

# Let's Be Direct: Making the Student-Teacher Writing Conference Work for Multilingual Writers<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

The student-teacher conference has been established as a pedagogical tool in composition courses, and teachers and students typically view the student-teacher writing conference as an effective way of providing feedback. However, most previous research on conferencing has been carried out with first language (L1) writers or advanced multilingual writers, and little attention has been given to student-teacher conferences with multilingual (L2) writers at various stages of language development. Though little research has been conducted, recent studies on student-teacher conferencing with multilingual writers offer important insights that provide direction for conducting effective conferences with multilingual writers. Earlier studies on conferencing with L2 students tended to measure the success of the conference on whether the conference effectively employed certain policy-as-pedagogy principles of conferencing, principles that had been initially developed with L1 speakers. Two of the prominent principles which should be called into question were insisting that the student-teacher conference be non-directive, and that higher-order concerns (HOCs) should be dealt with before lower-order concerns (LOCs). Rather than simply applying a structure of conferencing theory originated in conferences with L1 student writers to student-teacher conferences with multilingual writers, it is important to first closely examine these practices and reflect on whether they are applicable for working effectively with multilingual writers. This paper provides an overview of the student-teacher writing conference and multilingual students, and then addresses common practices and principles of conferencing and argues for the importance of flexibility when conferring with multilingual writers.

## Resumen

La conferencia alumno-docente se ha consolidado como una herramienta pedagógica en los cursos de composición; los profesores y los estudiantes normalmente ven la conferencia alumno-profesor como una forma eficaz de proporcionar comentarios. Sin embargo, la mayor parte de las investigaciones sobre conferencias se ha llevado a cabo con escritores de lengua materna (L1) o escritores multilingües avanzados, y se ha prestado poca atención a las conferencias con escritores multilingües (L2) en diversas etapas del desarrollo del lenguaje. Aunque, hasta la fecha, se han realizado pocas investigaciones, los estudios recientes sobre conferencias estudiante-docente con escritores multilingües ofrecen información importante que proporciona una dirección para realizar conferencias eficaces con estos escritores. Estudios anteriores sobre conferencias con estudiantes de L2 tendían a medir el éxito de la conferencia sobre si la conferencia empleó efectivamente ciertos principios de política como pedagogía que se habían desarrollado inicialmente con hablantes de L1. Dos de los principios destacados que deberían cuestionarse son; insistir en que la conferencia entre estudiantes y maestros no sea directiva y que las preocupaciones de orden superior (HOC) deben tratarse antes que las preocupaciones de orden inferior (LOC). En lugar de simplemente aplicar una estructura de teoría originada en conferencias con estudiantes-escritores de L1 a conferencias con escritores multilingües, es importante primero examinar de cerca estas prácticas y reflexionar sobre si son aplicables para trabajar de manera efectiva con escritores multilingües. Este artículo proporciona una descripción general de la conferencia de escritura estudiante-docente y de los estudiantes multilingües, y luego aborda las prácticas y los principios comunes de las conferencias argumentando la importancia de la flexibilidad al conversar con escritores multilingües.

## Introduction

Nicole worked hard on her compare-contrast essay for her English 101 class. She wrote her essay to the best of her ability, but there were some issues with grammar and vocabulary that she was not sure were accurate. Nicole made some notes on the items that were troubling her and planned to ask her instructor for help in her scheduled conference. When Nicole met her writing instructor the next day for her conference, the instructor first asked Nicole to explain her essay. Nicole was confounded by this. What did she need to explain? The teacher could see what she had written, and wasn't it the teacher's role to provide guidance for how she could improve her paper? After all, she was an international student, new to the US, and was still learning about academic writing conventions, which were quite different from those in her home country. When Nicole failed to explain her essay, the teacher read it and then told Nicole that she needed to work on some organizational issues. Nicole nodded, and then started to ask about the language issues she had made notes of. The teacher kindly refused, saying that she could not help Nicole with editing until she had first

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<sup>1</sup> This is a refereed article. Received: 21 January, 2020. Accepted: 9 June, 2020.

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improved the structure of her essay. Nicole left the conference feeling confused and frustrated. In Nicole's estimation, she had gained little, if anything, from the conferencing session.

