An Exploration of the Teacher-Student Writing Conference and the Potential Influence of Self-Efficacy

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AN EXPLORATION OF THE TEACHER-STUDENT WRITING CONFERENCE AND
THE POTENTIAL INFLUENCE OF SELF-EFFICACY

By

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To my family
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to examine the nature of scheduled teacher-student writing conferences with confident and less confident students. The participants of the study were fifth-graders from a public elementary school in the Southeastern United States. The guiding assumptions of this study were 1) the nature of conferences can be investigated by focusing on the length, number and functions of questions asked, content of the discussion (ideas/mechanics), participants’ roles and praise statements; and 2) the nature of student participation during conferences varies based on their level of perceived self-efficacy. A qualitative study design involving multiple case studies was used. Data were collected in both classrooms using the pre-and post Writing Self-Efficacy Scale (Pajares, Miller, & Johnson, 1999) as adapted from Shell, Murphy, & Bruning (1989), as well as students’ written performance scores from students’ writing samples, audio and video-taped teacher-student writing conferences, audio-taped interviews with teachers and students, and field observations. Collected evidence was described and interpreted using qualitative methods. Qualitative data that came from the analyses of recorded writing conferences also presented that conferences of students with higher and lower levels of self-efficacy differed in terms of focus, ownership, conference agenda, turn taking, frequency of talk, numbers and functions of the questions asked, numbers of praise statements provided by the teacher, and amount of outside interruptions. This study has implications for practitioners and researchers.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

I find it curious that the great debate in America still centers on how to teach our children to read, not on their learning to write. Unless children see themselves as authors with something to say, as writers with the power to initiate texts that command the attention of others, they may remain as sheep both in the classroom and later in the larger society. (Graves, 1994, p. 44-45)

This quote underscores the dearth of research on writing in comparison to reading, despite the advances made over the past three decades (Graham & Perin, 2007). In fact, only as recently as the late 70s did process research become a revolutionary new paradigm in composition studies, contrasting traditional or product-oriented studies with process writing (Hairston, 1994; Nagin, 2003).

In contrast to the traditional view of teaching writing, the teacher who uses the process writing approach sees writing as a social activity and accepts writers as independent and active participants of the writing process. In process writing approach classes, students frequently choose their topics, write multiple drafts, talk, ask questions, give feedback to one another, confer with the teacher and share their work. Since most process advocates think of writing as rewriting (Atwell, 1998, 2003; Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983; Lain, 2007; and Murray, 1978, 1980, 1982) the writing conferences are the heart of the process writing approach.

In the writing conference, all students have something to tell and teach us about both their knowledge and writing style. “The teacher who conducts conferences has a strong appetite for learning, both about the information the child shares, and what such facts reveal about the child and how he writes” (Graves, 1983, p. 99-100). This is why it is important and necessary to conduct writing conferences. More importantly, the central issue is using conferences to help students realize their potential. As Graves states, “Children discover both new information, and the personal satisfaction that goes with knowing something, when they hear the information from their own mouths” (p. 138) which also increase the level of their perceived self-efficacy. “Instructional programs such as the writers’ workshop approach to writing instruction have as a key priority the building of a child’s sense of confidence in writing” (Pajares, Miller, & Johnson, 1999, p.
It is vital to have students not only acquire knowledge related to content matter but also gain a sense of confidence in themselves. In an interview with Richard Evans (1989), Bandura recommends that teachers change how students think in order to change how students behave. He maintains that people with similar skills behave differently depending on their different levels of perceived self-efficacy. “Skills are a generative rather than a fixed capability and perceived efficacy plays a critical role in whether they are used well, poorly, or extraordinarily” (Evans, 1989, p. 53).

Despite the recommendations of Graves (1983, 1994), Atwell (1988, 1998), Calkins (1986), Murray (1979), Newkirk (1989), Sperling (1994), and Patthey-Chavez & Ferris (1997) still most teachers do not regularly include conferencing as an instructional format in the classroom. There are several reasons for this. First, testing writing is a priority. Second, teachers feel that they do not have enough time because they have many other subjects to cover. Third, they do not see the value and necessity of writing conferences in their curriculum. Fourth, they do not feel comfortable holding conferences nor have knowledge of conferences as effective strategies to teach writing (Kara-Soteriou & Kaufman, 2002; Lerner, 2005).

The importance of writing conferences, however, has been documented in several studies, which explain their positive effects on students’ writing achievement (Graves, 1983; Hansen, 1987; Harris, 1986), attitudes (McAndrew and Reigstad, 2001), and self-efficacy toward writing (Harris, 1995a; Kelly, 1995; Wong, Butler, Ficzere, & Kuperis, 1997).

The literature clearly points out that writing conferences, in which independence and ownership are promoted, increase students’ achievement in writing (Jacobs & Karliner, 1977; Koshik, 2002). Equally important is that students, seeing their achievement, progress, and potential increase their level of perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993; Jinks & Lorsbach, 2003, Snowman & Biehler, 2003). The purpose of this study was to examine the nature of teacher-student writing conferences. It also sought to determine if students’ levels of self-efficacy could inform conferences. Most of the research on conferences examines the nature and the quality of writing conferences as they affect revision (Harris, 1986; Nickel, 2001; Place, 2003; Wong, Butler, Ficzere, & Kuperis, 1997) and interaction between the teacher/tutor and the students/tutees.
(Anderson, 2000; Boudreaux, 1998; Freedman & Sperling, 1985; Jacob, 1982). With this study, the researcher aimed to describe writing conferences and explore whether writing conferences could be informed by students’ perceived self-efficacy. Confidence and competence are said to be necessary (Bandura, 1977, 1993) by-products of conferences. For instance, when conferences are conducted according to practices advocated by process researchers students gain knowledge about writing skills they need. Having these increased skills gives students the confidence and competence to see themselves as authors. On the other hand, when conferences are done inappropriately the writing conferences might have the opposite outcome, thus hindering students’ competence and making them dependent on teachers’ expertise and comments. The absence of conferences leaves students with a missed opportunity to develop and improve feelings of self-efficacy and, in turn, improve writing (Atwell, 1988; Graves, 1983; Harris, 1995a, 1986; Kelly, 1995).

Students’ beliefs that they have the potential to be successful take a long time to develop. One advantage of the teacher-student conference is the individual attention given to the writer. Too often, students with a low level of knowledge and self-efficacy are easily lost and invisible in whole group activities. However, teacher-student writing conferences offer each individual the appropriate and necessary level of help, experience and encouragement needed to compete not with others but at one’s own pace (Beach, 1989; Carnicelli, 1980; Glasswell, Parr, and McNaughton, 2003; Harris, 1995b; Lerner, 2005; Murray, 1985). Additionally, knowing our students and seeing them as individuals who have different backgrounds, skills, interests, and needs, are keys to their success. Teachers have opportunities to gain information about the personality and skills of each student during five-minute daily writing conferences.

**Purpose of the Study**

The study examined the nature of the scheduled teacher-student writing conference and the role of students’ perceived self-efficacy during teacher-student writing conferences. Because the quality of teacher-student writing conferences was not easy to determine, this study aimed to highlight the common patterns that occurred during the conferences with students who had low and high levels of perceived self-efficacy. The findings of this study have pedagogical implications for educators and practitioners.
who are preparing to scaffold and facilitate student learning through the writing conference.

Research Questions

The study investigated the nature of teacher-student writing conferences and, more importantly, the feelings teacher and students had about the conferences held during an academic semester. Therefore, the research questions of this study were:

1. What is the nature of scheduled teacher-student conferences between a teacher and four fifth-grade students?
2. Can teacher-student writing conferences be informed by students’ perceived self-efficacy?

Moreover, several assumptions were generated and tested as part of the research.

These assumptions were:

1. The nature of conferences can be investigated by focusing on the length, number and functions of questions asked, content of the discussion (ideas/mechanics), participants’ roles and praise statements.
2. Students with different levels of perceived self-efficacy perform differently during the conferences, and parallel to this, reflect or describe writing conferences differently.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is based on a cognitive and social constructivist model for learning as it relates to writing conferences. Vygotsky (1987) claims that social interaction is essential for learning to occur. Before making learning and skills internal, students first need to interact with their teachers who are more experienced and capable. Teachers collaborate and scaffold learning and support students in the zone of proximal development. According to Vygotsky, students can solve harder problems, and learn more and faster with the help of others than working alone. Therefore, in terms of collaboration, guiding, and modeling, writing conferences provide opportunities for teachers to scaffold strategies and content for the student according to individual level, needs, and skills.
Piaget (1952a), also known as a constructivist theorist, argues that for children to organize patterns of behavior or thoughts they need to interact with their environment. New knowledge must be accommodated or assimilated.

Whenever children gain a new skill which does not fit into an existing schema or practice, the process of accommodation is necessary (Piaget, 1952a). Accommodation is the process by which existing understandings are modified or adapted so that new information can be assimilated and adjusted to the environment. Assimilation provides a quantitative change in cognitive structures or schema whereas accommodation provides a qualitative change. According to Piaget (1952a), these changes affect children’s mental functioning so children transform or change previous experiences when dealing with new situations. While accommodating their behaviors, children still seek a balance, equilibration, and they organize their schemes to maintain stability and understandings of the environment. Cognitive conflict or disequilibrium can arise when experiences do not agree with existing understandings or predictions and plays a critical role in motivating a learner to learn.

Even though both Vygotsky (1934/1986) and Piaget (1952a) argue that social interaction is necessary for cognitive development and learning, they differ somewhat on the emphasis they place on individuals or groups and the direction of internal cognitive processes. For Piaget (1952b), development starts with (a) nonverbal autistic thought and continues as (b) egocentric thought, (c) socialized speech, and (d) logical thinking. For Vygotsky (1934/1986) the order of this development differs, thus, the schema development is “first, social, then egocentric, then inner speech” (p. 35-36). According to him, the direction of the development of thinking is “not from the individual to social, but from social to individual” (p. 36). Vygotsky (1987) supports children’s potential capabilities, and explains cultural differences in children’s cognitive development.

Both Vygotsky (1934/1986) and Piaget (1973) believe that students actively construct their own learning. In this tradition, teachers prepare classroom environments in which students’ thinking will be challenged; teachers are familiar with how students learn at different stages; and teachers ask questions to encourage students to think further to develop their ideas. Following Piaget (1952b), teachers would recognize that meaningful learning occurs when people create new knowledge by experimenting, inquiring,
reflecting, realizing, and discussing. In reference to this point, writing conferences are excellent opportunities for students to ask questions, describe, clarify, discover, and confer with an audience.

Piaget and Vygotsky’s work provide implications for teachers and learners’ roles in classrooms. For instance, they provide guidelines for how to model, explain, and ask probing questions of the learner as well as create challenging experiences that facilitate learner thinking.

The goal of the writing conference is to develop competent and confident writers (Graves, 1989, 1994; Calkins, 1986; Atwell, 1987, 1998; Flynn, 1993). Conferencing with writers is necessary in order to enhance ‘higher-order thinking’ skills because conferences allow a social environment for the novice and the expert to help the novice to become an independent writer (Flynn & King, 1993). The role of teachers in the conferences is “to help children expand thinking by asking questions, making comments, or introducing new ideas which challenge their thinking or provide additional food for thought” (Keebler, 1995, p. 5).

With the help of writing conferences, students gain higher-order thinking skills, and become independent, critical, and open-minded writers. All of these advanced skills help students increase their writing achievement and their perceived self-efficacy in relation to their achievement in writing.

Operational Definitions

The purposes of this study were to investigate the nature of the interaction during scheduled teacher-student writing conferences, and explore relationship between students’ level of perceived self-efficacy beliefs and their participation style during writing conferences. Below, the definitions of the terms that were used in this study are provided.

**Teacher-Student Writing Conferences**

Teacher-student writing conferences are individual, one-on-one teacher-student conversations about the students’ writing or writing process. “As students write, teachers often hold short, informal conferences to talk with them about their writing or to help them solve a problem related to their writing” (Tompkins, 1990, p. 370).


Teacher-Centered Writing Conferences

In teacher-centered writing conferences the teacher asks several closed or leading questions, does most of the talking and problem solving (Reigstad, 1980; Reigstad & McAndrew, 1984). In this study, teacher-centered writing conferences refer to interactions in which a teacher attempts to address more than three issues in the student’s writing, determines conference agenda, maintains ownership and power by providing most of the solutions, and takes more than half of the speaking turns. The teacher also dominates the conference discussion by asking a majority of the questions, offering only general praise statements and allowing herself and others to interrupt the writing conferences.

Balanced Writing Conferences

Balanced writing conferences refer to the conference interactions where both teacher and student act as equal partners in terms of determining conference agenda, providing suggestions, asking equal number of questions, and taking almost equal number of turns. In balanced conferences the teacher focuses her attention on correcting two to three issues. Also if interruptions do occur they are kept short so that the total amount of interruptions will not take up more than 15% of conference time.

Student-Centered Writing Conferences

Student-centered writing conferences refer to interactions in which the teacher provides opportunities for students to be active participants in determining the conference agenda, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the written texts and providing solutions. Students are also given the opportunity to ask more of the questions during conference interaction, take more speaking turns, and talk longer.

It should be noted that in the student-centered category on the rubric, the teacher is an agent for facilitating and providing opportunities for students to become active participants in their own learning. This is consistent with research on classroom discourse that shows teachers are typically in power positions but can create productive environments for students (Berliner, 2000; Cazden, 2001; Hatch & Shulman, 2006; Shulman, 2004) including managing and avoiding interruptions during conference interaction. Also, in student-centered writing conferences, the students receive both specific and general praise statements from teachers.
Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is “the belief that one can execute certain behaviors or reach certain goals” (Ormrod, 2003, p. 152). “Self-efficacy refers to people’s specific judgments and beliefs about their abilities like reading a book, writing a poem, etc.” (Walker, 2003, p. 173). “Self-efficacy refers to a set of beliefs regarding a person’s competence to formulate and carry out a particular course of action. Self-efficacy is task-specific and is not conceptualized as a global personality characteristic” (Jackson, 2002, p. 243).

Self-Efficacy Scale

The Writing Self-Efficacy Scale (Pajares, Miller, & Johnson, 1999) is a survey with 9 items designed to measure students’ confidence when judging their composition, grammar, usage, and mechanical skills appropriate to their academic level. The items in the survey ask students how confident they are that they can perform specific writing skills on a scale from 0 (no chance) to 100 (completely certain).

Writing Performance

Writing performance is the level of student writing quality as measured by using the rubric of the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT writing). Students were asked to write two expository essays on similar topics that were graded on a scale of 1-6, according to focus, good organization, supporting details, and proper writing skills (conventions).

Methodology

A qualitative study design with multiple case studies was used to study scheduled teacher-student writing conferences over a period of 10 weeks in one fifth-grade classroom. Data collection included self-efficacy data and writing scores in the study classroom and a designated reference classroom.

To study the nature of conferences, all the conferences were audio and videotaped. The nature of the teacher-student conferences were evaluated using a rubric (See Appendix E) designed by the author and based on the principles of useful teaching techniques and effective writing conferences (Anderson, 2000; Atwell, 1987, 1998; Bissex, 1982; Boynton, 2003; Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1982, 1983; Harris & Silvia, 1993; Keebler, 1995; Lain, 2007; Lerner. 2005; McAndrew & Reigstad, 2001; Murray, 1979, 1982; Reigstad & McAndrew, 1984; Sandmann, 2006; Sommers, 1982; Wilcox, 1997).
Thus, each writing conference was labeled according to instructional-interactional styles (teacher-centered, balanced, or student-centered) and according to conference features such as focus, conference agenda, ownership, and reflected questions.

Additionally, the quality and functions of the questions asked by the teacher and the students, the focus of the conference (whether teachers were working on global concerns first, such as content, before dealing with mechanics), and the match or mismatch between the kinds and functions of writing conferences were discussed. Audio-taped interviews with the teacher and her fifth graders were also conducted prior to scheduled teacher-student writing conferences and at the end of the 10 weeks.

Students in both the study and reference classrooms were given similar writing prompts at the beginning and at the end of the study to determine writing performance. Their written texts were scored by two raters using a scale from 1 to 6 based on FCAT criteria.

Finally, the researcher considered in what ways teacher-student writing conferences could be informed by students’ perceived self-efficacy and writing competence. The Writing Self-Efficacy Scales (Pajares, Miller, & Johnson, 1999) were administered as pre-post intervention to all fifth graders. Four students selected for case study work were identified based on their responses to the pre-Writing Self-Efficacy Scale. Students with mean scores from 0 to 50 were grouped under the category of “low self-efficacy” those with mean scores between 51 and 100 were categorized as “high self-efficacy”.

Reliability of the Study

Because the researcher observed the students five days a week for seventy-five minutes a day for over a ten-week period, the “Hawthorne Effect” was minimized and greater confidence could be placed on writing achievement and self-efficacy improvement.

Even though the FCAT writing rubric has a limited measurement scale (1-6) and does not yield large recognizable changes in students’ progress over a 10 week period, this rubric has been tested several times and found to be a reliable and valid tool for assessing students’ writing achievement throughout the state of Florida.
The issue of bias, reliability, and validity must be considered when unstandardized tools are used for data analyses. The rubric that was used in this study to analyze the nature of teacher-student writing conferences was created based on information and recommendations from the literature. Additionally it was reviewed, revised, and validated by a rater who was experienced in teaching language arts.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter consists of two main parts. To begin, the first part of the chapter a) defines teacher-student writing conferences; b) reviews the literature related to the types of conferences that have been traditionally implemented in process classrooms; and c) discusses the characteristics of effective writing conferences. The second part of the chapter examines related research in four major categories; effects of writing conferences on student’s writing achievement, learning, independence and authority; effective and ineffective writing conferences; interaction during writing conferences; and effects of writing conferences on students’ self-efficacy.

Definitions of Conferences

Conferences are “private conversations between teacher and student about the student’s writing or writing processes” (Sperling, 1991, p. 132). Murray (1985) called these conversations “professional discussion between writers” on what works and what does not work in students’ writings (p. 140). The writing conference was considered as an instructional format for demonstrating the basics of process writing approaches: 1) children should experience that what and how they write are important and valued, 2) children should be active participants in the process, 3) teachers should guide, model, and engage students in dialogue, and 4) children should see themselves as writers (Keebler, 1995). While emphasizing the connection between constructivist views and process writing approaches, Keebler (1995) discusses teachers’ role as helping children to expand their thinking by asking questions, making comments, or introducing different ideas that encourage and force students to think more and create diverse ideas.

According to Anderson (2000), the most important tasks and functions of writing conferences are 1) “communicating with a student related to his/her written text or writing, and 2) providing strategies to be better writers” (p. 25). In other words, conferences “encourage the student to reconsider what has been accomplished and to consider what will be attempted next” (Murray, 1985, p. 161). Calkins (1986) argued that the “Writing process approach to teaching writing is also known as the ‘conference approach’. Conferring is the heart of the writing workshops” (p. 224).

Over the last three decades, writing conferences were investigated under different names reflecting their multiple functions including: response sessions (Hansen, 1987); assisted
performance (Vygotsky, 1978); face-to-face interaction (Reigstad & McAndrew, 1984); one-to-one teaching (Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983; Harris, 1986); one-to-one interaction (North, 1995; Sperling, 1991); conversation about the student’s paper (Anderson, 2000; Carnicelli, 1980; Freedman & Sperling, 1985); private communication/conversations (Hiatt, 1975; Sperling, 1991); interactive dialogues (Wong, Butler, Ficzere, and Kuperis, 1997); conversational dialogue (Freedman & Sperling, 1985); dialectic encounter (Newkirk, 1989); and meaningful contact (Lerner, 2005).

Though there is more than one way to label writing conferences, their process and purpose is more consistently defined by researchers. For example, all conferences have a purpose, follow predictable structure, and put students in the position of being partners for collaboration (Anderson, 2000). In these conferences there is no single process to follow. Instead, conferences can be conducted differently according to the students’ needs, writing proficiency levels, and roles (Newkirk, 1989).

Kinds of Teacher-Student Writing Conferences

Calkins (1986) listed kinds of conferences as content, design, process, evaluation, and editing conferences. Anderson (2000) explained that teachers conduct four kinds of conferences: 1) rehearsal conferences – to help students find ideas to write about, 2) drafting conferences – to assist students with developing the big idea and determine which genre and style to write in, 3) revision conferences - to help students improve their drafts, and 4) editing conferences - to help students become better editors.

Reigstad (1980) listed three other kinds of conferences: student centered, teacher centered, and collaborative. Reigstad observed writing teachers when they conferred with their students and recorded repetitive patterns while categorizing the writing conferences. In student-centered-conferences “students are treated as conversational equals and fellow writers….as students initiate conversation about various problems with composing, the tutor suggests strategies or alternatives” (Reigstad & McAndrew, 1984, p. 30).

In the collaborative conference, observed by Reigstad, the relationship between the teacher and the student changed from teacher-student to one of equal conversational partners. Both teacher and student had equal chances to open, lead, and conclude the conversation. However, in a teacher-centered conference, the student tended to sit passively as “the tutor reads through the draft and, pen in hand, corrects mechanical errors or supplies alternative, improved
sentences and paragraphs. The tutor asks few questions, and the questions are usually closed or leading” (Reigstad & McAndrew, 1984, p. 31). In this kind of conference, the teacher moved from one problem to another by doing most of the talking and correcting. In conclusion, Reigstad argued that student-centered writing conferences were better because they allowed students to be more active and do most of the work by talking, finding problems, and discovering solutions.

Characteristics of Effective Writing Conferences

It has been argued, in the first chapter, that the goals of writing conferences are to inform both the teacher and the student about the student’s interests, goals, writing skills, and progress. Additionally, students have opportunities to talk, ask questions, provide possible solutions, and get adequate feedback, from a more experienced writer, during one-on-one and welcoming writing conferences. In order to reach these positive outcomes, writing conferences should be carefully planned and conducted based on the following characteristics of effective writing conferences:

- **Being predictable:** predictable conferences make students familiar with the steps and the procedures that also help teachers to save time (Anderson, 2000; Graves, 1982, 1983).

- **Being focused:** when determining what to focus on, teachers need to remember two principles. The first principle is, teachers should focus on one or two major concerns in students’ texts during a single conference. The second principle is, the concerns related to the content and meaning of the texts should be addressed before dealing with usage and convention problems (Anderson, 2000; Atwell, 1987, 1998; Bissex, 1982; Boynton, 2003; Graves, 1982, 1983; Harris & Silva, 1993; Lain, 2007; McAndrew & Reigstad, 2001; Murray, 1979, 1982; Reigstad & McAndrew, 1984; Sandmann, 2006; Sommers, 1982; Wilcox, 1997).

- **Providing solutions:** teachers need to demonstrate what they mean rather than tell a child what to do or what to write (Atwell, 1987, 1998; Graves, 1982, 1983; Lain, 2007).

- **Exchanging roles between teachers and students:** students should be encouraged to ask questions and provide solutions (Athanasourelis, 2006; Atwell, 1987, 1998; Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1982, 1983; Lain, 2007).
• Providing meaningful conversation: both teachers and students should talk during the conferences (Atwell, 1987, 1998; Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1982, 1983; Lerner, 2005).

• Having humor: playful structure, which is a mix of experimentation, discovery, and humor, is also necessary for holding a quality writing conference (Graves, 1982, 1983).

In sum, effective writing conferences include predictable and focused discussion between teacher and students that allow students to generate their own ideas and solutions for their writing problems. During the conferences teachers and students exchange their roles back and forth and they both have equal chances to talk, to ask questions, describe, clarify, summarize and so on. Finally, while conferencing with students, teachers keep in mind that humor is effective and even necessary while criticizing students’ work.

So far, definitions, types and characteristics of writing conferences have been reviewed. Below, the related research on writing conferences in four major categories are presented. These four categories are; research on effects of writing conferences on student’s writing achievement, learning, independence and authority; research on effective and ineffective writing conferences; research on interaction during writing conferences; and research on effects of writing conferences on students’ self-efficacy.

Research on Effects of Writing Conferences on Students’ Writing Achievement, Learning, Independence, and Authority

Several studies purport that writing conferences make students better writers and improve their habits and attitudes toward learning, independence, and authority. These assertions are presented in the following sections.

Making Students Better At Writing and Revising

Effects of writing conferences on students’ writing and revision skills were the focus of several studies (Bell, 2002; Eickholdt, 2004; Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Haneda, 2000; Hewett, 2006; Koshik, 2002; Martone, 1992; Steward, 1991; and Wong, Butler, Ficzere, & Kuperis, 1996). These studies not only consider the final written performance achievement of students but also increased aptitude for engaging in the writing process and revision. In a qualitative study, Steward (1991) investigated the beginning writing
behaviors of 11 five-and six-year old learning disabled students. The researcher observed a total of eight writing conferences between these students and their teacher for three months. The researcher chose one student as a case study participant for further analysis. The students were asked to write two books and had four story conferences for each book. Data collection included interviews with the teacher and the aide, children’s two written and published stories, transcripts of story conferences, and teacher’s records in which he daily took notes about each student.

The students’ conference questions and comments were categorized into two groups as a) comments about the speaker’s own story and b) comments and questions about the stories of others. The teacher’s comments and questions were categorized into three groups. These groups were: a) class control, b) story and text-related comments, and c) picture-related comments.

The researcher found that the control type of comments, produced by the teacher, were almost the same for both books. Of all the talk, thirty percent was from Book 1, and seventy percent from Book 2. Additionally, since students became experienced on receiving the questions and comments and talking about the parts of the stories, their conference talk for the second books was longer than the first books’ conference talk and it focused on the story. So, the amount of talk, produced by the students, about the pictures decreased from Book 1 to Book 2. “The teacher’s shift in emphasis from pictures to text mirrors the children’s growing focus on the text elements of their stories, and illustrates the reciprocal nature of learning in the zone of proximal development” (p. 207). Thus, the interaction during the writing conferences shaped the following drafts on the stories and the content of the later conference talk of these five-and-six-year old students.

In another three-month research study with young learners, Eickholdt (2004) investigated the nature and results of scaffolding during writing conferences. Data included transcriptions of audio-taped conferences between the teacher and 19 first-graders, field notes of classroom observations, and reflective teaching journals. Secondary data sources included samples of students’ writing.

The dialogues revealed that scaffolding in this writing workshop classroom consisted of three major processes: assess, decide, and teach. Earlier conference talk...
showed examples of assessing and deciding, whereas teaching was observed in the later parts of the conference talk. Further analyses of conference talk also illustrated that the teacher used several strategies to scaffold her students including modeling, referring to previous mini-lessons, helping students visualize, clarifying, labeling, affirming, and checking back. Analyses of talk during the conferences and students’ work drafted after conferences demonstrated that students benefited from scaffolding. For example, students displayed the ability to refine their writing craft and implement writing concepts. Additionally, the students became skillful at self-assessment and revision based on their own evaluations of the writing. Students’ written works also revealed their ability to revise their writings. They revised “their writing to match their growing understanding of the craft of writing” (p. 84).

Wong, Butler, Ficzere, & Kuperis (1996) investigated a) the effects of strategy instruction on students’ opinion essay writing performances from pre-test to post-test, b) whether students, who received strategy instruction, maintained their improvement in writing, and c) whether these students with strategy instruction showed greater writing skills in opinion essays than students did without the strategy training.

There were 18 students (13 males and 5 females) in the trained group and 20 students (11 males and 9 females) in the untrained group. All of the participants were from modified English classes in grades eight and nine. Seventy-six percent of the students had LD while the rest of them (24%) were low achievers whose best grade was a C-.

Three components of their six-week-long strategy instruction were 1) providing a prompt sheet to facilitate students’ planning process, 2) asking students to type their opinion essays, and 3) teaching students how to revise their essays with interactive dialogues –conferring. Conferences between the teacher and the student and between the students were the main part of the instruction.

Both groups had pre-writing grammar and pre-writing vocabulary tests. Students in each group wrote two opinion essays. Students were also asked to fill in three questionnaires for self-efficacy, attitudes, and metacognition in writing. The students in trained group received three periods of 50 minutes instruction –plan, type, and revise- for each essay. One week after the training was completed, students in both groups were
asked to write an opinion essays as their post-test and one week after the post-test essays, they wrote another opinion essay as their maintenance test. All of the essays were read and scored for clarity and cogency.

Analyses of pre-writing performances revealed no significant difference between the two groups. The findings of the study revealed that the students in both groups increased their writing scores. The students in the trained group profited from the intervention. Students “not only increased clarity in their opinion essays, but also increased ability to convince readers of the soundness of their arguments” (p. 206). Results of the study also indicated that trained students maintained their clarity and cogency skills in their maintenance opinion essays. Additionally, the researcher found that “the trained group surpassed the untrained control group in the qualities of clarity and cogency in their written opinion essays” (p. 206-207). Non significant findings were found for attitudes and metacognition but self-efficacy showed a significant relationship with writing.

The study by Wong et. al. (1996) with adolescent students suggested that interactive dialogues –conferencing- helped students to increase their persuasive essay writing skills. Evidence on college students, starting from the earliest to latest, also showed that writing conferences made students better at writing and revising.

Goldstein & Conrad (1990) investigated a) the extent of students’ input and meaning negotiated in ESL writing conferences, and b) the relationships between the conference dialogue and the successful revision in students’ following drafts.

Three advanced ESL college students (two females and one male) and their instructor, who has been using conferences as a central part of her curriculum for four years, participated in the study. The students wrote multiple drafts of expository papers and had a scheduled 20-minute conference every other week. The week they did not have a conference, the students received the written feedback from the instructor.

The researchers transcribed a total of ten audio-recorded conferences (each female student had three conferences while the male student had four) and analyzed them based on seven features: episodes, discourse structure, topic nomination, invited nomination, turns, questions, and negotiation. Ten expository papers (three papers for each female student and four papers for the male student) were also analyzed for students’ revision
activities. First drafts of each paper were written before the conference and discussed during the conference. After each conference, students produced their second drafts.

The analyses of the conference talk illustrated the individual differences among students. Thus, each student contributed different amounts of input and they clarified meaning differently during the conferences. Students’ later drafts showed that students included more concrete details, which were discussed during the previous conference, to give the reader more vivid representation of what they are describing. The results of the study not only highlighted that conference talk was effecting subsequent revisions on following drafts but also the relationships between the negotiation and revision.

Similar to Goldstein & Conrad (1990), Hewett (2006), in an empirical study, analyzed the conference dialogue and its effects on students’ amounts and types of revisions in their writing. The author studied fifty-two synchronized online conferences between fourteen online instructors and twenty-three undergraduate students. The students were required to write a metacognitive learning letter, three expository, and three argumentative texts. Based on two raters’ full agreement, the interaction units, during online conferences, were grouped under four categories: 1) linguistic function – inform, direct, elicit, and suggest, 2) general area of attention – writing or tutorial, 3) focus of consciousness – content, form, process, context, and reference, and 4) a phatic utterance – back channel cues such as “hmmm”, “ok”, “thinking”…etc.

Analyses of the conference interaction revealed that 25% of the conversation focused on ideas and content, 62% asked for help for specific writing problems for instance, developing a thesis sentence, providing details, and clarification, and 13% of the interactions were dealing with surface related concerns such as grammar, mechanics, and correct ways of citing sources.

