

Collaborative Conferencing with Second Language Writers

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Conferences with second language writers are most effective when they are collaborative.

In a collaborative conference, the instructor does not dominate.

Instead, she or he guides the conference through scaffolding and elicitation techniques.

The students participate actively and negotiate meaning throughout.

Benefits:

- When students collaborate, they can demonstrate their understanding. If teachers do all the talking, how do they even know if their L2 students understand them? Han (1996) identified misconceptions of teachers' comments, suggestions, and terminology as a major impediment to successful L2 writing conferences.
- Goldstein and Conrad (1990) and Williams (2004) found that L2 writers who participate actively in conferences and negotiate for meaning make more extensive and effective revisions. These active students go beyond surface level and mechanical changes to fundamentally improve the language, content, and organization of their writing.
- Hyland (2006) found that L2 writers respond more positively to clues than corrections, since the clues allow them to be active in their use of feedback.
- Young and Miller (2004) suggest that language acquisition is not cognitive so much as a situational co-constructed process. Conferences provide an ideal environment for learners to engage in authentic, meaning-driven language practice.

Traditional Feedback (Teacher Dominated)	Scaffolded Feedback (Collaborative)
<i>I think you need to revise your thesis to better capture the gist and focus of your text.</i>	<i>What do you want to tell me in this essay? OK, I'm going to write that down. Now, compare the sentence you just told me to your thesis. Which sentence is the best summary of your essay?</i>
<i>You are plagiarizing in paragraph three as you are not attributing this statement by Hinkel as a quote; it is not enough to cite Hinkel in the text.</i>	<i>Are these your words or Hinkels? Hinkels- OK. How can we show the reader that these words came from a different person? Right- do you know the name for that punctuation symbol? Quo... quotation marks.</i>

Teaching Multilingual and International Students:
Strategies, Resources, and Advice for Faculty
October 6, 2015

Second Language (L2) vs. Native-Speaking (L1) Writers

- Eckstein (2013) describes the need for a “rich mentoring relationship” with L2 writers rather than conferences in which instructors give traditional feedback on writing, that is, feedback limited to content and rhetoric.
- L2 writers are often more concerned about the quality of their language than their writing.
- L2 writers expect explicit correction on their grammar, unlike many L1 writers.
- Chen (2005) found that most L2 student anxiety prior to conferences was related to speaking in English, and the feeling they “had to come up with good questions” to ask their instructors. Eckstein (2013) found that low-level learners were most likely to suffer from intimidation.
- Liu (2009) compared L2 writers to L1 writers and found they were less concerned about how to get an A on their essays. Instead, they worried about integration- they held a desire to integrate with the broader discourse community.

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