While the student-teacher conference has been established as an effective pedagogical tool for providing feedback on writing, common practices and principles of conferencing have been established with the L1 learner in mind. However, as evidenced by Nicole's less-than-satisfactory experience with conferencing, some of the beliefs about how a conference ought to be conducted may not be suitable for multilingual students. Rather than merely transferring established tenets of conferencing theory from an L1 context, it is important to examine whether these practices are effective for working with multilingual (L2) writers. In this article, I argue that common practices and principles of L1 student-teacher conferencing might not be suitable for L2 students in teacher-student conferencing sessions. Specifically, ideas about who leads the conference need to be reconsidered as well as ideas regarding the order in which different aspects of a text are addressed.

### **Theoretical Framework: A Sociocultural Perspective**

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory posits that knowledge is socially constructed through interacting with others. Learning emerges from participation in interaction and is then internalized. Within the sociocultural framework, lies Vygotsky's theoretical concept of the Zone of Proximal Development. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as defined by Vygotsky is "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving, and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). In other words, the ZPD is a theoretical account of interaction and the knowledge construction resulting from that interaction which leads to increased cognition. An additional principle of ZPD refers to the ways in which instructional activities are scaffolded so that learners can achieve mastery of a skill or knowledge development through graduated and mediated tasks. The writing conference gives learners the opportunity to work within their individual ZPDs, constructing knowledge with the mediated help of a more capable peer, in this case, the teacher. While teachers can work with students within their ZPD during whole-class work (Bayraktar, 2013; Taylor et al., 2000), the research indicates that assisting students within their individual ZPDs can be carried out more effectively and efficiently through individual and small-group work (Berne & Degener, 2015).

### **What Is the Student-Teacher Writing Conference?**

A writing conference is a session in which teacher and student or teacher and students meet to talk about a student's or students' writing. Writing conferences provide a platform for individualized instruction that cannot typically be achieved in a whole-class setting (Anderson, 2018; Berne & Degener, 2015; Maliborska & You, 2016). Writing conferences are often one-to-one but might also be carried out in pairs or groups. Writing conferences usually exist alongside other sorts of feedback on student writing, such as written feedback and peer review (Berne & Degener, 2015). According to Glenn & Goldthwaite (2014), teacher and student might meet relatively infrequently for writing conferences, such as once or twice a semester or might meet frequently, such as weekly or biweekly. Usually, the writing conference would focus on a current piece of writing, but it might focus on a student's writing over time (as in the case of a review of a portfolio), or it might focus on other issues such as general challenges or difficulties a student might be facing in their writing (Glenn & Goldthwaite, 2014).

While the writing conference is often associated with the process movement when writing instruction began to place more emphasis on the stages of writing and providing feedback on drafts (Maliborska & You, 2016), there is evidence that writing teachers had begun to incorporate the writing conference as a part of their pedagogy much earlier. In 1894, Charles Sears Baldwin published an article on conferring with students during office hours. By 1929, E. C. Beck reported in an article in the *English Journal* that 82 percent of colleges and universities had adopted conferencing in first-year composition courses. (For an historical overview of conferences in English composition, see Lerner, 2005.) With such a long-reaching history as a pedagogical tool in the writing course, the question is not so much whether the conference has beneficial attributes, but, rather, how to make it as effective as possible.

While this article focuses specifically on the student-teacher writing conference, it is understood that there is some overlap in the practices and principles of Writing Center tutoring sessions, and student-teacher writing conferences. However, there are also some important differences. First of all, in a student-teacher relationship, the teacher is generally recognized as an authority figure whether or not the teacher exercises authority in a writing conference. In a writing center, however, students are usually tutored by peers.

Additionally, in student-teacher conferencing, the teacher has clear knowledge of what they want the student writer to achieve since they have (usually) written the course and planned the evaluation system whereas the Writing Center tutor typically only has indirect knowledge of course task and course expectations. Furthermore, students are likely to give more weight to feedback from teachers than peers, knowing that it is the teacher who will assign a grade (Siczek, 2018).