To investigate the effects of these interactions on students’ writing, the author copied students’ drafts and analyzed the amount of revision completed based on conference dialogues. The findings of the study showed that of the 52 interactions, 38 (73%) resulted in revisions on students’ written texts. Since students mainly focused on the ideas and the meaning surface level revisions could be connected to the conference interaction. On the other hand 19% of the revisions were related to the ideas, while 44%
were concerned with changing or developing microstructural meaning, and 10% macrostructural meaning.

In a four-month-long study, Martone (1992) investigated four at-risk college students’ conversations during conferences with an experienced instructor. The researcher focused on describing recurring patterns of collaboration and conversational interactions, occurred between the instructor and students, to be able to uncover students’ realizations. The data for this study was collected from total of 16 audio-taped writing conferences, field notes, and students’ drafts for multiple assignments. In their course, the students were assigned to write several papers such as a cultural autobiography, a research paper, and an emotional experience that needed to be written from four points of views: inner voice, face to face with a friend, letter to a friend, and formal essay. After listening to the each tape, conferences were transcribed into the word processor. The researcher’s notes and students’ written drafts were used to provide contextual details and supports.

Conference talk was classified and coded as: a) active listening and checking; b) problematizing-diagnosing problems; c) prompting meta-talk; and d) negotiating turn taking. Analyses of conference talk revealed that students came to the realization of audience awareness and features of quality writing. Several behaviors, displayed by students during conferences, were also coded: 1) talking aloud to test their thoughts; 2) beginning to reread a sentence or writing a new sentence for herself; 3) reflecting or composing freely; 4) questioning the words she had chosen to convey ideas; 5) raising questions about the completeness of her own text, and 6) deciding to change the text so the reader can follow her thinking. As described above “students established routines of talking, listening and problematizing which helped them develop as thinkers and writers” (p. 336).

Further, the researcher listed several positive outcomes of writing conferences observed during the study. For instance, a) students talked actively about intellectual issues; b) students began to develop these issues in their texts; c) students realized the importance of readers’ perspectives; d) students hypothesized the questions readers might have; e) students experienced illustrating writing problems; f) students learned ways to make textual changes; and g) students recognized the importance of conversations on
developing ideas and creating new meanings. Therefore, this research claimed that “when at-risk college students are provided with regular opportunities to discuss texts with the guidance of a skilled listener, they can develop greater thinking, writing, and conference competencies” (p. 350-351).

In a 13-week-long action research project, Haneda (2000) investigated the setting of goals for revision and subsequent text revisions by examining a total of 27 audio-recorded writing conferences between nine college students and their instructor. Data included audio recordings of writing conferences and three retrospective interviews with students. Students’ written products: first and final drafts, and a questionnaire concerning students’ language background were also collected.

The study revealed that topic negotiability was higher between teacher and students when they talked about ideas, content, and discourse organization of the text, but was less when they talked about language use and mechanics. Goals for revision affected the topics students discussed and the roles they displayed during conferences. Research also showed that writing conferences affected students positively. They learned specific information about their writing styles during conferences and used it to revise and improve essays. Students also acknowledged an increase in their writing skills, which was also supported by quantitative analyses. The study suggested that writing conferences contributed to students’ subsequent revisions. Further analysis of the types of revision revealed that the majority of the revisions done by the advanced group had an ideational and rhetorical focus while the intermediate group mainly focused on “form related revisions concerned with linguistic accuracy” (p. 183). Additionally, most of the revisions made, especially by the intermediate group, traced to conference talk.

Bell (2002) conducted a two-part study. In the first part of the study, the researcher investigated the nature of the conferences and roles of the tutors (to be described in detail under research studies on interaction during writing conferences). In the second part of the study (reported here), the researcher investigated whether undergraduate students who voluntarily attend one-to-one writing conferences on rough drafts improve as writers and produce better final products. The researcher audio-taped and transcribed the writing conferences between a tutor and 11 undergraduate students. Students’ intermediate and final drafts were analyzed to investigate whether there was an
improvement in students’ writing skills in terms of a) surface related concerns such as spelling, tense, number and modality, abbreviation, punctuation, and format; and b) meaning-preserving concerns such as additions, deletions, substitutions, permutations, distributions, and consolidations.

The researcher classified the writing conferences under two categories: (1) instructional focus: teaching the student or (2) assignment focus: fixing the paper. Ten of the tutoring sessions were instructional and one of the conferences had both an instructional focus and assignment focus. In terms of surface related concerns, the researcher counted changes in punctuation for 216 times, the most common change, format for 124 times, spelling for 61 times, and tense number and modality for 16 times. Substitution (105 times) was the highest in meaning-preserving changes students did, followed by deletions (74 times), additions (54 times), permutations (21 times), and distributions (3 times). As seen above, the researcher found that “the writers made on their final drafts the types of changes talked about during the one-to-one conferences, and most of the changes improved the papers” (p. 14).

Finally, in a conversation analytic study, Koshik (2002) investigated how four teachers talked to assist eight ESL college students during eight 20-minute to one-hour videotaped one-on-one writing conferences occurring during one semester. The researcher used a conversational analytic (CA) framework to analyze the conference talk and focused on revision strategies students engaged in due to designedly-incomplete utterances (DIU) provided by the teacher for students to revise and edit their mistakes. DIUs were mainly used to highlight the repetitions and grammar errors for self-correction. The instructors used DIUs as a) repetition of prior conference talk; b) extension of prior conference talk; and c) prompt to continue an action. The instructors used written responses and editing and grammar symbols to help students find the correct response.

Analyses of students’ explanatory synthesis papers demonstrated students’ common problems with the rules of English language that profiled the nature of the corrections done during the conferences. Analyses of conference talk showed that teachers had strategies to highlight the mistakes written on the essays. For instance, stretching the sounds in the last syllable, slowing down at the end of the utterance,
continuing intonation, pausing, and displaying occasional gestures were used by teachers
as strategies for targeting the trouble source. Teachers read students’ text and stopped
before the trouble source for students to correct during the conference talk. Therefore,
students had chances to correct the errors in their papers such as repetitions, omitted
words or letters, verb tenses, plurals and singulars, and irregular verbs. Koshik (2002)
stressed that letting students see their mistakes and giving them chances for self-
correction, during writing conferences, helped students to understand complex revision
and editing strategies that they might not have been able to discern themselves.

In conclusion, the related research on effects of writing conferences on students’
writing and revision skills shows that there are very few studies conducted with
elementary school students. Steward (1991) and Eickholdt (2004) showed that with
scaffolding, in writing conferences, even young learners can learn to talk about their
stories, the parts of their stories and how to make stories more alive. Wong, Butler,
Ficzere, & Kuperis (1996) demonstrated that with interactive dialogues adolescent
students improved clarity and cogency in their opinion essays. The studies with college
students also demonstrated that writing conferences make students better at writing and
revision in several ways. For example, students engage in negotiation and problem
solving (Martone, 1992); gain knowledge about criteria on better writing (Bell, 2002);
become skillful in diagnosing and finding solutions to problems (Koshik, 2002; Young &
Miller, 2004); see their problems and promote a better revising process (Goldstein &

Helping Students Learn Better and Increase Their Achievement

It has been argued that writing conferences increase students’ higher-order and
critical thinking skills as well as their learning by providing a social environment for the
expert to help the novice become an independent writer (Flynn & King, 1993). In
addition, writing conferences increase students’ learning; students learn more in
conferences than they learn by traditional methods and this happens in at least three
ways: 1) conferencing allows students to observe a real listener, who is asking questions
and reflecting on writers’ texts; they imitate this inquiry strategy when they compose
(Mabrito, 2006); 2) it enables hands on activity in which students’ own texts are in hand,
and 3) it provides an informal and friendly atmosphere. These findings are also supported

A quasi-experimental case study conducted by Mabrito (2006) compared the collaborative experiences during synchronous writing conferences versus asynchronous writing conferences. The author examined the amount, patterns, and the focus of interactions in two different conferencing styles between sixteen undergraduate students (eight females and eight males). Half of the students were instructed to meet for real-time-online discussions while the other half was instructed to join in non-real-time discussions about their writing. Later, the groups were switched, thus, each participant experienced both types of conferences. Transcripts of all sessions were analyzed under four categories as 1) text planned, 2) text written, 3) group procedures, and 4) group general. Communication units were also analyzed as either topic or comment. The findings of the study showed that students generated more conversation with several new topics during real-time meetings. During these meetings, the majority of the conversation was dealing with the procedures rather than the texts that students were writing. Still, 75% of the students agreed and 31% strongly agreed that conferencing in real-time with a partner was productive for these students.

Similar to the previous study, Edgington’s study with six college students also proved that students preferred and learned more by interacting with a real reader. These six students received three types of feedback: marginal comments, personal letters, and conferences with the instructor. The students composed different papers and for each paper they received a different kind of response. Thus, all the students received these three responses. The author investigated which response was more effective in terms of learning, audience awareness, and being able to write like a reader. To assess the quality and the effectiveness of each response style, the students evaluated the response separately in terms of elaboration, comments and teacher involvement, confusing comments, and involving students.

Marginal comments were the least favorite, since they hindered the elaboration between the instructor and the student and were the most confusing. Besides, these comments were vague and brief. Students thought that with marginal comments, the
teacher invested little time and did not show much interest in the overall quality of the text.

Personal letters on the other hand showed more teacher effort. They were longer indeed; however, students had difficulties finding the related sections from their texts that described the problem areas in the letters. In some instances, the teacher did not provide any feedback for the parts of the text that the students needed the most help.

One-on-one writing conferences were described as the most effective in terms of eliminating the misunderstandings and confusions, offering the most feedback, making students active, and giving students a voice to discuss their process of writing, and ask questions for clarifications. Being active participants and listening to a more experienced writer as a model, students felt more comfortable receiving feedback and learning their weaknesses and strengths.

Conducting one-on-one writing conferences are not only effective for students, teachers also learn a great deal about the art of writing while observing their students’ interaction and progress during conferences. Shin (2003) studied ten college students preparing to become ESOL teachers. Each student was required to work with an adult second-language learner for three months. The partners met once every two weeks. After each conference, the study participants wrote their reflections such as how the problem was assessed and solved, what they learned about students’ processes, and what they would change for the following conferences?

In this study, almost all the prospective teachers revealed their frustration with their failure to observe immediate progress in students’ writing. Later, the students realized that progress in writing took time and all students needed a patient reader. Additionally, prospective teachers learned that good writing requires a great effort. In short, based on the participants’ reflections, conducting writing conferences helped prospective teachers to learn how to 1) observe a second-language learner’s writing progress; 2) develop realistic expectations; and 3) be aware of themselves as writers.

Direct effects of writing conferences on students’ learning and increased academic achievement were investigated by Corden (2007), McLver & Wolf (1999), and Mitchell (2004).

Corden (2007) investigated the effects of explicit instruction of literary devices and a writer’s workshop approach, with frequent conferences, on the quality of students’
narrative writing skills. Eighteen experienced teachers from nine elementary schools joined in this year-long study. Each teacher had six case study students – two low achieving, two average, and two high achieving writers between the ages of 7 and 11. These students were selected according to their academic achievement in writing based on administered national exams.

During the study, the teachers attended developmental meetings and were able to argue and evaluate the progress in students’ writing. Students’ independent writing samples were also collected at the beginning and end of the study to argue the effects of explicit instruction and conferences. The teacher-student writing conferences were audio-taped and transcribed to determine whether students could show an awareness of audience and whether students could make effective suggestions or decisions to increase the quality of their writing. Additionally, peer-peer and peer-teacher discussions were video-recorded and transcribed.

The students’ written stories were analyzed based on a rubric, with four categories: structure, language effects, sentence construction, and planning-composing, which was also used by the national examination tests. According to a four level rubric, one being low and four being high, students’ written stories showed the features of level 1 and 2. At the end of the study, 77 of the 96 participants advanced one level while 19 children advanced two levels. Students’ initial texts a) lacked a recognizable story outline such as setting or opening; b) followed a linear pattern, c) had simple vocabulary with limited adjectives and adverbs with a basic sentence structure – subject, object, and verb. However, later, students produced quality texts with good openings, rich settings, correct punctuation marks, several adjectives and adverbs, varied sentence structures, and several connectives such as “and”, “but”, “so”, and “because”.

McIver & Wolf (1999) observed an experienced elementary school teacher’s interactions with her fourth-grade students to investigate students’ conferencing and writing skills. The teacher was observed for six days during a semester and purposely chosen because of having high achieving writers. During the conferences, the teacher asked open ended questions, listened to students’ purposes, allowed students to find problems, and encouraged them to provide suggestions for revisions. The students saw the teacher as a model and followed her conference style while they were conferencing with their peers. Thus, after listening to students’ conferences
with each other, the researchers realized that the students in this classroom were critical responders to language.

The researchers realized that it was the teacher-student interactions in conferences that helped students create good writing and generate instructive and educational conversations with their peers. “Through these interactions (teacher-student writing conferences), students not only learn to trust their inquisitive spirits, but also they effectively become English teacher, too” (p. 56).

In a qualitative case study, Mitchell (2004) observed 20 first-graders while they were conferencing with their teacher. The classroom teacher was purposefully selected due to her experience and success teaching the writer’s workshop. The three research questions of the study were: 1) how the teachers prepare and conduct the conferences, 2) what kinds of information or skills students used in their writing from what they learned in the writing conferences, and 3) benefits and limitations of writing conferences. The researcher chose four students (two girls and two boys) as her case study participants. The teacher had conferences three times a week and the researcher observed conferences for a couple of months.

Based on observation notes, students’ interviews and written texts, the researcher found that the teacher focused on one or two concerns, made connections with mini-lessons, used additional materials such as books and word walls during conferences. For the second question, kinds of skills and information used in writing conferences, the researcher found that students started to read their texts independently and had specific questions about spelling, word usage, and content before meeting with the teacher; and enjoyed having the teacher as an audience. Finally, the author found that writing conferences benefited students in term of having chances to talk and hear their conversations with the teacher which allowed students to see themselves as writers. Additionally, the researcher stated that writing conferences were necessary and important in developing students’ writing skills.

In conclusion, the research in this section showed that writing conferences could increase achievement by teaching students about the characteristics of good writing (McIver & Wolf, 1999) and improving their voice, audience awareness, spelling skills, and use of descriptive vocabulary (Corden, 2007; Mitchell, 2004).
Making Students Independent and Empowered Writers

Writing conferences purportedly contribute to student confidence (Harris, 1995a; Martinez, 2001); independence (Calkins, 1985; Harris, 1995a; Martinez, 2001; McIver & Wolf, 1999; Murray, 1979); and empowerment (Young & Miller, 2004). A number of qualitative studies conclude that conferences help students to interact with their own texts (McIver & Wolf, 1999) and experience the feeling of authority and ownership (Martinez, 2001; Steward, 1991).

Meeting alone with teachers, gaining individual feedback and help, and learning criteria for good writing, students soon become independent writers who know how to identify their own problems and writing solutions (Calkins, 1985; Graves, 1983; Murray, 1979). Donald Graves, Susan Sowers, and Lucy McCormick Calkins were funded by the National Institute of Education to observe and report on children’s writing development for two years in Atkinson, New Hampshire. Calkins’s (1985) work helped explain children’s increasing independence as writers. The researcher observed a fourth-grade classroom, for an academic semester, and focused on three students as her cases while investigating students’ writing processes such as voicing behaviors, eye movements, and pauses in general writing behaviors.

Over time, Calkins saw that these students, who previously had no idea about the writing process or how to revise their texts, started to confer all by themselves during and after writing their own texts. As Calkins (1985) explained, teacher-student writing conferences, in which the teacher focused on meaning and message, became a model for students to confer with themselves and to solve their emergent writing problems independently.

Consistent with Calkins’s (1985) findings, McIver & Wolf (1999) found that fourth-grade students who were experienced talking with a teacher, during one-to-one writing conferences, about their writings soon became their own tutors. The researchers examined the conference talk between the teacher and a student and between peers in terms of the content: the questions, explanations, suggestions, and examples provided by both participants. The researchers witnessed that the students were well-informed about their roles and were able to provide instructive feedback when conferring with a peer. By conferring with their teacher, students learned that they were able to make suggestions about content and form; became better communicators; gained knowledge about criteria on better writing; and interacted with their own texts.
Young and Miller (2004) video taped a series of four weekly writing conferences between an adult novice Vietnamese learner of English and his ESL writing instructor to investigate the effects of face-to-face interaction on the student’s revision skills. The researchers analyzed conference revision talk practice by coding both parties’ conversation according to eight categories: (1) attend –giving attention to student’s paper, (2) identify –finding the problem, (3) explain –justifying the need for revision, (4) direct –directing student for candidate revision, (5) candidate revision –completing the revision, (6) direct write –asking students to write the revision, (7) write –writing the revision, and (8) evaluate –evaluating the revision.

Analyses of the conference talk revealed that the student was more active in later conferences. In the first conference, the tutor was the active participant and performed the sequence of eight acts. Shortly, she diagnosed the majority of the problems and offered solutions to fix them. Thus, the student’s participation act was limited to rewriting the suggested revisions. Later on, the student became active in identifying problems, providing possible solutions, and self-correcting without the warning of the instructor. The tutor also created opportunities for the student to identify the problems and provide possible solutions for fuller participation in the conferring process. Therefore, at the end of the research, the researchers found that the student moved from peripheral to fuller participation in revision talk.

In conclusion, the related literature suggests that for several reasons writing conferences help students to be independent and empowered writers. These reasons are: students collaborate with a more experienced writer as a role model (McIver & Wolf, 1999); teacher-student writing conferences allow students to interact with their own text to determine its strengths and weaknesses (Calkins, 1985; McIver & Wolf, 1999); and teachers’ questioning strategies also teach students to develop audience awareness and criteria on better writing and become active participants who fully participate in the writing process (Young & Miller, 2004).

Research on Effective and Ineffective Writing Conferences

Previous information presented in this chapter described what are believed to be the characteristics of effective writing conferences. The following section presents detailed information regarding previous research studies that address the teacher-student
writing conferences not in terms of outcome measures but in terms of their content, structure, teachers’ and students’ roles, and process features.

To begin, both Walker and Elias (1987) and Kaufman (1998) observed experienced writing instructors’ conferences with their students to examine repeated patterns that were described as favorable features for effective writing conferences.

Walker & Elias (1987) conducted a study to investigate the content of the conference talk that the participants viewed as successful or less successful. The researchers audio-taped 17 writing conferences between eight instructors, who had reputations as good teachers, and ten graduate students from two universities. The researchers gave a survey to learn the participants’ satisfaction about the conferencing experiences. Based on the participants’ reflections, ten conferences, five effective and five less effective, were selected for further analysis by focusing on whether conversations were related to topic; whether there was enough encouragement; content of the conversation (giving directions); focus (meaning or mechanics); criteria (in which teachers invite students to evaluate their own text); whether the revision was made during the conferences; and questions asked by the teacher in order to help students to find the solution.

The analysis of the effective and less effective conferences showed that in the effective writing conferences the instructors: 1) explained the criteria for good writing and encouraged students for self-evaluation; 2) allowed the students to set the agenda of the conference; and 3) used students’ expertise when giving examples and explanations. On the other hand, in the less effective writing conferences the instructors took over the task and told students what to write and focused on their own agenda and expertise not on the students’ work. Thus, the researchers purported that “how much students talk is not a key determination of successful writing conferences but what teachers and students talk about—the agenda—is” (p. 281).

In a-year-long qualitative study, Kaufman (1998) observed an experienced teacher’s practices to see what she did in order to be a good listener, who was receptive and helped students realize and reflect on their knowledge, interests, and needs. As a participant observer, the researcher took field notes, conducted surveys, collected students’ writings, audio and video-taped the class sessions and writing conferences, and interviewed both the teacher and twenty-seven 8th grade students. Formal interviews were conducted about students’ general feelings and ideas about the teacher, their learning, and classroom atmosphere.
The researcher analyzed 21 transcribed writing conferences to investigate what academic issues—ideas or mechanics—were more important to the teacher and her conversational approach—questioning, suggesting, explaining, and praising—for different genders and different students. The teacher’s conversation analysis showed the following conferencing formula: 1) initiating the conference, 2) learning students’ needs, 3) receiving texts, 4) providing positive feedback, 5) providing questions, suggestions, and explanations, and 6) closing the conference. Four case study students, also, listened to the conferences and recorded their thoughts and feelings. Thus, each case study participant analyzed the conference talk.

According to the students’ reflections, because the teacher was: 1) asking a predictable question, which helped students to focus and evaluate their own writing; 2) being a good listener who heard and diagnosed her students’ unique backgrounds, likes, dislikes, and needs; and 3) using receptive body language, a caring attitude, and speaking indirectly when she had to criticize or to give comments, the teacher was described as skillful to conduct effective writing conferences.

Similar to the previous studies, Smith (2005) analyzed the nature of interaction which aroused the existence of an effective writing conference. The author regularly visited a second grade classroom for three months; videotaped the teacher-student writing conferences; collected students’ writing samples; and interviewed both the teacher and four study participants. The author specifically focused on two students with limited English proficiency, observing whether these students could assess their own writing problems and provide solutions to increase the quality of their story writing.

After analyzing the interactions during the conferences, the author described the teacher’s conferencing style as 1) paying attention to students’ previous knowledge; 2) focusing on what was written on students’ texts, 3) encouraging students to develop their ideas; 4) allowing students to write notes on post-its to remember what had been discussed during a conference; and 5) scheduling several short conferences to keep the process moving.

Later, the author reflected that the teacher was successful in conducting effective writing conferences for five apparent reasons listed above. These conferences were effective because they helped the two second-language learners to add details, to delete
unrelated or repeated information, and to move ideas and sentences around to develop their stories.

So far, the studies described above highlighted the characteristics of effective writing conferences based on students’ 1) reflections about teachers’ roles, and 2) their overall satisfaction of the conference talk. However, some other studies of the writing conferences, listed below, are based on less favorable outcomes such as: over correcting, providing too much instruction, dominating conferences, and treating conferences as question-answer sessions.

To begin, one characteristic of ineffective writing conferences was illustrated by Wilson-Powers (1999). The researcher examined the effects of teacher discourse on students’ interaction during teacher-student writing conferences. The researcher sought to analyze the similarities and differences in one teacher’s discourse with the students and the possible changes that might occur in the teacher’s discourse over time. The researcher audio-taped the teacher’s writing conferences with four struggling students, in her fourth-grade classroom, for four and half months. The conversation that occurred during teacher-student conferences was transcribed and analyzed in terms of conversation, topic shift, and identification of specific teacher discourse. Overall, the researcher found that the teacher was successful in connecting the students’ own language and culture to the school’s culture. However, in many cases the teacher was unaware that over correcting of grammar and dismissal of diversity among the students had silenced their voices. The researcher hypothesized that if the teacher changed the nature of her conferences from initiation, response, and evaluation to conversational discussion, these four students would become more engaged in conferencing activities.

Other examples of over correction, during conferences, were observed in studies which illustrated the negative effect of students as being dependent on their teachers for finding and solving their writing problems. Ulichny & Watson-Gegeo (1989), for instance, observed a total of 20 teacher-student writing conferences in two 6th grade classrooms. In these conferences, the teachers focused on correction and editing and solved most of the problems that occurred in students’ texts. According to the researchers, the teachers’ low expectations led them to produce correction-oriented conferences which led students to be dependent on the teachers. “Most students didn’t check their work for mistakes or oversight, instead expecting the teacher to point
out errors and advice how to fix them” (p. 315-316). Similar interaction was detected by Oye (1993). In this action research study, the author discovered her own dominant and directive roles while conferencing with an eighteen-year-old first-year chemical engineering student who was advised to have tutoring. The researcher and the student met once a week for the total of six weeks. The researcher, as an expert, continuously corrected the mistakes and told the student how to fix the writing problems, showing what is effective and what is not in writing. However, after awhile, the tutor witnessed that the student did not learn enough to continue to improve her writing. Since, the student received only a “C” on another assignment that the student worked on alone. The researcher realized her mistake and was disappointed with her own tutoring techniques. She reported that by directing too much or telling exactly what to do in a specific paper, the researcher only improved the quality of the paper, not the quality of the student’s writing skills.

The second characteristic of ineffective writing conferences was described as focusing too much on rules and mechanics. Oliver (2001) investigated three elementary and middle school teachers’ use of conversation, in writing conferences, to promote students’ writing as a transactional process. In this multiple case study, the author visited these teachers’ classrooms three times within two months and audio and videotaped conversations of the teachers when they conferred with their students. After analyzing the conference talk, the researcher found four categories of transactions that appeared in the conferences. These were: 1) transactions with personal experiences, 2) transactions with published works, 3) transactions with instructions, and 4) transactions with previous writing. Findings of the study revealed that, only one of the teachers had balanced teacher-facilitated transactions. Among the other teachers, over three-fourths of the transactions focused on personal experiences (26% and 43%), that allowed students to include their past experiences to make their stories more realistic, and instruction (52% and 48%), in which teachers mainly worried about mechanical knowledge such as capitalization and punctuation, and writing strategies such as using graphic organizers. These two teachers used transactions with published works in very few occasions (9% for each teacher) and one of these teachers did not have any transactions with previous writing. Thus, the students conferring with this teacher did not have experiences to monitor their writing development and their ongoing progress in creating ideas and texts.
The third characteristic of ineffective writing conferences occurred when teachers were dominating the conferences. In an action research, Nickel (2001) investigated her own teacher-student writing conferences with her first grade students by focusing on conferences in which the students resisted accepting the suggestions provided by the teacher. The researcher’s purpose with this particular study was to illustrate the obstacles that might hinder the success of the teacher-student writing conferences. She focused on four students and audio-taped and transcribed her conferences with those students. By analyzing the conversations and interactions during the conferences, the researcher mainly heard her own voice and additionally the author recognized that she played three roles: 1) the audience, which encouraged students to better clarify the parts of their stories; 2) the expert, in which the teacher showed editing strategies and directions for revising the stories; and 3) the author, which is being dominant and telling students what to write or even writing herself.

The fourth characteristic was demonstrated in studies which showed that teachers not only dominated the conference interaction but they also treated conferences as mere question-answer sessions. Fletcher (1993), Johnson (1993), and Di Pardo (1992) observed that the tutors unintentionally failed to give the student ownership and authority by asking/talking too much and not listening enough to lead students to communicate their ideas both in the conference talk and in their writings. Fletcher (1993) was curious about the quality of discussions during a writing conference, conducted in a writing center, between an undergraduate student and a tutor. The researcher audio-taped and transcribed the writing conference to investigate 1) whether the attention was given to the student’s text and meaning; 2) whether tutor listened to the student’s purposes and choices; 3) whether the focus was on what the student wrote so far and what she wanted to write in the future; 4) whether the tutor provided opportunities for the student to refine or clarify what she intended to say in her text; and 5) whether strategies and suggestions were provided by the tutor to assist the student to improve the quality of her writing.

After analyzing the conference talk, the researcher saw that there were thirty-six exchanges of dialogue between the tutor and the student. During the conference, the tutor asked twenty-nine low-level or fact-based questions while the student asked only four questions which were direct responses to what the tutor asked or responses for clarifying her meaning. The tutor paid little attention to the student’s text and partially gave her a chance to clarify her meaning. However, the tutor did not listen to the student’s purposes carefully but provided suggestions on
how to fix the text. Fletcher (1993) also noticed that the tutor was the one doing most of the talking. Shortly, the author reflected the pitfall of this conference by listing several unintended behaviors displayed by the tutor. These behaviors were: 1) the tutor asked several questions, which were unrelated to what the student’s text was about or what she wanted to accomplish in her text; 2) the tutor answered his own questions which were mostly dealing with how to fix the student’s paper; and 3) the tutor focused on what he wanted to accomplish in the conference that helped him to keep the control and the power.

Similar to Fletcher (1993), Johnson (1993) was also interested in the quality of the conference talk and the roles of questions asked by the tutors. The author randomly audio-taped writing conferences, between undergraduate students and tutors, in a writing center. Johnson (1993) found that a short-answer pattern occurred during the initial meetings between the students and their tutors. The tapes also showed that 64% of 232 questions were requesting factual information and 23% of the questions were for paraphrasing or rereading. More importantly, most of these questions were answered by the tutors. When a silent period occurred the tutors asked questions again.

Finally, Di Pardo (1992) studied one minority college student’s conferences with her tutor in a semester-long qualitative study. The researcher audio-taped the conferences, then the student and the tutor listened to them and reflected their feelings. Even though, the tutor aimed to help the student in the collaboration, by frequently questioning and telling the student what to write her actions resulted in a directive writing conferences. The tutor was more talkative and gave most of the directions, but, she needed to talk less and listen more to hear this student’s voice and concerns to better negotiate on the meaning of the student’s text.

In conclusion, there were almost equal number of studies conducted with college students and elementary school students to determine characteristics of effective and ineffective conferences. The researchers used students’ and teachers’ responses and feelings, and their roles during the conferences as criteria for determining the effectiveness of a conference; however, they did not relate the conference interaction with students’ writing competence. All the studies followed the qualitative methods, mainly the case studies, in which the number of students ranged from one to six. These students’ interactions, mainly, with one instructor were analyzed. The length of these
studies lasted from six weeks to one year, however, very few writing conferences were recorded and analyzed in these studies.

Even though, there were no quantitative data to support the effectiveness of the conferences discussed above, the related literature showed that students learned more in conferences where: attention was, first, on content of the text (Kaufman, 1998); students were invited to do self-evaluation (Walker & Elias, 1987); conferences were built on students’ responses (Walker & Elias, 1987); teachers were friendly and approachable, acted as student-oriented nurturers, listened patiently, and focused on ideas (Kaufman, 1998); students initiated the conference and shared the control of conference conversations (Kaufman, 1998); and there was humor (Kaufman, 1998). On the other hand, students did not do well in conferences where teachers: confused quality with quantity and focused too much on mechanics and grammatical concerns (Oliver, 2001; Oye, 1993; Ulichny & Watson-Gegeo, 1989); took control and kept the power (Di Pardo, 1992; Fletcher, 1993; Walker & Elias, 1987); pointed out and solved all the problems (Oye, 1993; Ulichny & Watson-Gegeo, 1989); weren’t patient enough (Johnson, 1993); asked unrelated or too many questions (Di Pardo, 1992; Fletcher, 1993; Johnson, 1993); had low expectations and produced correction-oriented conferences (Ulichny & Watson-Gegeo, 1989; Wilson-Powers (1999); and did not understand students’ purposes or provided complicated suggestions (Nickel, 2001).

Research on Interaction during Writing Conferences

Teacher-student interactions during writing conferences were investigated in several studies (Barker, 2003; Bell, 2002; Boudreaux, 1998; Chiu, 2002; Freedman & Katz, 1987; Freedman & Sperling, 1985; Gere & Stevens, 1985; Glasswell, Parr, & McNaughton, 2003; Heyden, 1996; Jacob, 1982; Jacobs & Karliner, 1977; Keebler, 1995; Martinez, 2001; Mitchell, 1990; Newkirk, 1989; Patthey-Chavez & Ferris, 1997; Sperling, 1988, 1990, 1991; Thonus, 2002; Wong, 1988; Yedlin, 2003). The related research about writing conferences revealed that the majority of studies were conducted to merely determine the nature of interaction not the writing performance.

