"I had to discard initial assumptions": Equipping Writing Center Tutors with Expertise in Second Language Writing

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Observation Checklist

Directions: Circle the appropriate information at the top of one column for your first tutorial and at the top of the other for your second tutorial. During the tutorial, put a mark in the appropriate column <u>each</u> <u>time</u> that event occurs in the tutorial.

	Tutorial One Grad Undergrad Other Native Speaker Non-Native 1st visit repeat visit	Tutorial Two Grad Undergrad Other Native Speaker Non-Native 1st visit repeat visit
Client appears to understand assignment/genre/etc.		
Client reads own paper		
Tutor reads paper		
Client comments on own ability in language or writing		
Client requests grammar/vocabulary/ sentence help		
Client requests other help (HOCs)		
Client finds own errors while (R)eading or while (T)utor reads	(R)— (T)—	(R)— (T)—
Client corrects own errors when tutor points them out		
Client indicates lack of understanding of tutor's words/comments/questions		
Client challenges or disagrees with tutor's suggestion		
Tutor interrupts reading to talk about grammar/vocabulary/sentences		
Tutor interrupts reading to talk about other concerns		
Tutor suggests options/corrections after the reading (no interruption)		
Tutor comments on positive points		
Tutor asks a question for clarification		
Client explains what he or she meant (when something is unclear) or otherwise talks about the writing		
Client adds content or sentences at the tutor's prompting		
Client and tutor talk in an equal-partner back-and-forth manner		
Client replies in an extended manner to something the tutor says/asks		
Client and tutor laugh together		

Agenda Observation Checklist

As you watch the video, number each topic in the order in which it occurs during the appropriate part of the tutorial (not all topics will occur in any given video). **Each column will be numbered separately**.

The *Agenda-Setting* columns should be numbered during the beginning moments of the tutorial. (The *Client* column will reflect the order stated by the client. The *Tutor* column will reflect the order suggested by the tutor.)

The *Client Mentions* column should be numbered if the client introduces a topic to address at any time **after** the agenda-setting has concluded (this may not happen during any given video).

The *They Talk About* column should be numbered as the topic is dealt with during the tutorial, whether or not it was part of the original agenda.

	Agenda-Setting		Client Mentions	They Talk about
	Client	Tutor		
Understanding the assignment				
Generating ideas				
Thesis statement				
Argument				
Focus				
Audience				
Organization				
Content development				
Introduction/conclusion				
Using sources				
Citation				
Document design				
Sentence structure				
Grammar				
Vocabulary/Word Choice				
Instructor Feedback				

Observation Protocol—Discourse Analysis

Fill out the demographic information at the top of the first page, and then fill out the chart as you observe a tutorial. Start **AFTER** the agenda-setting. Each time the speaker changes, start recording on a new (subsequent) line. Stay on that line until that speaker's turn has ended. **If the listener interjects comments/questions/etc. (called back-channeling) into the speaker's longer utterance, do NOT mark that as a speaker change**. Mark that as "Back-channel from the listener" on the same line as the current speaker. So, in the example chart below, when the tutor speaks for 20 seconds, at some point in that 20 seconds the writer interjected a comment or noise that indicated agreement, uncertainty, etc., so the "Back channel" space is marked. On the line below that, the writer speaks for 5 seconds and sometime in that 5 seconds the tutor made a sound of agreement, so that back channel space is also marked.

Below are some definitions and tips for filling out the various columns. Read over this material carefully **BEFORE** you begin your first observation.

Turn length: Mark in seconds (even if it goes above a minute). As a general rule, you will consider it the end of a turn if one speaker is done with a longer stretch of time and the next speaker begins a longer stretch of time. In a quick back and forth where it might be difficult or impossible to count seconds, one person is usually the primary or dominating speaker (it is that person's turn) and the other person is back-channeling (very loosely defined).