### **Understanding Multilingual Writers**

Multilingual writers come from diverse backgrounds (I use the term *multilingual* broadly to mean anyone learning or using more than one language in order to not offend those who find other terms such as *second language* or *additional language* inaccurate or offensive). They might come from contexts that have very different rhetorical traditions from that expected in institutions of higher education in the US and Canada, and they might not (Paltridge et al., 2009). While it is important to avoid essentializing multilingual writers, it is also important to realize that linguistic and cultural differences do affect writing, and gaining an understanding of these differences is an important aspect of being able to successfully work with multilingual writers (Bean, 2011; Conference on College Composition and Communication [CCCC], 2014). Multilingual writers will have varying levels of mastery of English; many will still be grappling with language issues (CCCC, 2014; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014; Manchón et al., 2009; Matsuda & Hammill, 2014). Some multilingual writers will have had some writing practice in previous language courses, but will not have taken any courses that specifically focused on writing in English (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014; Liu, 2009; Manchón et al., 2009; Siczek, 2018). Among the multilingual population with prior writing instruction in English, some multilingual writers might be unfamiliar with writing in certain disciplines and academic writing in general (Bean, 2011; Moussu & David, 2015; Richards, 2015) and as such, do not have any previous experience with writing in the genres they are now expected to produce (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014; Liu, 2009; Matsuda & Hammill, 2014; Moussu & David, 2015). Previous experience with reading in English might also vary (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014); some multilingual writers have limited or no literacy in their first language while others are highly literate (CCCC, 2014; Matsuda & Hammill, 2014; Moussu & David, 2015). In addition, ideas concerning what constitutes good writing vary from culture to culture, and some multilingual writers might not be familiar with ideas about what constitutes good writing in a North American context (Richards, 2015). For instance, while U.S. academic writing generally favors an upfront explicit approach, some cultures might be less direct (Reynolds, 2009). Given that multilingual writers come from such diverse backgrounds and may not have any prior experience with student-teacher writing conferences, successful conferring with L2 writers requires a degree of flexibility.

### **Benefits of the Writing Conference: Why Confer?**

Conferencing might be a more effective and efficient means of providing feedback than written feedback (Glenn & Goldthwaite, 2014; MacArthur, 2016; Nation, 2009). One of the greatest advantages of conferencing is the clarity it can bring (Bean, 2011; Ferris, 2011; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014; Glenn & Goldthwaite, 2014; Maliborska & You, 2016). Teachers may not always understand what the student writer intends, and the student writer might not always understand the teacher's written feedback (CCCC, 2014; Siczek, 2018). Another advantage of the writing conference is that it can help curb teacher-appropriation of student texts (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014; Glenn & Goldthwaite, 2014). Additionally, the writing conference can allow for a mentoring relationship that is potentially more expansive than afforded by written feedback alone (Anderson, 2018; Eckstein, 2013; Glenn & Goldstein, 2014; Maliborska & You, 2016). Conferences also help students develop the skills of reflecting on their writing (Anderson, 2018; Eckstein, 2013). Each individual student-writer typically has different needs, and because of their diverse backgrounds and experiences, multilingual writers are likely to have even more varied concerns. Therefore, conferencing might be an even more important pedagogical tool for helping multilingual writers (Ji, 2017). Nonetheless, in spite of the great potential of conferencing, benefits might be limited when instructors rigidly cling to conferencing prescriptions originally developed for L1 learners.

### **Directive or Dialogic?**

#### Origins of the non-directive conference

Many current experts on writing pedagogy (both L1 and L2) insist that the conference must be dialogic, interactive, and student-led rather than teacher-directed (Anderson, 2018; Bean, 2011; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014; Glenn & Goldthwaite, 2014; Nation, 2009). This notion originates from prior pedagogical approaches to conferencing that insisted the student writer should take on an independent role and the teacher's role

as that of coach or mentor, rather than authority figure. For instance, Murray's pedagogy, which has been enormously influential in determining conferencing strategies, was nondirective, aimed toward helping students find their own answers. In *A Writer Teaches Writing* (1968; 1985), Murray's conferencing approach was to have students first explain their writing before offering any feedback. Harris's conferencing pedagogy has also had a significant impact. In *Teaching One-to-One: The Writing Conference*, Harris (1986) provided a list of strategies for teachers to ensure that the writing conference remained non-directive. That the only type of successful writing conference is student-led is an idea that persists. It is important, however, to situate the roots of this idea historically. This principle was popularized at a time when students could "learn to write without teachers," (Elbow, 1973), and many of the ideas about teaching writing and learning to write were based on developing student agency and independence as well as rejecting a rigid authoritative teacher stance (Lerner, 2005). The importance of non-directive conferencing might have also been borrowed from Writing Center (WC) pedagogy, which generally insists that conferences ought to be non-directive and collaborative (Gillespie & Lerner, 2000; 2004; 2008).

