

“WHY DO YOU THINK I’M ASKING?”: HOW MISUNDERSTOOD REQUESTS IMPEDE STUDENT AGENCY IN WRITING CONFERENCES¹

Angie McKinnon Carter

Writing conferences offer teachers one-to-one mentoring opportunities that enable students to develop their confidence and agency as writers. This article assumes that, like me, you value the co-creative potential of writing conferences, including developing the kind of rapport with students that allows us to become partners in testing ideas and strategies in order to meet co-identified goals (Black; Lerner; Sperling; Strauss and Xiang). Yet, teaching and learning are disrupted when teachers and students misunderstand each other. As teachers, we do not sufficiently recognize how often miscommunication occurs. Yet miscommunication is, in fact, pervasive. Thus, recognizing miscommunication is an important step to improving teaching and learning.

To this end, I investigated how often students and teachers recognized each other’s requests in *An Eye toward Change: Examining Requests in Teacher-Student Writing Conferences*, a study I draw on for this article. In that 2018 study, I hypothesized that if students and teachers recognized the same speech as requests, then a conference was more likely to be successful (Carter 62), that is, to result in teachers’ and students’ “mutual satisfaction” (Thonus 126). Although I expected some unrecognized requests (conversation is messy, after all), I was surprised by how little teachers and students recognized each other’s requests: Of the utterances identified by either a student or a teacher as a request, their conversational

partner identified that same utterance as a request only 26 percent of the time—much less than the 50 percent I anticipated (Carter 244). This finding is important because students' and teachers' failure to identify each other's requests interferes with students' ownership of and their ability to make decisions about their writing (Carter 72; Thonus 129). I further discovered that this failure corresponded to a mismatch between speaker's and hearer's perceived roles in the conference. Basically, roles are the identities, including *reader* and *learner*, that the speaker and hearer enact or perceive during a conversation. Interestingly, when conversants misperceive each other's roles, they tend to miss requests, perceive them as orders, or not fulfill requests, leading to missed learning opportunities (Carter 247–48). By drawing on student-teacher conferences and findings from my study, I show how teachers and students (mis)identify requests based on their enacted or perceived roles in the conference. This connection between requests and participants' roles is key to the crucial work teachers do in fostering writing conferences that encourage student learning and agency.

At this point, you may be wondering, “What are requests, orders, and roles, and what do they have to do with student agency?” The answer to this question is crucial to understanding how miscommunication occurs and how to address it. I first define requests, orders, and roles and their relationships to each other and student agency by drawing on speech act (Austin; Blum-Kulka and House; Horner; Searle; Sacks et al.; Trosborg), politeness (Craig et al.; Tracy and Robles; Trosborg) and social construction theories (Flower, *The Construction of Negotiated Meaning*; Spivey). Based on these definitions, I present a continuum of requests and orders that signal teacher-student role relationships that offer varying degrees of student agency. I demonstrate these relationships by analyzing select writing conferences where I found misunderstood requests and misaligned roles to show the effect such miscommunication has on teaching and learning. Following this analysis, I provide strategies that instructors can use to maintain a role that encourages student agency over their writing.

Defining Requests, Orders, and Roles

Requests and Orders

During a writing conference, participants encounter both requests and orders.² Requests are crucial in writing conferences because they allow students to have more “ownership of their developing ideas and texts”—a key aspect of student agency (Gorzelsky 66; see also Thonus 125). To understand why this is so requires defining requests and explaining how they fit into the broader category of speech acts, particularly directives. Speech acts (a key concept in the field of pragmatics) are utterances that do work—such as apologizing, informing, or requesting (Austin 98–99; Blum-Kulka et al. 273; Searle 19; Trosborg 19–23). Directives, which include both requests and orders, bid listeners to perform actions in the future (Brown and Levinson 65–66; Trosborg 188). Additionally, in requests and orders, the speaker directs the listener to “perform an action which . . . benefit[s] the speaker” (Vilar Beltrán and Martínez-Flor 199; see also Trosborg 187). The main difference between requests and orders is that orders require “[the speaker to] be in a position of authority over [the listener]” whereas requests do not (Searle 66). The hearer’s perception of the speaker’s status determines whether they hear an utterance as a request or an order.

Students and teachers perceiving requests or orders accurately matters because misconstruing requests as orders (AKA miscommunication) affects students’ agency (Carter 57, 72). Although requests and orders both prompt change, a key goal of teaching and learning, what happens after a request differs from what happens after an order. Whereas a request creates freedom for the student to act (by allowing them choices among options), an order limits students’ options to act (by using the teacher’s proposed change). A more equal relationship between student and teacher creates the conversational context for a student to hear a request as a request and assume greater agency in their writing. Thus, just as agentive change lies at the heart of learning, promoting agentive change lies at the heart of teaching.

Roles and Role Relationships

As noted earlier, a role is an enacted or perceived identity. This definition is based on Karen Tracy and Jessica S. Robles' definition of "interactional identity [which] refers to specific roles that people take on in a specific communicative context with regard to specific other people" (22). I take their definition a step further by dividing interactional identity into enacted and perceived identities. An enacted identity is the identity that a speaker adopts in a particular communicative context. A perceived identity is the identity that the listener infers from what the speaker says or does. Thus, enacted identities are established from the speaker's point-of-view while perceived identities are established through the listener's point-of-view. All of these are created and sustained through cultural expectations (Fairclough 46–48). One way that people enact and perceive roles is through speech acts. Speakers enact roles through their language choices (Tracy and Robles 7). Likewise, listeners convey how they perceive the speaker's role when they respond to the speaker (thus becoming the next speaker in the conversation). For instance, a student's limited contribution (during the student's speaking turn) may surprise the teacher because the teacher expected that a student acting in a *writer* role would offer more potential changes.

Certainly, the speaker and hearer may or may not perceive each other's roles in the same way. For example, as a teacher, I might enact a *mentor* role. Yet adopting this role does not mean that the student-hearer perceives me as acting as a *mentor*. The student might view me in my institutional *teacher* role. The discrepancy between enacted and perceived roles occurs for several reasons. For one, context shapes the available roles. As Dan Sperber and Deidre Wilson have argued, context is "a psychological construct, a subset of the hearer's assumptions about the world" (15), which includes, but is not limited to, participants' physical environment, their conversational goals, and their speech and speech acts (Carter 23, 62–63). For example, people's assumptions about how to behave in a writing conference, and thus the role options available, will likely differ from those, say, at a bus station. Context extends

beyond the current situation to include cultural assumptions, religious beliefs, scientific hypotheses, beliefs about the speaker's or listener's mental state, and so on (Sperber and Wilson 15–16). To these we could add disciplinary context, such as each person's writing process and their understanding of rhetorical situation. While people often share elements of the same context, each person's context is uniquely their own (16; see also Tracy and Robles 5). And when people understand the context differently, the meanings that they derive from the same words, phrases, and events also differ—creating the potential for misidentifying a co-conversant's role.

