as art educators, note that exchange in critiques can be “argumentative, tangential, or disconnected” and that comments can sometimes be “rhetorical declarations” and other times mumbled and hesitant (p. 87). Based on his experience and observations, Elkins (2012) also insists that critiques are “not just conversations” because they are “intensely weird” and not the same type of conversation that happens in the real world or even the art world outside of the classroom context (p. 22; emphasis mine). A more empirically-based analysis of the conversation in critiques could help to better describe what critiques are as communicative events and give insight into the language and interactions that occur in them; a thorough description of and insight into this talk could then be used to inform recommendations to students with regard to participating in critiques.

**International Students in Art Programs**

Both domestic and international students alike undergo a process of socialization into an academic discourse community (Duff, 2010), which is arguably similar to the discourse community of professional artists as well. Students have to adjust to the
patterns of interaction, the socio-culturally accepted norms of the speech community, and the interpretation of speech (Gutierrez, 1995; McKenna, 1987), which can be quite complex in art critiques since statements can have multiple layers of meaning (Buster & Crawford, 2010; Elkins, 2012). In a study of critiques in a landscape architecture program, Graham (2003) found that domestic and international students both need time to adjust to giving and receiving negative feedback. This has also been confirmed with critiques in architecture, which suggest that negative attitudes towards critiques are stronger with first-year students and lesser with more experienced students (Lymer, 2010).

It is difficult to generalize international students’ previous experiences with critique prior to starting an undergraduate art program. I am not aware of any studies or surveys of art education in other countries at the secondary school level and of whether and how critiques are used. In her survey of first-year international students’ experiences in an art and design school in London, Sovic (2008a, 2008b) reported that international students were surprised by the emphasis on the process of creation over the end product as well as the emphasis on ideas over technical skills. In the video *Talking About Talking About: An Introduction to Visual Art Critiques* by a United Kingdom-based organization Q-Art, Alastaire Payne, a professor at an art institution in Scotland, commented that incoming international students might not have experience with critiques in their previous art courses and that “it’s a radical thing for them to actually engage with other students in that environment” (Bunch, n.d., p. 15, emphasis mine). Even if critiques are a part of art education in other countries, it is likely that the critique dynamics differ from those in the
United States depending on the culture’s power dynamics between students and teachers, norms for pedagogical interactions, and cultural norms for giving and receiving feedback.

Gaffney (2011) has conducted research in design studios and has found a significant positive correlation between “students’ positive previous experiences in critiques or studios, coupled with their perceptions of their own generalized communication competence” and “their perceived self-efficacy for critiques or studios” (p. 219). Gaffney explains that “each communication opportunity [in the studio] has the potential to either bolster or damage students’ self-efficacy, which in turn will have an impact on their future communication” (p. 220). In Sovic’s (2008a) survey, international students reported that they would welcome more language support, for example in listening skills and general English communication skills. Although both studies describe international students’ experiences in art programs and their perceptions of studio education, neither Gaffney nor Sovic conducted a needs-analysis of the target language skills that students may need.

**Student Guides for Art Critique**

Buster and Crawford’s (2010) book *The Critique Handbook: The Art Student’s Sourcebook and Survival Guide* is intended to help students understand what critiques are, prepare for possible critique dynamics, and effectively participate in them. Most of the book is devoted to the thought processes of how to analyze form, meaning, and context when looking at artwork. It is about how to do critical inquiry cognitively rather than how to verbalize those thoughts. Two pages are devoted explicitly to language: phrases that are commonly used to describe artwork are “working” or “not working” as well as “militaristic language” such as “defend your work, struggle with the painting,
attack the canvas, execute the piece, wrestle with it, master the medium” (p. 88). Advice that is given to students includes “listen to the language in critique” because there are often “hidden assumptions that lie beneath” what is actually said (p. 89). Finally, the book gives some general communication tips including how to prepare for critiques and how to receive feedback with an open mind by asking questions non-defensively. The following examples of how to continue the conversation are given:

“Could you explain to me further why you think that? I don’t agree that this was a poor choice of color, but I am open to reconsidering.”

“Explain to me a bit more about why you object.”

(Buster & Crawford, 2010, p. 93)

This handbook is written for a native English-speaking audience.

As mentioned earlier, Elkins’ (2012) Art Critiques: A Guide, a book for both students and teachers, gives a fairly well-rounded picture of art critiques and includes some words-only transcripts of critiques. In terms of language, there is a list of 200+ adjectives for “failed artwork” and a list of adjectives for successful artwork, although there has been no analysis of frequency of word use. He also gives students a short list of phrases to avoid saying during a critique, such as “This is all about my private spiritual experience” (p. 68), stressing the importance of listening to feedback instead of being stubborn about one’s own interpretations. A separate list of phrases to avoid saying is given for teachers; this includes inflexible directions such as “Here’s the correct way to do that” and general comments such as “Have you ever looked at [name of artist]?” without giving specific reasons for the suggestion (p. 68). This resource was written for native English speakers as the audience.
Two fairly recent projects in the United Kingdom created critique resources for students. *Critiquing the Crit* by Blythman et al. (2007), whose final report was published in 2007, examined the critique as a teaching and learning method, surveying instructors and students’ perceptions of critiques and current practices of the critiques. As a result of their investigation, the project group created a short teacher’s guide and a student’s guide to critiques. They also compiled a glossary of about 40 words and phrases (e.g., “resolved,” “intuitive,” “good breathing space”) (Blythman et al., 2007) that have meanings specific to the art context and that were likely to be inaccurately understood if someone used the standard dictionary definition of the terms. This glossary, although limited, was created with non-native English speakers in mind.

As mentioned earlier, Q-Art developed a pocket guide called *Art Crits: 20 Questions* and released a video on art critiques. The video contains interviews with instructors and students and tips for participating in art critiques. A short segment of the video discusses international students’ perspectives of critiques touching very briefly on potential differences in classroom culture, the difficulties of communicating one’s thoughts accurately in a second language, and the role of confidence (Bunch, n.d.).

Finally, I was also able to find a few reference guides for art and design vocabulary and terminology. *Design Language* by McCreight (1996) is a glossary of common design terminology; each entry defines the word and has a few paragraphs describing how the word is used. It does not actually show the words used in context. Makhoul and Morley’s (2014) *The Winchester Guide to Keywords and Concepts for International Students in Art, Media and Design* was written specifically for an international student audience. The book consists of definitions of common terminology,
illustrations and labels of common art tools, and description of key thinkers and key concepts in art theory. Day’s (2013) *Line Color Form: The Language of Art and Design* is another guide written for an international student audience; it includes names of line types, colors, and materials; a glossary of terminology; written descriptions of artwork showing field-specific terms used in context; and guides for writing essays about artwork. None of these reference guides, however, include descriptions and examples of the vocabulary and terms used orally.

This review of previous studies and published resources on critique shows that there is a gap in the description of language used in critique beyond the word- and phrase-level. Some of the resources described above (Blythman et al., 2007; Buster & Crawford, 2010; Elkins, 2012) give an introduction to the process of critical inquiry, to how to approach critiques, and to what to expect. The communicative needs of international students and the potentially different cultural perspectives of critique are addressed modestly in the resources produced by Q-art and Blythman et al. (2007). In addition, most of the published resources focus more on the content of critiques (Buster & Crawford, 2010; Elkins, 2012) and concepts of art and design (Lu & Morley, 2015) than on the language used in critiques. Language-specific resources are available as published glossaries (Blythman et al., 2007; Day, 2013; Lu & Morley, 2015; McCreight, 1996) or as lists of positive and negative adjectives (Elkins, 2012). Although previous studies in design have recommended English language support, specifically clarification of terminology, for students (Thomas, 2015; Wong, 2011), a word-level approach to language is not likely to be sufficient in raising students’ perceived or actual communicative competence to participate in critique. Thorough descriptions of language
used in critique at the macro-level, such as descriptions at the sentence- and discourse- levels and socio-cultural norms for giving and interpreting feedback in critique, are necessary; these are, however, largely absent in the literature. This thesis aims to fill this gap with a more fine-grained description of the talk in critique activities based on naturally occurring data collected from an art class.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY AND DATA

This study uses tasks as the unit of analysis and a triangulation of methods and data sources, as recommended by Long (2005), to create a more accurate needs-analysis of international art and design students’ language needs. I chose to focus my research on the task of critique since critique, as a signature pedagogy in art and design, is used in some form in art and design courses of all levels at all tertiary institutions (Klebesadel, 2006). Below I describe the methodology and data used in this needs-analysis.

Methodology

I used a mixed-methods approach to my needs-analysis consisting of Conversation Analysis (CA), ethnographic participant-observation, and interviews. Triangulation, which is the practice of using multiple methods, data, investigators, or theories to research a particular phenomenon, is commonly used in qualitative studies to enhance the validity of the findings (Hastings, 2010). This study uses methodological triangulation (CA, participant-observation, interviews, and a survey of published literature) as well as data source triangulation (interviews with students and faculty and multiple recordings of critiques) in order to arrive at a richer description of critique as a speech event and as a pedagogical and learning tool; triangulation of data sources is also useful for describing students’ perceived and real needs as well as institutional expectations regarding this task.
Since there had been no prior thorough analysis of the talk in this particular speech event in the literature, I determined that a description, even a partial one, of the talk in critiques would be a meaningful contribution to the literature as well as an essential component of my needs-analysis. CA methodology was used to analyze the talk in critiques since CA, in contrast to speech act theory and discourse analysis, analyzes talk as it unfolds, and does not code utterances based solely on linguistic forms (Levinson, 1983). As mentioned in the literature review in Chapter 2, although critique models such as Feldman’s 4-step process of description, analysis, interpretation, and judgment categorize feedback into these four typologies, this approach of coding statements is not conducive to analyzing talk-in-action.

CA was developed by Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson in the 1960s with early influences from Erving Goffman’s focus on face-to-face interaction and Harold Garfinkel’s ethnomethodology (Maynard, 2013). Heritage (1984) describes Garfinkel’s ethnomethodology as the study of “common-sense knowledge and the range of procedures and considerations by means of which the ordinary members of society make sense of, find their way about in, and act on the circumstances in which they find themselves” (p. 4). Similarly, CA has an emic (participant) rather than etic (researcher) perspective, examining participants’ perspectives as displayed in what they do in the interactions, rather than the researcher’s perspectives on what participants are doing. One of the goals of CA is to “identify the actions that participants in interactions do” and to “describe the particular practices of conduct that they use to accomplish [those actions]” (Sidnell, 2013, p. 78).

In order to identify the actions and the corresponding practices, researchers must
record naturally occurring activities as they take place in their normal settings (Mondada, 2013). These activities are not artificially organized or planned by the researcher; they would happen just the same even in the absence of a researcher. Since interactional organization, like the norms of culture, is “below the level of conscious awareness of the ordinary person” (Sidnell, 2013, p. 79), recordings are essential for accurately capturing the minute details in interactions rather than relying on the researcher’s memory, field notes, or what participants say they do or did. Recordings also allow for repeated playbacks of the data during the transcription process and for the data to be member-checked with another CA researcher for accuracy. The recordings and transcriptions of the interactions are the empirical data that remains uninfluenced by the researcher’s biases. Analysis of data is approached with unmotivated looking as the talk unfolds in real-time, turn-by-turn with the analyst asking, “Why that now?” (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973, p. 299) to discover reoccurring patterns in interactions (Psathas, 1995).

The CA perspective is that recordings, along with subsequent transcriptions of them, are sufficient for analysis of the interactions. No information is gathered on the participants’ identities, and researchers do not ask participants for their perspectives on the interactions. Rather, the participants’ identities and perspectives can be seen emerging in the interactions as they unfold (Antaki, 2012), and any information relevant to the identities of the participants will be evident in the talk itself. In my study, though, I take the stance that data gathered through ethnographic research methods can work in conjunction with the CA analysis of the talk to arrive at a richer understanding of critiques. Furthermore, for the purposes of this thesis, to conduct a needs-analysis that would accurately inform the needs of international art students and the learning
objectives of an EAP course, it was necessary to gather information on the felt, perceived, and real needs of international students regarding this specific task. Much of this information was gathered through interviews.

Although I have general membership knowledge about the art domain, I decided to conduct ethnographic participant-observation in order to gain a fuller insider understanding (Basturkmen, 2013) of the context from which my data was acquired. This context included the expectations of the course, the expectations of the critiques, the classroom environment that the instructor created as well as the broader institutional context: a particular art class in a particular art program at a particular university.

I also conducted individual interviews with faculty and students, which gave me multiple insights into the institutional and student perspectives on critiques, and I member-checked any personal biases I may have had from my personal experiences in art critiques. I used a semi-structured or semi-standardized interview format (Berg, 1989); I had pre-planned questions and topics that I wanted to cover, but I did not rigidly follow a systematic order for asking these questions. I allowed for the interviewee to respond to open-ended questions and prompts, and I asked follow up questions when necessary. Overall, I tried to give the interviewees sufficient freedom to answer my questions following the course of the talk, but I asked a pre-planned question if the interview did not organically lead to a particular topic for which I wanted information. The interviews, as well as my participant-observation, although not the primary data sources in my study, were valuable for prompting “topics of inquiry” in my research process (Zimmerman & Pollner, 1971, as cited in Mondada, 2013, p. 33). The longitudinal nature of my participation-observation in a semester-long course and the interviews, which were also
conducted over a period of time, allowed for thorough reflection on and synthesis of various themes that arose. I then explored some of these themes in the recordings and transcriptions. Sometimes a student’s or a professor’s comment in an interview prompted me to investigate a particular aspect of critique or a particular critique activity further.

Less frequently, the interviews also served as a “methodological resource for gathering information” (Zimmerman & Pollner, 1971, as cited in Mondada, 2013, p. 33); although this method of getting information is not recommended by Zimmerman and Pollner, the interviews with faculty gave me, for example, a general understanding of their pedagogical philosophies and expectations regarding critiques. This was information that I otherwise could not have gathered since my participant-observation was limited to one course. I will later show how this information was valuable in assessing the target needs of international students participating in critique events.

Data

1. Audio-video Recordings

The site for data collection was a Foundations: Drawing II course in the School of Art and Design at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign17. All first-year students, whether they want to major in Art Education, Painting, Graphic Design, or other program, must go through the one-year Foundation program. The curriculum is designed to provide a “base of training in basic drawing, design, art history, and contemporary

17 From this point on, I use “University,” capitalized, to refer to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
issues in the world of art” as well as to lay “a conceptual foundation in visual and verbal language that is universal to all artistic disciplines” (“Foundations”, n.d.). The conceptual foundation includes introduction to the “culture of critique” (Klebesadel & Kornetsky, 2009) and learning how to critique, an essential skill for all future discipline courses. In the second semester of the Foundations program, students apply to a specific major program; they must submit a portfolio of artwork and interview with faculty in the program that they are applying to. The School of Art and Design website makes the following recommendation to students:

...you should view your year of foundation studies as an opportunity to strengthen your portfolio and get a sense of which faculty members you’d most benefit from working with. Your success in the foundation courses affects your admission to your program of choice.

(School of Art and Design, n.d.)

Foundations: Drawing II is offered in the second semester of the program, so all of the students had already had one semester of experience with critiques at the tertiary level.

The participants in the course included 1 Professor; 2 Teaching Assistants (TAs) who were MFA students; 16 undergraduate students (10 females and 6 males); and myself. The TAs were shadowing and being mentored by the Professor in preparation for teaching their own class in the future; the Professor and both TAs were present in every class meeting.

A brief portrait of the participants is presented below in Table 1 along with the initials used in the transcriptions in this thesis. All participants’ names, except for my own, have been replaced with pseudonyms. Where there is no extensive description, I

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18 In this thesis, the professor of the course will be referred to as “Professor”; the two TAs will be referred to as “TA1” and “TA2”; the students will be referred to by their pseudonyms.
did not perceive these participants to be a notable exception to a typical American undergraduate student profile in terms of age and motivation. I feel, however, that it was important to provide a little background information on the international students who were enrolled in this course. While it is simpler to categorize students into binary groups, domestic and international, neither group is one-dimensional. For example, international students vary in their languages and cultural experiences. It is dangerous to make assumptions that, for example, an international student will have limited English language proficiency or limited knowledge of American culture. As the descriptions below indicate, the international students had varying degrees of experience with American culture, American pedagogical norms, and English as a medium of instruction.

Table 1

Description of Participants in Foundations: Drawing II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name / Title</th>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Assistant professor at the University with over 8 years of teaching experience, 5 of which were at the University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA - Anthony</td>
<td>TA1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>First-year MFA student; first experience in an instructor role in a tertiary level art class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA - Steph</td>
<td>TA2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>First-year MFA student; first experience in an instructor role in any art class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>S-A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Domestic student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy</td>
<td>S-C</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Domestic student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>S-D</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Domestic student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>S-E</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Domestic student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred</td>
<td>S-F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Domestic student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>S-H</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>International student from South Korea; spent 1 year of middle school studying in New Zealand; went to an international high school in South Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeffrey</td>
<td>S-J</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Domestic student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin</td>
<td>S-K</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>International student from South Korea; went to an international school in South Korea for two years; went to an international school in India for two years; lived in England for a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>S-L</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Domestic student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mei</td>
<td>S-M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>International student from China; spent a year living with an American family in an exchange program in high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patti</td>
<td>S-P</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Domestic student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen</td>
<td>S-S</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Domestic student; non-traditional student; already obtained a degree in another major and was going back to school to study art; several years older than the other students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina</td>
<td>S-T</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Domestic student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William</td>
<td>S-W</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Domestic student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xiao</td>
<td>S-X</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>International student; born in China; moved to Brazil in elementary school; studied for the last two years of high school in the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zheng</td>
<td>S-Z</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>International student from China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie (myself)</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Domestic student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seven class periods that included critique events were recorded. Each class period was 2 hours and 40 minutes long, and almost all of the class period was devoted to critique activities. All but the very first project’s critiques in the course were audio-video.
recorded. Below is a summary of the recordings:

02/27/14 - in-progress critique of a book cover design
03/11/14 - final critique of the book cover design project
03/13/14 & 03/20/14 - final critique of a drawing project
04/29/14, 05/01/14, & 05/06/14 - final critiques of 4 different projects

For the book cover design project (02/27/14 and 03/11/14 critiques), each student-artist was assigned a famous already-published novel, such as *The Heart of Darkness* or *1984*. The assignment was to design an original book cover for a contemporary audience. The critiques on 02/27/14 consisted largely of each student-artist monologically presenting his or her assigned book (e.g., background information and summary of the story) and explaining their ideas and concepts for a book cover design. Feedback given by the group was limited because not all of the student-artists had presented physical objects to view. Since these critiques were not the best sample of a multi-party interaction of giving critique and these were critiques of artworks in progress, I decided to exclude this day of critiques from my analysis. I used the next earliest critique (03/11/14) as well as the final critiques (04/29/14, 05/01/14, and 05/06/14) for sources to transcribe. The recordings were transcribed broadly first with words and silences. Extracts relevant to my inquiry were then transcribed more narrowly using CA conventions (see the Appendix for transcription conventions).

03/11/14 Critiques:

The book cover design project was due on this day. Students needed to present

19 Each student-artist presented 4 projects in his or her critique.
two artifacts: 1) a flat printout of the book cover design and 2) an actual book with the cover design on it. The latter could be a soft-cover book or a hard-cover book with a dust jacket. The class consisted of a series of smaller critique activities which varied in length, ranging from 11 minutes to 22 minutes long. The critique activities also varied in the number of books that were critiqued in the same bounded activity. For example, in the first critique, one student-artist’s book was critiqued. In the second critique, again one student-artist’s book was critiqued. However, in the third critique, two student-artists presented their books and the group gave feedback on both books within the critique. The critique activities had 1, 1, 2, 2, 2, 2, 4, and 2 student-artists, respectively. In all of the critique activities, the student-artists gave a brief presentation of their book before the group gave feedback.

04/29/14, 05/01/14, and 05/06/14 Critiques:

A total of four projects were due on these days. Two of the four projects were originally due earlier in the semester, but the students had voted to extend the deadline for those projects and present them at the end of the semester instead. Each student was assigned to present his or her artwork on a specific day. Each bounded critique activity was devoted to one artist’s artwork. There were 5 critique activities on 04/29/14; 5 on 05/01/14; and 6 on 05/06/14. The critiques ranged from 16 minutes to 30 minutes long.

2. Participant-observation

I also conducted participant-observation in the Foundations: Drawing II course.

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20 It is not uncommon for the first critique to be lengthier so that the student-artist in the first critique receives more time for feedback as well as feedback from the group.
As a former art student in my undergraduate studies with a Bachelors degree in Studio Art, I have had numerous experiences of critiques. Although I have general membership knowledge of the art and design community of practice, participant-observation allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the particular context (course, program, and institution) from which my data was acquired.

3. Interviews

Individual interviews were conducted with domestic and international undergraduate students, ranging from first-year to third-year students, graduate students, and professors to assess if there was any variability in the perception of critiques. Students and professors came from a variety of major programs (e.g., Foundations, Graphic Design, New Media, Painting and Sculpture, Photography) within the School of Art and Design in order to obtain a variety of perspectives on critique. Participants included the following: 10 faculty members; 2 graduate students, who were also instructors; and 11 undergraduate students. The undergraduate students consisted of 5 domestic first-year students, 3 international first-year students, 2 domestic upper-level students, and 1 international upper-level student. Brief portraits of the student interviewees are given in Table 2 on the following page; I indicate which interviewees were participants in the course in which I was a participant-observer and in which I recorded critiques. Brief portraits of the instructor interviewees are given in Table 3; I indicate the primary program in the School of Art and Design with which the faculty member is affiliated.
Table 2

*Description of Student Interviewees*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>International freshman in Foundations: Drawing II course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeffrey</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Domestic freshman in Foundations: Drawing II course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mei</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>International freshman in Foundations: Drawing II course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patti</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Domestic freshman in Foundations: Drawing II course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Domestic freshman in Foundations: Drawing II course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Domestic sophomore in Graphic Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Domestic freshman in Foundations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Domestic freshman in Foundations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shin</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>International freshman in Foundations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Val</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Domestic junior in Graphic Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xin</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>International sophomore in Painting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3

*Description of Instructor Interviewees*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Professor of Foundations: Drawing II course; Professor in Painting and Sculpture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony (TA1)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>TA in Foundations: Drawing II course; also a graduate student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steph (TA2)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>TA in Foundations: Drawing II course; also a graduate student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Professor in New Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Professor in Foundations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gene</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Professor in Foundations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristin</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Professor in Photography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leslie</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Professor in Graphic Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathan</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Professor in Painting and Sculpture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Professor in Foundations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Professor in Graphic Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Professor in Photography</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 4

BACKGROUND OF PEER GROUP CRITIQUE

Giving feedback in the form of comments, advice, and wonderings was common in the Foundations: Drawing II course in which I was a participant-observer. While students worked on projects alongside one another during class time, a classmate might make a positive assessment by giving a compliment, make a positive observation, or ask a question about how something was done. A student-artist might also invite comments from a classmate by asking him or her for feedback on how the artwork was progressing. Figure 1 below shows how students may set up in the classroom as they work on their projects.

Figure 1. Classroom Set-up.
As they circulated, the Professor and the TAs would give brief comments and suggestions to the students individually. These all occurred as unplanned and unrehearsed talk while students were actively working, problem-solving, and thinking about their projects. There were also more structured opportunities for giving and receiving feedback: for two different projects, students paired up for ten minutes and exchanged feedback on each other’s in-progress artwork. In two classes, the TAs and the Professor had one-on-one discussions with the students to talk about their projects.

Critiquing as a verb is not restricted to the critique event; students give each other feedback in and outside of class, and before, during and after the critique. The scope of this thesis, though, is the talk in the planned, organized event dedicated to the purpose of critiquing artwork. Delahunt (n.d.), author of an online dictionary of art lexicon, writes that art educators “employ... critique as means to convey the feedback art students need: a concentrated effort to give constructive analysis and advice” (entry for “critique”, artlex.com). Since the critique event includes a rich amount of concentrated feedback, it is possible that the talk in critique is reflective of broader patterns of talk outside of the bounded critique activity as well.

**Institutional Talk**

Drew and Heritage (1992) describe one of the main features of institutional interaction: “participants’ institutional or professional identities are somehow made relevant to the work activities in which they are engaged” (p. 4). The critiques are oriented to a specific task: 1) the student-artist(s) present(s) artwork on which he or she has been working and 2) the group, including the instructors(s), one speaker at a time, makes a series of comments on the artwork. In my data, there are three institution-
relevant identities: the student-artists, the TAs, and the Professor. At the same time, all three groups are artists\textsuperscript{21}. Although the individuals in these three groups are at different stages of their professional careers and possess varying levels of knowledge and experience, everyone had the right to take the floor and give comments in critiques. In fact, the students contributed the majority of the comment-giving turns\textsuperscript{22} in the critiques in my data.

One of the facilitator’s responsibilities was to guide the discussion when necessary, for example by indexing a specific work of art or by asking the students clarifying questions. Sometimes the facilitator inserted a display question in the critique to prompt discussion\textsuperscript{23}, for example in Extract (1) below; or the facilitator sanctioned students’ talk, for example in Extract (2). (Examples of sanctioning talk and analysis of what the sanctions reveal about the norms of the talk in critiques will be discussed in the next chapter.)

(1) 042914-1_S-A

01 P: what types of narratives might you start forming (.)
02 about the creation of this piece.

(2) 042914-3_S-T

01 S-E: I really like how realistic (.) it looks (.)
02 And it almost looks like it’s [(so ) ] (she’s a l)
03 P: [Ellen]
04 Can you say that a different way?

\textsuperscript{21} At the University, the faculty realize that not all of the students will become or even want to become artists as a profession. However, in the course, as well as in critiques, all students are viewed as artists.

\textsuperscript{22} The TAs and especially the Professor took lengthier turns and gave more detailed comment-givings than the students.