### Earlier Research on Student-Teacher Interactions in Writing Conferences

In investigating student-teacher interactions in conferences with L2 students, some researchers have concluded that successful conferences are interactive and student-led. Walker and Elias (1987) taped 17 student-tutor conferences and asked both tutors and students to rate the success of their conferences immediately after they finished. They found that students rated teacher-dominated conferences as less successful than student-dominated conferences. However, the majority of participants in this study were L1 writers (70%) who might be able to fully engage in more equitably interactive sessions than would some multilingual writers, especially multilingual writers of lower proficiency levels. Goldstein and Conrad's (1990) study involved three multilingual participants. Data were collected through taping multiple student-teacher conferences with each participant and comparing pre- and post-conference drafts. They found that active student participation in conferences led to more extensive revisions whereas teacher-dominated conferences resulted in less successful revisions that often focused on surface-level edits. It must be pointed out though, that the subjects of this study were advanced L2 students. In other words, all students in this study likely had the ability to lead or participate equally in a conference session if so desired. Patthey-Chavez and Ferris's (1990) study focused on four teachers and eight student participants. Each teacher in the study had selected one weaker student and one stronger student from the study. Data were collected through taped student-teacher conferences and copies of first and final drafts of student papers. These authors found that weaker students had shorter conferences that were typically teacher-led and mostly focused on local concerns (grammar and mechanics) while stronger students had longer conferences that led to more complex revisions that incorporated both the teacher's suggestions and their own individual changes. All these studies suggest that in order to uphold the principle of maintaining the conference as student-led and fully dialogic perhaps, conferencing should be reserved for either L1 learners or higher-proficiency L2 students. They further suggest that lower-level multilingual students might not be suited for writing conferences, which would mean not only that lower-level students would miss the opportunity to reap the potential benefits of feedback in conference sessions, but they would also be precluded from peripheral benefits of the writing conference, such as developing a better rapport with the instructor. The problem, perhaps, is not with the conference, but in perceptions of how success of a student-teacher writing conference is measured. Lower-level students can benefit from the conference if the notion that the successful writing conference must be fully interactive and student-led is readjusted.

### More Recent Research

Many of the recent studies of teacher-student conferences with L2 students have focused on finding out about students' expectations of conferencing. Eckstein (2013) collected data from surveys completed by 14 teachers and 546 students in a writing conference program in an intensive English program. Eckstein's (2013) study showed that students with lower proficiency levels preferred more directive sessions whereas higher-proficiency students preferred more interactive sessions. Liu (2009) collected data from 110 surveys and 18 interviews. This study included both multilingual and domestic students in first-year composition courses. The findings revealed that some multilingual learners did not feel comfortable with the expectation that they should direct the conversation in a conferencing session. They did not expect that they would need to explain what their essay was about. They expected, instead, that the teacher would give suggestions on how they could improve their drafts. Liu suggested that these expectations could be related to cultural beliefs. In some cultures, the person in the higher position is expected to direct and control the interaction.

In another study, Maliborska and You (2016) surveyed 100 multilingual students and eight teachers in sections of first-year composition courses for multilingual students. Maliborska and You found that the majority of multilingual students surveyed preferred balanced interaction in the writing conference, neither student-led nor teacher-led. Furthermore, while 22 percent of students preferred conferences to be instructor-led, only four percent favored student-led conferences. These studies indicate that multilingual writers prefer a degree of direction in a conference, rather than the opportunity to explain who they are as writers. In other words, the agency meant to be given to writers in non-directive conferences might not always work with multilingual writers since it assumes knowledge of conventions of writing that multilingual writers may not have (Moussu & David, 2015). In addition, the concept that students must always be self-directed individuals who find answers and meaning by turning inwards short-circuits the opportunity to socially construct knowledge through interaction, an opportunity which should not only be afforded by conference sessions, but is a cornerstone of conferencing. While student preferences offer important information for conducting conferences, they are, after all, preferences. Ji's (2017) research, however, suggests that success in revision might actually depend on who directs the conference. This study focused on three multilingual writers in first-year composition courses; the data was collected from interviews and comparisons of pre- and post-conference drafts. The results from Ji's study suggested that the aspects of conferences that led to successful revision all related to teacher talk. Findings from these more recent studies suggest the need to rethink this ideal of conferencing pedagogy. The degree to which a student-teacher writing conference session is directive or non-directive, student-led or teacher-led, should relate to what each individual student needs. Many multilingual students might derive more benefit from directive conferences.