Difference between the teacher’s and students’ comments was investigated by Gere & Stevens (1985). The researchers observed and recorded the teacher’s and her first grade students’ responses while students were discussing their writings in writing conferences. Overall, after
analyzing the conference talk the researchers found that students’ responses and teachers’ responses were different from each other. For example, the teacher’s comments concerned the mechanics of writing, while the students’ responses were diverse proving that even a clearly stated idea can be confusing for others.

Negative interaction between the instructor and his students was reported by Heyden (1996). The researcher described how three freshmen students learned and felt in a process writing course. In this qualitative study, the students had a minimum of two individual writing conferences, the class met twice a week for 15 weeks and the researcher observed and took field notes for each section. The researcher also interviewed each participant once a week for 45 minutes during 14 weeks and used these interviews as the primary source of data. The researcher also wrote analytic memos, which were also used as data for this study.

The results of the study showed that the instructor focused too much on his teaching philosophy and ignored how students learned and felt in the process. He did not count students’ previous learning experiences in high school. Additionally, having different expectations and understanding of writing instruction caused the students and the instructor to be in conflict. The study also emphasized that interaction between student and teacher is vital; there should be more opportunities for sharing and reflections both in verbal and written forms; and students need to be more active to implement the process writing approach effectively.

Effects of students’ expertise of written texts on the interaction between the tutor and college students were researched by Wong (1998). In a three-month-long case study with four college engineering students and two tutors, Wong video-taped and recorded 137 topical segments. The researcher categorized the talk into three classifications: two-way conversational exchange, teacher-dominated talk, and student-dominated talk to demonstrate participants’ knowledge bases, topic negotiability, and tutors’ recognition of students’ expertise.

Findings showed that when the negotiability was high and the tutor recognized the student’s knowledge bases, two-way conversation occurred. The percentage of this kind of talk was 41.6% and it was mainly about presentation of content in students’ texts. 21.2% of the talk showed low negotiability even though the tutors recognized students’
expertise in their topics. This kind of talk was mainly about the writing process and the content of the students’ writings.

Tutors dominated 3.6% of the conversation even though they were not experts on the written topic. Thus, topic negotiability was low. In the last category, negotiability high\recognition absent, the tutors did not solicit any student input 33.6% of the time. The study showed that the students were more active participants and dominated part of the conferences because they knew more about the subject matter than the tutors. The researcher recommended that regular English teachers pay attention to what students are writing and listen to them carefully to figure out how students want to present their topics. This will allow students to collaborate and negotiate with their teachers during conferences.

Chiu (2002) examined eleven discourse markers used in conferences (e.g. and, but, or, because, so, oh, well, I mean, you know, now, and then). Forty-nine college students and two instructors (one male and one female) participated in this a-semester-long study. Female students, in total, outnumbered male students. The researcher focused on six students, three with the highest and three with the lowest production of discourse markers that occurred during their second writing conferences. Data was collected by recording the second scheduled writing conferences with the instructors to examine single gender and mixed gender interactions during writing conferences. Research showed that there was a complex conversation pattern during writing conferences. The most frequently used discourse markers were “and”, “so”, and “but”. These discourse markers used during the conferences affected the meaning of the conversation and influenced instructor and student’s interactions because they served different functions.

Another finding of the study was there was not a significant difference for using specific discourse markers between males and females. However, the researcher also reflected that the functions of these discourse markers and their frequency changed according to gender performance of the instructors in conversations, and the status relationship between the instructor and students. For instance, female participants were more cooperative in mixed-gender interactions and were more expressive in single-sex interactions. The males, on the other hand, were more cooperative in single-sex interaction and were more challenging in mixed-gender interactions. In mixed-gender
interactions, males could not have as many speaking turns as the female participants had. Additionally, the male students did not challenge the female instructor very much because of her expertise and authority in writing. However, the male instructor challenged his female students more than his male students.

In a five-month-long ethnographic study, Jacob (1982) observed the body languages of six instructors and 32 college students during writing conferences. He investigated what body language reveals about the type of discourse and the roles of students and instructors. The researcher analyzed the conferences under three categories: a) the prescriptive model –teacher directs the conversation, gives directions and advises. Fourteen of the conferences were in this group; b) the unarticulated model –teacher bases his/her comments upon on unspoken model of good writing but fails to illustrate that model to the students. Ten of the conferences were in this group; and c) the open-ended model –teacher involves students in the writing process by paraphrasing, listening, and asking open-ended questions. Eight of the conferences were in this group.

Records of thirty-two writing conferences revealed that most of the time the instructors shaped and directed the conversations and students’ body language reflected that they adopted a passive role. The students also reflected their roles, in conferences, as listening to and learning from an experienced writer. The researcher also observed that there was a connection between kinds of conferences –classroom discourse and conversational discourse- and students’ body language. When the instructors were dominating the conference talk and the interaction, instructors created distance between themselves and students. On the other hand, in conferences where both parties had equal chances to direct the conversation, the instructors talked softly with several pauses. The students displayed several facial gestures and used their hands to express their feelings and thoughts. The students’ movements were relaxed and their bodies were slightly leaning toward the instructor and eye contacts maintained.

In another research study with college students, Boudreaux (1998) investigated a teacher’s nonverbal behaviors (eye gaze, latching, simultaneous speech, silence, vocalics, and laughter). The researcher observed and videotaped eight writing conferences between two tutors and four college students and transcribed the first five minutes of the conferences to code nonverbal behaviors. The researcher interviewed the participants.
before and after the conferences to find out their expectations and feelings about the
writing conferences.

Students’ responses showed that feelings about interaction during the conferences
are not static; rather they are changeable from person to person. For instance, silence was
seen as a kind waiting time for some students while it was the sign of boredom for others.
Another example could be that talking loudly was as a sign of enthusiasm for some
students and was a sign of anger for others. However, in general, the participants of the
study described silence, loud talking, interruptions, and talking off-topic as disturbing
behaviors. After watching the videos the researcher analyzed her data and categorized the
conference interaction in three groups as: a) highly expressive –eyes on the speaker, head
nods, and back channels; b) highly reserved –keeps eyes on the paper, does not move the
head, does not engage in back channel activities; and c) divergent –exhibits puzzling and
unexpected nonverbal behavior.

Yedlin (2003) compared the content and amount of teacher’s talk in whole class
instructions-minilessons, and individual writing conferences. Two whole class instructions with
25 ESL first-grade students and four individual writing conferences with two case study students
were recorded for further analysis. In both instructions, the researcher coded the teacher’s talk in
four categories: 1) the teacher’s role, 2) the teacher’s responsiveness, 3) stylistic modifications,
and 4) the metalinguistic, metacognitive, or academic content of teacher talk.

Analysis of teacher talk demonstrated that diverse features of talk occurred in two
instructional methods. For instance, in whole class minilessons the teacher talked about
characteristics of good writing or necessary elements of a good story. While doing this, the
teacher gave the same message or direction in several different ways in group instructions to
make sure every student understood what the teacher intended to communicate. The majority of
the utterances (45%) in minilessons were related to explicit metalinguistic or metacognitive
content, such as discussing conventions of grammar, syntax, and usage, definitions, meanings of
words, sentences and texts. Additionally, in whole group lessons, 34% of the teacher’s talk was
about guiding and assisting, 26% was about directing students’ writing, and 8% was about
students’ topics. On the other hand, during individual writing conferences, the teacher and
students engaged in a dialogue about the piece composed by the students. Both parties
collaborated in rewriting and editing activities. Thus, 79% of the conversations were related to
assisting students’ writing performances during individual writing conferences. Additionally, in writing conferences the teacher’s talk was finely tuned to the individual student’s level of language skills and needs. Furthermore, during writing conferences the teacher sent several non-verbal signals along with her talk, and students had a chance to gain individual feedback about their own writing.

An important aspect of interaction in conferences which teachers should be aware of is the diverse roles they have to play. These roles include being a: coach, commentator, counselor, listener/audience, and diagnostician (Harris, 1986); facilitator (Zinn, 1998); expert (Nickel, 2001); authoritarian, inquirer, and explorer (Allen, 1986). The important point here for teachers is to remember that they have dual roles when conferring with students: as “text-oriented instructors who build skill and student-oriented nurturers who build confidence” (Wilcox, 1997, p. 508). And “working with people must be a priority over working with papers” (p. 509). The two studies below investigated teachers’ and students’ roles during conferences.

Freedman & Katz (1987) explored student and teacher’s roles and interaction during conferences. Five naturally occurring writing conferences between a low achieving but highly motivated college student and an experienced instructor were investigated. The researchers categorized conferences into five components: 1) opening with initial greetings; 2) student-initiated comments and questions; 3) teacher-initiated comments and questions; 4) reading; and 5) closing. The teacher posed real questions which gave the teacher the information on what to teach later. Pauses, overlaps, and latching, as well as topic shift also provided opportunity for the student to voice a concern. Still there was little evidence of collaborative problem solving between the instructor and the student. The student’s responsibility, in these five conferences, was to analyze and think about her writing, as well as verbalize her thoughts. The teacher’s role was to listen to the student, while helping her identify and solve obstacles.

Bell (2002) explored the interaction and the nature of the audio taped writing conferences between four tutors and seven undergraduate students. The researcher categorized writing conferences under Reigstad’s (1980) typology of tutoring by paying attention to questions asked, roles played, and the amount of time each person had to talk. One out of the seven conferences was student centered; three of them were tutor centered, two of the conferences were tutor centered with partly student participation, and in only
one conference the tutor and the student participated equally. Analysis of the frequency of tutor roles showed that the most common roles displayed by the tutors were being editor (5) and manager (5). Being the controller of the conference content has been seen three times; being appropriator, questioner, and resource person followed them with 2.5 frequencies. The tutors displayed the behavior of listener (1.5) and collaborator (0.5). None of the tutors acted as modeler, negotiator, or reader/responder.

Teachers’ interactions with multiple students were investigated by Freedman & Sperling (1985), Glasswell, Parr, & McNaughton (2003), Jacobs & Karliner (1977), Martinez, 2001; Mitchell (1990), Patthey-Chavez & Ferris (1997), and Sperling (1991).

Sperling (1991) observed three very different (talkative to shy) ninth graders in their English class while they conferred with their teacher. The researcher observed that these three students saw the purpose of conferences differently and developed diverse expectations and behaviors due to these beliefs. The researcher also saw that the same teacher can have a collaborative conference with a student, while having difficulty communicating with other students.

In a qualitative study, Jacobs & Karliner (1977) investigated the nature of interaction during writing conferences and its effects on students’ writing. After observing conferences between a teacher and two students and analyzing students’ first and second drafts, the researchers found that these two students had different conferences with different outcomes. With one of the students, the instructor gave the student chances to discuss what she thought. With the second student the teacher lectured, highlighted criteria for better writing, and asked several questions. The nature of interaction affected students’ writing performances. Thus, the quality of the first student’s second draft was better than the second draft produced by the second student.

In a descriptive study of four advanced ESL college students in Puerto Rico, Martinez (2001) investigated the students’ revision processes, teacher feedback and its effects on students’ perceptions and writings, and writer’s concern and acceptance or rejection of the instructor’s suggestions during the conferences. The research data were collected and analyzed based on both pre-semester and post-semester questionnaires and three audio and video-taped individual writing conferences with each student. Analysis included: nature of teacher’s comments; teacher’s professional demeanor and fairness
with all students; teacher and student interaction; language usage of Spanish, English, or combined.

Conference analyses showed that the instructor provided positive feedback at the beginning and at end of the conferences and used authoritative role with students who did not have enough experiences in writing. However, she acted like a facilitator with more skilled students. Students often used Spanish when they talked about their lives, emotions, and personal issues. Data also showed that students used Spanish more often in the beginning stages of the conferences and less often at the end due to becoming more familiar with conferencing. Female students wrote more about private and intimate topics; male students wrote about their jobs. Females were more confident than males on their essays and used more overlapping than males.

Different interactions among teachers and students with diverse competence gained attention and were studied by several other researchers. Similar to Martinez (2001), described above, Freedman & Sperling (1985), Glasswell, Parr, & McNaughton (2003), Mitchell (1990), and Patthey-Chavez & Ferris (1997) also compared the nature of interactions among diverse learners. For instance, Glasswell, Parr, & McNaughton (2003) video-taped 108 writing conferences between nine exemplary teachers, who were selected with the recommendation of district language arts curriculum advisors, and their 54 students, in years 1, 5, and 8. Mitchell (1990) observed the interaction of the instructor with four ESL college students (two proficient and two less proficient writers) for seven weeks. Patthey-Chavez & Ferris (1997) observed conferences between four instructors and eight undergraduate students (four strong and four weak students) for five weeks. And finally Freedman & Sperling (1985) investigated the nature and function of 30-45 minute writing conferences between a college instructor and her four college students – one high achieving Caucasian, one low achieving Caucasian, one high achieving Asian American and one low achieving Asian American.

The researchers recorded scheduled writing conferences, interviewed the students and the teachers, and analyzed the students’ interactions with the teacher during writing conferences. Glasswell, Parr, & McNaughton, 2003 found that “struggling writers received more total teacher conference time than proficient writers but less sustained interaction time” (p. 293). It proved again, that teachers confused quality with quantity. On the other hand, Mitchell (1990) and
Patthey-Chavez & Ferris (1997) found that the conferences with strong writers were longer and had more even distributions of talk between the two parties (Patthey-Chavez & Ferris, 1997).

In general, during the conferences with proficient writers, it has been observed that the instructors were less directive and asked for students’ opinions and ideas (Patthey-Chavez & Ferris, 1997). The more proficient students set the direction of their conferences (Mitchell, 1990; Patthey-Chavez & Ferris, 1997) and received more feedback from the teacher than the less proficient students (Freedman & Sperling, 1985; Mitchell, 1990; Patthey-Chavez & Ferris, 1997). Similar to the teacher, the proficient students also changed the topics during the conferences (Mitchell, 1990; Patthey-Chavez & Ferris, 1997).

Unlike proficient writers, in conferences with less proficient writers, it has been observed that the instructor focused mainly on the rules of writing and frequently ignored the context especially while they were conferring with less proficient writers (Glasswell, Parr, & McNaughton, 2003; Mitchell, 1990). In addition, the researchers found that more interruptions occurred when teachers were conferring with struggling writers and in these conferences struggling writers experienced more teacher control than did the proficient writers and the teachers were the dominant partner in the conferences (Glasswell, Parr, & McNaughton, 2003). Furthermore, less proficient students were uncertain and insecure during their conferences. They talked less, were not knowledgeable about their topics, and could not respond to the teacher’s questions. There were frequent miscommunications between the teacher and these students. The teacher mainly lectured and specifically told what to do to revise their texts. Thus, unfortunately, the teacher connected writing with sentence level work and did not see writing as a means to express ideas and thoughts (Mitchell, 1990).

The authoritarian role of teachers was recorded in several studies (Barker, 2003; Keebler, 1995; Newkirk, 1989; Sperling, 1988, 1990; Thonus, 2002). In an exploratory research study, Barker (2003) examined the discourse patterns which occurred during writing conferences with three adult participants over a two-to-eight-week period of time. Data were collected by tape recorded writing conferences and the teacher’s journal. Samples represented monological conventional teaching practice and dialogical interaction. When the students and the teacher did not share an agenda, the conference conversation showed a monologue. On the other hand, if both participants shared similar
task definitions it seemed much more like a dialogue. By using writing conferences, the researcher originally aimed to increase students’ independence and make students active participants during writing conferences. However, her monologic teaching style and dominance during the conferences discouraged or postponed students’ active engagement and led them to be passive and frustrated listeners. On the other hand, the teacher and students had a joint dialogue during conferences, the students showed ability to influence the type of discourse through surprise, ignoring the topic, interrupting conversation, setting the conference agenda, and appearing to be stuck or having a writer block. The teacher also recognized that her discourse pattern influenced students’ participation in both positive and negative ways.

Sperling (1988) observed a middle school teacher’s class, for five days a week, for seven weeks when she was conferring with six ninth-graders. Conferences were categorized according to labeling date, participants, location, length, number of drafts, and main topic of the draft or the conference. And finally, the conferences were classified as: 1) quick, 2) prolonged, and 3) leisurely. In the quantitative data analysis section, the researcher described two categories: 1) topical concerns and 2) structural concerns. At the beginning Sperling observed that the teacher did most of the talking, however, day by day the amount of students’ participation increased and they had collaboration with their teacher.

In a follow up study, Sperling (1990) examined naturally occurring conferences in a ninth-grade English class. The researcher investigated the conferences according to the tasks, conference types, and purposes for each conference. Then the researcher looked at the 1) topical concerns and 2) structural concerns. The researcher found that the teacher was more active in the phase of topic initiation; however, both students and the teacher were active during the phase of topic ownership. The researcher found that conferences were dominated by question-answer units. Overall, the students engaged in negotiation and problem-solving activities due to having the experienced teacher who was also flexible according to students’ needs and writing levels. However, once again, students saw teachers as correctors and authorities even in the writing conferences.

The research continued to focus on the authoritarian role of teachers in conferences. For instance, dominance of teacher’s power were found in teacher-centered conferences with college
students in which the teachers tended to talk more than the students (Newkirk, 1989; Thonus, 2002), and with second grade students and their teacher within a culturally diverse, process oriented classroom (Keebler, 1995).

In conclusion, related literature on the interaction between the instructor and students revealed that majority of the studies were conducted with college students (72%). Unfortunately, there was not much information about the ongoing interaction during writing conferences in elementary education (14%), middle and high school (14%) levels.

These cited studies, above, mainly used explanatory studies with case studies. The number of participants ranged from one to six for instructors and one to thirty-two for students. Number of conferences that were analyzed was between one and five. In only one study, thirty-two conferences were analyzed. The length of the studies also lasted from four months to two weeks. As seen above, the number of recorded conferences is very limited in terms of analyzing the interaction.

Overall, the main topics that gained attention by the researchers were a) differences in terms of the comments provided by a teacher and students; b) variety of teacher’s interaction with weak or strong students; c) authoritarian roles and dominance of teachers; d) negative interaction between the conference partners; e) effects of students’ expertise on conference talk; f) participants’ roles in conferences; g) discourse markers have been used; h) non-verbal communication and body language; and i) amount and content of talk.

However, findings of these research studies provided information for educators. According to these studies teachers and students might have different focuses and concerns in terms of providing comments and asking questions (Gere & Stevens, 1985). Since students see the functions of conferences differently, conferences served diverse purposes among the students (Sperling, 1991). Overall, being knowledgeable about their own topics allowed students to have two-way conversations during conferences (Wong, 1998). Students reflected that they learned more in writing conferences than through written responses, or classroom discussions (Heyden, 1996). During conferences teachers could give individual help to each child while also proving specific feedback (Yedlin, 2003).

Yet, as discussed in the previous part, the teachers did most of the talking and they had the authority during conferences (Keebler, 1995; Martinez, 2001; Newkirk, 1989; Sperling, 1990; Thonus, 2002). The most common roles of teachers were being managers and editors and
the least common roles were listener and collaborator (Bell, 2002). Teachers’ use of unspoken agenda, interruptions, known-answer questions and lectures made students passive while presence of authentic questions, paraphrasing, uptakes, and supportive fillers made students active during conferences (Barker, 2003).

Additionally, teachers interacted differently with less proficient and proficient students. For instance, a) teachers mainly focused on the rules of writing while conferring with less proficient students (Mitchell, 1990); b) the length of writing conferences were longer with proficient students (Mitchell, 1990; Pathey-Chavez & Ferris, 1997); c) these students received more feedback from the teacher (Martinez, 2001; Mitchell, 1990); and d) the teachers acted like a facilitator with proficient students and they were more authoritative with less proficient students (Martinez, 2001).

Gender of the instructors and the status relationships between the instructors and students effected frequency and functions of discourse markers that have been used (Chiu, 2002). And finally, non-verbal behaviors and body language reflected the functions and types of conferences while also mirrored the displayed roles of the participants in writing conferences (Boudreaux, 1998; Jacob, 1982).

Research on Effects of Writing Conferences on Students’ Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is “an individual’s judgments of his or her capabilities to perform given actions” (Schunk, 1991, p. 207). It is an individual’s belief that he or she can reach a certain goal (Ormrod, 2003). Self-efficacy is “grounded in a larger theoretical framework known as social cognitive theory” (Schunk & Pajares, 2002, p. 16) and self-efficacy can be changed or increased with the effects of personal and environmental factors (Schunk, 2003). According to social cognitive theory, “both environmental conditions (e.g., the consequences of behavior and the presence of a role model) and personal variables (e.g., goals, expectations, and self-efficacy) influence learning and behavior” (Ormrod, 2003, p. 148). Existence of a self-efficacy belief is very important because as Bandura (1993) said, “children with the same level of cognitive skill development differ in their intellectual performance depending on the strength of their perceived self-efficacy” (p. 136).

Little direct evidence is available linking self-efficacy to writing conferences. However, many of the features of effective writing conferences are mentioned in related studies. For instance, students with high self-efficacy work hard (Bandura, 1993; Pajares, 2003; Walker,
2003), persist (Bandura, 1993; Bottomley, Henk, & Melnick, 1998; Ormrod, 2003; Schunk, 2003; Walker, 2003), seek help when completing challenging tasks (Walker, 2003), feel less apprehensive when faced with writing problems (Bandura, 1993; Pajares, 2003; Pajares & Valiante, 1997), approach difficult tasks as challenges instead of ignoring or avoiding them to save face (Bandura, 1989, 1993), set more challenging goals, believe that they will achieve their goals, take risks, engage in related activities, and are confident with the awareness of their potential (Bandura, 1993). Students with low self-efficacy, on the other hand, shy away from difficult tasks, have low aspirations, have weak commitment to the goals they choose to pursue, dwell on their personal deficiencies, give up quickly, and fall easy victim to stress and depression (Bandura, 1993). Additionally they believe that no matter what they do, they cannot learn or improve their skills (Bottomley, Henk, & Melnick, 1998).

The few studies that do relate writing conferences to self-efficacy tend to mention it as desire to write more and share their writing proudly (Clippard, 1998), positive judgments (Wong, Butler, Ficzere, & Kuperis, 1996), and confidence (Wong, Butler, Ficzere, & Kuperis, 1996; Clippard, 1998; Tobin, 1998).

In a case study with young learners, Tobin (1998) observed two kindergarten classrooms by especially focusing on writing conferences. To observe the effects of conferences on students’ writing and confidence, the researcher took field notes, audio taped classroom observations, interviewed both the teachers and students, and collected students’ writings to trace any development.

Analyses of conference talk showed that the teachers provided diverse responses in conferences. These responses were classified in 10 categories. These categories are: 1) compliment/encouragement, 2) show interest in written content, 3) get to know the child personally, 4) reinforce a skill, 5) stretch the student to another level, 6) locate writing resources, 7) set future goals, 8) request permission, 9) involve others in giving assistance, and 10) model the correct written form.

Findings of the study illustrated that both teachers encouraged inventive spelling which allowed students to rely on themselves as writers and use their knowledge of sounds and letters when they wrote. Besides encouragement from the teachers, hearing the supportive words from another person also helped students. The study showed that writing conferences are effective not only on students’ writing development but also on
their confidence in writing. The researcher reflected that, “these students became writers not only in the mechanical sense, but in the communicative sense as well” (p. 183).

In a seven-month-long quasi-experimental intervention study, Clippard (1998) investigated the effectiveness of writing workshop approach, with the emphasis on writing conferences, on the writing skills and self-efficacy of students with learning disabilities in grades four and five. Four teachers and 27 students, 14 boys and 13 girls, from two fourth-grade classrooms and two fifth-grade classrooms participated into the study. There were 17 students in two writing workshop classrooms and 10 students in two writing across the curriculum classrooms.

In writing workshop classrooms, students had 60 minutes for writing instruction for four times a week. During this one hour students had minilessons for ten minutes, 30 minutes for individual writing time, 15 minutes individual writing conferences, and 10 minutes to share their writing with their classmates to get feedback for revision, or to publish their writing. On the other hand, in the writing across the curriculum classrooms, writing was taught through theme cycles. Topics, formats, and due dates were determined by the teachers. There were writing conferences in this group, too. However, they were not scheduled regularly and whenever they occurred they focused on spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

All the students had a pre-post standardized writing test, three pre and three post writing samples, and another writing sample. Findings of the study showed no significant difference between the pre writing test scores of students in writing workshop classrooms and scores of students in writing across the curriculum classrooms. However, students in the workshop classrooms had significantly higher score on post-writing samples.

Students in writing workshop classrooms also reflected higher confidence in their writing self-efficacy test. On the survey, students stated that they feel good about their writing, and their writing is good not because of being lucky but because of the presence of competence.

All the studies described above claimed that writing conferences had a positive impact on students’ perceived self-efficacy beliefs toward writing. Yet, none of the research studies mentioned the features of interaction between the teacher and the student. Overall, it is clear that more work needs to be done on how students (reluctant versus effective writer or with high self-efficacy versus low self-efficacy) and teachers behave during teacher-student writing
conferences to determine or examine whether the nature of writing conferences affects students’ level of perceived self-efficacy toward writing.

Summary

A close investigation of related research on teacher-student writing conferences revealed several main concerns. First of all, even though writing conferences are accepted as conversations about students’ papers, and conversations require two people as both senders and receivers of the message, the researchers found a remarkable consistency in that teachers dominated conversations during the writing conferences (Glasswell, Parr, & McNaughton, 2003; Sperling, 1990; Thonus, 2002; Ulichny & Watson-Gegeo, 1989). The activities the teachers engaged in during those writing conferences were; reading the texts, asking and answering questions, diagnosing the problems, and providing suggestions. Often, teachers answered their own questions instead of allowing students to find the answers themselves.

Second, even though many educators and theorists cited writing conferences as an effective way to teach writing and improve students’ achievement, little research has been done to reflect what was happening during the conferences and how conferences helped students’ level of self-efficacy. When closer attention was paid to research studies, it was recognized that younger children, especially elementary school age students, did not receive an adequate amount of attention although those are critical ages for learning and for determining their skills and self-efficacy toward writing. These early perceptions may influence a student’s future learning and writing.

Third, educators described the effective writing conferences based on students’ own reflections about how they felt during the conferences. However, in conferencing, educators should go beyond the evaluations of teachers and students’ responses in terms of assessing the effectiveness of a conference. Students’ and teachers’ feelings and attitudes toward the writing conferences are, of course, valuable information for the field. Still, while determining the effectiveness of a particular writing conference, researchers should also pay attention to a) what is happening in a conference by considering both parties’ input in making and negotiating meaning, b) relationships between what happens in a conference and its effects on the student’s revision activities and attitudes toward writing, and c) the nature of the conference discourse and its effects on students’ perceived self-efficacy toward writing.
Fourth, conducted research studies about writing conferences were mainly designed as case studies with limited participants. In most cases, the number of conferences recorded for each participant ranged from 1 to 2. More studies should be conducted with other research methods such as quantitative or mixed study designs. The researchers need to record multiple conferences over several months to identify common patterns with frequencies and repeated interaction rather than simply relying on an individual’s feelings and behaviors assessed during limited interactions.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purposes of this study were to examine the nature of scheduled teacher-student writing conferences and to explore the potential role of perceived self-efficacy beliefs during writing conferences. Since the effectiveness of teacher-student writing conferences was difficult to determine, the researcher analyzed qualitative data to report common patterns that occurred during the conferences. Also a second classroom was selected to serve as a reference group to control for maturity effects on study group results. The following two research questions were addressed:

1. What is the nature of scheduled teacher-student conferences between a teacher and four fifth-grade students?
2. Can teacher-student writing conferences be informed by students’ perceived self-efficacy?

This chapter describes the design of the study, the school setting, description of the subject, the classroom context, sample selection methods, the instruments for obtaining the data, the procedures followed to gather and analyze the data, and the ethical concerns considered during the research.

Design of the Study

The researcher used a qualitative research design with multiple case studies. The principal interest in this study, in terms of qualitative research, was the nature of teacher-student interactions during writing conferences. Qualitative research “investigates the quality of relationships, activities, situations, or materials” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009, p. 422) and it focuses on “description, analysis, and interpretation” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 11).

Common characteristics of qualitative research are that it occurs in the natural environment, uses multiple methods, focuses on context, is interpretive and emergent instead of tightly prefigured (Rossman & Rallis, 2003), collects forms of words or pictures rather than numbers, and considers how people make sense of their lives (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009).
In this qualitative research study, multiple case studies were used because they allowed the researcher “to study on multiple cases at the same time as part of one overall study” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009, p. 431). It was felt to be the most appropriate method for answering the study questions. The goal of this study was to explore the nature of writing conferences between students and the teacher. Even though the research findings could not be generalized to all classrooms, grades, or writing conferences, the findings were useful in discussing effective teacher-student writing conferences. Fraenkel & Wallen (2009) explain the use of findings in qualitative research:

In qualitative studies the researcher may also generalize, but it is much more likely that any generalizing to be done will be by interested practitioners –by individuals who are in situations similar to one(s) investigated by the researcher. It is the practitioner, rather than the researcher, who judges the applicability of the researcher’s findings and conclusions, who determines whether the researcher’s findings fit his or her situation. (p. 432)

School Setting

The school that was chosen for this study was located in the southeastern part of the United States. This was a K-12 charter school sponsored by a local university. It has been graded as an “A” school (A to F grades) by the state. In the elementary school 24.1% of the students had free and reduced lunch. This number was 20.9% for the middle school and 10.9% for the high school. The student population was 1600 of which there were equal numbers of female (50.4%) and male (49.6%) students. The students came from different backgrounds but the majority of the students were white (58.53%). The percentages of the other ethnic backgrounds were listed as 24.32% African-American, 9.75% Hispanic, 2.12% Asian, 0.75% Native American Indian, and finally 4.50% other. Student demographics of this school when the study was implemented closely reflect those of the state student population. The other reason for selecting this school was because it was a university research school where students were continuously exposed to research projects.

Description of the Subjects

Participants of the Study

The participants of this study were two elementary school teachers and their fifth grade students. Jennifer (pseudonym) was the teacher of classroom A (reference group),
and Alex was the teacher of classroom B (study group). Both teachers had equal years of teaching experience, they both taught writing in grades three to five, and they were both enrolled in masters’ programs in education. Jennifer had nineteen students (eleven males and eight females). Four of the students were African American, one student was Mexican, two students were from other backgrounds, and the rest of the students were white American. Alex had 22 students (11 males and 11 females). She had two African Americans, two Asian Americans, and two Mexican students. The rest of her students were white American. The average student age in both classrooms was 10.5 years. Neither teacher reported students with learning difficulties or disabilities.

Jennifer was in her third year of teaching students at the third, fourth, and fifth-grade level. She commented she attempted to follow current research and theories related to her profession as much as possible and was in the process of completing her master’s degree in Reading and Language Arts. During our first interview, Jennifer stated that over the previous three years of teaching she had not been able to utilize writing conferences as a teaching strategy. She admitted that in the past she did not have time to confer with her students but wished to be able to use writing conferences in the future. At the end of the study, during the exit interview, she mentioned that she would be interested in participating in a study where she could work with students in one-on-one situations.