\textsuperscript{23} These are broadly similar to Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) sequences (Mehan, 1979); however, most of the time, the purpose of the initiating question seemed to be to prompt comment-givings rather than to only test the students’ knowledge. Explicit evaluation of the students’ responses may be absent.
For the most part, though, when the Professor facilitated the critiques, he removed himself from the discussion both by not taking the floor and by physically positioning himself at the outer periphery or even outside of the group as diagrammed in Figure 2 below.

```
X       X     X    X   X
X       X     X     X       X    X
X      X

Legend
_______ wall
****** artwork
X student or TA
P Professor
```

*Figure 2. Professor Standing in Critique.*

Another important responsibility of the facilitator was to keep track of the time and open and close the various phases of the critique activity (discussed later in this chapter). As time-keeper the facilitator tried to ensure that all of the student-artists had a chance to present their work and ideally had enough time to receive comprehensive feedback from the group.

Although the critiques in my data have distinctive features of institutional talk, the critiques were not rigid in organization and also exhibited some characteristics of ordinary conversation. For example, when giving a comment, the participants almost always decided themselves when to self-select as the next speaker and what to say. The

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24 As a contrast, in a formal debate “the order and length of speaking turns are decided upon before the event even begins” (Nofsinger, 1991, p. 4); and in interviews, the interviewee’s turn-taking rights are restricted to responding to questions initiated by the interviewer.
overall critique also exhibited topic shading (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973) as the comments gradually moved from a focus, a topic, or an artwork to a new one. The one-speaker-at-a-time turn-taking system occasionally erupted into more natural talk with multiple participants’ talk overlapping; this happened at more exciting moments in the critique. For example, in Extract (3) below, Jeffrey makes a positive assessment of the texture of a book cover which prompts laughter from the group and agreement from an unknown student (line 04) and Stephen (line 08).

(3) 031114-5_S-D_S-Z

01  S-J:  like it feels really good like (.)
02  [this one the matte paper
03  Grp:  → [[(chuckles and laughs)]]
04  ( ):  → [I agree (0.2) I don’t know I [agree=
05  S-J:  → [(it’s) the matte paper
06  Of the matte paper on this paperback (0.2) feels
07  Really really [( )
08  S-S:  → [it does. ((chuckling voice))

The overlaps and the turn-taking transcribed in this excerpt are closer to the norms of everyday conversation than those of institutional talk. Other conversational features that are found in my data include normal practices of interaction (Heritage, 1997) found in ordinary conversation such as negotiating turn-taking, overlapping talk, and repairing problems in speaking, hearing, or understanding.

Exploratory and Presentational Talk

Based on my participation-observation of critiques, the talk in critiques seemed to be a mix of exploratory talk and presentational talk. Exploratory talk is “hesitant, broken, and full of dead-ends and changes of direction” because the speaker is “try[ing] out ideas” and “arrang[ing] information and ideas” as the talk is in the progress of being
delivered (Barnes, 2008, p. 4). Exploratory talk is what Elkins (2012) describes as “discovering thoughts” in which “half-formed ideas...overlap in sentence fragments” as the speaker tries to make sense of what he or she thinks in the middle of verbalizing (p. 83). Students are encouraged to make observations and verbalize what they are seeing; while one is in the process of describing what he or she is seeing, though, other observations may be made which require the talk to be adjusted in real-time. Extract (4) below is provided as an example of such talk.

(4) 050614–4_S-E

01 S-C: They all kinda use the same color palette, (.)
02 Uh:m: “(0.2) the Four outside, (.)
03 thuh:– (0.6) five center one uh:m (0.8)
04 I guess a:ll of them "technically." (0.4)
05 THey All use similar: (. color palettes: (. uh:m: (0.6)

Cindy self-selects as speaker and begins her turn with an observation of the color in “all” (line 01) of the artworks. After a micropause and a delaying production “Uh:m:” and a short pause, she produces the self-repair “the Four outside” (line 02), which replaces the initial subject (all of the artworks) of the observation. After a micropause, a stretched-out “thuh:”, and a pause, she produces another self-repair “five center one” (line 03) to again replace the subject of the observation. After another “uh:m” and pause (line 03), she repairs the subject again, “a:ll of them” (line 04), going back to the very first subject. She then reissues “THey All” from the initial observation (line 01) and makes the same observation about the color palette (line 05). During this stretch of talk, the student has been continually looking at the artworks and coming to and changing and finally deciding on an observation about the color of the artworks.
Presentational talk, on the other hand, is a “‘final draft’ for display” to an audience and is concerned with “providing expected information and an appropriate form of speech” (Barnes, 2008, p. 5). Presentational talk is similar to what Elkins (2012) describes as “reporting thoughts” in which one says what one has already thought (p. 83). Although they are not being assessed based on the comments they make in critiques, students exercise care in how they word their comments. One freshman domestic student Grace, who was not in the Foundations: Drawing II course, in an interview describes how she monitors her speech for objectivity and how she consciously tries to give a compliment along with criticism:

I always try to be constructive no matter what. So if I have something I don’t like based off of personal taste, I try and hold back because that doesn’t really matter to them...I try to always pair a compliment with a negative...[and talk in a] fair, non-biased way.

Another freshman domestic student Patti describes the way that she gives comments in critiques as having changed from the beginning to the end of her first year in the art program. After saying that she now “choose[s] [words] carefully,” she explains how she does this:

It’s not necessarily that you use the more sophisticated vocabulary 100% of the time...It’s not that you just have to use bigger words to have valuable critique. I think it’s more that you choose them carefully...as opposed to letting yourself just rant you sort of more carefully craft...maybe focus in on something specific as opposed to [making] vague, general statements.

The Professor and the TAs also indicated in interviews that they are careful about how they formulate their comments because they are aware of the asymmetry in power and the influence that their feedback, especially their criticisms and suggestions, can potentially

25 There was a “participation grade” for participating in critiques; however, students were not assessed on how “good” or “bad” their comments were.
have on the student-artists. In addition, in an instructor role, they are presenting themselves as the more knowledgeable persons in the group. Anthony, TA1, commented that he was “careful” about what he said so that he did not insert personal biases about artwork and art-making into his comments and so that he did not say anything “wrong”.

**Interactional Difficulties**

Some of the interactional difficulties of giving feedback in peer group critiques that Soep (2000) describes are also present in the critiques in my data. For example, the critiques in my data also involve “face-to-face improvisation,” in which participants “compose and express their contributions on the spot,” and the “presence of the maker” (p. 27). The fact that the student-artist whose artwork is being critiqued is present as the feedback is given raises participants’ awareness of issues of “face” (Goffman, 1955). Participants may use politeness strategies, such as pairing a criticism with a compliment as Grace mentioned and using downgraders (House & Kasper, 1981), in order to maintain each other’s face.

These interactional difficulties of delivering critique in an improvised situation and in the presence of the student-artist affect the delivery of participants’ comments. According to Lerner (2013), “[S]peakers and their recipients pay special attention to what can and cannot be properly said in conversation” (p. 95), and speakers show their orientation to these norms by how they deliver *delicate* talk and *precise* formulations. Participants in critiques may use the features of delicate talk that Lerner (2013) describes: whisper voicing; euphemistic formulations, a feature of institutional talk as well (Heritage, 1997); doing searching for a word; and hesitation in the form of delay, cut-offs, and prefices. How speakers communicate something delicate, either
straightforwardly or hesitantly, can affect how recipients perceive the speaker, “either someone who speaks in this way freely or only reluctantly thereby showing one is loathe to say something [delicate]” (Lerner, 2013, p. 104). These specific features of the delivery of comments in critique will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

**Defining “Critique”**

In my interviews with students, I asked the interviewees to define critique. Among first-year students, upper-level students, and graduate students, three common themes arose, with the majority of definitions containing all three: a positive aspect, a negative aspect, and an orientation towards improvement. Listed below are several quotes with the references to *positive, negative, and improvement* identified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“to gain or learn or add...[and]...to help the artist see what went well and what didn’t.” - Mary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“attempting to give positive feedback to make it better and some negative feedback to make it better.” - William</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“getting feedback [on]...what people like, what people don’t like, and how you can improve that.” - Val</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“to discuss a finished or unfinished product in terms of it’s flaws and successes.” - Jeffrey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“definitely to improve your work...taking other people’s opinion about it, which part is your strength and like your weakness.” - Helen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“to locate and verbalize [and] express the strengths and weaknesses of a work and how to make them stronger.” - Anthony</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the students explicitly referred to both positive and negative components in their definitions, these two components were connected with the conjunction “and” or referred
to in a set, suggesting that students thought that positive and negative comments should both be part of critique. In separate interviews, one student commented that a critique with all good feedback is not good; and another student commented that a critique with all negative feedback is not good.

The interviewees defined critique as giving and receiving feedback on artwork; however, in my recordings of the critiques, the topic of the feedback given varies. While the majority of the comments given focus on the artwork as a formal object (i.e., the technical aspects of how the artwork actually looks), comments may also be given on the display or presentation of the artwork, the idea and concept behind the artwork, the student-artist’s introduction of the artwork, the student-artist’s process of creating the artwork, and even the student-artist him or herself26.

**Students’ Perspectives on Critique**

All of the students whom I interviewed expressed many similar perspectives on critique. They all thought that critique was a very important part of their art education. One freshman domestic student Jeffrey described that aside from technical skills and the actual act of creating artwork, critique is “the most valuable learning tool” and that “a certain level of intimacy is opened in a critique and [this] fosters more learning.” Another freshman domestic student William said, “Participating in critique is as important as the process of creating the work itself.”

26 Critiques of the student-artist him or herself are usually related to work ethic, experimentation, confronting fears, and “pushing” beyond one’s comfort zone (e.g., if someone always draws with pencil, encouraging him or her to draw with another medium; if someone always draws in a very particular style, encouraging him or her to experiment with drawing in another style). These comments come almost solely from the Professor who sees it as his role to “push” the student-artists as they develop themselves as artists.
They also all thought that it was important for all of the participants to make contributions in critiques; however, there were some differences in motivation for participating. One freshman international student Mei, who was especially active in giving comments in critiques, expressed that the “participation grade” was her motivation for her active participation. All of the domestic students, though, did not indicate that a grade was the motivation for participating. They perceived the critique as a kind of vote in a democracy and a sharing of ideas and different perspectives. Students said in different ways that “[everyone’s] opinion matters” even if it is different than other people’s opinions. Both domestic and international students said that they value and highly desire feedback from both their classmates and their instructors; and some students even said that they would be “disappointed” if some classmates never made contributions in critique. A sophomore Chinese student, Xin, expressed difficulty participating in the multi-party interaction; although she wanted to participate, it was very difficult for her to talk in front of a group. She expressed that talking at length in class was not common in her secondary education in China: if students made a contribution, it was after being selected to speak by the teacher, and it was a one or two-word answer to a question that was asked by the teacher. She said with resignation, “It’s okay for them to not get my opinion...my ideas are minor points. It’s okay if I don’t speak.” However, to the domestic students, contributing in the critique by expressing even minor points and details is important. William explains that missing a critique is “hindering their classmates because their opinion on a specific piece might be really important”. Although in this statement William was talking about being physically absent from a critique, for William being physically present at the critique goes hand-in-hand with contributing comments:
Everybody should speak. Even if your idea is similar to someone else’s, it may be just different enough that the information that you’re adding becomes... important... everyone should add some sort of input even if it’s very small.

Student-artists desire feedback; and just as compliments are used to “create or maintain rapport” between people (Wolfson, 1983, p. 86), giving critique, during and outside of the planned classroom event, seems to be a way to build rapport between student-artists. Jeffrey commented that he often sees shyer classmates go up to a student-artist after the critique and give comments one-on-one rather than in the group critique; he thought that this is a “good relationship” for both parties.

**Instructors’ Perspectives on Critique**

Based on my interviews with faculty and the TAs, almost all of the art instructors prefer for the majority of feedback and the majority of the talk in critique to be contributed by the students. Instructors said that they want students to exercise their visual observation, evaluation, and problem-solving skills by critically looking at an artwork and giving feedback. By verbalizing their praise and criticism, the students are displaying their knowledge (Scollon & Scollon, 1979); one professor, Michelle, views critique as a way of “checking in [similar to] a quiz or test” with students and as “one of [the] only ways of seeing that people are digesting that material”. Instructors also prefer for students to give feedback in critique because they think that feedback, especially criticism, can be more impactful when it comes from the student-artists’ peers instead of the instructor who is the authority figure. Finally, the instructors think that students need to learn how to talk about artwork and to practice using art and design terminology.

Anthony, a graduate student and one of the TAs in the Foundations: Drawing II course, thought that in a foundation level course, all the students should contribute to the
discussion because “it is important that everyone learns how to talk about work.”

Describing his own growth in this area of verbalizing his thoughts, he said, “I felt like in my undergrad as I learned to talk about other’s work I could talk about my work better.”

Some of the professors I interviewed experienced very critical critiques as students themselves; they do not think that this is the best way to run art critiques. Although there are likely still art schools where critiques are more about harshly and bluntly criticizing than praising, the faculty, on the whole, in the School of Art and Design at the University do not approach critiques this way. Their pedagogy and approach to giving feedback is much more “encouraging”. For example, the Professor of the Foundations: Drawing II class shared with the group during one critique about his own experiences with critique in undergraduate school. He told the group that the environment at the University is a “much different space” than the one where he studied specifically because the University is a “much more encouraging place”. Another professor, Carl, commented that most of the “horror stories” of critique come out of art schools, rather than universities, because there is a different “level of competition [in art schools]”; the students in art schools were each likely the best art students in their respective high schools, and these students are all more or less in art schools with the goal to become artists.

At the University, though, the faculty are aware that not every student in the art and design programs will become a professional artist. Therefore, their views on education are more holistic and include the skills of art-making as well as communicating. One professor, Gene, includes a participation grade as a component of the assignment grade. Although he feels “bad” for shy students, at the same time he
thinks it is necessary for students to verbally participate in critiques and to also present in front of a group of people in order to develop general public speaking skills:

...you can’t avoid [communication], you’re always gonna have to talk to people, and you’re gonna have to apply for jobs, and you’re gonna have to compete to some degree in your life with others, and you’re always gonna have to explain yourself.

Although a minority of instructors use different formats and modes of critique (e.g., blogging, pair critique, small group critique, presentation)\textsuperscript{27}, all of the instructors use some variation of peer group critique and think that oral participation in critique is important. One graphic design professor, who uses different formats of critique, still valued oral communication skills because graphic design is “visual and verbal”. As a teacher, she thinks that she would be doing a “disservice to students” if they cannot communicate orally because she thinks that one must be a good communicator in order to be successful as a graphic designer.

Comments from professors also suggested that making contributions in critique is a way to build rapport within the artist community. One professor I interviewed, Mathan, brought up the seriousness of missing a classmate’s critique and came to an interesting conclusion about the critique and “generosity”:

If someone misses a critique, even if your work is not being shown, that’s like a serious absence. It says that you don’t care about someone else’s work, which I think is terrible for morale in the studio community, but also it’s just selfish. I guess it also shows that critique has some element of generosity to it.

Another professor, Michelle, also sees critique and participating in critique as a form of “generosity”:

\textsuperscript{27} These instructors prefer to use multiple formats and modes (e.g., written vs. oral) of critique throughout the semester in order to increase student participation by engaging different learning styles.
...the point of a critique isn’t to find out what’s wrong with something. It’s more to figure out how to make something the best it can be. And it’s really a kind of generosity ...on the part of those participating in the critique to be giving you these bits of information and tools that are going to help you as an artist or designer. And not doing that is I think somewhat irresponsible.

Another professor, Sam, commented that if a student-artist “never shares” feedback in his or her classmates’ critique then he or she “won’t get back” feedback from their classmates, thus emphasizing the communal endeavor of critique.

Overall Structural Organization of a Critique Activity

A critique day or event consists of a series of critique activities. As a bounded activity, the critiques in my data have a structural organization with distinct openings and closings that separate the activity from ordinary talk. In this section, I will give a description of the various phases of a critique activity which are as follows:

Nomination Phase
Opening Up Phase
Student-artist’s Introduction Phase\(^28\)
Group Comment-giving Phase
Professor’s Comment-giving Phase
Closing Phase

\(^{28}\) Four out of the twenty-two critiques in my corpus omitted the Student-artist’s Introduction Phase. The student-artist had opportunities to give extended-tellings on his or her artwork and the process of creating the artworks during the Group Comment-giving Phase. These four critiques took place on a critique day that was facilitated by TA2.
**Nomination Phase**

In the nomination phase, the facilitator either nominates one or more student-artists to present work to be critiqued or states whose artwork is being critiqued.

For the critique activities in the 03/11/14 class from which the above extract was taken, there was no pre-determined schedule and order in which student-artists’ artworks would be critiqued. During this nomination phase, the Professor makes a collective suggestion (line 01 of Extract (5) above) to solicit self-nomination from the student-artists; however, after a 4.8 second silence (line 01) in which nobody volunteers, the Professor nominates the students who will go next (line 03). This practice of making a collective suggestion is common among American teachers to downplay the power asymmetry between teachers and students; these suggestions are heard by students as imperatives (Heath, 1983).

For the critique events on 04/29/14, 05/01/14, and 05/06/14, the student-artists knew in advance on which day they would be presenting their artworks. An additional classroom was used to present the artwork, so the group moved from one classroom to the other. Each student set up their artwork in advance (e.g., while a critique was going on in one classroom, a student-artist set up his or her artwork in the other classroom). The next extract comes from a critique event on 04/29/14, but we can still see the orientation to nominating the student-artist for the next critique by stating the student-artist’s name. Just before Extract (6) on the following page, the group has finished a critique of artwork set up on one wall of the room. Mei’s artwork is set up on the opposite wall of the room.
After the closing of the previous critique activity, the group has already begun to physically orient toward the other side of the room when the Professor begins this phase with a discourse marker “Alright” (line 01) and states who the group is “talking with” (line 01) next. In another example, Extract (7) below, the group has just finished a critique and is in the middle of clapping.

TA1 directs the group to “go across the ha:ll” (line 02). He also states whose artwork at which they will be looking (line 03).

**Opening Up Phase**

The purpose of the Opening Up Phase is for the participants to begin orienting to the artwork that is being presented. In the 03/11/14 critiques, after being nominated by the Professor, the student-artists pinned their printed-out book covers on the wall and gave their books to the group to pass around. (The student-artists from the previous critique also needed to take down their artwork.) In the 04/29/14, 05/01/14, and 05/06/14 critiques, the artworks were already displayed on the wall before the nomination phase. During this phase, participants walk up close and look at each artwork. This phase is different from the other ones in that the participants engage in small talk, related to and unrelated to the artworks. The facilitator may give information about the critique procedure, encourage the group as to how well they are critiquing, or give explicit
instructions to the student-artist (e.g., placing an artwork higher or lower on the wall, reminding the student-artist to be concise in their introduction); however, in this phase the facilitator’s talk was often overlapping with the group’s small talk.

**Student-artist’s Introduction Phase**

The beginning of the Student-artist’s Introduction Phase of the critique event is almost always marked by the facilitator with a discourse marker (e.g., *okay, alright*) as in Extract (8) below.

**(8) 042914-5_S-F**

01 **P:**  *Aw:right. let’s uh: (. ) let’s give the floor to Fred.*

The discourse marker “*Aw:right*” (line 01) functions to bring the previous opening up phase to a close and to open this new phase in which Fred gives an *extended-telling* (Schegloff, 2007) about his artworks. Similar to a storytelling, “the participants are oriented to a suspension of normal turn-taking rules such that a teller...has the right to bring the telling to completion” (Stivers, 2013, p. 200). However, the facilitator may ask the student-artist a real question or make clarification requests. This phase of the critique activities in my data ranged from two to four minutes long.

**Group Comment-giving Phase**

Most of the data analyzed in Chapter 5 is extracted from the Group Comment-giving Phase. This phase is the lengthiest part of the critique activity and consists of a series of turns and a series of comment-givings, which will be examined in detail in Chapter 5.
This phase is usually clearly launched by the facilitator with a discourse marker and then an indirect directive. In the extracts below, the student-artist is displaying four different projects. The facilitator may leave the floor open for a participant to decide which work of art to comment on first as in Extract (9) or explicitly specify which artwork to give feedback on as in Extract (10).

(9) 042914-2_S-X
01 P: Awright_ let’s give uh:: Xiao some Feedback.

(10) 050614-4_S-E
01 TA1: well we can jus’: Go ahead and get sTarted
02 → with THuh (.) the ballpoint.

In Extract (10), TA1 indexes “the ballpoint” (line 02) and restricts comment-giving to that particular artwork first.

The first comment-giving is always initiated by a student, not the Professor or the TAs. The Professor and the TAs may also initiate comment-givings, although this is usually towards the latter half of this phase29. In the middle of this phase, the facilitator may pose a question to the group to prompt more discussion or index a particular work of art. For example, Extract (11) below comes from a critique in which the student-artist was presenting four different projects.

(11) 042914-5_S-F
01 P: Let’s talk a little bit about flat color. (0.6)
02 How are the colors operating.

---

29 In the critique events on 03/11/14, the TAs did not vocally participate in the critiques. One of their roles as TAs was to shadow the Professor and observe his teaching methods. In this class, the TAs did not give any comments and the Professor did not solicit any comments from them.
The Professor directs the group to talk about the “flat color” project (line 01) and asks an open-ended question (line 02) which prompts a series of comment-givings from the participants.

In general, the discussion is collaboratively shaped by the student-participants’ comment-givings, but sometimes the facilitators may guide the discussion. The Professor may also solicit more comments and pre-allocate turns if students make bids to take the floor. This, however, is rare in my data; student participants for the most part self-nominate to take the floor. The student-artist generally gives only minimal response tokens or nonvocal responses (e.g. head nods) to the comment-givings; he or she may take the floor in order to answer a question that has been asked directly to them by a participant. The student-artist seldom vocally responds to a comment-giving.\textsuperscript{30}

**Professor’s Comment-giving Phase**

In my data, there are instances where the Professor initiates comment-givings in the previous Group Comment-giving Phase; even so, this does not take the place of the Professor’s Comment-giving Phase which is present in every critique activity. Some of the data analyzed in Chapter 5 is extracted from this phase which consists primarily of the Professor’s comment-givings on the artworks, the ideas, the process of creating the artworks, or the student-artists. The Professor may also include stories and comments on being an artist and on critiques, as a critique of the critique. Once the Professor begins his

\textsuperscript{30} In my interviews, a common theme that students brought up was being/feeling “defensive,” and they oriented to “defensiveness” as psychologically dispreferred behavior in a critique. It is possible that responding to comment-givings (e.g., giving an account for a criticism or complaint) is perceived by participants as defensive behavior.
comment-giving, normal turn-taking rules are suspended and the Professor gives a series of comment-givings uninterrupted.

Sometimes this phase is clearly marked with a discourse marker (e.g., *okay*, *alright*) such as in Extract (12) below.

(12) 042914-4_S-M

01 P: **OKay.** (0.4) **UH:**m. (1.6)

“**OKay.**” (line 01) uttered with falling intonation is a transitioning device between activities (Beach, 1993); it not only closes down the Group Comment-giving Phase but also marks the beginning of the Professor’s Comment-giving Phase in the critique. After launching this phase, the Professor gives a series of comment-givings for five minutes and thirty seconds.

There is not always a tight boundary between the Group Comment-giving Phase and the Professor’s Comment-giving Phase.\(^{31}\) The shift from one phase to the other can also happen in a *topic shading* fashion (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973), in which the Professor gradually moves from the previous phase to the next. In Extract (13) on the following page, the student-artist has just answered a question from the Professor about what she learned from the process of creating one of the artworks. Then, the Professor initiates this phase.

\(^{31}\) For the critiques on 03/11/14, in which the TAs were only observers, the Professor always marked the boundary between the Group Comment-giving Phase and the Professor’s Comment-giving Phase. For the critiques on 04/29/14, which the Professor was facilitating, 2 of the 5 critiques have clearly marked boundaries. The other three have a step-wise transition expanding from a previous turn.
He begins his turn with “Starting with that” and cuts off “that” (line 01). He then restarts the turn-constructional unit\textsuperscript{32} (TCU) and indexes the work of art, “that project” (line 02), on which he will begin commenting. Here “that project” is also the current topic that the student-artist was just talking about it, so the topic serves as a pivot to move from one phase to the next. The phrase “starting with...”, similar to a list-initiating marker (e.g., \textit{first of all}) (Schegloff, 1982), also marks that this comment-giving is the beginning of a series of comment-givings, essentially the Professor’s Comment-giving Phase.

Extract (14) below comes from a critique that TA2 was facilitating. It is towards the end of the Group Comment-giving Phase, and the student-artist has given an extended-telling on her artworks. Another student has given a brief comment, not shown, when TA2 attempts to close the phase.

\textbf{(14) 050114-2_S-C}

\begin{verbatim}
01 TA2: Alright. (0.4)
02 [(well)]
03 P: [we:ll] (0.4)
04 TA2: Yeah? (0.4)
05 [go ahead.]
06 P: [I have something. (0.8) UH:m:
\end{verbatim}

TA2 attempts to close the phase with her falling intonated “Alright.” (line 01). After a short pause, TA2 starts another TCU with what sounds like the discourse marker “well” (line 02), which is overlapped by the Professor’s “we:ll” (line 03), which is used as a

\textsuperscript{32} A turn-constructional unit (TCU) can be a word, phrase, clause, or sentence utterance at the end of which speaker change can occur. TCUs are grammatically, prosodically, and pragmatically complete.
turn-entry device that serves to self-select as the next speaker without impairing the comprehensibility of the turn’s beginning (Sacks et al., 1974). After a short silence, TA2 responds to the Professor with “Yeah?” with rising intonation; and then after another short silence, TA2 gives the floor to the Professor, “go ahead” (line 05). Her “go ahead” is overlapped by the Professor’s response to TA2’s question “Yeah?” (line 04), that he has something to say (line 06). Although we are not sure what TA2 would have said in line 02, the Professor seems to have interpreted her “Alright.” (line 01) as a move to close the critique activity, thereby bypassing the Professor’s Comment-giving Phase. After the Professor takes the floor, he gives an extended, uninterrupted series of comment-givings.

