



Umbrella Summary

Conversational Style in Training

A Summary of Workforce Research Evidence Relevant to the Child Welfare Field

What is conversational style?

Conversational style refers to a combination of stylistic strategies to personalize instructional text (oral or written) for learners. These include “the use of first and second rather than third person, directly addressing the reader, revealing [the author’s] personal beliefs, and/or using polite forms of address” (Ginns et al., 2013, p. 452). The following excerpts illustrate such styles:

- ▷ “During inhaling, the [your] diaphragm moves down creating more space for the [your] lungs” (Mayer et al., 2004)
- ▷ “Let me tell you what happens when lightning forms” (vs. just the scientific description; Moreno & Mayer, 2000)
- ▷ “You are about to start a journey where you will be visiting different planets. For each planet, you will need to design a plant.” (vs. “This program is about what type of plants survive in different planets. For each planet, a plant will be designed.”; Moreno & Mayer, 2000)
- ▷ “When studying ancient civilizations, I usually begin by scouting the lay of the land. You see, geography tells me a lot about why people lived the way they did.” (vs. just a description of the land; Paxton, 1997)
- ▷ “Shall we calculate the result now?” (vs. “The tutor wants you to calculate the result now”; McLaren et al., 2011)

Why is conversational style valuable?

Conversational style is valuable because it has moderate to large effects on various learner reactions and learning outcomes. Specifically, instructional materials are perceived as more friendly and easier to learn when they use a conversational style instead of a formal style (Ginns et al., 2013). Personalization also leads to improved retention of information and enhanced ability to apply the learned material to new circumstances (Ginns et al., 2013). The mechanisms for these effects are unknown, though learners’ interest in the material is not improved by a conversational style, so that explanation has been ruled out (Ginns et al., 2013).

QIC-WD Takeaways

- ▶ Instructional materials are perceived as more friendly and easier to learn when they use a conversational style instead of a formal style.
- ▶ Conversational style leads to improved retention of information and enhanced ability to apply the learned material to new circumstances.
- ▶ It is recommended that stylistic strategies be used to personalize instructional text (either oral or written) in training.

References

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