People also may misconstrue each other's enacted and perceived roles due to the number of roles available. Students and teachers employ a range of roles during writing conferences as they shift among purposes and intentions (Carter 194–236; Carter et al.; DeMott 220–23; Horner; Jacobs and Karliner 502–04; Newkirk 212–13; Thonus 124). Some roles, *consumer* and *provider*, emphasize students' and teachers' institutional identities (Carter et al.; DeMott 252, 254; Jacobs and Karliner 502; Newkirk 194; Sinclair and Coulthard). *Consumers*, mainly students, focus on earning grades or receiving a credential (DeMott 252; Carter 199; Carter et al.; Jacobs and Karliner 502). *Providers*, mainly teachers, focus on conveying expectations, enforcing standards, and assigning grades (DeMott 254; Carter et al.; Jacobs and Karliner 502; Mackiewicz and Thompson 50; Thonus 123, 126). Other roles emphasize learning and mentoring. *Learners*, often students, demonstrate the desire to improve their knowledge or skills (Weimer 34–37; DeMott 254). *Mentors*, often teachers, guide students to write more effectively (DeMott 253), often co-writing with the student during the mentoring process (Carter 227). Still other roles, *readers* and *writers*, emphasize reading and revision as rhetorical acts. Both students and teachers can enact *reader* and *writer* roles (Horner 167, 169). *Readers* infer the text's meaning (Spivey 93) and respond to the relative pleasure gained in experiencing the paper and the text's meaning (Horner 168). *Writers* articulate a document's purpose and audience (DeMott 256) while conveying a vision for their writing

and goals to enact that vision (Carter et al.; Horner 169). Students' roles (*consumer, learner, writer*), then, represent increasing levels of autonomy over their writing—from the teacher's imposed standards to the student's self-directed inquiry and learning. Teacher's roles (*provider, mentor, reader*) represent decreasing levels of control over the text, allowing them to encourage more agency in how students revise. Both teachers and students come to conferences expecting to enact, or are more comfortable enacting, some roles over others—expectations that affect student agency.

Since conversants' purposes and intentions change throughout their conversation, people may also misconstrue each other's roles as they shift among roles. As some overlap exists among the roles, multiple roles could fulfill a single purpose, or a single role could fulfill multiple purposes. Yet each person can enact only one available role at a time (Horner 166). With so many roles available, writing conferences are fraught with the tension of enacting roles in ways the other person can understand. Each time a person speaks, they could shift to a new role. Consequently, the listener must reassess their perception of the speaker's role. Thus, each speaker change introduces the potential for misinterpreting the other's person's role.

Yet speakers and listeners do more than simply recognize each other's speech acts and roles; they co-create both. Miles Lamar DeMott posits that teachers and students co-construct their roles via "role dyads" (125). These role dyads are co-constructed role pairs based on people's expectations that the two roles work together. When each conversant enacts their respective role of a role pair, their roles align. And when their roles align, people are more likely to react to each other's speech acts in expected ways. DeMott's findings and my own suggest three potential student-teacher role dyads in writing conferences: *consumer-provider* (DeMott 126, 222), *learner-mentor* (65, 221, which DeMott calls "novice-expert"; Carter 235), and *writer-reader* (Carter 235–39).

With each dyad comes potential power and status differences between the people enacting those roles. Those differences affect whether conversants recognize directives as requests or orders.

Power is the “degree to which [the hearer] can impose [their] own plans and [their] own self-evaluation (face) at the expense of [the speaker’s] plans and self-evaluation” (Brown and Levinson 77). Power is relational and comparative. For example, teachers have more institutional power than students, but both have less institutional power than the school’s president. As the example illustrates and of particular interest to this discussion, power is “attached not to individuals . . . but to roles or role-sets” (78). Power includes status, defined as “position,” “prestige,” or “rank in relation to others” (“Status”). In the example above, the university president not only has more power than the teacher or student, she also has more status. As Terese Thonus notes, whether a conversant uses or interprets a directive as a request or an order provides a “clear ‘window’ into participants’ perceptions of role and status” (118). After all, listeners who recognize orders convey that the speaker’s perceived role carries a higher status than the listener’s enacted role.

Role Alignment, Status, and Agency

Each dyad differs both in its status relationships and its potential for students to own their writing and grow as writers. The tendency for people to confirm power relationships means that role alignment in and of itself, particularly between roles that reinforce hierarchical relationships, does not automatically create avenues that promote student agency. As Norman Fairclough notes, “Institutional practices which people draw upon without thinking often embody assumptions which directly or indirectly legitimize existing power relations” (33). Those power relationships create hierarchies that are hard to shake. For instance, the *consumer–provider* dyad, with the highest relative power differential between its roles, is the most hierarchical of the three dyads. As DeMott cautions, the *consumer–provider* dyad is less successful (222) because it reinforces the institutional teacher-student relationship (Fairclough 38), which limits students’ agency over their own papers. *Consumers* tend to defer to *providers’* ideas and interpret *providers’* directives as orders (DeMott 234; Jacobs and Karliner

503; Newkirk 213). The *learner–mentor* and *writer–reader* dyads, which are more egalitarian, foster student agency. For instance, a key aspect of agency—“student ownership of the paper” (Thonus 125)—is more likely in the *learner–mentor* dyad (DeMott 125). Yet, as DeMott found, these more egalitarian relationships rarely occur in writing conferences (222–23), potentially because people are pushing against established hierarchies. Given those default hierarchies, it should come as no surprise that the *learner–mentor* dyad is harder to establish. Nevertheless, since listeners *choose* whether to perform the speaker’s requested action (Blum-Kulka and House 138; Trosborg 20), role dyads that encourage requests are particularly valuable for encouraging student agency in a writing conference.

Thus, effective change in writing conferences depends on tapping the symbiotic relationship that exists among directives, roles, role-alignment, and agency. As Thonus suggests, directives will most likely be interpreted the same way when both people share an “understanding of the other’s intent” (129). That intent includes participants sharing an interpretation of “directive forcefulness” (129)—that is, orders usually sound more forceful than requests. To correctly interpret a directive’s force, both participants need to have aligned their roles. Misperceived or misaligned roles muddy the distinction between requests and orders (DeMott 222; Carter 259). As a result, students may cede their writerly agency to the teacher. Conversely, proper role alignment guides students to take ownership over texts. Ownership leads to agency (Gorzelsky 66). And students need agency for effective learning and writing (71).