Alex also just started her third year teaching third, fourth, and fifth graders. She followed the current research in language arts education and had attended several conferences on that topic. In addition, she was in the process of completing her master’s degree in Reading and Language Arts. Furthermore, she joined and finished the Summer Invitational Institute at the local National Writing Project site prior to this study. During our initial interview, she stated that she had been conferring with her fifth graders since they were in grade four, and recommended to the researcher that she select the case study participants among these more experienced students. Thus, a total of four fifth-grade students were purposefully selected according to their low-high self-efficacy scores from the pre-self-efficacy tests, past writing experiences, and self reports on how they saw themselves as writers. By focusing on purposive sampling and case studies, the researcher believed that this group of participants would provide the variability necessary for examining the study questions.
Alex’s Classroom Context

Alex’s class, the study group with scheduled teacher-student writing conferences, was full of word walls and posters that guided students while they wrote in different genres. For instance, one of the posters was for FCAT writing:

- focus on the topic;
- choose an organizational plan;
- add specific words and details;
- take time to review and edit.

Alex usually started her language arts class by reading for five to ten minutes to the students while they were having their snack. In most cases, she prepared her agenda before the class started. The students’ names for conferencing and journal topics were listed on the board. The students were also directed verbally by Alex before they started writing their journals or responding to a prompt. Several times, Alex modeled composing the introduction paragraph with the main topic sentence and the students brainstormed together to determine the supporting details. For instance, the students were asked to write an historical story based on their research on a particular event, a place, or a person. Alex explained the steps for students to follow to finish their stories. She said that in order to complete this task, everyone needed to think historically, select a subject/topic, list ideas, collect facts, and identify story elements. Alex gave several examples for each expectation and provided non-fiction books for students to use as a resource. After students chose the topics and composed several chapters or drafts, Alex announced that she wanted students to vary their word choice. Thus, she asked students to brainstorm and as a class they came up with synonyms of common words such as “said, interesting, good, tasty, ugly, pretty” that they used in their stories. She assisted the students before they started writing, during writing, and after writing. She modeled step by step how students should type their stories for publication, how to save their files on the computer, and how to use publication manual that was prepared by the school librarian to be able to publish their historical fiction story books with hard covers.

Close to the end of the semester, the students were asked to write a persuasive essay. Before suggesting the topics, Alex again provided directions for the students. Later, as a whole class, they talked about the rules for persuasive writing. Alex wrote on
the board while students listed things to include in their persuasive essays. What students listed were 1) an introduction including a grabber and thesis (point of view), 2) the second strongest argument, 3) weakest argument, 4) strongest argument, and 5) conclusion. Then, Alex introduced the topics - year-around-school and school uniforms - and as a class, the students brainstormed the topics before writing independently.

She frequently wrote with her students, shared her writing, and encouraged others to read their stories or essays. Alex provided feedback during sharing at the author’s chair. She celebrated her students’ writing, and displayed work on the bulletin boards. Conferences were a big part of this classroom. Due to the many activities and breaks during the semester, Alex held eight or nine conferences for each student and during the study she conferred with them a total of 28 days. The number of students who had conferences each time ranged from 2 to 12 students. She listed her students’ names for conferences and tried to meet with each student an equal number of times. That allowed students to meet the teacher regularly. Alex conferred with her students at a designated desk, and in most cases, did not allow students to interrupt. She wanted to show that what they were doing was important.

During the conferences, the main focus was the topic and supporting details. Alex did not work on editing very much, however, almost twice a week, students had editing activities. Alex showed a sentence from the overhead projector and students independently corrected the sentence. Later, one student was assigned to correct it on the slide as a model. Almost every Friday, students had a spelling test. On most Fridays, prior to the test, the students played a spelling game.

The Reference Classroom

The students in Jennifer’s reference classroom also had the same writing assignment resulting in published historical fiction stories. Writing was a big part of this classroom as well, however instead of placing the emphasis on scheduled teacher-student writing conferences; Jennifer organized her curriculum teaching writing by integrating writing into other subjects –Writing Across the Curriculum. For instance, the students were asked to write a biography of an American history figure. Later on for a citizenship project the students were asked to figure out a societal problem and argue how they could fix that problem. Even though, the teacher did not conduct teacher-student writing
conferences, once in a while she circulated and assisted, helping students with their drafts. However, her feedback strategy was not organized or frequent.

A book list was placed under the whiteboard. Journal writing was used as a part of reading instruction. Everyday, after students came from lunch, they went to the media center and worked on the “Question of the Day” activity that asked students to provide a short written response about the question related to their daily reading material. The classroom was divided into math, reading, and novel study centers surrounded with related materials and posters.

The reference classroom also had several word walls, posters for pronouns, conjunctions, prepositions, interjections, adjectives, adverbs, and verbs. One poster listed the parts of a story while the other one was designed for FCAT reading with guidelines for students to a) create mental images, b) self-question, c) summarize, and d) read ahead. Three posters presenting classroom rules and one poster showing students’ birthdays were placed on the bulletin boards. Additionally two posters informed students about the computer center and World Wide Web. During reading and language arts block, the students had access to a television, a video player, and four computers.

Sample Selection Method

Initially, a convenience sampling method was chosen to select the teachers and their students for the study. However, Alex was purposefully chosen because she was willing to participate in the study and wanted to improve her teaching strategies. She was also familiar with writing conferences and the process writing approach. Her classroom was identified as having met all the criteria cited by Henk, Marinak, & Moore (2003) for refining and validating writing instruction. According to their rubric, a process classroom is an environment in which writing is valued and promoted. It fosters students’ engagement in different activities during prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. Students also confer with others while they are drafting and revising their texts. They are allowed to select their own topics and teachers give enough time for writing, use available technology, and circulate throughout the classroom to promote and facilitate writing instruction. There is evidence of a variety of students’ writings, announcements for assignments and project, wall charts or illustrations of stages of the writing process, writing folders and journals kept by students.
Selection of Case Study Students

The case study participants were selected based on their scores from the Pre-Writing Self-Efficacy Scale. The scale, used in this study, was adapted from Pajares, Miller, & Johnson (1999) who had originally used the scale created by Shell, Murphy, & Bruning (1989). The results of this self-efficacy scale were used to select four case study students and to explore the role of self-efficacy in writing conferences.

In this particular study, the researcher used a scale with a 0-100 format rather than a scale with a traditional Likert format to allow a variety in students’ responses. Besides researchers found that a writing self-efficacy scale with a 0-100 format was more reliable in predicting students’ achievement (Pajares, Hartley, & Valiante, 2001). In fact, the researchers of the instrument compared two writing self-efficacy scales having the same ten questions but differing in response styles (0-100 vs. Likert Scale). They studied the use of the instrument with 497 middle school students. Half of the students answered the first self-efficacy scale with a 0-100 format while the rest of the students had the scale with Likert format. The researchers aimed to predict students’ GPAs in language arts. At the end of the study, the researchers found that the writing self-efficacy scale with the 0-100 format made an independent contribution to prediction of students’ GPAs whereas the self-efficacy instrument using the Likert format was not significant in predicting students’ achievement in writing.

After the pre-self-efficacy test was administered, the students’ scores were listed from highest to lowest scores without including their names. Students who scored levels of perceived self-efficacy between 0 and 50 were labeled as lower; scores from 51 to 100 were labeled as higher. Therefore, the researcher chose two students for each category. Then, the names of the students who had the highest and lowest scores were written on small pieces of papers. Later, someone outside of the research selected students’ names form a container, without knowing either the names or the self-efficacy scores of the students.

In summary, the selection of the four case study students was based on the scores they obtained from the previously administered Pre-Self-Efficacy Scale. As a result, two groups of students those with higher self-efficacy versus those with lower self-efficacy were determined. Also in order to control for gender effect, one male and one female
student were placed in each group. Based on this selection, four case study students, Carl (confident male student), Krista (confident female student), Eric (less confident male student), and Stephanie (less confident female student), were determined. 

**Carl**

Carl reflected confidence in writing. It was also observed that Carl frequently volunteered to share his writing with others, read his classmates’ texts and provided feedback, and asked for and initiated several writing conferences with his teacher. Carl was fluent and persistent in writing. Similar to Krista, Carl had four pages of a written story on his desk, while others were still completing their first page. During the editing activities, he was one of the first ones to finish the editing and raise his hand to correct the sentences on the board. Generally, Carl was one of the last three children to be eliminated from the spelling game “the cherry pie.” He was energetic, social, when appropriate, and very much focused. Carl was one of the students who worked on his materials to publish his stories after Alex gave directions on what to do.

He was determined when it came to writing. One time, Alex announced that time was up and the students needed to “clean up”! Every one put his/her stories into writing folders and started moving around the classroom while Carl was saying “Oh! Ms. Alex I was still writing.” He enjoyed writing and talking about his writing. When students were asked to write a persuasive essay, before the conferences started, Carl asked if he could have a conference. If the teacher said, no, he got upset and showed his displeasure with his body language.

Carl saw conferences as dialogues not short minilessons. For instance, the students were asked to write about their winter break. Carl has already had a conference that day. Later, Alex was looking around to see who to confer with. Carl said, “You can have me!” both Alex and the researcher said, “You already had one.” He said, “Can I talk to you again.” He didn’t say you can read my writing or ask me questions or check my writing. But he asked, “Can I talk to you?”

**Krista**

Similar to Carl, Krista also reflected high self-efficacy toward writing and she was also very fluent in her writing. While students were working on their historical stories, she had four full written pages in front of her while other students around the
same table had one-page-long written stories. She was not only fluent but also good at spelling and editing. Krista volunteered several times to do the corrections on the board for everyone to see the proper way of editing a sentence.

Krista was the most talkative student interviewed. She provided lengthy explanations for each question asked. Krista also frequently provided feedback to her peers about their writing and was eager to share her writing with others. Several times during the study she even asked interns or the researcher to read what she had written.

Eric

Eric was not a confident writer. He never let others read his writing. In some cases, he did not even allow Alex to look at them. During language arts blocks, Eric seemed concerned and shy and did not talk much or collaborate with others including his own teacher. Instead he preferred playing with his nails and fingers and staying at his desk for most of the time. When he had to leave his desk, he did not forget to cover his pages with another blank paper. His short visits were limited to getting a book or a dictionary. Eric did not ask help from other students or from the researcher and was not a fluent writer. Eric’s happiest moments were clean up time. As soon as the clean up time came, Eric was jumping from his chair happily and quickly putting his papers into his folder.

Stephanie

Similar to Eric, Stephanie also reflected low self-efficacy toward writing. Even though Stephanie used most of her writing time giggling and talking to students from different tables, in most cases, she was a fluent writer. While most of the students had one-page-long stories, she had a three-page-long story.

Stephanie never volunteered to read her text to the researcher, to interns, or to her peers. She also hid her text as soon as the researcher approached her table. When the help was offered, Stephanie stated that she did not feel like writing at that moment or she had writer’s block.
Data Collection

Instruments

The instruments are designed to help the researcher determine the nature of writing conferences, select case study students, and acquire student background information and feelings about conferences.

Rubric for Categorizing and Determining the Nature of Writing Conferences

Analysis of each teacher-student conference interaction was guided by use of the rubric for analyzing teacher-student writing conferences (see Appendix E). This rubric was organized into eight categories: focus, conference agenda, ownership/building on students’ strengths, reflected questions, encouraged turn taking, frequency of talk, number of praise statements, and amount of interruptions. Rubric categories were further divided into three sections; teacher-centered, balanced, and finally student-centered. Conference interactions were assigned a score of 1, 2, or 3 points for each of the eight categories, with 1 point being considered as a teacher-centered conference, 2 points a balanced conference, and 3 points a student-centered conference. Each category had specific functions, for example, the first category of the rubric, focus, was used to analyze the amount of writing corrections assigned to the student. Conferences were considered as teacher-centered if student writers were overwhelmed by many missing or weak points of their text (Graves, 1983; Murray 1985, 1982, 1969). In balanced conferences only a few corrections were discussed during conference interaction. Finally, conferences were considered student-centered when the teacher limited her corrections to one or two issues so as not to overwhelm the students.

The second category, the conference agenda, was used to observe whether the teacher or student led the conversation during interactions and also who determined the topics to be discussed. Ownership, the third category, focused on whether suggestions for improvement came more from the teacher or the student. The fourth category reflected questions and explored the number of questions produced by both parties during the interactions.

Category five was used to determine the nature of turn taking. Transcriptions of conferences were printed and each turn was assigned a number. The total number of turns during each conference by teacher and student were counted. Attention was given not
only to the number of turns but also the amount of talk. In the sixth category the transcripts of conference talk were used to count total number of words produced by both participants. Category seven focused on the number and kinds of praise. Each turn of the teacher was read several times to determine when and how often she generated general or task specific feedback about students’ writing processes.

The last category investigated the amount of interruptions that occurred during interactions. In this category, the number and the length of the interruptions were calculated as well as how quickly the teacher returned her attention to the conference talk. Additionally, each conference was labeled as either a topic conference, content conference, process conference, editing conference, assessment conference, or publishing conference (Piazza, 2003).

Teacher-centered writing conferences described an interaction in which the teacher did almost all the talking, asked questions, determined the problem, and gave the solutions. In balanced writing conferences, both parties collaborated on finding the problems of the text and the solutions for it. They had almost equal time to talk, ask questions, and share their reflections. On the other hand, in student-centered writing conferences, the teacher provided time and opportunities for the student to voice concerns, suggestions, and ideas about the topic and to find ways to improve writing quality. Thus, the students were better able to take an active role in finding possible solutions to their writing problems.

*The Pre-Post Writing Self-Efficacy Scale*

The pre-post Writing Self-Efficacy Scale was adapted from Pajares, Miller, & Johnson (1999) who originally used the scale created by Shell, Murphy, & Bruning (1989). Several reasons were influential when choosing the survey to use. First, this scale was an established tool in other research studies that found a significant relationship between students’ perceptions of their self-efficacy and students’ writing achievement. For example, Shell, Murphy, & Bruning (1989) created a writing self-efficacy scale with eight items, each measuring students’ confidence on communicating their ideas effectively in their writing. Reliability of these eight items, which were calculated with Cronbach’s alpha, was .95. The authors used this scale to investigate the relationship between 153 undergraduate students’ self-efficacy and outcome expectancy beliefs and achievement in reading and writing.
Later, Shell, Colvin, and Bruning (1995) used the same scale with 364 fourth, seventh, and tenth-grade students. Since the age of the participants were lower they used a 5-point scale, as follows: 1 (I’m sure I can’t), 2 (I don’t think I can), 3 (maybe I can), 4 (pretty sure I can), and 5 (I’m sure I can), rather than a scale from zero (no chance) to 100 (complete certainty). The coefficient alpha reliability estimate for the self-efficacy scale for writing skill was .76 and this study also proved that self-efficacy was significant in predicting students’ writing achievement. Finally, four years later, Pajares, Miller, & Johnson (1999) used the same scale with 363 third, fourth, and fifth-grade students with a scale from zero (no chance) to 100 (completely certain). The authors added one item into the original survey. They obtained a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .85 with their participants and confirmed that perceived self-efficacy effects students’ writing achievement.

The second reason for choosing the scale of Shell et al. (1989) was that it paralleled criteria used on the FCAT rubric. Parts of speech such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, grammar, and spelling, excluded from Graham and Harris (1989a) study, was included in the Shell et. al. study and matched criteria on the FCAT rubric.

Bandura (1993) recommended that when investigating the relationships between students’ achievement on a particular subject or task and their level of self-efficacy, the researchers should be careful to find a self-efficacy scale which is specifically about the same subject or task to better assess the effects of self-efficacy beliefs on students’ achievements.

The Writing-Self-Efficacy Scale that was used in this research was a survey with nine items designed to measure students’ confidence when judging their composition, grammar, usage, and mechanical skills appropriate to academic level. The items in the survey asked students how confident they were that they could perform specific writing skills on a scale from 0 (no chance) to 100 (completely certain). The statements included:
- Organize sentences into a paragraph that clearly express an idea
- Write a simple sentence with good grammar
- Correctly punctuate a one-page story or composition (See Appendix C for all nine items).
Interviews

The interviews – careful asking of relevant questions (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009, p. 445) – allowed the researcher to test whether her observations and impressions were supported or clarified by the participants. According to Fraenkel & Wallen (2009), the purpose of interviewing people was: “1) to find out what is on their mind, 2) what they think, and 3) how they feel about something” (p. 446). Therefore, in this research interviews were used to better reflect teachers’ and students’ attitudes and values. Interviews allowed the researcher to investigate whether the participants’ beliefs and behaviors were parallel to each other (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009).

Observations

As a qualitative researcher, the researcher recorded what she saw, heard, and read by using video and audio recording devices. While observing writing conferences, the method was naturalistic observation, in which “the researcher makes no effort whatsoever to manipulate variables or to control the activities of individuals, but simply observes and records what happens as things naturally occur” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009, p. 442). The data obtained for each student were represented with descriptive statistics but more detailed descriptions were provided for the purposively selected case studies.

Writing Prompts

Two writing prompts were provided for student writing. Both prompts were similar in terms of genre (personal narrative), audience (self/teacher), and topic and length of the prompt. One prompt was given as a pre-test and the other one as a post-test. Students were asked to write two expository essays that were read by two independent raters and graded on a scale of 1-6 for focus, good organization, supporting details, and proper writing skills (conventions).

Procedures

Before starting the data collection procedure, the classroom site was visited several times by the researcher to make herself familiar with the classroom setting and to make students feel comfortable having someone observe their writing and conferencing process. Additionally, the researcher briefly described the purpose of her visits and encouraged the students to behave normally. Otherwise, curiosity or anxiety about the researcher’s presence might hinder their productivity and comfort (Graves, 1983). So, the
students were told that the researcher was also a teacher who had never used conferences while teaching writing and was observing how to implement them into her own teaching practices. The purpose of observation was relayed to students but they were not informed about how these conferences would be analyzed. Neither Alex nor the students knew who were case study students and what observations focused on during conferences.

The consent letters (see Appendix B) were obtained from the parents and the students, for both classrooms, before starting data collection. All the students in the study classroom provided consent letters, while four students or parents did not want to participate into the study from the reference classroom. The process of collecting the consent letters took more than two weeks, even though the researcher was in the research site during this time and frequently reminded students to bring their signed consent letters. The students in the reference group had difficulty with remembering what they were told to do.

After all the consent letters were collected, the pre Self-Efficacy Scale, with nine items, was implemented in each classroom. The researcher recognized that there was a professionally designed poster, titled as probability meter, in the study classroom. The poster was hanging on the teacher’s office door and could easily be seen by the students. According to the chart: 0 was impossible, 1-5 was extremely unlikely, 6-20 to very unlikely, 21-35 was unlikely, 50 was so-so chance, 51-75 was likely, 76-90 was very likely, 91-99 was extremely likely, and 100 was certain. The tones of the blue color were also used to reflect the high or low probability. For instance, the “impossible” part was a very light blue while the “certain” part was printed with very a dark blue color.

Prior to delivering the scale, the researcher showed the probability meter and asked students how to use it by providing examples. Later the students were asked to describe what self-efficacy was. Then, self-efficacy was described by the researcher with several examples. After the scale was delivered, each item was read by the researcher to prevent any misreading or misunderstanding of the items. Completing the scale took five to seven minutes in each classroom.

After the pre-Writing Self-Efficacy Scale, all students, in each classroom, were asked to write a personal narrative to explain one of their special days. At the end of the study, after the conferences ended, the same process was repeated. First, the students
were asked to answer the post-Self-Efficacy Scale. Second, they were asked to write another personal narrative about a special time with a friend. During both narrative writing processes, even though the students in the study classroom wrote longer texts still they were able to complete their narratives faster than students in the reference classroom.

After pre- and post-writing samples were collected from each classroom, the researcher copied the papers, covering the names of the students. Later, each paper had a randomly assigned number on it instead of a name. Thus, neither the researcher nor the readers knew 1) who wrote the text, 2) in which group s/he was assigned, or 3) whether it was a pre-writing sample or a post-writing sample. Students’ responses were read by two graduate students who were experienced in teaching and grading writing yet were not involved in the study. The personal narratives were scored by the same rubric used in the state of Florida (FCAT Writing). Thus, the students’ texts were scored based on the excellence of focus, organization, support, and conventions of the texts. (See Appendix G for definitions of criteria in the rubric). After the scores were gathered from the both readers, the researcher calculated the inter-rater reliability for both pre- and post-writing samples.

Only the students in the study group had interviews with the researcher about their ideas, their strengths, weaknesses, and preferences in writing. The reason for this interview was to learn what students thought about their preferences and level of perceived self-efficacy toward writing. (See Appendix D for the actual interview questions). In addition, during the interview the researcher asked further questions, such as: “Why?, Can you tell me more?, How did it make you feel?, and What makes you think that way?” to gain deeper information about the subject matter. Additionally, the researcher was respectful, acted naturally, asked the same questions in different ways, and asked the interviewee to repeat an answer or statement to avoid miscommunication. Enough time was allowed before going to the next question for participants to fully respond and leading questions were avoided (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009).

Interviews allowed the researcher to investigate whether the participants’ beliefs and behaviors were parallel to each other (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). The audio recorded interviews were conducted with both teachers. Interviews with teachers were conducted
in the natural setting of the classrooms, however, the interviews with the students in the study group were conducted in Alex’s office, which was also connected to the classroom, to have a quieter place to talk.

It is easier to conduct research in the laboratory setting, where the researcher can control the variables and make specific and accurate measurements which can be independently confirmed. However, in this study the researcher chose a natural setting in which the researcher did not manipulate the variables; instead, events and interactions occurred naturally (Scherer and Ekman, 1982). Thus, the scheduled writing conferences were set up and audio-video recorded in the natural setting, the classroom, as a part of the curriculum. The conference talk was transcribed. (See Appendix H for transcription notations and Appendix I for sample transcripts of the conference talk).

In order to collect data for the conference interaction, a rubric was designed by the researcher based on research about effective writing conferences. Its purpose was to measure the nature of teacher-student writing conferences. The rubric included two main columns labeled as Conference Features and Instructional-Interaction Styles. Under Conference Features there were eight categories for determining the nature and characteristics of the conferences. These categories included: focus of the dialogue, conference agenda, authority and ownership, questions asked, turn taking, frequency of talk, praise statements, and interruptions. Instructional-Interaction Styles consisted of three sub-categories presented in columns. These sub-categories were 1) teacher-centered, 2) balanced, and 3) student-centered. Since the nature of conferences changed in each sub-category, detailed explanations of each category were presented under each instructional-interaction style. (For more details on definitions and the categories in the rubric see Appendix E).

The research setting was visited by the researcher five times a week for 75 minutes daily. Besides audio and video recording of the scheduled teacher-student writing conferences, the researcher also documented what she saw, heard, and read in the field. The method for observing writing conferences was naturalistic observation.

Data Analysis

The first research question was, what is the nature of scheduled teacher-student writing conferences. To answer this question, the researcher repeatedly watched the video
recordings of conferences then transcribed and analyzed the conference talk to determine
the patterns of interaction during conferences between the teacher and four case study
participants designated as high and low based on their pre and post self-efficacy scores.
The possible representations of distributions might be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-efficacy (pre)</th>
<th>Type of writing conf.</th>
<th>Self-efficacy (post)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>low</td>
<td>teacher-centered</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medium</td>
<td>balanced</td>
<td>medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high</td>
<td>student-centered</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

or

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-efficacy (pre)</th>
<th>Type of writing conf.</th>
<th>Self-efficacy (post)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>low</td>
<td>balanced</td>
<td>medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medium</td>
<td>teacher-centered</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high</td>
<td>student-centered</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

or

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-efficacy (pre)</th>
<th>Type of writing conf.</th>
<th>Self-efficacy (post)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>low</td>
<td>student-centered</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medium</td>
<td>teacher-centered</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high</td>
<td>balanced</td>
<td>medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the rubric, created by the researcher, each writing conference was
categorized in one of the three groups, as teacher-centered, balanced, or student-centered.
Teacher-centered writing conferences described an interaction in which the teacher did
almost all the talking, asked questions, determined the problem, and gave the solutions.
In balanced writing conferences, both parties collaborated on finding the problems of the
text and the solutions for it. They had almost equal time to talk, ask questions, and share
their reflections. On the other hand, in student-centered writing conferences, the teacher
provided time and opportunities to the student to voice concerns, suggestions, and ideas
about the topic and to find ways to improve writing quality. Thus, the student did most of
the talking; s/he found the problems and provided suggestions for possible solutions. The
conference agenda was determined according to the student’s needs. Additionally, each conference was labeled as either a topic conference, content conference, process conference, editing conference, assessment conference, or publishing conference (Piazza, 2003).

The researcher also investigated the quality and functions of the questions asked by the teacher and the students. Additionally, global concerns related to the content and focus of the papers, and the characteristics and kinds of conferences, matched or not, were explored and discussed.

The second question was, *can teacher-student writing conferences be informed by students’ perceived self-efficacy.* To answer this question, the researcher used a pre-and post-self-efficacy scale. The pre-self-efficacy scale was used to determine the case study participants. The nature of writing conferences were described for high and low self-efficacy students. Then, the common patterns in conferences of students with lower and higher self-efficacy were listed to argue whether perceived self-efficacy could predict students’ interaction styles while conferring with their teacher. Also, post self-efficacy scores were examined to determine whether students who participated in writing conferences had self-efficacy scores that changed in a positive direction.

To investigate whether students who participated in scheduled teacher-student writing conferences improved their writing performance and efficacy toward writing, the researcher compared the pre-and post-writing and pre-and-post self-efficacy scores of students in the study classroom and reference classroom. Thus, the researcher calculated means and standard deviations for both the pre-and post-writing and self-efficacy scores and reported the distribution of scores (range and percentages) for students in both fifth-grade classrooms. Two graduate students scored written papers on a scale from 1 to 6 according to FCAT criteria. Then the researcher calculated inter-rater agreement between the two raters for the prompt writing scores. Additionally, mixed ANOVA design was used to investigate whether writing scores and level of self-efficacy significantly differed between group of students with and without scheduled teacher-student writing conferences.
Ethics in Research

Ethical conduct is important in any kind of research. Therefore, during the study, there were several rules maintained by the researcher. These rules are 1) identification of all the participants was kept confidential: the participants and schools used pseudonyms; 2) the researcher was courteous, respectful, and trustworthy during the whole study and never recorded conversations without informing the participants; and 3) the researcher assured participants that her study design or results would not harm anyone involved in the data collection procedures.

In addition to these, the data obtained in this research were analyzed and synthesized from several sources such as rubric, survey, observations, and interviews. The collected data and its analyses were shared by the classroom teachers -- member checking -- to have data triangulation and to make sure the researcher reflected the real or the whole picture of what was going on in the classrooms.
CHAPTER IV
DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The study examined the nature of scheduled teacher-student writing conferences while also giving attention to the potential role of perceived self-efficacy beliefs during writing conferences. Below, the research questions of the study are listed:

1. What is the nature of scheduled teacher-student conferences between a teacher and four fifth-grade students?
2. Can teacher-student writing conferences be informed by students’ perceived self-efficacy?

Therefore, the data analysis section is developed along two main components: 1) describing the nature of teacher-student writing conferences held with four case study students, and 2) considering if the level of students’ perceived self-efficacy informs educators about what kinds of conferences are likely to be conducted.

Findings

First Research Question

In order to address the first research question, the nature of scheduled teacher-student writing conferences in a fifth-grade classroom, a total of 32 writing conferences were repeatedly reviewed, coded and analyzed separately by the researcher and the second reader/coder who was experienced in teaching writing and not affiliated with the data collection. Inter-rater reliability was calculated using Intraclass Correlation Coefficients (ICC) because the sample size of case study students (4) was smaller than 15. Based on the ICC the initial inter-rater agreement was .93. After four follow-up meetings, with analyses of each case, the two raters reached 100% agreement.

The study classroom was observed five days a week for over a ten-week period. Each observation lasted for 75 minutes. The classroom teacher conducted teacher-student writing conferences for the total of 28 times throughout the study. The number of students who conferred with the teacher ranged from two to twelve. Four case study students had a total of 32 writing conferences ranging from 7 seconds to 10 minutes and
33 seconds long. Analysis of each teacher-student writing conference interaction was guided by the rubric created by the researcher based on the literature about effective teaching and writing conferences (see Appendix E). In this rubric there were eight categories, each analyzed differently, to identify patterns. In order to analyze the categories, total numbers of occurrences and a few functions were investigated to decide whether these conferences should be coded as teacher-centered, balanced, or student-centered. While analyzing individual cases the number and examples of occurrences are presented for each key informant. Below eight rubric categories, analyzing processes for these categories and the overall view of the conferences are explained.

Focus (F) was the first category of the rubric and dealt with the number of appropriate surface or content related issues addressed by the teacher. One of the purposes of conferences was to assess the weaknesses and the strengths of the written text. However, over emphasizing the rules or highlighting several errors at one time can lower motivation and make students feel frustrated. Therefore, conferences were coded as student-centered when the teacher focused on only one or two appropriate content or surface related issues. Conferences with three issues identified were coded as balanced conferences. When the teacher addressed more than three issues for students to fix or complete, two coders accepted those conferences as teacher-centered conferences. Overall it was encouraging to see that 72% of the conferences were coded as student-centered. Two out of thirty-two conferences were coded as balanced, while 16% of the conferences were coded as teacher-centered. In two writing conferences the participants did not mention anything related to the student’s written text or the writing process so these two conferences were excluded from the analyses.

Conference agenda (CA) was the second category in the rubric and determined whether the teacher or the student led the conference discussion and/or introduced and/or answered inquiries. Because the length of the conferences were not the same, the researcher and the second reader coded each turn and determined if it was teacher-led or student-led. If the teacher led the conference it was coded TCA and if the student led it was coded as SCA. For each conference, the total number of TCAs and SCAs were calculated. If the majority (2/3) of these turns were created by the teacher that particular conference was coded as teacher-centered. Overall, the classroom teacher invited students
to determine the conference agenda and shift topics freely. Thus in only one conference did the teacher control the topic to be discussed. In twelve conferences (38%) both the teacher and student led the discussion and answered the inquiries. These conferences were coded as balanced conferences. Again, it was promising to see that 59% of the conferences were coded as student-centered where the teacher gave the students opportunities to determine and lead the conference discussion.

The third category, ownership/strengths (OS), identified whether the suggestions for improvement came from the teacher or the student. Again for each conference, in each turn, every suggestion was coded as either teacher ownership (TOS) or student ownership (SOS). In contrast to the first two categories, in the third category it was found that the teacher controlled suggestions and recommendations for improving the quality of the written text. Thus, 34% of the conferences were coded as teacher-centered. In 44% of the conferences both the teacher and the students provided almost equal numbers of recommendations and were coded as balanced. In only one conference did the student provide more suggestions than the teacher did and it was the only conference coded as student-centered. In 19% of the conferences neither party provided suggestions so these conferences were excluded from the analyses.