In the critique events in which the Professor was the facilitator, there was almost always a quick transition from the Professor’s Comment-giving Phase to the next phase closing the critique event. Other times, the Professor solicited comments from the TAs after he finished giving feedback. In the other critiques where the TAs were the primary facilitator, the TAs and students sometimes gave comments after the Professor and before the facilitator launched the Closing Phase.

**Closing Phase**

The Closing Phase of the critique event is almost always marked by the facilitator with a discourse marker (e.g., *okay, alright*). It is common for either a token praise or

33 In the extract below, after the Professor finishes his series of comment-givings, he asks TA1, who is standing next to one artwork, if he has any comments.

042914-2_S_X

01 P: uh:m (.) do you have any *last* things to say?
token appreciation, sometimes both, to follow this boundary marker. Just prior to Extract (15) below, the Professor has finished giving the student-artist a suggestion.

(15) 050114-1_S-J

01  (1.5)
02  TA2:  [Alright.
03    [(shifts gaze to the student-artist)]
04      (1.0)
05    → Good job.
06      (0.3)
07  Grp:  ((claps))

After a 1.5 second gap, TA2, who is facilitating the critique activities in this particular class, says “Alright.” with falling, final intonation (line 02) to mark the end of the phase. She shifts her gaze to the student-artist (line 03), indicating that her following turn is intended for the student-artist as the recipient, and then produces a token praise “Good job.” again with falling, final intonation (line 05). The student-artist does not respond vocally to the token praise (line 06), but the group interprets TA2’s praise as a cue to clap (line 07) thus marking the end of this critique.

In Extract (16) below, the Closing Phase is very brief, consisting of just one appreciation token. The Professor has given an extended comment-giving on a student-artist’s artwork. The comment-giving has concluded with a strong criticism, not shown, and the Professor closes the phase.

(16) 031114-5_S-D_S-Z

01  P:  → Alright? (.) thank you. (0.2)
02      Let’s Get UH:: >two more people up.<

The Professor then says “Alright?” with rising intonation (line 01), which functions as a comprehension check. Since the “Alright?” is positioned as a tag, at the end of the extended comment-giving, it is asking, “Did you understand everything that I just said?”
He does not, however, wait for the student-artist to respond and affirm comprehension. Instead, the Professor takes a micropause and then produces the appreciation token “thank you.” (line 01) with falling intonation to mark the end of the critique event. The “Arigh?” also functions as a boundary marker to end the Professor’s Comment-giving Phase and as a pivot to start the Closing Phase. After the token appreciation and a brief pause, the Professor launches the Nomination Phase for the next critique activity (line 02).

In my data, token praises and token appreciations in the closing phase are seldom responded to vocally; if the student-artist does respond vocally, it is almost always with a whisper-voiced receipt marker (e.g., okay) rather than with an appreciation token, agreement, or disagreement, which Pomerantz (1978) notes are common responses to compliments in American English. This may indicate that the students orient to the praise as a matter of course rather than genuine praise; after all, the token praise is preceded by the Professor’s series of comment-givings, consisting of mostly criticism and suggestions.

**Actions in Comment-givings**

After I had done a general analysis of the critique activity as a speech event, I looked at the talk in the Group and Professor Comment-giving Phases for data to analyze. This section gives a brief description and examples of actions that are commonly found in these phases. This is not an exhaustive list, and the actions of praise and criticism will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5. For the scope of this thesis, I have focused only on actions by the participants who are doing the comment-giving. The student-artist whose
artwork is being critiqued talks about the artwork in the Student-artist Introduction Phase and may respond to comment-givings during the critique, but these actions are beyond the scope of this thesis.

**Describing / Observing**

It is common for a comment-giver to describe the artwork or a particular aspect of the artwork in detail. A comment-giver may also make an observation about the artwork or to what the artwork is similar, (e.g., *It reminds me of [NOUN PHRASE]*)]. These descriptions and observations may be perceived as neutral or as positive (praise) or negative (criticism), which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. In Extract (17) below, Cindy makes a neutral observation about the colors used in Ellen’s artworks.

(17) 050614-4_S-E

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>S-C: They All use similar: (. ) color palettes: (. ) uh:m: (0.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>except thuh: Center one is more:- (0.4) vi:brant,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>an’ the outer ones are more like uh (1.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>to:ned dow:n (. ) desa:turated, (0.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>version of this: &quot;main (color),&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cindy states that the artworks use “similar: (. ) color palettes:” (line 01). She then qualifies her observation: she indexes the “Center one” (line 02) and says that it is “more:- (0.4) vi:brant” (line 02); and she indexes the “outer ones” (line 03) and says that they are “more...to:ned dow:n” and “desa:turated “(lines 03-05).

In Extract (18) below, Mei describes the arrangement of the artworks.

(18) 050614-4_S-E

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>S-M: [like thos- (0.2) Uhm Those f:our: (. ) four collages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>They:(’re:) (0.2) li:ke (. ) uh:m: (1.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>surrounding the middle one,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>an’ (0.4) It: (. ) Gives a sense of ritualness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
She states that the “four collages...[a]re...surrounding the middle one” (lines 01-03). She then makes an neutral observation of what that arrangement accomplishes: “It (.) Gives a sense of ritualness” (line 04).

**Suggesting / Giving Advice**

Comment-givers also give suggestions on how to improve an artwork or how to develop an idea further. When a problematic aspect of the artwork is identified, a comment-giver may make a suggestion to remedy the problem. The Professor has just pointed out that there is a lot of text on the covers and offered praise to the student-artist for trying to get all the text on there, not shown in the excerpt. He then makes a suggestion shown in Extract (19) below.

(19) 031114-3_S-A_S-C

01 P: but you might wanna leave a little more room
02 for the borders. (0.4)

The Professor produces a contrastive conjunction “but” (line 01), which contrasts with the preceding praise, and makes a mitigated suggestion: “you might wanna leave a little more room for the borders” (line 01-02).

**Disagreeing**

After a participant gives a comment, whether praise or criticism, another participant may choose to express disagreement with that comment. In Extract (20) on the following page, Tina disagrees with Xiao’s criticism.
Xiao suggests to the student-artist to make the skin color in the artwork brighter because she thinks that “it gets lost with thuh: (0.8) go:ld” (line 02) background. Then another student comments on a different aspect of the same artwork, not shown in the excerpt; when Tina takes the floor (line 03), she begins her comment-giving by disagreeing with Xiao’s suggestion to change the color of the skin. Tina does not explicitly say that she disagrees, but the contrastive stress on “ACtually” in “I ACtually really like the color of the skin” (line 03) implies an opposition (Clift, 2001) to Xiao’s criticism. Tina also gives a warrant for why she likes the skin color: “because it is close to the gold” (line 04).

Again the emphatic stress on “is” (line 04) suggests a contrast or disagreement with Xiao’s comment: Xiao criticism is that the skin color is too close to the gold background, but this is exactly why Tina likes the skin color.

Participants may also express disagreement explicitly. In Extract (21) below, Stephen disagrees with Tina’s assessment of the skin color shown in Extract (20) above.

(21) 050614-4_S-E

01 S-S: it’s not working for me
02 I (wish-) (0.2) Thuh:- (. ) jus’, the skin tone, (1.6) 
03 → I: disagree with: (. ) with Tina’s statement. (1.6)

Stephen initiates his turn with a negative assessment, “it’s not working for me” (line 01). He states with some disfluency the beginning of a wish, “I (wish-) (0.2) Thuh:- (. ) jus’
the skin tone” (line 02). After a 1.6 second pause, he makes an explicit statement of disagreement: “I: disagree with: (.) with Tina’s statement.” (line 03).

**Agreeing**

A participant may also express agreement with a previous comment. Agreement may be minimally expressed through agreement tokens and head nods; participants may also elaborate on previous comments as in Extract (22) below.

(22) 050614-4_S-E

01 TA1: → [yah]
02 that line definitely is really important huh,

TA1 begins his turn by aligning, “yah” (line 01), with the previous comment, not shown, and then adding his own assessment (line 02). Participants may also express agreement explicitly as in Extract (23) and Extract (24) below.

(23) 042914-5_S-F

01 S-E: I also agree with [that, ] (.)

(24) 050614-4_S-E

01 S-W: ↑I’m- I’m- (. ) inclin:ned teu↑ (0.4)
02 teu agree with Stephen, (0.6)

**Analyzing Actions in Sequences**

Multiple actions can co-occur within one speaker’s comment-giving; and a speaker may give multiple comment-givings in a multi-TCU turn. In CA methodology, in contrast to speech act theory, there is not always a one-to-one relationship between an utterance and an action. Rather, an utterance can perform multiple actions simultaneously and be specifically designed by a speaker to do so (Levinson, 1983).
For example, one utterance can simultaneously be describing, giving an account for a disagreement, and giving an account for a complaint. In Extract (25) on the following page, Julie disagrees with a student’s prior comment-giving problematizing the skin tone of the elephant-like figure, describes the artwork with some criticism, and then suggests a solution to the problem of the skin tone. In lines 04 and 06-09, Julie points at specific parts of the cut-out paper, describing whether that part is or is not outlined with white sequins; these areas are marked with numbers in the photo below and correspond to the bolded numbers in the transcript.
Julie initiates her turn with a rushed “I don-” (line 01) that is cut off, and after a 0.4 second pause restarts her turn. This recycled turn beginning is a strategy for getting the
floor and prefacing a delicate, especially when gaze and nonvocal cues are not available for communicating bids to take the floor (Jones, 2003). She completes the higher-pitched “>↑I don’t think I __miːnd↑” (line 01) with a normal-pitched “the _skin _tone” (line 02). This statement is an epistemically mitigated, “I...think” (line 02), disagreement with the previous student who does mind the skin tone. Her talk takes a contrastive turn “but it’s _jus:t” (line 03) which seems to indicate that what is to follow will qualify the disagreement. After an inbreath (line 04), she indexes the foot by pointing at it and producing an emphatic and lengthened “H:ɛ:re” (line 04). She then describes the artwork at that precise location by beginning an adjective clause “WHere _i:t_” (line 04). She cuts off the “_i:t_”, pauses, self-repairs the “_i:t_” with a replacement “Youg-” (line 05), which is also cut off and self-repaired after a pause. This time the “Youg-” is partially reissued and the TCU is completed “you’ve _given us an_ outli:ne?” (line 05) with rising intonation, indicating a commitment to continue the turn as well as possibly uncertainty to mitigate the criticism. Emphasis and a lengthened vowel are produced on “outli:ne” marking this as the trouble source. She proceeds to index and describe the outlines in other specific locations of the artwork. In line 06, the pronoun “that” in “and you’ve _Done that_ Hɛ:re” refers to the previous statement about giving an outline. In line 07, she inserts a parenthetical starting with “although:” to qualify the previous statements and points to another part of the artwork rushing to say that “>(you’ve) kinda< _lost it_”; here “it” refers again to the outline of sequins, which is absent here. In line 08, a continuation of the parenthetical statement, she points to another outline in the artwork, “THis one”; rather than describe the outline though, she makes a negative assessment, “I’m a little _confi:sed
about”. In line 09, she continues describing the outline in the artwork. First, she produces a contrastive “But”; indexes the particular location (“on this side”); and then with hesitantly, displayed by a lengthened vowel on “you:” and a pause, says that the artist didn’t give an outline with sequins. The clause “But...you: (0.8) didn’t,” (line 09) is syntactically connected to “you’ve given us an outline? (0.6) and you’ve Done that Here” (lines 04-05), so “you: (0.8) didn’t” (line 09) is understood as you didn’t give us an outline. Lines 04-09 have been describing the artwork; but line 09 describes the lack of the outline and also simultaneously criticizes the lack of outline: you didn’t give us an outline but you should have.

We can see how the utterances in lines 04-09 simultaneously describe the artwork, give an account for the initial disagreement (Julie does not “mind the skin tone” because the problem is not the skin tone), and eventually give an account for what Julie perceives to be the problem: the outline. She then suggests that outlining the whole figure might solve the problem that other people are having with the color of the skin tone.

Extract (25) above is just one example of how utterances cannot be tightly labeled as doing one action. Even the first TCU “I don’t think I mind the skin tone” (lines 01-02), which is a disagreement with a previous speaker’s criticism, functions as a preface to the criticism (line 09) to follow. While acknowledging that an utterance may be doing multiple actions at one time and that a comment-giving may consist of multiple actions, comment-givings as a whole, in my data, are usually designed to do one of two particular actions, either praising or criticizing. I have also approached the analysis of my data with

34 In this area of the artwork, the outline of the white sequins doesn’t follow the edge of the cut-out paper. Instead, the outline is inside the paper.
the perspective that an action has an overall structural organization (Schegloff, 2011).

According to my data and analysis, comment-givings are organized in a particular way to do a particular action such as to give praise or to give criticism. This organization will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 5
PRAISE AND CRITICISM

This chapter is divided into two parts: 1) an introduction and relevant literature on praise and criticism and 2) the analysis of the talk. Part II includes analyses of the sequential organization of praise-giving and criticism-giving actions, the placement of praise and criticism in the overall structural organization of a critique activity, and the composition and delivery of praise and criticism.

I. INTRODUCTION

Rationale for Focusing Analyses on Praise and Criticism

With any action (e.g., requesting, inviting, complaining) there are “practices” of doing those actions. Heritage (2011) defines a “practice” as the following:

- any feature of the design of a turn in a sequence that
  (i) has a distinctive character,
  (ii) has specific locations within a turn or sequence, and
  (iii) is distinctive in its consequences for the nature or the meaning of the action that the turn implements.

(as cited in Sidnell, 2013)

When a practice is “effective,” recipients of an action are able to recognize what the action is doing (Sidnell, 2013, p. 78). Assuming that the interactional practices of critiques are “effective,” then there are distinctive characters and patterns of praise and criticism in critiques that have consequential meaning for the interpretation of the feedback given.
I chose to focus on analyzing the practices of giving praise and giving criticism in critiques since the definitions of *critique*, shown in Chapter 4, that students gave in the interviews displayed students’ orientation to critique as consisting of both positive and negative feedback. In addition, both listening and speaking in critiques were perceived by students to be important. International students in art programs need to be able to understand and interpret praise and criticism as well as perform these actions if they are to fully engage in critiques, and therefore their art education. The interpretation of praise and criticism in critiques is very essential to a student’s art foundation education, since critique events are the main method (aside from a letter grade) for instructors to communicate feedback on artwork. The feedback given in the critiques, as well as outside of the critique and in class, may eventually be consequential for students’ acceptance into their desired program (e.g., Painting and Graphic Design). In the second semester when they apply to a specific program, students must submit a portfolio of a selection of artworks that were created in their foundation art courses. Because of this, students may choose to continue working on an artwork based on the feedback they receive in the critique.

Accurate interpretation of feedback in critiques is a potential challenge for international students since they may have had very different prior experiences with feedback and how it is delivered in their home countries. One Chinese student, Mei, took extracurricular art classes as a high school student; her teacher would give the students art exercises to complete but never gave feedback on the artwork. Mei is a highly motivated artist and eager to improve; she commented, “Critical suggestions [are] really important especially to me.” Describing her dissatisfaction with her experience in the Foundations
program at the University, she said a student might present a technically unskilled painting that has many areas for improvement, but “[people] will never say it out loud to the artist.” This may reflect a misinterpretation of feedback; participants in the group may actually voice their criticisms and suggestions for improving the artwork, but Mei may not interpret it as such since criticism and suggestions may be highly mitigated, which I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter.

Another Chinese student, Xin, did have prior experience with critique in her extracurricular art class in China. In her experience, Chinese art teachers point out things that are “lacking” in the artwork and give “harsh criticism” to the students. As a hypothetical example, she said a Chinese teacher might say, “What’s this? What are these strokes you made here? You have to change that.” Comparing her experience with critiques in China and critiques in America, Xin said that the critiques at the University consist mainly of students’ and professors’ opinions and “their thoughts toward [the] artwork” rather than how to improve their technical skills. She thought that critiques “should give more suggestions [for] improving skills” rather than “only talk[ing] about good things” about the artwork. Again, this may reflect a misinterpretation of the comments given in critique; since criticism, as I discuss later, may often be prefaced, followed up, or “sandwiched” with compliments, Xin may hear more “good things” than bad things. Unlike Mei, Xin didn’t really mind, though, that critiques are not very critical. Critiques are very enjoyable experiences for her since she can hear her

35 Although the origins of the “compliment sandwich” or the “feedback sandwich” are unclear, it is a fairly common phrase in American English to describe the practice of prefacing and tagging criticism or negative feedback with a compliment or positive feedback: compliment - criticism - compliment.
classmates express their thoughts and opinions. Speaking of her classmates, she said, “They are so nice. They always speak good for your work.”

In Xin’s experience, the way that her art teacher in China gave criticism was very different from the way that the art professors in her classes at the University give criticism. This may be reflective of differences in broader norms of giving criticism between the American and Chinese cultures. It is also possible that Xin and Mei hear criticism given by an American classmate or professor in a very different way than was actually intended by the speaker.

In the literature, there are stories of very critical critique experiences such as a professor throwing paintings out of a building (Soep, 2005), a teacher ripping up a drawing (Elkins, 2012), and students crying (Buster & Crawford, 2012; Elkins, 2012; Wernik, 1985). As mentioned earlier, these types of dramatic experiences are not the norm at the University. Although they expressed feeling nervous and unsure about what to say in critiques when they first started their studies, the students that I interviewed did not express any negative feelings towards critiques, as the literature on critiques in art, design, and architecture often reports. This is likely because of the encouraging atmosphere that the art and design programs at the University fosters as well as the changing attitudes of art instructors over the years; some students, domestic and international, thought the environment was too encouraging and needed to be more critical. These students seemed highly motivated to improve their artistic skills.

One domestic freshman student Grace had heard about critique from her friend who went through design school twenty years ago. Her friend experienced very direct and very critical critiques so this is what she was expecting as well. In her first semester at the
University, she thought that the professors were “too easy” and that they “would kinda change their attitudes towards different pieces” so that “certain students would kinda get [judged] eas[ily]”. It is possible that her perception was influenced by her friend’s experiences; nevertheless, Grace expressed disappointment that the critiques she experienced at the University were “easy” and too similar to the critiques she experienced in high school. Grace described the critiques in her high school art classes this way:

... there were some of us that would take it a little bit more serious and were hoping for some more criticism but would never get it; we would just get praise...they never said, “But, you could do this...” It was more of like, “Oh, you’re doing well...keep it up.”

She expected the critiques at the University to be different and more challenging, and they were not in her opinion. Because she feels that the professors’ responsibility is “to make [the students] better” and not “to boost people’s confidence” or “[try] to be liked [by the students],” she was disappointed that critiques were more about praise than criticism:

I would spend a lot of time on something and I wouldn’t think it was perfect, and it wouldn’t be like sitting well with me. But [the professors] would just say, “Good job,” like “You should feel good about the work that you did.” But I was hoping that they would help me bridge that gap.

That Grace, a domestic student familiar with American English pedagogical norms for giving criticism, thought that the critiques in her classes were too easy may be reflective of how criticism is delivered, mitigated and couched with praise. This will be discussed later, as well as the amount of criticism delivered.

Giving praise and criticism in critiques is also an important skill for international students if they are to fully participate in the class and to build rapport and solidarity with classmates. Student-artists psychologically prefer to receive honest feedback in critiques;
some of the students interviewed said that they preferred criticism over praise since criticism can lead to improvement. Giving criticism, however, is an interactional challenge for both domestic and international students. Reflecting on her experiences of critiques in her first semester at the University, one domestic student Patti commented on the difficulty of giving criticism:

I didn’t know exactly what to say at first...I was kinda worried about offending people. You kinda have to figure out where the line is between just saying something mean about someone’s artwork and actually giving them something that will be helpful to them.

Two international students commented on the difficulty of giving criticism in the context of a classroom critique at an American university; their comments reveal their uncertainty of how to politely give criticism. Mei, a freshman Chinese student, commented, “Sometimes I want to be critical, but I feel like I cannot because it’s not polite.” Shin, a freshman Taiwanese student, described her experience:

Sometimes I had trouble participating when I don't really know what to say about a piece of art, because I didn't want to say bad things that would hurt them, so I chose to be silent.

It’s worthwhile to note that these students may not even have cultural norms in their native language for giving peer critique if giving peer feedback, whether in pairs or in a group, is not a normal activity in Chinese and Taiwanese pedagogy. Mei and Shin had no experience with peer group art critiques in their home countries. Another Chinese student, Xin, commented more generally about the difficulty and inability to give any comment at all:

36 I did not ask the interviewees if they experienced peer critiques in other subjects in their home countries. I do know, however, that they did not experience peer critiques in any art classes they had taken.
I really wish I could talk more, but I just cannot do it. I have thoughts of I want to open up. I will think about “Okay. I’m going to speak. Open your mouth. Prepare the first sentence.” But I just couldn’t speak them out.

She added that it is difficult for her to talk in front of the whole class or any group of people. Describing her elementary and secondary education in China, she said that there were no opportunities to talk in front of a group; and if a teacher asked a question, a student answered with one or two-word answers only.

Although both domestic and international students experience difficulties with giving criticism, international students may especially benefit from explicit guidelines on the interactional practices of giving criticism since the norms for giving and interpreting criticism in their native language and in American English may be very different. In addition, the norms for giving and interpreting criticism in American English may not be transparent even to an advanced speaker of English since proficiency in the linguistic features of language does not equate to proficiency in sociocultural and pragmatic norms.

**Preference Structure in CA**

The concept of preference structure comes from adjacency pair organization in conversation (Schegloff, 2007). An adjacency pair is a sequence of two turns (two parts) produced by two different speakers. The first turn is called the First Pair Part (FPP), and the second turn is called the Second Pair Part (SPP). After a speaker produces a FPP, the other speaker is expected to produce the SPP; the SPP is said to be *conditionally relevant*. If the SPP is not produced, then it will be noticeably absent. Some FPPs call for the same type of action for the SPP; for example, after a greeting, another greeting is conditionally relevant. Other FPPs call for a different type of action for the SPP, but the SPP may have “alternative types of responses” (Schegloff, 2007, p. 58). For example, an invitation FPP
can be responded to with an accepting SPP or a declining SPP. These two types of SPP, accepting or declining, are not identical. Accepting the invitation is a preferred response because it promotes social solidarity and is affiliative; whereas declining the invitation is a dispreferred response because it is disaffiliative (Heritage, 1984b). Preferred and dispreferred in this context do not refer to psychological preference, or what the recipient hopes the answer will be, but to a structural preference in the adjacency pair sequence.

Preferred SPPs are usually short, to the point, and given without delay; on the other hand, dispreferred SPPs are usually mitigated, delayed, and elaborated with accounts, disclaimers, or excuses that explain why the preferred response cannot be given (Schegloff, 2007). FPPs can also be preferred and dispreferred as an action and in terms of turn shape (Schegloff, 2007). For example, the action of offering is preferred over the action of requesting. Preferred FPPs are delivered straightforwardly and without delay; and dispreferred FPP are mitigated, usually elaborated with accounts, and delayed both in the turn shape (e.g., with hesitation devices and silences) and in the overall interaction (Schegloff, 2007). For example, a request, as a dispreferred FPP in American English, is generally prefaced with a pre-request delaying the request sequence in the overall interaction or allowing the recipient the opportunity to make an offer. If the pre-request does not elicit an offer and a request needs to be produced, the request may be delayed in the turn by hesitation, silence, and prefaces. The request may also be mitigated and accompanied by an account as to why the speaker is making the request.

According to my data of peer group critiques, praise-giving actions share many of the same characteristics of a preferred FPP, and criticism-giving actions share many of
the same characteristics of a dispreferred FPP. These characteristics will be examined in
detail later in this chapter.

**Literature Review of Preference Structure in Pedagogical Contexts**

Preference structure has been widely researched in CA. I will briefly review
several studies of praise and criticism in pedagogical contexts that are particularly
relevant to my study.

Jacoby’s (1998) comprehensive study of a physics group’s conference talk
rehearsals is particularly relevant to my research on critiques. Members of the group ran
through their conference presentations as a simulated activity after which the members
gave feedback on the presentation. The feedback phase consisted of a series of *comment
sequences*.

A comment sequence is a stretch of talk and interaction, with a recognizable
opening and closing, during which some particular problem in the just-rehearsed
conference presentation is raised or alluded to, the status and remedy of which
may be negotiated until verbal or non-verbal agreement is achieved by the
participants, before participants move on to the next comment or the next activity.

(Jacoby, 1998, p. 378)

Participants comment on what they think is “laudable or problematic” in the rehearsal
presentation (p. 363); however, the majority of the comments are related to what
participants find problematic. When complaints were made, they were delayed by
prefaces and produced with interactional disfluency; they were also often raised with
accounts and explanations, which point to the dispreferred nature of raising complaints.

Pillet-Shore (2012) has researched student praising and student criticizing in
parent-teacher conferences. She found that teachers and parents displayed different
orientations to praising or criticizing the non-present student. Teachers praised the
student in a preferred manner: straightforwardly and without delay. When teachers praised the non-present students, parents responded to the praise as if it were a compliment given to the parent. On the other hand, parents avoided praising their child in order to avoid self-praise. In addition, parents criticized their child in a preferred manner, whereas the teachers criticized the student in a dispreferred manner.

Yoon (in progress) investigated American teachers’ advice-giving in one-on-one writing conferences with international undergraduate and graduate students. Her analysis of the talk showed how teachers orient to advice-giving as a dispreferred FPP by delaying the advice-giving. The writing conference was essentially a chain of advice-giving activities, each of which consisted of problem identification, an optional problem discussion, advice-giving, and an optional discussion of advice. In the overall conference, advice-giving was delayed by general positive comments. And during each advice-giving activity, the advice-giving turn was delayed either with a compliment or with a justification for the advice-giving.