Method

To explain how conversants’ role (mis)alignment co-creates (mis)communication of their requests, I share four conference excerpts from my 2018 study (Carter).³ What follows is a brief description of that study’s method. I recorded the first writing conference from four Comp II teachers and thirteen of their students at a large, open-admissions university.⁴ Comp II, a second-semester, first-year writing course, focuses on academic research

and writing. The participants, who all volunteered for this study, met several important criteria. The teacher-participants were all experienced writing instructors. The three referenced in this article each had over twenty years of experience teaching writing and using writing conferences. This context is important because teacher inexperience can potentially cause miscommunication. The students' ages, writing experiences, language backgrounds, motivation to write, and conference experience (gathered from their background surveys) were more diverse by design. Students' experiences with talking about writing were especially relevant to their ability to make and recognize requests. The four students presented in the following excerpts had little experience with writing conferences. Three students (Romeo Escobar, Peter Hale, and Julia Kelli) had never had a writing conference, but Tim Drake had had one conference (which he called "unmemorable").⁵ Yet most of them, except Kelli, had worked with either peers or a Writing Center tutor. So while most had experienced talking about their writing with others, none were as experienced with conferences as their teachers.

After the writing conferences had been recorded, I met individually with each teacher and student to watch their conference video and invited them to identify the requests—theirs and the other person's (stimulated recall, Gass and Mackey). Thus, the participants themselves acted as second coders, confirming or refuting the other participant's and my identified requests. I transcribed identified requests and the surrounding sequence using conversation analysis (Drew and Heritage; Du Bois et al.; Gumperz and Berenz; Gilewicz and Thonus; Jefferson; see Appendix A for the transcription key).

I coded transcribed conferences, guided by speech act theory (Austin; Blum-Kulka et al.; Gumperz; Searle; Thonus; Trosborg) and conversational analysis (Drew and Heritage; Gumperz and Berenz; Sacks et al.). Coding focused on how each participant recognized and interpreted the other participant's requests. I coded the identified requests for the participant who identified it. Then I coded the participants' roles. I used the recalls along with pre-

semester interviews (for teachers) and background surveys (for students) to infer the roles teachers and students enacted, their perception of the other person's roles, and their status relative to each other.

I developed the coding for roles through an iterative process of consulting previous studies, analyzing the transcripts, and using participants' comments from the stimulated recalls. My initial coding focused on the following four roles: *student* (Carter et al.; Sinclair and Coulthard), *teacher* (Carter et al.; Mackiewicz and Thompson 50; Sinclair and Coulthard), *reader* (Carter et al.; Horner 166–67; Spivey 93; Thonus 126), and *writer* (Carter et al.; Horner 169), as defined earlier. To avoid associating students and teachers with negative definitions, I later changed *student* to *consumer* and *teacher* to *provider* (DeMott 252, 254). While analyzing the conference and recall transcripts, I realized that students were not always *readers* or *consumers*. Some of their requests suggested an interest in learning more about writing. So, I created the code *learner*, using ideas derived from Maryellen Weimer (Weimer 34–37, 250–51). Similarly, when teachers wrote during a writing conference, they were helping enact the student's vision of the student's text, rather than a vision of their own text. When their writing aided the student-writer, I re-coded the teacher's role from *writer* to *mentor*, based on DeMott's description of "expert" and "coaching" (252). I ended up with six total roles: three each for students (*consumer*, *learner*, *writer*) and teachers (*provider*, *mentor*, *reader*) using the definitions mentioned earlier. This coding proved crucial to identifying miscommunication.

I chose the four conference excerpts that follow for one of two reasons. One, key requests identified by either the teacher or the student did not match how the other person identified that utterance. Two, the conversation surrounding the request(s) that both identified suggested, at least initially, some misalignment in their roles.

Illustrating (Mis)communicative Relationships

Through analyzing the excerpts and writing this article, I developed a spectrum to help us consider the relationship among directives, roles, and student agency and learning. Figure 1 below represents a key finding from my study: the more opportunity that students had to make their own requests and hear their teachers' directives as requests, the more agency they exerted over their papers, their writing process, and their learning. This continuum that I offer shows how teachers' and students' directives infer their enacted or perceived roles.

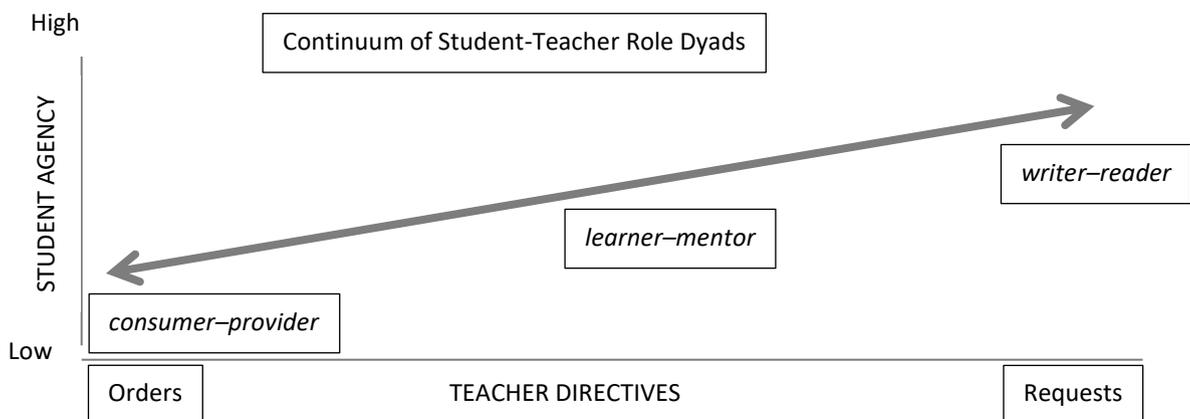


Figure 1: Continuum of Student-Teacher Role Dyads

Together, these roles and the types of directives they allow influence students' relative degree of agency over their writing. Specifically, as teacher directives change from orders in the *consumer-provider* dyad to requests in the *learner-mentor* and *writer-reader* dyads, student agency increases. The conference excerpts sequentially exemplify this finding that misperceived requests and misaligned roles impede a teacher's ability to encourage, and their students' ability to enact, student agency.

Recognizing Miscommunication

The conference excerpts reveal what miscommunication looks like, how it is created, and how it impedes learning. The first two excerpts convey how student agency diminishes when role misalignment is not addressed. The last two excerpts show participants recognizing and addressing role misalignment by maintaining roles that foster student agency.