The fourth category, reflected questions (RQ), investigated total numbers and functions of questions asked in each conference. After the numbers of questions were determined, the coders counted how many of these questions were produced by the teacher and by the student. If the teacher asked more than 2/3 of the questions the conference was coded as teacher-centered. If both parties produced almost equal numbers of questions the conference was coded as balanced. When the student produced most of the questions the conference was coded as student-centered. The analyses of the conference questions showed that the teacher asked a total of 464 questions while four students alone asked a total of 76 questions. Two conferences were coded as student-centered and another two conferences were coded as balanced while the remaining 28 conferences were coded as teacher-centered. The researcher not only paid attention to the total numbers of questions asked but also the functions and the purposes of these questions. After the total number of questions was determined for each student, the functions and frequency of these questions were investigated and calculated into
percentages. Detailed analyses of conference transcripts revealed many functions of the teacher’s questions including 1) allowing students to determine conference agenda with open-ended questions (14%), 2) getting information about students’ texts with specific/detail questions (28%), 3) learning about students’ writing processes (6%), 4) checking students’ understanding of their written text (9%), 5) providing students chances to share their concerns or questions (7%), 6) clarifying what students said (9%), 7) engaging in social talk (3%), 8) seeking information (14%), 9) encouraging students to tell more about their texts (1%), and 10) providing recommendations and showing examples (9%).

The students’ questions also served several purposes. Examples were: 1) clarifying the assignment (21%), 2) guessing the solution or providing suggestions (20%), 3) checking for understanding or clarifying what the teacher said (28%), 4) asking permission (7%), 5) engaging in social talk (1%), and 6) seeking specific information (23%).

Encouraged turn taking (TT) was the fifth category. This category was used to investigate which partner took most of the speaking turns in the conference discussion. The researcher and the second coder read the transcript of each conference and counted the total number of turns for both the teacher and the student. The conferences where the teacher took more than 2/3 of the turns were coded as teacher-centered. In this study, only 9% of the conferences were coded as teacher-centered and the remaining 91% of the conferences were balanced. Both the teacher and the student took almost equal numbers of turns which allowed students to be also involved in the conversation about their text.

Frequency of talk (FT) was the sixth category and, similar to turn taking, it also considered utterances of each party. However, this time each word was counted instead of the whole turn. It was surprising to see that even though in the majority of the conferences both parties had almost equal numbers of turns, when it came to the total numbers of words produced by both parties, the teacher outnumbered the students in 62% of the conferences. In 16% of the conferences both the teacher and the student talked almost equally during the discussion and they exchanged roles as senders and receivers of the messages. Thus, these conferences were coded as balanced. In 22% of the conferences, the teacher gave opportunities to the students to produce more than 50% of
the talk and acted as a sender of the messages during the conference dialogue. These conferences were coded as student-centered.

Number of praise comments received (P) was the seventh category. Initially, the praise statements were separated into two groups as specific praise statements such as “That’s a good metaphor” and general praise statements such as “Good, fine, oh, well”. Later on, after listening to the conference dialogue and reading the transcriptions, it was observed that the classroom teacher used general praise statements so often that they were a type of back channeling (Tannen, 2005). Thus, the researcher and the second coder had to decide whether general praise statements were about the quality of the written text or if they were statements for showing active listening, a way of keeping the conversation going. Although back channeling was coded in other categories for encouraging student talk it did not fit the definition of “praise” in this category. The conferences where the majority of the general praise statements were used to show active listening were coded as teacher-centered. The conferences where the teacher still used general praise statements for highlighting the quality of the student’s text were coded as balanced. Finally, the conferences were the teacher provided specific praise statements were coded as student-centered. The percentage of teacher-centered writing conferences was 19%, 37% for balanced, and 25% for the student-centered conferences. Similar to the ownership category 19% of the conferences were excluded from the analyses in terms of praise statements since there were no specific or general praise statements provided to the student.

The last category was amount of interruption (I). Since the length of the conferences varied a common time frame or certain numbers of interruptions could not be definitively established. Given that the longer a conference lasted the higher the probability of the interruptions, the researcher calculated the ratio of interruptions to total time of the conference and if that time took more than 15% of the total conference time it was coded as teacher-centered. When the interruption time was less than 15% of the total conference time that conference was coded as balanced. The conferences where there was no interruption were coded as student-centered. In these cases the teacher gave the message that conferring was a serious act. Even though the teacher warned students several times not to interrupt still 22% of the conferences were interrupted and were
coded as teacher-centered, 44% of the conferences were coded as balanced, and 34% of the conferences were coded as student-centered. Similar to the reflected questions category, in this category the researcher paid attention to the functions and the reasons for these interruptions. Four common reasons accounted for the interruptions: 1) students asking questions to the teacher 55%, 2) the teacher answering the phone 3%, 3) the teacher warning other students about classroom behavior 30%, and 4) the teacher giving directions to other students 12%.

In conclusion, analyses of 32 teacher-student writing conferences showed that the classroom teacher was good at keeping the conferences focused and allowing students to determine the conference agenda. However, still there were conferences in which students did not share the content of their papers or their writing processes. In these situations conferences were excluded in the analysis specifically in categories of conference agenda, ownership, and praise statements. Even though the classroom teacher allowed the students to have almost 50% of the turns, she still spoke more. Her suggestions and/or recommendations for students to implement into their writing led her to keep the power and control in terms of ownership and frequency of talk. The other surprising finding was seeing that even though the teacher warned students to be quiet and not to interrupt while she was conferring, the teacher had a total of 40 interruptions and almost half of these were initiated for reasons of classroom control, giving directions, and talking on the phone.

As mentioned earlier, teacher-student writing conferences for the four case study students were analyzed and coded by the researcher as well as an independent second reader/coder. Based on reader/coder analyses the students’ writing conferences are described below beginning with the two more confident writers, Carl and Krista, followed by conference descriptions of the less confident writers, Eric and Stephanie. Descriptions of the analyses of each case study student is presented by first, presenting the researchers perspective of the student; second, presenting the students’ perspectives of how they viewed and explained the writing conferences; and three, by briefly summarizing the frequency and types of writing conferences. An overview of conferences across the eight categories/indicators of the particular student being described concludes each of the case study descriptions.
Carl – the Confident Male Student

Carl was a highly confident writer. Sharing his writing with the researcher and with others was always easy for him and he even enjoyed the sharing process. Students frequently went to him for suggestions while the classroom teacher was conferring with other students. Besides being a good responder to classmates, Carl was also a fluent writer. He was persistent in his writing and more importantly saw writing-conferences as dialogues not short mini-lessons. Carl also commented that he was a good writer and especially enjoyed writing stories about fantasy because he could be more creative and allow his mind to go anywhere. When asked, Carl was also able to provide suggestions for improving the quality of a text. For instance, he mentioned a) brainstorming, b) using graphic organizers, c) studying, d) having a good beginning, fair middle, and a really good ending, e) creating good topic sentences, f) indenting new paragraphs, g) including dialogue into the text, h) asking for a friend’s help, i) asking for others’ opinions, and j) having writing conferences as helpful strategies to improve the quality of a text.

Carl was not able to provide a textbook-type definition of writing conferences but did reflect upon the idea that he enjoyed participating in teacher-student writing conferences because they allowed him a chance to ask questions and discuss his concerns with the teacher. He described conferences as talking with the teacher and pointed out that if he had writer’s block the teacher could help him resolve this obstacle. He also stated that the teacher provided ideas and helped throughout the writing process. Carl enjoyed conferences and his favorite part was gaining ideas and advice from his teacher.

Over the ten-week research period Carl participated in a total of eight teacher-student writing conferences, a conference regarding a speech contest was excluded from the conference data. The duration of writing conferences with Carl ranged from 53 seconds to 7 minutes and 38 seconds. Conference duration usually depended on the draft stage of the text and the kind of conference interaction. During seven conferences Carl wrote texts for diverse genres. He was first assigned to write a historical fiction which was the focus of the first four conferences. The fifth conference was held after he wrote an expository text regarding his Christmas memories. The last two conferences occurred during the process of writing a persuasive essay.
Through the seven conferences it was clear that the draft stage affected the focus and nature of conferences. For instance, before the recording of his first conference, the teacher and Carl had already decided on his topic. As a result, during the first conference Carl came to the conference table with his materials and texts with several pages of the story already written. In general, conference talk in this conference was based on what he had already written and what he was planning to do next. The majority of the questions and suggestions centered on the events and information provided in the story - as a content conference (Piazza, 2003). In the second conference, Carl stated that he was confident with what he had written so far, his favorite part of the story was the ending, even though it was not written. The teacher asked for Carl to summarize how the story would end. During the rest of the conference, they discussed procedures for publishing his historical fiction story in the school’s library as a result, the second conference was considered a combination content and publication conference. The third and fourth conferences were process conferences in which Carl mentioned that he finished writing the text and was searching for images to include with his story. Most of the conversation in these conferences centered on procedures and management of his work. The fifth conference focused on both content and assessment in which Carl summarized his text. The teacher, Alex, read the text and provided suggestions for improvements while also highlighting missing points such as details, descriptions, and examples. This was the only conference in which they talked about the strengths and the weaknesses of the essay.

The sixth conference regarded the topic and content of Carl’s persuasive essay about wearing uniforms in school. After Carl had decided what he would write about, the teacher asked several questions about how Carl would support his thesis with examples and supporting details. In the seventh and final conference, Carl decided to change his topic from the ‘uniforms’ to ‘year round school’. This was a content conference where Alex again challenged him with questions to gauge how persistent Carl was with his statement. The teacher also encouraged Carl to put his supporting ideas in order according to their importance and strengths.

In Table 1 are analyses of eight indicators that were observed in Carl’s seven writing conferences. Detailed information is provided under each category outlining the rubric used to assess the nature of teacher-student writing conferences.
Table 1

*Overview of the Conferences with Carl across the Indicators*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conferences:</th>
<th>C. 1</th>
<th>C. 2</th>
<th>C. 3</th>
<th>C. 4</th>
<th>C. 5</th>
<th>C. 6</th>
<th>C. 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agenda</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership/Strengths</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflected Questions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turn taking</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of talk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praises</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interruption</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1= Teacher-centered  2= Balanced  3= Student-centered

**Focus.** As shown in Table 1 the first two and last two conferences were rated as student-centered conferences. The third conference was totally about Carl not being able to find a computer to type his story. There was no response or question about the content of the story. Therefore it was not applicable to assess this conference and it was excluded from the analyses in terms of focus. The fourth conference was balanced where Alex asked Carl to prepare the criticism about the story, as well as, an author’s page. Also he was to review other historical fiction books to see if there was something else that he could include in his story. The only conference that was labeled as teacher-centered in terms of focus was conference five when Alex and Carl talked about his expository essay. In conference five he was assigned a second draft which included; a) an introduction that has a grabber, b) sensory details, and c) descriptions. Finally, he was asked to review his texts in order to find parts that needed to be more specific.

**Agenda.** This observational indicator, specifically, looked at who was determining the conference topic and discussion theme. It was encouraging to see that, except for the fourth conference, all the conferences were student-centered. Alex asked several open-ended questions (see Table 2), so that Carl could decide what he wanted to do at that conference. In conference four there was also limited talk about the content of the story, instead, Alex commented that since Carl worked so hard on this story, she was volunteering to type it. However with her specific question (e.g. What are you planning
to do about the author?) she was not only assigning him a task but also determining the
topic that was talked about in following ten turns during the interaction.

Ownership/Strengths. Conference one, two, and five were labeled as balanced
conferences where Alex provided suggestions such as, “So you might wanna break it
down to like one or two” and “Well you can end it with the artist died or you can end it
with he died or he can die in it or he doesn’t even have to die like he you can just end it
with you know him being like he’s popular and he just did all this the Indians and he was
a strong leader for them and then just kinda end it that way.”

Carl’s responses to these suggestions were limited to showing his agreement with
Alex in the first conference. However, in the remaining two conferences Carl provided
two specific suggestions about including pictures in his story. He admitted that he had no
problem with writing but considered drawing difficult. He mentioned that he could print
images and include them into the story. The second suggestion came in conference five,
while they were talking about ways to improve the quality of the text. Carl stated that he
could work on word choice because better words would develop the essay. He didn’t
simply ask the teacher to help with drawings and to provide remedies to improve his
texts. In conference four and six all the suggestions came from Alex so they were coded
as teacher-centered in terms of ownership (Reigstad, 1984, 1980).

Reflected questions. As mentioned earlier, frequency and functions of questions
were also an interest of the study while investigating conference interaction. Table 2
illustrates questions asked by Alex with selected examples.

Table 2

Numbers and Functions of Questions Asked by Alex during Conferences with Carl

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function of Questions</th>
<th>Conference Number</th>
<th>Frequency of Questions</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Open-ended and general questions that allow students to determine the conference agenda | 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7   | 17                     | “What’s changed?”
|                                                            |                   |                        | “So what are you gonna tell?”
|                                                            |                   |                        | “So what is your story gonna be about?”
| Specific questions about the student’s text                | 1, 2, 5, 6, 7     | 32                     | “Is he a real person?”
|                                                            |                   |                        | “What happens at the end?” |
Table 2 (continued). Numbers and Functions of Questions Asked by Alex during Conferences with Carl

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function of Questions</th>
<th>Conference Number</th>
<th>Frequency of Questions</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions asking about student’s writing process</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>“So have you started doing your plot?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Checking student’s understanding | 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 | 10 | “Okay?”  
“Right?”  
“So you think if I make you write a persuasive piece on uniforms you’ll do okay?” |
| Providing chances to student to reflect any concerns or questions before the conference ends | 1, 2, 3 | 11 | “Any questions?”  
“Any problem?”  
“Is that it?”  
“Are you having any problems with like the end of the story?” |
| Clarifying what the student says | 2, 3, 4, 5 | 7 | “What?” |
| Social talk | 1 | 1 | “Tired?” |
| Seeking for information | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 | 13 | “What is all this red on here?” |
| Keep going | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Recommending/showing examples | 5, 7 | 15 | “Okay so what did you forget?”  
“How should you, what’s what are some of the grabbers?” |

Conference four was the only one in which Carl asked the majority of questions. The remaining conferences were dominated by the teacher’s questions. However, it is important to mention that Alex used her questions for different purposes as seen in the table. For instance, the majority of the questions were used for encouraging Carl to provide details about his texts (28%) and to determine the conference agenda (15%). The least popular function was using a questioning strategy for engaging in social talk (1%) and Alex did not need to ask additional questions to Carl in order to keep him talking. Table 3 illustrates the frequency and samples of questions asked by Carl.
Table 3

Questions Asked by Car

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function of questions</th>
<th>Conference Number</th>
<th>Frequency of questions</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clarifying the assignment</td>
<td>1, 2, 4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>“Umm…….. like the whole book?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Do we have to fill all eight pages?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guessing/providing suggestions</td>
<td>5, 6, 7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>“That’d be my second weakest one?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Persuasive?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking for understanding/clarifying</td>
<td>3, 5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“Yes, is it okay?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“What do you mean what I have done?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking for permission</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>“Could I use white out?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social talk</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking for information</td>
<td>1, 4, 5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>“What can I be in the story… that I’m trying to think”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“How should I start it off?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As mentioned earlier, students also used questions during conferences for six purposes. Except generating social talk, Carl used all other functions and most of his questions served the purpose of seeking information (42%) and clarifying assignments (26%).

Turn taking. Carl initiated six out of seven writing conferences. In all seven conferences, both Alex and Carl had almost equal numbers of turns. The longest pause was 10 seconds for Alex and 6 seconds for Carl. In 69 out of 467 turns there were no time laps between the two speakers. Overlaps did occur 23 times and 48% of those were created by Carl. As seen in the transcripts the pace of conversation was smooth in which partners took turns without hesitation or with short pauses (see Appendix I). They both had almost equal number of turns and overlaps which demonstrated that Carl actively engaged in taking turns during conferences.

Frequency of talk. Even though Carl and Alex had an almost equal numbers of turns in each conference, in conference one, five, and six Alex dominated the conference talk. Carl’s responses were limited to saying “Okay”, “Good”, “My notes”, “Maybe”, “Yeah!”, and “Umm hum” to show, most of the time, his agreement with the teacher’s
suggestions or proposals. This made Alex’s length of talk longer than Carl’s. However, Carl was more fluent in his speech when he summarized his story, asked questions about the typing and publishing procedures, and presented and defended his statements and supporting details when he talked about his paper, topic of year-round school. Thus, Carl dominated the conference talk in conferences two, three, and seven. When Carl mentioned about the computer problem and Alex offered him help with typing, they had almost equal amounts of talk, thus, conference four was labeled as balanced in terms of frequency of talk. Figure 1 displays the amount of talk between the two speakers from conference one to seven.

![Figure 1. Amount of Speech between Alex and Carl](image)

S: Student T: Teacher

*Praise.* Carl received specific feedback, twice, after he wrote an expository essay (conference five). As shown in the excerpt, in the first dialogue, praise was given in the last turn. In the second part of the dialogue, the specific feedback was provided in the middle. Thus conference five was the only conference of Carl’s labeled as student-centered.

T: And then how else can you sparkle this up?......
T: What else can you add to sparkle that?......
C: I don’t know.....
T: What did I say?
T: You can get a 4 by just doing what you… by staying on topic.
T: How do you get that 6?...
T: By adding…
C: Umm adding like better words I guess=
T: =Yeah.. so.. what is a better WORD?
C: But I don’t. [and
T: “I was almost in tears” (the teacher reads from Carl’s text), was
perfect it’s kind of like a metaphor…….

Okay so be more specific when you read it
C: Okay.
T: Okay…. Okay well that well, that’s a good conclusion.
T: So that’s fine.
T: But now you need an intro=

Carl also received specific feedback, in conference seven, for his use of
metaphors in the text. Additionally, he also gained several general praise statements from
the teacher such as “Okay”, “Alright”, and “That’s good” that led this conference to be
coded as balanced. The first two conferences were labeled as teacher-centered because he
did not receive any general or specific praise or feedback from the teacher. All the
utterances provided by Alex were limited to “Okay” and “Umm hum” but they showed
active listening and encouraged Carl to continue talking. Due to the focus of the
conference, in some instances, there was not any feedback given to the student. In
conference three and four, for instance, the focus was on typing and printing the story
(publication process) thus Carl did not receive any comments about his written text or
writing skills. Surprisingly, even though the remaining three conferences were labeled as
topic (conference six) and content conferences (conference one, two, and six), Alex did
not provide any feedback about the student’s topic, ideas, or examples.

 Interruption. Carl’s conferences were seldom interrupted. No interruptions
occurred in conference three, five, and seven. In conferences two and six interruptions
made up less than 15% of the interaction and were labeled as balanced. In the remaining
conferences the interruptions took more than 15% of the conference interaction and were
coded as teacher-centered. Interruptions were in many cases interpreted by the children as
if what they said was unimportant since nothing should interrupt this dialogue (Graves,
1983). Therefore, the conferences with no interruptions were recognized as student-
centered conferences. Figure 2 illustrates which conferences had interruptions and how long these breaks lasted.

![Bar chart showing time use in Carl's conferences]

Legend:
- I: Interruption
- S: Student
- T: Teacher

*Figure 2. Distribution of Time Use in Carl’s Conferences*

Interruptions occurred during four out of seven conferences totaling 3 minutes and 52 seconds long. Therefore, the average length of Carl’s conferences, without interruptions, was 3 minutes and 19 seconds long. Table 4 illustrates the reasons for and the frequencies of interruptions occurring in all seven conferences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of interruption</th>
<th>Conference number</th>
<th>Frequency of interruption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Another student(s) asking question</td>
<td>1, 2, 4, 6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking on the phone</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4
*Kinds and Frequencies of Interruptions in Carl’s Conferences*

Overall looking at the entirety of these seven conferences, Carl’s conferences were focused with the teacher listening patiently to him and the student and teacher making good eye contact. There were total of 113 questions queried by the teacher during
the seven writing conferences. Even though the teacher asked most of the questions, she allowed Carl to determine the conference agenda and have ownership of his writing. There were a total of 467 turns between the two speakers and 54% of them were initiated by the teacher. Three out of 467 turns were used for social talk that had nothing to do with Carl’s written texts or the writing process. A review of his conference interactions showed that his concerns were addressed while conferencing with the teacher. Both the teacher and the student, in general, shared the authority and ownership, and demonstrated almost equal amounts of talk.

Krista – the Confident Female Student

Krista always had lots of ideas and was also a fluent writer. She was not only fluent but also exhibited strong spelling and editing skills. She enjoyed writing and often included illustrations, dialogues, and character names within her stories. She was also eager to share her writing with others and several times during the study she asked me or the interns to read what she had written. While talking to me, during both interviews, Krista seemed very comfortable and the dialogue with her lasted longer than with any other student in her classroom. She stated since she had a powerful imagination she was confident in her writing. She also believed she was good at indenting new paragraphs, using strong verbs, juicy color words, and action verbs. When asked, Krista was also able to provide suggestions for improving the quality of a text. For example, she recommended writing strategies including: indenting paragraphs, being honest to the readers, and providing details about the selected topics.

Krista liked having teacher-student writing conferences because they allowed her a chance to recognize what she was doing wrong and also to learn possible solutions. Her favorite part in conferences was where she gained more details for improving her paragraphs. However, she did not like hearing about her mistakes without mentioning her effort to improve the text. Krista described conferences as a meeting where the teacher tells students what is missing and the problems in their written text. According to Krista, the teacher also attempts to discern how a student can improve their composition skills, what other writing difficulties the student might have, and what distractions might be throwing them off-task. She considered conferencing similar to having a check-up. She stated that sometimes she requested meeting with the teacher to discuss her
composition even though a writing conference was not scheduled. Krista said this allowed her to talk to the teacher about her writing and learn if anything was wrong with it. Krista continued saying,

“Even though she (Alex) says that it is perfect I would still ask her how can I make it even better because I would not like to stop working on it. What I learned the most from the conference is even though you think that you are done, you can still get more ideas during the conferences.”

Similar to Carl, one of Krista’s conferences was about the speech contest so it was also excluded from the conference data giving her seven transcribed writing conferences. Like any other students in the room, Krista was also asked to compose specific assignments as mentioned in the section with Carl. The historical fiction project she worked on was about Amelia Earhart. Her first conference was labeled as a topic, content, and process conference in which she introduced her topic and described why she chose to write about this famous woman. Alex requested information about Krista’s process of gathering information and keeping notes as a pre-writing strategy. Later, both parties talked about what else could be included in the story and how the information would be organized.

In the second conference, Krista introduced another character, a fish, and said that she had completed writing the story and was working on the illustrations. This conference was labeled as a content conference. During the conference 3 the first 12 turns were about social talk where Alex asked Krista to share what happened in PE time. During the conference, Krista read parts of her story to Alex and in the rest of the conference they again talked about the characters and events. Therefore, the third conference was also labeled as a content conference.

In the fourth conference, Krista admitted that she had written a lot about Amelia’s childhood and needed to include more information about her teenage years and adulthood. She also mentioned that she was not sure how to organize and present different events that happened during different points in Amelia’s life. They brainstormed together on ways to present information in different sections or chapters. Additionally they talked about missing or unnecessary events. This conference was labeled as a content and assessment conference.
Conference five was labeled as a process conference where Krista mentioned having technical problems while typing her story. The last 13 turns of the conference were used for social talk when they talked about Krista’s finger nails and who painted them. The sixth conference was labeled as a topic, content, and assessment conference. This time Krista introduced her expository essay and talked about her thesis statement and supporting ideas. Alex asked several questions seeking more information about her supporting ideas and Krista thought about adding details and descriptions to her essay. Krista’s last conference was held when she was writing her persuasive essay on wearing uniforms in schools. Once again, she introduced her topic and shared her reasons for not wearing uniforms. Both Alex and Krista organized the paragraphs and decided the importance of each of her arguments, as a result, this conference was labeled as a topic and content conference.

In Table 5 are analyses of the eight indicators that were observed in Krista’s seven conferences. Detailed information is provided under each category that outlined the rubric used for assessing the nature of teacher-student writing conferences.

Table 5

*Overview of the Conferences with Krista across the Indicators*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conferences:</th>
<th>C. 1</th>
<th>C. 2</th>
<th>C. 3</th>
<th>C. 4</th>
<th>C. 5</th>
<th>C. 6</th>
<th>C. 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agenda</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership/Strengths</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflected Questions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turn taking</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of talk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praises</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interruption</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1= Teacher-centered  2= Balanced  3= Student-centered

*Focus.* Krista had more student-centered conferences compared to Carl. As shown in Table 5 except the sixth conference all the remaining conferences were rated as student-centered conferences. The only conference that was labeled as teacher-centered
in terms of focus was when Alex and Krista talked about Krista’s expository essay. At this time, Alex stressed a) an incomplete paragraph, b) lack of details for supporting ideas, c) absence of strong verbs, and d) missing descriptions for activities that were mentioned in Krista’s essay.

**Agenda.** In terms of determining the conference topic and focus it was encouraging to see that except for the fifth and the sixth all Krista’s conferences were student-centered. The questions asked by Alex (see Table 6) allowed Krista to be active and determine the topics of her own conferences. In conference five, as mentioned earlier, talk was focused on Krista’s having technical problems with saving her word documents. In another conference, six, they talked about Krista’s expository essay. Even though Krista introduced her thesis and supporting details Alex asked several questions about missing details and was seeking further information about undeveloped paragraphs. This allowed her decide the topics of the talk making these two conferences balanced in terms of determining conference agenda.

**Ownership/Strengths.** Conference one, three, and seven were labeled as balanced conferences where Alex provided suggestions such as, “Well say that in there” and “Okay well maybe when you start getting the stuff, umm… cause you gotta figure out how like where lets see….. once you start writing we could kinda bring the squirrel into it but you could start off the story with just talking about the squirrel and the squirrel could be walking down the street one day and got caught and but I mean obviously you know a lot. But the squirrel got umm….. you know just kinda became friends with Amelia and hoped on.. or he was hanging out at the airfield and saw her and hoped on the plane and became life long friends.”

Similar to Carl’s, Krista’s responses to these suggestions were limited to showing her agreement with Alex. On rare occasions Krista offered suggestions or shared her opinions about her texts. In the third conference, for example, Krista said that she preferred using “second” following the name of a character rather than using “third” because it sounded better and looked nicer on the paper. In conference four, five, and six all the suggestions came from Alex so they were coded as teacher-centered. In the second conference, however, no suggestions or evaluations came from either participant, so this conference was excluded from coding in terms of ownership.

**Reflected questions.** Table 6 illustrates selected examples of the frequency and functions of questions asked by Alex.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function of questions</th>
<th>Conference number</th>
<th>Frequency of questions</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open-ended and general questions that allow students to determine the conference agenda</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>“Alright Krista talk to me what are we working on?” “So what is your story?” “What else can you say?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific questions about the student’s text</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 6, 7</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>“What kind of board games?” “Okay now what’s your next reason?” “Which one is going to be your strongest point?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions asking about student’s writing process</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>“Alright Krista how’s the typing going?” “Umm okay so are you finding that, are you changing anything as you type it?” “Okay….. so are you like going at a smooth PACE?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking student’s understanding</td>
<td>1, 4, 6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>“Right?” “Okay?” “Okay?” “Alright?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing chances to student to reflect any concerns or questions before the conference ends</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>“Is there anything I can help you with?” “Have you had any kind of problems?” “So do you have any questions?” “Alright?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarifying what the student says</td>
<td>2, 4, 6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>“You drink what?” “You had a bad PE day?” “How is your Friday?” “Oh, is it because it’s raining?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social talk</td>
<td>1, 3, 5, 7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>“Do you want to read it to me?” “So that do you find yourself a lot like this stuff?” “So like all the memory is gone?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking for information</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep going</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommending/showing examples</td>
<td>4, 6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>“What other things do we add to expository?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In terms of asking questions Alex dominated all the conferences. Similar to Carl’s case, it was again clear that Alex’s questioning strategy allowed Krista to determine the conference agenda and see parts to be revised and developed through details and more descriptions. Different purposes and functions of Alex’s questions are presented in the table. For instance, the majority of the questions were used for encouraging Krista to share specific information about her texts (31%) and determine the conference agenda (13%). The least frequent functions for questioning were providing recommendations/examples (5%) and clarifying Krista’s comments (4%). Like Carl, because her dialogue was substantial, Krista was also not pushed to keep talking.

In comparison to the other confident student, Carl, Krista asked a very limited number of questions. As mentioned earlier, students also used questions, in conferences, for six different purposes. Her questions served the following purposes: asking permission (50%), engaging in social talk (25%), and seeking for information (25%). Table 7 illustrates the frequency and samples of questions asked by Krista.

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function of questions</th>
<th>Conference number</th>
<th>Frequency of questions</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clarifying the assignment</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guessing/providing suggestions</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking for understanding/clarifying</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Asking for permission         | 2, 4              | 2                     | “Do I go now?”
|                               |                   |                       | “Can I read it?”                              |
| Social talk                   | 7                 | 1                     | “Why”                                         |
| Seeking for information       | 3                 | 1                     | “Not really, do you want to read it?”          |

*Turn taking.* Krista initiated only two writing conferences. In all seven conferences, both Alex and Krista had almost an equal number of turns. Except the last conference, in which both parties stopped talking to take notes for themselves, the longest pause was 7 seconds for both Alex and Krista to take their own turn. In the majority of
the turns there was no pause longer than 1 second. Additionally, in 50 out of 504 turns there were no time lapses between the two speakers. Overlaps occurred a total of 27 times and 56% of those were created by Alex. As seen in the transcripts of conference talk, pace of conversation was smooth but not as much as it was in Carl’s conferences in which partners took turns without hesitation or with short pauses. Both the teacher and student had almost equal numbers of turns and overlaps which demonstrated that Krista also actively engaged in taking turns during conferences.

Frequency of talk. Even though Krista and Alex had an almost equal number of turns in each conference, in conference one and six Alex dominated the conference talk. In the first conference, Krista’s responses were describing her topic and layout of the story. In the sixth conference, on the other hand, Krista replied to numerous questions by Alex about the events she did with her cousin and details about her favorite holiday. Once again, at this time Alex read the text and highlighted several points to be developed or fixed that led her to dominate the conference talk. However, once Krista completed writing her story, in conference three, four, and five, she became more talkative when speaking. She mentioned her characters, talked about their descriptions, illustrations, and the number and order of events. That made Krista’s length of talk longer than the teacher’s talk. In the second and the last conference, on the other hand, both parties had almost equal amounts of speech so that these two conferences were coded as balanced. During seven writing conferences, Krista engaged in social talk on four different occasions that showed a rapport with the teacher. The first three of these instances were initiated by Alex and the last one was initiated by Krista. Figure 3 displays the amount of talk between the two speakers from conference one to seven.
S: Student  T: Teacher

Figure 3. Amount of Speech between Alex and Krista

Praise. Among all four case study students, Krista received the most specific feedback from Alex. Therefore, except the fourth and the fifth conferences all other conferences were coded as student-centered in terms of receiving positive feedback. Some of Alex’s specific praise comments were “Oh good you have a nick name!; I liked that a lot!; Now Krista very creative very good; Well it flows very nicely; and Very cute you are in a very good pace”. In conferences four and five, Alex produced general feedback such as “Right; Okay; and Good”. So, these two conferences were coded as balanced.