The talk in critiques is unique compared to the above studies in two ways. First, as discussed in Chapter 3, classroom art critiques are primarily a multi-party interaction and responsibility\(^\text{37}\). Since multiple participants give comments in each critique activity, critiques may be a particularly rich source of data on giving peer feedback as well as pedagogical praise and criticism. Second, in critiques, participants may not have fully formulated comments, advice, and assessments to offer since participants are looking, analyzing, and coming to decisions about the artwork as the talk is unfolding and the

\(^{37}\) The physics talk rehearsals in Jacoby’s (1998) study are also multi-party interactions; but Ron, the principal investigator, was the primary giver of feedback.
activity is underway. More or less, the first encounter the participants have with the artworks is at the beginning of the critique. In contrast, in the one-on-one writing conferences, the teachers had read their students’ drafts and commented on them before beginning the conference. In the parent-teacher conferences, teachers had already formed evaluations of their students to be communicated to the parents. In the physics talk rehearsals, the principal investigator took many notes on what to give feedback on during the actual rehearsal and then referenced those notes when giving feedback.

Despite these two main differences and the obvious difference in contexts, these previous studies have demonstrated how actions such as complaining, criticizing, and advice-giving are dispreferred FPPs, delayed in the overall structural organization of the talk or delivered with a dispreferred turn-shape. I will show that criticism in comment-givings in critiques is also a dispreferred FPP and has a dispreferred turn-shape.

II. ANALYSIS

Comment-givings

Each critique activity—whether one student-artist’s artwork or artworks are being critiqued or whether multiple student-artists’ artworks are being critiqued simultaneously—is composed of smaller comment-giving activities. The group comment-

38 Instructors and students may have previously seen the artwork at various stages of its creation, for example, in an in-progress critique or while the student-artist was working on the artwork during class time or in another shared studio space.
giving phase is composed of a series of comment-givings with each comment-giving composed as a longer *multi-TCU turn* by one participant at a time. Ordinary conversation is composed mainly of adjacency pair sequences; in its most basic form, Schegloff (2007) defines adjacency pair sequences as “two turns, by different speakers, adjacently positioned, one recognizably a first pair part...the other recognizably a second pair part,” (p. 251) such as a question-answer sequence or an invitation-response sequence. However, in *multi-part tellings* (Schegloff, 2007), such as story-tellings and direction-giving, there are “non-final and final TCUs within [a speaker’s] turn” (Selting, 2000, p. 490). A multi-part telling ends with a final TCU; and all the previous non-final TCUs together form the multi-TCU turn.

A comment-giving can be a neutral action, which I call a *neutral comment*, though they are not common in my data; a positively-valenced action, functioning as praise, which I call a *praise-giving*; or a negatively-valenced action, functioning as criticism, which I call a *criticism-giving*. These will be described in detail below.

**Neutral Comments**

A neutral comment can be a description or observation and cannot be clearly attributable to an action of praising, criticizing, or aligning or disaligning with another participant’s comment-giving. For example, in Extract (26) on the following page, Cindy makes a neutral observation of color with no positive or negative assessment. Her observation also does not align or disalign, or give further support for or against, another participant’s assessment since no one made a prior assessment of the color. Since there is no evidence that it would be interactionally interpreted as positively or negatively valenced, Cindy’s comment is analyzed as a neutral comment.
Praise-givings

A praise-giving is composed of a praise and a warrant. The praise component can be formulated in a variety of ways, such as a positive assessment in Extract (27), often in the form of a compliment, or a positive description in Extract (28).

(27) 042914-5_S-F

01 S-S: I really like the content, (0.2)

(28) 050614-6_S-S

01 P: There’s a lot of development here

The warrant component is often formulated as a description or an observation. The description does not necessarily have to be positive; the description can be a neutral statement of facts or can use semantically more negative adjectives, but it is designed to support the praise as in the following example.

In Extract (29) below, Cindy launches a comment-giving on an artwork.

(29) 042914-5_S-F

01 S-C: “um” moving to the (0.2) self-portrait (0.5)
02 it’s (0.7) kinda shocking
03 that almost all of it if not all of it
04 is (0.8) um (1.5) pixelated or blurred (0.6)
05 um (0.9) ‘cuz you can still tell it’s youn:s (0.3)
06 which is- “it’s really (0.8) pretty impressive”
After indexing the specific artwork (line 01), she produces what may initially be interpreted as an assessment: “it’s (0.7) kinda shocking that almost all of it is (0.8) um (1.5) pixelated or blurred” (lines 02-04). The negatively valenced adjective “shocking” might be initially heard as criticism. She describes the artwork as “pixelated” and “blurred” which are facts, although in certain contexts these adjectives can be used and perceived as criticism. However, when she produces the positive assessment, “it’s really (0.8) pretty impressive” (line 06), the preceding observations (line 02-05) can be interpreted as a warrant supporting why the artwork is “impressive”.

In addition to the variability in how the praise and warrant is formulated, the sequential positioning of the two components is variable. The extracts below give an analysis of praise-givings to demonstrate this variability in organization.

As Extract (30) shows, the praise-giving action can be initiated with praise and then followed by a warrant.

(30) 031114-2_S-X

01 S-S: and I also appreciate the use of the color: (.)
02 [red in the title, (0.2)] praise
03 S-X: [(nods head several times)]
04 I think if there was no colo:r,
05 it would’ve bee:n=
06 S-X: =“yah” (.)
07 S-S: It would’ve been very du:ll (0.4) warrant
08 Bu:t- just that one red against thuh- (.)
09 against the greys and blacks and whites
10 makes it, (0.2) r:eally [pop out, (0.8)

The praise is formulated as an appreciation, “I also appreciate...” (line 01); the warrant is formulated as a hypothetical, “if there was no colo:r...It would’ve been very du:ll” (lines 04-05, 06). Although this is a negative formulation, the statement is implying praise since
there is actually the “color: (. red in the title” (lines 01-02), and so it is not dull. The description of the colors also function as warrants to support his praise (lines 08-10).

In Extract (31) below, the praise-giving is initiated with a warrant preceding the praise. In this critique, the silhouette of a person standing at a tombstone was cut out of black paper and affixed to the marble wall of a building. Lily makes an observation of the marble and praises the contrast between the paper and the marble.

(31) 042914-5_S-F

01 S-L: I think thah:: (. like the marble:, of this wa:ll
02 is kinda like it could be used
03 for uh certain gra:vesto::nes,=" warrant
04 TA2: =mmhm_ 05 S-L: and it does make me think about that
06 and the contrast is really ni:ce:. praise

The warrant is formulated as an observation, “the marble:, of this wa:ll...could be used for uh certain gra:vesto::nes” (lines 01-02); the praise is formulated as a positive assessment, “the contrast is really ni:ce:” (line 06).

Extract (32) on the following page demonstrates a more complex structure because criticism is inserted into the praise-giving. However, the overall action that the multi-TCU comment is doing is praise rather than criticism.
TA1 initiates the comment with a warrant followed by its corresponding praise; he inserts what is a criticism but abandons it and then concludes the comment with praise. The warrant is formulated as an observation: “I see... There’s ay: uh:: (0.4) Tendency: Towards: (0.4) Very simple for:ms?” (lines 01, 04-05). The praise is formulated as a positive assessment, “Which...>↑I think is very effective in: this one an’: the outer one where you: (0.2)” (lines 06-07), an adjective clause modifying the “simple for:ms”. However, he limits the praise to two specific artworks, “in: this one an’: the outer one” (lines 07-08), and then qualifies them as the artworks in which the student-artist has taken her “ti:me” (line 09). He continues his qualification with the coordinating conjunction “an-” (line 09); the cut-off and the following micropause both indicate self-repair may be upcoming (Schegloff, 1979). He then begins a criticism “>THey’re not-<” (line 10). He produces the beginning of the criticism at a rushed rate of speech but then he cuts off the “not” (line 10) and abandons the TCU with a one-second pause, perhaps because he realizes in the middle of his talk that a negative adjective is due (e.g., The simple forms are very effective in the artworks where you take your time and they’re not [negative ADJECTIVE]). Alternatively, he could have formulated the TCU as a positive assessment (e.g., and they’re [positive
ADJECTIVE]); the contrastive stress on “not” indicates that a negative adjective is due, but he does not produce it and states that he doesn’t know (line 10) the adjective to use here. Instead he concludes with praise that is formulated as a positive assessment (lines 11-14).

It is possible for the praise component to be intensified by giving a series of praises. Extract (33) below comes from the last critique activity of the course; Stephen is a particularly driven student-artist who has worked hard on all of his projects throughout the semester. For his final critique, he went beyond what the other student-artists produced. Some examples of this include setting up his artwork in a clean room of another building on campus as a kind of exhibit; learning how to build and building his own canvas; and for one project, creating a dozen drawings over a period of time to show the development of his technical skill. The Professor begins his extended comment-giving by saying that if the grading in the course were based on a curve, then Stephen would have broken the curve, not shown in the extract.

(33) 050614-6_S-S

01 P: Because: you: have: (. UP-ed the whole ga:me. (0.2)
02 You’ve up-ed your ga:me:, (.)
03 an’ I think you’ve UP-ed the class’ game. (0.6)
((38 lines omitted of specific warrants for the praise))

The Professor repeats the praise “you: have: (. UP-ed the whole ga:me” (line 01) in variations—“You’ve up-ed your ga:me:” (line 02) and “you’ve UP-ed the class’ game” (line 03)—before giving lengthy warrants for his positive assessments.
Criticism-givings

A criticism-giving is composed of a preface, a criticism (essentially a negatively valenced comment), a warrant for the criticism, and a remedy for the complaint which can be implicit or explicit in the criticism.

The preface, which may be formulated as a praise, a problem-projecting noun phrase (Jacoby, 1998), a locational index (Jacoby, 1998), or a question, is not always present. The praise preface in a criticism-giving is distinct from that of a praise-giving in that the praise preface is unaccompanied by warrants; it is often unaccompanied by intensifiers as well. The praise, though, does not obscure the overall action, criticizing, of a criticism-giving. Extract (34) below is an example of a praise preface; Extract (35) below is an example of a problem-projecting preface; Extract (36) on the following page is an example of a locational index preface; and Extract (37) is an example of a question preface.

(34) 031114-1_S-S

01 P: → I appreciate your analog component
02 I think (.) the only thing that takes away
03 from this being spot-on sharp professional (.)
04 is that the (. ) analog component’s
05 a little (. ) f fuzzy (.)
06 a little little out of focus, (.)

(35) 050614-6_S-S

01 S-F: One thing uh:: (0.6) I:- I’m jus’ kinda–
02 I’m kinda disappointed with,

39 Not all criticism-givings in my data contain a prefacing component. This may or may not be an intentional design by the speaker to convey a more blunt criticism. Also, a criticism-giving may be prefaced with a praise-giving, which functions as a preface to the criticism-giving.
More than one preface can be present as well, as in Extract (34) above that is composed of a praise preface (line 1) followed by a problem-projecting preface (lines 02-03).

The criticism component can be formulated in a variety of ways, such as a negative assessment as in Extract (38) below; a negative description as in Extract (39) below; a suggestion as in Extract (40) below, or a wish as in Extract (41) following. Suggestions and wishes indirectly point out what is lacking and should be improved.

(38) 050614-6_S-S

01 S-F: for the hands, they look- (0.4)
02 → They look like (. ) the least- (. ) y- you know
03 → the least competent part of the drawing. (0.2)

(39) 031114-6_S-K_S-H

01 P: this starts gettin’ way: too tight. (0.6)

(40) 050614-5_S-S

01 S-P: the other ones I think (0.2)
02 → you could’ve: (. ) done a little bit more o:n.

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40 S-M is a second language speaker of English; she says “point on” but likely means “point out”.

41 For example, in Extract (41), when Tina says, “I wish...That (. ) thuh (. ) colors that were flat were like (. ) real:ly fla:t,” (lines 01-03), she is indirectly stating that the colors are not flat enough.
The warrant component may be formulated as a description or a speculation, and the remedy is often formulated as suggestions and advice but can also include wonderings. At the very least, criticism-giving actions are composed of a criticism and a warrant, although there are special cases, analyzed later in this chapter, in which warrants are not given. Also, not all of the components are always present; but the components of a preface, criticism, warrant, and remedy make up a maximally structured criticism-giving. Similar to praise-givings, the sequential positioning of the individual components is variable; examples of this variable structure will be shown.

Extract (42) on the following page is from Mei’s criticism-giving shows all the components. Although the talk in this extract is not analyzed, other examples in this chapter describe the various components in detail.
Extract (43) below has all of the components in the following order: preface, warrant, remedy, and criticism. Mei begins her comment-giving on a book cover design in the middle of the critique activity.

(43) 031114-5_S-D

01 S-M: I: e (.) Also want to point on\(^ {42} \) the font
02 "on the" (0.2) <Back cover?> `h (0.2)                     preface
03 Um (.) Yah the Back:, (0.2)
04 So war is peace,          warrant
05 you used the <capitalized> letter,  
06 but- `h wh:y- (0.4) `h freedom is slavery
07 you use the lower case_ 
08 and (. ) ignorance is strength_  
09 I H ope you ge- like- I W i sh they coul (0.2) remedy
10 They could (.) use both like capitalized (.)
11 uh:m (0.4) <First (.) letters?>
12 >So it would be more "consistent, criticism
13 if that makes sense,"

---

\(^{42}\) S-M is a second language speaker of English; she says "point on" but likely means "point out".
The preface is formulated as a locational index: “the font ‘on the’ (0.2) Back cover:?” (lines 01-03). The warrant component includes negative descriptions of specific font elements of various phrases on the book cover (lines 04-08). These observations are criticisms as well; for example, pointing out that *War is Peace* is capitalized (lines 04-05) but that *freedom is slavery* and *ignorance is strength* are not capitalized (lines 06-08) is a criticism: they should all be capitalized. Although the remedy is implied already in the warrant, the comment-giver makes the remedy explicit by expressing a “wish” that all the first letters could be capitalized (lines 09-11). If the remedy is undertaken, then the outcome, expressed by the conjunction “So” (line 12), is that “it would be more consistent” (line 12). Implied in the outcome is that the design currently is not consistent; and this is the source of the criticism and complaint for which the remedy is offered.

In Extract (44) below, the criticism-giving is launched directly without a preface. Tina self-selects to take the floor in the middle of the critique activity.

(44) 050114-4_S-P

| 01 | S-T:  | ‘eh-” (. ) "I wish that in the paintin’ | criticism |
| 02 |      | That (. ) thuh (. ) colors that were flat |            |
| 03 |      | were like (. ) really flat, like- (1.2) |            |
| 04 |      | like there are parts |            |
| 05 |      | where it’s li:ke (0.4) <une:ven,> (0.2) |            |
| 06 |      | because of your brush strokes? (0.6) |    warrant |
| 07 |      | a:n:d (0.4) I::ee (0.4) think that- (0.2) |            |
| 08 |      | you just like applied a lot of thick paint |            |
| 09 |      | to like try and cover it, |            |
| 10 |      | but- (0.8) uh:m (. ) you could’ve <done |            |
| 11 |      | many layers> that were flatter:, |    remedy |
| 12 |      | <tuw: achieve like> (0.4) <one solid color,> (1.0) |            |

Criticism, in the form of a wish, is given first. Starting with “I wish” projects that criticism will follow since something is lacking. This wish is heard as a criticism since “I wish that...thuh (. ) colors...were like (. ) really flat” (lines 01-03) implies that the colors
are not flat but that they should be. The warrant for the criticism is a description of the painting and pointing out that “there are parts” that are “uneven” (lines 04-06) as well as a speculation as to what caused the problem (lines 07-09). The remedy component is a suggestion as to what the artist could have done differently, “you could’ve done many layers...<tuw: achieve like> (0.4) <one solid color,>” (lines 10-12).

In Extract (45) below, praise is inserted in the middle of the sequence. The insertion may display the speaker’s orientation to the norm of prefacing a criticism; since there was no praise prefacing the criticism, it is inserted after the criticism. It is also possible that the inserted praise functions as a contrastive-preface device to the negatively valenced warrants that follow (Pomerantz, 1984). However, the overall action that the comment-giving is doing is criticism rather than praise. Extract (45) below comes from an extended comment-giving by Ellen. After a tangential side sequence, not shown, Ellen continues her turn by giving a criticism-giving composed of a criticism, a praise, and warrants for her criticism.

(45) 050114_S-D

01 S-E: A:nd (. ) uh:m (. ) your craftsmanship
02 is really breaking down, (. ) criticism
03 Li:ke, (1.2)
04 how strong your: (. ) works are, (0.4) praise
05 especially in li:ke- (0.4) your ballpoint pen,
06 where you see::, (0.6) warrants
07 you see your fingerprints,
08 and (. ) in the stencil one an we:ll.  
09 and even in the draw:ing.

The criticism is formulated as a negative assessment, “your craftsmanship is really breaking down” (line 01). The praise is not precisely grammatically fitted with the

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43 This criticism is based on the objectives of the particular assignment which was to use “flat color”.

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surrounding talk but is formulated as a variation of a formulaic compliment structure:

“how strong your: (. ) works are” (line 04) => *your works are strong*. The warrants for the
criticism are simply pointing out the problem, “your fingerprints:” (line 07) and
identifying which artworks, “your ballpoint pen,” (line 05), “the stencil one” (line 08),
and “the drawing” (line 09), exhibit the problem. The remedy is absent from this
sequence; however, in this case, the remedy is implied in the criticism itself: *increase
your craftsmanship by taking better care not to leave fingerprints on the artworks.*

It is possible for praise to be a preface, as shown earlier, an insertion, or as a tag
to a criticism-giving. Pomerantz’ (1984) distinction between weak and strong
disagreements can be applied to weak and strong criticisms. Pomerantz describes a strong
disagreement as “an evaluation which is directly contrastive with the prior
evaluation...[and] occurs in turns containing exclusively disagreement components” (p.
74). On the other hand, a weak disagreement is formulated as an *agreement-plus-
disagreement* turn consisting of partial agreements—in the form of agreement tokens, and
weakened or qualified agreements—and partial disagreements. She makes an important
note that “although both agreement and disagreement components are present in the
agreement-plus-disagreement turn organization, such turn shapes are *used for disagreeing*
rather than agreeing” (p. 75, emphasis mine). Though I do not analyze in depth the
difference between weak and strong criticism-givings in this thesis, Pomerantz’ analysis
of weak and strong disagreements was useful in my analysis of how praise is used to do a
criticism-giving action.
Extended Comment-givings

An extended comment-giving is performed by one speaker and consists of at least two of the following, in any combination: a neutral comment, a praise-giving, and a criticism-giving. Extended comment-givings are essentially a series of comment-giving actions performed by one speaker in a longer turn. For example, in the Professor’s Comment-giving Phase, the Professor usually gives a lengthy extended comment-giving with no interruptions and few turn exchanges.

Co-construction of Criticism-givings

In the previous examples, the criticism-givings were launched and completed by one speaker. The criticism-giving can also be co-constructed by participants who expand the action. In Extract (46) on the following page, another participant Ellen agrees with the comment-giver Stephen’s criticism and contributes additional warrants.
The criticism-giving is composed of a preface, a criticism, and warrants. The preface is formulated as a compliment “I really like the content...that you’re getting out there” (lines 01-02). After a contrastive “but”, which indicates that criticism contrasting with the previous praise will follow, the criticism is delivered by simply stating the problem without any evaluative comments: “but what strikes me right off the bat is the craftsmanship” (line 03-04). Warrants for the criticism are given by pointing to the problematic area of the artwork (line 05), wondering if the problem is the fault of a tool (06-08), and describing the problem, “I see ch:oppiness.” (line 09). After two participants negotiate to take the floor, Ellen begins her turn by explicitly stating agreement with the criticism (line 10). She then points out additional problematic areas such as the “little rip” (line 11) and the “pixelization” (line 13) which function as additional warrants supporting, and perhaps upgrading, the criticism of the artist’s craftsmanship. The remedy is absent from this sequence since it is implied: increase your craftsmanship. In
general, it seems that problems resulting from craftmanship and attention to detail do not require remedies to be explicitly stated when the remedy is obvious.

The co-construction of a criticism-giving can also occur when another participant completes an action. In Extract (47) below, Ellen is in the middle of an extended comment-giving. She has given a neutral comment and then gives a criticism and a warrant for her criticism; the corresponding remedy, however, is missing. William contributes the remedy.

(47) 031114-2_S-X

01 S-E: and then (0.6) <I: really don’t like> “the text
02 that’s in the fron:nt, like the quo:te,”
03 (1.0)
04 S-X: OH [this?=
05 (((points at the text on the cover design))
06 S-E: Y:a:h (1.2)
07 ’caus from here ih- like- ih- (0.2)
08 you really can’t see anything [(from)
09 S-X: Okay. ((nods head))
10 (0.6)

((2 lines of a tangential side sequence omitted))

11 S-W: (“yeah”) I think you could’ve (0.6)
12 for that (0.4) quo:te you used,
13 >you could’ve used:< (0.2) <<a different fron:nt,> (0.4)

Ellen continues her turn with a continuation phrase “and then” (line 01); after a short pause, she makes a syntactically straightforward, though hesitantly delivered with a slower pace and whisper voice, negative assessment: “<I: really don’t like> “the text...like the quo:te,”” (lines 01-02). After a one-second silence (line 03), the student-artist Xiao requests confirmation, “OH [this?]” (line 04) on the object of Ellen’s criticism by pointing at the text (line 05). After giving confirmation and taking a pause (line 06), Ellen provides a warrant for her criticism with some hesitation and hitches: “’caus from here ih- like- ih- (0.2) you really can’t see anything” (lines 07-08). Xiao’s
acknowledgement token, “Okay.” (line 09) overlaps with Ellen’s talk. After a brief silence (line 10) and a short tangential side sequence, not shown in the extract, William begins his turn with what sounds like “‘yeah’” (line 11) which expresses agreement with Ellen’s comment. He gives a remedy (lines 11-13) to the problem of the text; although it is framed in the past tense, “>you could’ve used:< (0.2) <‘a different’ fo:nt,>” (line 13) is still heard as an action to take in the future to remedy the problem. After William’s remedy completes Ellen’s criticism-giving, William continues his turn with a praise-giving, not shown in the extract.

Criticism-givings may also prompt disagreements about whether the criticized feature is or is not problematic or what the exact source of the problem is. It is possible, then, for a criticism-giving to prompt a lengthy discussion of the problem. Similar to feedback given in physics conference rehearsals, the comment-giver who raises a complaint is usually also the person to offer a candidate remedy (Jacoby, 1998). However, other participants may also offer alternative candidate remedies. When the subsequent talk is oriented to either pinpointing the problem or finding a remedy, speakers may not always include praise in their turn. It is also possible for a participant, especially the Professor who does his comment-giving towards the end of the critique activity, to reopen an earlier criticism-giving topic even after other comment-givings have been given.

Extract (48) from a critique of Zheng’s book cover illustrates how multiple participants orient to finding a remedy to an identified problem. Participants may

44This contrasts with complaint-remedy sequences in ordinary conversation in which the recipient of the complaint offers a remedy (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973).
contribute new comment-givings but still return to a problem mentioned earlier, especially if no remedy has been offered and ratified by the group’s agreement. Mei has just finished a praise-giving, not shown in the extract, and then begins a criticism-giving problematizing the red font color, also not shown. She says that the red color is difficult to read when the red text and the black colors interact with each other. Mei’s criticism-giving is composed of a preface, criticism, warrant, and remedy; the extract below begins with Mei’s candidate remedy for the problem of the font color.

Figure 4. Still image from Zheng’s critique on 03/11/14.

(48) 031114-5_S-D_S-Z

01 S-M: you can TRY putting um a liger (0.4)
02 OHk- (. ) a Lighter, (. ) white background um ˙h (0.4)
03 O:N: ON the- on the back cover tuw: (0.2)
04 tuw BRing (. ) tuw bring up thuh: the text ( )
Mei’s suggestion is not to change the font color but to change the background: “you can try putting...a lighter, white background” (lines 01-02) in order to make the text stand out more (line 04). This starts an extended comment-giving, not shown, by another student William who gives praise and criticism. He also comments that it is difficult to choose a font color that can work well against a background that has so much white and so much black. He does not, however, offer a solution to the problem of the font color. After several more comment-givings on other features of the cover design, another student returns to the topic of the red font color again and then begins to offer a candidate remedy.

(49) 031114-5_S-D_S-Z

01 S-X: you could change the color, even (0.8)
02 S-Z: [“mm”]
03 S-X: “>I don’t really know how<” And— (0.2)

Xiao suggests that the student-artist “change the color” of the font (line 01). After producing a turn-holding conjunction and (line 01) and a brief pause, Xiao states explicitly that she does not have or know the exact remedy to the problem (line 03); she may have meant that she did not know to what color the font should be changed. After a side sequence, not shown, Fred joins the discussion, starts his comment-giving with a preface and praises, not shown, and then suggests his candidate remedy for the problem.

(50) 031114-5_S-D_S-Z

01 S-F: one thing I would do to make it more effective
02 as a book cover is front and back, (0.2)
03 is maybe like (0.4)
04 just like (0.4) reduce the opacity

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Fred frames his remedy as “one thing [he] would do” (line 01), but it is clear that he intends for his statement to be a suggestion for the artist. Although he refers to the book cover as a whole (line 02) rather than the font color specifically, his remedy, to “reduce the opacity” (line 04) of the background image, is really a remedy to the problem of the difficulty of reading the red text. The red font color was identified as a problem by one participant, but other participants in the group attempted to find and offer suitable remedies thereby agreeing that the problem is a valid complaint and co-constructing the criticism-giving.

Necessity of Warrants for Praise-givings and Criticism-givings

Sanctioning

In general, both praise-giving actions and criticism-giving actions require a warrant for the praise or criticism that is given. There are some cases where a warrant does not accompany criticism; these cases will be examined later in this chapter. Except in these cases, the absence of a warrant is sanctionable, and the Professor may ask for the comment-giver to be more precise or to explain exactly what they are praising or criticizing. Since he does not often intervene in the talk when the critique activity is underway, the Professor’s sanctioning is noticeable and makes the norms of the American art and design speech community for giving comments in critique explicit.