### **Addressing Higher-Level and Lower-Level Concerns**

#### What Order: Higher-Order Before Lower-Order?

A number of writing experts from the L1 camp (Anderson, 2018; Bean, 2011; Berne & Degener, 2015) and Reynolds (2009) from the L2 camp advocate that feedback in the student-teacher writing conference ought to first focus on higher-order concerns (HOCs) before attending to lower-order concerns (LOCs). HOCs, also called global concerns, relate to macro-level features of writing, such as topic, organization, and developing and supporting an argument. LOCs, also referred to as local concerns, focus on micro-level features, such as spelling, grammar, word choice, and punctuation. These experts caution that focus on LOCs during the early stages of the writing process could impede students' ability to productively create first drafts as their writing process could become cautiously fraught with attention to, and concern for, form over ideas. This longstanding principle that HOCs need to be addressed before LOCs in a conferencing session likely comes from early publications on Writing Centers, such as North's (1984) seminal article *The Idea of a Writing Center* and Reigstad & McAndrew's (1984) early training manual *Training Tutors for Writing Conferences*. While these publications are focused specifically on Writing Centers, their practices and principles have bled into ideas for structuring student-teacher conferences. Historically, these seminal works on Writing Centers were published at a time when the process movement was in full swing. Though process pedagogy did not necessarily ignore treatment of error, it usually relegated attention to form as a final-stage consideration. The idea of HOCs before LOCs presents a binary that might not be particularly useful. For instance, Reigstad and McAndrew categorized voice as one of the HOCs; however, a writer's voice must be informed by words, expressions, use of grammar, and even punctuation. In other words, any piece of writing is not just the whole, but also the parts, and ordering concerns into higher and lower order and assigning them schedules may not be a clean-cut strategy for organizing conference sessions. In some cases, multilingual students might need help with LOCs before they can move on to HOCs. If a text has numerous sentence-level issues, the focus of the paper might be obscured. In such cases, it might be important to first work on LOCs before moving to HOCs (Fitzgerald & Ianetta, 2016), and a teacher's skillful direction can help students prioritize their concerns.

#### Early Editing Might Benefit Multilingual Writers

Bean (2011) and Reynolds (2009) point out that a focus on lower-level skills in early drafts might be counterproductive as major parts of the text might be substantially altered or even deleted in subsequent stages of the writing process. It is always possible that text created in the early stages of writing will later be significantly different or not exist at all, but this does not necessarily mean that time spent on LOCs in early drafts is time wasted for multilingual students. Gains of knowledge on language concerns alone might be valuable for multilingual writers and important for their further language development and improvement

of composition skills even on text that is ultimately discarded. Multilingual writers often need additional assistance from their writing teachers for working on language-related issues (Ferris, 2011), and that learning might sometimes take place while working on LOCs in early draft stages. Furthermore, always expecting students to reserve attention to editing until the final stage of the writing process might not be realistic. Revision is a recursive process, and even though editing is nearly always recognized as a final-stage task in the writing process, many writers do, in fact, concern themselves with LOCs as they compose (Anderson, 2018; Sommers, 1980). Some writers do a great deal of editing as they draft, even knowing that some of their manicured language will not survive to the final draft.