Interruption. Unlike Carl, Krista had several interruptions. Since there were no interruptions in conferences two, five, and seven these conferences were coded as student-centered. In all the remaining conferences several interruptions occurred however they were short enough to not take more than 15% of the total conference time. Thus these conferences were coded as balanced in terms of having interruptions. Figure 4 illustrates which conferences had interruptions and how long these breaks lasted.
As seen above, very short interruptions occurred during four out of seven conferences with the total of 1 minute and 3 seconds which was much shorter than the interruptions of Carl’s conferences. Therefore, the average length of Krista’s conferences without the interruptions was 3 minutes and 53 seconds which was 34 seconds longer than Carl’s average length of conferences. Table 8 illustrates the reasons for and the frequencies of interruptions occurring in all seven conferences.

Table 8

Kinds and Frequencies of Interruptions in Krista’s Conferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of interruption</th>
<th>Conference number</th>
<th>Frequency of interruption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Another student(s) asking question</td>
<td>1, 3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom control</td>
<td>4, 6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving directions to a student</td>
<td>4, 6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall looking at all seven conferences, except the sixth conference, Krista’s conferences were focused with the teacher listening patiently to her. Krista seemed talkative and to be having a good time while conferring, especially toward the end of the study. Krista received fewer questions, total of 103, than Carl. Once again, conference interactions showed that Alex’s questions allowed the student to determine the conference agenda. Even though Alex often praised Krista, she was not patient enough to allow Krista to figure out pitfalls in her writing. Instead, Alex highlighted the parts that required more work and also made frequent suggestions. This led Krista to have slightly less ownership than Carl. There were a total of 504 turns between the two speakers and 55% of them were created by the teacher. Thirty-six out of 504 turns were used for social talk that had nothing to do with Krista’s written texts or her writing process. A review of her conference interactions showed that Krista’s concerns were addressed while conferencing with the teacher. Both the teacher and the student, in general, demonstrated almost equal amounts of talk.

**Eric – the Less Confident Male Student**

Eric stated that he was not a confident writer. He rarely allowed others to read his writing. He was a shy student and never volunteered to read his text to others. Eric seemed sad and concerned, did not talk much, and stayed at his desk for most of the time while other students were collaborating on their stories. He seemed uncomfortable sharing his ideas and feelings about writing in the first interview. Eric did state though that he was comfortable writing stories and that the middle of the story was the easiest part for him to write. The hardest part for him was the beginning because it was challenging to develop a new idea. His writing was slow with several long pauses. Even after several weeks following the first recorded teacher-student writing conference, most of his peers had finished composing their stories, yet Eric continued to lag behind.

When asked about strategies to make writing better he focused on punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. Eric also recommended having grabbers, using descriptions, and graphic organizers to improve the quality of a text.

Initially Eric could not describe what happened in a writing conference but did reflect that he did not enjoy having writing conferences because it was not enjoyable sharing his writing. However, at the end of the study Eric stated that he enjoyed writing
conferences because the teacher helped him figure out how to get rid of his writer’s block. When asked whether he would confer with Alex even though his paper was free of spelling or punctuation errors, he said that he would have a conference in order to gain better ideas and organization.

During the study, Eric had ten conferences which ranged from 7 seconds to 10 minutes and 33 seconds depending on the draft stage and the type of conference. Similar to his classmates, Eric also started his first conference when he was working on his historical fiction story about James Garfield, an early president of United States. Alex asked several questions to learn about Eric’s prewriting process, topic selection, and content of the story. This conference was labeled as a combination topic, content, and process conference. In the second conference Eric stated that he wanted to change his topic. As a result, Alex opened a social studies book for both of them to review. After a short brainstorming session Eric decided to work on the War of 1812. Later Alex gave some suggestions about selecting and including events in his story. Due to its nature, this conference was labeled as a topic and content conference. Up to the eighth conference, Eric worked on his new topic. In the third conference, a process conference, Eric said that he was working on a graphic organizer and generating some names for his characters. Alex provided some suggestions for possible names. The fourth conference lasted less than a minute when Eric stated that he is still trying to figure out what to include in his story and surprisingly mentioned that he did not need help. The seventh conference was also relatively very short in which Eric again stated that he did not have any questions and did not need any help. Therefore, these two conferences did not fit into any categories under the definitions of kinds of writing conferences.

Conference five started with Alex being surprised with Eric having written papers saying CHAPTER 5. However, what was even more surprising was during the whole conference they again talked about him having difficulty with finding names but nothing else. Alex provided some book names for Eric to review. Thus, this conference was labeled as a content conference, even though they did not mention who the characters were or what was happening in the story.
In conference six, finally, Alex got into his story. At the beginning of this content conference, she asked questions for Eric to speak up. As seen in the script, Eric still was not willing to share his text.

T: Facts.
T: Okay... so this isn’t part of the story..
C: Yeah=
T: =This is your note..
C: Yes..
T: Where does the story start?.....
C: Umm..
T: Chapter 1…
C: Yeah…
T: Okay
C: But (mumbles)…
T: So it’s the beginning?..
C: Yes and here /this/=  
T: =Your ideas….. so you’ve got story plot, main characters.. main characters.. chapters okay /scene/ side characters..
C: I’m up to here…..
T: Okay…… and so then these are characters that just kind of show up
C: Yeah…..
T: Okay…… alright so you’ve got the plot, you’ve got the characters the characters the characters but now you got the setting…
T: What happens?
T: What’s the beginning?...
C: Umm…..
T: Cause what makes a story? The beginning?...

Eric did not provide detailed answers to Alex’s yes/no and open-ended questions, so she read over his paper. While reading she paused and either asked a question or provided a suggestion for developing the part that she read. Once again, Eric’s responses to Alex’s inquiries were very short and most of the time incomplete.

He met the teacher for the ninth conference after he composed his expository writing. The last time he conferred with the teacher Eric had discussed his persuasive essay about having a year-round school system.

Even though conference eight was the last one about the historical story, neither of the parties mentioned anything specific about the text. Instead Alex mentioned that he could take his time and if he needed extra time he could work during the holiday since she was not planning to give any assignments to the students.
Eric’s expository essay was the focus of the ninth conference. After Eric mentioned that he wrote an essay with three main points, Alex, asked whether he liked his text. He replied yes, and then Alex mentioned that she wanted him to compose the second draft and provided ways to improve an essay. For instance, she mentioned some target skills such as, grabbing the reader’s attention, using strong verbs, similes, and metaphors. Once again, all Alex knew was that Eric had written an expository essay. She did not inquire about the topic or the supporting details, instead she only provided Eric a mini-lesson on composing an expository text.

Eric had his last content conference after he composed his persuasive essay. The conference talk was limited to Eric’s pointing out his three main points and Alex’s asking the order of these points based on their importance. There were a total of 34 turns and 24% of these turns were used for social talk purposes initiated by Alex.

In the majority of conferences with Eric, it was clear that, unlike cases of students with higher self-efficacy, the draft stage did not match the focus and nature of conferences. Most of the time Eric’s texts were not the subject of the conversation. Table 9 illustrates the analyses of eight indicators that were observed in Eric’s writing conferences.

Table 9
Overview of the Conferences with Eric across the Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conferences:</th>
<th>C. 1</th>
<th>C. 2</th>
<th>C. 3</th>
<th>C. 4</th>
<th>C. 5</th>
<th>C. 6</th>
<th>C. 7</th>
<th>C. 8</th>
<th>C. 9</th>
<th>C. 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agenda</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership/Strengths</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflected Questions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turn taking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of talk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praises</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interruption</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1= Teacher-centered   2= Balanced   3= Student-centered
Focus. Conference seven was excluded in the analyses in terms of focus since neither party mentioned anything specific about his text. The contents of his texts were not always the heart of his conferences. As a result, Alex did not do a lot of corrections which led a majority of his conferences to be coded as student-centered in terms of focus. Conferences six and nine were the only one’s coded as teacher-centered. In conference six, Eric was asked to a) give more details about one of the groups which was also included in the story, b) put the events in order, c) describe the scene and characters, and d) create a new draft with developed ideas. In conference nine, again, Alex requested Eric to a) correct the spelling mistakes, b) check all the weak verbs and replace them with strong ones, and c) compose a developed second draft of the expository essay. His last assignment was to conclude the historical fiction assignment since he was, still, struggling to finish it.

Agenda. Compared to the other case study students, most conferences of Eric were balanced in terms of determining the conference topic and focus. Only conferences three and four were student-centered in which Alex provided several open-ended questions. However, conference transcripts showed that even though Eric had opportunities to bring up his concerns or comments about his texts, he stated that he was good and did not need any help except on one occasion in the third conference when he asked for help finding names.

Ownership/Strengths. Even though Eric had the highest number of conferences with Alex, unfortunately, he had the least instances in which he could discuss or receive feedback about his writing skills or writing process. For example, in conferences four, seven, and eight there was no specific comment or suggestion about his texts. Therefore these conferences were excluded while determining the nature of ownership. Sadly, his second, third, and fifth conferences were coded as teacher-centered since all the suggestions came from the teacher. Some of Alex’s advice was:

T: Okay, so, you what you want to think of is you wanna have like believable characters…..
T: Whether or not these people are actually there like you can have.. a stowaway.
T: Do you know what a stowaway is?
E: Yeah=
T: =Okay you can be a stowaway on one of the boats.
T: Umm on one of these boats.
…
T: So you could be a stowaway on either the British.. flags or you know the
British ships or the American ships listening to….. listening to find out who is
on this ship.
T: Listening to… you know all /over/ captain.. Harry… forced the 1728
British ships on Lake Erie to surrender.
T: Like that sort of thing…

... 

T: =Yeah, well saw America and made the national anthem…
T: I mean and then you could tell talk about the story of the Star Spangled
Banner…..

Conferences one, six, nine, and ten were coded as balanced since Eric responded to
Alex’s suggestions. Once again, Eric’s responses were limited to “Yeah!” and “Okay”, simply
showing his agreement. Eric did not have any student-centered conferences in which he could
highlight the strengths or the weaknesses of the text, or provide suggestions for revision.

Reflected questions. When close attention was given to the frequency and the
functions of questions generated by Alex, it was seen that similar to the case with Krista,
Alex asked most of the questions. Compared to the all the other case study students Eric
had received the highest number of questions from the teacher. Table 10 illustrates
questions asked by Alex with selected examples.

Table 10

Numbers and Functions of Questions Asked by Alex during Conferences with Eric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function of questions</th>
<th>Conference number</th>
<th>Frequency of questions</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Open-ended and general questions that allow students to determine the conference agenda | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 | 15                     | “Like what kind of story that you want to tell?”
                                                                                       |                    |                                                      | “Okay Eric, how are we doing?”
                                                                                       |                    |                                                      | “Umm what’s gonna be what’s gonna be the story about?”
| Specific questions about the student’s text                                          | 1, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10 | 40                     | “Alright so what’s your strongest?”
                                                                                       |                    |                                                      | “Where does the story start?”
                                                                                       |                    |                                                      | “So it’s the beginning?” |
### Table 10 (continued). Numbers and Functions of Questions Asked by Alex during Conferences with Eric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function of questions</th>
<th>Conference number</th>
<th>Frequency of questions</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Questions asking about student’s writing process | 1, 3, 8 | 4 | “How did you do the past two days?”
| | | | “Did you do some stuff at home?”
| | | | “So you are finding out more information about him?”
| | | | “Okay?”
| | | | “I mean do you know what that one is?”
| | | | “Does it make sense?”
| | | | “Do you have any questions?”
| | | | “Okay you’re good?”
| | | | “Okay. So is that it?”
| Checking student’s understanding | 1, 2, 3, 6, 9 | 16 | “You wanna do what?”
| | | | “Alright, so you’re changing yours to the War of 1812?”
| | | | “What attacking Baltimore... is that what you said?”
| | | | “Okay how you feeling are you cold?”
| | | | “What was wrong oh oh why were you out there the other day and Ashley said that you had headache?”
| | | | “Oh is that all today?”
| | | | “Oh you have done reports on him before?”

As seen in the table the majority of the questions were used for encouraging Eric to provide details about his texts (29%) and provide specific information (15%) about whether he liked his topic and what he thinks he should do next. The least popular function of using the questioning strategy, similar to Carl, was engaging in social talk (1%).

Functions of Eric’s questions were grouped under three categories. Table 11 presents the questions asked by the student.
Table 11

Questions Asked by Eric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function of questions</th>
<th>Conference number</th>
<th>Frequency of questions</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clarifying the assignment</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guessing/providing suggestions</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking for understanding/clarifying</td>
<td>2, 6, 10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>“What do you really /want/?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Umm like narrative and expository?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I just now I just write the essay?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking for permission</td>
<td>2, 6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“Can I do an expository, not a narrative?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social talk</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking for information</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“What is expository?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alex was the active participant in terms of deciding how and what to do next. A majority of Eric’s questions were used to check whether he understood the teacher’s comments or requests (60%). Eric also used questions twice for gaining permission and information from his teacher.

*Turn taking.* In all ten conferences Alex was the one that initiated the conference talk. Eric did not have any student-centered conferences. Except for the first, second, and fourth conferences, all the conferences were coded as balanced. However these three conferences were dominated by Alex, as a result, they were coded as teacher-centered. Overall, in all ten conferences, Alex took 64% of the turns. The longest pause was 10 seconds for both Alex and Eric. In 94 out of 564 turns there were no time laps between two speakers. The majority of these turns (70%) were created by the teacher. Alex also created 14 out of 15 overlaps. In many cases, Alex either interrupted Eric’s speech or started her turn as soon as he finished his short responses.

*Frequency of talk.* Figure 5 shows that Alex dominated the conference talk in all the conferences. One reason this might have occurred was because Eric produced very short responses such as “Okay; Well; and Umm hum”. The second reason might be since
Eric was not forthcoming in providing information to Alex. She had to ask many questions and most of the time explained the possible answers all by herself.

\[ \begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure5}
\caption{Amount of Speech between Alex and Eric}
\end{figure} \]

S: Student \hspace{1cm} T: Teacher

*Praise.* Eric received specific feedback when he was conferring about his historical story. Alex mentioned that she liked what he wrote and she especially complimented his dialogues in the texts. This was the only conference that was coded as student-centered. Conferences one, three, four, and eight were coded as balanced because Alex’s praise statements were very general and limited to “Good; Okay; and Alright”. Conferences two, five, and ten were coded as teacher-centered since they also showed limited praise such as “Okay” and “Alright”. However, the difference was that these responses were used for showing active listening and pushing Eric to keep going in his speech. In conferences seven and nine there was no general or specific praise statements, so these conferences were excluded during the analyses.

*Interruption.* Eric’s conferences were frequently interrupted. The conferences with no interruptions, conference one, seven, and eight were coded as student-centered. In the remaining seven conferences Eric had a total of 14 interruptions. In conferences
three, six, and nine interruptions comprised less than 15% of the talk and were labeled as balanced. In the remaining conferences the interruptions took more than 15% of the conference talk which was coded as teacher-centered. Figure 6 illustrates which conferences had interruptions and how long these breaks lasted.

![Distribution of Time Use in Eric’s Conferences](image)

I: Interruption      S: Student      T: Teacher

*Figure 6. Distribution of Time Use in Eric’s Conferences*

Interruptions occurred in seven conferences with a total of 3 minutes and 51 seconds. Therefore, the average length of his conferences, without the interruptions, was 2 minutes and 52 seconds. Table 12 illustrates the reasons interruptions occurred and the frequencies of interruptions in all seven conferences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of interruption</th>
<th>Conference number</th>
<th>Frequency of interruption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Another student(s)/teacher(s) asking question</td>
<td>2, 3, 4, 5, 9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom control</td>
<td>6, 9, 10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall looking at his conference interactions it was observed that Eric had difficulty sticking to a chosen composition topic. First he was supposed to write an historical fiction but after two conferences he changed his topic. His conferences mainly focused on finding ideas and information, as well as, organizing paragraphs. The teacher was the one providing ideas, suggestions, and filling in gaps in the text. Alex dominated the talk time and produced more speech during the conference while Eric’s responses were limited to “okay” and “umm hum” acknowledging agreement. At the beginning of the study Eric stated that he liked writing stories more than other genres. Yet, he faced some difficulties while composing his historical fiction story. At the end of the study, it was not a surprise to hear that Eric felt most comfortable with expository writing. To Eric, story writing, had too many details and it was difficult for him to organize the events of the story.

Eric’s writing conferences in general, were focused, he shared ownership of his writing, and he helped determine the conference agenda along with the teacher. Alex focused on Eric’s strengths but was not patient enough to allow him time to figure out what needed to be done in order to improve his writing. She always initiated the conference talk and attempted to give Eric an opportunity to respond but once again Alex did not wait long enough during his conferences. In most cases Alex overlapped his speech and she dominated the conference talk. In ten conferences, Eric received little positive feedback but had the highest number of interruptions.

**Stephanie – the Less Confident Female Student**

Stephanie used most of her writing time for giggling and talking with peers and also exhibited low self-efficacy toward writing. Once Stephanie was focused on her writing she was fluent, however, it was not always easy for her to be focused. She never volunteered to read her text to others and when approached she did her best to avoid talking about her writing. In our initial interview Stephanie stated that her writing was not good because she did not know how to start or end a story. However, in her second interview, it was encouraging to hear that Stephanie liked writing and she believed her writing was good. When asked for writing strategies Stephanie listed a) reading books to get ideas, b) having writing classes, and c) asking others to read and talk about their written text.
She described conferences as where the teacher talks to them, reads some part of their stories, tells what needs to be improved, what to add, and, based on the conference, what the student needs to fix in their paper. At the end of the study, Stephanie stated that she enjoyed writing conferences and that her favorite parts were when the teacher provided positive feedback about what the student did well and some suggestions to fix any problems. When asked if she would consider having a writing conference when she had a paper with no grammatical or spelling mistakes, Stephanie stated that she would like to confer with the teacher, because having no grammatical mistakes does not mean that the ideas of the text were good. It was clear that Stephanie learned the very purpose of having writing conferences, focusing on the meaning and fixing the grammar later.

During the study Stephanie had eight writing conferences while she was composing her historical fiction story about BB King, her personal narrative essay about her visit to Orlando with her family and cousins, and her persuasive essay on year-round school.

Throughout the eight conferences it was clear that the draft stage affected the focus and nature of conferences. Stephanie conferred with Alex for six times while she was writing her historical fiction story. The first conference was labeled as a topic and content conference where Stephanie introduced her topic and they both talked about possible events to be included into her story. The second, third, and fifth conferences were labeled as content conferences where again both parties brainstormed together to create scenes and events for her story. In the fourth conference, Stephanie stated that she mostly wrote about herself and her cousin as characters in the story instead of BB King. Alex reviewed Stephanie’s texts and pointed out strengths and weaknesses. Thus, this conference was labeled as a content and assessment conference. In the sixth conference, Alex used a trade book as a sample to teach indenting paragraphs and separating dialogues from regular texts. Additionally, they also mentioned the procedures for publishing her historical fiction story, and this conference was labeled as an editing and publishing conference.

The seventh conference was labeled as a content and editing conference. This time Stephanie explained how much fun she had with her family and she provided details about their vacation. Alex also read Stephanie’s personal narrative essay and did several
corrections on misspelled words even though it was her first draft. In the last conference, they talked about Stephanie’s persuasive essay on the topic of year-round school. Stephanie was not really sure about the length of the school time and the vacation time. Alex provided information and emphasized the differences between the year-round school and what they currently were attending. Alex provided tips for writing persuasive essays and suggested some ideas for her to incorporate in her text, and this conference was also labeled as a content conference. Detailed information in terms of the eight indicators for coding Stephanie’s writing conferences was presented in Table 13.

Table 13

Overview of the Conferences with Stephanie across the Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conferences:</th>
<th>C. 1</th>
<th>C. 2</th>
<th>C. 3</th>
<th>C. 4</th>
<th>C. 5</th>
<th>C. 6</th>
<th>C. 7</th>
<th>C. 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agenda</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership/Strengths</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflected Questions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turn taking</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of talk</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praises</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interruption</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1= Teacher-centered  2= Balanced  3= Student-centered

Focus. Conference talk analyses showed that Stephanie’s writing conferences were mainly focused, student-centered, and the teacher did not correct more than three items. In conference two, Alex asked Stephanie to include more information about her character and to also think about ways for making the piece a more fictional story. This conference was coded as a balanced conference while the seventh conference was the only one coded as teacher-centered. In the seventh conference Alex and Stephanie worked together on the essay. Alex requested adding more details, descriptions, and an ending. Alex also frequently edited the texts even though in terms of ideas the essay was not yet complete.
**Agenda.** Once again, Alex’s questions allowed Stephanie to open the conference talk and determine the conference agenda. However, in conferences four and seven Alex’s questions such as “What’s this page about?; Are they like long sentences?; So you explained your grade?; and Did you prewrite?” changed the direction of the conference talk which led these conferences to be coded as balanced.

**Ownership/Strengths.** In terms of ownership Stephanie did not receive any student-centered conferences but received mainly balanced conferences. In the first, second, third, fourth, and eighth conferences both parties provided suggestions for revision, adding details, and evaluations of the written texts. In these balanced conferences Stephanie’s responses were not limited to “Okay; Umm humm; and Yeah” instead she provided her own suggestions as seen in the following excerpts.

S: Umm… like… I think mine was more biography because it’s just him telling his life…..
T: Okay, him….. telling….. his….. life……… What else?....
S: I don’t know. It’s just him telling his life makes it sound to much like biography…. T: Well, how do you think you can make that fiction?....
S: Hmm… make someone else tell the story.
T: Well, not necessarily. What else? Well, maybe or…….
S: Hmm… I could be in the story…..

T: Maybe you can talk about… you know.. you going to a concert of his…..
S: Umm hum=
T: =You know that could be a story and like the trip to the concert and you could go on from there and go on from there and then on your way back you could talk about it and then that’s where your you know your fiction or whatever could be
S: So, it would all like… “I was going something just going over to the concert driving in the car” and be all like umm… telling stuff about BB King and then get to the concert=
T: =Umm hum..
S: The end..

The remaining writing conferences were coded as teacher-centered since Alex was the only one showing ownership of the texts. Some of her comments and suggestions were: “Well, I think you can talk about other stuff” and “It could end with… talks of him coming to your birthday this weekend.”
Reflected questions. When frequency and functions of questions were investigated it was observed that the number of questions asked of Stephanie was similar to the number of questions asked by Carl and Krista, and much lower than the number of questions asked of Eric. Table 14 illustrates Alex’s questions with selected examples.

Table 14

Numbers and Functions of Questions Asked by Alex during Conferences with Stephanie

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function of questions</th>
<th>Conference number</th>
<th>Frequency of questions</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Open-ended and general questions that allow students to determine the conference agenda | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7   | 18                     | “Well, how do you think you can make that fiction?”
                                                                                       |                   |                        | “Okay, how are we doing?”                                               |
                                                                                       |                   |                        | “Okay, so your cousin tells a story about BB King then what else what’d you say?” |
| Specific questions about the student’s text                                          | 1, 4, 7, 8        | 25                     | “How would you sum up the essay?”
                                                                                       |                   |                        | “Why would you need more time then two days?”                           |
                                                                                       |                   |                        | “Well, what’s your strongest argument gonna be?”                        |
| Questions asking about student’s writing process                                     | 1, 5, 7           | 5                      | “Okay. Well now have you been doing any research at home?”              |
                                                                                       |                   |                        | “Where else are you going to learn stuff about BB King?”                |
                                                                                       |                   |                        | “Did you prewrite?”                                                    |
                                                                                       |                   |                        | “What?”                                                                |
                                                                                       |                   |                        | “Alright?”                                                             |
                                                                                       |                   |                        | “Okay?”                                                               |
| Checking student’s understanding                                                     | 2, 3, 6, 7        | 7                      | “So, are you having a hard time with anything?”                         |
                                                                                       |                   |                        | “Any questions, comments, complaints?”                                 |
| Providing chances to student to reflect any concerns or questions before the conference ends | 2                 | 2                      | “You’d have barely what?”                                              |
                                                                                       |                   |                        | “Okay, well so you don’t know if he’s dead or not?”                    |
Table 14 (continued). Numbers and Functions of Questions Asked by Alex during Conferences with Stephanie

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function of questions</th>
<th>Conference number</th>
<th>Frequency of questions</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social talk</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“Why?” “You’re those kids that bug me when I’m in a hotel, aren’t you?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking for information</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>“So you agree with what we have now?” “And when did he go?” “How old is he now?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep going</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“Okay?” “And?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommending/showing examples</td>
<td>4, 6, 7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>“So…… what do you think you need to sum up?” “Are they like really long sentences?” “So NOW is your chance to write it isn’t it?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in the table, the majority of Alex’s questions asked for specific information (22%) about Stephanie’s written texts. The second most frequent were questions used to clarify what the student said (20%), and to gain detailed information (20%). The categories in which Stephanie received the least number of questions were about providing chances for the student to comment on their concerns or questions (2%), and encouraging the student to keep talking (2%). Table 15 illustrates the questions asked by the student from eight conferences.

Table 15
Questions Asked by Stephanie

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function of questions</th>
<th>Conference number</th>
<th>Frequency of questions</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clarifying the assignment</td>
<td>1, 2, 5, 6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>“So, so I don’t have to complete this stuff?” “I’m gonna start my story like after I’ve been doing all this?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guessing/providing suggestions</td>
<td>1, 2, 4, 8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>“Well like start when he was born?” “Would that be one?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function of questions</td>
<td>Conference number</td>
<td>Frequency of questions</td>
<td>Examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking for understanding/clarifying</td>
<td>1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>“Okay… what?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“What now?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Umm.. what person I’m doing?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“What?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking for permission</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social talk</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking for information</td>
<td>4, 5, 7, 8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>“Umm…. don’t we have some guy named Bush?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“But his name isn’t “W” right?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“What these people want?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“How would I start this?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was surprising to see that, compared to other case student students, Stephanie asked the highest numbers of questions which also demonstrated the largest variety in terms of diverse functions. As seen in the table, Stephanie was mainly concerned about checking what Alex had said to her, providing or guessing the solutions to improve the texts, and clarifying her assignments especially about the historical fiction story.

**Turn taking.** Stephanie initiated two out of eight writing conferences. In all eight conferences, both Alex and Stephanie had almost an equal number of turns which made this a balanced conference. Similar to Eric’s case, both Stephanie and Alex experienced several pauses with 10 seconds being the longest pause. In 78 out of 682 turns there were no time lapses between the two speakers. Overlaps occurred for the total of 17 times and again the majority of them (65%) were created by the teacher. Stephanie’s conference talk analysis also showed that Alex, at times, offered little wait time for the student to complete her ideas or thoughts.

**Frequency of talk.** In terms of frequency of talk even though Stephanie and Alex had balanced conferences in terms of turn taking, since Stephanie’s responses were limited and incomplete, she had only one conference, the fourth, which was coded as student-centered. In the teacher-centered conferences, two, five, six, seven, and eight Alex dominated the conference talk. As discussed earlier in most of those conferences the recommendations and suggestions were mainly provided by the teacher which also led her to dominate the conference talk. Likely, in the first and the fourth conference
Stephanie was also an active participant and provided lengthy responses that led to having more balanced conferences. Figure 7 displays the amount of talk between the two speakers from conference one to eight.

![Figure 7. Amount of Speech between Alex and Stephanie](image)

S: Student  
T: Teacher

**Figure 7. Amount of Speech between Alex and Stephanie**

*Praise.* Out of eight conferences, the seventh conference was the only one where Stephanie received specific and positive praise from the teacher as seen in the scripts below.

T: (Alex reads from the text) “Going over board” ...........
T: Put that.
T: That’s a good detail…

... 

T: (Alex reads) “Finally, fun and candy was up to our heads and we left”
T: Oooh good.
T: That’s like a metaphor.
T: You’re so smart.

Stephanie’s first, third, fourth, and fifth conferences were coded as balanced where Alex provided general statements such as “Okay; Alright; and Umm humm”. In
her second conference, all the responses that came from the teacher showed only active listening thus that conference was coded as teacher-centered. However, the sixth and the eighth conferences were excluded from the analysis because there were no general or specific praise statements generated by the teacher.

**Interruption.** In the third and the fourth conferences no interruptions occurred, however, the remaining conferences of Stephanie had several short interruptions. In conferences one, two, six, and seven interruptions comprised less than 15% of the talk and were labeled as balanced. In the remaining conferences the interruptions took more than 15% of the conference talk which was coded as teacher-centered. Figure 8 illustrates which conferences had interruptions and how long these breaks lasted.

![Figure 8. Distribution of Time Use in Stephanie’s Conferences](image)

I: Interruption   S: Student   T: Teacher

*Figure 8. Distribution of Time Use in Stephanie’s Conferences*

Interruptions occurred during six out of eight conferences totaling 2 minutes and 7 seconds. Therefore, the average length of Stephanie’s conferences without the interruptions was 4 minutes and 32 seconds. Table 16 illustrates the reasons for and the frequencies of interruptions occurring in all seven conferences.
Table 16

*Kinds and Frequencies of Interruptions in Stephanie’s Conferences*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of interruption</th>
<th>Conference number</th>
<th>Frequency of interruption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Another student(s) asking</td>
<td>1, 2, 7, 8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>question</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom control</td>
<td>1, 5, 6, 7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall looking at all eight conferences the majority of Stephanie’s conferences were focused when the student was not overwhelmed and when she was encouraged to determine the conference agenda. Even though Stephanie was involved in changing the direction of the conference talk the majority of suggestions and comments came from the teacher. Once again Alex seldom waited for Stephanie to generate an answer or a remedy to her inquiry and instead took authority and listed the tasks for Stephanie to complete. Along with keeping the ownership of the text the teacher also dominated the conference talk but rarely provided specific feedback to the student. Alex also interrupted Stephanie’s speech but not as much as she did with Eric.

*Second Research Question*

To analyze the second research question, can teacher-student writing conferences be informed by students’ perceived self-efficacy, the teacher-student writing conferences were thoroughly viewed and transcripts of conference talks were read repeatedly. Students’ level of perceived self-efficacy toward writing was measured at the beginning of the study with the Self-Efficacy Survey. Based on the scores gained from that survey, case study students were selected.

According to the literature on the theory of self-efficacy, the researcher supposed that students will experience diverse conferences related to their confidence level. It was assumed that students with higher self-efficacy would be more active in determining the conference agenda thus keeping authority and ownership. Since they would be actively participating in the conference talk they would have equal turns, similar number of questions asked, and produce as much speech as their teacher. It was also expected that more confident students’ conferences would be longer, with less interruptions, and with more praise when the teacher focused on only one or two issues in students’ writing keeping the conferences more focused.
Interviews and field notes revealed some differences between these two groups. For instance, students with higher self-efficacy saw writing conferences as dialogues not short mini-lessons, enjoyed sharing their writing with the teacher and other students, were persistent and fluent in writing, highlighted content-related concerns to improve the quality of texts, and more importantly saw themselves as good writers. Students with lower self-efficacy, on the other hand, seemed uncomfortable when talking about their writing, frequently had writers’ block, were resistant to share their writing, showed lower levels of commitment to writing, and highlighted mainly the surface-related concerns to improve the quality of texts. See Table 17 for summary of the observed behaviors between two groups of students.

