Chapter 6
The Use of Zoom in Giving Writing Conferences in Foreign Language Writing Classes

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ABSTRACT

To give feedback during Covid-19, language instructors used digital programs such as Zoom. Accordingly, the present study aimed to find out and describe the experiences of a language instructor who held online writing conferences through Zoom. It was designed as a single case study conducted with a participant language instructor. The data were collected through a semi-structured interview and content analyzed. The findings indicated that online writing conferences had advantages such as saving time, and disadvantages, including technical issues. They also showed that online writing conferences could be affected positively and negatively by several factors such as time-saving and technical issues. According to the findings, though the content of feedback in them was the same as the one in face-to-face writing conferences, there were differences including student prejudice between them. The findings were discussed, pedagogical implications of the study were mentioned, and suggestions for further research were made.

INTRODUCTION

Writing in a foreign language requires foreign language learners to produce a piece of language by using their knowledge of the language(s) so that they can communicate their ideas, feelings, and beliefs to other people in the foreign language(s) they learn. Therefore, the communicative purpose of writing has rendered teaching writing an essential part of foreign language teaching, which has also made approaches, methods, and/or techniques used to teach writing significant for foreign language teachers to be familiar with and use in their writing classes. One of these methods is writing conferences.

BACKGROUND

The background of the study was presented by first explaining what writing conferences are, their nature, the roles of teachers and learners in writing conferences, and giving feedback online during Covid-19.

Writing Conferences

Writing conferences can be defined as the conversations/talks that a teacher and a learner make with each other one-on-one and that concentrate on the learner's writing (Bayraktar, 2012). As the definition indicates, a language teacher and a language learner come together, the teacher talks with the learner about their writing (e.g., a paragraph, an essay, a report, or a research paper), and they work on the writing together to improve it in a writing conference in foreign language teaching. Also, a writing conference can be made between a teacher and an individual learner, as the definition mentions, between a teacher and a pair of learners (Yeh, 2017), or between a teacher and a group of learners (Mochizuki, 2017).

The Significance of Writing Conferences

A writing conference is an effective teaching method for language teachers to know because it can enable language learners to become better writers in the languages they learn (Bayraktar, 2012; Brown, 2018; Ji, 2017; Maliborska & You, 2016; Phusawisot, 2018; Yang, 2022; Yeh, 2017). There are several reasons for this. According to Bayraktar (2012), it can make language learners more independent in writing in a foreign language, promote their sense of authority or ownership in their writing, and improve their self-efficacy in writing. It can also enhance their confidence in their writing (Brown, 2018; Phusawisot, 2018). Language learners can receive personalized instruction about their writings in writing conferences (Yeh, 2017) since the focus of a writing conference between a language teacher and a language learner is on the learner's writing, the teacher only deals with the learners, and he spends time talking about the strengths and weaknesses about the writing with the learner individually. As a result, they can be provided with individualized/personalized and tailored support (Yang, 2022) and feedback (Brown, 2018; Sowell, 2020) for their writing. Oral (Alfalagg, 2020) or written can be given. Personalized feedback provided in a writing conference causes them to value it (Brown, 2018). With personalized instruction, feedback, and support, they can discuss their progress in their writing with their teachers (Maliborska & You, 2016).

The Nature of Writing Conferences

The nature of writing conferences can be characterized as interactive (Gilliland, 2014; Yang, 2022) and negotiating (Chang, 2021; Ewert, 2009; Mirzaee & Yaqubi, 2016; Taylor, 2021). That a writing conference is made between a teacher and a learner makes it interactive as the teacher and learner dialogue with each other in a writing conference, so dialogue is valued in writing conferences (Aldohon, 2021). The nature of this interaction is essential for effective writing conferences now that Gilliland (2014) emphasized that language learners can be engaged in a writing conference through constructive interactions. Constructive interactions can enable them to be socialized academically by learning about the academic use of the language, yet unhelpful interactions may create obstacles that may avoid learners' language (i.e., writing) development (Gilliland, 2014). Constructive interactions between language teachers and learners can promote negotiations which are required pedagogically in writing conferences (Taylor,

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