Misaligned Roles Disrupt Learning

The following conference began well between Julia Kelli, a first-year Comp II student, and her teacher Ken Leighton, a writing instructor with nearly thirty years' experience teaching writing and using writing conferences. Kelli had asked Leighton to help her make her paper's prose more reader-based than writer-based (Flower, "Writer-Based Prose"), a *learner*-oriented focus, and Dr. Leighton noted in his recall that he tried to enact a *reader* role. Yet the conference goes awry when, midway through the conference, Dr. Leighton focuses on an APA citation error. In his recall session, he said that he identified the error that he read in her paper (line 3) as well as Kelli's reaction to his mentioning it (line 4) as requests. He heard Kelli's exclamation, "Ah:::!! I thought I fixed all those" (line 5) as a request for them to work on correcting those errors or for her to demonstrate her ability to "fix" them. That leads him to request, "Will you fix it for me?" (line 10).

(Excerpt 1) "Fix it for me"⁶

Kelli-Leighton Conference

JK^(S): Julia Kelli(student) KL^(T): Dr. Ken Leighton (teacher)

B=> teacher- and student-identified request

T=> teacher-identified request

S=> student-identified request

07:55

1 KL^(T): "According to Professor Jacobs of psych-
physiology," (2.1)

2 What/ (1.4)

3 T=> "'corrding (unclear)" got a little reference

problem here.
 4 JK^(S): T=> Oh I didn't –
 5 T=> **Ah:::** I [thought I] fixed all those,
 6 KL^(T): T=> [(see you)]
 7 JK^(S): T=> But I didn't. (.)
 8 KL^(T): >Didya- [(unclear) can you-]<
 9 JK^(S): [I did][n't]
 10 KL^(T): T=> >[Will you] fix it for me/
 11 ((Leighton slides Kelli's paper toward
 her.))
 12 >Help me- help me, so-<
 13 JK^(S): Like I need to put (.5)
 14 Well, I've- "Professor Jacobs."
 15 Then I have to do parenthesis Jacobs,
 (.8)what[ever.

While Dr. Leighton saw the question "Will you fix it for me?" as a request, Kelli did not. In fact, Kelli did not identify any requests in this sequence. As she explained in her recall, his question was not a request because he did not need her to fix the citation: "Cause it's obviously just for my paper. . . so I could get a good grade." Her comment shows their role misalignment. Leighton may have intended to enact a *reader* role, but Kelli perceived focusing on citations as important to a *provider*. Their miscommunication rests on this point. When Leighton says, "Will you fix it for me?" he means, "Will you fix it for me [the reader]?" But Kelli hears, "Will you fix it for me [the teacher]?"

Dr. Leighton also misunderstood why Kelli started fixing the citation (line 13). According to his recall, her action meant she recognized his request. But fulfilling a proposed action does not distinguish a request from an order. Higher status does. It is more probable, given Leighton's institutional status, that Kelli interpreted his utterance as an order (Craig et al. 440). That hierarchical focus causes her to shift her role to match his. Their difficulty in distinguishing requests and orders signals their role

misalignment, which shifts them into a *consumer–provider* dyad (the far left of the continuum).

Moving to the *consumer–provider* dyad reduces Kelli’s agency because she does not perceive how correct citations help her writing. Her exclamation “I thought I fixed all those” and her recall mentioning this sequence as one of several that “went on for a while” suggests that she felt the conference diverged from more important tasks—such as crafting reader-based prose. This dyad shift diverts them from their respective roles of *reader* and *learner* that would have honored Kelli’s agency as a writer.

Misaligned Roles Impede Learning

The next two excerpts show how roles can become misaligned when two or more perceived roles are plausible. As we will see, the teacher’s bias of seeing requests as grade-motivated, a *consumer* role, prevented her from hearing students’ requests as *learner*-motivated. That is, she enacted the role in a role dyad that matched her preconceived idea of the student’s role.

Both excerpts involve Professor Emily Forest meeting students—Peter Hale and Tim Drake—from her Honors section of Comp II to discuss their Midterm Researched Argument. Forest had extensive experience teaching writing (27 years), using writing conferences (20 years), and teaching Honors’ writing. Yet Forest had come to believe Honors students were more concerned about grades than learning: “they have learned to do school.” Both Hale and Drake were “really good writer[s],” Forest noted in her recalls. Both were also highly motivated to improve their writing, according to their background surveys.

After Professor Forest and Hale reviewed his paper, on which he scored a 93 percent, Hale tried to enact a *learner* role. He emphasized his confident readiness to take the next step in his writing progress: “if there is one thing that I can- need to improve the most in my writing, what would you say it is?” (lines 1-2). Yet she deferred fulfilling his request with a request of her own—asking him to ask her again later (line 16). Although Forest and Hale co-identified the utterances each had identified as requests (lines 1 and

16), Forest's unwillingness to fulfill Hale's request suggests misaligned roles.

(Excerpt 2) "One thing to improve"

Forest-Hale Conference

PH^(S): Peter Hale (student) EF^(T): Emily Forest (teacher)

B=> teacher- and student-identified request

T=> teacher-identified request

S=> student-identified request

12:08

- 1 PH^(S): B=> Um, if there is one thing that I can- need to
2 improve the most in my writing, what would
you say it is/
3 besides submitting my philosophy paper
accidentally [@@@@@].
4 EF^(T): Oh, not a problem.
5 That happens. (.7)
6 And I do that very same thing.
7 No. No.
8 Um, (1.9) oI don't know if I can (1.5) pin
down^o (.7)
9 Because(.4)>youhave<(.4)more strengths::
°than weaknesses°
10 S=> So (.9) uh:: >let me think about that for a
while<
11 PH^(S): Okay.
12 EF^(T): Because I don't know that I can come up with
an answer on the spot.
13 You just, have very strong skills,
14 So I'll think about it.
15 PH^(S): Okay.
16 EF^(T): B=> Would you remind me that I'm supposed to
be thinking about it/
17 @@@ (3.2)

Essentially, they disagreed on his role for making his requests. Professor Forest perceived his request as *consumer* motivated. She mentioned in her recall feeling that he was demonstrating that anxiety about grades that Honors' students sometimes display when they do not get a perfect score, where the grade takes precedence over the learning. Yet my meeting with Hale suggested a *learner* motivation: he wanted to improve his writing. Their misaligned *learner-provider* dyad prevented them from discussing ways he could improve his writing. That created a "missed opportunity" in the conference, a feature DeMott pointed to when teachers or students default to *provider* or *consumer* roles, respectively (155).