### What Students Expect in the Writing Conference

For many multilingual writers, aspects of writing that are considered LOCs might be HOCs. Recent research has indicated that multilingual students want feedback on language issues in the writing conference. From their survey, Maliborsak and You (2016) found that students' main concerns for the conference involved issues related to LOCs. Similarly, the participants in Liu's (2009) study indicated a concern for accuracy on their papers and saw the writing conference as an opportunity to get help with their grammatical errors. Eckstein's (2013) research revealed that student preference depended on proficiency; students at lower proficiency levels preferred conferences that focused on LOCs while students at higher proficiency levels preferred conferences geared toward HOCs. Although teachers in Eckstein's study had been instructed by their Writing Conference Program training of the importance of first attending to HOCs, many of them adjusted their feedback to the needs of their students, providing lower-level students with help on LOCs and assisting higher-level students with feedback on HOCs. This is a clear indication that while the principle of HOCs over LOCs might be upheld by Writing Conferencing programs, in practice, it might not be a useful premise, especially for multilingual writers who are not only developing composition skills but are also still acquiring language skills. Siczek's (2018) research of multilingual writers showed that while some subject-matter professors were understanding of sentence-level errors and did not mark multilingual writers as harshly on LOCs as they did L1 writers, other professors did not extend the same sort of understanding and marked L2 student writers by the same standards as L1 students. While flawless execution of language-related issues in a multilingual writer's text certainly seems to be an unrealistic and even punitive aim, some students' fixations on LOCs are likely fueled by expectations of how their writing will be judged. One of Ferris's (1999; 2004; 2011) longstanding claims has been that one of the most compelling reasons to provide corrective feedback for language concerns on student writing has been that students themselves expect it because they know that errors in writing can interfere with comprehensibility and inaccuracies that can have consequences in the real world, in scholastics and beyond. These studies show that a focus on language-related issues is important to multilingual students. When, and exactly how, LOCs are addressed in a writing conference should not be dictated by a specific conferencing rule but should accommodate the individual writer and the particular goals of the conference. LOCs might be addressed before HOCs, after HOCs, or alongside HOCs. Some conferences might even be specifically dedicated to language related issues. Ferris (2011) found that error-treatment conferences might be especially useful when dealing with complex and untreatable errors. It is time to re-think the key principles that have upheld traditional conferencing techniques and instead think about how the writing conference can be used as an effective platform for feedback and instruction with multilingual writers.

### **Limitations of Current Research and Recommendations for Further Research**

To date, not much research on student-teacher writing conferences with multilingual writers has been carried out. Earlier research with multilingual writers was focused on finding out whether multilingual writers followed the script of the non-directive conference, and, if so, to what extent. Recent research with multilingual students has focused on multilingual writers' desires and expectations from teacher-student conference sessions. Further research could provide more insight into ways to make the student-teacher conference effective for L2 writers. Sites of previous research on L2 student-teacher writing conferences have focused on students in higher education settings in US universities. These studies have focused on L2 students in first-year composition courses (Ji, 2017; Liu, 2009; Maliborska & You, 2016) and an intensive English program (Eckstein, 2013). Further research on L2 student-teacher writing conferences might focus on other populations, such as students in pre-university courses, high schools, or students in graduate-level courses. Research might also focus on L2 student-teacher writing conferences in EFL contexts.

## Conclusion

The student-teacher writing conference can be an effective means of providing feedback and assisting multilingual writers in composition classes. However, in order to maximize potential benefits for multilingual students, it is important to reflect on whether common conferencing approaches are effective for multilingual writers. Rather than maintaining a rigid one-size-fits-all approach to student-teacher conferencing, each session should be adjusted to meet the needs of the individual student. The degree to which a conference session is dialogic should be individualized to the student and the purpose of the conference. Some writing conferences might be teacher-directed but effective. Furthermore, there should be a degree of flexibility regarding the order in which different aspects of writing are addressed. Higher-order concerns do not have to strictly be addressed first. They might be dealt with first, but they might also be covered in conjunction with lower-order concerns, or they might follow them. Conferences can be designed to focus on a number or writing issues, some of which might be language related. Some conferences might even focus exclusively on language issues. Recent research on conferencing with multilingual writers has shown that many students' desires and expectations counter traditional prescriptions of conferencing. However, this does not mean that instructors should focus on a conferencing pedagogy that is the inverse of traditional pedagogy. There is not necessarily one right approach for conducting conferences with L2 writers. What is important is to respond to the needs of each student. It is a contradiction to say that the student-teacher conference allows students the opportunity to work within their ZPDs through individualized instruction and, at the same time, expect that conferences should be carried out uniformly for all students, especially when many of the current ideals for conferencing were initially designed for L1 students nearly forty years ago. In considering a student's ZPD, the instructor must mindfully take into account the student's background, their preferences and desires, as well as personal goals and institutional requirements for their writing.

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