Table 17
Observed Behaviors of Students with Higher and Lower Self-Efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students with Higher Self-Efficacy</th>
<th>Students with Lower Self-Efficacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Saw writing conferences as dialogues not short mini-lessons</td>
<td>- Seemed uncomfortable when talking about their writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Enjoyed sharing their writing with the teacher and other students</td>
<td>- Frequently had writers’ block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Were persistent and fluent in writing</td>
<td>- Were resistant to share their writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Saw themselves as good writers</td>
<td>- Showed lower level of commitment to writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Highlighted content-related concerns to improve the quality of texts</td>
<td>- Highlighted surface-related concerns to improve the quality of texts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to compare the nature of conferences conducted with students who has higher and lower self-efficacy cross case analyzes investigated. Table 18 summarizes the different patterns that were observed these two groups of students’ writing conferences.

Table 18
Different Patterns in Conferences of Students with Higher and Lower Self-Efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students with Higher Self-Efficacy</th>
<th>Students with Lower Self-Efficacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Had mainly student-centered conferences</td>
<td>- Had mainly balanced-conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Had longer conferences with less interruption</td>
<td>- Had shorter conferences with more interruptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Received more teacher praise</td>
<td>- Received less teacher praise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Engaged in more social talk</td>
<td>- Engaged in less social talk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During the observed teacher-student writing conferences the classroom teacher was effective at keeping her conferences generally balanced and none of the students’ conferences were entirely teacher-centered. When the conference interactions of two groups were compared with each other it was seen that the majority of the assumptions were proved. For instance, each student with lower self-efficacy received positive feedback a total of three times, while the total number of positive feedback statements was twenty-one between students with higher self-efficacy. These students had longer conferences but had less number of interruptions while conferring. The total number of outside interruptions was sixteen for students with higher self-efficacy and twenty-four for students with lower self-efficacy. Students with higher self-efficacy were willing to confer and frequently initiated the conference talk. In contrast, the students with lower self-efficacy initiated the conferences only twice and on other occasions both of them mentioned that they had writer’s block and were not willing to share their writing.

The teacher dominated the conference talk while conferring with students having lower self-efficacy. Students with higher self-efficacy engaged in social talk more often than the students with lower self-efficacy did, however, it has been observed that by the end of the study students with lower self-efficacy improved their confidence to talk about their writing. For instance, they put their papers on the middle of the table instead of keeping papers in front of them and hiding their writing with their hands. They also maintained eye contact with the teacher and frequently smiled and laughed. They eventually developed stronger rapport with the teacher.

Since these students seemed more comfortable when talking about their writing and more willing to share their writing with the researcher it was promising to see that the students in the study classroom with frequent teacher-student writing conferences improved their self-efficacy scores by for 10 points. Mean of their pre-self-efficacy score was 73 and their mean increased to 83 in their post self-efficacy survey. The observed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students with Higher Self-Efficacy</th>
<th>Students with Lower Self-Efficacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-Frequently initiated conference talk</td>
<td>-Rarely initiated conference talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Were more active participants during conferences</td>
<td>-Were less active participants during conferences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
improvement was not only in their efficacy toward but also in their improved writing scores. Mean of their pre-writing score was 12.9 and post-writing score was 15.8. In order to control the maturity effect the same pre-post self-efficacy surveys and the writing prompts were administered to the students in the reference classroom.

The students scores for self-efficacy and personal narrative writing tasks in both reference and study classrooms were analyzed through mixed ANOVA and examination of the cell means indicated that there was a large increase for study group from pretest ($M = 12.91$) to posttest ($M = 15.80$), but a similar increase was also observed for the reference group from pretest ($M = 7.87$) to posttest ($M = 11.70$).

In terms of self-efficacy toward writing an examination of the cell means indicated that that there was a large increase for the study group from pre-test ($M = 72.67$) to post-test ($M = 82.77$), but also a decrease was observed for the reference group from pre-test ($M = 86.66$) to post-test ($M = 81.31$). Research findings showed that even though these writing conferences did not create a significant difference on students’ post-writing performance, self-efficacy and interview data revealed that writing conferences helped to increase students’ perceived self-efficacy towards writing.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

Introduction

The primary purpose of this study was to explore the nature of scheduled teacher-student writing conferences in a fifth-grade classroom. In addition, the study examined whether teacher-student writing conferences could be informed by students’ perceived self-efficacy toward writing. To measure whether the level of students’ perceived self-efficacy predicted their role and interaction styles in conferences, the pre-post Self-Efficacy Survey, adopted from Pajares, Miller, & Johnson (1999), was used. FCAT writing rubric guided assessment of students’ narrative essays to explore whether there would be improvement in students’ writing performances while another rubric, developed by the researcher, was used to analyze teacher-student writing conferences. Two teachers participated in the study and a total of 37 students between two classrooms also participated; 22 in the study group and 15 in the reference group. In terms of analyzing conference interaction specific attention was given to four students as case study participants; two with higher reported self-efficacy and two with lower reported self-efficacy.

Chapter one and three were used to present the research questions for this study and chapter four was utilized for the analysis of these questions. This conclusion chapter synthesizes and discusses; a) the observed benefits and pitfalls of the study teacher’s approach to writing conferences, b) common behavioral patterns witnessed during writing and conferencing among students with higher and lower self-efficacy, and c) how the researcher’s rubric provided a multi-perspective approach to analysis of conference interaction. Also included are recommendations for educators planning to use writing conferences, as well as, suggestions for researchers intending to investigate writing conferences.

Benefits of Student-Centered Writing Conferences

Students’ confidence in their writing ability can improve when writing conferences are provided in a student-centered approach where students have seen as active participants and were provided opportunities to share and highlight their ideas and suggestions during conference dialogue. By engaging in student-centered writing
Based on characteristics of effective writing conferences identified in the literature (Atwell, 1987; Boynton, 2003; Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983; Harris & Silva, 1993; Kaufman, 1998; McAndrew & Reigstad, 2001; Murphy, 2000; Murray, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1985; Reigstad & McAndrew, 1984; Straub, 2001; Wilcox, 1997) research observations uncovered several ways in which Alex’s conferencing approach could be characterized as student-centered. For example, she played the role of advocate by creating a conference environment in which both parties shared power and were treated equally (Boynton, 2003; Graves, 1983). A specific table for conducting conferences was designated and Alex always sat next to the student, not across from them. For less confident students the side-by-side seating arrangement was less threatening because it did not force them to make unwanted eye contact. She also used the smaller student chair in order to sit at an equal height with students. To give the student control during the conference and promote an equal sharing of authority (Boynton, 2003; Graves, 1983), Alex was observed placing the text in front of the student or between teacher and student. Also, in order to allow students to determine the conference agenda (Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983; Murray, 1980, 1985; Walker & Elias, 1987) the teacher generally started writing conferences with a predictable question such as “So what is your story about?” and/or “Okay, how are we doing?”. Since a predictable conferencing pattern was followed, students were encouraged to lead off the conference talk and were also able to speak up at any time allowing the teacher’s role to be more of a coach instead of the all-knowing dictator (Boynton, 2003; Graves, 1983; McAndrew & Reigstad, 2001; Murray, 1980; Reigstad & McAndrew, 1984). This led students to freely explain their texts and/or ideas because the teacher often prompted them with open-ended questions (Murray,
1978, 1979; Smith, 2005). By keeping the conferences concise and focused the teacher allowed students to have multiple conferences over the period of the writing process (Atwell, 1987; Boynton, 2003; Graves, 1983). During these conferences Alex remained attentive by listening carefully to students’ ideas, questions, and responses. Her conscientious behavior encouraged students to be more open and share their topics and concerns (Kaufman, 1998).

Observations showed that Alex effectively provided students opportunities for turn-taking by using pauses as their cue to generate a response (Boynton, 2003; Graves, 1994). This allowed students to become more actively involved in turn-taking and consequently 91% of the observed conference interactions were coded as balanced in which the two participants took an almost equal number of turns. Another promising observation was Alex’s use of longer pauses with less confident students since these students might have needed extra time to formulate a response to unforeseen questions or comments. The teacher also provided both general and specific praise statements in order for students to learn more about their strengths and to assure them that their voice was being heard. Hansen (1987) asserted the importance of this behavior by stating, “our belief in whether students should believe in themselves or not shows when we respond to our students. We can decide to support their efforts, or we can decide not to and weaken their self-confidence” (p. 45). This was also confirmed in the study of Wachholz & Etheridge (1996) in which students assessed their success or failure using teachers’ responses as criteria -- “high apprehensive writers citing negative teacher feedback as a cause of their lack confidence and low apprehensive writers citing teacher support of their efforts as a reason for their competence” (p. 17).

In order for students to be positive about the writing process Alex used a light-hearted approach when revising and editing. Consistent with the literature (Harris & Silva, 1993; McAndrew & Reigstad, 2001; Reigstad & McAndrew, 1984; Straub, 2001; Wilcox, 1997), she mentioned that students should be concerned first about higher order concerns of content and meaning before dealing with the lower level concerns such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Alex reassured students through eye contact and very often used humor as a way of lightening the mood when providing recommendations for revisions and/or editing (Boynton, 2003; Graves, 1983; Kaufman,
1998). When making editorial corrections to students’ texts, Alex often attempted to identify with students by mentioning that she had also experienced similar difficulties with writing and spelling.

Students recognized the importance of the writing conferences and their role as active participants when Alex reminded other students not to be disruptive or interrupt her while she was conferring with their peer (Glasswell, Parr, & McNaughton, 2003; Hansen, 1987). When there were interruptions Alex focused on getting the writing conference back on topic as quickly as possible and returned the discussion back to the point where it had left off. Her actions were helpful in fostering student-centered conferences because as Hansen (1987) highlighted, “the children watch us like hawks and figure out our agenda fast. Our genuine interest in a child’s work shows when we make our decisions about whether to let others interrupt a conference or not” (p. 50).

In summary, by engaging in student-centered activities the teacher tried to share the authority and decision making process with her students. As a result, this encouraged the study group students to see themselves as writers who were experienced enough to assess the strengths and weaknesses of a written text. “When we speak, or when someone elicits information from us, it is as informative to the speaker as it is to the listener” (Graves, 1983, p. 138). Previous research by Wong, Butler, Ficzere, & Kuperis (1997) supported this assertion stating, “trainees gained writing skills in areas specifically targeted in the intervention, and increased their self-efficacy in writing because of awareness of their learned skills in planning, writing, and revising” (p. 209). Similarly, Kelly (1995) argued that during writing conferences students worked face-to-face with their partners and by gaining feedback on revisions, students wrote again-and-again. This re-writing may have increased students’ self-efficacy because day-by-day students became more experienced writers.

The evidence of improved self-efficacy in this study was supported through post self-efficacy survey results, post student interviews, video and audio taped writing conferences, and observation field notes. Signs of confidence toward writing were determined not only by the students self reflections but also from their observed willingness to participate more-and-more in conference interaction, by writing multiple chapters or drafts, an interest in more openly sharing their writing with others, and caring
about receiving feedback. For example, at the beginning of the study the students, especially the ones with lower self-efficacy, seemed nervous, quiet, and sad; however, after several weeks of conferences these students became more verbal, cheerful and relaxed when talking with the teacher about their current writing process. As mentioned previously, the conferences were scheduled in advance, yet over the period of these observations students became more independent and asked to conference with the teacher even though they had recently conferred or had an upcoming scheduled conference later in the week.

Pitfalls of Teacher-Centered Writing Conferences

Analyses of teacher-student writing conferences showed that conducting effective and truly student-centered writing conferences is an important and challenging task because when conferences are not conducted solely as student-centered the students may not learn the desired skills (Calkins, 1986; Oye, 1993; Ulichny & Watson-Gegeo, 1989; Wilson-Power, 1999).

Even though, in several cases, Alex did demonstrate numerous desired behaviors and utilized many activities that promoted student-centered writing conferences there were times when it was observed that Alex was less effective and conferred in a more teacher-centered approach. Pitfalls that Alex was observed making were dominating conference talk, ignoring the drafting stage, limiting specific praise statements, failing to promote dialogue, and failing to maintain revision as a priority of conferences.

To begin, it is important to realize previous studies have shown that when the teacher dominated conference talk, the writing conference became more teacher-centered and was less successful in terms of fostering student interaction (Keebler, 1995; Martinez, 2001; Newkirk, 1989; Nickel, 2001; Sperling, 1990; Thonus, 2002). There is criticism when teachers are more talkative than students during conferences because allowing students to speak frequently aids the teacher in better understanding students’ needs and can lead to more effective decisions regarding topics and strategies of instruction for individual students. Murphy (2000) argued, “Understanding the student’s perspective makes us better able to communicate and better able to adapt instruction to the student’s needs” (p. 86). Observations showed that when attention was paid to the frequency of talk between Alex and her students during conferencing that even though
she allowed students to have their turn as active participants she still dominated the conference talk by using a higher number of words. As a result, the majority of conferences were coded as teacher-centered (62%).

Sometimes the teacher ignored where the student writer was in his/her drafting stage. It is important to communicate the intentions of the text before addressing any of the editing concerns. An example of Alex failing to communicate the ideas of the text before editing the students writing was observed when Alex read Stephanie’s paper about her vacation and immediately corrected several misspelled words before inquiring about the paper’s content. When exiting the conference area, Stephanie, a student with lower self-efficacy, disappointedly stated that her paper was full of red ink. Yet Alex failed to see the importance of what she had done by responding that corrections were okay because this was the paper’s first draft. Throughout the period of observed conferences Alex on more than one occasion corrected students’ writing errors without ever allowing the students to diagnose their own mistakes or to make suggestions for revising the text (Oye, 1993; Ulichny & Watson-Gegeo, 1989; Wilson-Power, 1999).

Additionally, the failure to provide a substantial amount of specific praise statements was another drawback in Alex’s conferencing style. As highlighted by Hansen (1987) and Wachholz & Etheridge (1996) the teachers’ use of praise statements can bolster a student’s confidence while negative criticism may alternatively diminish a student’s confidence. On occasion it was observed that the teacher failed to take advantage of writing conferences as an opportunity to boost a student’s confidence through use of frequent specific praise statements such as telling “Well your story is well written with details and description and it flows very nicely” rather than generating general praise statements such as “Well, good, and/or nice”. Analyses showed that in only 24% of writing conferences did the study teacher provide two or more praise statements regarding the students’ written text. However, students need to hear about the strengths of their texts and their improved skills through text specific feedback (Calkins, 1986).

The study teacher appeared to be successful at breaking the ice in her conferences with students by asking a diverse set of opening questions. She was less successful though at being persistent with follow up questions that could have promoted further
dialogue for students to provide details about their texts and the writing process. For instance, the teacher frequently queried students about whether they needed assistance or in general how the writing process was going, yet in most cases these questions were answered with simple statements of “I’m fine, okay, or good.” This in effect ended the conversations and left both parties without a full understanding of the criteria behind students’ judgments. In these situations it is necessary for the conferring teacher to be more persistent by asking questions such as a) tell me about your favorite part of the text, b) how did you compose this part of your paper, and/or c) what are you planning to do next in the writing process?

Real revision should include engaging in reflective thinking and problem solving in order for students to thoroughly communicate their original ideas and intentions. This deeper and more thoughtful form of revision requires the teacher to do more than just changing one or two words or adding/cutting a couple of sentences here and there. During this study, observations showed that although the teacher and students did discuss the content of the students’ text there was actually a lack of real revision that occurred to students’ work. Instead what actually occurred in most cases was a lack of even mentioning revisions or trivial revisions being made such as providing character names for the student’s stories.

Obviously both student-centered and teacher-centered writing conferences did offer students a chance to interact with their own text and for the teacher to model her strategies to assess a written text. Additionally, meeting with the more experienced writer, receiving specific praise statements, and by simply having one-on-one dialogue, students could improve their self-efficacy. However, the findings of the study yielded no significant difference in students’ writing performances between two groups of students, with and without writing conferences. This result highlighted the fact that existence of self-efficacy beliefs are important for students to be motivated yet students also need to have required skills to reach their intended goals and/or complete assigned tasks (Schunk, 1991, 2003). While conferring with students it is important that teachers make sure students are not leaving the table only with excitement, motivation, and confidence but are also leaving with the required skills to keep their confidence and motivation alive until completing their assignments.
Self-Efficacy Beliefs during Writing

Students’ behavior toward completing an assigned task can be affected by their level of perceived self-efficacy. Students with a higher level of self-efficacy, for instance, are more focused in achieving their goal, have a stronger belief in their overall abilities, are more committed to completing a task, and also engage in activities that support their success. In contrast, students with lower levels of self-efficacy are less focused on achieving their task, have less confidence in their abilities, show less commitment toward their goals, and due to feelings of anxiety avoid engaging in related activities (Bandura, 1993; Bottomley, Henk, & Melnick, 1998; Greene, 1999; Ormrod, 2003; Pajares, 2003; Pajares & Valiante, 1997; Schunk, 2003; Walker, 2003; Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994).

Differences between these students with higher and lower self-efficacy were observed during this study and their behavior was seen to play a role in both how they approached assigned writing tasks and how they interacted with the teacher during scheduled teacher-student writing conferences. Observations of students’ writing behavior during this research showed that the more confident students worked harder, were not hesitant to seek assistance when needed, and persistently stayed on task until their assigned task was achieved. Consequently, the two confident case study students were first to complete their story assignments. Even though they finished their work much earlier than several other students they were still seen engaging in related writing activities. For instance, they engaged in revision of their own writing, sought feedback from others by having them read their texts, and also voluntarily read the texts of their peers as assistance in the writing process. Examples of persistent behavior among the more confident students were witnessed when Krista had difficulty deciding on what information to provide about her paper’s main character, as well as, when Carl was challenged with illustrating his story. In both cases, instead of giving in to their struggles these students worked to find solutions and quickly overcame their obstacles right away. In summary, the confident students seemed to be more self-disciplined and when responding to self-efficacy surveys and interviews they reflected positively on their strengths and potential as writers.

In contrast, observations of less confident students showed that they were quick to give up on their task, often blamed themselves for their failure, and appeared to be
frustrated when working towards their goal. During the writing process the lower self-efficacy students avoided drafting, revising, and sharing. Throughout the writing process, these students wrote in a linear manner, seemed concerned and nervous, and were reluctant to revise or share their stories. While conferring, they also had difficulty speaking with the teacher about their texts. They also exhibited low aspiration. An example of this was seen when the less confident students did not hesitate, even for a second, to close their notebooks as soon as it was announced that language arts block was over. Their avoiding writing was so blatant that they closed their notebooks without even completing the word or sentence that they were composing. Not surprisingly, they also showed weaker commitment to their goals. Among the entire class these two students were part of the final four students to complete their writing assignment. In summary, the less confident students appeared to be less committed to accomplishing their goals, were less self-disciplined than more confident students, and responded negatively about their writing abilities in the pre self-efficacy survey and initial interview.

Self-Efficacy Beliefs during Writing Conferences

Students with different competence and efficacy levels may experience different conference interaction (Freedman & Sperling, 1985; Glasswell, Parr, & McNaughton, 2003; Mitchell, 1990; Patthey-Chavez & Ferris, 1997).

The findings of this research support that students’ conference interactions differed according to their level of self-efficacy and these beliefs led them to play different roles as participants while conferring with their teacher. For instance, the more confident students had longer conference interaction, frequently initiated conference talk, and also acted as equal partners during conferencing. Examples were observed when students with higher levels of self-efficacy more often asked questions, provided suggestions for writing, took the initiative to introduce new topics/concerns, and approached their conferences with a cheerful demeanor. As a result of the equal sharing in conference talk the students who showed higher confidence and competence levels received more specific praise statements from their teacher and had a lower number of outside interruptions while conferring.

On the other hand, conferences of less confident students were shorter and most often were teacher initiated. Less confident students clearly saw the teacher as an
authority and let her handle a majority of conference questioning and conversation. Their participation was limited and they preferred to listen mainly to the teacher’s suggestions and comments. This resulted in several observed long pauses during conference interactions with less confident students. The two case students with low self-efficacy beliefs were soft spoken and difficult to clearly hear when speaking. When they did talk during interaction their statements were often incomplete or limited to one or two word utterances. Due to the limited nature of conference interaction with less confident students, the teacher became more concerned with correcting students’ writing mechanics such as spelling errors, capitalization, and punctuation.

In general, students’ with higher self-efficacy tended to be more active in terms of turn taking, frequency of talk, and determining the conference agenda. The students with lower self-efficacy in contrast tended to be more passive resulting in the teacher retaining conferencing authority. The study showed that it was not the teacher alone who contributed to the conference but students were also there and the way students behaved during conferences shaped the nature of interaction between two conference participants. Thus, the study highlighted the fact that differences in conferencing patterns might be caused not only because teachers are less patient or have low expectations while working with less achieving students (Glasswell, Parr, & McNaughton, 2003; Patthey-Chavez & Ferris, 1997) but because these students still see the teacher as an authority figure and limit their participation with accepting the teacher suggestions.

Analyzing Writing Conferences

To better understand the complex nature of interaction between teacher and student during writing conferences, researchers should not limit observations to only one aspect of conference interaction such as body language, number of words produced, number of turns taken, and/or the length of conferences. Additionally, while analyzing conference interaction attention needs to be paid to both parties’ input rather than focusing solely on either the teacher or student. As Murphy (2000) highlighted, “we cannot make sense of an interaction if we only hear one half of the conversation” (p. 89). Therefore, a rubric with multiple and specific categories can be utilized to more fully observe details of conference interaction which ultimately can provide a clearer picture of overall writing conference dynamics.
The conference rubric utilized in this study was organized into eight categories with three interaction styles such as teacher-centered, balanced, and student-centered. This allowed the researcher to pay attention to not only the teacher’s utterances and behaviors but also to the participation styles of students. Use of the conference rubric allowed the researcher to not only count each participants’ number of utterances but also allowed for making better sense of the participation in ownership, authority, and reflection questions.

Analyzing a conference from multiple perspectives established through the conference rubric allowed the researcher to not over generalize the rules of effective conferencing. For example, investigating a pattern of conversation from several aspects between the teacher and student aided the researcher in recognizing that one positive aspect of a conference does not necessarily imply other intended conference outcomes are being met. For instance, during conference analysis 72% of the writing conferences were coded as focused because one or two writing concerns were mentioned, yet closer attention to overall conference interaction showed that there was in fact limited discussion about the content of the student’s paper. The brief mention about the development and motivation behind the students’ texts did not lead to the teacher or the student asking content related questions, offering suggestions, or making recommendations. As a result, these interactions although focused in some respect actually failed to allow the student to truly develop ownership and/or determine the conference agenda. Less attention given to content related concerns also meant a dearth of praise statements from the teacher.

Another advantage of analyzing conference interaction from multiple perspectives is that it allows a researcher to be less critical of an observed behavior during a conference. For instance, past research criticized teachers for asking too many questions which turned writing conferences into question-and-answer sessions (Fletcher, 1993; Johnson, 1993). In this study, the classroom teacher asked a large number of questions, yet through rubric analysis of these conferences it was recognized that the teacher was not trying to gain power and authority over the student. Instead, when conferring with less confident students the teacher used her queries as an attempt to get the student more involved in the conference dialogue.
In terms of being good indicators of observed differences, it was seen that not all the categories provided equally distinctive findings. For instance, in the focus, conference agenda, ownership, and turn taking categories there were not a clear differences between students with higher and lower self-efficacy beliefs toward writing. However the rest of the categories yielded different patterns of interaction between these students and the classroom teacher. It has been observed that the students with lower self-efficacy beliefs asked more questions (53 out of 76 questions) and majority of their questions worked for the purpose of checking for understanding or clarifying what the teacher asked them to do. However the most common question type that was asked for the students with higher self-efficacy was seeking for information such as “What can I be in the story?” The category of frequency of talk also showed that students with higher self-efficacy were more verbal and acted more like an equal partner during the conference discussion. The students with higher self-efficacy also received more specific praise statements and experienced lower number of interruptions. The majority of interruptions that these students faced occurred when other students asked questions to the teacher. On the other hand, for students who had lower self-efficacy, the teacher initiated a majority of the conferences to give directions to other students or for gaining the classroom control.

Implications for Practice

As in several previous studies, this study was able to uncover several rules of thumb for practitioners to keep in mind when conferring with their students. First and foremost the teacher needs to be patient. This is sometimes difficult for teachers because they are usually more familiar with and experienced in solving writing problems. As a result they often like to solve writing problems immediately by providing a quick solution that students can implement in their writing. Educators though need to consider that providing quick solutions is not necessarily the best way to assist students in developing new skills.

Second, teachers should keep in mind that one-on-one interactions through writing conferences provide opportunities for their students to shine. During these conferences students can showcase their writing styles while teachers can recognize the students’ strengths and weaknesses. When conferring teachers can empower students by giving them ownership regarding the development of their writing skills rather than
dominating the conversation through frequent questions, explanations, and lectures like they often do during mini-lessons.

Third, teachers should provide models for their students to improve their writing and help students better understand the writing process. Students can have examples from experienced writers who model the strategies or actions that lead to successful writing while avoiding unnecessary pitfalls. To model successful writing teachers can use their own experiences, other students’ written texts, and published children’s literature.

Fourth, students need more than the requisite skills and ability to write well. They also need to believe that they are capable of doing the desired task. Therefore, for students to be truly successful writers they also need to develop high self-efficacy beliefs toward writing. This is important because high self-efficacy leads students to motivate themselves, set goals, and expend the necessary effort to achieve their goals.

Fifth, as mentioned previously students consider praise and positive feedback as one of the leading factors that help determine their level of self-efficacy. Therefore, while students are judging their capabilities they need to hear positive feedback from their teachers and tutors in order to better realize their strengths.

Sixth, since students can misjudge their level of self-efficacy, an appropriate strategy or evaluation instrument should be used to aid in informing students about their potential. Being knowledgeable about students’ beliefs of their skills can help teachers to understand how their students feel about writing, as well as, about what and how they write. Later teachers can utilize this information to further develop their curriculum and writing activities in order to better accommodate each child’s needs and feelings.

Finally, teacher education programs can incorporate the lessons learned about effective writing conferences into their Language Arts curriculum. In this way, pre-service teachers can become more knowledgeable, experienced, and qualified at conducting and analyzing writing conferences based on the criteria of an ideal conference. More importantly, teacher candidates should understand that writing conferences are more than an activity to apply on occasion but instead are a pedagogical strategy useful in teaching writing. Because as Anderson (2000) pointed out, “writing conferences aren’t the icing on the cake; they are the cake” (p. 3).
Implications for Research

Investigating students’ levels of perceived self-efficacy is important for educators. Knowing your students’ levels of self-efficacy can provide a head start in better understanding and helping students (Pajares, Miller, & Johnson, 1999). Also important to remember is that students behave parallel to how they feel about their skills (Bandura, 1984, 1993; Pajares & Valiante, 1999).

It has been observed that researchers have given significant attention to self-efficacy and how people judge their skills. Less attention though has been paid to how self-efficacy affects learning, especially the relationships between self-efficacy and learning to write. In addition, because little attention has been focused on studies of younger students it is critical for researchers to more exhaustively investigate self-efficacy at these grade levels.

Few other investigations have provided empirical evidence showing positive effects of teacher-student writing conferences on students’ confidence in writing. This study provided an opportunity to investigate the possible impact of conferences on students’ perceived self-efficacy toward writing and did so by focusing on a group of selected fifth-graders. More work in this area is needed, and future research should continue to investigate earlier grades in order to provide better insight into what is occurring in conferences with younger students.

Another recommendation is that this study might be replicated with co-researchers/research partners, so that writing conferences in several classrooms and schools could be recorded simultaneously and then investigated for occurrences of common patterns across teachers and/or students in a larger range of conferences. Additional studies with larger sample sizes may also uncover subtle changes in writing and lead to statistical testing with more generalizable measures.

Also additional research is necessary in order to determine whether the present findings regarding the effects of writing conferences on students’ writing skills and perceived self-efficacy toward writing are replicable at different elementary grade levels and for different genres of writing. Future research should be conducted over longer periods of time because the effects of teacher-student writing conferences may require more time to be internalized. Future research should also examine the durability of the
gains made by students through the inclusion of a maintenance component in their investigation.

The rubric that was used in this study might also be revised to more precisely capture and define interactions between the teacher and student during conferences. The researcher’s suggestion is to conduct interviews with students in reference classrooms in order to gain information about possible reasons for the decrease or increase in their level of perceived self-efficacy toward writing. Based on writing conference interactions, researchers might consider extending study to include investigating the possible effects of gender differences among students.
APPENDIX A

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH COMMITTEE

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL FORM

[Image of document page]

Date: 3/13/2006

To: Aysegul Bayraktar
   167 Crenshaw Drive
   Apt. 13
   Tallahassee, FL 32310

Dept.: CHILDHOOD EDUCATION, READING AND DISABILITIES SERVICES

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research
   The Teacher-Student Writing Conferences and Its Relationship to Fourth-Grade Students’ Perceived Self-Efficacy and Writing Performance

The forms that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Human Subjects Committee at its meeting on 2/8/2006. Your project was approved by the Committee.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals which may be required.

If the project has not been completed by 2/7/2007 you must request renewed approval for continuation of the project.

You are advised that any change in protocol in this project must be approved by resubmission of the project to the Committee for approval. The principal investigator must promptly report, in writing, any unexpected problems causing risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the chairman of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols of such investigations as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Protection from Research Risks. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.

cc: Carolyn Piazza
HSC No. 2006.0139
APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT LETTERS

Informed Consent Form for
The Teacher-Student Writing Conference and Its Relationship to Fourth-Grade Students’ Perceived
Self-Efficacy and Writing Performance

My name is Aysegul Bayraktar and I am a doctoral student at Florida State University in the
College of Education. I am currently studying the relationships between teacher-student writing conferences
and students’ writing confidence and competence. I am asking for permission to have your son/daughter
complete The Pre-Post Self-Efficacy Scale, have a 10 minute interview with me, and be observed during
writing conferences. Although there may be no direct benefits to your child, and minimal risk, there are
possible benefits of your child’s participation in this study. Each child’s participation is valuable since
responses from the research have the potential to provide classroom teachers with information on how to
help children enjoy writing, develop confidence as writers and improve students’ writing achievement with
the strategies can be implemented during teacher-student writing conferences.

I will conduct 15 minute Pre-Post Self-Efficacy Scales in the students’ classrooms and will interview
your child in September and November. The information about your child from audiotapes and surveys will
remain confidential. While students are conferring individually with their teachers videotaping will be
conducted but the tapes will be seen only by the researcher and other two co-researchers and will be
destroyed when the data is analyzed.

Participation in this study is voluntary and there will be no penalties for nonparticipation. Further,
consent may be withdrawn at any time without penalty or prejudice (it will not affect your child’s grade).
Students who do not participate will be released from the classroom while the Self-Efficacy Scales are
conducted; they will not have interviews with the researcher; and their writing conferences with the teachers
will not be videotaped. All the data collected will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law. The
results of the study may be published, but your child’s name will not be used. Study results will be sent to
you upon request.