This missed opportunity impeded Hale's agency over his writing. The question Hale asked is agentic. He confidently enters the conference essentially saying, "I've reached this point. What can I do to improve? I'm ready for the next step." By asking his teacher to *mentor* him and give him that next step, he signals his *learner* role. Although he tried enacting a *learner* role (which would have given him more power), Forest's perceiving him as a *consumer* and not answering his request kept him in a relatively powerless, non-agentic role.

Misaligned Roles Can Be Resisted

Initially, Professor Forest also missed Tim Drake's desire to enact a *learner* role. Yet Drake successfully resisted aligning with Forest's *producer* role, eventually shifting her into a *mentor* role. Drake's initial request, which Forest recognized, conveyed reduced confidence: "how is my writing?" (line 2). His subsequent request, which Forest did not recognize, asked for a more general evaluation: "do you think my writing is okay?" (line 20).

(Excerpt 3) "How is my writing?"

Drake-Forest Conference

TD^(S): Tim Drake (student) EF^(T): Emily Forest (teacher)

B=> teacher- and student-identified request

T=> teacher-identified request

S=> student-identified request

09:19

- 1 TD^(S): S=>And that was another thing I wanted to ask
you on is like <how,>
2 B=>how is my writing/ (.6)
3 I feel like, (.5) 'cause (because)
personally, like I feel like (.) um, like my
4 senior year of high school (.5) and first
5 year of college, (.5) I was- I was a pretty
good writer.
6 I'm not gonna lie.
7 EF^(T): Well, good.
8 [Good.]
9 TD^(S): [Yeah. But then] uh, coming into (.5) and
10 even like my Shakespeare class, I feel like I
wrote really well.
11 And then (.5) doing these, I don't know if
12 it's just like you pushing us, which like is
your kind of job, ya know.
13 But I feel like I'm not doing as well (.) or
14 like growing. (.4) ((On "growing" Drake
lifts his hand, horizontal and parallel to the
15 floor, from his stomach to abovehis head.))
16 I feel like I'm like downgrading my writing.
17 ((As he starts "I feel" his hand lowers. On
18 "downgrading" he abruptly stops where he
had begun the hand motion for "growing.))
19 S=> So, I mean, do you, like (.5) do you think
my writing is okay/
20 Is it=
21 EF^(T): =You got a 94 out of 100.
22 That's pretty good.
23 TD^(S): @@ Yeah, okay. All right, yeah.
24 That is pretty good.

The way Drake maintains his *learner* role is instructive. In positioning himself as a *learner*—a writer whose confidence and

effectiveness are waning—he emphasizes Forest’s knowledge. Then he asks her to validate his writing because he no longer trusts his own ability to do so. As with Hale, Forest initially defers answering Drake’s request, but here she explicitly mentions Drake’s grade. “You got a 94 out of 100” (line 21). Her tone implies, “What else is left to discuss?” Her response assumes his request is grade motivated and projects the less-preferred *consumer* role on him. She confirmed this interpretation when she noted in her recall that “[he felt he had] to ask that question.” Drake’s lackluster response, “Alright right, yeah. That is pretty good” (lines 23-24), counters her perception of his grade-based intentions. As she realizes that Drake is not concerned about his grade, Forest shifts out of her *provider* role. He’s not a *consumer*. He’s a *learner*. A later segment of his conference shows the successful alignment of their roles as Drake and Forest determine why his writing has been “downgrading” (line 16). By prompting Forest to consider a non-grade reason for his request, Drake’s reaction helps him maintain his *learner* role and shift her into a *mentor* role. His doing so is remarkable because he maintained his agentive role despite pressure from his teacher, enacting a higher status role, to match hers.

Misaligned Roles Can Facilitate Learning

The final conference excerpt shows how a teacher maintains her role to help her student attempt more rhetorical roles. Here, the teacher Caitlin Meier maintains her *mentor* role even as her student Romeo Escobar shifts between an encouraged *writer* role and a less-preferred *consumer* role. This shifting may have come from Escobar’s lacking confidence, possibly because he felt his writing was rusty after a two-year absence from school. Having recognized Escobar’s lack of confidence, Meier noted in her recall that she intended to use their first writing conference to increase his confidence, which she does by helping him practice a single skill.

In this excerpt, near the end of Escobar’s conference, they review what he has learned about the sandwich principle (topic sentence, evidence, commentary for each paragraph)—their

conference's focus. When Dr. Meier says, "You see what I'm asking?" (line 9) or "What do you think?" (line 11), she requests that Escobar respond. Escobar recognizes some of these requests (line 11) but not others (lines 6, 7, and 9).

(Excerpt 4) "Same point?":

Meier-Escobar Conference

RE^(S): Romeo Escobar (student) CM^(T):Dr. Caitlin Meier (teacher)

B=> teacher- and student-identified request

T=> teacher-identified request

S=> student-identified request

09:00

- 1 CM^(T): Okay, (.8) okay let me ask you something,
or ask both of us-
- 2 Let's ask both of us something.
- 3 The paragraph really ends pretty strongly
- 4 on the point that, (.) um, right, that, that
brain- "anatomical brain structures [(.8)]
control weight." (.7)
- 5 RE^(S): [mm-hm]
- 6 CM^(T): T=> What we should do is check how the
paragraph begins. (4.3)
- 7 T=> And the question is, the way you started
here, is that the same point that we have at
8 the end/ (1.5)
- 9 T=> You see what I'm asking/(.)
- 10 RE^(S): Oh yeah. (3.7)
- 11 CM^(T): B=> °What do you think/° (3.2)
- 12 RE^(S): Um, (2.6) I guess it does kind of change
towards the end.
- 13 CM^(T): It changes towards the end, but (.)
- 14 not a big deal because what you do say right
- 15 now is, >"Primarily recognizes the
struggle between will power and habits."<
- 16 This phrase here, you can change this
phrase, to make it- (.)

17 RE^(S): yeah

Dr. Meier maintains her *mentor* role by using strategic silence and making follow-up requests to help him eventually recognize and respond to her requests. Her silence helps her avoid responding to her own requests too quickly. When Escobar offers minimal responses (lines 5 and 10), Dr. Meier does not answer for him, which would reinforce his *consumer* role (Newkirk 213). Instead, she gives him lots of time to respond. Note the silences of several seconds (lines 6, 8, 10, and 11). And she continues making follow-up requests such as “What do you think?” (line 11). Meier does talk more here than Escobar, which initially suggests a *provider* role. Yet, her verbal requests combined with giving him time to formulate his responses encourage him to assume a *writer* role and offer ideas for his own paper. That is, Meier’s requests encourage him to maintain ownership of his own paper.