Extract (51) below comes from the middle of the Group Comment-giving Phase of a critique. TA2 gives a praise without a warrant and the Professor asks for elaboration.
TA2 indexes two artworks, “bo:th of [these he:re:]” (line 01), as the topic of her feedback (lines 01-02). After a short pause, she makes a positive assessment about the student-artist’s “sense” (line 03). Using a straightforward syntactic structure, (NOUN PHRASE + is + ADJECTIVE), she starts the assessment with “your sense of color and composition” (line 03). The self-repair of “ih” (line 04) and the sound stretch on “is:” (line 04) signals trouble; and the stretched “uh::” (line 04) followed by the 1.2 second silence indicates that TA2 is searching for a word (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1986; Schegloff, 1979) to complete the assessment. After a 1.2 second pause, she supplies the completion as an intensified positive adjective, “very well-balanc:ed” (line 04). After 1.6 seconds of silence passes, the Professor explicitly asks TA2 to elaborate on her assessment, “Whaddyou mean.” (line 06). In my data, 1.6 seconds is a relatively short gap between turns; the Professor perhaps interpreted TA2’s silence as a relinquishing of the floor and the end of her comment-giving. We see in TA2’s response to the Professor’s request for elaboration how TA2 interpreted his request. TA2 takes an inbreath, and while walking towards the artworks, she seems to be formulating what to say uttering “I mea:n” (line 08). After a turn-holding “uh:m” and a micropause (line 08), she then starts to describe
the placement of red in one artwork (lines 10-13) by pointing to the areas of the artwork where there is red. After producing a conjunction and a turn-holding “uh:m” and pausing (line 14), she continues to give more descriptions of how the colors are interacting with each other to make a “balanced” (line 11) composition. All these descriptions function as warrants for her initial praise and complete the action.

Extract (52) below comes from the middle of Fred’s criticism-giving. Fred has just started his turn with a problem-projecting preface and has then inserted a praise preface. He then continues his turn.

(52) 050614-6_S-S
01 S-F: for the hands, they look- (0.4)
02 → They look like (.) the least- (.y- you know
03 → the least competent part of the drawing. (0.2)
04 I mean not that they’re: (. They’re done we’ll,
05 "they’re jus-" (0.6)
06 TA1: [which aspects of the ( )] (. are you-
07 S-F: [( ]
08 TA1: >would do you wanna point out
09 → like which parts [( ) (suggesting) (0. ]
10 S-F: [I mean

In line 01, Fred indexes the location of the problem “the hands” and makes a negative assessment: “They look like...the least competent part of the drawing.” (lines 02-03). Then Fred begins to qualify his assessment, “I mean not that they’re:” (line 04), but he abandons that TCU and gives a positive assessment instead, “They’re done we’ll” (line 04). In a lower volume, he starts the beginning of a criticism but cuts off the TCU at “jus-” (line 05). We have evidence that line 05 is the beginning of criticism for a few reasons: 1) the mitigator just indicates the following word may be negative; 2) the positive assessment (line 04) serves as a prefacing contrast to the criticism (e.g., They’re done [positive ADJECTIVE], they’re just [negative ADJECTIVE]); and 3) the cut-off on
“jus-” and the following silence signal a dispreferred action. After a 0.6 second pause, which is a very short transition space in my data, TA1, who was facilitating the critiques on this day, begins to ask Fred “which aspects” (line 06) of presumably the hands to which Fred was referring. Although TA1’s talk is overlapped with Fred’s talk, which is untranscribable (line 07), TA1 does not relinquish the floor to Fred, which is what he does in other instances of simultaneous turn starts. In line 06, TA1 cuts off “you-” leaving the TCU unfinished; and then in line 08, he reformulates his question as a request. First producing “would”, he then self-repairs and restarts the TCU with “do” (line 08). He frames a directive in the form of request: “do you wanna point out like which parts” (lines 08-09). Predicting the end of TA1’s turn, Fred starts his talk (line 10) by overlapping with TA1’s talk. Fred then gives a warrant for his negative assessment by describing the problematic areas of the hands.

**Criticism-givings without Warrants and Remedies**

There are examples in my data of when criticism is given without a warrant, most often by the Professor. In these cases, the mere noticing is understood to be criticism in and of itself (Schegloff, 1988), and the problem source and its remedy are obvious and do not need to be explained. In her study of physics conference talk rehearsals, Jacoby (1998) found that the principal investigator Ron sometimes gave a complaint in a preferred manner—without any preface or with a minimal preface, such as an ordinal preface or an “and” preface—and with epistemic certainty. These complaints were used to start a series of comment sequences, but the first complaint was unusually direct. Jacoby (1998) concluded that this manner of straightforwardly making a complaint
indicates that the “particular problem [is] a fairly basic one which any competent
presenter ought to be aware of and immediately remedy” (p. 403).

Similar examples were found in my data. In Extract (53) below, a comment-
giving has been concluded on one artwork, and then TA2 indexes another artwork to
introduce it as a new topic.

(53) 042914-3_S-T

01  TA2: → I have a question about the white edges: on this, (0.4)
02   S-S:  Me too:
03   S-T:  Oh::, (0.2) li:ke- (0.4)

(((18 lines omitted of Tina’s account))

TA2 states that she has a question “about the white edges:” (line 01) without any preface
and any hitches. Although she produces continuing intonation on “this,” (line 01), we do
not know if she intended to give a warrant for her “question”. After a brief silence,
Stephen takes the floor to communicate affiliation, “Me too:” (line 02), with TA2’s
“question”. Then Tina gives an extended account of her reasoning for leaving the white
edges on the photograph. The fact that Tina gives an account is evidence of her
orientation to TA2’s statement as a complaint or criticism. The problem of the white
edges has clearly been indexed with emphatic stress on “edges:” (line 01), and the
solution in this particular context is obvious: cut off the white edges around the
photograph; but the overall critical takeaway here is that the student-artist should
carefully consider how he or she presents artwork because it will be noticed and critically
evaluated. Neither Stephen nor the TA2 say why the white edges are problematic, so this
criticism-giving does not contain a warrant for the criticism.
In another example, Extract (54), the Professor has given an extended comment-giving on Anna’s book cover. He has given a series of praises, criticisms and suggestions and is about to close the critique when he notices a problem.

(54) 031114-3_S-A_S-C
01 P: But really solid jo[b. (0.2)
02 \(\)\((\text{turns book over to the back})\)
03 \(\rightarrow\) That barcode is \textit{hu::ge::}= 
04 S-A: =((chuckling))
05 (0.6)
06 P: \(\rightarrow\) “that barcode is \textit{huw}” (0.2)
07 \(\)\((\text{nods head slightly})\)
08 bb NEUb ((imitating beep noise of a barcode scanner))
09 S-A: ((laughter))

In line 01, the Professor is holding the book and seems to be transitioning to the closing phase by giving an overall praise: “But really solid jo[b.” (line 01) Just as he is finishing producing the last word “job” of the TCU, he turns the book over to the back cover (line 02). He immediately, without any prefaces, hesitation, or hitches makes the observation “That barcode is \textit{hu::ge::}” (line 03) with stress and vowel lengthening on the adjective “\textit{hu::ge::}”. After Anna laughs (line 04), the Professor repeats his observation in a lower volume (line 06). He then makes a joke by making a gesture of holding a barcode scanner and imitating the beeping noise of the scanner (line 08) which prompts Amy to laugh again. The special prosodic emphasis on the word “\textit{hu::ge::}” indicates that the size of the barcode is the source of the problem, the solution to which is obvious: make the barcode smaller.

In Extract (55) below, the criticism is prefaced, but the criticism is delivered straightforwardly and without a warrant like the previous example. TA2 has just given a series of comment-givings, and then the Professor self-selects to begin his turn.
The Professor prefaces his comment-giving by projecting how many comments he has: “one observation” (line 01) and “a suggestion” (line 02). He then takes a pause (line 02), and after a short delaying production (line 03), he delivers the comment straightforwardly with only a short pause before the observation: “it’s kinda interesting that (0.2) you’ve [left a space for the third panel that’s not there]” (lines 04, 06, 08). As he delivers the observation, he points to the location of his observation (line 07). William looks at the empty space on the wall (line 09) but does not respond, and the Professor adds some
increments, first “‘with the gvideo game’” (line 10) and then “‘pieces.’” (line 12).

William’s response (lines 16-20, 22-23, 25-27) is an account for his decision to leave the empty space on the wall: “initially; (.) <I was gonna” do X (line 16), “But” Y happened (line 23), “so::” I did Z “instead” (line 25). This is delivered while smiling throughout the talk which seems to indicate William’s awareness of the problem. The fact that William gives an account is interactional evidence that he orients to the Professor’s neutral observation as a complaint or criticism. William’s account does not explain why the empty space is problematic, but the Professor nonverbally acknowledges, and seems to accept, the account by flicking his hand up (line 29) as if to mean oh well. The Professor seems to accept the account as sufficient uptake for the criticism because he does not give a warrant for his criticism or offer a solution. The problem of the empty space has clearly been indexed, and the solution in this particular context is obvious: don’t leave a conspicuously empty space on the wall or plan ahead better to figure out how to display the third one on the wall; but similar to Extract (53), the overall critical takeaway here is about the presentation of the artwork.

Praise and Criticism in the Overall Structural Organization of Critique Activities

One piece of evidence supporting the dispreference for criticism as a FPP is the
Delay of criticism-giving in both the overall Group Comment-giving Phase and the overall Professor’s Comment-giving Phase of the critique.

Delay of Criticism in the Group Comment-giving Phase

In the Group Comment-giving Phase, the talk may be constructed by the participants in variable combinations of praise-givings and criticism-givings, as well as the more seldom neutral comments. The participants may complete a series of praise-givings (e.g., 4 praise-givings one after another) before a participant launches a criticism-giving. Or the talk may weave back and forth between praise-givings and criticism-givings, starting with one praise-giving, proceeding through a series of criticism-givings, and then returning to a series of praise-givings again. One participant’s praise-giving may prompt another participant to expand on that praise, for example, by contributing additional warrants to support the praise. Similarly, as shown earlier, one participant’s criticism-giving may be expanded upon when other participants offer different remedies to the problem.

The variability of the outline of praise-givings and criticism-givings is understandable when considering the multi-party interaction of the critique event. Jacoby’s (1998) description of the interaction of physics conference rehearsal feedback is an equally appropriate and accurate description of critique events:

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46 In an interview, one professor Gene said that intentionally tries to “cover the critical parts first and then the positive parts”. He said that the “natural way” is to do the reverse, positive first and then negative, but he feels it is important to end his feedback on positive notes.
Although they rarely make actual notes, other participants raise comments they have apparently made mental note of, for they occasionally initiate totally new comment sequences with little or no topical connection to prior talk. In addition, participants occasionally initiate new comments that appear to be touched off by an in-progress comment sequences.

(Jacoby, 1998, p. 312)

Although the middle of the phase varies in terms of how early or how late criticism is first initiated, criticism is, nevertheless, delayed overall; it is avoided as an opening action in the Group Comment-giving Phase. In the majority of the critique activities in my corpus (19 out of 22), this phase begins with a complete praise-giving, consisting of praise and a corresponding warrant. (The three exceptions will be accounted for later in this chapter.)

The delaying of criticism is particularly apparent when critiquing artwork that is of very poor quality: there is very little to praise and much to criticize. The book cover for *1984* presented in the 03/14/14 critique was very poorly designed; in a rather harsh and critical comment, one student Stephen said that the cover could be thought of as a “joke”. This cover prompted a series of criticism-givings by 6 of the students. It is indeed unusual for there to be a long series of criticisms without any praise in my data. The majority of the criticism-givings were not prefaced or followed up by any praise, perhaps because the comment-givers could not find anything to praise. Although the criticisms of this book cover were particularly justified, the launching of criticism was still delayed overall by a praise-giving. Extract (56) on the following page shows the only praise-giving of the book cover and not surprisingly the first action to open up the discussion.
There is strong evidence of the dispreference for giving criticism: even within a bounded critique activity that is well underway, criticism is not given first when shifting the topic of discussion to the artwork of another student-artist. In the 03/14/14 critiques, in which the student-artists presented a book cover designed for their assigned books, most of the critiques discussed more than one student-artist’s artwork in each bounded activity. The discussion typically focused first on one student-artist’s book cover. After a series of comments on that book cover, a participant commented on another student-artist’s book cover. None of the first comment-givings on the “new” book cover began with criticism, even if multiple criticisms had already been given in the critique towards the other book cover. Essentially, each artwork was treated as a “new” discussion which needed to be opened up first with praise. I interpret, though, this pattern of opening a “new” topic or object of critique with praise as attributable to the group’s orientation to the artist and not the artwork. Evidence of this is found in the final critiques in which each bounded activity was devoted to one student-artist’s four different projects. Except for a couple instances which I discuss later in this chapter, the first comment launched in the critique activity was praise. However, in the middle of the critique activity, the first comment on artwork was either praise or criticism; criticism could be the first comment on a “new” artwork. The transcripts of the talk are too lengthy to reproduce here, but I present below a hypothetical outline of talk, representative of the talk in my data, to
demonstrate the difference between the two critiques: 1) critique of two artworks each by different student-artists and 2) critique of multiple artworks by one student-artist.

Critique of Two Artworks Each by Different Student-artists

A: Praise-giving of Student1’s artwork  
B: Criticism-giving of Student1’s artwork  
C: Criticism-giving of Student1’s artwork  
D: → Praise-giving of Student2’s artwork  
Criticism-giving of Student2’s artwork

Critique of Multiple Artworks by One Student-artist

A: Praise-giving of Artwork1  
B: Criticism-giving of Artwork1  
C: Criticism-giving of Artwork1  
D: → Criticism-giving of Artwork2

The difference between the outlines of the talk of these two critiques has to do with how many participants’ “faces” are being potentially threatened (Goffman, 1955). In the former critique, the praise-giving of Student1’s artwork delays the face-threatening criticism-giving. When the topic of the talk shifts to Student2’s artwork, a new “face” is being threatened, and so criticism is delayed with praise-giving. In the latter critique, although multiple artworks are being critiqued, only one “face” is being threatened. The overall critique is opened with a praise-giving; but once criticism has been given on one artwork, there is no need to delay criticism for another artwork since both artworks are the product of one creator. Since they are inanimate objects, the group does not orient to preserving the “face” of objects; but they do orient to preserving the “face” of the objects’ creators.
Exceptions

In 3 out of 22 of the critique activities in my corpus, the first comment given was not a complete praise-giving. There are reasonable explanations for these deviations from the norm. In one of the exceptions, the facilitator limited the first comment-giving to one specific artwork by asking how well one specific artwork achieved the goals of the particular assignment. In Extract (57) below, David self-selects to take the floor and responds.

(57) 050614-2_S-K

01 S-D: → I think uh: (. ) H:e:- (1.0) painted himself very well,  
02 But: the Background, (1.2) >I mean: (1.8)  
03 the Background could  
04 ↓be a little more detailed," ((creaky voice)))

David takes a very brief turn consisting of a praise in the form of a compliment (line 01) and a criticism (lines 02-04). Although the compliment cannot be categorized as a complete praise-giving, since it was not accompanied by a warrant, and the criticism (lines 02-04) cannot be categorized as a complete criticism-giving since it was not accompanied by a warrant, the compliment still functions as a preface to delay the giving of criticism.

In another exception, just before launching the Group Comment-giving Phase, the Professor made a suggestion that indirectly criticized the student-artist’s research process\(^\text{47}\). The first speaker, William, gives an extended comment-giving consisting of

\(^{47}\) As noted earlier, the Professor may ask questions during the Student-artist Introduction Phase. The Professor rarely gives any comments, though, during this phase and before opening up the Group Comment-giving Phase.
two criticism-givings and a praise-giving. In Extract (58) below, William starts his turn by introducing his criticism as topically coherent with the Professor’s criticism-giving.

(58) 031114-4_S-T_S-F
01  S-W:  Uh: (1.1)
02   → just off that (0.6)
03   oh: I feel like your flaps might be: (.)
04   a little bit too small

After a turn-entry device, “Uh:” (line 01) which also holds his turn during his 1.1 second pause (line 01), William prefaxes his criticism with “just off that” (line 02). The pronoun “that” refers back to the Professor’s talk; after a brief pause (line 02) William delivers a mitigated negative assessment of the book’s flaps (lines 03-04) and then gives a warrant, not shown in the transcript. If his criticism was not topically coherent with the Professor’s criticism, William may have begun his turn with a praise-giving and followed by criticism.

In the final exception, Peggy gave an introduction to her artwork and the facilitator opened the Group Comment-giving Phase. However, instead of leaving the floor open for the participants’ comment-giving, the facilitator reviewed the goals of one of the projects, thereby making one specific artwork the topic, and then asked the group for their observations of the color “palette” and the “color relationships” in the artwork. Extract (59) below shows Stephen’s response to the facilitator’s prompting.

(59) 050614-1_S-P
01  S-S:  They’re very uh: s:PR:ing-y:, (0.4)
02   Like the s:pringti:me: (0.2) relat:ed color palette.

In line 01, Stephen responds to the facilitator’s question stating that the colors (the antecedent of the pronoun “They” in line 01) are “s:PR:ing-y:,” and then restates this
description: “springti:me: ... color palette” (line 02). The hesitancy in Stephen’s
production of this talk, as evidenced by the short pauses (line 01 and 02) as well as the
brief word search initiated by “uh:” (line 01), is attributable to his trying to formulate a
precise description. Stephen’s response is limited to these two lines which describe the
colors neutrally with no positive or negative assessment of the colors. Though this Group
Comment-giving Phase did not begin with a praise-giving action, this is due to the fact
that the facilitator asked the group a specific question which made an answer to the
question conditionally relevant. Following Stephen’s response, there is a brief tangential
side sequence, and then a series of praise-givings by multiple participants, not shown in
the transcript.

**Delay of Criticism in the Professor’s Comment-giving Phase**

During the Professor’s Comment-giving Phase, the Professor gives an extended
comment-giving, consisting of any number and combination of praise-giving and
criticism-giving actions. As with the talk in the Group Comment-giving Phase, the
extended comment-giving does not have a rigidly fixed organization, but there is an
overall progression from praise to criticism throughout his multi-TCU-turn. With the
exception of one critique event, in which the student-artist presented unusually
exceptional artwork\(^48\), the Professor’s comment-giving inevitably concludes with
criticism. The majority of the Professor’s monologues begin with a praise-giving action

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\(^{48}\) Interestingly, in this critique event, the Professor’s extended comment-giving began with criticism-givings and then progressed to a series of praise-givings. This is the opposite of the Professor’s normal pattern for his extended comment-givings, which generally begins with praise and progresses to criticism. Although praise can be interwoven through the extended comment-giving (praise-criticism-praise-criticism), his comment-giving almost always ends with a relatively lengthy multi-TCU criticism-giving. See Extract (33) for a small excerpt from the Professor’s comments from this critique.
or a praise-prefaced criticism. Again, just as in the Group Comment-giving Phase, giving criticism is delayed overall by praise.

Since the student-artists were presenting four artworks in the critique events at the end of the semester, the Professor’s extended comment-giving tended to give feedback on one artwork at a time. The delaying of criticism was also evidenced when the Professor first began commenting on each artwork. In Extract (60) below, the Professor has already given positive and negative feedback to Xiao on three of her artworks. He begins to close down the previous series of comment-givings.

(60) 042914-2_S-X
01 P:  Uh:mm. [(12.6)]
02  [(looking at the artwork on the wall)]
03  [okay.]
04  [((shifts gaze to another artwork)]
05  (1.2)
06  → [Really enjoy this one.]
07  [((shifts gaze to artist)]
08  (1.4)
09  [((nodding head)]
10  → [Really enjoy this one. (.]
11  [((shifts gaze to the artwork)]
12  "uh" >for everything people have said
13  I'm not gonna re: reiterate what was said, (0.6)
14  uh:mm (1.4)
15  (but) the sensitivity tuw: (0.2) tuw your mar:k,
16  your hand, your body:, yer: "yer: (0.4)
17  you're stretching your limitations, (0.2)
18  "uh:mm (1.0) your orienta:tion, (0.6)
19  "uh:mm (2.4)
20  if I HA:d tuw: be critical, (0.6)
21  → I'd wonder if there might be more opportunity
22  for you to break outside of the paper,? (.]

After a delaying production that secures his turn and a long 12.6 second pause (line 01) during which he looks at the artwork (line 02), the Professor closes the previous sequence with a falling intonated “okay.” (line 03) while shifting his gaze to the fourth artwork (line 04). After a pause (line 05), he looks at the student-artist and offers a
compliment “Really enjoy this one.” (line 06). The compliment itself is upgraded by the use of the intensifier “Really”, produced with emphasis, qualifying how much he “enjoy[s]” the artwork. Although he maintains his gaze toward the student-artist during 1.4 seconds of silence (line 07-08), Xiao does not vocally respond to the compliment which is strong interactional evidence that Xiao thinks that the Professor is not finished with his comment-giving and that criticism is likely to follow\textsuperscript{49}. Then, while he shifts his gaze to the artwork (line 11), he restates the positive assessment “Really enjoy this one” (line 10). Although the two utterances (line 06 and 10) are almost identical, there is no interactional purpose for the repetition (line 10) since nobody initiates a repair and the group has likely heard the Professor the first time. So the repetition of the compliment functions to upgrade the previous compliment. He then gives warrants for his praise by listing all the positive features of the artwork and the student-artist (lines 12-18). After a delaying production “uh::m” and 2.4 second pause (line 19), he produces a problem-projecting preface (line 20), and then makes a criticism composed as a speculation (lines 21-22). He then continues to give a detailed warrant for his criticism, not shown in the above excerpt. In this example, we can see that criticism-giving is due even when artwork is produced very well. It is important to note that the criticism-giving is delayed overall, being preceded by a praise-giving action.

\textbf{Participants’ Explicit References to Interactional Norms}

The dispreference for giving criticism is also evidenced when “participants make an interactional norm explicit in subsequent talk, particularly where that norm has been

\textsuperscript{49} Students very rarely respond to praise and praise-givings with vocal expressions of gratitude.
violated” (Sidnell, 2013, p. 81). One such explicit reference will be described. Extract (61) below is taken from Fred’s critique which took place in two locations. After about 17 minutes of critiquing three of Fred’s projects presented in the classroom, the group went outside to view the fourth project displayed on a building. Fred gave an introduction to the artwork, which had been printed out, cut out, and attached to the wall. After the Professor opened the Group Comment-giving Phase but before the group initiated the first comment, Fred advised his classmates not to print out something of this large size because of the prohibitively high printing cost. After a side sequence and group laughter, there was a 1.4 second silence. Stephen then initiates a criticism-giving consisting of a compliment, criticism, and remedy, not shown in the excerpt. After a 2.6 second silence, Stephen adds onto his comment-giving and makes an explicit reference to the fact that he “jump[ed]” into criticizing50 “it”, the artwork, “right away”, implying that perhaps he should not have done so.

(61) 042914-5_S-F
01 S-S: not to just jump into criticizing it right away

Although giving criticism is delayed in the overall critique, there is, nevertheless, a clear orientation, similar to the physics conference talk rehearsals researched by Jacoby, to the critique event as an indigenous assessment (Jacoby, 1998) in which the participants should and will inevitably give critical feedback on the artwork. Evidence of this is also

50 Although Stephen does not use the word “criticize” in his talk, he orients to the word “critique” as a negatively valenced action. Although to “critique” an artwork does not mean to only criticize it, there is an expectation to give and receive critical feedback and constructive criticism, not only praise.
found in the talk itself. Extract (62) below shows the talk that immediately follows Extract (61).

(62) 042914-5_S-F
01 S-S: not to just jump into critiquing it right away
02 bu- (.) THat’s What (0.2) jus >right away:< (0.6)
03 P: → that’s wha we’re here to do:.

After his reference to the fact that he “jump[ed] into critiquing” (line 01), Stephen adds on another TCU, which is the start of criticism: “bu- (.) THat’s What (0.2) jus >right away:< (line 02). He pauses briefly (line 02), but before he can finish his criticism, the Professor takes the floor (line 03) commenting on Stephen’s comment referencing starting criticism “right away” (line 01). In the Professor’s statement, “that’s wha we’re here to do:” (line 03), “that” refers back to “critiquing it” (line 01) in Stephen’s talk. Here the Professor explicitly affirms that the purpose of these planned group discussions is to give feedback on and to criticize the artwork.

During critique activities, participants sometimes acknowledge that they should say something, and this is analyzed as the participant’s orientation to the norms of the interaction (Sidnell, 2013). In Extract (63) below, which was shown earlier as Extract (60), the Professor orients to the norm that he should say something “critical” (line 02). He has just finished a praise-giving, and he begins a preface to a criticism-giving.

(63) 042914-2_S-X
01 P: "uh::m" (2.4)
02 if I HA:d tuw: be critical, (0.6)

After a stretched delaying production that secures his turn and a 2.4 second pause (line 01), he produces a problem-projecting preface: “if I HA:d tuw: be critical” (line 02). He
places particular emphasis on the verb “HA:d” through prosodic stress, vowel
lengthening, and increased volume. The implication is that there is little to criticize in the
artwork or that he does not want to criticize the artwork; nevertheless, as the Professor
and more practiced artist whose role is give the student-artists constructive feedback, he
does indeed have to be critical, and so he proceeds to give criticisms on the artwork.

In Extract (64) below, Tina has just given a lengthy praise-giving about the colors
used in Cindy’s painting. After a short silence, Mei elaborates on Tina’s praise-giving by
adding positive descriptions.

