

The pair conference space is one of those rare spaces where students can engage in authentic academic discourse leading to a concrete product they have ownership over. This implies that it is a great space for English learners to use academic discourse and advance to a higher academic English proficiency level. Particularly because the whole writing conversation is about the use of language, word choice, sentence structure and the purpose they serve in conveying certain ideas. These conversations can be developed into ones where students critically think about language purpose, functions, and audience. This means that the parts of the day we tend to toss out to accommodate skills that are more readily tested need not to be tossed but to be done more deliberately. Conferencing may be able to more adequately and authentically prepare students for the critical thinking they need to understand de-contextualized passages found on standardized tests and more importantly understand how word choice is very important in getting the result desired from a given audience. For example when writing a personal narrative one of my students asked me if they could add a fantastic character into their story even though that would make it untrue. I simply replied, "well what is your purpose for the writing." That sparked a whole conversation about his choice as a writer and how he wanted to connect to his audience. His story then took on more life for him on the paper and became less of another opportunity to describe a life event.