Near the end of the conference, Dr. Meier’s strategy pays off. In that section, Meier requests Escobar’s input, “So what should we do?” Escobar noted that her request made him more invested in his paper. “She started making me think of how to change the structure because it was, again, one of those previous things that we had already talked about.” He also liked that she asked him to contribute. “. . . [I]nstead of just fixing it for me, telling me exactly how to write my paper, she asked me, what do you think we should do to fix it, to start . . . and end on the same point.” His comment is instructive. He appreciates that Meier wants him to do more than listen—she requests that he propose a revision. I am not suggesting that Escobar fully enacts a *writer* role. But, by requesting that Escobar articulate his vision for changing his paper, Meier encourages him to start enacting aspects of that role, which pushes him to align to her role.

Mitigating Miscommunication

These conferences suggest mindsets and strategies that writing instructors can use to help students recognize their teachers’ directives as requests and encourage students to make more

requests of their own. These mindsets and strategies help instructors recognize how common miscommunication is, recognize how student and teacher roles contribute to miscommunication, and help themselves and their students understand and enact roles that encourage student agency.

Recognize Miscommunication

The first step in creating conferences that encourage student agency is recognizing that miscommunication happens—a lot. Unfortunately, when miscommunication occurs, our human inclination is to blame others. I am certainly guilty of saying, “The student misunderstood me.” Sure, students misunderstand their teachers, but teachers co-create miscommunication. As my study suggests, teachers are just as likely to misinterpret their students’ roles as vice versa. So teachers need to recognize how they contribute to miscommunication. Just the awareness that people co-create miscommunication through their roles can help teachers more readily recognize, and change, roles that inhibit agency.

Avoid Assumptions

Misperceiving *writer* or *learner* roles for *consumer* ones may explain why teachers struggle to address students’ requests for specialized feedback. The more I reflect on Professor Forest’s responses to Drake’s and Hale’s requests and my occasional distrust of similar requests, the more concerned I am that such cynicism about students’ motives impedes student learning. We can do better.

A key strategy that emerges from this study is that teachers should recognize and encourage *learner* and *writer* roles when students try to enact them. When doubt exists, teachers should assume that an utterance arises from those roles farther right on the continuum, those that allow students more agency. As the last two excerpts show (Drake-Forest and Escobar-Meier), students who employed more requests and teachers who encouraged students to see teachers’ directives as requests tended to enact roles that fostered student agency. If we can sense, even implicitly, that students are attempting *learner* or *writer* roles, we should encourage

those roles by aligning to them. As teachers seek to perceive the most-favorable role that a student's utterance allows, teachers can reduce the number of missed and unfulfilled requests and, in the process, maximize student learning.

Enact Agentive Roles

A related strategy is for teachers to enact roles that encourage student agency. That strategy begins with teachers developing a mindset to avoid the *provider* role. Yes, teachers and students should work together to enact more egalitarian role dyads such as *mentor–learner* or *reader–writer*. Yet teachers are better positioned—through experience and, ironically, their higher status—to recognize and mitigate role misalignment and encourage more egalitarian conferences. As we saw in Leighton and Kelli's conference, a student may sense a *provider* role while focusing on lower-level concerns. There may be times when those concerns require a dialogic approach. But if not, another option might be to point out what we've noticed, give students some pointers on how to address it, and move on (as Meier did early in Escobar's conference). In other words, instructors can save dialogic work for higher-order concerns.

When addressing those higher-order concerns, teachers should enact roles—*mentor* and *reader*—that allow more student agency. This strategy encourages students to hear teachers' directives as requests. As Thonus noted, students enjoyed working with tutors who enacted more rhetorical roles, like *reader* (126). Training ourselves to talk more like *readers* may help us better enact that role. Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff's classic book on response *Sharing and Responding* offers ways to respond to texts without evaluating or suggesting. Using phrases such as "first I felt this, then I thought that" can train student-writers to notice the reactions that suggest change (44). In fact, instead of teachers suggesting the changes, teachers who read as *readers* can help students identify problems themselves, as Dr. Meier did with Escobar. If teachers enact roles that minimize the status differences between themselves and their students (*mentor*, *reader*), students will have more potential to enact

the complementary roles (*learner, writer*) which offer them the most agency over their writing (or writing process).

One problem is these agentive roles are precisely the roles that students will find unfamiliar, particularly students new to conferences. Students may not know that roles such as *learner* or *writer* are available, much less expected. They may also struggle to recognize teacher's roles of *mentor* or *reader*. Moreover, we cannot assume that students who have had conferences will have experienced these roles. They may have been further socialized into the *consumer-provider* dyad, which limits their agency.

To help students learn roles that will help them become partners in their own learning, I suggest teachers provide some pre-conference instruction, a suggestion in line with the metacognition teaching strategy of establishing expectations (McGuire 25). Such instruction can alert students to the available roles that they can enact and that their teacher will be enacting. All four roles (*learner, mentor, reader, writer*) exist outside writing conferences, but students may need help recognizing that they are available in conferences too. Since students are primed to recognize a *provider* role as a teacher's default role, instructors could warn students, "I won't tell you exactly what to change. Instead, we'll figure out what you want to write and how you want to write it together." Also, rather than naming roles, teachers can prepare students for activities aligned to teachers' preferred student roles. Some options include asking students to come to the conference with questions, encouraging students to suggest the discussion's focus (DeMott 205; Jacobs and Karliner 504), telling them that the instructor will ask for their ideas (Murray 148), and asking students to evaluate their paper's ideas throughout the conference (Newkirk 196). Claude Hurlbert suggests asking questions that promote discussion: "How would it change your meaning if you [the writer]" made any of the following changes: moved a sentence, re-ordered paragraphs, added content or examples, or deleted words or sections? (185). By asking questions, teachers encourage writers to think about the potential effects of those changes. Even if the teacher has a focus in mind, such as practicing the Sandwich Principle (as Meier did), these ideas

can prepare students to expect to actively participate in the conference.

Exercise Patience

Another existing teaching strategy teachers can use to signal their agentive roles is to employ longer wait times (Newkirk 213; Tanner 323). As Meier demonstrated, waiting prompts students to contribute and signals that their participation is expected. Waiting also solves another problem. As Thomas Newkirk found, students are expected to not only know all the role options available, but they are also expected to enact (and I would add, perceive) them perfectly (194). Obviously, this expectation is unrealistic. Granted, seconds feel like minutes in a writing conference. But students are doing new work here. Talking about their writing asks them to enact new-to-them roles as they think about writing in new ways. Proposed revisions will take time. Students' and teachers' adopting new roles also takes time. So patience is crucial. That patience in waiting longer for responses has two benefits. It helps teachers enact roles that encourage student agency. And it allows students time to enact new roles that establish their agency.