(64) 050114−2_S_C
01 S−M: the colors are very f:LA:t
02 and this is so cl:eañ_ [(1.6)
03 S−T: [(nodding head))
04 S−M: "yah nothing tuw::" (0.6)
05 "I think" (.)
06 → Nothing tuw "↓ crifici:ze as well." ((creaky voice))
07 [(1.4)
08 S−C: ["hh thhank yhou hh"" ((breathy voice))

Mei formulates the descriptions in the form of a formulaic compliment—NOUN
PHRASE + is/are/looks + (intensifier) + ADJECTIVE (Manes & Wolfson, 1981)—that
seems genuine by being marked by the upgraders “very” (line 01) and “so” (line 02).51
Tina displays affiliation with Mei’s elaboration by nodding her head (line 03). After a 1.6
second silence during which no one else self-selects as the next speaker (line 02), Mei
continues in a lower volume ““yah nothing tuw::“” (line 04) and lengthens the vowel on
to, halting the progressivity of the talk. After a short pause (line 04), Mei inserts, again in

51 This particular project was exploring the use of “flat color,” and the professional artists whose artworks
the students were looking to for inspiration used clean shapes and flat colors. So although the adjectives
“flat” (line 01) and “clean” (line 02) are not necessarily semantically positive adjectives in everyday talk, in
the context of this particular project, these adjectives are very positive; therefore, these statements would be
heard as compliments by the student-artist.
a low volume, “‘I think’” before taking a micropause and reissuing in a normal volume “Nothing tuw” (line 06). Then she brings the TCU that she started in line 04 to completion with falling, final intonation in line 06: “Nothing tuw ↓ criticize as well.”” She produces “criticize as well” in a lower volume, lower pitch, and in a creaky voice perhaps to mark her hesitation and unwillingness in saying that she has or that there is “nothing to criticize” in the artwork. Mei’s statement that there is “nothing to criticize” implies that if there were something to criticize she would have given the criticism at this moment. Although Mei is not addressing Cindy the student-artist with eye contact or through explicit address, after 1.4 seconds of silence (line 07), Cindy produces an outbreath and then a whispered “thank you” (line 08) with laugh tokens. Cindy’s response is unusual because appreciation tokens (e.g., thank you, thanks) by the student-artist are extremely rare in my data. So her response does indicate that she interprets Mei’s statement that there is nothing to criticize as a great compliment that apparently needed to be responded to with appreciation. Cindy’s response and Mei’s explicit statement indicate that their expectations are as a student-artist, to receive criticism, and as a participant, to give criticism.

Composition of Praise and Criticism

In this section, I examine the following features of the composition of praise and criticism: epistemic stance; student-artist’s agency; syntactic structure; qualifiers; and 

52 Mei is one of the more critical students in the class; she also gives the first criticism-giving more often than other participants. It is highly unusual for her to not have any negative feedback.
lexical formulations, specifically using positive adjectives for criticism and avoiding negative adjectives for criticism. Not all examples from my data are contextualized in great detail; and the same extracts may be used to demonstrate multiple features.

I. Lower Epistemic Stance

Hedges

It is common for both praise and criticism to be given using hedges to weaken the certainty of the statements. For criticism, shown in Extracts (65), (66), and (67) below, hedges, such as maybe and seems, and hedging phrases, such as I feel or I think are commonly used to mitigate the criticism. Praise, as shown in Extract (68) below, may also be given with hedging phrases for reasons that are outside the scope of this thesis.

(65) 050614-5_S-Z

01 S-P: the ones without the letters on them: (0.4) are::: (1.2)
02 → maybe a little bit too like greeting cardish:

(66) 042914-1_S-A

01 S-S: → it almost seems like (.)
02 the cutting process or the cropping process, (0.6)
03 was: (. uh: (0.2) not as mindful
04 as the drawing process? (1.0)

(67) 042914-5_S-F

01 TAl: and I: feel like it’s a little bit safe

(68) 050614-6_S-S

01 P: I think it’s very matu:re, very professional, (0.2)

In Extract (69) on the following page, Fred is in the middle of a comment-giving. He has just given a praise preface and then he produces a contrastive “but-“ (line 01) to
begin a criticism.

(69) 031114-5_S-D_S-Z

01 S-F: "but- ther-" I feel like they're backwards. (0.6)

Note that he cuts off the TCU in progress “but- ther-” (line 01) in order to initiate a self-repair to insert a hedging phrase (“I feel like”) before reissuing “they’re” to complete the criticism. This self-repair is evidence that Fred orients to the hedging phrases as a necessary component of his critical statement.

Modals

Modal verbs may be used when giving criticism to weaken the certainty of the statements thereby mitigating the criticism. Criticisms, as shown in Extracts (70) and (71) below, and possible remedies to problems, as shown in Extract (72) below, are given using modal verbs.

(70) 050614-2_S-K

01 S-D: the Background could
02 ↓be a little more detailed," ((creaky voice))

(71) 050614-6_S-S

01 P: uh:mm: the tape (. ) on your: (0.6)
02 "on your: um uh* ballpoint pen project, (1.0)
03 I noticed it was there,
04 ↓It probably shouldn’t be there:. (0.4) awright.

(72) 031114-5_S-D

01 S-M: They could (. ) use both like capitalized (.)
02 uh:mm (0.4) <First (. ) letters?>
03 ↓So it would be more *consistent,

In Extract (73) on the following page, the first line of which was shown in Extract (69), Fred composes his criticism and/or remedy with a combination of a modal verb and
hedging phrase: “I would think” (line 02). The use of the modal verb, “would make” (line 02), further lowers the already lower epistemic stance.

II. Student-Artist’s Agency

In both environments of praise, as shown in Extract (74), and criticism, as shown in Extract (75), the comment-giver may frame the student-artist as an active agent.

It is possible to remove the student-artist from the comment-giving, focusing on the artwork or the creation process instead as in Extract (76) below.

In the above extract, Stephen does not refer directly to the student-artist, although the

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53 In interviews, some students and professors said that critique should be directed toward or at the artwork (e.g., describing what the artwork is doing) and not the artist.
student-artist’s agency is implied by referring to the *process* of cutting and cropping in which the artist was an active agent. The word “mindful” (line 03) also implies that a sentient agent was thinking and considering the artwork. Although removing the student-artist as an active agent mitigates the directness of criticism, there was not a clearly apparent pattern of when the student-artist was and was not referred to as an active agent; a detailed analysis of this feature is outside the scope of this thesis. It seems that there is not always a clear line between the artist and the artwork. The artist has an obvious, direct connection as its creator to the artwork; and the acknowledgement of this connection is shown in the reference to the creator as an active agent in comment-givings.

III. Syntactic Structure

Simple Syntactic Structure

Praise is often formulated with a straightforward, simple syntactic structure. One common structure is the following:

\[ I + (\text{INTENSIFIER}) + \text{Positive VERB} + \text{NOUN PHRASE} / \text{NOUN CLAUSE} \]

Extracts (77), (78), and (79) below all formulate praise with the first person singular pronoun *I* and a positive verb, either *enjoy*, *love*, or *appreciate*.

(77) 050614-4_S-E

01 S-M: I enjoy how you: (. ) arranged the works: _ (.8)

(78)042914-5_S-F

01 S-J2: I:- I love how you symbolize Robin
"is: (0.2) as an actual robin."
(79) 031114-2_S-X
01  **S-S:** and I also appreciate the use of the color: (.)
02            [red in the title, (0.2)

*Like* is another commonly used positive verb in my data; there is, however, a psychological dispreference for this word in the art and design community of practice. This will be discussed further towards the end of this chapter.

Another common structure found in my data is the following structure demonstrated in Extracts (80), (81), and (82) below:

(HEDGING PHRASE) + NOUN PHRASE + is / are + (INTENSIFIER) + Positive ADJECTIVE

(80) 050114-2_S-C
01  **S-M:** the colors are very flat\textsuperscript{54}
02            and this is so clean\textsuperscript{(1.6)}

(81) 050614-6_S-S
01  **P:** I think it’s very mature, very professional, (0.2)

(82) 050614-5_S-Z
01  **S-P:** those ones are really beautiful:,

As noted earlier, praise can be upgraded through repetition; repetitions of praises also use simple syntactic structure. In Extract (83) on the following page, the Professor begins his extended comment-giving with praise.

\textsuperscript{54} See footnote 51 for an explanation of my interpretation of “flat” as a positive adjective.

133
01 P: I love the blue. (0.6)
02 I think the blue really works well.

He uses the “I + Positive VERB + NOUN PHRASE” structure to express praise. After a short pause, he gives another praise in the form of a positive assessment; this assessment is formulated with a hedging phrase but it is still a straightforward, simple structure:

I think + NOUN PHRASE + (INTENSIFIER) + VERB + Positive ADVERB.

In Extract (84) below, Fred is in the middle of giving the remedy to another student’s criticism-giving. Fred has started giving a suggestion when he inserts a series of praise.

01 S-F: I REally really (0.2) love your drawing,
02 it’s:: [it’s beautiful, (.)) I love it,

The repetition, and therefore upgrading, of the praise seems to indicate that he is being genuine in his praise. The first praise (line 01) uses the intensifier really twice and the positive verb love. The next praise is formulated as a short, simple statement “it’s beautiful” (line 02). He then restates the first praise with some modification, without the intensifiers and using a pronoun in place of “your drawing”: “I love it” (line 02). Each of these praises is given using a simple syntactic structure.

Criticism may also be formulated with a simple syntactic structure, though this is not as common as it is with praise. The following is one structure found in my data:

NOUN PHRASE + is / are + (MITIGATOR) + Negative ADJECTIVE

In Extract (85) on the following page, Mei has given a problem-projecting preface and a description of some text in the book cover. She then states a negative assessment:
It is rarer for a comment-giver to use the following structure as it would be perceived as particularly blunt:

\[ I \pm (\text{INTENSIFIER}) \pm \text{VERB} \pm \text{NOUN PHRASE} \]

For example, in Extract (86) below, Ellen has just given a neutral comment which serves as a preface to the criticism which comes next:

\[ 031114-2_S-X \]

01 **S-E:** and then \((0.6)\) \(<\text{I: really don’t like} > \) "the text that’s in the front, like the \\
02 quote "

After “and then” (line 01), which signals to the group that she has more comments to make and a short pause, Ellen uses a simple syntactic structure, “<I: really don’t like>” + [NOUN PHRASE] (line 01-02) to express her criticism of the text. It is worth noting that Ellen does not use a negatively-valenced verb, such as hate or dislike, to form her criticism; instead, she uses a negation of the semantically positive verb “like” (line 01).

Using this simple syntactic structure as well as the intensifier “really” (line 01) makes this criticism sound blunt in comparison with the more common and more mitigated ways to give criticism.

**Complex Syntactic Structure**

Criticism is often composed using more complex syntactic structure. For example, the criticism may be embedded in the sentence or it may be implied through contrast with another element or with praise. In Extract (87) on the following page, Fred is in the middle of an extended comment-giving when he criticizes a book cover.
Fred first produces a problem-projecting preface, “and one thing I’m kinda like- (0.4) UNEAsy about” (line 01). He then modifies “when” (line 02) he feels uneasy thus again delaying the giving of criticism; and he indexes the two book cover designs, the spread of the cover design “all laid out” (line 02) and the “book itself” (line 03). After a short pause (line 03), he finally produces the noun phrase that delivers the criticism, “just how many fo:nts you have goin’ on” (line 04). In contrast, a syntactically simple and straightforward equivalent of this criticism might be composed as the following: There are many fonts or You have many fonts going on. The complex syntactic structure mitigates the criticism by placing the critical words at a more embedded level of the sentence structure.

Extract (88) below is another example of embedded criticism, in this case, within an adjective clause placed at the end of the sentence.

The above structure is as follows:

NOUN PHRASE + PRONOUN + is / are + NOUN PHRASE +

ADJECTIVE CLAUSE

The first noun phrase, “thuh: the pixilation on this: (. ) on this front book” (line 01) states the topic of the comment or indexes the object of the upcoming criticism. The
“pixilation” is the antecedent for the pronoun in “it’s” (line 02) and the contracted copula is connects “pixilation” to the complement “a small detail” (line 02). The negative assessment is finally delivered in the adjective clause, “that makes it look (.) NOT totally professional” (line 03), that describes “detail”. The “it” (line 03) in this adjective clause refers to the book cover design. In contrast, a syntactically simple equivalent of the above criticism could use the “NOUN PHRASE + is + Negative ADJECTIVE” structure which makes the criticism sound blunt: *The pixilation on the front makes the book unprofessional.* (Mitigation in the phrase “jus a small detail” (line 02) also makes the criticism sound less blunt. Mitigating criticism will be discussed later in this chapter.)

In the next Extract (89), the criticism is composed as a comparison to a positive aspect of the drawing.

(89) 042914-1_S-A

01 S-S: it almost seems like (.)
02 the cutting process or the cropping process, (0.6)
03 was: (.) uh: (0.2) not as mindful
04 as the drawing process? (1.0)

Stephen begins the criticism with a mitigated hedge “it almost seems like” (line 01) and then makes a comparison between the cutting or cropping process (line 02) and the drawing process (line 04); the drawing process had previously been praised by another student during the critique. Saying that the cutting process was “not as mindful” (line 03) as the drawing process is criticizing the cutting process: although the drawing process was praiseworthy, the cutting is not praiseworthy. Using a simpler syntactic structure, the criticism might be composed as the following: *The cutting process was not mindful* or *The cutting process was* [negative ADJECTIVE]. This would seem more blunt than using a positive assessment to make the comparison and indirectly deliver the strength of the
criticism.

**Simple and Complex Syntactic Structures in Action**

Extract (90) below is an example of how one speaker uses simple and complex syntactic structures in the specific environments of praise and criticism. Mei is in the middle of an extended comment-giving; she has just given praise on one book cover and then shifts the topic to another book cover and begins her criticism-giving:

(90) 031114-3_S-A_S-C

01 S-M: uh:m for (. ) the Lolita I love it too it- (0.4)
02 I:- I like the p:ure white "background"
03 "and I (. ) I love that butterfly:, " (0.2)
04 um I:- >the thing< I:- (0.4)
05 i do wish though i:s:
06 um ( . ) I wish the butterfly can look more realistic

This criticism-giving is prefaced with a series of praise (lines 01-03). After a brief 0.2 second pause (line 03), Mei begins to give criticism by first using a problem-projecting preface (lines 04-05); after some hesitation displayed by the lengthened “i:s:” (line 05) and delaying device “um” and micropause (line 06), she restarts her TCU and formulates her criticism as a wish (line 06). The syntax changes from a simple, straightforward structure (I + like / love + NOUN PHRASE) used for the praises in lines 01-03 to a complex, embedded structure for the criticism in lines 04-05.

**IV. Qualifiers**

**Intensifiers**

Praise is usually formed with intensifiers, most commonly really and very, to upgrade a positive verb as shown in Extract (91), an adjective as shown in Extracts (92)
and (93), or a noun as shown in Extract (94).

Mitigators

On the other hand, criticism is generally not intensified; mitigators, such as pretty, kind of, just, and a little (bit), are often used to weaken a negative adjective as shown in Extracts (95), (96), (97), and (98) below or to weaken a suggestion as shown in Extract (99).

55 See footnote 51 for an explanation of my interpretation of “flat” as a positive adjective.
Mitigators such as *probably*, in Extract (100) below, also weaken suggestions, and the criticisms implied.

(100) 031114-6_S-K_S-H

01 P: → you should probably stay consistent and respect (.)
02 the borders you set here, (0.6) up here. (.)

**Intensifiers and Mitigators in Action**

Extract (101) on the following page is an example of how one speaker uses intensifiers and mitigators in the specific environments of praise and criticism. Patti self-selects to contribute to the discussion and begins her comment-giving with a negative assessment.
Patti starts her comment-giving by indexing the artworks that she is commenting on: “the ones without the letters on them:” (line 01). She then uses a simple syntactic structure (NOUN PHRASE + are + (MITIGATOR) + Negative ADJECTIVE) to deliver her criticism. However, she uses a hedge “maybe” (line 02) and then a mitigating phrase “a little bit” to weaken the negative adjective, “greeting card-ish.” While the word “greeting card-ish” is not semantically negative or positive, the use of the mitigators signals to the recipients that criticism is upcoming; so “greeting card-ish” is heard as a negative assessment. After some delay (line 03), she begins to give a warrant for her assessment using “‘cause” (lines 04) to connect the assessment to the talk to come. She then indexes other artworks, “the ones...where you:: use:- (0.2) the WHi:te...” (lines 04-07). Then she gives praise in the form of a syntactically simple structure (NOUN PHRASE + are + (INTENSIFIER) + Positive ADJECTIVE) in line 08; the positive assessment is composed of an intensifier “really” (line 08) to qualify the positive adjective “beautiful:” (line 08). Patti rushes through the end of the TCU to the
conjunction “an’”, pauses briefly, and adds another praise: they “show craft really well” (line 09). Again, an intensifier “really” is used, this time to modify the positive adverb “well”. After delivering this praise, Patti re-indexes the artworks (line 10) on which she had initiated the comment-giving, and says that the student-artist “could’ve: (.) done a little bit more o:’n” (line 11) those ones. In this criticizing comment, she again uses the mitigating phrase “a little bit”. In this extract, intensifiers qualify a positive adjective and a positive adverb in service to praise; and mitigators are used to reduce the strength of the negative assessments.

V. Using Positive Adjectives for Criticism

*not* + [Positive ADJECTIVE]

As discussed earlier, criticism may be syntactically composed using the following simple structure:

NOUN PHRASE + *is / are* + (MITIGATOR) + Negative ADJECTIVE

However, using a semantically negative adjective is not very common and is particularly blunt (e.g., *The cut job is pretty atrocious* from Extract (95)). It is more common for speakers to formulate the predicate of the negative assessment by using the negation of a positive adjective:

*not* + (INTENSIFIER) + Positive ADJECTIVE.

In Extract (102) on the following page, TA1 has been describing the texture of the paint in an artwork when he makes a negative assessment using a simple syntactic structure. The pronoun “It’s” (line 01) stands in for the texture of the paint.
Instead of saying that the texture is *inconsistent*, TA1 formulates the negative assessment as “Not...consistent” (line 01). The intensifier “very” (line 01) in this negative syntactic construction functions to mitigate the negative assessment conveying the following: *It’s a little inconsistent.*

Extract (103) below is another example of this construction. Stephen is in the middle of a comment-giving when he indexes a problem. His criticism uses the embedded, complex syntactic structure discussed earlier:

(103) 031114-4_S-T_S-F

01 **S-S:** thuh: the pixilation on this: (.) on this front book
02 → it’s jus a small detail that (1.0)
03 → that makes it look: (.) **NOT** totally professional, (0.6)

After pointing out the problem “the pixilation...on this front book” (line 01), he starts a new TCU with “it’s jus a small detail” (line 02); the pronoun “it” refers back to the “pixilation” that was indexed. The relative pronoun “that” (line 02) is the beginning of an adjective clause modifying “detail”, but Stephen takes a 1.0 second pause (line 02). He then reissues “that” (line 03) and finishes the adjective clause through which the criticism is delivered: “that makes it look: (.) **NOT** totally professional” (line 03), in which “it” refers to the book cover design. Instead of formulating the criticism as a negative adjective *unprofessional*, Stephen formulates the criticism as a negation of a positive adjective “**NOT**...professional”. The intensifier “totally” in this negative syntactic construction functions as a mitigator conveying the following: *It looks a little unprofessional.*
Comparatives

Positive adjectives are also formulated as comparatives in order to give criticism. This is often done using the following syntactic structure which may be embedded in the sentence:

\[
\text{NOUN PHRASE + MODAL VERB + more + Positive ADJECTIVE}
\]

The modal verbs, _could_ as shown in Extract (104), _would_ as shown in Extracts (105) and (106), and _can_ as shown in Extract (107), lower the epistemic stance of the criticism; and the use of positive adjectives in the comparatives mitigates the criticism in each of the examples below.

(104) 050614-2_S-K

01 **S-D:** the Background could
02 "\(\downarrow\)be a little more detailed," ((creaky voice))

(105) 031114-5_S-D_S-Z

01 **S-M:** → So it would be more "consistent,
02 if that makes sense,"

(106) 031114-5_S-D_S-Z

01 **S-F:** → \_like- (0.4) I w\(\text{ould}\) think >it would make more sense
02 **S-D:** [ye::ah.
03 **S-F:** to have thee- (.) thee author (.) on the front fl\(\text{a:p}

(107) 031114-3_S-A_S-C

01 **S-M:** um I:- >the thing< I:- (0.4)
02 I do wish though i:s:
03 → um (.) I wish the butterfly can look more realistic

In contrast, a straightforward criticism, for example for the first extract above, might be formulated as the following: _The background is not detailed_. Other features of criticism, such as the mitigators in Extract (104) and the complex syntactic structure in Extracts
(106) and (107), are also demonstrated in the transcripts above.

**Superlatives**

Positive adjectives used as superlatives to deliver criticism are not common in my data. I did, however, find one particularly striking example which I will explicate. Fred has already started his comment-giving by giving a problem-projecting preface. In Extract (108), he then indexes the object of his criticism:

(108) 050614-6_S-Z

01 **S-F**: for the hands, they look- (0.4)  
02 they look like (. ) the least- (. ) y-you know  
03 → the least competent part of the drawing. (0.2)

Fred starts to make an assessment, “they look-” (line 01), and after some hitches restarts the assessment. Delivered with some micropauses and cut-offs, he completes the assessment: “they look like (. ) the least- (. ) y-you know the least competent part of the drawing.” (lines 02-03). Similar to the earlier extracts, Fred does not formulate the criticism with a negative adjective *incompetent*, but he uses the positive counterpart “competent” (line 03). In contrast, *The hands are the most incompetent part of the drawing*, formulated with a superlative of a negative adjective, sounds especially blunt.

**VI. Avoiding Negative Adjectives for Criticism**

Comment-givers may also reformulate their talk as their comment-givings are in progress in order to avoid using a negative adjective. The first 3 lines of Extract (109) below were shown in the previous extract. Fred inserts a praise after his negative assessment.
After a brief pause (line 3), Fred attempts to qualify his assessment “I mean not that they’re:” (line 04); but perhaps realizing that a negative adjective is now upcoming in his talk (i.e., *not that they’re* [negative ADJECTIVE]), he stretches out “they’re:” and takes a micropause (line 04). He then reissues “THey’re” and makes a positive assessment instead: “THey’re done we:ll” (line 04). The louder volume on “THey’re” and the emphasis on the verb and the positive adverb cue recipients that this statement is not a continuation of the earlier negative formulation which had been abandoned.

Extract (110) below comes from Helen’s critique in which two of her artworks received mostly criticism, and the other two artworks received mostly praise. In the middle of his comment-giving, TA1 makes the observation that there are “simple forms”, not shown in the excerpt, in Helen’s artwork. He then makes an assessment:

(110) 050614-3_S-H

01  **TA1:**  >↑I think is very effective in: this one
02       an’: the outer one where you: (0.2)
03       you take your ti:me, an- (.)
04       ➔ >THey’re not-< (1.0) °I dunno° ((higher voice))

After making the positive assessment and indexing two specific artworks, “this one an’: the outer one” (lines 01-02), he modifies them as the artworks in which the student-artist has taken her “ti:me” (line 03). He produces a cut-off conjunction “an-“ and a micropause (line 03); then he begins a criticism “>THey’re not-<” (line 10), which is syntactically connected to the preceding clause with the conjunction *and* (i.e., *The simple forms are*
very effective in the artworks where you take your time and they’re not [negative ADJECTIVE]). He cuts off the “not-” (line 10) and abandons the TCU, perhaps because he realizes in the middle of his talk that a negative adjective is upcoming. After a 1.0 second pause, he says in a higher pitched and softer voice “I dunno” (line 04). He does not complete the abandoned TCU with a negative adjective and gives more praise, not shown in the excerpt, instead.

As a final example, in Extract (111) below, Mei has already given praise and introduces her criticism with a contrastive but.

(111) 031114-5_S-D_S-Z
01 S-M: but- ’h I would point out that the f:font color?
02 ’h (0.2) the RE:d, (0.2)
03 → It’s: really (.)
04 → It’s NO:t really um graceful

Mei explicitly “point[s] out” (line 01) the problem-source, “the f:font color” (line 01) and then after some delay, states the color of the font, “the RE:d” (line 02). After a brief pause, she begins an assessment, “It’s: really” (line 03) but stops the TCU in progress, perhaps realizing that a negative adjective is due. After a micropause, she restarts her assessment, this time inserting an emphatic “NO:t” (line 04), and uses a positive adjective “graceful” (line 04) to formulate the mitigated criticism: “it’s NO:t really um graceful” (line 04).
Delivery of Praise and Criticism

In this section, the delivery of praise and criticism will be examined. The following features will be explicated: word searches, doing hesitating, and silence as a preface to possibly pre-formulated criticism.

Word Searches

It is fairly common for a speaker to do a word search while delivering a comment-giving. Even the Professor and the TAs who have more experience talking about artwork and participating in critiques would occasionally search for precise words to convey their comments. This was common in both environments of praise and criticism. In Extract (112) below, TA2 enters into a search, signaled by the sound stretches and *uh* + silence (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1986; Schegloff, 1979) for the precise adjective “well-balanced” (line 04).

(112) 042914-2_S-X

01 **TA2:** >I think with* both of [these here:, (0.6) 
02 (((points to two artworks))) your sense of color and composition, (.)
04  → ih is: uh:: (1.2) very well-balanced.

In Extract (113) below, TA1 has just given a praise and is in the middle of a criticism-giving when he searches for the precise adjective to deliver his assessment.

(113) 042914-5_S-F

01 **TA1:** but the one thing I:- (.)
02  → I find uh- (.) little bit um: (0.6) ((click)) (0.4) 
03  → I:- look at the scale and I:- (.) feel like it’s a little bit s::a::fe
TA1 is in the middle of formulating a problem-projecting preface, “but the one thing I:-(.) I find uh- (. ) little bit” (lines 01-02), when he has difficulty producing the negative adjective to complete the preface. After a delaying “um:”, a short pause, a mouth click, and another pause (line 02), TA1 states the topic of the problem, “I:- look at the scale” (line 03). He then restarts his assessment: “and I:- (. ) feel like it’s a...” (line 04). He eventually reissues “a little bit” and produces the adjective “safe” (line 04), which is negative in this context indicating the student-artist did not challenge himself.