Reading: Place an X in this column if the current speaker is reading a section of the document (do not count re-reading single sentences). Mark the time on the same line in the column for whoever is reading. If one person reads and then switches into speech (or vice versa), count each as a separate turn, mark the times in the appropriate column, and place an X in the reading column for whichever turn was composed of reading.

Tutor Questions: A "Known Answer" question is when the tutor knows the answer and is trying to elicit it from the writer. An "Authentic Question" is one that the tutor does NOT already know the answer to. Place an X in the appropriate column if the tutor asks a question.

Back-channel from listener: Place an X in this column if the non-speaker makes sounds or inserts short speech into the longer speech of the current speaker. Examples include mm-hmm, uh-uh, oh I get it, yeah, like this?, etc. A complete sentence can be back-channel if it is in direct reply to the speaker and if it does not significantly interrupt the speaker's longer turn. See the discussion of turn length above, and use your best judgement.

Sample Chart

Turn length in seconds				Tutor Questions		
Tutor	Writer	Silence	Reading	Known Answer	Authentic Question	Back-channel from listener?
	15					X (the tutor spoke)
20					X	X (the writer spoke)
	5					X (the tutor spoke)
60			X			

Information on what categories to include in this observation protocol was gleaned from the following source:
Weissberg, R. (2006). *Connecting Speaking & Writing in Second Language Writing Instruction*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

(continued on the next page….)

Data Analysis for Discourse Analysis Observation Protocol

Using the data you collected with the Discourse Analysis Observation Protocol Form, fill out the form below (round to the nearest whole number):

	Tutor	Writer	Silence	Total
Number of turns				
Length of speaking time in seconds				
Average turn length (length of speaking time divided by number of turns)				
Number of *Known Answer* questions (remember to count the rows when the person was NOT the main speaker)				
Length of time spent reading				
Number of *Known Answer* questions				
Number of *Authentic* questions				

Possible Uses for Sample Papers

L2 and presumed-L1 comparison

Goal: To help tutors overcome a tendency to immediately focus on surface errors in L2 writing

Method: Choose an L2 paper with plenty of surface errors. Correct those errors so that the paper looks more like an L1 paper. Ask tutors to read the presumed-L1 paper (the modified one), to identify who the author is (L1 vs. L2; advanced vs. beginning writer; etc.), and to list all of the things that could be worked on in a tutorial. Have them rank those in order of importance. After a week or so, ask them to do the same thing with a "new" paper, the original L2 version of the document they already worked with. After they have completed the ranked list, ask them to compare the two versions/lists and to reflect on the experience.

Results: Many tutors immediately notice their own tendency to get stuck on language in the original L2 document even though it has all the same global concerns as the presumed-L1 version.

Error Marking Methods

Goal: To help tutors learn to identify error types and patterns of errors; to help them learn to make judgement calls about how many errors to focus on and which ones to prioritize

Method: Introduce tutors to various methods of marking errors (direct, indirect, color-coding, etc.). Provide them with one sample paper per method taught and ask them to try out each method. Conclude by having them reflect on the various methods, their usefulness to writers, and their suitability for being adapted to a tutoring situation.

Results: Many tutors are uncomfortable with identifying grammatical error types. Exercises such as this one can help alleviate that discomfort by providing practice in doing so. In addition, tutors may see ways to use the various methods within the constraints of a limited tutoring session, thus helping writers who are ready in a final draft to focus on the sentence level.

Document Needs Vs. Writer Wishes

Goal: To help tutors understand and learn to negotiate the disparity between a document's needs and a writer's wishes.

Method: Tutors mark a sample paper with all of the things that could or should be focused on in a tutorial. They then view a video-recording of the tutorial for that particular draft, comparing what the paper needed in their opinion with what the writer asked for and what the tutor chose to prioritize in the moment.

Results: With L2 writers, there is often a disparity between a writer's expressed need (for grammar) and a document's weaknesses (often global). This exercise can help tutors realize and begin to think about that disparity.