Plus, instructors who use more exaggerated wait times (a subtle form of requesting that encourages student participation [see Carter 146–93]) may help students recognize teachers' *mentor* role. Even if students struggle to fully enact *learner* or *writer* roles, their teachers' patience discourages students from enacting the default *consumer* strategy of passively listening. That is, waiting signals that their role is misaligned with their teacher's. When teachers persist in enacting roles misaligned with the default *consumer* role, they encourage students to enact more agentive roles. The strategy of longer wait times, when combined with more explicit requests for the student to work with us on the paper, encourages students to co-create a collaborative writing environment.

Conclusion

As this article demonstrates, if we want students to enact a *writer's* identity and if we want them to have agency over their own

writing, then we need to move past *consumer* and *provider* roles. We need to enact *mentor* and *reader* roles so students can enact *learner* and *writer* roles. To be clear, I am not suggesting that one-hundred percent role alignment is possible. A system based on grades and credit will bring *consumer–provider* roles to the forefront more than we would like. But I am suggesting that we writing instructors can better recognize how we perceive our students’ directives in our writing conferences and, by extension, how we co-create and (mis)align our roles. And we can help our students do the same for us. Recognizing the connection between requests and roles may just be the approach we need to co-create writing conferences that encourage student writers to accept more ownership of their writing.

Notes

¹ I thank Deb Rossen-Knill and Craig Hancock for their faith in this project and their many practical recommendations. The article exists in its current form due to their mentoring.

² Some readers familiar with speech acts may wonder why I do not include suggestions, which, I agree, occur in conferences. The answer is two-fold. First, speech-act theorists are divided about how to categorize suggestions (Searle 66–67; Thonus 122; Trosborg 189). Second, to simplify an already complicated topic, I chose to focus on requests and orders which both benefit the speaker while suggestions benefit the listener. Further research should explore the relationship among requests, orders, and suggestions.

³ This was an IRB-approved study. Of note, this article is a heavily revised, adapted, and re-analyzed version of my dissertation’s findings.

⁴ All the participants consented to be in the study. Their names are pseudonyms.

⁵ I refer to students by their last names throughout this essay. Referring to student work by the student author’s last name “foster[s] and sustain[s] a culture that treats student writing with intellectual integrity and respect” (Salvatori 202). This convention promotes the more egalitarian writing relationship between teachers and students that this article advocates.

⁶ Appendix A provides the transcription key.

Works Cited

- Austin, J. L. *How to Do Things with Words*, 2nd ed., Harvard UP, 1962.
- Black, Laurel Johnson. *Between Talk and Teaching: Reconsidering the Writing Conference*, Utah State UP, 1998.
- Blum-Kulka, Shoshana, and Juliane House. "Cross-Cultural and Situational Variation in Requesting Behavior." *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: Requests and Apologies*, edited by Shoshana Blum-Kulka et al., Ablex, 1989, pp. 123–54.
- Blum-Kulka, Shoshana, et al., editors. *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: Requests and Apologies*, Ablex, 1989.
- Brown, Penelope, and Stephen C. Levinson. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*, Cambridge UP, 1987.
- Carter, Angie McKinnon, et al. "A New Prescription for Dialogic Action: Reframing the Writing Conference as a Contact Zone." *Conference on College Composition and Communication*, 9 Apr. 2016. Houston. Conference Presentation.
- Carter, Angie McKinnon. *An Eye Toward Change: Examining Requests in Teacher-Student Writing Conferences*, 2018. Indiana U of P, Ph.D. dissertation.
- Craig, Robert T., et al. "The Discourse of Requests: Assessment of a Politeness Approach." *Human Communication Research*, vol. 12, no. 4, 1986, pp. 437–68.
- DeMott, Miles Lamar. *Writing Conference Interaction and Scaffolding: The Possible and the Actual – ProQuest*, 2006. Auburn U, PhD dissertation.
- Drew, Paul, and John Heritage. "Analyzing Talk at Work: An Introduction." *Talk at Work: Interaction in Institutional Settings*, edited by Paul Drew and John Heritage, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 3–65.
- Du Bois, John W., et al. "Outline of Discourse Transcription." *Talking Data: Transcription and Coding in Discourse Research*, edited by Jane A. Edwards and Martin D. Lampert, Lawrence Erlbaum, 1993, pp. 45–89.
- Elbow, Peter, and Pat Belanoff. *Sharing and Responding*, Random House, 1989.
- Fairclough, Norman. *Language and Power*, Longman, 1989.
- Flower, Linda. *The Construction of Negotiated Meaning: A Social Cognitive Theory of Writing*, Southern Illinois UP, 1994.
- . "Writer-Based Prose: A Cognitive Basis for Problems in Writing." *College English*, vol. 41, no. 1, 1979, pp. 19–37.
- Gass, Susan M., and Alison Mackey. *Stimulated Recall Methodology in Applied Linguistics and L2 Research*, Routledge, 2017.
- Gilewicz, Magdalena, and Terese Thonus. "Close Vertical Transcription in Writing Center Training and Research." *Writing Center Journal*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2003, pp. 25–49.
- Gorzelsky, Gwen. "Working Boundaries: From Student Resistance to Student Agency." *College Composition and Communication*, 2009, pp. 64–84.