Using precise vocabulary and terminology to express one’s praise and criticism seems to be an important part of being a competent member of this speech community. When a word is used imprecisely, the Professor may sanction the talk as demonstrated in Extract (114) shown on the following page.
Ellen begins her comment-giving of a painting with a formulaic compliments, “I really like how realistic (. <it looks> (0.2)
and it (. almost looks like it’s [like (. >she’s in a-

Ellen

>can you say that a different way,

((6 lines omitted of Ellen trying to reformulate her comment)

it looks like she’s gonna pop out (. of the picture.

from how realistic it (0.4) looks.=

(mm."

Can we unpack that a little bit?

Ellen’s critique on 04/29/14.
elaborating her praise (line 02) when the Professor interrupts her (line 03). After Ellen
cuts her talk off (line 02), the Professor asks her, “>can you say that a different way,”
(line 04). After some negotiation, Ellen starts her comment-giving again (line 05) and
refers again to the painting as “realistic” (line 07). An unknown participant acknowledges
receipt of Ellen’s statement (line 08), and after a 1.2 second gap (line 09), the Professor
locates and addresses the problem: the word “Realistic” (line 10). He elicits comments
from other participants by asking, “Can we unpack that a little bit?” (line 11). other
students describe the painting as “cartoon[y]” and “abstract”, which are opposites of
“realistic”, and then the group discusses how abstraction, not realism, is functioning in
this artwork.

**Criticism: Doing Hesitating**

Criticism is normally delivered with hesitation in the form of silences, cut-offs,
hesitation devices, self-repairs, and repetition of words. Doing hesitation is one way that
the progressivity of the talk is halted, thus delaying the delivery of criticism and
displaying the speaker’s orientation to criticism as a delicate matter (Lerner, 2013). In
Extract (115), which has been discussed previously, Fred’s criticism is delivered with
hitches so that the statement is produced in a step-by-step fashion.

(115) 050614-6_S-S

01  **S-F:** for the hands, they look- (0.4)
02 they look like (. ) the least:. ( .) y- you know
03 the least competent part of the drawing. (0.2)

A straightforward delivery of the above would be the following: *For the hands, they look
like the least competent part of the drawing*. Instead, we see disfluency in Fred’s talk.
After he indexes the “hands” (line 01), he begins an assessment, “they look-” (line 01),
but cuts-off the TCU and takes a brief pause. He reissues “they look” (line 02) and progresses further along in the TCU although with some micropauses, “they look like (. ) the least- (. ) y- you know” (line 02). Fred produces some more cut-offs on “least-“ and “y-“, which is the start of the following word “you”. These hitches delay the delivery of the fully formulated criticism. Fred reissues “the least” (line 03) and then progresses further along in the TCU bringing it to completion. Although this is just one analysis of these micro-features, doing hesitating while delivery criticism is common throughout my data.

Silence as a Preface to Possibly Pre-formulated Criticism

There are instances in my data when the speaker seems to have pre-formulated criticism before producing it. The criticism appears to be pre-formulated because it is delivered straightforwardly with very little or no hitches. However, the straightforward delivery of the criticism is prefaced by a silence of at least 1 second. The pause in the talk comes right before the words conveying the criticism and seems to serve as doing hesitation, conveying the speaker is uneasy about what he or she will say (Lerner, 2013).

(116) 050614-3_S-H

01  **TA2:**  ➔  I think uh::m:. (1.4)
02   Your investment in time is readable. (0.2)

(117) 031114-4_S-T_S-F

01  **S-S:**  ➔  BU:t UH::m: (0.4)
02   thuh: the pixilation on this: (. ) on this front book
03   ➔  it’s just a small detail that: (. ) NOT totally professional, (0.6)
In Extract (116) above, TA2 starts her turn with “I think” and then produces a turn-holding “uh::m::” (line 01). She pauses for 1.4 seconds (line 01) and then delivers her criticism, though indirect, without any hitches. In Extract (117) above, Stephen is in the middle of an extended comment-giving when he produces a contrastive “BU::t” and a turn-holding “UH::m::” (line 01). After a brief pause, he gives a problem-projecting preface (lines 02-03) so that recipients know that the criticism will follow. Just before the point where he would produce the criticism, he stretches “tha::t” and pauses for 1 second (line 03). Then he reissues the “that” to complete the TCU and deliver the criticism with only a micropause halting the progressivity of the talk. In the final Extract (118) above, Patti uses a simple syntactic structure to formulate her assessment. After producing the noun phrase indexing the object of her comment, she takes a brief pause, and stretches the “are::” (line 01), all of which halt the progressivity of her talk. Then she takes a 1.2 second pause (line 01) before delivering the highly mitigated negative adjective phrase, “maybe a little bit too like gree::ting car::d-ish::” (line 02), straightforwardly. Since the criticism following the at least one-second silence is delivered with very minimal hitches, it seems that the criticism is pre-formulated and that the prefacing silence serves to delay the criticism.
Further Analysis

Giving Strong Criticism

Giving criticism in a manner that is contrary to the norm can make the criticism seem blunt. This includes using a simple syntactic structure, intensifiers, and a straightforward delivery, which are features common for giving praise. For example, in Extract (119) below, Stephen has launched his comment-giving with a general criticism. Then he continues to make negative assessments as warrants for this criticism.

(119) 031114-5_S-D_S-Z

01 S-S: The C:U:t job is=
02 ( ): "mm"=
03 S-S: =pretty atrocious, (0.2)
04 Uh: th it looks: (0.2) ve:ry amateur, (0.8)

The first negative assessment is delivered straightforwardly without any hitches: “The C:U:t job is pretty atrocious” (lines 01-03). Although a mitigator “pretty” is used, the negative adjective “atrocious” makes the criticism remain very strong. The next negative assessment (line 04) is syntactically structured similarly, though with the linking verb “looks:” instead and an intensifier rather than a mitigator: “it looks: (0.2) ve:ry amateur” (line 04). The use of the intensifier, which is normally used in giving praise, makes this negative assessment particularly strong.

Giving Praise: Avoiding “I like...”

In the community of practice of artists, the verb like is psychologically strongly dispreferred. According to Sebastien Fitch, a Canadian artist and art educator researching critiques, the verb like is the source of jokes among artists and art educators (S. Fitch,
personal communication, May 6, 2014). Evidence of the strong psychological
dispreference for the word *like* is also in my data in the form of explicit instruction not to
use the word. Extract (120) below is taken from an extended talk by TA2, who is leading
the critiques for the class period. It is the beginning of the class, and TA2 is giving
general guidance on the critique procedures.

(120) 050114-Introduction

01 **TA2:** → and stick away from the (.) I like{es I enjoy::
02 **TA1:** (((chuckling))

TA2 gives an explicit directive to the students to “stick away from” (i.e., *do not use*) *I like* or *I enjoy* (line 01). This prompts TA1 to chuckle indicating TA1’s affiliative stance
toward the directive.

Even stronger evidence of this speech community’s dispreference for the word *like* are instances in which students’ use of *I like* + NOUN PHRASE is directly
sanctioned by the instructor. Interrupting a speaker and stealing the floor is rare in
critiques; but in Extract (121) below, the Professor interrupts Lily’s talk in progress,
steals the floor, and indirectly directs her to express her praise in a different way.

(121) 042914-1_S-A

01 **S-L:** → I also like tha’ they connect like
02 the ( ) are connecting, (1.[0) like th[e]:re:,
03 (((begins to point at artwork))
04 **P:** "let’s:" (0.2)
05 → [Let’s keep pushing beyond (.) the word *like.*
06 **S-L:** [an’ then-

Lily begins her comment-giving (line 01) with a formulaic compliment: *I* + (*also*) + *like*
+ NOUN PHRASE. Lily’s talk and gesture seem to indicate her commitment to
continuing her turn. She uses a continuing intonation on the word “connecting,” (line 02);
during her one-second pause, she begins pointing towards a specific part of the artwork (line 03) to coincide with the indexical “th[e:re:]” (line 02). It is at this point that the Professor bids to take the floor by producing the first word “‘let’s:’” (line 04) of his directive in a lower volume, which overlaps with Lily’s talk. After a 0.2 pause, the Professor and Lily, who perhaps interpreted the 0.2 pause as the Professor relinquishing his bid for the floor, both continue their turns at the same time. In line 06, we see that Lily cuts off “then-“ leaving her TCU unfinished; in fact, she never completes it because another student begins a new comment-giving after the Professor’s directive. In line 05, the Professor recycles his overlapped “‘let’s:’” (line 04) and produces an indirect directive: “Let’s keep pushing beyond (. ) the word like.” As the Professor, he has the right to take, and steal, the floor in order to facilitate the critique, although he rarely steals the floor and even relinquishes the floor to another speaker in the case of simultaneously starting turns.

Extract (122) below is another example in which a student is sanctioned for using *I like*. In this critique activity, two student-artists’ artworks are being critiqued at the same time. The student-artists have introduced their artworks, and the Professor has just opened up the floor to the students to begin the Group Comment-giving Phase.

(122) 031114-5_S-D_S-Z

01 S-K: "Uh:m" for Chris’ I uh: (.)
02 P: \(\rightarrow\) I like< I like\(\text{thee}\)uh:m (0.8)
03 S-K: \(\rightarrow\) Let’s do a different one=
04 S-K: \(\rightarrow\)
05 P: =than like.
06 S-K: ((smiles))
07 WELL I:-\(\rightarrow\) [(1.0)
08 ((smiles))
09 I Fee:l li:: kh:h:eu::=
10 Grp: =((lau[ghter]))
10 S-K: ([thee:: uh:: (0.4)
\(((\text{Kevin continues his assessment}))

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Kevin begins his turn by indexing the artwork (line 01) that he will comment on. Then, he produces the start of a formulaic compliment: “>I like-“ (line 02). After cutting off the verb “like-”, he restarts the compliment by reissuing the words “I like<” (line 02). Kevin’s restart, vowel lengthening on the definite article the, and the delaying device “uh:m” (line 02) all signal that he will be initiating self-repair, more specifically searching for a word as indicated by his pause after “uh:m” (Schegloff, 1979). However, before Kevin can find the noun or noun phrase to complete the partially produced compliment, the Professor interrupts Kevin’s word search and takes the floor (line 03); although Kevin continues his turn (line 04), his talk overlaps the Professor’s turn and the Professor reissues “Let’s” (line 03) and completes his indirect directive: “Let’s do a different one= =than like” (lines 03, 05). Kevin’s response of starting his comment-giving over again indicates that he understands that “Let’s” does not refer in this context to the whole group or the Professor, but specifically to Kevin himself. It is Kevin who needs to “do a different one than like”. He smiles (line 06) acknowledging receipt of the directive; and then he begins to reformulate the compliment (line 07) although with delay, as shown by the lengthened “I:-” and pause/smile, perhaps to buy some time to formulate an acceptable compliment that does not use the verb like: WElI I:- [(1.0) I Fee:l li:: khh:eu::=” (line 07 and 09). Although Kevin produces the word “li:: khh:eu::” (line 09), in this comment like functions as a conjunction; but his seeming display of hesitancy, with sound stretches and laugh tokens, to use the word as well as his emphasis on the word like through stress prompts the group to affiliatively laugh (line 10). This displays their orientation to the difficulty of Kevin’s task of avoiding using the word like.
The TAs and the Professor rarely use the verbs *like* or *love* to formulate their praise-givings. It is possible that upper-level students in the art program also seldom use *like* or *love* when giving comments in critiques. When I asked the Professor about the psychological dispreference for *like* in critiques, the Professor explained that *like* is a fine way to get into the discussion if “it’s qualified with information or suggestions or observations that back [it] up”, revealing the importance of providing warrants with assessments as discussed earlier. He explained that consciously removing *like*, what he perceives to be a “tick” or an “affectation”, from comments helps student to think more about the content and language of the feedback they are expressing:

Saying you like is not a bad thing, that’s a very valuable critique. Just like “I wanna buy that” is a very valuable critique. In terms of language, “like” becomes an affectation. It becomes a tick sometimes in critiques, at best where as people say “um um” in lectures, or when someone’s about to deliver maybe a harsh personal critique in informal settings, they go, “I like them, but...” And so in critiques, trying to remove that particular affectation allows for students to think more deeply about how they’re trying to express what they’re trying to say...it does encourage students to think deeper into the vocabulary of what they’re trying to say.

**Interpreting Criticism**

In one of the final critiques of the course, Helen received a balanced critique overall; specifically, two of her artworks were given mostly praise and two of her artworks were given mostly criticism. The latter two artworks were noticeably unfinished; she received multiple criticism-givings from her peers as well as one of the TAs and the Professor. As a participant, I thought the overall feedback was appropriately critical. When I was interviewing Mei, an international student from China, she independently brought up Helen’s critique, which had taken place earlier in the day of Mei’s interview, as an example of how instructors, as well as students, are not critical
enough. She thinks that instructors are “too easy” in the critique and do not always give
suggestions for improving artwork: “…something needs to be improved in the painting,
but they will never say it out loud to the artist…” I explained to Mei that my experience of
Helen’s critique was very different from hers and that the Professor and TA2 were very
critical. I told her that they had indeed communicated that Helen didn’t spend enough
time on her artwork, but they didn’t actually say it directly. Mei expressed some surprise
at first, but immediately understood that it was the “way” it was said that had obscured
her interpretation of the criticism. She then made the following comment that more direct
criticism would be better:

> For me personally, I guess it’s also because of my cultural background, I feel like
if you say it directly to the people it might be more effective. But I feel like here
in America people say things in a really polite way. They are afraid of hurting
someone’s feeling. And I think that is too much. They are overdoing it.
Sometimes really critical suggestions will be more impressive. So the person can
remember it and push themselves further and harder. That’s what I think, but it
might not be true. It is something cultural.

It was surprising to me to hear that Mei’s experience of Helen’s critique was very
different from my own. I decided to take a closer look at Helen’s critique and attempt to
locate what may have caused us to have very different experiences of the same critique.
Although I do not analyze the transcript line by line, TA2’s full comment-giving, which
is not prefaced by any praise, is presented on the following page in Extract (123). The
overall criticism implied is you did not spend enough time working on this drawing.
(123) 050614-3_S-H

01 TA2: I think uh:m:. (1.4)  
02 Your investment in time is readable. (0.2)  
03 ↓ in some of the:se:↓  
04 an’ I:- (0.4) I feel like when you’ve given yourself (.).  
05 ti:me to actually really work on these piece:s, (0.4)  
06 that’s when they kinda start, (0.6)  
07 the quality of ‘em starts to [go up  
08 S-H: (((nods head few times)))  
09 TA2: a little bit more, ((rising pitch)) (0.4)  
10 >an’ so I think it’s jus’<- being awa:re of:  
11 of ti:me [management,  
12 S-H: (((nods head two times))  
13 TA2: (an’) that: as we:ll, (0.4)  
14 ‘cause you’re capable  
15 ↓ when you give yourself t[i:me.↓  
16 S-H: (((nods head several times))  
17 TA1: (((nods head several times)))

Following TA2’s turn, the Professor gives an extended comment-giving which includes praise-givings of two artworks and then concludes with a lengthy criticism on the artist herself and her process of creating the artworks. Looking at my transcripts of the critique, Mei was correct in that the Professor and the TAs did not give suggestions on how to improve the two unfinished artworks. They did not criticize the formal elements of the two seemingly unfinished artworks at all. However, what TA2 and the Professor did criticize, and based on my experience of the critique, quite harshly, is the artist herself and her work ethic. This suggests that TA2 and the Professor perceived the more important problem that needed to be addressed in this particular critique was the artist, and not the artworks themselves. Giving critical feedback and suggestions for improving the artworks, which the student-artist presumably^57 did not care about as

^57 There is, of course, a chance that Helen believed the artworks to be satisfactory products fitting the project parameters. However, the students had a significant amount of time to work on these projects since earlier deadlines were postponed. Based on the amount of time given to complete the projects, the artworks did not appear to exhibit a commensurate amount of production time.
shown in the perceived amount of work and time that went into creating them, would not be the most productive feedback.

In an interview, the Professor explains that sometimes it is not the artwork that needs to be critiqued; sometimes the artist, whom he sees to be the real artwork, needs feedback:

The work that we consider the artwork is only the residue of an activity. It’s the visible tangible thing that expresses the idea, the energy, the personal time investment...The work, whatever it is, because of time and ephemerality of materials will go away at some point. But the artwork itself is the person...And so sometimes it’s important to talk about...the residue of activity, and sometimes it is important to talk about the art themselves which is the person, how they’re working, thinking, behaving, practicing toward that residue.

It’s possible that Mei thought that the critique was “too easy” because the instructors did not give criticism on what she was expecting them to criticize: the artwork. The irony of Mei’s criticism of the critique as “too easy” is that Mei herself, along with her classmates, gave very specific and valid criticisms during Helen’s critique. The Professor in the Professor’s Comment-giving Phase does not restate every praise and criticism that has been contributed by students even if he does agree with the comments. In an interview, the Professor confirmed my observation that he would not necessarily repeat what students have said earlier. He described what contributions he might make:

If the critique is going really well, there’s not much for me to say. I might point [out] a few things here and there. I might reinforce some really strong observations that were made that I thought were really pertinent. I may give the maker a list of artists or veins of research in order to further wherever their practice is moving toward. Sometimes I use it as a teaching moment in a meta way to talk about critique again, to talk about what just happened, and how the critique went as a practice.

The Professor views students as active agents in the critique discussion who are capable of giving valid feedback on the artwork. Early in the semester, he “models” critique and
sets the tone for critiques so that students can feel that the critique is a safe place to express their opinions including criticisms. As the students become more competent in their observational and critiquing skills, he tries to remove himself more and more from the discussion. Therefore, students have more and more authority in the critiques.

I also interviewed a second-year Chinese student, Xin, and asked her how she interpreted TA2’s comment-giving in Extract (123). After listening to the excerpt, Xin commented:

I think it’s nice at first...she’s saying that this artist is capable. So she’s saying good things about her ability...I’m always not sure if it’s being critical...she’s giving out his opinions at least toward the attitude of the artist.

As an initial reaction, Xin thought the comment-giving was “nice”, pointing specifically to the positive adjective “capable”; but then she expressed some uncertainty over whether TA2’s comment was critical or not. I asked Xin what she thought about the specific statement, “Your investment in time is readable” (line 02). At first, there was some confusion about the word “readable”; she thought TA2 had said “reasonable” instead. I explained what “readable” meant, and then Xin interpreted the overall comment-giving to mean, “Your investment in time is good enough...I know you spent some time on your work, but it’s better to spend more time.” This does not quite capture the strength of TA2’s criticism. I told Xin how I heard the statement: *I can see how much time you put into your work and overall you didn’t put enough time into it.* She was surprised by my interpretation of the feedback saying that this is similar to criticism that a teacher in China might give in a more direct manner, such as *I can tell that you were not working on your work.* In this extract, TA2’s criticism was indirect and layered too much with subtext that obscured the criticism that she intended to convey. For example, when TA2
says, “I feel like when you’ve given yourself (.) tiː me to actually really work on these pieceːs,...the quːalitːy of ‘em starts to go up” (lines 04-07), the words actually and really are important in hinting to the listener that this statement is criticism: you didn’t spend enough time working on these pieces and their quality is not good. As another example, TA2 tells Helen, “you’re caːpable” (line 14) and then in a lower-pitched voice qualifies the compliment by adding an increment, “↓ when you give yourself (.) tiː me ↓” (lines 15). TA2 limits the situations in which Helen is “capable” to when she spends time on her artwork; this indirectly communicates you did not give yourself enough time to work on these artworks.

The Dispreference of Criticism

The analysis in this chapter has shown how criticism is a dispreferred FPP. Criticism-givings are delayed in the overall structural organization of the critique activity; participants open the Group Comment-giving Phase with praise-givings after which the talk progresses to criticism. In the Professor’s Comment-giving Phase, the Professor’s comments progress from praise to criticism as well. The analysis in this chapter has also shown that criticism-givings have a dispreferred turn-shape. The criticism component in a criticism-giving is delayed structurally by prefaces and delayed in delivery by silences, hitches, and self-repair. Criticism is also accompanied by warrants accounting for why the criticism is given. All of these features are characteristic of a dispreferred action as demonstrated in previous literature.
CHAPTER 6
SUMMARY & IMPLICATIONS

To my knowledge, this is the first study using CA methodology to analyze the talk in critiques in a first-year art classroom at the tertiary level. As such, this thesis contributes, in Chapter 4, a general outline of the institutional talk of the peer group critique activity; and, in Chapter 5, a description of the practices and speech norms for critiquing in the art and design speech community at an American university, including a detailed analysis of the overall structural organization, the composition, and the delivery of praise- and criticism-givings. Since the critique events in my data are predominantly devoted to the activity of critiquing, giving positive and negative feedback, these are concentrated sites for gathering data on the giving of praise and criticism. Therefore, my analysis of the preference structure of praise-givings and criticism-givings is a contribution to the literature on pedagogical feedback and reflects a broader preference for praise and dispreference for criticism in American pedagogy and peer feedback.

The analysis of the talk was a major component of a triangulated needs-analysis which also consisted of a thorough survey of published literature, interviews with domestic and international students, interviews with faculty, and participant-observation. Instructors at all levels in the School of Art and Design strive to create an encouraging and positive atmosphere in their classrooms, a norm typical of present-day American pedagogical contexts. This is fostered not only through giving positive feedback, but also through limiting the proportion of negative feedback and mitigating negative feedback. The findings of this research on the practices of doing praise-givings and criticism-
givings can be used to guide international students in understanding and interpreting instructor, as well as peer, feedback in critiques.

Giving feedback to one’s peers is an essential aspect of being an active member of the student-artist community, and eventually the professional artist community. Oral participation in critiques is also often graded, in some way, by instructors. However, as noted in Chapter 2, the current resources on how to critique are limited to vocabulary and terminology and the content of critique. There is no detailed guide on how to do the action of critiquing. While the action of critiquing consists of many other actions, such as describing, suggesting, and discussing meaning, this study contributes a description of the actions of praise-giving and criticism-giving. These findings can be used to create a guide for international art students on how to compose and deliver peer feedback, specifically praise and criticism.

Comparison of Findings to Previous Literature

The findings of this thesis supported some of the findings of previous studies on critique and how to critique. Wallis et al. (n.d.) recommended giving suggestions along with feedback; their models of giving feedback include warrants as shown by accompanying because clauses. The necessity of warrants was also shown in my data. My findings on the use of mitigators to give criticism and hedging phrases support Taylor and McCormack’s (2004) recommendations to instructors on how to give feedback. Although I did not code the talk in my data, some of Soep’s (2000) typologies of talk such as the language of possibility and the language of elaboration were also evident in
my data through suggestions given as remedies to criticism and through descriptions. The *language of accountability* and the *language of necessity* were not as present in my data, perhaps because the critiques in my data were directed towards an individually created artwork rather than a collaboratively created product as in Soep’s study. Similar to Soep and Cotner’s (1999) experimental findings on describing and talking about artwork, the participants in my data used negation (e.g., *It’s not* [NOUN or ADJECTIVE]), speculation (e.g., by using modal verbs), and hedging to describe artwork. Soep and Cotner (1999) also showed how people use verbalizations to think through what they are seeing; this was also present in my data as exemplified in the analysis of Cindy’s talk in Extract (26). My analysis also showed that praise and criticism are delivered with a lower epistemic stance; this is consistent with the data in Phillabaum’s (2004) study in which students used “I think,” “I believe,” and “in my opinion,” when talking about photographs. Finally, based on my participant-observation and interviews, my findings support Sovic’s (2008a, 2008b) report that international students are accustomed to feedback that emphasizes the product and Sanborn’s (2002) findings that critiques contribute to building a community among the student-artists.

Some of the findings of this thesis contrasted with the findings of prior studies on critique and the recommendations of published literature on how to give feedback. For example, Wallis et al. (n.d.) recommends using “appropriate” language when delivering feedback by giving feedback with “‘I’ language” instead of “‘YOU’ language”. However, in my data, “you” is present in both praise-givings and criticism-givings orienting to the student-artists’ agency as creators. While the recommendation by Wallis et al. (n.d.) is based on intuition and what speakers *should* say, my data does not reflect that this is what
students and instructors actually do say. Taylor and McCormack (2004) make the recommendation to instructors that “feedback should focus on the positive” (p. 8); however, students indicated that they desire negative and positive feedback and defined critique as such.

Implications for Institutional Support

of First-year International Students in Art and Design

Since previous experiences of critiques can affect students’ self-efficacy for participation in future critiques (Gaffney, 2011), it is important to establish positive critique experiences early on when students first start in a Foundations program. At the School of Art and Design at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, as well as any other tertiary institution in the United States, critiques are a part of every studio-based art course in every undergraduate program—Ceramics, Graphic Design, Industrial Design, Metals, New Media, Painting, Photography, and Sculpture. The skills and experiences gained in the critiques in the Foundations program do indeed set a foundation for the upper-level critiques throughout students’ undergraduate education.

As demonstrated in interview data with students and professors, both domestic and international students undergo a period of adjusting to critiques. One professor commented that, in his opinion, how vocal a student is in critiques has more to do with personality than with whether or not English is his or her first language. Sovic (2008b) also concluded at the end of her study that the difficulties faced by international students are not very different from the difficulties faced by domestic students. Both groups
indicated that group work, presentations, and critiques were common causes of stress. Sovic (2008b) concludes, though, that “international students are more likely to be confronted by an accumulation of these problems, and at the same time have greater difficulty in dealing with them” because of cross-cultural communication difficulties, lack of social integration, and lack of understanding about the education system (e.g., expectations and availability of support) (p. 156).