If you have questions about the study or your child’s rights, please feel free to contact me, Aysegul
Bayraktar, 2325 West Pensacola, Apt. 170 Tallahassee, FL 32304, 559 9480, or my academic advisor D.
Carolyn Piazza, Florida State University, Department of Childhood Education, Reading, and Disability
Services, 215R Stone Building, 850 644 8476; or Human Subject Committee, 2010 Levy Ave Research
Building B, Suite 276, 850 644 8633.

I have read and understood this consent from.

________ Yes I give my permission  __________ No, I do not give my permission

_____________________________________________________________________________________
(Printed Name of Child)

______________________________________                               ________________
(Printed Name of Parent Guardian)                                                      (Date)

__________________________
(Signed Name of Parent/Guardian)

Signature of Researcher

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Child Assent Form for

The Teacher-Student Writing Conference and Its Relationship to Fifth-Grade Students’ Perceived Self-Efficacy and Writing Performance

I have been informed that my parent(s) have given permission for me to participate, if I want to, in a study concerning writing instruction. My participation in this project is voluntary and I have been informed that I may stop my participation in this study at any time. If I choose not to participate, it will not affect my grade in any way.

Name:_________________________   Date:________________________


APPENDIX C
THE WRITING SELF-EFFICACY SCALE

Direction: On a scale from 0 (no chance) to 100 (completely certain), determine how sure you are that you can perform each of the writing skills below. Remember that you may use any number between 0 and 100.

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

No chance                                               Completely certain

1. Correctly spell all words in a one-page story or composition.
2. Correctly punctuate a one-page story or composition.
3. Correctly use parts of speech such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, or adverbs.
4. Write a simple sentence with good grammar.
5. Correctly use singulars and plurals, verb tenses, prefixes, and suffixes.
6. Write a strong paragraph that has a good topic sentence or main idea.
7. Write a paragraph with details that support the topic sentence or main idea.
8. Organize sentences into a paragraph that clearly expresses an idea.
9. Write a well-organized and well sequenced paper that has a good introduction, body, and conclusion.
APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions for Students

1. Do you feel that, in general, you are good at most kinds of writing? Which kinds? Why?
2. What parts of writing are easy for you?
3. What parts of writing are difficult for you?
4. What makes someone a good writer?
5. What is a writing conference?
6. Do you enjoy having writing conferences with your and your teacher? Why?
7. What do you like best about writing conferences? Why?
8. What do you like least about writing conferences? Why?
9. Even if your paper was free of errors, would you still want to participate in a conference with your teacher? Why or why not?

Thank you for your participation.

Have a nice day!
Interview Questions for Teachers

1. How would you describe your teacher-student writing conferences?

2. How would you describe your role(s) during teacher-student writing conferences?

3. How do you decide what is to be discussed in a particular conference?

4. Do you think writing conferences are effective or not? Why?

5. Do you usually decide on the major changes for the student to implement during conferences? Why or why not?

6. Which parts and what kinds of writing conferences do you like the most? Why?

7. Which parts and what kinds of writing conferences do you dislike the most? Why?

8. Is there anything that you want to tell me about your teaching philosophy and theories about writing?

Thank you for your participation.

Have a nice day!
### RUBRIC FOR ANALYZING TEACHER-STUDENT WRITING CONFERENCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories:</th>
<th>Teacher-centered</th>
<th>Balanced</th>
<th>Student-centered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focused</strong> (F)</td>
<td>The teacher focuses on more than three appropriate content/surface related issues depending on draft stage</td>
<td>The teacher focuses on three appropriate content/surface related issues depending on draft stage</td>
<td>Teacher focuses on one or two appropriate content/surface related issues depending on draft stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conference Agenda</strong> (CA)</td>
<td>The teacher leads the discussion and/or answers her own inquiry</td>
<td>Both teacher and student lead the discussion and answer the inquiries</td>
<td>The teacher gives student the opportunities to determine and lead the conference discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ownership/Building on Student’s Strengths (OS)</strong></td>
<td>The teacher provides suggestions for improvements in or beyond the text</td>
<td>Both teacher and student jointly determine suggestions for improvements in or beyond the text</td>
<td>The teacher gives opportunities to the student to provide suggestions for improvements in or beyond the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflected Questions</strong> (RQ)</td>
<td>The teacher asks more than 50% of the questions for her own problem solving</td>
<td>Both teacher and student ask equal number of questions</td>
<td>The teacher gives the student silent time to ask more than 50% of the questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Encouraged Turn Taking</strong> (TT)</td>
<td>The teacher takes more than 2/3 of the turns that lead her to keep the control and give all the directions and suggestions without giving the student a chance to respond</td>
<td>Both teacher and student take almost equal number of turns which allow the student to be involved in the conversation about his/her text</td>
<td>The teacher allows the student to have more than 2/3 of the turns to make him/her mostly in charge of improving the student’s text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency of Talk</strong> (FT)</td>
<td>The teacher does more than 50% of the talk (in words) during the discussion as s/he is the source of information and</td>
<td>Both teacher and student talk almost equally during the discussion; they exchange roles as sender and receiver</td>
<td>The teacher gives opportunities to the student to produce more than 50% of the talk and acts as a sender of messages during the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Praise Comments Received (P)</td>
<td>The teacher does not provide any explicit or implicit statement about the quality of the writing features but may use general praise statements (e.g. Okay) to show active listening and/or keep the conversation going</td>
<td>The teacher provides general praise statements about the quality of the writing features (e.g. good, fine, oh, well)</td>
<td>The teacher provides text specific praise statements about the quality of the writing features (e.g. That’s a good metaphor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of Interruption Occurred (I)</td>
<td>The teacher is open and flexible toward interruptions by others that can take more than 15% of the total conference time</td>
<td>The teacher has interruptions but returns to the discussion as soon as s/he can limit the length of the interruptions to be less than 15% of the total conference time</td>
<td>The teacher gives the message that conferring is a serious act and has no interruptions during the conference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX F

EFFECTIVE QUESTIONS AND RESPONSE THAT TEACHERS USE
IN WRITING CONFERENCES

As Students Begin to Write:

What are you going to write about?
How did you choose (or narrow) your topic?
What prewriting activities are you doing?
How are you gathering ideas for writing?
How will you organize your writing?
How will you start writing your rough draft?
What form will your writing take?
Who will be your audience?
What problems do you think you might have?
What do you plan to do next?

As Students Are Drafting:

How is your writing going?
Are you having any problems?
What do you plan to do to the next?

As Students Revise Their Writing:

What questions do you have for your writing group?
What help do you want from your writing group?
What compliments did your writing group give you?
What suggestions did your writing group give you?
How do you plan to revise your writing?
What kinds of revisions did you make?
What do you plan to do next?

As Students Edit Their Writing:

What kinds of mechanical errors have you located?
How has your editor helped you proofread?
How can I help you identify (or correct) mechanical errors?
What do you plan to do next? Are you ready to make your final copy?
After Students Have Completed Their Compositions:

What audience will you share your writing with?
What did your audience say about your writing?
What do you like best about your writing?
If you were writing the composition again, what changes would you make?

How did you use the writing process in writing this composition?”

Questions for the Writer

What would you like me/us to listen for and react to? (Ask this before the writer reads aloud his piece).
What part do you like the best?
What part gave you the most trouble?
What did you consider putting in and then decide against?
What would you like to change in your next draft?
What did you learn from writing this piece? (Bissex, 1982, p. 76).

Right Questions to Ask

What did you learn from this piece of writing?
What do you intend to do in the next draft?
What surprised you in the draft?
Where is the piece of writing taking you?
What do you like best in the piece of writing?
What questions do you have of me?” (Murray, 1979, p. 15).

Questions that Nudge Students to Say More:

Could you say more about that?
What do you mean by….could you explain what do you mean by…..

Questions that Grow Out of Our Knowledge of What Good Writers Do:

Have you planned out your draft?
What’s the focus on your piece?
What kinds of revisions have you made?
Questions about Students’ Writing Strategies:

How are you going to do this work?
What strategies are you going to use to do this work?
How are you planning to get started with your draft?

Questions that Come from What We Already Know about Students:

Have you done some of the revision work you tried in your last piece?
How did you pick the idea for your draft this time?

Questions Connected to Our Mini-Lessons:

Have you tried out what we talked about today in the mini-lesson?
Remember how we talk yesterday in the mini-lesson about revision strategies?
Have you used any of them to help you revise?
Questions about a student’s decisions:
Why did you pick these places to add-on?
Why did you decide to structure your draft this way?
Why did you repeat this line several times?” (Anderson, 2000, p. 42-43).

Questions for Writers to Ask:

What have I said so far?
What am I trying to say?
How do I like it?
What is good here that I can build on?
What is not so good that I can fix?
How does it sound?
How does it look?
How else could I have done this?
What will my readers think as they read this?
What questions will they ask?
What will they notice? Feel? Think?
What am I going to do next?” (Calkins, 1986, p. 222-223).

According To Murray (1985) Some Responses To Avoid and To Use Are:

No

This is good
Wow. You can write.
Didn’t you learn anything about writing.
This is great, just great.
This is a mess, just a mess.
I’ve never seen such a good paper.
I’ve never seen such a bad paper.

Yes

What do you plan to work on next?
Obviously some of this works, but what do you plan to attack next?
Where do you think you get off the track?
Well you certainly solved last week’s problem, what’s next on the menu?
I liked the way you wove the quotes into the text. Are there other things that could be woven in the same way?
And you said you had no voice. Tell me how you made this draft so different?” (p. 156).
“We learn how to write primarily by building on our strengths, and it is important for the teacher to encourage the student to see what has potential, what has strength, what can be developed (Murray, 1985, p. 157).
APPENDIX G

DEFINITION OF HOLISTIC SCORING AND SCORE POINTS IN RUBRIC

Focus: Focus refers to how clearly the paper presents and maintains a main idea, theme, or unifying point. Papers representing the higher end of the point scale demonstrate a consistent awareness of the topic and do not contain extraneous information.

Organization: Organization refers to the structure or plan of development (beginning, middle, and end) and whether the points logically relate to one another. Organization refers to (1) the use of transitional devices to signal the relationship of the supporting ideas to the main idea, theme, or unifying point and (2) the evidence of a connection between sentences. Papers representing the higher end of the point scale use transitions to signal the plan or text structure and end with summary or concluding statements.

Support: Support refers to the quality of the details used to explain, clarify, or define. The quality of support depends on word choice, specificity, depth, credibility, and thoroughness. Papers representing the higher end of the point scale provide fully developed examples and illustrations in which the relationship between the supporting ideas and the topic is clear.

Conventions: Conventions refer to punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and variation in sentence used in the paper. These conventions are basic writing skills included in Florida's Minimum Student Performance Standards and the Uniform Student Performance Standards for Language Arts. Papers representing the higher end of the scale follow, with few exceptions, the conventions of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling and use a variety of sentence structures to present ideas.

Score Points in Rubric

6 Points
The writing is focused, purposeful, and reflects insight into the writing situation. The paper conveys a sense of completeness and wholeness with adherence to the main idea, and its organizational pattern provides for a logical progression of ideas. The support is substantial, specific, relevant, concrete, and/or illustrative. The paper demonstrates a commitment to and an involvement with the subject, clarity in presentation of ideas, and may use creative writing strategies appropriate to the purpose of the paper. The writing demonstrates a mature command of language (word choice) with freshness of expression. Sentence structure is varied, and sentences are complete except when fragments are used purposefully. Few, if any, convention errors occur in mechanics, usage, and punctuation.

5 Points
The writing focuses on the topic, and its organizational pattern provides for a progression of ideas, although some lapses may occur. The paper conveys a sense
of completeness or wholeness. The support is ample. The writing demonstrates a mature command of language, including precision in word choice. There is variation in sentence structure, and, with rare exceptions, sentences are complete except when fragments are used purposefully. The paper generally follows the conventions of mechanics, usage, and spelling.

4 Points
The writing is generally focused on the topic but may include extraneous or loosely related material. An organizational pattern is apparent, although some lapses may occur. The paper exhibits some sense of completeness or wholeness. The support, including word choice, is adequate, although development may be uneven. There is little variation in sentence structure, and most sentences are complete. The paper generally follows the conventions of mechanics, usage, and spelling.

3 Points
The writing is generally focused on the topic but may include extraneous or loosely related material. An organizational pattern has been attempted, but the paper may lack a sense of completeness or wholeness. Some support is included, but development is erratic. Word choice is adequate but may be limited, predictable, or occasionally vague. There is little, if any, variation in sentence structure. Knowledge of the conventions of mechanics and usage is usually demonstrated, and commonly used words are usually spelled correctly.

2 Points
The writing is related to the topic but may include extraneous or loosely related material. Little evidence of an organizational pattern may be demonstrated, and the paper may lack a sense of completeness or wholeness. Development of support is inadequate or illogical. Word choice is limited, inappropriate or vague. There is little, if any, variation in sentence structure, and gross errors in sentence structure may occur. Errors in basic conventions of mechanics and usage may occur, and commonly used words may be misspelled.

1 Point
The writing may only minimally address the topic. The paper is a fragmentary or incoherent listing of related ideas or sentences or both. Little, if any, development of support or an organizational pattern or both is apparent. Limited or inappropriate word choice may obscure meaning. Gross errors in sentence structure and usage may impede communication. Frequent and blatant errors may occur in the basic conventions of mechanics and usage, and commonly used words may be misspelled.

Unscorable
The paper is unscorable because:

- the response is not related to what the prompt requested the student to do.
• the response is simply a rewording of the prompt.
• the response is a copy of a published work.
• the student refused to write.
• the response is illegible.
• the response is incomprehensible (words are arranged in such a way that no meaning is conveyed).
• the response contains an insufficient amount of writing to determine if the student was attempting to address the prompt.
• the writing folder is blank.
APPENDIX H

TRANSCRIPTION NOTATIONS

[ ] = overlapping speech

word= = no gap in speech between speakers
=word

CAPS = stressed word

--word-- = interruption

.. = half second pause; each additional half-second is indicated by one additional period

( ) = parentheses enclose commentary by transcriber

// = words enclosed by slashes are difficult to understand on the tape and may be inaccurately transcribed

*italics* = reference to a word as a word. Example: “The second *and* in this sentence is not necessary.”
APPENDIX I

TRANSCRIBED TEACHER-STUDENT WRITING CONFERENCES

Transcripts of Conference Talk between Carl and Alex

Conference 1: (1:11-8:49) – 7 minutes and 38 seconds long

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turns</th>
<th>Talk</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>C: Hello!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>T: Hi……</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>T: Okay, how are we doing?=</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>C: =Good.=</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>T: =Okay. Umm from the last conference what do I have from you?=</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>C: =My notes.............</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>T: (Alex looks at her own notes and says) Osceola, like the Seminoles, the mascot, that’s why you chose it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>T: All you knew is that he was a chief, you’re gonna do a journal with Osceola being the main character and the narrator and he had many events from that time period. (Alex turns to Carl and asks)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>T: What’s changed?.....</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>C: (Carl looks at his notes) Got my characters, some new characters.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>C: I’m in the story too.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>T: Alright.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>C: The sky says blue feather.......</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>T: Is that an actual person?=</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>C: =No.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>T: Okay…</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>T: How’d you get the name?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>C: I don’t know I just made it up.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>T: Are you going to have a blue feather?=</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>C: =Umm, I like feathers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>T: Very cool, and who’s that?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>C: Umm, That’s some dude in the story his name is Riley Thompson.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>T: Is he a real person?=</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>C: =Umm hum.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>T: So what are you gonna tell?...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>C: Umm he held a meeting with Osceola or something to like…….. umm I can’t remember… he is with all the umm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
British soldiers I think.

28 C: That’s where they were umm or American.
29 T: Okay.
30 C: And then like they ran, they ran the Indians off.
31 T: Okay...
32 T: So what kind of meeting did, so in your story are you gonna talk about that?
33 C: It’s kind of like, they want, they want umm yeah.
34 C: They want umm Osceola to sign like some some contract or something.
35 C: Saying that they’ll never like go on the land or something Like that I think.
36 T: So do you think that that’s going to be like the main idea of the Story?
37 C: Maybe……
38 T: Okay. Keep going……
39 C: Umm shh shhs ssshhhh (10 seconds long pause) and then they talk about how….. he got bit by a mosquito, he got a very deadly disease.
40 T: Alright.
41 C: They got, they took them to St Augustine.
42 C: And then umm….. his family got out and they went umm They umm sailed to Fort Mortry.
43 C: People took them on a boat, I think.
44 T: Alright.
45 T: So what is your story gonna be about?
46 T: Like, different things?
47 C: Yeah. Yeah…..
48 T: Okay…
49 T: So have you started doing your plot?
50 C: Not really, not yet…..
51 T: (yawning) Okay. (8 seconds long pause)
52 T: Okay (with the message of saying go ahead)=
53 C: =And then, after his family did that umm it’s like it said many artists wanted to paint him and…… Hatlin or Katelien, George or something George Katleen or something he got to paint him… and he died (Alex’s office phone rings) just two days after he finished the painting…..
54 T: Okay.
55 T: Like (the phone rings) you got a lot of events.
56 T: So you might wanna break it down to like one or two (the
phone rings)...

57  C: Okay (nods his head at the same time)=

58  T: =You’ve got a lot of things so maybe focus on just one or two so you can really like detail those up (the phone rings) fatten those up. (Carl nods his head to show his agreement).....

59  T: Okay? (Carl nods his head again)

60  T: Do it like (one student tries to talk to Alex, but Alex continues talking with Carl) that when you do your plot -- the same student talks to Alex about her journals for 19 seconds --

61  T: Okay...

62  T: So yeah you might want to pick for your two

63  C: Umm hum.....

64  T: Or one or two... right?.....

65  T: Because then that lets you not have to write too much… (Carl is nodding his head).

66  T: Okay and then like tell the story more like have more fun with=

67  C: =Umm hum=

68  T: =Like one or two..... or three...okay?....

69  T: And the one might be a good one like how they wanted to sign it but they could also do it how then after something what they went to the Fort sailing=

70  C: =Umm hum=

71  T: =Then he just became so popular because he did not sign it?

72  C: Umm I think he did, they got him to.

73  T: Okay.

74  T: So you might want to say that but still then you should still play mix with all these other people=

75  C: =Umm hum=

76  T: =And then that’s how are you gonna end it?

77  C: Umm........ like the whole book?=

78  T: =Umm hmm=

79  C: =With him dieing like I guess I’ll do... maybe that.... I don’t know really.....

80  T: Okay.

81  T: Well you can end it with when the artist died or you can end it with when he died or he can die in it or he doesn’t even have to die like he you can just end it with you know him being like he’s popular and he just did all this the Indians and he was a strong leader for them (Carl awns) and then just kinda end it that way.

82  C: Yeah.......
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>C: Umm hum…..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>T: You’re making me yawn….</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>T: Okay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>T: Any questions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>T: Any problems?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>C: Uh uh ……..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>T: Okay (six seconds long pause) a little more time little more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>C: =Okay………..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>T: /Is that it?/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93</td>
<td>C: Yeah!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>C: I think so, I guess………..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>C: What!?...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td>C: What can I be in the story … that umm I’m trying to think.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97</td>
<td>T: You can be like his son…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>T: And you’re his like his office so you can be like oh no wait</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I’m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sorry you’re blue feather.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>C: Umm…. cause I can be one of the Indians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>T: Yeah here hold on -- Alex’s phone rings and she talks on the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>phone for 56 seconds--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>C: Yeah!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>C: He could be his best friend….</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103</td>
<td>T: Okay, his colleague his companion alright so you’re disguised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>as blue feather which is.. his.. [friend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104</td>
<td>C: Compadre friend yes=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td>T: =or [compadre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106</td>
<td>C: Umm yeah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td>T: Okay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108</td>
<td>T: Alright….. oh perfect timing (her alarm clock buzzes, Alex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>asks students to clean up).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Transcripts of Conference Talk between Krista and Alex

Conference 1: (00:12-6:10) – 5 minutes and 58 seconds long

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turns</th>
<th>Talk</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>T: How is your Friday?.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>K: Good</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>T: Good! (9 seconds long pause, Alex writes notes to herself)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>T: Alright Krista talk to me what are we working on?.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>K: We’re working on Amelia  Ah Ah=</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>T: =Air</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>K: Airheart!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>T: Emily Airheart, Cool. Why did you decide on her?..</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>K: Because I like FLYING and uhm… also I wanted to show that a girl can be good on history.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>T: Okay so have you found research on that?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>K: Yes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>T: A lot?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>K: Well I found enough and also I read some of the books.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>T: Okay so you kinda so you are, are you done with research?..</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>K: Not yet [I still</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>T: Okay=</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>K: = gotta do more stuff</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>T: Alright well what you need to do is now that you have your research now just take notes on it so that you don’t need to use the books when you.. are writing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>T: Okay you are just using the…</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>K: the paper=</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>T: =The Paper.</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>T: So just write notes so like if I was taking notes on the /grapolos/ child I’d be like… okay I wouldn’t write you know I’m not scared said the /grapolos/ I’d say /grapolos/ child not scared.</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>T: You know that’s how you take notes.</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>T: Okay… umm have you thought about when you umm how you are going to write your story?...</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>K: Uhm….. I thought that maybe in the beginning… umm… it would start like.. like umm… you would see like… my animal or squirrel or whatever and the….. if he he’d be like he would be running out of danger or something and then he’d tell what happens and then it goes it leads back to that point….. or something happen while he is doing that so he told you what happen like from his point of view like… like…… he is like making like a little video or like a book about his adventures (Alex takes notes while...</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>T:</td>
<td>K:</td>
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</table>
| 26  | Is he gonna be like Amelia Airheart’s friend?... | (Krista talks)...
| 27  | It’s her pet. |  
| 28  | Okay so the squirrel..... is... her.. so kinda like the umm “Luis and Clark” (the name of a book) sort of thing… |  
| 29  | Okay so the so the squirrels gonna be..... Umm.. be telling the Story......... |  
| 30  | Okay........ So how? |  
| 31  | Do you know how you gonna think about ending it? |  
| 32  | Like are you gonna end it with her disappearing or are you gonna end it with= |  
| 33  | m probably going to end it.. when uhm....... Sorry |  
| 34  | /a word that was not loud enough to capture)/ |  
| 35  | when umm..... |  
| 36  | Umm hum..... |  
| 37  | Oh I thought these two ways like ending it like.. when umm.. he meets someone new or something and it starts a whole other story. |  
| 38  | Or if umm.... It’s just a good point to stop.. and umm it’s like them having fun and the same old stuff |  
| 39  | Well do you know what wha what happens to Amelia Airheart?..... |  
| 40  | Oh I haven’t check out the end but I checked out the beginning and the middle. |  
| 41  | Okay -- for 12 seconds a student asks a question -- Alright uhm.... would so okay so you just..... so what about Amelia Airheart are you going to write about? |  
| 42  | Like Are you going to write about her life story?.. |  
| 43  | Are you going to write about how she became a pilot?.. |  
| 44  | I’m gonno write uhm..... how.. how it was leading up to when she became a pilot and then some parts when she was like going around the world..... and meets people...... |  
| 45  | Okay.... Alright so you still have a lot of.... “finding things out”.. to do. |  
| 46  | Right? |  
| 47  | I needed to know where she’s flown. |  
| 48  | Okay |  
| 49  | Checked out this one thing but I didn’t understand what it meant. |  
| 50  | Except |  
| 51  | Okay |  
| 52  | for umm the end I didn’t know what it stood for. |  
| 53  | O..kay. Well your umm homework this week is to do stuff at home... where your mom or dad could help you kinda do |  

153
some stuff and figure out what the points are for and figure out what you really wanna write about her umm [and]

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<tbody>
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<td>54</td>
<td>K:</td>
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<td>55</td>
<td>T:</td>
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<td>56</td>
<td>T:</td>
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<td>57</td>
<td>T:</td>
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<td>K:</td>
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<td>73</td>
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<td>74</td>
<td>T:</td>
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<td>75</td>
<td>T:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>K:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>T:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
K: And also I put something like this.
T: Okay.. Okay! Alright.
T: Great Krista, Thank You!
T: Okay.. Okay! Alright.
T: Great Krista, Thank You!
Transcripts of Conference Talk between Eric and Alex

Conference 1: (16:46-18:58) – 2 minutes and 12 seconds long

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turns</th>
<th>Talk</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>T: Alright Eric, how we doing?...</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>E: I’m good.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>T: Alright so you decided on a person?..</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>E: James Garfield, the president.........</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>T: So you are finding out more information about him?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>E: Umm yeah=</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>T: =Oh is that all today?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>E: Yeah!=</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>T: =Alright, good…..</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>T: So did you look at home last night?...</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>E: No.. not really.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>T: Okay.. umm=</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>E: =But I got [this.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>T: You got that cool.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>T: Let’s see.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>T: This will be fun for your book because you can throw in some of these…..</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>T: So you thought about how what you are gonna write about with James Garfield?..</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>E: Kind of..</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>T: Like what?.....</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>E: Kind of the....</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>T: Kind of just brewing up in your head..</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>E: Yeah</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>T: Umm okay.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>T: Umm lets see, (Alex reads) “less than a year after his inauguration he was assassinated”....</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>T: “When he was sixteen Garfield tried to run away to sea, he was turned down but did sign onto a canal boat that sailed from Cleveland to Pittsburgh”…</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>T: You need to do something like that you could throw a story about that.. and then how he.. you know got turned down but then he said oh I’m going to be President one day and I am gonna make sure that nobody turns me down...</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>T: You could make that up.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>T: It’s fiction right?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>E: Yeah=</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>T: =And then he does become President and… alright.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>T: (Alex reads) “Sometimes to entertain friends James Garfield would write Greek sentences with his right hand and Latin”</td>
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</table>
with his left and speak German at the same time”..

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<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>E: I am getting good at that=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>T: =Are you?....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>E: If I do if I do a report on him, I always include that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>T: Oh you have done reports on him before?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>E: Yeah!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>T: Oh, okay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>T: Good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>E: One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>T: Well, good……</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>T: Okay (Alex reads) “Sometimes he greeted people by barking like a dog.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>T: That would be a good way to start it off.</td>
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<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>T: Ruff, ruff, ruff (Alex makes dog barking sound) like onomatopoeia sort of thing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>E: Yeah…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>T: Okay so do you have any problems.. or questions?</td>
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<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>E: No, not really.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>T: Okay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>T: If you do, we’ll meet up again and then umm hopefully then you’d find more stuff.</td>
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<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>T: And I do have books in there that talks about presidents, too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>T: So, I can /hold/ that for you.</td>
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<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>E: Okay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>T: Okay?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>T: So, I’ll do that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>T: Alright?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>E: Alright.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>T: Good?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>T: Alright.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>T: Cut back finish up.</td>
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Transcripts of Conference Talk between Stephanie and Alex

Conference 1: (9:58- 13:30) – 3 minutes 32 seconds long

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turns</th>
<th>Talk</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>T: Alright Stephanie.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>T: Do you want to meet right now or do you want to keep doing research?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>S: Umm I can meet right now.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>T: Okay -- talks to other students for 16 seconds--</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>S: Okay… what?...</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>S: What now?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>T: Okay, what are you doing?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>S: Umm.. what person I’m doing?=</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>T: =Yep!=</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>S: =BB King.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>T: Ooooh!.....</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>S: Umm my statement like whenever in my book am I suppose to draw his life story?.....</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>T: You need to find out if you have been doing a lot of research on BB King?...</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>S: Not really=</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>T: =Why?....</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>S: Because I’ve been trying to finish my statement.....</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>T: Okay. Well now have you been doing any research at home?...</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>S: Umm kind of.....</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>T: Okay, well now you need to focus on this weekend getting information about BB King and finding something about him whether he was..... well, talk to me about BB King</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>S: He was a guitarist.</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>S: The “King of Blues.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>T: Okay</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>S: And I was reading something that… umm….. he had his license taken away.. and some of his band members were umm… they were on a bus and the bus crashed into another bus -- Alex warns some students for 5 seconds to be on task --</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>T: Okay what?...</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>S: BB king has got his license taken away.. and he was driving umm.. er the he had got a bus for his umm band players.. but he wasn’t on there and the band players got injured because they umm smashed another car.....</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>T: Hmm…..</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>T: Did that affect him at all?..</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>S: No, because he wasn’t aboard…</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>T: Oh yeah, but like like emotionally?….</td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>S: No, his umm band players were just slightly injured..</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>T: Okay (yawns) alright, you need to find something about BB King….. that like whether it’s how he was a guitarist..</td>
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<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>S: <strong>Well like start when he was born?</strong>=</td>
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<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>T: =Well, no.. not necessarily but find something about him that you think you can write a story about…..</td>
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<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>S: <strong>How he made his banjo?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>S: <strong>Would that be one?...</strong></td>
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<td>36</td>
<td>T: It might be.</td>
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<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>T: But I think it’s not very historical that way…</td>
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<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>T: Like how did he get called the “King of Blues?”…..</td>
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<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>S: <strong>By starting a band?...</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>T: That’s not… I’m sure that’s not the only way..</td>
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<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>S: <strong>I have no clue about that</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>T: You’re going to want to look that up</td>
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<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>S: Yes…</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>T: [Okay</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>S: <strong>What about…. how he got into the music?</strong>=</td>
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<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>T: =Yeah, and then you could write a story about that, like whether it’s… you know, when he started when he was younger or that could start when he was a teenager and….. you know picked guitars…</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>S: <strong>How he star how he got like start how he got into music.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>S: <strong>Then.. umm…. he played in band why they called why was he called the “King of Blues?”</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>T: Umm hum</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>S: <strong>So write a book about that……</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>T: Yeah……</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>S: <strong>Well, then I’m done…..</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>S: <strong>That’s what I need to know..</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>T: Alright.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>S: <strong>See you later.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>T: See you later.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Aysegul Bayraktar was born in Ankara, the capital city of the Republic of Turkey and completed her elementary, middle, high school, and undergraduate education in this city. She earned her undergraduate degree in 1998 with the major of Educational Management and Planning from University of Ankara. After her graduation, she worked for one and a half years as a full-time elementary school teacher. Meanwhile she was awarded a scholarship from the Turkish Ministry of National Education to complete her higher education in the United States. Aysegul completed her Master degree in 2002 at the University of Missouri-Columbia, majoring in Curriculum and Instruction with emphasis in Elementary Education. She also participated in the Missouri Writing Project and was awarded a scholarship for her contribution. Ms. Bayraktar continued her education in the School of Teacher Education at Florida State University earning her doctorate in Elementary Education. During the time of her graduate work at Florida State University she worked for five years as an instructor teaching undergraduate level courses in Reading and Language Arts. She also worked as an assistant teacher for two years at Child Development Center at FSU, as well as, an additional two years as a research assistant with a grant research project in individualized student instruction for literacy. During her doctoral degree studies Ms. Bayraktar was also appreciative to be awarded the Kathy and Dennis Newman Scholarship on two occasions, the Melvin & Helen Pope Elementary Education Scholarship, and the William Leonard Hall & Julia Carter Hall Scholarship.