- Gumperz, John J. *Discourse Strategies*. Cambridge UP, 1982.
- Gumperz, John J., and Norine Berenz. "Transcribing Conversational Exchanges." *Talking Data: Transcription and Coding in Discourse Research*, Lawrence Erlbaum, 1993, pp. 91–122.
- Horner, Winifred Bryan. "Speech-Act and Text-Act Theory: 'Theme-Ing' in Freshman Composition." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 30, no. 2, 1979, pp. 165–69, doi.org/10.2307/356324.
- Hurlbert, Claude. *National Healing: Race, State, and the Teaching of Composition*, Utah State UP, 2012.
- Jacobs, Suzanne E., and Adela B. Karliner. "Helping Writers to Think: The Effect of Speech Roles in Individual Conferences on the Quality of Thought in Student Writing." *College English*, vol. 38, no. 5, 1977, pp. 489–505.
- Jefferson, Gail. "Glossary of Transcript Symbols with an Introduction." *Conversation Analysis: Studies from the First Generation*, edited by G. H. Lerner, John Benjamins Publishing, 2004, pp. 13–31.
- Lerner, Neal. "The Teacher-Student Writing Conference and the Desire for Intimacy." *College English*, vol. 68, no. 2, Nov. 2005, pp. 186–208.
- Mackiewicz, Jo, and Isabelle Kramer Thompson. "Talk about Writing: An Introduction to Our Empirical Study." *Talk about Writing: The Tutoring Strategies of Experienced Writing Center Tutors*, Routledge, 2015.
- McGuire, Sandra Yancy. *Teach Students How to Learn: Strategies You Can Incorporate into Any Course to Improve Student Metacognition, Study Skills, and Motivation*, Stylus, 2015.
- Murray, Donald M. *A Writer Teaches Writing*, 2nd ed., Houghton Mifflin, 1985.
- Newkirk, Thomas. "The Writing Conference as Performance." *Research in the Teaching of English*, vol. 29, no. 2, May 1995, pp. 193–215.
- Sacks, Harvey, et al. "A Simplest Systematics for the Organization of Turn-Taking for Conversation." *Language*, vol. 50, no. 4, 1974, pp. 696–735.
- Salvatori, Mariolina Rizzi. "Reading Matters for Writing." *Intertexts: Reading Pedagogy in College Writing Classrooms*, Lawrence Erlbaum, 2003, pp. 195–217.
- Searle, John R. *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, Cambridge UP, 1969.
- Sinclair, J. McH., and R. M. Coulthard. *Towards an Analysis of Discourse: The English Used by Teachers and Pupils*, Oxford UP, 1975.
- Sperber, Dan, and Deidre Wilson. *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, 2nd ed., Blackwell, 1995.
- Sperling, Melanie. "I Want to Talk to Each of You: Collaboration and the Teacher-Student Writing Conference." *Research in the Teaching of English*, vol. 24, no. 3, October 1990, pp. 279–321.
- Spivey, Nancy Nelson. *The Constructivist Metaphor: Reading, Writing, and the Making of Meaning*, Academic Press, 1997.

- “Status.” *Merriam-Webster.com*. Merriam-Webster, 2021. 4 Apr. 2021.
- Strauss, Susan, and Xuehua Xiang. “The Writing Conference as Locus of Emergent Action.” *Written Communication*, vol. 23, no. 4, 2006, pp. 355–96, doi.org/10.1177/0741088306292286.
- Tanner, Kimberly D. “Structure Matters: Twenty-One Teaching Strategies to Promote Student Engagement and Cultivate Classroom Equity.” *CBE—Life Sciences Education*, vol. 12, Fall 2013, pp. 322–31, <https://doi.org/DOI:10.1187/cbe.13-06-0115>.
- Thonus, Terese. “Tutor and Student Assessments of Academic Writing Tutorials: What Is ‘Success’?” *Assessing Writing*, vol. 8, 2002, pp. 110–34.
- Tracy, Karen, and Jessica S. Robles. *Everyday Talk: Building and Reflecting Identities*, 2nd ed., Guilford Press, 2013.
- Trosborg, Anna. *Interlanguage Pragmatics: Requests, Complaints, and Apologies*, Mouton de Gruyter, 1995.
- Vilar Beltrán, Elina, and Alicia Martínez-Flor. “Analysing English Native Speakers’ Use of Request Modification Devices during a Role-Play Activity.” *25 Años de Lingüística En España: Hitos y Retos [25 Years of Applied Linguistics in Spain: Milestones and Challenges]*, edited by Rafael Monroy Casas and Aquilino Sánchez Pérez, 2008, pp. 199–205. *Google Scholar*, [www.um.es/lacell/aesla/contenido/pdf/1/vilar.pdf].
- Weimer, Maryellen. *Learner-Centered Teaching: Five Key Changes to Practice*, 2nd ed., Jossey-Bass, 2013.

Appendix A Symbol Transcription Key

Symbol	Example	Gloss
[]	JK ^(S) : Ah!!! I [thought I] fixed all those, KL ^(T) : [(see you)]	Overlapped or simultaneous speech by two or more people speaking at the same time.
=	TD ^(S) : Is it= EF ^(T) : =You got a 94 out of 100.	Latched speech. No break (or beat) between words or lines.
(1.0)	EF ^(T) : Um, (1.9) °I don’t know if I can (1.5) pin down° (.7)	Time of pause in tenths of seconds from .4 and up.
(.)		Pauses of less than .4 seconds. Noticeable, but not timed.
-	TD ^(S) : I was- I was a pretty good writer	Cut-off
:	EF ^(T) : Because (.4) >you have< (.4) more strengths:: °than weaknesses°	Elongation of the prior sound.
.	EF ^(T) : Oh, not a problem.	Final, falling tone

,	EF ^(T) :	Well, good.	Even, continuing tone
/	CM ^(T) :	You see what I'm asking/	Rising tone (as for a question)
“ ”	KL ^(T) :	“corrding (unclear)” got a little reference problem here	For quotation quality of speech. As when a speaker sounds like she is repeating someone else's words, exact dialogue from a previous expereince, including earlier in the recording, or reading from the student's paper or a source text.
mm- hmm (yes); uh- uh (no) Okay.	RE ^(S) :	[mm-hm]	Backchannel, in lowercase (made when the person does not have the floor)
	PH ^(S) :	Okay.	Minimal response (capitalized) The capitalization indicates that the person has the floor.
<u>Word</u>	TD ^(S) :	how <u>is</u> my <u>writing</u> /	Part or all of a word that is stressed. The part of a word that is underscored has more stress than the rest of word that is not.
Word	JK ^(S) :	Ah:::!	Indicates stress via increased loudness or changes in pitch, often over several words. Used to indicate an exclamation Or empathetic statement.
°word°	EF ^(T) :	°I don't know if I can (1.5) pin down°	Words softer than the surrounding speech
< >	TD ^(S) :	like <how,>	The enclosed speech is slower than the surrounding speech.
><	EF ^(T) :	Because (.4) >you have< (.4) more strengths:: °than weaknesses°	The enclosed speech is spoken faster than the surrodning speech.
(unclear)	KL ^(T) :	>Didya-[(unclear)can you-]<	Indicates the transcriber did not hear or understand what was said. An empty parentheses in the speaker column indicates that the transcriber could not identify the speaker.
(())		((As he starts “I feel” his hand lowers.))	Description of non-verbal behavior or sounds.

@

TD^(S): @@ Yeah, okay.

Laughter. Each pulse of laughter is one @ symbol.

Adapted from Du Bois, et al. (for paralinguistic symbols such as @ for laughter), Jefferson (for lexical notations including accents, pauses, overlaps, and syllable lengthening), and Gilewicz and Thonus (for pauses and overlaps).