I take a similar stance that while domestic students undergo academic discourse socialization (Duff, 2010), international students may undergo multiple layers of socialization. Both student populations begin as novices more or less and are socialized into field-specific art discourse and the community of practice: how to think, write, and talk like an artist. Domestic students are also socialized into academic discourse at the university level. International students’ socialization, though, into the university classroom community is more multi-faceted; they experience socialization in language and culture, general American pedagogy, and art pedagogy.

This study suggests that it is important for institutions to offer support for first-year international students’ socialization process into critique, as well as more generally to the Foundations program, by providing opportunities for awareness-raising and reflection on the different norms in language, culture, and pedagogy. Opportunities can also be provided for students to practice critique in a safer, lower-stakes environment. There are many variables related to individual differences and personalities, outside the scope of this study, that affect both domestic and international students’ oral participation in critiques. However, I think that oral participation in critiques should be a decision that an international student makes rather than the student feeling that there is a barrier, linguistic
or cultural, to making a contribution. At the School of Art and Design at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, this institutional support could take form in a three-session workshop (one workshop a week) at the beginning of the fall semester. The international undergraduate students at the University are quite proficient in English, so the purpose of the workshops would not be to teach English per se but to raise awareness of language and cultural norms in critique and scaffold the critique experience.

- Workshop 1: introduction to critique and art pedagogy in the United States as well as reflection on prior experiences with instructor feedback and peer feedback
- Workshop 2: analysis of talk from sample critiques including interpretation of feedback and examination of linguistic forms and sociocultural norms of praise and criticism
- Workshop 3: mock critiques and reflection on the practice experience

**Implications for Writing Objectives for an EAP Course in Art and Design**

Below is a list of implications to consider while writing objectives for the above workshops. The same implications would be applicable to designing an EAP course for international students beginning art and design programs at American tertiary institutions. The implications are divided into three categories: language and culture, American

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58 For example, a student may decide that he or she does not want to contribute a comment in a critique and so does not participate orally. This can be for a number of reasons not limited to the personal relationship between the comment-giver and the comment-receiver, the poor quality of an artwork, or the content of the artwork. On the other hand, a student may feel like he or she cannot contribute or does not know how to contribute a comment in a critique and so does not participate orally.

59 For freshman admitted in 2014, the middle 50% of students had a TOEFL score between 94 and 104.
pedagogy, and art pedagogy. The rationale for these implications is based on the findings of this study; I will, therefore, refer back to specific sections of this thesis when describing these objectives.

I. Language and Culture

Vocabulary / Terminology

Productive and receptive knowledge of vocabulary and terminology in art and design is absolutely necessary for students to give and interpret feedback. As Woodward-Kron (2008) argues, “The specialist language of a discipline is intrinsic to students’ learning of disciplinary knowledge” (p. 246); the vocabulary and terminology of art and design is a necessary foundation to “mak[ing] meaning and engag[ing] with disciplinary knowledge” (p. 246). This seems to be an obvious language need as the art and design guides for international students that I was able to find in my survey of published literature focus on vocabulary and terminology. Indeed, the School of Art and Design website also has an electronic document of terminology as a resource for students in the Foundations program.

Describing and Making Observations in Detail

As shown in Chapter 5, the giving of a praise or a criticism without a warrant is sanctionable, suggesting that warrants are a necessary corollary to the actions of praising and criticizing in critiques, and presumably in the professional art world as well. Analysis of the data shows that warrants usually included at least some descriptions and observations of the artwork. Since warrants are required when giving both praise and criticism, the actions of describing and making observations are very common in
critiques. Remedies to problems also often use descriptions. Therefore, international students need to be proficient at describing artwork and verbalizing what one is seeing in detail.

Although the detailed linguistic analysis of the actions of describing and making observations is beyond the scope of this thesis, in doing the analysis of data in Chapter 5, I have noticed the following reoccurring patterns: indexing specific parts of an artwork with deictics (e.g., this, here), using appropriate vocabulary and terminology, and using positive formulations (e.g., It is X, I see X, There are X) as well as negative formulations (e.g., It is not X, There are no X). The main implication from my study is that international students need to know that any praise and criticism should be accounted for with descriptions and observations of the artwork.

Based on a broad analysis of their talk in critiques, the Professor’s and the TAs’ comment-givings are not only longer but also more detailed in their descriptions and observations than the students’ comment-givings; this suggests that over time student-artists acquire greater proficiency in describing and making observations as they practice verbalizing their thoughts and as they develop a professional vision for details. It may, however, be beneficial for international students to get an earlier start practicing these actions.

Giving Criticism

Since giving criticism is a face-threatening action, it is arguably the most difficult aspect of participating in critiques. Therefore, international students could benefit from explicit instruction and guidance on how to give criticism. This would include, as presented in Chapter 5, the following:
• word-level instruction on hedges, mitigators, and positive formulations
• sentence-level instruction on embedded syntactic structures including problem-projecting phrases and locational indexes,
• discourse-level instruction on the components of criticism-givings (preface, criticism, warrant, and remedy), and
• features of the delivery of criticism.

Explicit guidance on how to formulate and deliver criticism in American English may help international students to feel more comfortable with giving criticism to their classmates. As shown in Chapter 4, some international students expressed uneasiness about giving criticism because they seemed unsure of how to do so politely. In addition, it is imperative that students practice giving criticism since the action of peer criticizing may not be one that is practiced in their home countries’ education systems.

Giving Praise

Along with giving criticism, giving praise is an essential part of critiques. As detailed in Chapter 5, in praise-givings, praise is paired with detailed accounts for that praise; in criticism-givings, praise may be a preface to, inserted in, or a tag to the criticism-giving. Formulating praise is relatively straightforward, using simple syntactic structures and intensifiers. However, the norms for giving praise, which is often given as compliments, in critiques seems to be in tension with the practice of complimenting in everyday talk.

Manes and Wolfson’s (1981) analysis of compliments used by middle-class American English speakers concluded that almost all compliments use either an adjective or a verb with positive semantic load. When a positive semantic verb was used in the
compliment (e.g., $I + (\text{INTENSIFIER}) + \text{VERB} + \text{NOUN PHRASE}$), 86% of the compliments used either like or love as the verb. Other verbs that were in Manes and Wolfson’s data included admire, enjoy, and be impressed by; the latter two verbs were also found in my data. The formulaic expression, $I + (\text{INTENSIFIER}) + \text{VERB} + \text{NOUN PHRASE}$, is commonly found in my data in both praise-givings and criticism-givings. However, as shown in Chapter 5, the verb like is psychologically dispreferred among the community of practice of artists. Since there is a strong dislike for the verb like which is very common in everyday conversation, it may be beneficial to preemptively encourage international students to formulate positive assessments using different words and syntactic structures from the formulaic compliment structure. Models of words, phrases, and sentence structures used to communicate that one “likes” something could be given to international students.

**Making Contributions in Critiques**

In my interviews with students and professors, reported in Chapter 4, a recurring theme was sharing and giving. All of the students said that they like and want to hear feedback on their artworks. A few students even said that they prefer criticism because critical suggestions can help them to improve the artwork. If compliments are the “social lubricants” (Wolfson, 1983, p. 89) between relationships in everyday talk, then the “compliments” in the artist speech community are actually critique, and for some individuals, criticism, instead. International students need to know that giving praise and criticism is a part of building relationships and becoming an active member of an artist community.
Disfluency

As seen by the analysis of the talk in critiques in Chapter 5, speakers may be thinking of and reformulating their comments as their talk is progressing, searching for precise terminology and phrases, and doing being hesitant to display their orientation to the dispreferred action of criticizing. For any of these reasons, the talk of comment-givers may be disfluent. It is important for international students to know that disfluency is a natural feature of talk in critiques and that it is acceptable, and arguably favorable, for their talk to have features of hesitation. This may help students to overcome shyness or possible insecurities regarding their language proficiency.

Interpreting Feedback

Since critiques are the primary method of delivering feedback to student-artists, it is important that the student-artists accurately understand and interpret the feedback given to them. As seen in Chapter 5, in “Composition of Praise and Criticism,” criticism is mitigated as shown in Extract (124) below, often formulated with positive adjectives as shown in Extract (125) below, and not always given directly as shown in Extract (126) on the following page.

(124) 042914-5_S-F
01 TAl: and I: feel like it’s a little bit safe

(125) 031114-5_S-D_S-Z
01 S-M: → >So it would be more *consistent, if that makes sense,*

60 This is not to say that what instructors say in critiques should be taken as irrefutable rules. On the contrary, instructors often give multiple suggestions and multiple possible solutions to a problem because they do not want to tell student-artists exactly what to do; the suggestions may even prompt the student-artist to come up with other solutions that were not suggested.
International students who are not familiar with these norms for giving criticisms may under-interpret criticism given to them by instructors. Praise-givings by instructors often include repeated and upgraded praise. On the other hand, it is possible for criticism to be given once and very briefly, but the lack of repetition does not decrease the strength of the criticism. It is also important for international students to know that praise is used as prefaces, insertions, and tags to criticism so that students can practice filtering through the praise in order to accurately interpret the criticism. As we saw in Mei’s and Xin’s comments that critique was “too easy” or “nice,” the praise packaged along with criticism can give the overall critique a positive tone which may weaken the criticism that is given in the eyes of international students.

II. American Pedagogy

**Participation: Dominance-Display**

In Scollon and Scollon’s (1979) description of American pedagogical norms, the teacher who is in the dominant position is the spectator, and the student who is in the subordinate position is the exhibitionist. Students are expected to display their knowledge and abilities to the teacher who evaluates students’ learning. In other cultures, the relationship between dominance and display may be reversed: the dominant person displays knowledge and abilities while the subordinate person quietly observes and learns. Students who come from an educational culture where teachers do the majority of the classroom talk may have difficulty taking the floor. International students need to
know that American professors expect students to participate orally in critiques and are assessing students’ learning through their display of participation in critique. Student can be encouraged to develop strategies for participating in critique such as writing down one’s thoughts first as a way to formulate their thoughts into words.

**Students as Sources of Knowledge**

In American pedagogical contexts, students are considered valid sources of knowledge. As mentioned in Chapter 4, in critique, almost all of the instructors want students to do the majority of the talking and critiquing. International students, however, may not see themselves and their classmates as sources of knowledge, or they may expect their instructors, who are older, more knowledgeable, and more experienced, to legitimize students’ comments. However, instructors feel that feedback may have a stronger impact when it comes from a student-artists’ peers. In the section on “Interpreting Criticism” in Chapter 5, Mei and her classmates gave appropriate criticism of Helen’s artworks; however, Mei felt dissatisfied with the Professor’s comments perhaps because the Professor did not criticize the artworks as Mei felt was deserved. International students need to know that instructors will not reiterate all the comments that are given by students in critique; however, this does not mean that the instructors do not agree with the comments. The responsibility for giving good feedback rests more on the students than on the instructors.
III. Art Pedagogy

Artwork vs. Artist and Process

International students who come from an education system in which art-making is taught mainly as a technical skill may have difficulty adjusting to the American approach to art pedagogy. As written in “Interpreting Criticism” in Chapter 5, Chinese students Mei and Xin complained that critiques were “too easy” and “nice” and should include some critical suggestions for improving the artwork. Chinese students may have a stronger orientation to technique and the finished product of the artwork since a high-normative assessment culture is prevalent in China (Yu & Suen, 2005); it is arguably easier to assess technical skill rather than creativity. In the United States, however, art pedagogy focuses more on the artist and the process of art-making. International students may not interpret criticism directed towards the student-artist or the process of making art as strong criticism. They may also view a critique that does not focus on the artwork as incomplete. If an international student is interested in receiving more technical criticism, then it may be beneficial for the student to explicitly ask the instructor for this type of feedback.

Implications for Art Instructors

Socialization should not be a one-way process, with international students being socialized into the dominant speech community. As the demographics of the student population changes, an institution and its instructors may also need to adapt to the changing social dimensions in the classroom. Although I did not focus on art pedagogy or
specifically on teacher talk in my study, the following are a few pedagogical recommendations that emerged through my study.

**Explicitness of Criticism**

As shown in the section “Composition of Praise and Criticism” in Chapter 5, criticism is mitigated by using hedges and modals to lower epistemic stance, by using mitigators to reduce the strength of negatively-valenced words, and by expressing criticism with positive adjectives. Criticism is also given more indirectly by using complex syntactic structures. Praise is also often given along with criticism as shown in the section “Criticism-givings” in Chapter 5. It is also possible for criticism to be expressed indirectly through subtext as seen in TA2’s comment on the student-artist’s “investment in time” in Extract (123) or even not expressed at all as in TA1’s comment in Extract (110) which he cuts off the in-progress criticism.

For all of these reasons, it is possible for international students to misinterpret the severity of an instructor’s criticism. The instructor may feel that he or she has delivered a strong criticism; however, the recipient may interpret the criticism as mild or perhaps not even as criticism. Although it would feel uncomfortable for an American instructor to do so, perhaps criticism should be given more directly to international students or at the very least to any student, domestic or international, who desires more critical feedback. As shown in my interview data, highly motivated students desire more criticism than praise, and they may learn more by receiving more criticism. Instructors can negotiate this balance with students individually, and students can be encouraged to ask for a greater quantity of criticism or for more explicit criticism.
In addition, since praise and criticism are usually given together, with praise woven into criticism-givings, international students need to evaluate when praise is genuine and when praise is functioning as a comparison in service to giving criticism. It is possible that giving praise and criticism in separate discourse chunks may help students to interpret criticism more straightforwardly.

**Explicit Instruction on Art Critiques**

Based on my participation-observation and interviews with professors, instructors give guidelines to students on how to critique. Instructors take different approaches as to how rigidly they structure the critique discussion and how much they let critique be a more organic discussion. Generally, explicit instruction may be given on the procedures of critique, such as the critique model used (even though it may not actually be representative of the actual talk) or the participatory organization of the critique. However, there can be more explicit instruction on the purposes of critique and the instructor and student roles in critique. As Kushins (2007) notes, students come to the classroom with different past experiences of critique; international students, especially, may have very different ideas about the purposes of critique that may affect how they approach the group interaction and how they approach the feedback given in critique. For example, in Helen’s critique in Chapter 5, Mei expressed disappointment that the instructors did not criticize Helen’s painting even though Mei and the other students did do so. Instructors can be explicit about students being competent and valid evaluators and state that they will not repeat every criticism that is given in critique even though they may agree with the criticism.
Limitations of the Study

Through interviews and participant-observation, I tried to get a holistic picture of the experiences of students and the expectations of instructors of art critiques at the University. I also presented a micro-analytic description of some talk in art critiques in a first-year art course at a research university in the United States. The critiques in my data were all peer group critiques; even so, the analysis of praise-givings and criticism-givings would likely be transferable to other critique formats (e.g., small group critiques, one-on-one peer critiques) in which praise and criticism are given. I used multiple data sources, which included multiple critique activities on multiple critique days, but the data used for the analysis of talk still comes from one first-year course. Although I had recorded critiques in design courses and upper-level courses as well, due to time constraints, I chose to focus on critiques from one class. Therefore, some findings of this thesis may not be transferable to critiques in the courses of other media or of other levels.

As noted earlier in this thesis, the academic environment at the University is different from that of an art school. It is probable that the findings of this study are transferable to first-year art critiques at other research universities as well as liberal arts colleges that have similar approaches to art education. However, the transferability of these findings to first-year critiques at an art school was not investigated.

Earlier in this chapter, I proposed implications for writing objectives for an EAP course in art and design. Though these are based on the findings of this study, these implications for teaching were not operationalized, piloted, and evaluated. It is unclear if the implications that I have proposed will be effective in increasing international
students’ oral competence and perceived self-efficacy with regard to participating in critiques.

Suggestions for Future Research

Throughout the process of gathering and analyzing the data and writing this thesis, I have identified areas of research for future analysis and studies. I describe several of these areas of research below.

Art Critique in Other Countries

The literature on art critique in countries other than the United States of America, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Canada is very limited. Although critique is used in art courses all over the world (Elkins, 2012), there is no description of how the critiques are exactly done. Some questions to explore include the following: What are the pedagogical goals for critique? How is the talk organized? Who participates in critique? What are the cultural norms for giving feedback in critique?

Models of Art Critique and Art Criticism

As noted in Chapter 2, instructors often use models of art criticism, such as Feldman’s (1973) 4-step process of description, analysis, interpretation, and judgment, to teach students how to critique. In my research of the institutional context of the School of Art and Design, I came across a guide for students in the Foundations program which included terminology, art and design principles, and Feldman’s critique model. The discussion in the critiques in my data, however, do not have distinct stages similar to this
or other published critique models; while art educators may think that a critique model such as Feldman’s is how they should do critiques, it may not represent the actual talk in critiques. Instructors should be clearer about what critique models are used for: as a resource for analyzing artwork or for writing about artwork, but not necessarily for communicating oral feedback in critiques. I have approached the analysis of my data from a perspective of talk as doing an action rather than talk as a typology of statements. My data could be analyzed further using typologies, such as description, analysis, interpretation, and judgment, to assess potential relationships between such typologies and giving critique.

**Turn-taking Norms**

The art critiques in my data are not highly controlled discussions with a pre-allocated turn-taking system or with frequent bidding for turns. My data could be analyzed for self-selection turn procedures in a relatively large multi-party setting. How do participants self-select for a turn in the multi-party interaction of group critique? How and under what circumstances do participants steal the floor? How do participants hold the floor as they are in the process of formulating their thoughts into words?

**Individual Variation in Giving Criticism**

As I was analyzing criticism, I noticed that several participants seemed to have a strategy or at least a pattern for how they as an individual delivered criticism. For example, TA1 almost always started his extended comment-giving with praise. One student tended to end his criticism-givings with a disclaimer, and another student inserted praise in the middle of his criticism-givings. Further detailed analysis of these
individual’s talk may show the regularity of these sequential patterns which may reveal how different individuals use different strategies to handle the interactional difficulties of giving face-to-face criticism.

**Prosodic Strategies for Mitigating Criticism**

In this thesis, I analyzed lexical, syntactic, and structural organizational features of mitigating criticism as well as the delivery of criticism. Further descriptions of criticism-givings can include analysis of prosodic features including using rising intonation as in Extracts (126) and (127) below and vowel lengthening to mitigate criticism. These prosodic features may convey a hesitancy to give criticism, for example, by lowering the epistemic certainty of the criticism by using a rising or questioning intonation.

(126) 050614-4_S-E

01 J: but it’s jus:t ‘hh
02 like H:ere WHere i:t- (0.4)
03 → Youg- (0.4) you’ve given us an outli:ne? (0.6)

(127) 042914-1_S-A

01 S-S: it almost seems like (.)
02 the cutting pro:ce:ss or the cropping pro:ce:ss, (0.6)
03 was: (.) uh: (0.2) not as mindful
04 → as the drawing process? (1.0)

**Student-artists’ Responses**

This thesis has only examined the giving of feedback in critiques. The transcripts could be analyzed further looking at the student-artists’ responses to criticism. Some

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61 Although time constraints did not permit me to investigate these features in my data, I owe these observations to Dr. Walters.
guides on art critique explicitly stress not responding defensively when receiving feedback or reacting to criticism (Buster & Crawford, 2010; Elkins, 2012). Some questions to explore include the following: Does the student-artist respond vocally or non-vocally? If the student-artist responds vocally, when and how does he or she respond? How are these responses perceived? Is responding to criticism perceived by the participants as defensiveness? What are the features of a defensive response? Is there a preference for responding vocally or silently receiving feedback?

**Agreement and Disagreement**

In everyday talk, agreements are performed in a preferred manner, straightforwardly and without delay. Disagreements are performed in a dispreferred manner, mitigated, with delay, and elaborated with accounts. In my analysis of the talk in critiques, it seems that agreement and disagreement in critique is performed differently than in everyday talk. As one example, it seems that silence does not signal disagreement but conveys a normal level of agreement such that silence after a comment seems to validate that comment. Expanding on a participants’ comment-giving seems to convey upgraded agreement. In particular with praise, upgraded agreements are performed in a preferred manner. How are disagreements performed? Are they performed in a preferred or a dispreferred manner? How soon after a comment-giving are disagreements expressed?

**Critiquing in the Critique vs. in the Studio**

Although the critiques in my study are institutional talk, it is possible that the talk in the critique reflects how student-artists give praise and criticism outside of the event in
more everyday talk as well. How similar are praise and criticism in critique to praise and criticism in more natural conversations in the studio? In my experience, outside of the formal critique, classmates offered unsolicited praise by giving a formulaic compliment without a warrant; a classmate also offered praise by beginning with a question such as, “How did you do that? It looks really cool.” These praises were an opening to further conversation, such as talking more specifically about the artwork, sharing a problem or complaint, or reciprocating praise. Criticism, though, was never given unsolicited by peers. An analysis of actual talk could be used to compare praise and criticism in these two contexts.

**Talk in Upper-level Critiques**

As noted earlier, this thesis examined the talk in a first-year, foundation-level critique. It is unlikely that the talk in an upper-level critique is the same as the talk in a foundation-level critique. The student-artists in an upper-level critique not only have more experience and knowledge in content but also in the language norms of this speech community. In an interview, a professor stated that advanced studio classes have different models of critiques since students have individual directions. In contrast, in the Foundations courses, students work on projects with specific objectives and prompts. The talk in upper-level critiques could be analyzed and compared to the description of foundation-level critiques in this thesis. What actions are common in upper-level critiques, and are these actions the same or different from those in foundation-level critiques? If the actions or the proportion of particular actions are different in these two levels of critique, is it beneficial to offer ongoing language support to international students?
Talk in Design Critiques

Similar to the previous point, it is possible that the talk in art critiques may be different from that of the talk in design critiques. In an interview, a graphic design professor commented that she has to “deconstruct” the Foundations critique model and teach the graphic design model of critique. Some questions to explore include the following: What is a graphic design model of critique? How is this model similar to and different from a fine arts model of critique? Are the same actions found in both design critiques and art critiques? How similar and different are the talk in design critiques and the talk in art critiques?

Conclusion

The results of this study yielded implications for objectives in a potential EAP workshop or course to equip international students to engage in art critiques. These implications included awareness-raising and analysis of linguistic features, sociocultural norms, and pedagogical norms of critique. I also included a few pedagogical suggestions for instructors on facilitating critique involving international student participants. In order to conduct a more comprehensive needs analysis for international students entering art and design programs in the United States, further study of various tasks common to foundation courses in art and design is necessary. This study examined the talk in one task—critiques—as part of a triangulated needs-analysis. This one task was analyzed in detail by examining praise-giving and criticism-giving actions and has contributed to a
deeper understanding of the structural organization, composition, delivery, and
sociocultural norms of doing these actions in this context.
REFERENCES


Blair, B. (2007). At the end of a huge crit in the summer, it was crap I'd worked really hard but all she said was fine and I was gutted. *Art, Design & Communication in Higher Education, 5*(2), 83-95.


School of Art and Design (n.d.). “Foundations”. Retrieved from http://www.art.illinois.edu/content/undergraduate/foundations/


APPENDIX: TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

Excerpts from Schegloff (2000)

I. Temporal and sequential relationships

Overlapping or simultaneous talk is indicated in a variety of ways.

[ Separate left square brackets, one above the other on two successive lines with utterances by different speakers, indicates a point of overlap onset, whether at the start of an utterance or later.

] Separate right square brackets, one above the other on two successive lines with utterances by different speakers indicates a point at which two overlapping utterances both end, where one ends while the other continues, or simultaneous moments in overlaps which continue.

= Equal signs ordinarily come in pairs - one at the end of a line, and another at the start of the next line or one shortly thereafter. They are used to indicate two things:

(1) If the two lines connected by the equal signs are by the same speaker, then there was a single, continuous utterance with no break or pause, which was broken up in order to accommodate the placement of overlapping talk.

(2) If the lines connected by two equal signs are by different speakers, then the second followed the first with no discernable silence between them, or was “latched” to it.

A single equal sign indicates no break in an ongoing piece of talk, where one might otherwise expect it, e.g., after a completed sentence.

(0.5) Numbers in parentheses indicate silence, represented in tenths of a second; what is given here in the left margin indicates 0.5 seconds of silence. Silences may be marked either within an utterance or between utterances.

(.) A dot in parentheses indicates a “micropause,” hearable but not readily measurable without instrumentation; ordinarily less than 0.2 of a second.

Aspects of speech delivery, including aspects of intonation

. The punctuation marks are not used grammatically, but to indicate intonation. The period indicates a falling, or final, intonation contour, not necessarily the end of a sentence. Similarly, a question mark indicates rising intonation, not necessarily a question, and a comma indicates “continuing” intonation, not necessarily a clause boundary.
Colons are used to indicate the prolongation or stretching of the sound just preceding them. The more colons, the longer the stretching.

A hyphen after a word or part of a word indicates a cut-off or self-interruption, often done with a glottal or dental stop.

Underlining is used to indicate some form of stress or emphasis, either by increased loudness or higher pitch. The more underlining, the greater the emphasis.

Especially loud talk may be indicated by upper case; again, the louder, the more letters in upper case.

When there are two degree signs, the talk between them is markedly softer than the talk around it.

The up and down arrows mark sharper rises or falls in pitch...or they may mark a whole shift, or resetting, of the pitch register at which the talk is being produced.

The combination of “more than” and “less than” symbols indicates that the talk between them is compressed or rushed. Used in the reverse order, they can indicate that a stretch of talk is markedly slowed or drawn out. The “more than” symbol by itself indicates that the immediately following talk is “jump-started,” i.e. sounds like it starts with a rush.

Hearable aspiration is shown where it occurs in the talk by the letter h - the more h’s, the more aspiration. The aspiration may represent breathing, laughter, etc....If the aspiration is an inhalation, it is shown with a dot before it.

Other markings

Double parentheses are used to mark transcriber’s descriptions of events, rather than representations of them: ((cough)), ((sniff))...

When all or part of an utterance is in parentheses, or the speaker identification is, this indicates uncertainty on the transcriber’s part, but represents a likely possibility.

Empty parentheses indicate that something is being said, but no hearing (or, in some cases, speaker identification) can be achieved.

Schegloff (2000) uses the “less than” symbol.